

## Pastor's Report to Council May 2021

In the following report, you will find a brief update regarding recent and upcoming activities, plans for outdoor worship, and guidelines to enhance the experience and flow of in-person worship.

Last Sunday morning we were contact by Jeff and Becky, a couple who moved to Woodstock in the middle of the pandemic. They have spent many Sundays checking out the churches in the area online. And this year have found themselves returning to our worship services many times. They feel an affinity with our congregation through our online worship. Beck and Jeff, Judy and Michael are four people who have not only connected to us through these experiences, but also have felt moved to connect in-person as well!

In June we have several special services that we are working on:

- June 19 an outdoor memorial service
- the last weekend of June (possibly during worship) a baptism for Katie and Katy's twins, Oliver and Robin.

We will continue the tradition of joint services with East Woodstock in July and August. In July we will host the worship service and East Woodstock will provide the message. Pastor Sue is on sabbatical all summer so Danielle Arnett Keller, a clergy intern from BU, will lead worship. In August we will be at East Woodstock and we will provide the message. During July, I will take vacation for two weeks and use the rest of the month to plan worship and other activities through the Christmas.

### Outdoor / In-person Worship

Our current plan is to offer outdoor worship services on the lawn behind the parsonage beginning May 23<sup>rd</sup>. It will look and feel like outdoor worship in the fall.

Plans are currently underway to:

- Identify musicians and song leaders for each Sunday through the end of July;
- Pre-record organ music and some hymns that will be played during our worship service;
- Offer communion on first Sundays using pre-packaged communion kits packets to minimize preparation, touching and handling of food;
- Post worship to Facebook, Youtube and our Website following worship to give us time to edit the recording and add lyrics and titles. Pre-recorded aspects of worship, titles and lyrics can be pre-populated to minimize the time it takes to edit the video post worship and get it published.

If the weather forecast calls for storms on Sunday, we will offer worship online and announce this to the congregation by Friday. Alternatively, when we feel that it is safe to return to in-person gatherings in the sanctuary, if we cannot worship outside, we could move indoors,

## Pastor's Report to Council May 2021

posting signs to let the congregation know. Jacob V. and I will be measuring off 6-foot seating spaces in the sanctuary in anticipation of the return of such gatherings.

At this time, whether outside or inside, we will be a mix of fully vaccinated and not vaccinated people. We will ask attendees to remain masked and maintain social distance. We will follow guidance from the CDC and UCC regarding singing and spoken responses, which currently indicates that we should ask people to sing quietly or silently.

We anticipate that there will be social time following worship offered by a committee or the hospitality team.

### Technology

Led by Bruce Staehle a group has been evaluating our technology equipment.

To offer hybrid services we are looking to identify and acquire:

1. A device to store and play recorded music (prelude, postlude & hymns) into the Crate amp during service;
2. A video camera to record the service.

To offer hybrid services (that is to hold in-person and offer online as well), we will need congregants to:

- Play the pre-recorded music at the appropriate times during worship;
- Record the service (the need for this may be minimal, depending on the camera);
- Edit the recording, integrate it with pre-recorded aspects of worship, and post the video online.

An alternative is to stream live via Zoom / Facebook. The quality of the worship experience will be greatly diminished.

## Pastor's Report to Council May 2021

### DRAFT Guidelines to Enhance the experience and flow of worship

*... let us speak the truth in love, and grow to the full maturity of Christ, the head. Through Christ, the whole body grows. With the proper functioning of each member, firmly joined together by each supporting ligament, the body builds itself up in love. Ephesians 4:15-16*

The following guidelines are intended to help us be more centered, present, connected, and aware of ways we can work together and contribute to our collective worship as we embody and share the good news of God's love for everyone in, at, and through worship.

**Why does this matter?** As leaders and facilitators, we can intentionally invite people into deeper, more meaningful, engaged, and embodied experiences; or unintentionally create noise and distractions that disrupt the individual and collective experience. Worship means "worthy of respect" and for a congregation such as our, that means it is **the work of the people** in relationship and partnership with **the Spirit of the Living God**.

Many of us are nervous when reading, singing, or speaking in public and even more so when we offer such gifts as part of worship. No worries. These guidelines are meant to help those who are introverts and anxiety prone when it comes to public speaking – as well as those who are more comfortable in such settings.

#### 1. Prepare for worship

Get the reading(s) and answers to your questions to help you prepare and feel more comfortable. The Pastor and Deacons want to help you participate. If you have a question, unsure how worship will work/flow, are unclear how to pronounce a word... "seek and ye shall find..." No question is silly.

#### 2. Be and become present

Sunday morning, if you have questions or need instruction or are unsure of the when and where or how, arrive a little early and ask the Pastor or deacon on duty. Remember we want you to have a positive experience.

At 9:45am, everyone helping to facilitate/lead Sunday worship will meet for any last-minute adjustments/substitutions and to center ourselves for prayer. This includes anyone with a "part" in the worship service including musicians, readers, deacons, av/sound, pastor, etc.

The intent of this gathering is to help us relax into worship. Ensuring all are aware of the flow of worship and most importantly for us to come together as a body, let go of all of the pre-service set up and preparation "noise" and open ourselves up to God's Spirit that we joyfully can be present as we worship.

## Pastor's Report to Council May 2021

### 3. Know your cue / move in time to be in place

One of the things that kills the flow and spirit of worship is the lag time that occurs when one movement has completed, and we wait for the leaders to get in place to begin the next. To reduce the lag time, anticipate where and when you will be needed and find your way to that place in time to begin as soon as the prior movement has ended.

For example, if something follows a hymn move (without making a distraction) the last verse or chorus. If a song follows the message, work with the person giving the message to understand how you might know when to move.

If there is a handout or something to be distributed, have this included in the worship bulletin, or work with the deacons on duty to have the item distributed at an appropriate time.

### 4. Begin

When offering a reading, you might begin with "a reading from ...." Or the "gospel according to John..." when leading a response like a call to worship, invite people to participate, e.g., "will you join me as we share our call to worship...." And for a prayer, invite people to join in the spirit of prayer.... or in one voice to pray together.... (whatever is appropriate).

Refrain from offering additional greetings, such as saying "good morning" before offering an announcement or a reading.

### 5. Relax, be joyful and go with the flow... remember presence – not performance.

Sure we want everything to be just so. And we want to prepare so we can be more present – less uncertain and anxious. The focus is on presence – not performance. Things happen. We play a song out of order or add a verse or the pastor completely misses a part of worship. Discretely move into place (or off to the side) and we'll pick things and work things out as best we can on the fly.

If you are in the middle of a reading, prayer, etc. and mis-read a line, skip a sentence, stumble over a word – no worries.... When we bring our hearts to worship, the focus is on presence – not performance.

When things happen, pause if you need to and simply continue, or take a step back and begin again where it makes sense. Relax. No need to worry or apologize or unnecessarily draw attention - that'll only increase your stress.

## Pastor's Report to Council May 2021

### Community Announcements:

During in-person gatherings announcements will be part of the call to offering. The reason is that this is closer to the end of worship, so people are more likely to remember what was said and who to connect with. The other reason for this is to try to connect the work of the community as part of the gifts that we bless/bring.

The following are a few considerations that can help keep the announcements inviting and make the announcements meaningful and more effective for those in-person as well as those watching online:

- a. Consider adding a brief note to the Bulletin and/or Weekly Email: No later than the Tuesday before the Sunday, send an email to the office briefly describing the what (think headline/title), where and when (location and date/time), who (who is the announcement for), how (what is the next step? Is there an email, phone number, url, sign up form), and in a phrase or 1 sentence why (why would someone want to attend/participate).
- b. Before Sunday, consider what you are going to say... again think what, where, when, who, and how... and how you will share the information using language that newcomers will understand. If an item is included in the bulletin... you can simply point people to the bulletin/email for those details. Be inviting, be joyful, be brief.
- c. Before Worship: it is appreciated and helpful for the pastor to be aware of how many announcements we are planning. So let the pastor know you'll have an announcement.
- d. During Worship: Nearly all announcements will be made prior to the call for our offerings. There is usually a song of reflection or some music following the message and preceding announcements. Near the end of the music (or when the Pastor rises to introduce our announcements), move to the front and get in line to make the announcement. As best as you are able, try to minimize the lag time between the preceding announcement and yours.

Remember to briefly cover the who, what, when, where and how in ways that even the uninitiated and/or people online (when applicable) can participate.