



St. Lawrence

Episcopal Church

June 1, 2020

A Letter From the Wardens

Past, Present and Future - Faithful, Together

As businesses and activities around Illinois begin to enter the first stages of opening up, we wanted to let you know where St. Lawrence stands at this point in time.

In February, things were "normal" - we held regular worship services, our own and outside small groups used our building, and we were engaged in searches for an interim rector as well as beginning the process to search for a permanent rector. We continued to work on addressing our long-term financial stability.

Then, back in mid-March, we went from full in-person operations to shut-down within a matter of days, under the guidance of the Diocese and with efforts by many parishioners. Since that time, our building has remained closed except for essential operations - finance and building maintenance/security and our HOPE feeding ministry, which continues to operate under significantly modified procedures to protect our guests and volunteers.

Many of us have found these times disorienting and stressful, and some of us have suffered directly with illness and even deaths in our communities, and among our families and friends. We have watched with sadness and concern as the pandemic has disproportionately affected our elderly populations in care facilities and our communities of color.

During this strange, unanticipated period, the St. Lawrence community has been a bulwark for many of us. We give thanks for the dedication and resourcefulness of our Vestry, staff and parishioners. We have found ways to stay faithful together as St. Lawrence, despite the inability to use our building, and are continuing to develop new ways to stay connected.

Our new parishioner-led Zoom Sunday Morning Prayer services have been very well received, and we encourage you to participate if you have not done so yet. There is liturgy, music provided by Alan Whaley and our choir members, and a reflection, often from a parishioner. Afterwards we have the opportunity to participate in a virtual coffee hour, which many have found delightful. If you do not have internet access, prefer not to use Zoom or have hearing challenges, it is possible to connect to the worship service by telephone - there will be instructions on how to do this in each week's e blast. If you do not receive the eblast, please contact the office for instructions on how to call in to the service or to be added to the eblast list.

Many of St. Lawrence's small groups continue to meet remotely. HOPE and its volunteers are providing very needed feeding services to our community. Our staff and parish leadership are very active on a remote basis. We are also in frequent contact with the Diocese, participating in weekly parish leadership Zoom calls with Bishop Lee and the Diocesan staff and also engaging in direct conversations with staff.

Our finance team, led by Joe Cardinale and Jeanne Lasheff, and with excellent support from our bank, Libertyville Bank & Trust, managed to secure a \$47,000 Payroll Protection Plan loan, giving us a cash cushion in these uncertain times and allowing us to continue to pay our staff and keep our operational costs funded.

So that's our present, but what about the future?

Our state, under the leadership of Governor Pritzker, has begun a staged process of opening up from the stay-at-home situation. But the Governor, and the scientific community, have emphasized that this period is one of uncertainty - it is unknown whether beginning to reopen will cause an increase in infections, hospitalizations and deaths from the coronavirus. It is also unclear whether there will be a seasonal resurgence in infections starting in the fall.

Here at St. Lawrence, our highest priority is the safety of our parishioners. We have established a task force, that, together with the Wardens and Vestry, will undertake the process of discerning if, when, and how to recommence our parish's various activities that use our building, including those of outside groups. The members of the task force are Susie Brock, Susan Fink, Chris Heier, Tom Simpson and Hal Toberman. We are very grateful that they are willing to work on this important task. The Diocese of Chicago has established guidelines for this process, and we will be in close communication with the Diocese throughout. Unlike closing down, which occurred very quickly, this process of discernment and creating procedures for any reopening we decide to undertake will take time and care. Part of this process will be to determine what is appropriate and practical for St. Lawrence, taking into account the demographics of our parishioners, the specific configuration of the spaces in our building and our financial and personnel/volunteer resources.

So, for now, our building remains closed except for HOPE and essential activities. We will keep you updated as our task force and the leadership of St. Lawrence work through this process.

But, although we can't push a reset button and return to the past, and the future is still uncertain, we are here, now, and we are St. Lawrence. This parish and its people are faithful, resourceful and creative. It's a natural human tendency to often treat the present time as only a waiting room for the future. We would encourage you instead during this in-between time to focus on the positives of our continuing life together as a community of faith. There are many opportunities to stay connected and we hope to develop more. Many of these new ways of staying connected will likely have usefulness when we once again, at some point in the future, are able to be together in person as a community.

We encourage you to contact either of us if you have questions or concerns, or need to know more about how to stay connected with our parish community.

We are St. Lawrence - faithful, together.

Your Wardens

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