

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 5-17-21



Dear Friends in Christ,

***ONE AT ONE – Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, May 18 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for peace in Israel and Palestine. Remember when you pray that when we don't understand or know all the details it is best to pray for the outcome God desires—"Your will be done."***

As all of you are aware, guidelines regarding the pandemic are changing rapidly—it seems almost daily. Even since the Church Council at St. Andrew Lutheran developed procedures for moving back to in-person worship about three-to-four weeks ago, much has changed and been relaxed. I suspect we soon will be much closer to what we knew before the pandemic began.

Remember, though, that there still is a pandemic, now with variants and breakthrough cases. Only about half of California is fully vaccinated. During all of these past fifteen months, the Council has sought to lead the congregation through this time with the safety of our members as the highest priority. That's not an easy thing to do. There are those who want full return to worship now as we had it before the pandemic—two services with singing and responses. There are some who do not feel comfortable returning from the safety of live-streaming services from their home or watching and listening from their car. For many, there is not a switch that can be flipped to move from a year-and-a-quarter of caution and worry to whatever we remember as having been "normal." Even with the guidelines the Council set up several weeks ago, and in light of new recommendations from the CDC, the State of California, and the County of Los Angeles, there is still within our congregation a wide range of views on how things should be done. "Why are we removing hymnals and Bibles?" "Shouldn't we be taking temperatures at the door?" "Can't people decide for themselves whether to visit after service or not?" "Shouldn't we restrict attendance to just those who are fully vaccinated?" All of these questions and others have been raised by folks from within

our congregation. A wise man once said, "I don't know what the secret to success is, but the secret to failure is trying to keep everyone happy."

Again, things are changing quickly and we should expect that the recommended practices of our congregation will change with them. This will happen gradually with concern and consideration for all our congregation. Again, the Church Council continues to monitor the requirement from the CDC, state, and for churches, to ensure that people are safe and cared for within the wishes and values of our church. Rejoice that we are moving in this forward direction. Be kind and generous in your reactions and response to what is decided. Show your appreciation to the leadership of our church for the good work they have done and are doing for our congregation. Be patient as we move back toward what we previously enjoyed in our worship. Also know that things will likely never be quite the same again, just as we will never be quite the same again. And different can be good!

A friend of mine posted this statement on Facebook this week: *Dear churches, Please be gracious with your pastors [and church councils] who are balancing new CDC guidelines with the values of our churches. We're doing the best we can, I promise. Love, Every Pastor [and Council] right now.*

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey