

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 4/11/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, April 12 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, give thanks to God for the gift of Jesus Christ, especially as we witness His passion this week. Praise God for the great love shown in Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross. Rejoice in the good news that death is no longer the final word for us and that, through faith in Jesus, we have a restored relationship with our loving God.*

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In two months, I will have been pastor of St. Andrew Lutheran for three years. I couldn't help but be struck to note that this past Sunday was my first service in the worship center on Palm Sunday. It was at the beginning of Lent my first year here that we had to suspend indoor worship and move outside, so I had never seen the beautiful arch of palms and the procession of people through the arch and then down the side aisles to take their places for the rest of the service. It was truly moving for me to stand in front and watch this marvelous "entry in to Jerusalem."

Because I started at St. Andrew on Holy Trinity Sunday, the first Sunday after the Pentecost, this will also be my first Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost in the worship center here. The same is true for our music team of Randy Guiaya and Matthew Sivertson. Though we regularly have conversations with members of St. Andrew about worship, this also means that we will do somethings differently than many in the congregation might be used to seeing or hearing. But that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Later yesterday afternoon, I was reflecting on the fact, even though it was just a few months ago that we moved back into the worship center, we have continued to worship (except for a couple of Sundays) ever since the pandemic began. Worshiping in the parking lot was certainly different. Blending our worship styles into one service has also been dissimilar to what folks were used to before. But we have worshiped regularly. Each week, we have gathered to praised God for God's many blessings and to receive what God has to offer us to prepare us for the week ahead.

The history of Christianity has been a history of change and innovation. Unless you are also worshiping in a congregation that speaks Greek or Latin (and I don't know of any Lutheran churches that do that other than Latin terms like "Kyrie" or "Sanctus"), you are worshiping in a language that is different from what was originally followed. Unless you prefer repetitive chanting without accompaniment, you are worshiping in a much newer style of praise. (Organs for the most part, were not placed in churches until the 1700's and when that happened, they were met with great suspicion and anger. Some prominent Reformation leaders even viewed the organs as "worldly" and "of the devil.") Many who like the more historic worship style may not even realize that this worship medium has undergone many changes over time, and these were not always well-received when first introduced.

It's fine to have our preferences for music and worship style, usually based on individual years of worship experience. But we have to be careful not to limit God or miss out on the meaningful ways that God can and does speak to us. Variations in worship can be blessing if we allow ourselves to be open to what God is doing. I'm not saying that our worship this year will be all that different from what we may have known from the past (though it will be blended). But I encourage you to come ready to receive what God brings and to rejoice in it, whether it is old and familiar or new and diverse.

God has never been limited by our expectations or preferences. We should not anticipate that God will be so now or ever.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey