

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 2/6/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, February 7 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for the leadership of our congregation. Thank GOD for their commitment to our church, its members, and its mission in our community and world. Ask that the HOLY SPIRIT continue to guide them as they seek to lead us to the places that GOD would have us go.*

Recently, I encouraged our leadership to begin looking at our congregation in a different way. Since we returned to more normal ways of being church, I think there has been a general expectation that soon things will be just like they were before the pandemic. It's clear to me that this is not going to be the case. We are not the same congregation. Most of the faces are still the same, but it's not all the same faces. Some have drifted away. Some have intentionally gone away. We simply are not who we used to be.

But, again, our expectation seems to have been that the pre-pandemic days will return. We refer to our worship service as a "blended" service—a temporary combining of our two separate and different services. We've functioned in anticipation of being able to do things the way we did before. Clearly, now, that isn't going to happen.

I believe it's time to let go of the past. It's time we stopped seeing ourselves as who we used to be and start recognizing who we are now. We are still a vibrant congregation committed to praising and serving our LORD, just as we were before. But we are not the congregation we were before. It is time for us to start asking, "Who are we now?" and "Who do we hope to be in the future?" More importantly, we need to be asking, "Who does GOD want us to be in this time and this place?"

The Lutheran Church has always been a reforming church. That's where the term "Reformation" came. We are constantly looking at ourselves in light of GOD'S will and asking, "What do we need to do better, differently, or in new ways?" Following the pandemic, it is time again for us to be "reforming." That doesn't mean that we completely abandon who we've been. Rather we look to take from our past, evaluate it in terms of who we are now, and look to see what we might become.

You may already have noticed some new things that we are doing. We are regularly launching new programs or discovering new ways to serve. We are tailoring how we do things based on the resources we have now, including people. We are looking at what are the needs of our current congregation as we look toward the future. And you will likely see more modifications in how we function as a church. If that makes you uncomfortable, remember that we do these things always seeking to be faithful to GOD'S calling. GOD invites us to grow and change as individuals who love GOD. And GOD calls us to do the same as a congregation as well. We, the faithful, continue to strive to be GOD'S people in an ever-changing world. And we do so knowing that we have a faithful GOD who leads us and goes with us into that future to guide us and to bless us in new and exciting ways.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey