Worship in these times…

At the recommendation of the Worship and Music Ministry, the vestry has decided to continue offering Sunday morning worship via ZOOM through June. While many of us may have friends whose churches are re-opening earlier, and while some of us may feel eager to return to in-person worship at St. Brendan's before July, there are a number of reasons why the decision has been made to wait, and we wanted to share these reasons with you. It's not been an easy decision to make, but we feel it's the right one for the St. Brendan community at this time. Here is our thinking and the plan thus far (always a work in progress).

Bishop Brown has asked that before parishes return to any kind of in-person worship, every detail around issues of safety be well-thought out and addressed. This means worship spaces must be "measured and marked" for seating to insure there are six feet between individuals or family units. Protocols must be established concerning face masks, singing, the Eucharist, coffee hour, passing the offering basket, welcoming guests, sanitizing/cleaning etc. Ironing out all of these details will require members of the Worship and Music, Property, and Hospitality ministries to work together on developing a comprehensive plan. And this will take some time to develop and implement in order for worship to be the gift we all long to for it to be in these times.

It has also become clear to many of us over our ten or so weeks of Zooming worship that this internet opportunity to gather for Morning Prayer has offered unexpected blessings, allowing us to see one another's faces, to hear one another's prayer petitions, to listen to one another's concerns and joys. So we want to figure out how we can keep the blessings of our on-line worship services going, even as we phase back into in-person worship. This will entail some investigation into technologies that will allow us to live-stream worship from St. Brendan's so those who choose to stay home (or who need to stay home for safety's sake) can still feel part of the worshiping community. We will be looking into this as well.

(And, just so you know, we are also considering what outdoor worship might look like in terms of safety protocols, music, and black flies. There is more to think about than we ever imagined!).

Re-opening St. Brendan for in-person worship is our ultimate goal of course. But we will do so with care and caution, in conversation with Bishop Brown, the Diocesan office, and other brothers and sisters in Christ. While our hope is to be "back together" (in new ways) in early July, we will listen to our church leaders, as well as to Governor Mills, Dr. Shah, and others who have expertise and knowledge in the area of public health. And we will make our decisions in keeping with their wisdom.

No matter where we are as we gather for worship (whether over Zoom or eventually, at St. Brendan's), we give thanks for the love which makes us one in the body of Christ, and we live in hope for the day when we can once again sing together and receive the living presence of our risen Lord in the breaking of the bread.

Pastor Elaine Hewes

May 20, 2020