

Pastor Letter 4/14/21

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Ask anyone who has had cataract surgery what it was like to see before and after and you will likely hear that before it was very cloudy and blurry, then after it was much clearer. I recently read a story about Alexander Schmemmann, the late priest who led a reform movement in Russian Orthodoxy, who tells of a time when he was traveling on the subway in Paris, France, with his fiancée. At one stop, an old and ugly woman, dressed in the uniform of the Salvation Army, got on and found a seat nearby. The two lovers whispered to each other in Russian about how repulsive she looked. A few stops later the woman stood to exit. As she passed them, she said in perfect Russian, "I wasn't always ugly." That woman was an angel of God, Schmemmann used to tell his students. She opened his eyes, searing his vision in a way he would never forget. Schmemmann's experience has something to teach us about keeping our eyes clear. Just like cataracts, without intervention, will cause blurred vision our spiritual vision will become blurry if we don't actively care for it. When we keep our eyes clear of cloudiness by spending regular time with God we will begin to see where God is at work in our lives and in the world. We can see those who Jesus **saw** that the world wrote off.

When we spend time with God in worship, we are taking time to clear any cloudiness in our eyes. As was said in past letters, the session is diligently, always evaluating the way forward in these clouded times. More and more congregants have been vaccinated and would like to return to in person worship. As such, this week the decision was made to have our first step in moving forward by allowing an increase in the capacity of the sanctuary. The hope is that, over time, this can increase again until the way be clear to have the full capacity available. However, we will continue to have a hybrid model of worship so those who want to remain worshipping from home can. We will try to offer some more outdoor services for those who find this spiritually helpful to see one another, even if it is at a distance, in another car. As we continue this Easter season sermon series on, what we are called to, and discerning the way forward, may we seek time with God to keep our eyes cleared of cloudiness so we can see how Jesus sees.

In His Peace,

Pastor Nicki

YouTube and Facebook live and video recordings <https://www.espresbyterian.com/worship/> or <https://www.youtube.com/user/ESPresbyterian> Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/espresbyterian/>

*If you are worshipping from home I would encourage you to use the YouTube platform for optimal streaming quality. Additionally, feel free to sign on early no need to wait right until 10am anymore. *

Additionally, bulletins and an online hymnal have been put on the website and can be found at <https://www.espresbyterian.com/worship/sunday-bulletin/>

Ways to give- mail or drop of check/cash through no contact mail slot in office window. Drop off envelope in offering plates before or after worship services. Donate on our website by going to the home page at <https://www.espresbyterian.com/> and clicking on the Donate button in the upper right corner. Designate where you would like the money to go by using the note section.