

HEARTBEATS – Staying Connected

6/14/2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, June 15 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray regarding the gun violence in our nation. Pray for solutions that minimize mass shootings and shootings of any kind. Ask for God look kindly on the victims of gun violence and to be present with the families of victims.

With California removing restrictions of physical distancing and wearing masks, many are feeling like we've reached the end or are very nearly at the end of the pandemic. We are not. While we have made great progress toward making vaccination available to everyone in America, only 51% have received one dose and only 41% are fully vaccinated. The G7 summit of world leaders this week pledged to provide 1 billion doses of vaccine to places in the world that are in desperate need of them, but studies say that 11 billion doses are what is needed.

California may be lifting restrictions, but just because they have doesn't mean that we must or should. It is great to be back worshipping in our church building. Still, the guidelines that we are maintaining inside are a good reminder that the pandemic is not over and that we still seek to protect those who come here to offer praise to our loving God. Just last week, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, along with the United Methodist, Pan-Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, American Baptist, and Roman Catholic churches issued an updated document advising on safe practices for in-person worship titled, Care-Filled Worship and Sacramental Life in a Lingering Pandemic. This guide makes use of protocols from the Center for Disease Control to create policies and practices for safer worship.

Here is a summary of some of the recommendations from that document, along with a few comments:

- We should seek to avoid stigmatizing those who have not gotten the vaccine. Because of anti-immune deficiencies and a variety of

personal preferences, some have not, will not, or can not receive that vaccine. One of the wonderful hymns in our hymnal is #641 “All Are Welcome.” It seems odd that we would have this hymn and others with similar messages if we do not welcome all who come to join us for worship.

- Worship is still safest outdoors. If you will be worshipping inside a building, it is important to continue to wear masks and follow physical distancing. Good indoor circulation of air is helpful. Shorter indoor services are recommended.
- Singing and loud speaking spread the aerosols that contain the coronavirus across a wider area. The recommendation is to wait to resume congregational responses and singing. Those who lead worship should maintain a distance of at least twenty feet from the congregation.
- Communion is safest when the elements are brought to the people, rather than have the people form lines to come forward to receive the sacrament. Individual containers are preferable and safer for serving the bread and wine to several or many. (Apologies to the congregation for the individual units used for communion this week that were difficult to open. It was the last of one type we had used in the parking lot. Going forward we will have the other containers that open from both ends.)

As a congregation, we continue to try to follow practices that keep people safer and help worshipers to feel more comfortable with their wellbeing. We encourage those who come to attend our indoor services to observe these restrictions in consideration of others. It is a joy to be together in person, to see each other, and to praise our Lord as one body. All are welcome, but the safety of all is still our priority.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey