

October 22, 2021

Friends in Christ---

Greetings in the name of Jesus.

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

We again find ourselves in the place of, "Better is the end than the beginning." We are not quite at the end, yet it again appears that the end draws nearer.

Based on recommendations from the Reopening Task Force and the Worship & Music Committee, supported by data from the CDC and other providers, Church Council has voted to return us to near pandemic worship and fellowship patterns. Of course, this decision will be met with mixed reviews in our congregation. Still, with Brevard County having a 65% vaccination rate, and downward trending Covid numbers, it seems faithful to relax some of our pandemic practices. This relaxation of measures will be reviewed again in 30 days by Church Council. Specific details will be presented to the congregation by Church Council President Marjorie Maenpaa in a temple talk on 10/24 and in her report that is found in our November newsletter.

What is changing? Generally speaking: a) In terms of worship, we will be singing more liturgical portions of the service, and by November 7th, we will be singing 3-4 hymns rather than 2 hymns; and b) In terms of fellowship, look to see the return of food items in coming Sundays. Mask use will become optional.

While we are making these faithful steps with lots of enthusiasm, we are mindful of our reality---the pandemic is still with us. This is our reality. Each person must do as seems best for self and for neighbor. This pandemic remains hard on us.

Let's continue to make wise choices, to sanitize, to use hand sanitizer, to not create human traffic jams in the narthex, to know that we are not all of one mind on how to manage the pandemic. In short, let's take care to look to needs of our neighbor above our own personal preferences and individual practices. Remember what the *Teacher* says, "the patient in spirit are better than the proud in spirit," maybe especially when it feels like we near an end.

When it comes to the pandemic, again we say, "Better is the end of a thing than its beginning!"

Stay well. Stay safe and sound. Thanks for being so very faithful.

God bless and keep you,
JDB+