

HEARTBEATS-Staying Connected 2-8-2021



Dear friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, February 9 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, let our prayers be for those areas of the world that struggle to get the vaccine for the coronavirus. Pray for world leaders to find ways to assist all areas in receiving and distributing the vaccine so that the continued spread of the virus throughout the world can be stopped.

This past Friday, the Supreme Court ruled that the State of California could not block churches from gathering indoors for worship. It can restrict singing in church and limit the size of gathering to 25% of capacity or 100 people, whichever is smaller. This past Sunday a number of California churches rushed back to indoor worship. St. Andrew Lutheran did not.

In I Corinthians 10:23-24, Paul writes, “‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.” Paul was writing about the practice of eating food sacrificed to idols. There were those who said it was not a problem because they knew it didn't really mean anything, but Paul was pointing out that, while there was nothing that prohibited such behavior, doing so might serve as a bad example to others whose faith might be shaken by such activity.

Though Paul was writing about eating food sacrificed to idols, these words seem to also speak to the consideration of returning to indoor worship at this time. Just because we can, doesn't mean that we should. In Corinth, it was a matter of following a behavior that might weaken or confuse faith practices for others; for us the issue is keeping everyone as safe as possible.

There also seems to be confusion for a number of churches about where you can worship. I've discussed that previously and I hope we have a clear understanding that it our attention should be much less about where and how, and much more about who. Worship is about offering our praise to God and receiving God's blessing through the Word, both proclaimed, read, and sung. To think that we can only worship God or best worship God in the church actually limits God. It says that God can only bless us if it is in a specific building. Last Sunday, after worship in our parking lot, I had a couple of conversation with folks about how beautiful it was to be worshiping outdoors, seeing the fog burn of and turn into a bright, beautiful, sunny sky with the mountains visible in the distance.

I realize that one of the values of worshiping is community—coming together in praise of God. I know that right now some of our members are not able to come to the parking lot, or simply don't feel safe doing so right now. And there are valid arguments for going back inside, wearing masks, and spreading out. Still, following practices that maximize safety for others remains our priority as we plan worship, and for the time being, that seems to remain through outdoor and online worship.

Everything is permissible—but not everything is beneficial.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey