

Hello friends,

Sunday marks another Independence Day celebration and I have been thinking a lot about what that means. It is a day to celebrate our nation gaining independence from England and the injustices that relationship fostered. Over 240 years later, as a nation, we are still struggling with injustice and other issues around our relationship together. Independence is something we all value. I can remember the first time my son, as a toddler told me he didn't "need me" to go with him to get napkins from the counter at McDonalds. I remember the emotions that surrounded my father and I when he was not physically able to operate an automobile safely, and when my parents moved from the home, they had lived in for over 60 years, to a place smaller and easier to manage so they would be able to afford help and their independence became more and more limited. There is always a desire to "stand on our own feet" but I also know that we are not meant to make this journey of life and faith alone. In our baptism vows we make commitments to "surround one another in a community of Love and Forgiveness."

As a country, we were based on some principles that were new and revolutionary for the day. That individuals have rights that were given to us by God. Things like the right to our own life, the right to liberty and living as you like, as long as it does not harm others, and the right to pursue happiness. Ironically, it is not our independence, but the strength of our community that insures those God given rights. As many have said when justice is delayed for one justice, is in fact denied and that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. So as this Independence Day arrives, I hope you can celebrate the country we are a part of and the principles that we stand for... that I believe are given to us by God. My prayer for our nation is that we will always continue to confess our shortcomings, and work as a community to insure that experiencing those God given rights is a reality for all people.

I hope it is a wonderful Independence Day ... please be safe and careful!

Here are the other important things happening at the Church!

Cards and gifts for Alexa Eisenbarth

For those of you who would still like to send a gift or card to Alexa Eisenbarth to celebrate her ordination please drop it by the church office next week.

Vacation Bible School Planned

This Summer on August 3-4 from 5:30-8 pm, Kennewick First will be putting on an outdoor Vacation Bible School. If you know a kid that would like to participate you can get registration materials in the Narthex at Church on Sunday. If you would like to volunteer to help on those two evenings, you can sign up to volunteer by clicking this link and signing up: <https://rsvp.church/r/yYVuCLl4> .

Help Wanted for VBS

VBS 2021 is looking for a volunteer to prep, serve and clean-up VBS dinner the nights of August 3rd and 4th. We can plan and buy your supplies and we will train you in an COVID related rules. You will also have additional volunteers to help you out. If you are willing to help us, please contact the church office at 509-582-2163 or email starlite@kennewickfirst.com .

Upper Room Devotionals for July-August

The July/August Upper Rooms have arrived! You can either pick one up at the back of the Sanctuary or if you would like one mailed or delivered to you, please call the church office at 509-582-2163.

Protocol updates

Our re-opening plan has been modified to incorporate the State recommendations and CDC advise. So as of June 30th, we have updated our mask and spacing protocols to match the state's "Washington Ready" proclamation. That means that the face covering at worship is no longer a requirement and that social distancing is no longer in place. We will also be updating our occupancy limits from 50% to 100%... until we bump into the 10,000 in attendance qualifier ☺. Although we are making these updates, we are well aware that the threat of Covid-19 and its variants are a huge concern for the health of many of us, and we want to do our best to make sure we do not contribute to any new outbreaks.

We will continue to have sanitizing stations available, encourage people to receive vaccinations, we will ask you to continue to sign in as you enter worship in case, we need to get in touch with you with news about exposure or health concerns, and we will be holding off on receiving communion until the 1st Sunday of August when we can implement some safe practices in that ritual. At this point, the CDC notes that singing together in indoor spaces is still among the activities with the highest likelihood of spreading the virus, so we will continue to hum along with our worship team for the time being.

Thanks for helping us continue to move forward towards being fully open!

See you in church my friends!

Pastor Mark