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Pentecost Sunday

Keeping in Touch

Resuming Worship: Sunday, June 20, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.!!

As you may know, the Diaconate met last Sunday, May 16 to discuss the matter of resuming worship. With COVID numbers (cases, hospitalizations, deaths) down, certainly below the target numbers that I had in mind for reopening, with the relaxation of restrictions in our state effective at the end of May, and the percentage of people fully vaccinated up and growing, the Diaconate has set a goal of resuming worship on **Sunday, June 20, 2021!** Of course, something totally unexpected could happen before then, but as it stands now, that target date seems eminently sensible to me.

Because of the relaxed pandemic restrictions recently announced by Governor Baker, and after consulting with other clergy about what they are doing in their churches, we have decided we are going to resume worship in the sanctuary, not outdoors.

When the pandemic hit, the general consensus was that no one was interested in the alternative forms of worship employed by some other churches. We didn't want to hold worship in our parking lot with neighbors mowing their lawns (which they always seem to do on Sunday mornings), cars going by on both Highland Street and Southville Road, and ambient noise from the occasional passing train. We didn't want to sit ensconced in our individual cars in our little parking lot (we only have room for about ten cars) and try to find a way for me in my car to transmit a worship service over the radio to you. We considered the possibility of holding live services on Facebook (which I don't do) or Zoom (a stretch for many of our people), but we felt that setting up an option that excluded a sizable number of our members didn't make sense. So, we settled for a weekly Keeping in Touch church newsletter, a church-in-society section of social concerns, a pastor's reflection, and an audio version of an abbreviated worship service that could easily be accessed through our church web site or that I would send to people individually through email. Not ideal, but it was the best we could do under the circumstances.

The following are the guidelines proposed by the Diaconate for the resumption of worship on June 20.

1. Services will be held inside the sanctuary.
2. In light of the size of our congregation and our sanctuary, if we wear masks and observe social distancing, we will not need to make a reservation to attend worship.
3. Access to the sanctuary will be from the front door only. The downstairs doors will be closed and locked with signage directing people to the front door.
4. Signage at the front door will note that masks and social distancing are required, regardless of vaccination status.
5. A box of paper masks and hand sanitizer will be positioned inside the front door.
6. In lieu of collecting the morning offering, the offering plate will be positioned at the back of the sanctuary near the doors.
7. Bulletins will be one-time use only, not recycled as we usually do during the summer.
8. We will utilize individually wrapped combination communion cup and wafer units for the Sacrament of Holy Communion. They will be available at the back of the sanctuary for worshippers to pick up when they enter on communion Sundays.
9. There will be no Bible study preceding the worship service.
10. There will be no coffee hour following the worship service. If all goes well, both of these, along with the Tuesday afternoon Spiritual Study and Growth Group should be able to be resumed in September.
11. There will be no choir. Resumption of the choir will be at the discretion of Pastor Paul, the Diaconate, Michael Larson, and the choir members. Since we never have the choir at Sunday services in the summer, we will look at resuming in September.
12. The church will be professionally cleaned prior to reopening, and probably monthly after that.

There will be a meeting of all persons interested on Sunday, June 6 at 11:00 a.m. to go over these guidelines and address any questions or concerns.

We have been (mostly) very patient during this difficult period, a time when we were guided by an abundance of care and an abundance of caution in our decisions. It has been a difficult time for all of us, especially for those of us who have lost loved ones. We know things will

never go back to the way they were, but we trust that God will lead us forward as individuals and as a church into the “new normal” that we will need to embrace!

I hope we see you all on June 20 at 11:00 a.m.!

Personal Prayer Requests

We hold in prayer:

- Marilyn Page, one of Darlene’s dearest friends, now living in Seattle. Marilyn is undergoing intensive treatment for multiple myeloma.
- Evelyn Till’s son, Eddy, who is still recovering from a recent stroke.
- Martha Hubley, who is still recovering from a mild heart attack.
- Danny, Dianne Simmons’s colleague’s husband who is still on Hospice care because of extensive lung damage from COVID-19 four months ago. Our prayers are with him and his family.
- Reverend Sanderson recently officiated at a graveside service for Pat Grogan, a long-time member of this church. Our thoughts and prayers are with Pat’s daughters, her grandchildren, and her two special friends from First Community Church, Bev and Evelyn.
- We are saddened to learn of the death of Amy Rose Beaudet, the sister of our Teresa Boyce. Amy passed away at age 55 after a five-year battle with colon cancer. If you would like to learn more about this amazing young woman who did so much with her life, you can access her obituary through the Morris Funeral Home website.

A note from the Pastor . . .

I would like to personally thank you for your prayers this past week. As some of you know, I have been battling melanoma for the past fifteen years or so. Because of my excellent dermatologist, who has caught spots and had them excised before they spread, I have stayed on top of things. However, because of this pandemic and the fact that my dermatologist stopped practicing when it began, my regular six-month checkups stretched into a year and a half.

