

## HEARTBEATS- Staying Connected 11/15/2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, November 16 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for continued control over the COVID-19 virus. Pray for those who work with those who are sick and who provide medical services like vaccinations. Ask God for patience as we continue to wait for the time when this pandemic will no longer be a threat.*

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We're getting itchy. We're getting anxious. As things related to the pandemic seem to be relaxing around us, we want to get fully back to normal. Or whatever we remember as normal. This is true in the church as well. We are less patient with all this COVID stuff and just want things to go back to what they were. Other than having to wear masks (and many aren't really sure we even need to do that, or do that anymore), why can't we just do things like we used to?

But while things appear to be getting better, we're still in a pandemic. Yes, COVID-19 case rates, hospitalizations, and death rates have decreased and seem to be stable, the virus still continues to pose a high risk to communities. Though many are vaccinated, the effectiveness of the vaccine is wearing off—thus the need for boosters. And there are still not enough people vaccinated to limit the risk of infection and transmission to a point where we can completely relax. Certainly, the better numbers we're seeing of cases and hospitalizations has stabilized. But the reason this has happened is because of a continuing rise in vaccinations and more wide-spread use of masks. The positive effect of our caution is showing, but we haven't reached the end yet.

LA County still requires masks be worn in all indoor gatherings. They have also encouraged and many businesses are requiring proof of vaccination or a recent negative COVID test. While we at St. Andrew have continued to ask everyone to wear masks (there are a couple of medical exemptions within the congregation), we have not asked for vaccination proof. In lieu of that, we instead have urged everyone to be mindful of one another's safety by wearing masks and maintaining physical distance as much as possible. We have relaxed on allowing people to give responses in church, like saying the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, but we have not yet approved of singing as doing so, even with a mask, projects particles at a much further and unsafe distance. Our priority remains the safety of all who come to worship.

It's challenging when we become so anxious for this pandemic time to be over. That anxiety can lead to us becoming overly critical of other things as we attempt to find more places over which we can claim control. When some things are still not what we want, we may turn our frustration to other areas where we might have some voice. In response to these feelings, we might do well to try to overlook those things which are not meeting our expectations, and focus rather on trying to find the things that speak to us spiritually. I believe that there are always forces that will try to block God's good messages to us, and our attitude can contribute to that interruption of what God wants us to receive. It is when we come without anticipating, allowing ourselves to be open to whatever God has to offer, that we often will find ourselves

surprised by what we are given. Each week, God will give to us that which will bless and equip us for the week ahead. But that can only happen if we set aside our agendas and look for what God is pouring into our lives.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey