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Rev. Ronald J. Hopmeir, Pastor

July 31, 2020

Dear Parents, Staff, and Stakeholders of SSP School,

I thank you for the warm welcome to the SSP School community. Every day I feel more and more a part of this great community with each person I meet. I'm seeing firsthand all the wonderful stories I've heard about SSP.

I would like to thank you for the considerable patience that you've afforded me and the entire Return-to-School Task Force so that we could capture the pulse of our community and formulate a plan that will allow our students, teachers, and staff to return to a safe and nurturing environment. Our group that began as a small steering committee has grown and expanded recently to include more medical professionals, architects, and a communications expert to help us flesh out our productive brainstorming sessions to create this initial document that we are sharing with you today.

As our committee expanded recently, I was reminded of Matthew 20:1-16, The Workers in the Vineyard parable. The members who joined us recently were just as vital to our work this week as those who have toiled with us in the proverbial vineyards since the beginning of July. They were about to see our plan coming from different lenses (prisms) based on their areas of expertise. Our work is not complete; additional laborers may be required between now and when we open our doors on August 24, 2020.

This plan we are revealing today will not answer every burning question. I encourage you, after you read this document and look at our attachments, that you give this time to digest and write down initial questions for our team to resolve. It is my hope that by the end of next week, we will have a FAQ addendum to pass along to you.

We have two options for families: Live/In-Person Learning and a comparable Online/Distance Learning option for families who elect to have their children learn from home during this first quarter. We will have families commit, quarter by quarter, to their educational model choice. The deadline for the first quarter is next Friday, August 7, 2020. This deadline allows our Task Force architects to use the actual number of students when mapping out our learning spaces and making suggestions for essential adaptations to ensure safe social distancing for Live/In-Person Learning.

Our committee had the benefit of discerning from a multitude of plans being published from both sides of the River, from private and public schools and districts. The variance among plans varies slightly; there is not much latitude when taking into account guidelines and mandates.

This is the first pandemic that any of us have had to navigate. We have the benefit of learning from history, not personal experience. I am blessed to be surrounded by a supportive parish administration team, especially Fr. Ron. I'm truly blessed to be supported in these efforts by leadership in organizations such as the Parent-Teacher Organization and the parish Board of Education; these are some hardworking teams. I encourage you to get involved soon if you do not have an affiliation yet.

The bottom line is, with as much hard work that was poured into this document over countless hours, this in effect is a living document. With the unpredictability of this pandemic, plans may need to be amended. Future announcements and mandates from city government and the Department of Health greatly dictate what we can do as a school community. This week the state of Missouri was designated as a "red zone" by the White House Coronavirus Task Force.

Today, on the last day of July, we plan to offer parents two choices to stay engaged in the SSP learning community. During this academic year, we may find ourselves engaged in a multitude of models, some that we haven't even foreseen.

Thank you in advance for your patience and your continued support. We will continue to listen to your concerns and support you in your ministry as the primary educators of your children.

May the Good Lord continue to shower blessings and love on your family; together may we remain SSP Strong!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Greg Sturgill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

D. Greg Sturgill
Principal
St. Stephen Protomartyr School