

Pastor's Report - August 2021

Staff Updates

Sunday School - After much discussion, polling of families with children, and assessing resources the plan for Sunday School this fall is as follows. Erin sent this out to families with children via email this week. This communication will also be part of our September newsletter:

Godly Play will be held in-person, in Friendship Hall, with two-to-three children seated at each table. Each table will be equipped with its own set of craft or activity supplies. We hope that this format encourages children to keep their distance as much as possible. Instead of in-person storytelling (which requires much closer proximity), each week the students will watch the Godly Play videos that were recorded by the Rodrigues family in 2020. A facilitator will guide the kids in a craft, singing (with masks) and other appropriate activities. Masks will be required for all children and instructors, regardless of vaccination status.

There will not be take-home Godly Play activities for families who aren't ready to be here in-person; however, the YouTube links to the stories will be distributed weekly with the e-news for those who wish to watch from home.

We are looking for parent volunteers to assist with general classroom management and kid-care. You don't have to lead or facilitate anything, and you can commit to as many or as few weeks as you wish... but we really do need your help! Please sign up here:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/508094EAAA628A5FF2-sunday>

Connect will be conducted in a hybrid format. Students wishing to attend in-person will meet in the large classroom downstairs, with other students joining from home via Zoom. Pastor Jessica will once again be the lead facilitator for the Connect class, with a support person each week. Students in 4th through 7th grade are encouraged to participate. Please note that we have extended the upper age range of the class, since confirmation classes will be deferred for now. Families of Connected students should let Erin know no later than September 3 whether your child will attend in-person or online. Masks will be required for all children and instructors, regardless of vaccination status.

If you can occasionally assist Pastor Jessica with general classroom management (no preparation required), please sign up here:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/508094EAAA628A5FF2-sunday>

Seekers will continue to meet in the hybrid format – with some choosing to come to the Church, and others joining from home via Zoom. Since children are unable to be vaccinated, we need to use the bigger rooms for those classes. Starting September 12, the Seekers class will meet in the classroom down the hall, right beside the kitchen (what was the “bell choir room”). The Seekers class will follow the same masking protocols as worship so, for the time being, masks will be required for everyone attending in-person.

*We have decided to postpone convening a **Confirmation Class** for the time being. It is important that this class happen in-person and with as few interruptions as possible. With so much up in the air regarding the ongoing pandemic, we will revisit offering a Confirmation Class for 7th-9th graders in 2022. In the meantime, we encourage youth in this age range to participate in the upcoming OWL curriculum (beginning in October), and they are also invited to join the Connect class, either in-person or via Zoom.*

Evaluations - Our staff is in the process of completing self-evaluations unique to the last 18 months of ministry in the midst of the pandemic, these evaluations are reflective and mindful of the year we have endured/survived/experienced. These will be submitted to me and reviewed with each staff member by the end of September and then placed in their personnel files. We will resume the practice of anniversary/hire date Annual Reviews in 2022.

Budget/Stewardship Pre-Work - Elizabeth and I are in the beginning stages of preparing a draft 2022 Budget to present to the board, thinking ahead to our upcoming stewardship campaign, and assessing where 2022 might take us. I will have a draft of the 2022 budget available to the moderators in advance of our next Mod Squad Meeting and then, with any input from them, we will forward the draft to the wider board in anticipation of our September meeting.

Bricks and Mortar Needs and Organ Repairs - Elizabeth has been in communication with the Moderators about two fairly urgent repairs - stained glass windows (one damaged during the derecho and several others that need urgent repairs to ward off further deterioration resulting in much more costly work) and smaller scale organ

repairs that both Ken and John Rommereim have noted which is limiting music choices for worship. We can discuss this more during our meeting, as well as ideas as to how to fund these repairs.

Pastoral Care/Worship/Ministry Updates

Ongoing Thanks to Dave Eberbach, Josh Sandquist, John and Barb Ashby, Rabbi Rob, Elizabeth Haas and Lee Walker and the folks at B3 for the work they've done/are doing to make our live-stream worship and seekers options possible.

Thus far feedback remains positive and folks seem to have handled the resumption of mask requirements (which are again in place due to high levels of community spread and out of love for the unvaccinated and immunocompromised among us) with grace. There is an obvious longing for communion and singing, a need we are hoping to meet with our outdoor hymn sing and BYO Communion service on August 29. Several ideas for a safe way to bring communion back into the sanctuary have been noted - namely using prepacked elements - but I have several concerns with this including the environmental impact which seems very wasteful and the difficulty in opening them by elderly, disabled or child-sized hands. We can discuss this more as needed going forward, but hopefully the upcoming service will allow folks the joy of communion in a safe manner.

We have a wine and cheese gathering scheduled for September 1 at the Mayflower for retirees and are awaiting the Mayflower's guidance as to whether or not this can happen due to the recent positive covid case on their campus. Erin organized a Solera gathering for families with young children which took place on August 8. Out of this gathering a spiritual need for more consistent gatherings among this demographic was named and planned, to be hosted monthly at different church members' houses with childcare provided, as long as it remains safe to do so related to Covid.

Wider Ministerial/Denomination/Continuing Education Updates

I attended a continuing education retreat July 19-23 called Grace Filled Turnings, an initiative of Women Touched by Grace—Thriving in Ministry, a Lilly Endowment-funded program, to provide women clergy with the tools and encouragement to meet life's transitions. This was a life-giving, renewing experience.

I provided worship service leadership for the Mayflower Health Center and Beebe in July, and was scheduled to do so August 25th, but this has been postponed due to the recent positive covid test result of an unvaccinated Mayflower employee and the need for those two portions of the Mayflower community to quarantine. Hopefully I will be able to resume this service at a later date.

[HERE](#) is the most recent Covid guidance from our Iowa UCC Conference Minister.

I will be taking a week of personal leave, as allocated by my call agreement, in mid-October to be the primary care provider for my mother after she has major abdominal surgery. This is a preventative/elective surgery, recommended by her doctor. As elective surgeries are currently being postponed or delayed in Iowa due to Covid, I am keenly aware that this may happen for her in Kentucky as well, but for now things are still on schedule. I will communicate more information about who will be covering for me - both pastoral care and preaching - by our September Board meeting.

**With Grace and Peace,
Pastor Jessica**