



## St. Peter's Lutheran Church

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Dear friends in Christ,

*"So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another." Romans 12:5*

During the past eight months, our society has been struggling with questions of identity. I believe this is true in our congregation as well – not only asking “Who are we?” but also “Who are we becoming as a result of this pandemic? How is it changing us?”

I heard this question emerging as we started to discuss gathering in person for worship this past summer. As it became clear that we would need a whole array of precautions in place to help safeguard people's health, I noticed an undercurrent of anxiety as people started wondering how we could enact all these safety measures and restrictions and still be St. Peter's. How could we wear masks, stay six feet apart, stop having coffee hour and potlucks, and still be the church family that welcomes you with a smile and a hug and something to eat?

In other words...who are we? Are we still “us”? Are we still St. Peter's? Are we still this family of faith that welcomes everyone to the table? The unexpected blessing of the pandemic – of any crisis situation, really – is that it helps us focus on what is most important. For us as a church, it helps us re-focus on our core values, those things that define us, our DNA as a congregation. Even if our welcome looks different now, the love of Jesus that calls us to act is still the same. We can still welcome people to the Lord's table as a caring church family. And we are still committed to the principle that everyone should have a place at that table to receive the grace of God.

Our stewardship theme this fall is “**This Is Us.**” Rather than having anything to do with the TV show, the pandemic has shown us that even when everything changes, we are still “us” and we are still St. Peter's! The pandemic has called us to live out our values of love, hospitality, and community in new ways, and it will continue to do so.

*(continued on reverse)*

Recently I was meeting with a couple who were just beginning to attend St. Peter's regularly when the pandemic hit. They are now planning a wedding for next summer. When I asked them where the wedding would take place, they said, "St. Peter's, of course. This is home!" That was such a moment of hope for me, because it was a clear sign that we are still St. Peter's. Through the welcoming power of Christ, we can be "home" for those who just got here, and we can be "home" for those who have been here for decades. We are still your family of faith, and no pandemic can change that, because that identity is given to us by Christ.

As part of our annual stewardship time, we usually share stories from our people about what St. Peter's means to them. This year, we plan to share moments like the one I just shared, stories about the ways we are experimenting and finding new ways to live into our identity and grow into what God has called us to be for the world. Through video segments, we will share those stories in both online worship and in-person worship for the next few Sundays. Keep an eye out for them on our YouTube channel and Facebook page as well as our website.

Enclosed you will find a **giving card** to assist you in making an intentional plan for supporting St. Peter's, should you choose to do so. We hope you will prayerfully consider growing by increasing your estimate – even by only a small amount. (Percentage charts are available on request.) We understand that your finances may be unpredictable in 2021, so please remember that you can always revise your giving plan at any time by contacting our financial secretary Paula Bishop.

We also understand that the patterns of your life are also likely in flux, so we invite you to return your giving card (minus the stub for your records) in **whatever way makes the most sense to you**. You can use the enclosed envelope to return it securely to Paula through the mail. You may also drop it off in Paula's mailbox at church if you wish, using the enclosed envelope to ensure privacy. You can also email Paula directly at [pbishop2344@icloud.com](mailto:pbishop2344@icloud.com) with the pertinent information, if that is more convenient for you. We'll add an option to our website also at [stpetersverona.org](http://stpetersverona.org). We invite you to complete this process any time before December 31, 2020 as part of your (and our) planning for 2021.

Thank you for all that you share with St. Peter's – and for being an important part of "us"!

Together in Christ,

Pastor Katie Yahns