

Shout out to our community leadership

² We always thank God for all of you and pray for you constantly. ³ As we pray to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and the enduring hope you have because of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ We know, dear brothers and sisters, that God loves you and has chosen you to be his own people. ⁵ For when we brought you the Good News, it was not only with words but also with power, for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-5a

Greetings and peace my friends!

You may have heard the term “Shout out!” Today, I would love to share some “shout outs” with all of you!

On Tuesday Pastor Suzanne wrote wonderfully about being grateful. As I thought and prayed over her message to us all and then experienced life this week within the midst of our community of faith, I felt truly moved by the Spirit.

I would like to give a “Shout out!” to our congregational councils of the UPG and St. John’s Windish. Trust me when I tell you that it is extremely difficult dealing with “real world” concerns of our community of faith via the internet and “Zoom!” In fact, some might say it is easier to herd 40 cats into one room, than to faithfully discharge the important duties of our councils via “Zoom.” Think about this for a moment, these wonderful sisters and brothers in Christ volunteered to help lead, direct, and guide our communities. In “normal” times this task can be daunting as emotions and thoughts can run high, but during the pandemic, incredibly important and difficult decisions have had to be reached in order to keep our community of faith heading in God inspired directions.

Each month we faithfully talk about and discern our decisions regarding “in person” worship. Each month with longing hearts to return to regular worship these faithful people set aside their personal preferences and truly are looking out for the best interests of the people who comprise our community of faith.

During this pandemic, when many communities of faith have been in an almost “hibernation” our community of faith has been constantly looking to grow and expand our ministries in previously unthought of ways. Our “Bringing it Home” ministry is allowing our sisters and brothers in Christ who may not be familiar with available technologies to have access to and be able to participate in our “online worship celebrations.” For many of these family members it has not been months of being away from worship, but rather years! The joy on their faces is precious as they watch these worship celebrations! The capital investment for this ministry was wonderfully received and supported by our congregational councils because of the realization that our Lord is calling us to share worship with as many sisters and brothers within our community of faith as possible! This bold action shares the power of God’s love to people who otherwise would continue to be separated from the strength of our community of faith and the hope that is shared among our family of faith.

Of course early on in this pandemic we noted how truly the Spirit moved us in the direction of allowing for “on line” worship celebrations and a hefty investment of \$500 was made in order that we would purchase a low end camera that could “live stream” worship celebrations. That camera arrived in our hands literally a week before the pandemic struck and forced us to close off our buildings. Amazing? Inspiring? I think so too! Through this experience the leadership of our community of faith realized the importance, but perhaps even more importantly the potential that having an on-line worship presence can create. Weekly we receive people from across the country and on some occasions even across the world, who join us for our weekly worship celebrations. The leadership of our community of faith seized this opportunity to advance the gospel during this time and supported our community purchasing much more sophisticated and professional equipment that will ultimately allow people to experience new and exciting ways of experiencing worship. Our leadership did not hesitate when they could see the potential such a ministry could bring to advancing God’s love within the world in which we live.

So, on this day, I just wanted to send out a special “Shout out!” to our congregational councils! People who stepped forward to help lead and direct our ministries. People who continue to allow the Spirit of God and God’s calling to us all to share God’s love with the world one heart at a time. People who are courageous and bold enough to embrace the realities that this pandemic has brought us but instead of trying simply to secure our well being are seeking ways in which our ministries and the proclamation of the love of God can grow and flourish. As Pastor Suzanne said on Tuesday, “I pray that you too would accept with gratitude the gifts that are given to us by God and by each other. Our hope and prayer are that we, as one community of faith, would join together in gratitude and love toward each other and with each other.”

Thank you, my sisters, and brothers, in Christ! Thank you! For through your words and more importantly your actions, you allow God’s Word to flourish in a world that absolutely, positively needs to hear of the great love, mercy, and hope that can only come from our Lord!

Until next time,

Trust God, keep washing those hands, and be at peace with one another!

PJ