

Worship Committee, 7 August 2020

Present: John Sampson, Susie Allen, Annie Scavo, Bernie Webb, Karen Glass, Lorraine Duvall, Erica Swift, Linda Bogardus

Karen asked that we talk about the Zoom worship format. She suggested that the positive aspect of Zoom is the ability to see the community. But that there is disconnect in the time just sitting, along with some redundancy. She wondered whether the worship time could be shortened by taking out some things, and more community participation could be added to bring in interesting new things.

The redundancy was in doing some of same things every week. Such as the doxology, the offertory music, singing all the verses of the hymns—or even the number of hymns. While these are meaningful in live church, they do not work so well on Zoom, sitting alone in front of your computer hearing only yourself. There is a need to feel more connected with people, to hear a unity of voices. Maybe this is the time to seek something new. To imagine how we can celebrate our relationship with God.

We had to go online quickly when the shutdown occurred. Our model was to duplicate what we had been doing. Many people found this comforting. Because of their other activities, many on this committee have now experienced other formats, for example, webinars. Susie asked where are other models for doing things differently?

In those early days of using Zoom, John asked the committee to visit different churches online to see what they were doing. Now that it seems that we will be using Zoom for a longer time, maybe we should start looking into other groups, lectures, readings, concerts. To see what things are being done within Zoom settings or to find available apps that allow people to sing/recite together, as well as to get other ideas. He asked us to look around before the next meeting. Hopefully, we can identify a seed of something new. This could become a reformation of worship—to think outside the box. Annie added that John's sermons were nonnegotiable. Lorraine felt the sermons were the highlight of each service and sometimes too short. Others suggested using the breakout rooms to discuss the sermon.

John followed up by saying that with so much going on in the service, the sermon is one place that can be compressed. Some Sundays it is ten minutes before 11 before we get to the Scripture. He asked us to consider whether all the worship pieces really are needed.

His question started a lively discussion. Strong opinions were expressed about the passing of the peace. John considers his acknowledgment when people log onto Zoom as a type of passing of the peace. Other highlights included feeling that the social interaction between people as they logged on was a passing of the peace; the position in the service was disruptive yet allowed latecomers to greet people.

About the offertory, there was a consensus: the music, along with the video, of the collection plate filling, followed by the picture of the donate button and website, does not represent actual giving and does not work with Zoom. Especially its position and time allotment within the service, which make money too prominent. The Finance Committee wanted services to include a reminder to people to give; as a practicality the church needs the money. One solution could be to place the website link and donate button at the end of the service during the postlude.

It was generally agreed that the true focus should be what we are giving to God. It should reflect living our faith by giving of ourselves by volunteering or kindnesses. This could be expressed in the Prayer of Dedication.

Lorraine gave a quick update on the Creation Justice Task Force. A subgroup is working on a vespers service. Other doings include an email for Faith and Issues, an inventory of the church, which has been completed, a planned "forest bathing", and a spiritual connection with a Newell webinar and book selections.

Vespers service: August 26

Next committee meeting: September 4, 2020, 10 a.m.–noon

submitted by Linda Bogardus