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May 13th, 2020

Friends -

The burning question: “When we will gather in-person to worship at Saint Giles?” It’s a great question that, as of this moment, doesn’t have the kind of answer most folks want: an actual date.

We do not have an actual date, but here are some of things about which I have been thinking.



1. I think folks want real connection and genuine fellowship. I think we want to sit in our “regular” places, near those we love. I think folks want time to talk, listen and linger with a cup of coffee or glass of lemonade. I want these things, too.
2. I think folks want worship to be familiar - whether that means how we enter and depart the sanctuary or how we share the peace, gather for the Time with Children, celebrate communion or pass offering plates. I want these things, too.
3. I think folks want music, especially singing. I think we want to hear our musicians. I think folks want to sing. I think folks want congregational singing. I want these things, too.
4. I think folks want to be - and feel - safe. I think folks want to gather without undue worry or apprehension. At the same time, I know folks are committed to making smart decisions for their health and the health of others. I want these things, too.

Last week, I sent our church staff and Session an article from the Wisconsin Council of Churches. I know we don’t live in Wisconsin, but at the time, it was the best article I had seen related to re-launching in-person corporate worship. The Presbyterian Church (USA) just released a similar, but much longer (20 pages v 7 pages), article. Here are some of the concerns - things we need to consider - these articles raised:

- Social distancing: How will we ensure social distancing before and after worship? As we gather and depart?
- Number of people: What will we do if more than “X” (depending on the phase/stage) folks come to worship?
- Community: How will we honor the beloved generational diversity of our congregation? How will we be sure all of us can gather?

- Congregational singing: How will we make music knowing that congregational singing increases the risk of in-air virus transmission?
- Facilities: How will we guarantee sanitation/disinfection in our communal spaces?
- If someone contracts COVID-19, how we will communicate that information to the congregation in a pastorally appropriate way that honors confidentiality?

The Session, staff team and I want to gather for in-person worship at Saint Giles as soon as possible. We also need to be smart about the timing. We will continue to review recommendations from our state and denomination as well as the best medical and scientific information we can gather. We will do our best to communicate our plans in a timely fashion.

Thank you for your prayers and your patience as we discern the next steps.

Peace,  
Katherine

Links to the above articles:

<https://www.wichurches.org/2020/04/23/returning-to-church/>

[https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/covid-19/returning\\_to\\_public\\_worship\\_may\\_2020.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/covid-19/returning_to_public_worship_may_2020.pdf)



Photo by Hannah Busing on Unsplash

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### **Graduate Recognition**

If you or someone you love is graduating from any school in the next few weeks, please submit to the church office the name, school, and grade/degree being received.

We would love to honor your graduate!

We will begin posting these recognitions next week.

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If you need assistance with shopping or other errands, please contact Emmie ([office@saintgiles.org](mailto:office@saintgiles.org)) or Katherine ([katherine@saintgiles.org](mailto:katherine@saintgiles.org)).

If you are able to offer assistance with shopping or other errands, please contact Emmie ([office@saintgiles.org](mailto:office@saintgiles.org)) or Katherine ([katherine@saintgiles.org](mailto:katherine@saintgiles.org)).

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One of you recently sent me a link to an article from The Guardian. The article highlights a “resurgence of faith” among adults in the UK, as measured by a survey related to accessing religious services or contacting prayer hotlines.

It is an interesting article. Here is my favorite part:

A separate poll, commissioned by Christian Aid, found that *The Vicar of Dibley*, the Rev. Geraldine Granger, the BBC TV character played by Dawn French, would be the public’s choice of screen priest to lead the UK through the coronavirus crisis. In second place was Sister Evangelina, played by Pam Ferris, from *Call the Midwife*...with Father Ted Crilly, played by Dermot Morgan, from *Father Ted* taking third place.

What screen priest/pastor would YOU choose?

~ Katherine

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/03/british-public-turn-to-prayer-as-one-in-four-tune-in-to-religious-services>; accessed 5/6/2020

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## Newsletter Mailings

In addition to our emails, the office provides snail-mail, hardcopy versions of newsletters and important mailings to a small group of people who do not use email, or whose access to email is limited. If you would like to be added to our hard-copy mail distribution list, please let us know! We would be happy to mail you paper versions of important church communications.

If you know of someone else who you believe would benefit from a paper mailing, please contact them and ask! If they would, let us know in the church office and we would be more than glad to add them to the list.



Photo by Mikaela Wiedenhoff on Unsplash

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To finish our newsletter this week, please find this letter from member Tripp Carter, a teacher at Longview School in Wake County.

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Before the 2020 closure, over 800 bars and snacks were donated and distributed to students and families at my school. These were given to any child upon request and included many high protein snacks, and were sometimes the only thing a child ate that day.

The Women of the Church also supplied the school with over a year's worth of female hygiene products through our social worker, nurse, and counselors. My school and students were ready recipients for your kindnesses, and it is a privilege to get to be the one to say "help yourself, my church bought these for you", or "you can have two if you're still hungry".

Well, Saint Giles family, I hope you each are doing well and are self-regulating and interacting calmly and kindly with the people near you. The remote-learning phase of the school year has been great for a few kids, and very difficult for some others. All Longview students have a layer of confidentiality that has complicated showing you pictures of the children you've been helping.

Some moments involving the snacks were kind of funny. For example, one kid was sure the high protein bar he bit into was some sort of trick and he wasn't amused. Who is this CLIF guy and why did they leave out the jelly? I try to be discrete so the admin doesn't have to look too closely at our giveaways, but the November NutriGrain Incident had several staff chasing children down who said they all needed a granola bars from 'Carter' before anybody was doing any work. "Carter, what is a fig walnut ball?" "You eat one first." "Ok maybe. Let me see you eat another one..." The Keto Diet Oreos bag said "extra fat for long burning energy". The students looked at me and discussed why I look like I have extra fat in my cookies- and do I really think that was needed? I have a lot of funny stories about a wide cast of characters from this year alone.

In other situations, being able to give food was a way to just be present for someone and provide a basic need. One girl did not speak to me for an entire week and would not interact at all. One Friday she knocked on my door before getting on the bus and asked for something to eat. "Yes, your friends at Saint Giles bought them for you. Take two."

So thanks again and again to those who donated and supported me in other ways. The people of this church amaze me with your capacity to give so freely and work so hard on keeping this church on its mission to reach and serve others. Forgive the belatedness of this (in)formal note of appreciation to the Women of the Church and the congregation at large.

I need to send a few quick shout-outs of specific gratitude- to the deer hunter Johnnie Palmiter and his jerky, Peggy Forster for the library of valuable books and maps, Kathy Wolinski for giving years of weekly visits and connections with students, and especially to Dr. Carol Pope who continues to inspire and impact the teachers she's coached and empowered.

With gratitude,  
Tripp Carter