

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 3/18/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

Christian love is born out of true compassion. Compassion is a sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings and misfortunes of others. Jesus had tremendous compassion for us and that is why He gave Himself for our sin, that we might be freed from the consequences—sufferings and misfortunes—death—that were and are the consequences of our sin. Certainly, we cannot be Jesus, but we can become more Christlike if we strive to show unconditionally love to one another. And if we are to develop a real love for one another, it must begin with greater sensitivity and compassion each other. This will come the more we put ourselves in the shoes of another and seek to see things from their perspective.

The pandemic had forced all of us to suffer, though we might not think of it that way. We have had to endure inconvenience and change in order to keep ourselves and each other safe. Among these changes, probably the biggest ones have been in worship. A blended or merged service has meant adjustments to what we formerly were accustomed. Both those who prefer a more traditional or historic and those who prefer a more modern or contemporary style of worship have had to sacrifice so that others might also have some of what they desire. Initially, when there were concerns about physical communication of the coronavirus, we chose not print bulletins, using the projection slides commonly used in the modern worship service. This has the additional benefit of saving the church considerable costs on printing and reduced the amount of paper we throw away each week. We also have not passed the offering plate in the pews and communion at the altar railing was suspended for the aforementioned reason. The order of service we currently use and my wearing the robe each week is more in keeping with the historic worship style. Weekly we alternate our music offerings with three of one type and two of the other, and then reverse that the following week, and singing by the congregation has been discouraged as well. And, of course, all in worship have been asked to wear masks. Some of these will change very soon, but the point is that all of us have had to make adjustments and sacrifices in worship.

It's easy for each of us to be focused solely on what we've had to give up. That may mean that we do not give much thought to what others have had to forfeit. If we wish to develop a more loving attitude toward one another, we would do well to consider the adjustments others have had to make. When we are enjoying or feeling nurtured by something in worship, take a moment to ask if this is happening at someone else's expense. Even go so far as to ask who specifically is sacrificing so that we can receive what we hope for. And when something is not what we enjoy or appreciate, think about who it is that is being blessed by this, and then give thanks that they are being encouraged in their faith.

Remember that the adjustments we've made in worship have been done with the safety and needs of the entire community in mind. We are not two congregations meeting in the same place. We are one congregation with preferences for two different styles of worship. While it has been necessary for us to merge these two styles, we have been fortunate that we can do so

for the benefit of many. When you come to worship, look around at the others who are there and then say a prayer of gratitude for all who have come. You might also add your gratitude for what they may be giving up in worship for others. And then give thanks that you are able to come and worship in a community that cares for the many and not just the few. Give thanks that we are able to worship with diversity in order to meet our own needs and the needs of others. Finally, it is fine and good to ask for the day to come quickly when we can expand our worship so that it is more fully what each person wishes for.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey