Members of the Saint Luke Catholic School Community,

I am writing because of the sad news last week that our excellent principal, Elizabeth Kissel, has chosen not to return for the coming school year. Again, I express my own sorrow plus my deepest appreciation for all that Mrs. Kissel has done for us and with us these past three years.

A week ago today I sent you my first letter regarding plans for the coming year for Saint Luke Catholic School. I promised to keep you updated; so I am writing again today. Quite a bit has happened in a week!

Last Saturday I met with the outgoing and incoming School Commission presidents, Katie Kumler and Kevin McCusker. We had a good discussion and planned for last Monday evening when we met with the incoming and outgoing executive committees of our School Commission.

A Search Committee was formed to select a new principal. Dr. Rob Shumaker graciously agreed to again chair the committee. Rob chaired the Search Committee three years ago that brought us Mrs. Kissel.

The following have agreed to serve on the Search Committee under Dr. Shumaker’s leadership: Joe Hansen (Principal at Bishop Chatard High School), Katie Kumler (parent and outgoing School Commission president), Kathleen Leppert (parent and educator), Jennifer Schaefer (Assistant Principal), Katie Schrage (parent and educator), Mary Jo Woodside (grandparent and educator). Rob Rash from our archdiocesan Office of Catholic Schools will assist the group as he did three years ago.

I am thrilled with the make-up of the Search Committee. I am so thankful for each of those willing to serve. In the next couple weeks, they will screen the applications and resumes we have on hand, interview several potential candidates, and then recommend two or three top candidates to me for a final decision.

Our plan is to have a principal named by July 1. At first I thought we might just go with an interim-principal. Now I am hopeful we will name a new principal for the longer term. We had a number of applicants for the assistant-principal position occasioned by Mrs. Borland moving to be principal at Saint Joseph School in Shelbyville. We are putting that assistant principal position on hold for at least a year.

Of those assistant principal applications we have, a couple have good experience and could be candidates for principal. I have been amazed that even at this late date we have had several other applications from others well-qualified to take the role of principal. I suspect it means they realize they would be inheriting a very good school. The Search Committee is already moving ahead with all this.

That’s where we are with naming a new principal. I want to mention three other matters before I conclude this letter.

Late last week the State of Indiana issued a 38-page document to Indiana schools outlining necessary steps to reopen schools for the next semester. Saint Luke School sent a survey to parents a couple weeks ago asking for thoughts on how we did with remote learning and thoughts on how and when to reopen school. At this writing, the results have not been fully tabulated.

However, at our meeting last Monday, we had strong consensus that we could and should reopen Saint Luke Catholic School on-campus and in-person as scheduled in August. Naturally, we would make some significant changes in procedures, but we felt it can be done safely. You will be hearing more about this from Mrs. Kissel and our school staff.

There was also strong consensus that we must have a back-up plan ready. If someday we need to go to remote learning again, we will be prepared. We also need a way to help students who are perhaps unable to return to school right away or take a break because of health concerns.

Second, you will not be shocked that every so often off-the-wall rumors surface at Saint Luke (or any other parish or school). I thank those of you who have contacted Mrs. Kissel or me to get the real story. Some of these rumors are incredibly ridiculous!

Finally, I think there must be school families who have been impacted financially because of the pandemic. Paying tuition will be more of a challenge than ever. **No student will ever be unable to attend Saint Luke Catholic School because of finances. We have substantial tuition assistance available.** Please, if you are one of those parents; do not hesitate to apply for financial aid through the usual channels (FACTS). A Catholic School education is worth it.

Above all, keep all of this in your prayers. I again promise to communicate often to keep you posted. **Never hesitate to contact me or Mrs. Kissel with concerns or questions.**

Sincerely in the Providence which so far has never failed us,

Msgr. Joseph Schaedel

Pastor, Saint Luke Catholic Church and School