

Predicting the Future, Living in the Present
COVID-19 Update from Pastor Tim Vance

September 1, 2020

At the beginning of the summer I announced that we were aiming to have some type of adapted in-person worship service at the church in October. Unfortunately, as those words were coming out of my mouth, COVID-19 cases in LA county were spiking. We are now here at the beginning of September; things aren't improving enough, and it looks more and more likely that a safe return to group gatherings exists somewhere further in the future. As we've been monitoring safety concerns and risk levels there is a growing sense among our church leaders that we are now looking beyond this year, into 2021. *But keep in mind that our predicting the future track record is not great.*

This is obviously disappointing. I'm discouraged too and really miss seeing you all in-person. Now I will get to the "but God is with us..." part in a bit, but let's not move on too quickly. To various degrees we are living through a season of compounding loss. If it's not big things, there are a lot of little things that are changing in our lives. And we might be finding that we are no longer able to process or cope with life's challenges in the same ways. And as we are trying to adapt and push through, it might still be hard to pay attention to just how deeply this pandemic is impacting our physical, mental, spiritual and relational health.

So how are you doing? Are you finding it easier or harder to slow down a bit and pay attention to your needs and/or the needs of those around you? One spiritual practice that might help is *the examen*, which is a simple way of paying attention to our on-going life-giving or life-draining experiences. This can be done personally or with others. At the dinner table our family asks each person to share one positive (best) moment and one negative (worst) moment from our day. Even though this won't help us predict the future, it is helping us to pay attention to life in the here and now.

As we pay attention, please let us know if there is anything we can do to help? Can we pray for you? Do you have anything you'd like to share or discuss confidentially with me or another church leader whom you trust? If you have the support you need, let us know what has been life-giving for you in this season. Sharing our stories might help all of us discover ways that God is breathing life into us during this season. I personally would welcome more opportunities to have a conversation with each of you, especially those of you whom I haven't yet met. For support, to share a story, or schedule a time to talk email us at info@fpcsantamonica.org or leave a message at 310.451.1303.

In the meantime, we hope that our online worship services continue to offer nourishment and connection. If you want to see others and talk, join us for our Zoom coffee hour or a kids Zoom faith group at 11AM on Sundays. And if you're free on Thursday mornings at 9:30AM we have a great group of people studying the book of Acts together on Zoom. Even though we are apart we are not alone. We remain the church, a community connected to one another by friendship, shared

experiences, a calling to embody love, and ultimately God's presence here with each of us. *See, I told you we'd get to that part.*

On top of all this let's be good citizens: Stay safe, wear a mask in public, eat healthy, ask your doctor about a flu shot, register to vote, etc... We miss each of you and are looking forward to seeing what God will continue to do in each of our lives and in our community even as we wait to see each other again face to face.