

Pressing Pause – Elizabeth Crummy, Family Ministry Coordinator

I am writing with a heavy heart to tell you that after gathering final bits of information from families and Sunday School staff this week, after careful consideration with Pastor Jeff and Holly, and with the approval of the Parish Council, we are further delaying the opening of Sunday School, probably until a vaccination is available for children younger than 12. I know that sounds like a rather formal opening statement, but I wanted you to know seriously, we have contemplated having to make this decision.

Since schools reopened last spring, we have been connecting with families and teachers about what might be possible. You have been with us through the many interest surveys, while behind the scenes we have been measuring rooms, stockpiling cleaning supplies and revamping the program to minimize exposure among the 150 or so children who come from 10+ school districts.

The plan that took shape was a choice of a simplified at home option and a modified in person option. Although only about 35% of families expressed interest, we planned to start October 10th, after we celebrated the First Communion faith milestone for those children who would have been in last spring's class.

And then, the Delta variant struck. Children were sent home from school to quarantine. Then children were hospitalized. And then, families expressed second thoughts. Finally, our Sunday School staff, which ideally is a vibrant group of at least 25 teachers, assistants, musicians and substitutes, dwindled lower and lower, and finally settled this week at 6. Our attempt to host Sunday School in some capacity called for meeting in multi-age groups, and ultimately not even that could move forward.

Our attempts to recruit volunteers have just not worked, and I totally get it. For the Sunday School staff members who are teachers in their professional lives, it feels like too much to be in another environment, wearing masks again, not being able to teach like they know is really best and worrying about transferring germs across multiple environments. For potential staff who are not teachers by trade, but might normally be willing to take it on for this, they are shying away due to the less than ideal conditions.

None of this is intended to make anyone feel bad for not being able to step forward to teach. Many of you expressed that wish, and you simply cannot at this time. It is a big commitment and many people are stretched to their limits and beyond these days. I will be emailing parents about other options.

Since we are pressing pause on in-person Sunday School, we are reopening the option of at home Sunday School. The materials for that will consist of a Bible, a Learner Leaflet packets and a lesson schedule. Because this is now the only option being offered this fall, I will figure out some additional materials and some email communication. I will put my energy toward that next week and be back in touch ASAP.

Still Happening

- Registration Day will NOT take place on October 10. I hope to move it to October 17, if materials are received by that date.
- Bible Blessing for 3rd graders is still October 16 9:15 AM -10:45 AM. There will not be a meal, and will take place in the community room to allow for social distancing.
- Trunk or Treat is still on for October 24 in the parking lot.

Thank you for your continued patience and feedback as we navigate these times. Fingers crossed that vaccination can be offered to our younger children and that infection rates fall.