

Reformed Episcopal Seminary

Est. 1886

UPDATED PRACTICAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC, AND WORKING PLAN

July 2020

With the lessening of restrictions and Montgomery County Pennsylvania moving to the green phase of the state plan, the Seminary has put in place the following plans to safely and faithfully operate while fulfilling our mission and ministry. In this we acknowledge that it is important to remember that there is still an on-going COVID-19 epidemic. Sadly, as the Seminary community knows, Bishop Robert Booth died of COVID-19 and while others we know have caught the virus and recovered, the Seminary will take an abundance of caution as we reopen the facility. Here are the guideline for current and future operations along with other guideline that have been released by the Seminary since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak. **All prior guidelines remain in force until replaced by official, updated guidance.**

Summer classes will remain on-line and will finish according to their current operational plans and schedule. Fall classes will operate with a hybrid model for the Trinity Quarter, fall 2020.

Staff needed for on-going Seminary operations are now working on campus at least a few days a week each. Remote work is done when possible. Faculty have worked remotely since the spring and will work on campus in a staggered format this fall. Since the Seminary involves clinical pastoral training, we will open for in-person classes at the end of August. All courses for the fall are planned to be offered in-person in a hybrid format, with online options. Professors are encouraged to offer their classes in-person as well as an on-line distance format such as Zoom. Part-time students can make arrangements with professors to take classes entirely on-line in a synchronous format with residential classes. Full-time students will be in residence given the practical nature of their education and work-study requirements. Faculty will work to plan for special arrangements in most classes where possible. Some may be split with half of the students being in-person and half taking the class remotely. Alternatively, faculty may choose to offer up to half of their class sessions remotely. The Seminary has upgraded the internet throughout the campus and purchased new copiers, computers, and other technology in order to meet the increased distance-education needs. This equipment and these methods while allowing for faculty-student interaction and peer interaction will increase physical distancing and help ensure that there are no more than 30 people spread across the two Seminary classroom and office buildings at any one time.

A number of safety precautions have been put in place. **In accordance with Pennsylvania state law and CDC recommendations, mask use is required when**

in Seminary buildings and within 6 feet of anyone else. The Seminary will be providing one free, washable cloth mask to every student, faculty, and staff member that comes to campus. Additional masks may be purchased from the bookstore.

The Seminary has plenty of hand sanitizer. Please wash and sanitize your hands frequently. The Seminary also has hospital-grade disinfectant. Common areas will be sanitized regularly. All staff with cleaning responsibilities as well as all work-study students should coordinate with Rev. Riley regarding what materials to use and how often sanitizing is to be done. All community members are reminded to carefully follow physical distancing requirements when eating on campus. Some specific guidelines are posted in the dining hall. Please use outside eating areas and your private offices as appropriate to minimize potential spread of contagion.

We will be returning to worship with appropriate physical distancing as well. Communion will be served with a pouring chalice and individual cups for the time being. Worshippers will come up to the rail with their masks on in quarantine groups to receive the elements and will take them back to their seats where they will commune. Rev. Riley will sanitize all individual cups after each Communion service. The Dean and the Rev. Deacon Jenkins will establish firm guidelines before any singing is conducted.

Remember: **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE SHOULD ANYONE COME TO THE SEMINARY IF THEY OR ANYONE IN THEIR HOUSEHOLD IS SICK. Before returning to campus anyone who has visited any state or area where COVID-19 is spreading rapidly should quarantine for two weeks in accordance with state recommendations.** At this point large group gatherings will be avoided. The in-person Commencement planned for September will again be postponed and we hope to have the in-person version of the 130th Commencement along with the 131st Commencement in late Spring 2021. Unfortunately, the opening picnic will need to be cancelled this year and we will look for other opportunities for fellowship as the year progresses. We plan on holding the Seminary Banquet in May 2021.

Classes will begin on Monday, August 24th. Orientation will be on Tuesday, August 25th, but will be conducted by Zoom with a minimal contingent on campus. **ALL faculty, staff, and students** should make an appointment with the Rev. Forsberg to have their ID pictures taken during the first two weeks of the quarter or submit a suitable photo to him. **ALL students** must make an appointment and meet with Rev. Riley within that same time to confirm and schedule work study assignments, confirm first term charges and complete financial paperwork, establish payment plans, sign dormitory leases, submit all orientation paperwork.

