

Report of the Lead Pastor for September 2020

Rev. Dr. Jack M. Horner

October 13, 2020

Baptisms: none

Funerals: Beth Shunk 9/9

Weddings: none

In-person worship

Our in-person worship has been going very well. Protocols are being followed and those that attend have been very appreciative to be worshipping in person. We have suspended registration for the time being because we are not near capacity for the spaces (180 nave; 130 fellowship hall).

Attendance over the last three weeks since in-person started are:

Saturday 5 p.m. **33**

Sunday Traditional 11 a.m. **58**

Sunday Contemporary 11 a.m. **68**

Online Worship **542**

Podcast development

The pastors are working with Danelle and Kelly to develop a regular podcast. If you listen to podcasts please help us with some information by doing a short survey on our website. Thanks.

Christmas Planning

The staff has begun planning for Christmas. With so much up in the air we went over a number of scenarios. We will continue to monitor the situation closely but we are recommending in-person services in our regular time slots of 2,4,6,8,10. 4 and 8 would be contemporary, 2,6,10 traditional. A pre-recorded online blended service would be made for streaming as well. We also plan on live-streaming the 8 and 10 services. All of the in-person services will require registration. Depending on registrations, which will begin in early December, we can add a 10 a.m. or noon service.

Reflections from the DEM

Pastor Richard Jorgensen serves as our synod's Director for Evangelical Mission. At last month's Synod Council meeting he offered his prognostications on the church. I found them interesting and worth sharing with the Council.

1. In person gatherings in our congregations will not return to pre-Covid-19 levels even after a vaccine becomes available. Currently, in person gatherings tend to be between 15-40% of pre-Covid numbers. We anticipate after a vaccine is widely available, we might see perhaps 70% of our pre-Covid in person attendance.
2. At the same time, online ministry will remain essential as we move into the future. We do need to be intentional not to call it "virtual," because it is real

ministry. The online platform will expand our mission in some exciting ways but will also require great intentionality if we are to be effective.

3. It will become increasingly important for congregations to develop a strategy for Hybrid Ministry which incorporates both on-the-ground ministry and online ministry in ways which allow us to be effective in both. This will require a great deal of adaptability and flexibility to do both well.

4. So far this year, 80% of congregations in the ELCA are maintaining similar income levels to pre-Covid-19 levels (while 20% are struggling), but we anticipate that there will be a significant stewardship crisis for many congregations in 2021. Part of this is because of a deep sense of fatigue and the prolonged nature of the pandemic.

5. Developing intentional strategies for increasing engagement in ministry will be essential for the future of the church in the United States.

6. We will see widespread burnout, depression and anxiety among both rostered and non-rostered leaders in the church.

7. We anticipate the largest wave (percentage wise) of clergy retirements since the post- World War II as a direct result of the pandemic.

8. Approximately 20% of existing Christian congregations in the United States will close as a direct result of the pandemic.

9. At the same time, we will see emerging new mission possibilities. This will require greater collaboration among congregations and other ministries. We will also may expect to see an increasing emergence of micro-churches.

10. We will observe an emerging spiritual crisis for many people. This will not always be bad. Some people will experience great spiritual growth, and others will also face a sense of disconnection and doubt. There will be increasing conflict within congregations, as people are faced with competing options and viewpoints for paths forward in ministry.

11. In all things, we remember that God is still God and God is still at work in our midst and will work through us and among us in this season and always.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Jack Horner