

Welcome Back!

I have lived in many different places in my life; twelve, to be exact. And after living in so many places, I have to say that there is no better experience than being welcomed back home again. Time seems to stop in those places you left, but the amazing thing that I have found is that it picks right back up where you left off when you return. Coming back home is awesome. It is like the connection we have had with people and places, never goes away. We will continue to have those connections even, if we can't be around all the time. The same is true of God. Our connection with God is a connection that won't quit. No matter how far apart we are, God connects with us. No matter how many miles we think separates us from each other and God, God connects with us. No matter our collective or individual pasts, God connects with us. God seems always looking to connect and reconnect us again in some way. I think the Bible is full of stories of God looking to connect with people and places, and helping us to connect with each other.

As you might have already heard, it is our pleasure to welcome you back to in-person worship beginning on February 6 & 7. We resume in-person gatherings for ministries and groups inside and outside the church with restrictions. We resume High School Youth group which will meet every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. for Prayer and Ping-Pong. We resume in-person Faithtime and Confirmation on Wednesdays. As always, we will continue to offer opportunities for gathering virtually. Hopefully when we come back, we will be able to pick up right where we left off.

We hope to welcome you back in whatever way you have been connecting with us and with God. In-person or virtually, we welcome you back. We welcome you back, if you have been waiting for us to resume worship the last

three months. We welcome you back, if you are waiting to return until after you get the vaccine. We will always welcome you back, if you have been away for not just months, but years. And it won't be just us welcoming you back, but God will be. For where connection is found, there God is.

As we move into this season of Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday on February 17, maybe the time is now to reconnect in whatever way you are able. Connect online. Connect in-person. Connect on the phone. Reach out and connect with someone old or new. Connect again with God through prayer, fasting, and service. Connect again with God's creation on a hike or doing a polar plunge for charity! In some way (it really doesn't matter which way), God is calling upon us all to connect again.

As always, we give thanks for your patience during this time as we have had to reinvent and reimagine. We thank you always for your generosity during a time of scarcity. We thank you for your faithfulness and trust. We thank you for your leadership and service. Pastor Laura and I thank God for not only welcoming us into God's family, but inviting and allowing us to serve yours.

In all the different ways in which we are connected to you and to God, we are thankful. We are thankful for your partnership in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which continues to challenge and inspire us to love and serve God and neighbor in all times, even times like this.

Our prayer is always to welcome you back in some way and to see you all soon, Amen.

—*Pastor Matt*