The Seminary administration continues to monitor the situation closely and the community should be prepared to transition back to online instruction should that be required. The situation remains fluid, so this plan will continue to be revised and updated.

4/6/2020

The lockdown and physical distancing required by our civil authorities continues. At this time there are still known cases of COVID-19 among the current Seminary Community. Bishop Robert Booth, a 1956 alum whose portrait hangs in the hallway upstairs in the Main Building, is thought by the nursing staff at his retirement home to have COVID-19. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

All classes will remain online through the completion of the Easter Quarter. The April Open House is now a virtual event scheduled for April 21. The Annual Seminary Banquet to be held on May 16 has been cancelled. Dr. Gerald McDermott will be our speaker at the Banquet to be held at St. Mark's Church in Rydal, PA in May 2021. An alternative virtual event will be held. We are looking into alternate plans for Commencement which may involve a virtual event in May and then a face to face event at the end of August. Plans for summer classes include language preparation, review, and reading classes as well as a theology class, *Albert Camus: 21st Century Christian Contextual and Theological Application* to be co-taught by Dr. Arner and Dr. Riches. We will determine if these classes will be held in person or on-line. The current plan is to make the theology class available by Zoom even if it is held in person.

3/19/2020

Given the increasing cases of corona virus and the government orders, Reformed Episcopal Seminary will be closed until April 14. Classes and support will be given remotely. Please arrange to get anything you need from the Seminary buildings on Friday March 20. The buildings and physical operations will remain closed until April 14. The situation will be re-evaluated at that time. Faculty and staff will be working remotely. The situation will be re-evaluated by April 14.

3/13/2020

Reformed Episcopal Seminary continues to adjust its practices in light of the growing pandemic and governmental regulations. The Seminary is closed for residential classes until Friday March 27 when the situation will be re-evaluated. Students are being supported in their classes through various distance learning methods as well as in-person support in as force is as possible and prudent. This situation has been reported to our accrediting agency we have been given allowance to do learning in this way during this extraordinary situation.

Faculty will make every effort to conduct classes synchronously using tools such as Google Hangouts, Skype, FreeConferenceCall, e-mail discussion threads, and Populi. Deacon Broberg and Rev. Buchanan are available for information technology support for faculty, staff and students, please contact them as needed and they will try their best to assist you. They have been authorized to supply this support during off-hours and from home as needed and they are able. This will also allow them to

complete some important work from home during this crisis period.

While the Seminary is closed as an educational institution, library and technical services remain available, but **BY APPOINTMENT ONLY**. The main building will be staffed by Dr. Riches, Dr. Arner, Rev. Buchanan, Father Riley, and Deacon Broberg as long as they are well and allowed to commute to site. In order to prevent congregating and to mitigate spread of disease, only 7 people will be allowed between the two Seminary buildings at one time. Whether you are faculty, staff, or a student, please call Father Riley or Deacon Broberg at the main office building to schedule your visit. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE SHOULD ANYONE COME TO THE SEMINARY IF THEY OR ANYONE IN THEIR HOUSEHOLD IS SICK.**

Other procedures previously set in place remain in force as they apply. When classes and regularly activities resume, other procedures will remain in place as long as there is a concern of infection.

3/10/2020 (REVISIONS 3/12/2020 and 3/13/2020)

Reformed Episcopal Seminary, while not a global campus, does have students who come from areas around our region to take classes. Therefore the seminary is issuing the following guidelines for the remainder of the CORVID-19 outbreak. Please understand that while there are no confirmed, immediate issues, we encourage you to stay healthy, aware, and prayerful about the situation.

Stay Healthy

Staying healthy is key to avoiding sickness of every kind. Eat well, exercise, get plenty of sleep, laugh often, and wash your hands. The days are getting longer, the weather more enjoyable, and the outdoors is beautiful – go take a walk. These are things each of us should be doing on a daily basis, but situations like these tend to remind us of this need.

Also, keep your living, commuting, working, and study areas clean. Clean up spills, wash hands, throw away trash and put your belongings away.

Be Aware

Being aware of your surroundings is important. Many of you will continue to go to the gym, grocery store, church, etc. during this time, but being aware of your surroundings can help you stay healthy. The CDC urges:

- ☒ _Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- ☒ _Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- ☒ _Stay home when you are sick.
- ☒ _Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- ☒ _Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe. Never flush wipes down the toilet.
- ☒ _Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.

- FOLLOW LOCAL AND STATE LAWS. NOTE GYMS, RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, AND MALLS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY ARE CLOSED AT THIS TIME

☒ _Wash your hands often with soap and hot water. Hand sanitizer is ineffective against COVID-19 unless it contains at least 60% alcohol.

As always, please notify any RES faculty or staff if you notice any health/safety issues and do your part to help keep RES clean and safe.

Be Prayerful

The church has historically been the one, during times of crisis, to press into the darkness with the witness of Christ, and we hope it will continue to do so during this time. Many leaders have encouraged their members to pray for the outbreak, the infected, and those who minister to them, and so we should pray. However, we can also work to share the hope and assurance of Christ in this time of uncertainty. A great part of our society has no hope past this life, and therefore they fear death, suffering, and uncertainty. They look to medicine or the government for deliverance, and while these are sources of aid, they are not in control nor are they the source of ultimate hope for those who call Christ their Lord. Maybe this crisis has even brought out some of our own doubts and fears. Please do wrestle with these in scripture, prayer, and class, but do not keep the hope of Christ to yourself. Let Him be a source of strength of hope for you and those around you.

Here are some reliable sources for updates, prevention, and preparedness on COVID-19:

☒ _US Centers for Disease Control updates/prevention/preparedness.

☒ _PA Department of Health COVID-19 updates/prevention/preparedness.

RES Specific Changes

1. If classes are canceled, the seminary closes, or for general announcements of this nature, there are several ways you can receive that information. The best way to stay informed is to be sure you are receiving text notifications from Populi. Dcn. Broberg can help you if you are unsure how to set this up in your Populi account. Otherwise, please check the RES website - www.reseminary.edu - for instructions first. CBS RADIO (KYW 1060 AM) and television stations CBS3 and CWPhilly 57 will be notified of any schedule change at RES. Log on to KYW1060.com for school closings. The Seminary identification number is: Montgomery County #1030.
2. If you are ill you are asked to stay home and may be asked to go home if you come to the seminary sick.
3. There will be no more use of non-disposable dishes, silverware, etc. We will **not** provide plastic or paper goods for general use. We will provide them for community lunches. Please bring your own from home. If you chose to bring non-disposable dishes and utensils from home, please return them to you home for washing.
4. There will be tissues & hand sanitizer (if available) around the seminary. Please use them and notify the seminary if they are empty.
5. Students with cleaning work assignments are encouraged to be diligent in their efforts.

6. As always, please notify any RES faculty or staff if you notice any health/safety issues and do your part to help keep RES clean and safe.

7. Communion:

a. While the potential transmission of a disease from a common cup when using alcohol is very low and has not been a documented health hazard, RES has been encouraged and will enact the following precautionary measures around the serving and receiving of communion.

i. All Eucharistic servers and assistants will thoroughly wash their hands with hot water and soap before serving communion. Sanitizer will be used before serving.

ii. Anyone with concerns may receive the "In-one-kind," remembering that the body of Christ is not divided in the elements, and anyone receiving in-one-kind receives the entirety of the body and blood of Christ.

iii. Those wanting to receive in both kinds will be served an intincted wafer. The Deacon will follow behind the server with the chalice and the server will intinct the wafer and place it in your hand.

iv. Only one person (the priest or the deacon will drink from the chalice) and that will be done after the service. All leftover consecrated bread will be consumed. None will be reserved. All altar furnishings will be thoroughly cleaned between services.

Responsible Parties:

The Rev. Canon Dr. Jonathan S. Riches, Ph.D., President and Dean

The Rev. Shawn Riley, M.Div. Dir. of Facilities @ Reformed Episcopal Seminary

826 2nd Ave, Blue Bell, PA 19422 (610) 292-9852 x. **103** – Seminary (215) 205-6117 – Cell bookkeeping@reseminary.edu