

PASTOR'S REFLECTION

by Rev. Glenn A. Brumbaugh



Dear Church Family,

It certainly has been a different year for our congregation. This time last year, we were decorating our sanctuary and beginning to observe this sacred time of anticipation.

Who would have guessed our life together would change so dramatically a few months later. We have all had to adjust to a new “normal,” as individuals, and as a community of faith.

Yet now we approach another season of Advent. That season of waiting, of seeking the promise that the arrival of the Christ-child brings. In many ways, we too, are living in a time of great anticipation and waiting: waiting for the much needed vaccine to our current pandemic; waiting for the rates of

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infections to go back down; waiting for the restrictions to be eased and a return to “normal.” Many of us yearn to gather again in our sanctuary and share in worship and fellowship together again, especially as we enter into the holiday season. The leadership of our church has been working to prepare for when that day comes, however, we will not risk exposing our church family to unnecessary risk. While we had hoped to maybe resume in-person worship for Advent, the recent surge in infections does not make that a wise choice.

But as with any time of testing and trial, there are lessons to be gleaned from those trying periods in our lives. Often we gain an appreciation for what is truly important to us, and we seek a renewed focus on what really matters. As a community of faith, the events and restrictions of the past year have also led us to discern what really matters to us and has forced us to be more creative and innovative in our approach to worship

and community. It is not the physical building that is as important as the connections and fellowship to the people who have gathered there. Worship can look very different and still have meaning, and be experienced in places other than the church sanctuary. Fellowship can still take place without coffee and cookies, and in the comfort and safety of our living rooms. And we can still find ways to be the body of Christ in our community, finding a safe way to provide Thanksgiving meals for 69 local families (300 people) in need.

As we begin our observance of Advent this Sunday, we can seek hope, not only in the promise of the Messiah, but also in recognition that we still are the church and are so much more than a building on a hill. Even though we are not able to meet in person, we are finding ways to stay connected and worship together. During Advent, we will have different members participate in leading worship safely from home, and we still have

hope that we will be able and find a way to safely gather for Christmas Eve.

It is my sincere wish that you are finding hope in not only the promise that this season brings, but that you also are truly discerning what is really of value in your own lives, and seeking to continue to fellowship with your church family, whether in the online opportunities provided by the church, or through other means. God is always with us and is always ready to guide us through the trials we face in our lives, though what emerges on other side is often not the same as what we began with. Likewise, I hope and pray that our congregation will emerge from this time with a new appreciation and mission for what the church is meant to be, and can be the shining light on the hill we are called to.

In the promise and peace of Christ,

Pastor Glenn