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Bethlehem Star



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The Other Side

As we keep being reminded in the news, the Covid pandemic is not over yet. But it is definitely all feeling much better than it did a few months ago. I received my second shot over two weeks ago and it does feel remarkably freeing. I didn't feel fabulous for a couple days, but it definitely feels worth it. I have resumed home visits, and after a year of contact only by phone and mail with some of our older members, that feels so good.

Nearly all of us at Bethlehem have been vaccinated, or will be by mid-May. Between that and lower case numbers in our area, we'll plan to stop requiring masks starting May 9. I suspect there will be some who will still be nervous to come without a mask. Anyone in that boat should wear it as long as they feel the need. As has been true all along, this decision is based on as up-to-date science as I can find. It's much less restrictive than recommendations in some areas. At this point it's less restrictive than the CDC guidelines, but conditions vary in different local areas and I still believe this is safe.

Mostly at this point, I have questions about what things will be like from here.

In some ways, it will feel like a return to normal. But as a popular meme says, it is probably worth thinking about what parts of "normal" we should return to and what we should jettison. And what parts of the pandemic experience should we hang on to?

And maybe we shouldn't rush to force "normal."

There has been a lot of pain, grief, and anger over the 14 months in our nation and communities. I have to confess that it will take me some time to let go of the anger I've felt because of the politicization of Covid and the impact that has had on me personally as one of the leaders tasked with making decisions for the congregation's activity.

Perhaps others have anger for the same reason, and still others are angry for different reasons. But it is what it is...the life of faith is about living in the reality that is instead of the one we want. Forgiveness and healing will gradually come. How can we as a congregation facilitate that process of healing? I don't exactly know at this point. But it is something I will be praying about over the next several weeks.

Our online presence and how it should evolve is another question. It truly is one of the gifts of the pandemic that we've been forced to grow in that area. Finding a way to sustain that will be important to our ministry, not just to those who show up to the church building, but also those who don't.

We will have to grapple with these and other questions as we move back into whatever normal will be now. My prayer is that God grants us the courage to ask the questions, understand what others are feeling as we move forward, and do what we need to to heal.

Peace, *Pastor Kris*

Online Worship

We are continuing with Zoom worship for the time being. That is being livestreamed to YouTube Live—that happens with a click of a button on Zoom. I think rather than trying to do Facebook Live, I'll just plan to share the YouTube link on the church Facebook pages, and one of the services on mine. Facebook is trickier to stream to from Zoom, but it probably gets the best reach.

Several members have expressed appreciation that we've continued with Zoom. I have a lot to learn about being a hybrid church, but I'm working on it.

I will need help on Sunday mornings. I've had one volunteer but it would be nice to have more so one person didn't always have to do it. I can't lead worship in an effective way in person and online and also manage the technology. I don't want to scare anyone off, but here's a sort of tech script for what I'm trying to remember to do now:

- Plug Blue Yeti mic into USB port on laptop – this will be on a stand by the baptismal font
- Plug camera into another USB port – check position to make sure camera points to where pastor is most of the service
- Open Zoom – make sure it's set on speaker view
- Click YouTube Live button at beginning of service
- Move camera to focus on lector, or keep pastor in view if there's movement
- Greet Online worshippers - this is my responsibility but easy to forget. It would be nice for tech volunteer to greet folks in the chat
- If possible, move camera to let online worshippers see congregation for exchange of peace – invite to unmute
- Remember to do Communion instructions for online worshippers—again my responsibility but easy to forget
- After dismissal, end meeting. I really can't smoothly do this and when we don't, everything that goes on after worship ends up on YouTube

Training—None of these are terribly difficult. If you've been using Zoom for worship, you won't have any trouble learning this. I am planning to offer a little training session after worship on **May 16**. Then we'll make up some sort of rotation so nobody has to do it all the time.

Calendar

May 2	10:30 am—worship with Holy Communion. In person and on Zoom and YouTube Live
May 9	10:30am—Worship in person and on Zoom and YouTube
May 16	10:30 am—Worship with Communion—in person and on Zoom and YouTube 11:30—Tech training
May 23	10:30 am—Worship in person and on Zoom and on YouTube
May 30	10:30 am—Worship in person, Zoom, YouTube

Share your experience

I have my vacation Sundays scheduled. I'm hoping to get people from the congregation to share some of your experience from this year...how it impacted your faith, how your faith helped, what you learned about yourself or the world, what you see for the church coming out of this year...things like that. It wouldn't have to be more than a few minutes. We can always have more than one person share in a service. I'll have a sign-up at church and on sign-up Genius starting the week after Easter.

Here are the dates I know:

May 23—Virg will share.

July 18

August 29

October 24

Please make every effort to attend, either in person or on line, when one of your brothers and sisters share. We all have something to share about our faith, especially over this last 14 months. Hearing those stories can help us all grow. And now that we're on YouTube, I plan to listen as well.

May Helpers

Lector—open

Tech—Mike; Pastor Kris

Cleaners—Weeks 1/2—Rhonda Madsen

Weeks 3/4—Randy Giebenrath

Usher—Peter and Gareth Mills

Altar—Jerri Daugherty

Communion Assistant—open. The first Sunday, we will continue with the Covid style communion. The third Sunday, we will go back to our normal way of doing it. I'll be in touch regarding communion assistants.

We'll have a sign up sheet for lectors and communion assistants at worship.