

Ministry Update Report June 2023

The following is an update regarding items within the Ministry Areas and Communications.

This is informational in nature.

A. Upcoming Activities and Dates

Jun 17	8 – early PM	Town Wide Yard Sale
Jun 17	9am – 4pm	SNEUCC Annul Meeting Worcester Ma
Jun 18	10am	Father’s Day / Children’s Sunday
Jun 25	10am	Maci Sholie Fox Baptism
Jun 27	7 pm	Windham Association Annual Meeting ONLINE
July - Aug	9am worship	Sue preaching July 2, 9, 23, Aug 27, Sept 3; Noah July 16
July 2 & 16	9 am worship	Communion
July 4 - 11		Pastor on Vacation
Aug 6	9am	Backpack blessing
Aug 25 – Sept 4		Pastor on Vacation
Sept 10	10am	Homecoming and Communion
Sept ??		Beliefs conclusion and Vision Kickoff
Sept 24	10am	Juniper Webster Baptism
Oct 7	10am	Pet Blessing
tbd		Team’s and Ministry meeting

B. Ministry Update

1. Worship

Summer worship will be at 9am for July, August, and September 3. Worship in July will be at First Congregational Church, and for August and September 3 at East.

During July, I encourage a Governing Board member to lead the call to the offering. This will help remind congregants who are the Governing Board members, and help the deacons by reducing one more responsibility. The exception will be July 16, as the intent of this service is for Noah to lead the service from top to bottom (including communion).

Rev. Sue will be having knee surgery the end of July and I have agreed to be on call if there are any pastoral emergencies during her time of limited mobility.

Creative Worship

The first meeting post-retreat will be Tues June 13. The intent is for the team to reflect on our worship and find ways to enhance the flow and content of worship to ensure that worship is worshipful and encourages spiritual growth for the team and congregants.

Structurally, the deacons have overlapping responsibilities with the Worship Ministry. As the deacons discern their future role, the liturgical activities of the deacons will move to the Creative Worship Team.

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A separate team of volunteers is envisioned to create a worshipful environment for our gatherings, e.g., candles, decorations, communion elements, seasonal items, etc. The deacons have been asked to document these items and our meaningful traditions, and to help form this team.

Music Director Search

- Job description finalized and we are moving forward with posting the position.
- Rick is helping in the interim and Maria continues to help and sing/play during worship.

2. Care

The anticipated June 4 meeting did not occur. Many were unavailable or felt the meeting unnecessary, saying things like, “I already send cards.” “I already check in on people.” This later point is emblematic of one of the cultural challenges of the congregation, i.e., choosing to not participate in conversations and/or dismissing efforts to be more intentional regarding communication, coordination, and collaboration.

Our intention for the Care Ministry is to build on the long tradition within our congregation of extending God’s love and care to each other through connection and help in times of need. Our desire is to build upon that which already exists, celebrating and acknowledging that a great deal of care is happening organically within the congregation. We also want to explore ways we can identify, communicate, and respond to needs as they arise so that no one is left feeling forgotten or alone.

Right now, we've organized the Care Ministry teams into 3 main groups.

- Connection needs: Visiting, Phone Calls, Cards
- Practical needs: Meals, Rides, Deliveries, Yard Work, Household Help
- Spiritual Needs: Prayer Chain, Prayer Shawls, Pastoral Care

As the meeting did not work as planned, we are asking people who expressed an interest in the Care Ministry to share their hopes and desires; questions and concerns; ideas to identify, communicate, and respond to needs within our congregation; and what training or help they might need in relation to the Care Ministry.

3. Learning/Spirituality

Children and Family Ministry.

- Children Sunday is this Sunday.
- We will be working with East Woodstock to host 6 evening VBS sessions for K-8 on Wednesday evenings from mid-July through late August.
- We are recruiting volunteers for VBS and for Sunday School in the fall.
- A family BBQ is being planned for the summer.

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- Organizing contacts for families with children who have been baptized in the last few years, to add them to the Children and Family Ministry communications, to send out periodic communications, and to invite them into deeper relationships.

Youth.

- Exploring, with parents of older children, whether we offer confirmation this autumn.

Other activities on hiatus during the summer.

- Bible Study and Finding Meaning in the Message to resume in September
- Exploring studies and conversations for the fall and winter that I will facilitate and that will have an appeal to broader community.

Labyrinth.

- We need to have an intentional conversation to explore the challenges with the current configuration, and options for updating the space.
- Lisa Haupt has offered to facilitate a walk through the labyrinth as part of a group conversation.
- Additionally, Lisa is pursuing a D.Min. and wants to explore the use of the Labyrinth as a way to help communities move through difficult conversations and overcome roadblocks.

4. Faith In Action

We are establishing Google Groups to encourage conversation, collaboration, and community among people with shared interests and passions. This is a low administration, high impact activity. People will be able to sign up to participate in the group conversations and or send relevant ideas and items to the group. Current groups include:

- Environment
- DEI, includes ONA/LGBTQ and “hospitality”
- Hunger/Poverty
- Racial Inequality

We are working on the names for the groups and identifying congregants who will be part of the initial conversations/lists.

5. Communications

We continue to work on our communications policy proposal, process improvements, and guidelines. The working draft is posted in the Communications Google Drive.

The goal is to increase the impact of our communications and reduce the effort needed to produce and publish items such as the newsletters. Common challenges include written and spoken messages that are

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unclear, omit critical information, include a great deal of unnecessary details, and do not make it easy for people to take the next step.

The guidelines will include standards for our logo; links to helpful resources; and questions to clarify the message, intended audience, and next steps for each message. The 2023 – 2024 calendar for the periodic newsletter will be included as we shift to the following seasonal, rather than monthly, schedule:

	Period
Winter	January – February
Lent-Easter	Ash Wed - Easter
Late Spring	April - May
Summer	Memorial Day – Labor Day
Fall	Homecoming – All Saints Day
Holidays	November – New Year’s Day

Church Windows.

During the summer we will continue to clean up the data in Church Windows, eliminating fields we no longer use, correcting erroneous data as best we can, updating birthdays and contact information, merging duplicate records, and documenting the use for various fields.

In addition, we will seek the information that is currently being maintained by various individuals and teams in an effort to get our contact information up to date and make our church directory the single source for congregant information. As part of this effort, we will clarify who receives what types of communications, clarify the relationship status of our current “member list,” and seek Governing Board policies where necessary, e.g., Active Member.

Web Site.

During the summer I will also work to update the website to reflect our current ministries and structure. The goal is to make visible our many ministries, to make it easy for people to engage in ways that make sense, and to shift the content of long articles from the newsletters to the website. (This last point is a longer-term goal).

In essence, each team should have a web page that explains their purpose, provides periodic updates about their work, and advertises ongoing volunteer needs.