Dear VBS Families,

While I’m thankful for the blessing and safety of my home, my heart is beginning to long for the community of our church family. I am thankful that God is taking our homes and turning them into sanctuaries and classrooms, even as our hearts yearn for togetherness. We were all looking forward to gathering in person this summer for Vacation Bible School to experience the Knights of North Castle. Similarly, we are all greatly disappointed that we are not able to gather in person this summer.

The safety of our community continues to be the priority when considering how to move forward with all our ministries. The leadership will move forward by following the social distancing guidelines and directives from local, state, and federal agencies and healthcare professionals as we determine how to begin reopening Palma Ceia’s campus safely.

Unfortunately, the staged re-opening of the campus will not happen in time to host some of our most beloved summer traditions including VBS and Cedarkirk Day Camp.

The Children and Families Team made this decision with prayer, discernment, and great love. It was a hard decision, and one we felt was necessary for the safety and health, not only of the Palma Ceia community, but of each and every community it connects with out into our world. I want to commend the VBS Directors Kerri Edwards and Jess Hayden, and the entire VBS leadership team for their willingness to create an alternative with a path forward in allowing families to still participate as they are able. We are not canceling, we are improvising. We are grieving but not giving in.

Our VBS Leadership Dream Team is transforming this year's ‘Knights of North Castle' VBS into a safe and fun at-home experience. We invite all registrants to pick up an at-home kit at the church around June 2nd to enhance the experience and encounter God in a unique and new way. This will allow your family to participate in your own way on your own timeframe. The team will provide music cds, art project supplies, science supplies, a Flat Sparky, and even cloth masks that you can decorate. We will also provide access to videos and demonstrations throughout the summer should you want more alternative options to armor up at home with the keywords of truth, justice, peace, faith, and salvation. We will send out a notification when the VBS-to-go boxes are ready.

In addition, we are planning to gather in person on the church campus parking lot or courtyard on Saturday, August 8th (time TBD). We hope you will share what your family created during the summer, participate in a parade around the castle and sport your  masks and family crest, and celebrate together the start of a new school year should the way be clear to gather safely.

If you are receiving this message, your family is currently signed up and has already paid for this summer. Please direct us on how you would like us to handle these funds and we will accommodate everyone to the best of our ability. Here are your options:

⬜ We would like to pick up a VBS kit and journey through summer with friends in a new way.  Please use my registration fee towards the supplies.

⬜ Please allow my registration amount to simply remain in the VBS fund to help cover the cost of materials for this year’s VBS participants and scholarships.

⬜ Please direct my registration amount to our local VBS mission recipient, [Faith Café](https://www.faithcafetampa.org/).

⬜ Please send a full refund. Checks will be made out to the name and address listed on the VBS registration form. *All requests for refunds must be made no later than June 1st. Repayment will be made within two to three weeks.*

We ask you to please fill out these three questions on [this google poll](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSev179MUOu03OTcXFt7LIQEq-SeOIqrpkJ8ikOOhMAK05Y2uQ/viewform?usp=sf_link) before Wednesday, so that we can plan accordingly ang gather the supplies for the families who will be participating. Should you request a refund, we want you to still be able to participate by picking up a VBS-to-go box at no cost.

While this is not the summer any of us had planned, we celebrate in the knowledge that we can, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power” (Ephesians 6:10) as our theme verse suggests. We are living in faith locally and globally despite feeling like we are locked up in castles with protective armor.

In the coming weeks, you will hear details from ministry leaders about their plans to move forward and how your family can stay involved and active in the worshiping life of Palma Ceia. We hope to continue to be a vibrant source of encouragement to one another, to our community, and for life in Christ. God meets us where we are in joy and sorrow. May we all continue taking that next step and navigate this transition together with grace and understanding.

We pray that each of you will know and experience God’s love, grace, and nearness as we walk through this together.

Allison Kelly

Director of Children and Families

Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church