
MINISTRY REPORTS: MINISTRY IN A CHANGING WORLD

August 2, 2020

Pastor: Laura Jennison Reed

In mid-March, everything changed. Schools closed, stores closed, we were told to shelter-in-place. As a church community, the most consistent part of our lives together was physically gathering to worship God, to eat together at the Lord's table, and to share in one another's lives. Every Sunday. Every Sunday we gathered together in person. Until we didn't.

Since that time, our worship, the most visible part of our congregation's life together, has been online. I believe robust participation in worship helps to build and sustain our community, but what that means has changed dramatically. I am thankful that over the months we have added more people back into worship leadership. We are leading from the sanctuary and from our homes and I grateful for the way technology allows us to come together. We are also connecting through sharing of prayers during our worship service. It is good to see who is present and who worships with us at a time other than our live service. We are planning to enable those who are comfortable to come back to the sanctuary in September, but we will continue our online presence and together will work creatively on how to keep our community vital and involved wherever we are worshipping from.

Yet, because worship is no longer a physical touchstone for our community, other forms of creating and sustaining community have arisen. I am trying to be in touch with every family on a regular basis as are the Elders and Deacons. We are able to gather as a community online and that has been a wonderful way to see and hear from our community. I hope more people join us for these times on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

With everything, I continue to work primarily from home. I gather with community groups as I am able, but many of the ways I used to interact with the broader community are gone for now. I hope, together, we can look creatively at how to again nurture those relationships with other churches and community groups.

CCVP 20/20: written by John Martin

Since March, the team (Laura, Heidi, Raja, and John) has been following the science regarding COVID-19. We have been meeting, looking at ways to position the congregation to live out its mission goals as outlined in our Design in the developing "New Normal". We also looked at ways to activate anew our Ministry Gatherings. We will continue looking at and developing ways we can live into our Design going forward into that new normal we can now see but dimly.

The Ministry Gathering on August 9, of which this report is part of the preliminary document, is our most recent effort. We think that a Zoom meeting is the best format for the reporting and questioning portion of the gathering and that an in-person meeting in the church yard is the best for the free form sharing which is the second part. Also, it is the first chance many of us have had to see other members in person.

Disciples Food Pantry: Joan Fuller

The Food Pantry's community is the people who come together to retrieve, sort, stock, package, and deliver food. From the warehouse managers at three different food stores that have reached out to us to come get food that is still edible, to the people who then get it ready, they are our community. We have volunteers from the surrounding neighborhood, surrounding suburbs and the church. All coming together 3 and 4 days a week to serve our neighbors in need.

Our ministry builds connections with people who have disabilities and can't work, seniors, folks who have lost jobs because of COVID-19, and folks who work 3 jobs and still need a little help. They are greeted by a friend (Chuck or John) that is a familiar face and who always makes them feel welcomed. We have been told many times that we are the "nicest" pantry. Our pantry also builds connections with those same warehouse managers and employees that feel pride by just helping bring the food together and helping is load our vans and trucks. These people have even come to the pantry to see where the food goes after they have given it to us, furthering the connection.

The pantry helps our community find a sense of belonging, compassion and friendship in volunteering, and the security of knowing in these difficult times that you can get your fridge and freezer stocked to feed your family. Finally, the pantry is a standing invitation for everyone to come join us in worship and service.

Deacons: written by Heidi Gomez

Our Community are the people we interact with, have helped, family, friends. As deacons, although we might not see that we are doing that “job” outside of church, based on the responses from 3 deacons this is our community.

Deacons are actively caring for others, even though it might not be in person, they have reached out with a phone call, card, email. It’s the continuous interaction between deacons and anyone that crosses their mind. They are still helping in any way they can and serving the community even in this chaos. Right now, when everyone is mostly at home it can cause loneliness, anxiety, stress, so it is nice to hear from others, it’s nice knowing someone cares. Before the pandemic we gathered the deacons and asked them what a deacon was, at that time we thought it was just helping at church and saw it as a “job”. I think through this crisis we’ve discovered all the other amazing things we can do outside of church, all the wonderful things everyone else sees we are doing and we didn’t realize was also a part of being a deacon.

Elders: written by Raja Philip

As Elders, our community is our congregation, as well as anyone else who joins our online worship services. The role of our ministry, which is to provide spiritual leadership and encouragement to our congregation, has not changed even though we are in a shelter-in-place situation. If anything, our role as Elders has become more important because everyone, including each of us Elders, is trying to adjust to the ‘new normal’ and are facing challenges and questions that we have never experienced before.

In these difficult times, when the ‘new normal’ is becoming increasingly hard to define, we maintain and strengthen our connections with people in our community by reaching out to members on our calling lists on a regular basis. Also, as we prepare for our Elders meditations and prayers that we deliver at the Table, we work hard to try and make our message reflect the changing world that we are in today. This helps our community to be reassured that in the midst of all these changes, our Almighty God is ever present and is always in control. Also, we wish that the folks who are not regular attendees at our church but are watching our online worship will be encouraged and find strength in our messages. In this way we hope and pray that we are building new connections and growing our community.

Love Your Neighbor Day: Doris Carter

This year we will be working again with other churches in Lombard and Villa Park on the 6th annual Love Your Neighbor Day which will take place on Saturday, September 19, 2020 (rain

date September 26, 2020). We wondered if we should go ahead with LYND in 2020 but we were reminded that the need for help still exists, so we decided to see what safety precautions we could establish to minimize the risk to homeowners and the volunteers.

Applications are now being accepted from homeowners in the Villa Park/Lombard area who are having difficulty keeping up with work around their homes because of financial or physical limitations and who could benefit from a group of people volunteering at their home for a day. This year, all work will be in the yard or on the exterior in the home to protect both the homeowner and the volunteers. The work will be done by small groups of volunteers. Homeowners can rest assured that no one will be going into their home and all volunteers will be practicing social distancing. If you or someone you know could use help from your neighbors, you are encouraged to apply now. Applications can be obtained on the church website at www.ccvponline.net, by sending an e-mail to loveyourneighbor15@yahoo.com, or calling Doris Carter. The deadline for submitting homeowner applications is August 28, 2020. We have already received applications.

We are also actively seeking volunteers for LYND 2020. This year, volunteers will have the option of signing up either as individuals to be assigned to a team (as we have done in the past) or as a small group of people who are comfortable working together. You can also obtain volunteer sign-up sheets on the church website, or by e-mailing the above address or calling Doris Carter.

A few other changes have been made in 2020 for safety reasons. We will not meet together at CCVP to kick off the day, but instead teams will go directly to their assigned job sites. Lunches will not be served and volunteers will be encouraged to bring their own lunches. The deadline for submitting volunteer sign-up sheets is September 5, 2020. We hope you can volunteer and encourage family or friends to join you.

Stewardship Council: Doris Carter

The Stewardship Council has been very busy since March when the decision was made to stop worshipping in person and closing the building. We have considered many resources from our regional church, our insurance company, the Illinois Department of Public Health and the CDC, have had many discussions via Zoom call, and have prayed to God for guidance. We very quickly were reminded that the steps we take don't just affect the members of CCVP but our wider community which includes New Life, the Disciples Food Pantry and the outside anonymous groups that regularly met in our building.

We began to consider how we could partially open the building for limited use to meet the needs of our community. The first step was setting up guidelines for the opening of the Disciples Food Pantry which is now serving its clients as a drive-through. The second step was having Pastor Laura and worship leaders begin broadcasting the worship service from the sanctuary. The next more challenging step was responding to the request from outside groups to begin meeting again in the church building. We compiled a set of guidelines in a letter of understanding that the groups needed to agree to follow in order to begin using of the building. Two anonymous groups are now back meeting in the building.

Our next step has been to determine the guidelines for opening up the building for in-person worship and when that would be. We have determined for now that we will begin in-person worship on September 6, 2020. Of course, that is subject to change based on what is happening with the virus in our area and any new state orders being issues. We have also set up a list of procedures and guidelines which were just recently finalized. The purpose of these guidelines is to try to minimize the risk of exposure to or of spreading the virus while in the building and how to reach people for notifications should some who was in the building tests positive for COVID-19. We will be distributing these guidelines to our members and on our website.

New Life has advised us that they will not begin meeting for in-person worship until we begin doing so and have agreed to abide by our guidelines.

At the same time, we continue to so the regular work of the Stewardship Council. We are very thankful that are congregation has continued to make its faithful contributions to our church to continue our ministries and that we have not been faced with the challenge of making decisions based on a decrease in financial resources. We continue to seek God's guidance as we work through our "new normal" step by step.