

HEARTBEATS- Staying Connected 8/9/2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, August 10 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for patience. Ask God to help you walk through challenging times with the strength of faith. Pray that the Holy Spirit give you the words to help others in their struggles.*

Winston Churchill, on May 8, 1945, said, “Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.” He said these words on VE (Victory Europe) Day announcing the end of the war in Europe. But he also wanted people to realize that the second great war, World War II, was not over as conflict continued in the Pacific.

These words of Churchill, though, feel almost like they apply today. Many felt that we were coming to the end of the pandemic as many people were getting vaccinated and with the relaxing of mandates for wearing masks and sheltering at home. It felt like the end. But now, with the spike resulting from delta variant of the coronavirus, it feels like things are going the wrong way. Hospitalizations and deaths are surging, and we hear of “breakthrough” cases where even those who have been vaccinated are testing positive for the virus. It is not the end. Some days we wonder if it is even the end of the beginning.

With this move back to more stringent requirements, it seems that many people are being tested for their tolerance. After a year-and-a-half of this pandemic, many folks are just plain fed up and seem increasingly unwilling to put up with any move back to previous guidelines. Last week, my wife, Sandy, was in the bank when a gentleman came in but was stopped and told he needed to wear a mask. The man refused. He said he wasn't going to be told what he had to do and wasn't going back to wearing those face coverings again. When the staff insisted, he shouted that he would take his business elsewhere instead. (I don't know where he thinks he will find a bank that doesn't require masks.) And then he stormed out, slamming the door hard enough that Sandy thought the glass was going to break.

But it is hard when we've gone through this for so long and especially because things were looking better, and now we seem to be moving back to where we were before. Still, I think these new or returning challenges give us some opportunities as Christians. First, we would do well to try to stay in the moment and not worry

about how long. By endeavoring to focus just on is happening right now we can become better at dealing with whatever joys or trials that we encounter today. Second, we can commit to being examples for others. When we see another who is frustrated or unhappy with the current situation, we can cautiously offer some comfort and understanding for what is happening, and perhaps help to navigate this difficult time. Third, and most of all, we can model our trust in God's presence and the hope that our faith brings to us as we journey toward that time when all things will be resolved according to God's will. How we deal with stressful time and minister to one another can be a powerful witness to our own faith and we may even find that walking through these challenging days is helping us to grow in our relationship with and confidence in God.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey