

Dear Faithful Shepherd Catholic School Parents,

Thank you for your patience as we have worked hard the past few weeks to put together our **Back to School Plan** that we share with you today. Faithful Shepherd is committed to our mission to “*nurture meaningful growth in academic achievement and service to Christ in the world*” during these challenging times. It’s just going to look a little different this year!

Our goal has been, and continues to be, to provide in-person, in-school learning beginning September 8, and this plan allows us to do so. As we look to the future we have designed a comprehensive plan that is flexible enough to be responsive to the ever-changing impact of COVID-19 on our local community. We will continue to reevaluate our plan as we learn more through the recommendations of health experts.

Our reopening plan encompasses guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health, the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics and was developed with the help of health professionals and teachers serving on the **Back to School committee**. Our goal is to reopen school balancing the educational/social needs of students with protocols and procedures in place that will significantly lower transmittable health risks due to COVID-19 to students and staff. We will implement safety and health measures and place limitations or restrictions on some aspects of life at Faithful Shepherd.

We are committed to working in partnership with you to move forward with confidence and cautious optimism as the new school year begins. We recognize that some students and families may have health related concerns that require distance learning as we begin the new school year, and we are prepared to support that need as well. We learned much from the distance learning experience of the spring and have taken into consideration your perspective and the teachers’ perspectives on how we can improve the at-home learning experience for those who need that option throughout the school year. We will apply that knowledge should we need to shift to that mode of learning during the school year. Next week, we will share more details about our distance learning plans so that you may make the right choice for your family in choosing either on-site instruction or learning from home.

There is still much unknown about COVID-19 and how it will impact our community in the year ahead. Our plan is flexible and will adapt to significant shifts in the risk levels related to major surges close to and within our community. We will be prepared to work with the Minnesota Department of Health to shift to short or longer term closing of the school building based on these changes. We will also be closely monitoring the educational and emotional progress of our students to assess how they are adjusting to this dynamic environment. Our teachers are prepared to adjust quickly in these events to ensure continuity in learning for our students.

We will begin the year helping our students become proficient in the digital platforms that will support in person and distance learning. These are robust tools that support the organization of learning and provide the opportunity for interactive learning experiences at home and school.

Our plan creates a separation or learning cohort model for students which will assist with limiting exposure throughout the school building. This may help lower the number of students who may need to quarantine if and when students become symptomatic or test positive for the Coronavirus. Families will need to keep their children home from school if they have a temperature or have symptoms that are potentially COVID related to protect the rest of the community from a spread. This plan will continue to evolve in the weeks and months ahead.

We are eager for our students to return to the classroom for in person learning. While things may look a bit different, we remain the same at our core: a community committed to working together to provide a safe, welcoming, and joyful environment where students build a foundation of faith and learning to last a lifetime.

Attached to this email, please find our **Back to School Plan**, as well as a copy of the **Minnesota Department of Health's Decision Tree** for people with COVID-19 symptoms. If you have additional questions regarding the plan or the upcoming school year, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. The school office will remain open throughout the summer in anticipation of and preparation for the new school year.

*Loving Father, our Good and Faithful Shepherd,  
With you, all things are possible,  
Guide us in our preparations to reopen our school.  
Grant us wisdom to keep our community safe,  
Inspire us with creativity to keep our mission alive in challenging times,  
Fortify us with perseverance to endure difficult and uncertain situations,  
Bless us with peace to calm our hearts and minds when so much is unknown.  
Unite us in the Holy Spirit to be beacons of light, of life, and of hope for our community.  
We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*St. John Neumann, pray for us.*

*St. Thomas Becket, pray for us.*

*St. Peter, pray for us.*

Sincerely,

Mike Randall  
Executive Director

Chris Smith  
Principal