

***“<sup>19</sup> Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”***

***Matthew 18:19-20***

Greetings and peace to you my friends!

God's creation herself adorned our gathering place. Views of resting places of saints who have come before us. A “house of prayer” which serves as a centerpiece for witnesses to Christ's love in our time and place. A limitless ceiling with moving clouds and beautiful blue hues above our heads. Bright green grass to serve as carpeting under our feet. So, it was as our community gathered to worship “in person” for the first time since the last week of February.

The piano shared story after story of our Lord's graciousness, yet audible human voices did not accompany her tune. Family and friends, gathered behind masks, where smiles though hidden, were present and alert. Prayers of thanksgiving and prayers of repentance were offered to our God. God's Word was read and heard. The Spirit moved among us and the Holy Meal was shared.

Our mere presence on the front lawn of the Lutheran Center on Grove road proclaimed Christ's disciples are alive and well. The bonds of fellowship were renewed among the 65 who were able to be present.

There were no parades, no great festal shouts were heard among the neighbors. But there was a bold witness that we, the children of God who gather as part of the United Proclamation of the Gospel Parish and St. John's Windish Lutheran Church continue to count ourselves among those who feel blessed by a loving God and serve as witnesses to God's love in this time and place.

Indeed, the entire worship celebration felt foreign, yet comfortable because we gathered among friends. Indeed, the celebration was quiet, even though our hearts rejoiced. Indeed, we prefer to be singing and rejoicing aloud, yet we remain blessed by the gift of one another's presence.

In the history of the world, there will unlikely be a mention of how it was God's children of the UPG Parish and St. John's Windish Lutheran Church gathered in worshipful celebration of 10<sup>th</sup> week after Pentecost on August 9, year of our Lord 2020, but for those of us who were honored to be there, it will be a memory that will last a life time!

I wanted to thank all who did not join us in person on this day out of concern for your safety and concern for others regarding Covid-19. I wanted to thank those who did join us on this day for wonderfully keeping your masks in place and maintaining proper social distancing from one another. I want to thank our staff and volunteers from our community of faith who safely gathered together to prepare our worship space, who worked together to provide bulletins, music, elements of Holy Communion, sound systems, and even designated spaces for our children. Truly we are blessed by the gifts each of you share with our community.

Blessed by our God and blessed by one another.

Our first of prayerfully many outdoor in person worship celebrations is now complete. We will return anew next Sunday, the Sunday following that and so on and so on, if weather and conditions allow. But for now.

We continue to trust God, we continue to wash our hands, and we continue to be at peace with God and with one another!

PJ