

Worship Committee, January 14, 2021

Present: John Sampson, Linda Bogardus, Dre Roebuck, Katharine Preston, Annie Scavo, Ann Hurd, Bernie Webb, Ellen Dubois, Susie Allen

The meeting began with a recap of Christmas services. John views the season as an arc from the first Sunday of Advent through Christmastime and then Epiphany.

- o First Sunday in Advent – reading from Romans, waiting for the coming glory
- o Second Sunday – the Annunciation of Mary
- o Third Sunday – John was away, Susie Allen spoke on “What are we waiting for”
- o Fourth Sunday – Reimagined pageant
- o Solstice celebration with fire pit, indoor Vespers, outdoor labyrinth
- o Christmas Eve – Outdoor carol sing at 4 PM (community invited), hybrid service at 7 PM
- o December 26 – John was away, Naj Wikoff spoke
- o January 2 – Communion
- o Epiphany, January 9 – The Three Kings arrived; new Council was installed.

When John asked for feedback on the Christmas services, the committee responded with many positive comments. They called the season an “incredible journey”, “spiritual from the beginning to the end”, and “uplifting”. All the committee had particular and enthusiastic praise for the Annunciation sermon, which some considered even life changing. There was less enthusiasm for the pageant, and one member felt that the Three Kings’ arrival fell flat. Someone suggested that the labyrinth be year-round, possibly at a place where the community could access it. From the discussion, John concluded that overall the Christmas season was a nourishing experience for everyone.

Special recognition was voiced for David Craig’s productions of the Zoom worship services. It was felt that the service has come into its own with all its parts making a complete panorama.

One committee member voiced that she is struggling with the church services. She feels that something is missing, and she would like to discuss how worship might connect us in a more tangible way. The service leans on the sermon itself. There is no singing and no conversation afterward as people leave immediately. John suggested that further discussion on this be the first topic at the next meeting.

We discussed what will happen later this year when John is gone on sabbatical. John said that there would be two phases to the leadership. The first phase goes from the beginning of September until right up to Advent. Before that, town residents and the wider community will have been invited to make an offer to lead worship on one of those Sundays. These would be a single standalone opportunity for a person to share something that is not our norm. Then, because John views the time from Advent to Epiphany as one continuing arc, Laurin McArthur and Susie Allen will be co-leaders working together to do that.

When John returns, he wants the congregation to share with him what our time was like: what things vibrated in our spiritual lives, what new areas were explored, what did not work, what we learned. Here is an opportunity to imagine how we want to move forward in old or in new ways, with the possibility to embrace changes. It will be a time of growth for everyone.

Meanwhile, John will be in England, immersed in study at Cambridge University. When he returns, he also will report what he learned. He hopes that the congregation will continue to come to church. To accomplish this, Plan A is to create something people are excited about, and Plan B is for people make a commitment to join and gather together each week.

When a pastor is gone, some congregations acknowledge in some way the continuing, unbroken bond between congregation and pastor. For example, each Sunday we could light a candle or offer a prayer for John. On the other hand, some congregations choose to embrace the opportunity to stand alone as a congregation.

Church includes all the study groups as an intellectual force in the life of the church. John aims to incorporate ideas and discussions from the various groups into worship services. Many of the sermons, readings, and activities come directly from these groups. Our spring calendar has been shaped by the Faith and Issues group's discussion of the Celtic calendar and Creation Justice. Susie talked of Celtic traditions and how we might include those in our worship.

- o January 30 – Celtic-inspired worship informed by the Faith and Issues readings
- o March 2 – Ash Wednesday evening service
- o March 20 – Rerelease of Vernal Equinox vespers video via Zoom gathering
- o April 13 – Indoor labyrinth in VSR with electric candles
- o April 15 – Good Friday service
- o April 17 – Easter – Lighting Paschal candle, sunrise service, 10 AM church service
- o April 22 – Earth Day service
- o May 1 – Celtic-inspired worship informed by the Faith and Issues readings
- o May 20/21 – World Meditation Day
- o June 5 – Pentecost
- o June 21 – Summer Equinox Vespers Celebration
- o July 31 - Celtic-inspired worship informed by the Faith and Issues readings

**Next meeting: February 18, 2022, 10 AM–noon**

Submitted by Linda Bogardus