



Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church

April 25, 2022

Dear St. Stephen's family,

As we continue our journey through the season of Easter and reflect on the meaning of Jesus' resurrection in our lives, I've been engaging in personal reflection on the signs of resurrection I'm seeing here at St. Stephen's. It's been such a joyful time as we've welcomed (both in person and online) old friends and new to our many services, gathered in increasing numbers, returned to our much-loved coffee hours, and once again knelt beside one another at the altar rail for communion. Today I'd like to add one more piece to the resurrection story being lived out by our community.

Beginning on Sunday, June 5 we are returning to our traditional two-service schedule with Holy Eucharist again being offered at both 8:30 and 10:30 (please note that this later service time is a change from the 10:00 hour at which we've been gathering for quite some time). The 8:30 service, as was the case when previously offered, will be a spoken service with no music, while we'll enjoy music provided by Dana, our choir, musical guests, and our own voices at the 10:30 service. It's important we continue reaching those who can't be with us in person, so live streaming of the 10:30 service on our Facebook page will continue.

Some of you may be asking yourselves "Why wait?" In short, it's to avoid leaving you with a whiplash feeling in the month of May. On May 22 we're recognizing our graduating seniors and celebrating the end of the school year for all our youth, something for which I'd like us all to be together. The following Sunday, May 29 I'll be away with my family celebrating the graduation of our oldest child, and supply clergy has been arranged for one service that day. Rather than have three weeks of two services, two weeks of one service, and then a return to two services, we'll be able to move forward consistently and confidently with no interruptions by going with a June 5 start date.

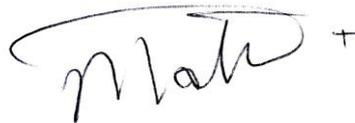
I know everyone - *especially me!* - has loved having opportunities to gather as a unified community and experience the joy of spending time together in worship and fellowship. However, I'm also very aware there are a number of people who miss the quiet and particularly reflective nature of the earlier spoken service and long for a return to that time. Additionally and of equal importance, it's worth asking ourselves how many other individuals and families in the wider area might be interested in

visiting (and perhaps even joining us!) with more service times and options available to them. There will of course be many opportunities in the time ahead to come together for special single services (such as a bishop's visitation or other noteworthy event), so returning to two services doesn't mean the end of our joyful communal fellowship - and it most definitely does *not* mean the end of our unity.

One final word here: an invitation for your own discernment. The return to two services also will present more opportunities for you to take part in the leadership of our liturgy. I'm always looking for anyone interested in serving as lectors, ushers, acolytes or Eucharistic ministers, and I hope you'll take time to consider if now might be the time you feel led to take part. If you've got questions about the many ways of serving or would like to sign up, please reach out to me here at the office or by email at ststephenspriest@gmail.com.

I invite you to share this news with anyone and everyone you feel may be interested in it. Thank you for everything each one of you brings to the life of this church and its growing visibility in the surrounding area. Resurrection in this case is very much a communal process, and I'm grateful for and overjoyed by your presence, prayers, and enthusiasm for it.

Grace and blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark", followed by a plus sign (+). The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.