

Worship Committee, March 20, 2020

Present: John Sampson, Linda Bogardus, Annie Scavo, Martha Gallagher, Anne Hurd, Lorraine Duvall, Karen Glass

After a moment of centering meditation, John asked the group what we might be bringing to the meeting. Since the last meeting the world has turned upside down, and we need to acknowledge that we are not in the same place as we were for the last meeting.

We put aside momentarily the discussion of hymns to discuss what worship is now in this new norm, what worship means remotely online in our community. Other churches have been broadcasting online for a long time. We will be catching up. But John is excited to find out what it means for us—what resonates, where we feel loss and can't get it back. John needs feedback, our perspectives, and if we talk to others, he wants us to bring their comments into the discussion. This Sunday is day one and won't be perfect.

Zoom was chosen because it allows participation rather than just watching what is going on. Martha and Dennis will bring their professional experience: a lot of effort will be required for production, and we need to see if this is sustainable. There was discussion exploring other types and locations of worship, especially outside once the weather warms. Maundy Thursday's dinner is not appropriate, so it will be online, and Easter will be radically different. The church has made it a priority to develop a way for people to make donations online. The economy has been hit hard, and that will have implications on giving.

John wants the church to be a presence in the community (of caring). He wants to create a diaconate, that is, a group of volunteers who would have a list of people to check on and to help when people have needs or feelings of isolation. John has a list of community members willing to offer services, so he has the ability to make connections. This is worship, too. It is "love of neighbor" in a practical and real sense.

The things we discussed in past worship meetings seem less important. How will the experience here and now change our worship going forward? What will we want to retain, and what will we let go? We will need to be open to new opportunities. John has always provided in our services visceral/physical ways to connect to the gospel. How will we make these connections when we are online?

Some churches provide communion online, for example. Why not try it? This is a great time to try things that we would not try otherwise. John has always been open to presenting the message in different ways, such as through intellectual ideas, stories, and prayers. Our faith is incarnational, which means that our body is part of the sacred story, and it is important to involve our body in that.

The service via Zoom will try to replicate our regular service. A bulletin will be available, Lynn and Rob will provide music, and the words to the hymns that we sing will also be available.

John has tried in the past to push us, maybe making us feel uncomfortable. But he will not do so now, not when we all are going through a rough time. He wants to provide people with what they are familiar with, and he has more empathy with those who want the hymns that they know. John wants to be supportive and to help us see that God is here with us, we are not alone. With all the new insight with technology moving us forward, do we really want to go back? Wouldn't it be wonderful to have people who cannot be with us physically, because of distance or other conditions, to be able to "be" with us each week?

The church is not closing. We are spiritual beings, and if we lose that ability, that is its own kind of sickness. We have the financial resources to move service online, and with Martha and Dennis sharing their knowledge and equipment, we can continue to have a presence.

Next meeting: March 27, 2020

submitted by Linda Bogardus