

**The First Community Church of Southborough
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**May 30, 2021
Trinity Sunday**

Keeping in Touch

Resuming Worship: Sunday, June 27, 2021 at 11:00 a.m.!!

Note: Due to personal/family commitments, I discovered that I am unable to be present at the date that was originally suggested (June 20). The general consensus is now that we will resume worship in our sanctuary Sunday, June 27.

As I mentioned last week, the Diaconate met May 16 to discuss the matter of resuming worship. With COVID numbers (cases, hospitalizations, deaths) down, certainly well below the target numbers that I personally 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, we are presently planning to resume worship on **Sunday, June 27, 2021!** Of course, something totally unexpected could happen before then, but as it stands now, that target date seems realistic 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 also 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 involved a lot of work, a level of expertise that is frankly beyond me, and which still 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/sermon, and an audio version of an abbreviated worship service, all of which, thanks to David Crane, could be accessed through our church web site or that I would send directly to people through email. It was, of course, not ideal, but it was the best we could do under the circumstances.

The following are the guidelines proposed for the resumption of worship on June 27.

1. Services will be held inside the sanctuary.
2. Congregants are not to socialize inside the church either before or after the worship service (this is a killer for us!). If you would like to chat with your brothers and sisters in Christ, you could come early and/or stay late and be with each other either in the parking lot or on the front lawn.
3. 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.
4. There will probably be no need to rope off or block off certain sections of the pews. If two people sit at the two ends of one pew and two people sit in the middle of the next pew, they will be more than six feet apart from each other.
5. 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.
6. Signage at the front door will note that masks and social distancing are required, regardless of vaccination status.

7. A box of paper masks and hand sanitizer will be positioned inside the front door.
8. In lieu of collecting the morning offering, the offering plate will be positioned at the back of the sanctuary near the doors.
9. Bulletins will be one-time use only, not recycled as we usually do during the summer.
10. 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.
11. There will be no Bible study preceding the worship service.
12. There will be no coffee hour following the worship service. If all goes well, Sunday morning Bible study and the Tuesday afternoon Spiritual Study and Growth Group should be able to resume in September.
13. 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.
14. The church will be professionally cleaned prior to reopening, and probably monthly after that.
15. I (personally) no longer feel there is a need to surround the pulpit or lectern with a plexiglass shield. The primary purpose of the shield would be to protect you from me when I speak. Since congregants in our church usually gravitate toward the back pews, you will probably be at least twenty feet away from me; since I am fully vaccinated; and since I know of no one (who is not neurotic) who has been more careful over the past year and continues to be careful than I, I don't see the need for it. Pilgrim Church isn't using plexiglass and Groton (where Corey is the pastor) is in the process of removing it. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese in our area also does not use it for worship.

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 27 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.
- Emily Harris, who is having a difficult time in her ongoing battle with cancer.
- 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.

(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 church members who have 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

We are offering an abbreviated weekly worship service on our “Pod Cast” site.

There is a link to it on the Home page of our church website:

www.firstcommunitychurch.com. It can also be accessed from a link at the top of the Sermons page. On the Pod site, each service is listed by date. 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 an important factor in unearthing, developing, and expressing our creativity.

"Patience has to be cultivated.

Perhaps the entire creative process can be viewed as a patience builder."

Jill Ashton-Leigh

A Second Quote/Thought of the Day

"Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul—

And sings the tunes without the words—

And never stops at all."

Emily Dickinson

A Third Quote/Thought of the Day

"The future ain't what it used to be."

Yogi Berra

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!

No one correctly identified last week's hymns. To be fair, they were difficult—not what we usually sing in church. With regard to the Prelude, *Farther Along*, there are contradictory claims of authorship. The words and music are usually attributed to W. B. Stevens, although some have attributed the words to W. A. Fletcher. I suspect that the writer may have been drawing from passages of scripture such as John 13.7 and/or Luke 24:13-48. For your edification, the words to *Farther Along*, are as follows:

*Tempted and tried, we're oft made to wonder
Why it should be thus all the day long;
While there are others living about us,
Never molested, though in the wrong.*

Refrain:

*Farther along we'll know more about it,
Farther along we'll understand why;
Cheer up, my brother, live in the sunshine,
We'll understand it all by and by.*

*Sometimes I wonder why I must suffer,
Go in the rain, the cold, and the snow,
When there are many living in comfort,
Giving no heed to all I can do.*

*Tempted and tried, how often we question
Why we must suffer year after year,
Being accused by those of our loved ones,
E'en though we've walked in God's holy fear.*

*Often when death has taken our loved ones,
Leaving our home so lone and so drear,
Then do we wonder why others prosper,
Living so wicked year after year.*

*"Faithful till death," saith our loving Master;
Short is our time to labor and wait;
Then will our toiling seem to be nothing,
When we shall pass the heavenly gate.*

*Soon we will see our dear, loving Savior,
Hear the last trumpet sound through the sky;
Then we will meet those gone on before us,
Then we shall know and understand why.*

Now you can see why we seldom sing this in church! Although, to be fair, I have heard this sentiment articulated with deep feeling more than once by parishioners and/or counselees!

The Postlude is much less tinged with self-pity and the self-righteous hurt and anger of those who regularly claim victim status in relation to life. The words of the hymn *God Leads Us Along*, which was written by George Young in 1903 and which may have drawn from John 10:3 and Psalm 23:3, are as follows:

*In shady, green pastures, so rich and so sweet,
God leads His dear children along;
Where the water's cool flow bathes the weary one's feet,
God leads His dear children along.*

Refrain:

*Some through the waters, some through the flood,
Some through the fire, but all through the blood;
Some through great sorrow, but God gives a song,
In the night season, and all the day long.*

*Sometimes on the mount where the sun shines so bright,
God leads His dear children along;
Sometimes in the valley, in darkest of night,
God leads His dear children along.*

*Though sorrows befall us, and Satan oppose,
God leads His dear children along;
Through grace we can conquer, defeat all our foes,
God leads His dear children along.*

*Away from the mire, and away from the clay,
God leads His dear children along;
Away up in glory, eternity's day,
God leads His dear children along.*

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.