It will come as no surprise that 2020 has been a challenging year for St. Augustine’s and campus ministry. Covid-19 has created circumstances that have required a massive change to how we conceptualize and execute campus ministry. Despite all of these issues and challenges, St. A’s is looking forward and working to build on the progress we have made over the last three years of my ministry.

Currently, the St. Augustine’s Chapel building is in good working order after completing some repairs to the boiler in December 2019. While we are still planning to do more updates and upgrades to the lounge and the sanctuary, budget constraints caused by Covid-19 have caused us to postpone these plans for another year. While we completed the creation of a new Meditation Room for students, faculty, and staff, the university closed the week after it was completed and it has not been utilized yet. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we also do not have our usual group of other religious student groups renting the Chapel.

The St. A’s student group at UK is going well. When the pandemic hit, we took our time and went very slowly, making deliberate decisions about how we would proceed during this season of life. We have been meeting virtually for Bible study on Thursdays at 7 PM using GoogleMeet and on October 8th we had our first in-person meeting, a campfire on the front lawn of the Chapel complete with s’mores, social distancing, and masks. We hope to safely build on this event in future so we can do service and social events. Our religious committee is currently working on reestablishing our worship opportunities. All events at St. A’s strictly conform to our reopening plan approved by the Diocese and review by the University of Kentucky.

Looking forward, we have almost completed the process of starting a student group at Transylvania University. This group will be supported by and work with St. Augustine’s and the UK student group, but will be primarily self-directing. We look forward to getting this group off the ground.

Like all groups, financial contributions to St. A’s are significantly down. While we can continue to make our budget, we are looking to make short-term and long-term plans to address future budgetary needs. After signing a new four-year covenant with the I-K Synod of the ELCA to continue our joint campus ministry, we are reorganizing the board and our fundraising structures to meet our needs, not only during the Covid-19 pandemic, but into the future.

All in all, St. Augustine’s is doing well, and we are planning for a long future serving the University of Kentucky, Transylvania University, and college students all over the Diocese of Lexington.

Grace and Peace,
Rob Coulston
Campus Minister