Newsletter October 2021

**Getting Back to Normal!**

Yes, Fall is here, and we are finally beginning to get back to “Normal”. Well almost “normal”. In fact, I’m not sure now what “normal” really is. In the words of the humorist Norma Bombeck “normal” is a setting on our dryer, and no person or family can really describe themselves as “normal”. However, they tell us in El paso we have reached “herd immunity”, what an endearing term, makes you feel all warm and fuzzy to be part of the “herd”. Anyhow that basically means a large enough % of people have been vaccinated or had the Covid or both, and that they are much less likely to get it and or to spread it.

 Therefore, we are beginning to ease up on mask mandates, social gatherings, schools are open, restaurants, businesses etc. However, many stores including hospitals still require masks, and limit the number of people allowed inside at one time. Some places say we “recommend masks” but don’t “require” them. Others still require masks, but don’t really enforce it. While other places say, “masks required” and they enforce it and will ask you to leave if you don’t wear a mask. It’s now “normal” to see groups of people in the same room, some wearing masks and some no mask scattered about; some people social distancing others huddled close together. Now, we even have to decide if we want a booster shot, because of “break out” virus variants. Finally, our nation, our community, and even our families are divided about how much longer to continue masks, social distancing, vaccine mandates, boosters, etc. That does not even include skyrocketing gas, and food prices, rentals, home purchases, and just about every other item as inflation begins to set in. Help wanted signs are everywhere, even while fast food chains are paying some teens 10$ to 15$ per hour. These are just part of the things that seem to be fundamentally transforming our nation and society. I won’t get into the politics and other cultural hot button topics in this newsletter, though I may at another time. So, who knows when we can really fully return to “normal”! All I can tell you, is we need to be ready to step out on faith, make the best plans possible based upon what we think we know, and obediently follow the Lord serving him and other people.

What does that mean? Well for our church, it means we are going to have the Fall Bash again, and invite the community to come, resume our Thanksgiving Potluck which we cancelled last year, and basically resume every other ministry. Church has been open throughout the pandemic except I believe two Sundays, and we will continue to be open. At the same time, we still have rows far apart for social distancing, some people still wear masks while others do not, but it is their choice. We clean and disinfect the church thoroughly, and even continue to conduct the Lords Supper in a “safer” manor not passing the tray from hand to hand. We will continue to have a live service on You tube each week, for those who still are not comfortable attending in person, and a short “encouraging word” from me weekly, also on You Tube.

We are no longer conducting “Zoom” Bible studies, all our care groups are meeting in person, unless someone requests to be zoomed in which we are glad to do so. So, although I personally am “done” with all the masking etc. and try to go “mask less” as much as possible, and probably will not get a booster (I have had the covid already and two doses of the Pfizer vaccine) I will respect other people and wear a mask when required, and social distance, and their choice to vaccinate or not. While some people who read this letter may believe we are letting our guard down too soon in regard to safety, others will think we are being too timid and giving in to fear or the “government” etc. Those of you who know me well know my stance on government and cultural issues. Right now, however, for me getting back to “normal” is simply going out in person as much possible and telling bother people about the good news of Jesus Christ! Inviting those people into our church, our homes, meeting them wherever I can, in person preferably, but online if necessary, and TV, the radio, whatever it takes. We will “tweet you”, “Instagram you”, “face book you”, “tic Tok you”, shake your hand, elbow bump, hug you, fist bump, booty bump, (just kidding no booty bumps) … but you get the idea. Whatever it takes, we want to reach others for Christ. Just like Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 “***For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more….and I do all things for the sake of the gospel , that I may become a fellow partaker of it.”***

So please if you are reading this letter and have gotten out of the habit of attending church in person, or participating in a care group, or no longer come to fellowships, pray about coming back. If you live out of town and are reading this, then pray about returning to your home church, or continuing to attend if you are still attending. Finally, whatever “normal” is to you, make loving and serving Christ, and loving and serving other people the most “normal” part of your life.

Love

**JOe**

Pastor Joe