

## HEARTBEATS-Staying Connected 2-10-2021



Dear friends in Christ,

Next Wednesday is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the season of Lent. During Lent, St. Andrew will offer worship services by Zoom at 7:00pm on Wednesdays until Holy Week. I will be doing a sermon series titled "Blunders of Biblical Proportion." On Wednesdays you will receive a link and an Order of Service by email. For Ash Wednesday, you are encouraged to have matches ready. They will be used in the service that evening.

From time-to-time social media pops up with concerns about the future of our country and calls for a return to religious values. (Of course, when that is said, the person making the statement means the religious values they themselves hold dear). Often, however, the solution put forth by those who make such calls is a return to prayer in school. "If only we had prayer in school, then our children would grow up with Christian values and all would be right with the world." Or at least our country.

But there are some problems with this suggestion.

First, the United States constitution says in the First Amendment, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." That means that if public schools that are funded by monies received by the government through taxes were to require public prayer—any kind of public prayer—that would make religion a requirement. And that would violate the First Amendment.

Second, who do you want leading that public prayer. We make the assumption that it would be led by a Christian. But perhaps it won't be. When our daughter Rebekah was in school—a private Christian school where my late wife taught—prayer was required in the classroom each day. But Rebekah's teacher was a believer in Wicca—white witchcraft. This was definitely not the person we wanted leading our daughter in prayer

As long as tests are given in school, there will be prayer. It just won't be public prayer led by someone representing the school. It will be private prayer and it will be left to each student to navigate how their faith will be lived out as they make their decisions in life.

And to make a requirement that puts the teaching of prayer on the schools borders is an abandonment of parental responsibility. My wife and I didn't send our children to school to learn religion. We sent them there to learn how to read and write and do math and so on. We wanted our children to learn religion in our home and in the church to which we brought them. To have the expectation that a school will teach our children the faith we want them to have is, at the very least, naïve. At the most, it is a denial by parents of what God expects of them in the raising of their children. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it." If we want our children and grandchildren to have the values of our faith, we need to recognize that learning those values begins at home.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey