

March 2021

Dear Eden Members, Extended Family and Friends:

Welcome to the “new” year as we enter the month of March. This letter is intended to look back on the year just past and perhaps look forward into the unknown for the remainder of 2021. We certainly can say as far as looking forward there is a lot that certainly is unknown.

To say that 2020 was a year like no other year is an understatement of understatements. It is not necessary to relate all that began happening in early 2020 but it all had an impact on church gatherings all around the world. I did look back on Face Book to refresh my memory of some of the changes we made due to Covid. With the rapid spreading of the virus in Maine and the decisions coming out of August we had to cease in-person worshiping in mid March of 2020. In actuality, we missed only 1 service. We went “live” from my den on March 29 and did so every Sunday until we were able to open again in early June of 2020. Because we had established a following both of our Eden people and a few from outside our area we made efforts to go live from church using Face Book. With anything new and with no real experience there were a few glitches along the way.

With a huge thanks to Gerry Mann, Bill Butler, Ed Dillon, Eric McNeil and the generous anonymous gift to cover the internet costs for 1 year we were able to be “live” the first Sunday in June of 2020. Since that time, Gerry has created a broadcast set up that allows the power point slides to be seen with one camera and another to follow the speaker. I’m sure there are things we might do to make the live option better to view and hear. Suggestions are welcome.

As I write these few words there is one situation facing us that might be of concern as we venture forward beyond the impact of Covid. That concern centers around what church leaders are suggesting will be a 10 to 20% loss of attendees. Of course, they are speaking of larger churches by comparison to Eden but, nonetheless, it is a concern for us as well. Some of the reasons for staying away may be for health reasons, you may not yet feel safe, you may not have gotten the vaccine, it’s easier to watch from home in your pj’s or for some other reason. Removing the legitimate health reasons from the equation, I would encourage you to read, pray and meditate on the words of encouragement from the writer of Hebrews. Verses I know you are familiar with. **Heb 10:23-25 ESV Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. (24) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**

One thing we can truly say is that “things have changed” with the advent of Covid. However, in one of the many emails I choose to receive, I saw an article by writer James Scott, in Church Leaders. His headline for the article is: “**No Pastor, Everything Hasn’t Changed.**” Here are just a few of his thoughts and related scriptures that support his position. All worthy and stated way better than I might have said.

If you would like to read the whole article, here is the web link you can copy and paste in your web browser: (all of it)

https://churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/390709-no-pastor-everything-hasnt-changed.html?utm_source=msv-nlFebruary%2023rd,%202021&utm_medium=email&utm_content=text-link&utm_campaign=msv-nl&maropost_id=713077807&mpweb=256-9294786-713077807

They are reminders for all of us as we move to reopen and carry out God’s ministry in and through Eden Baptist Church. So, what hasn’t changed? James Scott reminds us:

1) Jesus Christ, who is unchanging, remains the one foundation for the church.

1Co 3:11 ESV For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

2) Our primary tool for leading in the church – the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ — hasn't changed.

2Co 5:18-19 ESV All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

3) The power of prayer, and our ability to come before God in prayer at any time, hasn't changed.

Heb 4:14-16 ESV Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

4) We can still seek and receive wisdom from God.

Jas 1:5 ESV If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

5) The indwelling presence, power, and direction of the Holy Spirit.

Rom 15:13 ESV May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Although there are many changes that have come about because of Covid, some of which may not return to what we call "normal," believers have so much going for them that this little church of Jesus Christ, also known as Eden Baptist Church, also has so very much going for it that the future is filled with rich promises.

Last year we chose as our theme verse for the year a combination of Matthew 9:38 and Isaiah 6:8 that read, **"Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest; And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am Send me."**

I would encourage you to read **John 13:1 through John 16:33** to refresh your memory of what Jesus said to his Disciples; His teachings, encouragements, warnings, and promises as they were called to carry on the message of the gospel

I'm praying our hearts are open to hearing the Holy Spirit speak to our hearts that we may be willing to step out in service to our Lord. As we serve we will have trials, times of discouragement and even fear. But remember the words of Jesus in the portion I suggested you read because **John 16:33 says, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."** And that has not changed!

Thank you for allowing me to be with you all these years. May 2021 be a year of blessings for Eden Baptist Church.

