

Pastoral and Theological Considerations to Guide Local Conversations

What we have learned in the work we have been doing, alongside our bishop, throughout this pandemic, is that even getting good information is a real challenge. The politicians – all of them – consider advice from health professionals but have many competing agendas and constituencies to whom they answer. People in our congregations, including our clergy, are more and less informed – but human beings can only bear so much reality.

But we are the Church, and we serve the Risen Christ. Some want to be back inside our buildings yesterday; others are saying they will not return until there is a vaccine. So begin with prayer, and silence, and remembering that we are members of one Body. Listen for the Holy Spirit who leads us into all truth – just not usually on the timetables we set.

As leaders, ordained and lay, we invite you to take some time to reflect on God's call to you as the Church. As you envision being the Church in Stage 2, what do you hope will be gained? What might you lose? How will the move into stage 2 support your congregation in living out God's call to you at this time and in your neighborhood?

Our bishop and others have been talking for some time about the fact that returning to our buildings is not about "going back to normal." We are moving ahead, with God's help. Take some time to consider both what has been lost, and what you have been learning over the past three months as a faith community. How might you navigate this next phase in ways that strengthen you all for the work that lies ahead?

Invite the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you in the discernment that lies ahead – not only in Phase 2, but as you continue to seek and serve Christ, and love your neighbor.