

Pastor Letter 4/28/21

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Safe spaces—a term that was thrown around a lot back when I was in seminary. The idea of a safe space is where a person feels free to share their thoughts without fear of being judged, criticized, discriminated against, harassed or any other emotional or physical harm. When I think of church gatherings, I believe this is the kind of space it should be. If we, as disciples of Jesus, are to be like Him, then all our gatherings must be a safe space. Unfortunately, often it is not. We may think it is, but if we are not careful, our words and actions can cause others to refrain from sharing their experiences be it spiritual, emotional or physical. As a leader, I can tell you it's not easy to create safe spaces. Here are some ways to create a safe space environment that the church is supposed to be. Be inclusive, give others a chance to speak, be vulnerable and open to building emotional connections, even with those we might disagree with. Remember that your actions (body language, tone etc.) can speak louder than words, don't assume all people in attendance will agree with you or are at the same place in their spiritual, emotional or physical journey as you. It's important, as a church, to have every gathering feel it is a safe space, but the only way that happens is when all attending try to enact in the aforementioned ways.

Worship is one of those gatherings that we should strive to feel like it is a safe space. This Sunday, we continue in our phase 2 hybrid worship, which means we are continuing to allow an increased number of congregants in the sanctuary, while at the same time still offering overflow opportunities as well as joining remotely. Additionally, we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper. I would invite you to do as we have been doing and bring along your communion elements. To create a safe space though, we do have individually packaged communion elements for guests or those, who are like me, and easily forget. Let us come together creating this week's safe space to worship as we learn about being called to peace, a call that helps us create safe spaces.

In His Peace,

Pastor Nicki

*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. *

YouTube: live stream and recording can be found at <https://www.espresbyterian.com/worship/> or <https://www.youtube.com/user/ESPresbyterian>

Facebook: click on the link below near the time the service begins at 10:00am to watch the live stream <https://www.facebook.com/espresbyterian/>

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.