

August 14, 2020

Dear Friends:

I have decided that we will re-open our 8:00 AM and 10:00 AM services on Sunday, August 23.

In a briefing (attached) released yesterday, Alan Watson, the CEO of Maury Regional Health, declared *“Across the state, the number of new infections is trending back down toward numbers in early July. Maury County is not quite to that level, but does show a downward trend as the week has progressed.”* Yesterday’s hospital reports show that the COVID population has declined to fifteen (15) patients, with five (5) in Critical Care and four (4) on ventilators. Furthermore, that Sunday marks the third week after the schools in Maury County reopened. By then we will have observed some of the results of this re-opening and want to be ready to open our doors as soon as is responsibly possible. As before, we will follow careful protocols (attached).

While St. Peter’s will take every reasonable precaution to minimize the risks of exposure to the virus, **the decision to attend these services carries risks**. Those with health concerns or in the more vulnerable age groups should seek the guidance of their doctor before attending. Further, as an act of charity, those who even think they may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19—especially if they have been tested and are awaiting results—should stay home and join our 10:00 AM live stream worship on Facebook<sup>1</sup> and YouTube<sup>2</sup> or on WKOM 101.7 FM.

Our 10:30 AM Wednesday healing service will resume on August 26 in the church (not in the Chapel downstairs). Our 5:15 PM service at St. John’s, Ashwood will continue. It must also be said that, God forbid, future circumstances may call for a return to the suspension of public worship.

Some will wish we could open earlier. Others will be concerned about our re-opening at this time. These perspectives have valid points that I honor and have deeply and prayerfully considered. At the same time, we need to worship God. We are made in His image and likeness; when we worship as one Body we are remade and renewed in His grace and love like a stamp in clay. We put our trust in Him, and we trust in the discernment and discretion of those He has made His children.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/stpeters38401>

<sup>2</sup> In your search browser, enter “saint peter's episcopal columbia tn”

In the meantime, the rest of the work of the Church continues. We look forward to re-opening Christian Education in various forms soon and we continue to reach out to others and care for them as best as we can. If you would like to make an appointment to discuss this decision, pastoral matters, or anything else, please call the church office at (931) 388-3331.

Most of all, we do the most important thing we can do: we commend ourselves, our lives, and everyone we love to the never-failing love of God who, in Christ Jesus, has promised, "I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20)."

Faithfully,

The Rev. Chris Bowhay  
Rector, St. Peter's Episcopal Church