
**A LETTER
FROM
PASTOR
LAURA**

New Life

August 19, 2020

This morning, the air was brisk as I walked Anna to school. I know that the summer heat is not gone yet, but it feels like autumn is coming. With the changing of the season, I'm feeling all the feels: sadness that summer has come and gone and we didn't get the vacation at the beach we had hoped for this year; hope that the end of summer and the beginning of the school year will be a chance for us all to reset and find new rhythms; and joy, because autumn is my favorite time of year.

This time of year will bring a trip (*or several*) to the apple orchard, pumpkin carving, sweaters and boots, and beautiful colors on the trees. It will also bring the beginning of Faithtime and Confirmation and youth group and return to rehearsals for the Glory Ringers. It means first Bibles, First Communion, and the Rite of Confirmation, Reformation and All Saints Day.

Many activities will be missing from the life of our congregation this season – choirs and praise teams, Faithtime meals, First Friends. These activities are on hold for now, until we can safely sing together and eat together. Our weekend faith formation program, GIFT (Growing in Faith Together) is also on hold, as we focus our faith formation efforts on Faithtime, Confirmation, and high school youth group.

And, of course, our worship life continues to look different. There are exciting things happening – we are getting so close to being able to livestream worship, which will be a blessing into the future, long after the pandemic is over, especially for those who are homebound. Most of the changes, though, are losses that we lament: not being able to sing together, not being able to share the peace, not being able to celebrate Holy Communion at the table together.

And yet, the Holy Spirit continues to move among us and breathe new life into our family here at First. We are celebrating baptisms. We are welcoming new members. People are discovering new spiritual gifts. I'm surprised, these days, when I see these signs of life. But I really shouldn't be. Shouldn't I have learned by now that our God is a God of surprising new life? When we go to the tomb, expecting to find it full of death, instead we find that the tomb is empty, and Jesus is living, and we too can live.

So we will persevere. We will continue to follow the guidelines, and find ways to do ministry in the midst of a pandemic. And God will continue to bless us with life.

I want to share with you a few notes about some changes you will notice this month. First, since we are able now to livestream worship on Facebook, the experience will be different for those worshipping at home. The livestream will happen during 8:15 worship on Sunday mornings. This will be recorded, and then the recording will be posted to our Facebook page and YouTube channel by early Sunday afternoon.

Second, when you call the church office or stop by during the week, you will be welcomed by Deb Spence, who will be filling in as our Receptionist while Sherry Dickens takes the opportunity for seasonal employment with Wyffels.

As the weather cools, and the colors change, we will continue to look for ways that God is working in our world. Everything may be different now – except for God's gift of new life, which is ours, in this season and the next.

—Pastor Laura