

Pastor Letter 5/26/21

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

My husband was attending a zoom meeting for work in which they were discussing the problem of increasing reports of loneliness. This being mental health awareness month meant this was the third time I was hearing about this topic. In one article I was reading, it noted that loneliness is as much of a health risk as obesity. A question often posed is how the church can be relevant today. One way is to address loneliness by recalling Jesus' words relating to friendship. He says "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants...but I have called you friends..." Friendship is the key to combatting loneliness and it is something the people who make up the church can offer this increasingly lonely world. We all seek that friend who will listen with empathy and help us become our truest selves. We, the church, can build friendships where there is not judgement, but only love willing enough to lay down our life for the other. As we continue moving forward as a church living into our mission to be the hands of God, may we seek to find someone who needs a friend and be that Christ-like friend for them.

Friendships also develop through spending time together. One way Christ's disciples learned to strengthen themselves, and prepare their hearts to be ready for building new friendships, is to worship our amazing Lord together. This Sunday, we return to in-person hybrid worship phase 3 of our reopening. This means that we continue to remain socially distanced, but the capacity of the sanctuary will continue to increase so that those who feel comfortable, and want to be in the sanctuary, can be. To do this, though, means individuals and families will be seated by an usher to ensure we can be distanced and get the most people in the sanctuary. Masks are still required at this time. Additionally, we will continue with the abbreviated services. The session will be meeting again to finalize the next phase in the opening as more and more begin to open and guidance becomes clearer. Let us recall Jesus words about friendship as we continue this phased re-opening to ensure we are good friends to one another and to those who may find themselves battling loneliness.

In His Peace,

Pastor Nicki

\*If you are worshiping 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.