



THE GRAPEVINE – Issue 56:23th April 2021

Dear Friends,

A Prayer: May We Never Again Take Our Sunday Gathering for Granted

Dear God,

May we never again take the ability to gather with others in the same space to worship for granted. We did in the past. There were Sundays when leisurely breakfasts, long country walks or sleeping in seemed better or of greater priority. There were schedule conflicts; sports matches and family gatherings. And it seemed easiest, so often, to pick those things over gathering with our church family, over sitting in an over-hot or cold sanctuary. Church would be there next week, right? It would be there when we didn't need to get the food shopping or when the sports season was over or when we had slept better the night before. We could sing again next week. We could sip the mediocre coffee next week. We could gather next week.

There were Sundays we wanted what others had - the ability to choose. There were Sundays when people got on our nerves, when worship wasn't what we wanted or expected. There were Sundays when we sang all the old hymns or the modern songs that we didn't like.

We took for granted the freedom to be in a building with others. We took for granted the hugs and the smiles. We took for granted the music group, the readers and the Family Church leaders. We took for granted the idea that these things would always be there, when we wanted and needed them. We took for granted church chairs and PowerPoint slides and sticky hands wet from communion juice. We took for granted the gift of sitting shoulder to shoulder with people trying to figure out faith together, with holy saints singing off key beside us.

Our faithful God, we are grateful that throughout this year you have given us ways to still be together. Thank you for virtual worship. Thank you for YouTube and Zoom. Thank you for recorded worship from people's homes. Thank you that "where two or three are gathered" is still true, even if the gathering is around computer screens. Keep us grateful, God, until we can all feel safe meeting in person again.

And when "in person" is no longer impossible, help us to never take it for granted. It will be easy to do so God. The routine will return, God, as hard as it is to see right now. And when Sundays come, many good things will once again tug us away from the very good thing you have for us each week. Some days we will long to stay in bed or stay at home. Some weeks the gift will seem like a burden. When that happens, help us to remember the longing we feel today. Help us to never again take this thing we call "going to church" for granted.

May our new normal include gratitude for what was available all along. May we receive it, with joy.

May God's richest blessing be yours