

“For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” Romans 8:24-25 (NRSV)

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We wish you greetings in this ongoing pandemic! Back in the middle of March, when the nation began its shutdown due to the spread of COVID-19, we were hopeful that we could regather by Easter. It did not take long to realize that we were in this for a longer haul than we could have ever imagined! It also did not take long to realize that, while the building was closed, Bethesda has never shut down. We continue to worship, pray, serve, and advocate justice for the oppressed. The nature of how we do these may have changed, but this church is anything but closed!

We want to thank you for everything you do to proclaim the hope we have in Christ Jesus through word and deed. We know that a lingering question remains, however, as we live-stream worship every Sunday and in many ways have moved our other opportunities online. When do we think we will return to in-person worship and resume as normal as we can? The short answer is, not quite yet.

Ok, now the longer answer. While we have the Constitutional right to gather, according to guidelines set out by the CDC and guidance from the ELCA, COVID-19 cases in our area need to steadily decline over several weeks, enough testing needs to be available, our local healthcare system needs adequate personal protective equipment and capacity, and contact tracing needs to be sufficient enough to limit the spread before we can regather more safely in person for worship. Right now, the Pastors and the Council feel it is best to wait until these conditions are more favorable to move us in a direction that is safe and responsible for all of our members. It has been reassuring to hear from many of you, as well, that you agree that now is too early. We will keep you updated as a time draws nearer to such a possibility, but this will not stop us from moving forward and trying new things!



We know you can't get out much yet this summer, so why not have a Backyard Bible Campout on us? Just drive-thru the church from noon-1pm or 5-6pm on Monday, June 22nd, and we'll hand you a bag complete with all the fixin's for S'mores, stickers, a glowstick, and some fun activities to learn about God!





We are looking forward to our first ever drive-in worship service and semi-annual meeting!

- Drive-in Worship and Semi-Annual Meeting, Wednesday June 24th @ 6:30pm
- Enter through the SE entrance and you will be guided to your parking spot
- Bring your own communion elements (wine/grape juice and bread)
 - OR - Sealed, self-serve communion packs available on your way in
- Listen through your FM radio! Station will be shared that night.
- Walk-ups discouraged for safety.
- You can drive up for materials early on Monday, June 22nd; noon-1pm and 5-6pm
- Pastor chats, Treasurer reports, and SO. MUCH. MORE!

As we work to ensure a fun and successful semi-annual meeting with worship in our cars, don't forget that we can connect with one-another each week for Sunday morning worship through Facebook Live. Just go to www.facebook.com/BethesdaAmes/live around 9:30 each Sunday morning!



Not able to connect online? Contact the church office and ask for a DVD with a video of the past Sunday's service.



Also, when we're not worshipping in our cars, be sure to take advantage of our Living Water Wednesday Devotional through Zoom. The link is emailed each week. Not receiving the email? Call the church office, 232-6256, and let Lynn know.

Remember, we are in this together. God is with us and working through us to proclaim the good news of God's grace, mercy, and peace through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Through Christ we have our hope. We cannot see the future, how long this pandemic will continue to last or the unrest in our society, but we know that through it all God has the future end in God's perfect vision, the full realization of God's eternal love in our lives. We work toward that future, because that's where God is guiding us.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Bryan Simmons

Pastor Ryan Arnold

Intern Pastor Sonja Gerstenberger