

Dear friends,

I want to personally thank you for your faithfulness in navigating this season of COVID-19 to the best of your ability. You have shown courage, creativity, and flexibility. Accompanying the faithful, you stepped into uncharted territory with trepidation, but also with curiosity. Together, you helped navigate challenges and have found wondrous new ways to reconnect with people and the most significant aspects of ministry. Through your leadership, many lay people have started living even more fully into their baptismal identity. I am proud to serve with you in this hybrid church that is emerging, and I thank you for your faithfulness. While I share with you the sense of loss for the lack of human contact during this season, I also rejoice with you for the many new discoveries. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Your faithfulness has helped us keep the faithful safe and thanks to our good Governor and civic leaders, our region seems to be on track. Some of you have started gathering outdoors meaningfully using the guidelines. The Task Force has provided feedback to several plans received. As we move forward, I have four requests for your attention and consideration:

1. First and most importantly, if you have not done so already, kindly make sure you take a set of breaks or a vacation according to what works for you. Please switch off to restore your body, soul, mind and humor as a leader.
2. Second, please make time for gratitude every day in your daily life. Ministry can be a lonely journey, especially now. Even your regular support systems may be vulnerable during this tender season. You and I are naming multiple pandemics, all the while walking alongside the faithful as pastors. As followers of Jesus, we do not seek a passive peace, and you will be misunderstood more often than not for naming the truth of Christ crucified, as you call for and model baptismal renewal. It is crucial that you find joy and gratitude in small things, which will sustain you for this gospel marathon in a COVID world. We are not going back to the same normal we knew in January 2020. Instead, let us build resilience on the foundation of gratitude (Philippians 4:6-7).
3. Third, please continue to treat this crisis as an opportunity to help birth a new church. This crisis presents a *Kairos moment*. We have the opportunity to go deeper in understanding our baptismal identity—to become known by the grace of baptism. As we prepare to reengage the Eucharist in a month, I invite you to continue teaching and preaching pointedly on the Eucharist, and specifically on *becoming Eucharist*.

In Galatians 2:20, Paul reminds us that, “...it is no longer [we] who live, but it is Christ who lives in [us].” I commend to you, the thoughtful liturgy from our Thriving in a COVID world Task Force to help with regathering the faithful, mindful that different churches will do so at different times for good reason—you can find that [HERE](#). As a sign of unity, we will break the long spiritual fast, when we gather to ordain Deacon Josh Barrett as a Priest on August 15. This will be our first celebration of Holy Eucharist since March 15. All churches are welcome to prepare for celebrating Eucharist after this time.

We will use only bread for the foreseeable future, knowing that Eucharist in one kind is efficacious. Our Eucharistic theology—Concomitance—assures us that to receive either the bread or the wine is to receive the fullness of Christ’s presence in the sacrament. As we are reminded in the Book of Common Prayer, “it is suitable to administer the

Sacrament in one kind only” (BCP 457). We will have more guidance on this at our next Diocesan check-in on August 6, at 5pm. I believe this is a thoughtful way to reengage the sacrament during this season. Let the Eucharist be of comfort to us. Let it strengthen us to live with courage to enliven Christ in the world. May it be a mark of forgiveness for the penitent, restoration of relationships for all, and justice for the oppressed! May it bridge the gaps that we have enabled, knowingly and unknowingly, in our society!

4. Finally, looking ahead, kindly consider at least one Sunday a month to be a liturgy of ante-communion. Consider also inviting a lay person, especially a young person, to tell their faith story of why they follow Christ. Let us hear from lay leaders why they choose to reject the ideology and practice of racism while striving for justice and peace among all people.

As we go forth, remember the encouraging words of Jesus, “Abide in me as I abide in you” (John 15:5). Remember also to love your neighbor by *Washing, Masking and Distancing!*

With affection,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. L. S.', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Prince