

President's Note for July 2020

So, July, summer and Independence Day are upon us. It has been an odd year. A year that seemed to begin rather uneventfully that morphed into a year of disease, suffering, animosity, angst, grief, prayer and hope. We never know with any degree of certainty what the day or days ahead will bring. We do know that God created a beautiful, magnificent, glorious world and that he also created us. We also know that God loves us and through his Son gave us some rather specific guidance, commandments on how to live our lives: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39 NRSV Yes, I've quoted this passage in the past, but I believe the message to be timely and important enough to bear repeating. Our Lord himself says all of the law and the prophets hang on these commandments. In a year smitten by pandemic, strife, unemployment, financial market swings, political rancor, racial tension, prejudice, intolerance, anger and fear perhaps we need to return to scripture and remind ourselves who we are, who created us and why we are here. I'm reminded again of the words of St. Augustine that Pastor Townsend often quotes that state, "God loves each one of us as if there were only one of us." Writer, poet, philosopher Maya Angelou put it this way, "I believe that each of us comes from the creator trailing wisps of glory." Let's work to recognize and foster those radiant wisps in our simultaneously broken, fallen, yet noble and ascendant world.

We move forward with our YouTube channel Sunday worship. June saw many businesses and some houses of worship reopen as we moved into Stage Three of COVID-19 guidelines. But, as I write this column, numbers for those afflicted with the Corona virus are showing a disheartening resurgence, particularly here in Sacramento County. So, with reluctance and an abundance of caution we are delaying plans for returning to physical worship on Sundays. As I say, the online YouTube channel worship in place video format will continue, check out our website at stpaulselcasac.org, and yes, we hear you that the sound quality could use improvement and we've purchased a new external microphone that receives good reviews that we hope will improve the audio....coming soon! Church of the Cross and Atonement are continuing with their phone and video worship and that worship format continues to be an option, particularly for those with phones, but without internet access. Check out the Church of the Cross website under the heading Worship for how to access the new Zoom video option. For phone access the new

phone number is (669) 900-9128. After calling enter 875-9898-7747 to join the worship service.

Continue to pray for our nation, our world, fellow believers and those on our prayer list. A number of our friends, members and family are going through a particularly hard time right now, some struggle with their health, some are alone and feel isolated, some are overburdened and working overtime. So, let's look out for one another as best we can, if in no other way at least with a prayer and kind word. Also, remember the financial needs of the church go on even when we are not gathering regularly physically. Please continue to make a monetary contribution as able. Thanks to all who continue to give as they can. Finally, continue to love, laugh, give thanks and dream. Prophets, poets, lyricists and great writers of prose all speak of dreams. Joseph, Jeremiah, Daniel and St. Peter all had dreams. Sometimes dreams can more accurately be called visions, placed in our mind by God directly or through His angels. In Judea in the book of Acts Peter speaks of the last days and the prophet Joel saying, "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." Acts 2:17 NRSV My little dream for now is that soon we will be able to return safely to physically gathering in our beloved sanctuary where together we can pray, worship, give thanks and share in Word and Sacrament. Even as we celebrate our nation's independence and our own personal independence, let's not forget that we are also interdependent for many things and that ultimately we are ever dependent upon our Lord and maker, the giver of all good gifts. Thanks be to God for his grace and mercy and all of the innumerable gifts he provides, particularly life, health, freedom, forgiveness and hope; hope for this world and hope and faith for the world to come. Amen.

Blessings,

Chuck Prewett

Council President

PS: After submitting this article for print our Sierra Pacific Synod Bishop's office has issued a recommendation encouraging congregations to not return to physical worship until at least July 31st with a likelihood this recommendation soon will be extended until September. In addition State and County health officials have closed bars, movie theaters and indoor dining for at least three weeks, including Sacramento County. We will get through this trying time.