When I finally made an appointment with another dermatologist, she discovered three spots that she biopsied; all turned out to be melanoma. The two on my chest were contained, *in situ*, and just had to be surgically removed. The one on my neck, however, was bigger; it spread not only sideways under the skin but also deeper, raising concern that it might have spread to the lymph nodes in my neck. My dermatologist referred me to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute where I met with a surgical oncologist and a melanoma dermatologist.

This past Tuesday, I had all three spots surgically removed. In addition, thanks to the injection of a radioactive dye in the skin surrounding the melanoma spot on my neck, the surgeon was able to discern which “sentinel” lymph nodes would be first in line to receive meandering melanoma cells, and he removed both of them as well. So, my neck is pretty much of a mess with scars. In a couple of weeks we will know if the melanoma actually spread to these lymph nodes and, if so, what the next steps will be.

I am sharing this to thank those of you who held me in your thoughts and prayers this past week. The surgery went well; no post-operative pain, but I am feeling washed out from the surgery and the general anesthesia. I am not a spring chicken, you know! But I am also sharing this as a lesson, as a warning.

To any and all of you who have put off routine appointments with your primary care physician or your dermatologist, to any and all of you who have put off your scheduling of a mammogram, a colonoscopy, etc., because of an abundance of caution during this pandemic or because you “just didn’t feel like it” (*and yes! I’m talking to you!!*), I *strongly* encourage you to make an appointment immediately! The melanoma spot on my neck, if it had been caught during a regular six-month full body scan, would have been no more serious than the other 10-15 spots that I have had removed over the years. However, because it dragged out over a year and a half, perhaps even a little more, it became much more serious.


We all need to practice self-care during this difficult period. Keeping to your regular schedule of doctors’ and dentists’ appointments and not postponing diagnostic procedures is an important part of self-care!

(If you are in need of prayer or if you know of someone who stands in need of prayer, and you would like to ask us to pray for them/you, please let me know.)

Thank you to:

- Those who have already turned in their 2021 pledges to the General Fund, and those Friends of the Church who have either already sent or pledged a special gift to support us financially in the year to come.

Celebrations

	
<i>Birthdays</i>	
Angie Bird	1 st
Scott Webster	6 th
Cricket Port	10 th
Jan Bishop	13 th
Jeff Willman	22 nd
David Crane	23 rd
Nancy Mantos	30 th
Mason Renaud	31 st

Audio Weekly Worship Service

This reflection by the Reverend Paul D. Sanderson, D.Min., Ph.D. is also available in audio form on our “Pod Cast” site as part of a devotional service. To access it, click on the link at the top of the Sermons page. The reflection/homily is the same reflection that is sent to those on our expanded church contact list, a list that is comprised of church members, members of our larger church family, and friends of the church who have asked to be put on our contact list. The pastor’s reflection is also accessible in printed form on our website in the sermon section.

If you would like to have a copy of the audio service/reflection (or this newsletter/reflection) emailed directly to you when it is recorded and printed (usually Saturday night or Sunday morning) rather than when it gets posted on our website (which can be several days later), please send an email to Reverend Sanderson and he can make it happen!

Quote/Thought of the Day on Patience

A quote or thought on patience is included in this newsletter every week because an abundant supply of patience is not only important for us in weathering this pandemic; it’s one of the most important personality characteristics/qualities/gifts that we can have in life.

“Patience is not passive; on the contrary, it is active; it is concentrated strength.”

Edward G. Bulwer-Luyton

A Second Quote/Thought of the Day

*“Lift the stone and you will find me;
cleave the wood and I am there.”*

Jesus

A Third Quote/Thought of the Day

*“When the power of love
overcomes the love of power,
the world will know peace.”*

Jimi Hendrix

Worship Service Music

The Prelude and Postlude for today’s devotional service are two more hymns played by the pianist Gerald Wolfe. If you can identify either of these old-time and deeply beloved hymns, send me your guess(es) by email. Next week I will give you the recognition you so deeply deserve by printing your name in this newsletter! (Caveat: today’s prelude is a modern country-type hymn, not an old-timer.)

The two people who correctly identified last week’s hymns, *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, written by Robert Robinson in 1758, and *Fairest Lord Jesus*, written by an unknown German hymnologist and published in the *Munster Gesangbuch* in 1677, were Darlene Sanderson and Cathy Ambler. Congratulations to both of you!

BTW, if you would like me to send you a copy of the audio worship service that includes the preludes and postludes as soon as I record it every week, please email me and I would be happy to do so. Also, if you have difficulty making out the words on any of the preludes or postludes, please let me know and I will find a way to get them to you and the rest of our mailing list.