

September 2020

Dear Holy Trinity,

“When are we going to open up?”

We hear you. We miss you. We miss church, too.

In a recent meeting with leaders from our synod, we heard the synod staff is stretched thin as so many churches are in conflict. While we know there are many different opinions at Holy Trinity regarding our next steps to safely reopen, we want to thank the good people of Holy Trinity for your support and prayer. This has been hard. But this church is resilient.

In some ways, these days remind us of the days of early Christians, where they met in homes rather than in churches. It was illegal to be Christian so in order to grow in faith, the early Christians took it upon themselves to study the Word within their own homes. Baptisms happened in homes. Parents taught the faith to their children.

Today we continue to prioritize online ministry. While there are instructions for how to proceed with proper safety precautions if we were to meet, according to the [MN Department of Health](#), “All faith communities are encouraged to provide remote services and choose **not** to open or host large gatherings.”

We recognize that we are being more cautious than some other churches. Please know this is because of a deep care for the well-being of the people in this community of faith. We have a detailed COVID preparedness plan and an active Risk Management Team behind our informed response. We are currently in [Phase 2 of our Re-entry plan](#). And, while there are exceptions, our actions are in step with sibling churches within the Minneapolis Area Synod of the ELCA.

Holy Trinity is blessed with people who are willing and able to adapt to the technological challenges of this time. For one, our music team has figured out how to produce high quality music remotely, and synthesize their parts into a cohesive worship experience. Admittedly, it’s much more work. But we are so fortunate for the positive attitude of our team who has left the safety of “the known” behind in order to pioneer a path forward.

We are taking steps forward. Thanks to those who attended our first drive-in communion services. Thanks to the high schoolers who attended our first outdoor campfire. Thanks to Jon Bergquist for creating and providing an outdoor prayer garden. And thanks to all who continue the good ministry work of this church, planting stakes in the ground of the future that God has for us.

As we begin this programmatic year, we want to start with the best, safest, most reliable foundation for ministry we can...and that is online. This is the way that we can welcome *everybody*. While it's not the church in the way we know and love, we want to continue to make it as meaningful as possible for now. Thank you for your patience and your prayers.

We left the church on March 15th, not knowing what would happen next. We heard the urgent demands to "flatten the curve", because we simply didn't have the space in our emergency rooms to care for an outbreak of COVID-19 cases.

We are now six months in. The only death in our congregation was non-COVID related. Thanks be to God. Our efforts have worked. God has protected us.

But there's no question--we greatly look forward to the day when we will be in person again.

We miss you deeply. We will return. We can't wait to see your faces instead of a camera when preaching. We can't wait to hear the sound of coins clanking in the noisy offering can as children skip and stumble back to the pews. We can't wait to shake the hand of the crew gathered together for coffee before worship, or eating the Wednesday evening meal together. We can't wait to place the bread into your hands again as we look into your eyes and say, "This is the body of Christ, given for you." It will be a joyous reunion!

This has been hard. This church is resilient. We miss you. God is with you. Thanks for sticking with us.

In Christ,

Pastors Alicia and Ben