

HEARTBEATS – Staying Connected

5/24/2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – You are invited to pray for one minute at one o'clock each day. This week, let our prayers be for the rights and health of woman throughout the world. Pray that women be treated with justice and dignity, and not as objects or property. Ask that they receive equal recognition and income as their male counterparts and that they be respected for the important many roles they play in our society.

We've been living with uncertainty for quite awhile. As we move toward a reducing of the guidelines that remind us of this uncertainty, a new kind of doubt is arising. What does it mean when someone is still wearing a mask? Have they not been vaccinated? Are they worried about those others who have not gotten the vaccine? Or are they just used to wearing the mask and haven't let go of that practice yet? And what about those who aren't wearing a mask? Does that mean that they are vaccinated? Or are they simply not wearing a mask because they choose not to, or because they feel it is safer? A lot of new questions for us.

While we would like to think that we will be heading quickly for a time when we don't have to worry so much about the behaviors of others, that time may be a ways off yet. We will be seeing a lot more folks without masks and still a lot with masks. Probably those without have been fully or at least partially vaccinated. But just because someone is wearing a mask does not mean that they have not received the vaccine. It has been fifteen months that we have been doing this mask thing and, for many, it will take some time before they feel comfortable shedding this protective gear. There also are those who will continue to wear a mask so that others feel safer.

Even though we feel more at ease after having been fully vaccinated, we should not presume to expect others to be in the same place as we. People have different levels of comfort. Think of it like a bell-shaped curve. There are a few people at one end who are completely at ease with the current situation and some at the other end who may never feel totally safe. Then

in the middle portions of the curve, there are many people with varying degrees of contentment about their own safety and with the practices of others.

It is important that we extend grace to those we encounter as we make this transition away from masks. For us as a congregation, we will move with a degree of slowness and intentionality so that we can bring along a significant majority of people. That means the easing of restrictions may happen more gradually so that our hospitality includes a level of safety that appeals to many. There is no shame in still feeling insecure about things today. In time, we will all reach a level of comfort that allows us to interact with each other in ways we have missed and to which we look forward. As we make our way in that direction, let us all seek to extend a welcome that meets people where they are at and not where we expect them to be.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey