

Some of the tasks of the past few months:

Meeting with various committees - children's programming, Adult Sunday School programming, worship committee, Leadership team and elders, continues to take place as we prepare for the continued unknowns of COVID.

Check-ins with individuals, virtually, by phone and in person, continues to be a major emphasis of my work.

Visioning, planning, coordinating and executing Church Around the Table has been a big task. As we continue to experiment with CATT I will work on refining the materials and communicate with hosts/facilitators regarding their experience and how we navigate COVID.

Creating hybrid worship services, aware of those in the building and those online, has been another place of learning these past few months. We continue to experiment with new ways of being community together, and I am grateful for a team with which to work - those learning the technical side, and those willing to lead worship, do children's time and provide music. It takes many, seen and unseen, to create worship together.

The Elders and I are preparing for a new members exploratory class this fall.

In the past few months, I've noticed excitement, enthusiasm and weariness in myself. This theme of weariness is pervasive right now - I hear it in others, and I perceive it in the lack of participation in signing up for volunteer positions. I recognize a tendency in myself, as the one full-time paid staff person, to want to pick up the slack and keep programs and pieces of worship going when no one else steps forward. I don't think that's healthy for me, as your pastor, or for the congregation. And so I am trying to move more and more towards the role, not of fixer, but of encourager and listener. Listening instead for where the tiredness exists, where the energy is held for us as a congregation, and discerning together how we live out the call to follow Jesus in this place and time

This requires an honest reckoning of who we are, at this point in time. It requires grieving and re-aligning our expectations to what's here. What happens when no one signs up to do children's time? What about if no one agrees to lead worship? How do we provide meaningful activities for our children without traditional Sunday school classes?

My hope is that together, we pay close attention to the movement of the Spirit among us. I've been thinking about the long arc of the biblical story and the many points of upheaval and major disruption throughout the centuries - the exodus, the destruction of the temple, multiple times, the exile to Babylon that spanned generations. And all of that before the birth of Christ! Over and over the people were brought low, experiencing a time when the future looked uncertain.

The stories of those times of upheaval and uncertainty give me hope. They serve as a reminder - God is here among us. We are called to bring our whole, imperfect, messy, sometimes tired selves, and follow Christ - no more, no less.

*God is here among us; let us all adore him,
and with awe appear before him.
God is here within us; soul, in silence fear him,*

humbly, fervently draw near him.
Now his own who have known God in worship lowly
yield their spirits wholly. -HWB #16