

## **2020-01-10 Refresh and ReNEWS**

Dear Church,

Happy New Year! It is hard to believe, but another year has come and gone. I am guessing that most of us are relieved that 2020 is in the books. Between the pandemic, Covid restrictions and deaths, elections, racial unrest, and (fill in the blank!) it was an exceptionally difficult year, to say the least. And that is all on top of the personal family, job, school, and relational challenges of a “normal” year.

My 2020 was no exception. I was hospitalized 4 times, including an emergency open heart surgery and a surgery to repair my arm (and, unfortunately, a second arm surgery tomorrow). In addition, my wife unexpectedly lost her grandma Ginnie and her uncle Steve. It has been a tough and unusually hard year for our family, too.

We - our nation, our congregation, and ourselves - are in desperate need of a restart.

If I may, one way to push the restart button is to practice the idea of **“radical acceptance.”** Therapists use this technique with clients to help process trauma and loss, but it is a technique from which we can all benefit. Used intentionally, **radical acceptance** acknowledges and processes past grievances with honesty and wisdom, seeking a healthy way to integrate it into our lives and move forward.

Radical acceptance does not mean that we magically condone, deny, or forget our past. It does not mean that we process and relabel suffering as having been a good thing. The God that we believe in, the God of love, forgiveness and renewal doesn't want us to suffer, and grieves with us when we do. Radical acceptance DOES mean accepting that we can't change the past, but/and that through Christ we can change our attitudes and beliefs about it.

Easier said than done, you might say, and you are right. It is not easy to make sense of bad things, especially when they involve the loss of health, employment, security and normalcy. This is true on a corporate level as well. You, the congregation of St. Paul Lutheran Church has done a lot to work through the

conflicts of your past. It is only because you have gone through this process that you're now able to move forward; it is this radical acceptance that allow you to move into the present and future ministries of your church.

As we begin this new year may we pray for a path forward. May we come to accept and move on from the challenges of the past. Through prayer, conversation, and contemplation - and through the community of the Body of Christ at St. Paul - may we reenter our hopes and expectations having been renewed by God's grace.

Blessings, always,  
Pastor Christoph