

June 22, 2021

Friends in Christ---

The cantankerous *Teacher* in Ecclesiastes says, "Better is the end of a thing than its beginning; the patient in spirit are better than the proud in spirit." (7:8)

For over a year, we've been vigilant and cautious. As a consequence, we near the end of a thing. We near the place where we can say with the Teacher, "Better is the end than the beginning." We are not at the end, but it appears that the end draws nearer.

Based on new guidelines from the CDC and our denomination, some pandemic practices are nearing their end. Specific details will be presented to the congregation by Church Council President Marjorie Maenpaa. Church Council has initiated a gradual approach that moves us in the direction of pre-pandemic worship patterns. While it may seem like we should move quickly forward, Church Council believes a gradual approach to be best. How come? Because, candidly, we JOY members have many and varied comfort levels.

We each have our own particular comfort level because none of us has experienced a pandemic. We're each experiencing a trauma, processing it at different rates, through different means. To be "patient in spirit," is our best tact. As we move forward gradually, we are not throwing caution to the wind, nor are we acting out of wild abandon. JOY will remain prudent and responsible, making faithful, solid decisions together.

To this end, know that singing will be reintroduced as part of Sunday morning worship. We will start gradually with two hymns at first, beginning July 4th. The goal is that we transition 100% back to where we were pre-pandemic in terms of both hymns and liturgical music.

Further, know that receiving Holy Communion in both kinds will be reintroduced as part of Sunday morning worship. We will start gradually with intinction and individual cup, beginning July 4th. Again, the goal is that we transition 100% back to where we were pre-pandemic in terms of reception and celebration modes.

Each Sunday, 10am worship will be live streamed. For a season, 11am-11:30am drive-thru communion will remain available. For a season, youtube abbreviated worship will be provided. In July, Pilgrim Journey Rockin' Praise services will return to the sanctuary.

The pandemic is still with us. This is our reality. Each must do as seems best for self and for neighbor. This pandemic has been, and remains, hard on us. When it comes to the pandemic, we can truly say, "Better is the end of a thing than its beginning!"

Stay well. Continue to make wise choices. Thanks for being so very faithful.

God bless and keep you,

JDB+