

A PASTORAL EPISTLE TO THE PEOPLE OF ST. JOHN'S

From: Dennis Foust, Senior Minister

To: The Saints Scattered throughout Metro Charlotte Who Gather at 300 Hawthorne Lane

December 31, 2020



AS WE BEGIN A NEW YEAR TOGETHER

Well, as we turn our calendars to put 2020 in our rearview mirror, we can look through the windshield into 2021. The calendar tells us this will be our 99th year as a local church and our 11th year of mutual ministry as people and pastor. After this pandemic year, I offer to you a brief review and offer a few requests as we begin a New Year.

2020: First, **thank you!!!** I am extremely grateful for your consistent fidelity throughout 2020. Every person in a role of church leadership has served and is serving with diligence by sharing insight, knowledge, experience, vision and resources to keep the church moving forward. Members have acted on behalf of our church's health and vitality. I am so grateful to God for the blessing of serving you as your Senior Minister and serving alongside this fine church staff. I look forward to the day when we can gather again in 2021.

Although we cannot name everything **we learned and confirmed** last year, let me name a few. We **learned** that we enjoy being together because separation from one another was – and is – one of the most unlikable features of this pandemic. We learned how to use Zoom for meetings and how to use video technology in better ways (and are exploring how we can harness these new skills to expand future ministries). We also learned how to use 'drive-throughs' in our parking lot to celebrate graduates & deacons and pick-up literature & Christmas Eve worship kits. We **confirmed** that we love one another, we are resolute in our service of our community and world, we are faithful stewards, we are committed to be a covenant people, and we are open to change. Our love for one another was evidenced in many ways including how we grieved the loss of members who passed on ahead of us into the land of God's rest and then grieved that we could not celebrate their lives according to our traditions. We expressed compassion for one another in the midst of heartache, burden and struggle. We confirmed that we know how to be 'church' to one another and to extend God's love to those within our sphere of impact..

So, where do we go from here?

2021: If you are like me, you cannot remember being so ready for a New Year to begin. The slow roll-out of the vaccines will improve. The vaccines' success will extend through winter and spring into early summer. We should be able to plan some more outdoor gatherings in the spring. I will request another Zoom-meeting of our COVID-19 Task Force in January so we can get up-to-date information to help us make plans for the months ahead. For now, I ask you to join me in the following commitments and initiatives:

- **LET'S RENEW OURSELVES TO OUR ONE ANOTHERING 'WE ARE 1' EFFORT:**

Let's embrace 202**1** to refocus our efforts of using the **1:00** hour each day (as possible) to invest in our church's unity and care. Make a call, send an email, text, mail a note, or offer a prayer.

- **STAY IN TOUCH THROUGH DIGITAL PAGES, FAMILY NEWS & ONLINE MEETINGS:**

Although there is a great deal of information to track these days, prioritize St. John's news. It is very important for us to keep up with what is going on, what is being emphasized and our prayer list.

- **BE CONSISTENT IN ONLINE WORSHIP:** Our staff and church members are expressing creativity. We are trying to offer services that are diverse and relevant in less than 40 minutes. I know screen time is plentiful. But, please prioritize our St. John's online worship expressions and invite others to check out St. John's online.

Beloved, I wish you a Happy New Year! Sometime in January or early February, I will send out another 'epistle' to offer another look through the windshield into this transitional year. See you soon on Zoom or YouTube!

Shalom,
Dennis