

---

---

# KEEPING IN TOUCH

---

August 2020

Dear Friends,

I hope you are all staying safe during this unprecedented time. It's hard to believe it's been 6 months since the Covid-19 pandemic began in our area. In these times, especially when coming to church is not an option, it is important to keep you informed and connected to your church family. The office has been staffed 3 days a week so phone messages, mail and emails are checked.

*This is a condensed version of our monthly newsletter and will touch on the following areas:*

- ◆ **REV. SUE'S SUMMARY OF GOALS FOR REOPENING THE CHURCH AND WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE**
- ◆ **ANNUAL BOARDS & COMMITTEES MEETING**
- ◆ **ATTENDANCE STATISTICS**
- ◆ **CHRISTIAN ED UPDATE**
- ◆ **CONFIRMATION CLASS**
- ◆ **WORKCAMP UPDATE**
- ◆ **PASTORAL SEARCH UPDATE**
- ◆ **BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

## WHEN CAN WE GET BACK INTO OUR CHURCH?

*Rev. Sue Remick*



### Current goal for in person worship

Many folk wonder when we will be able to get back into our church building and into worship in the sanctuary. The news is often tentative and changes from week to week. As of August 7<sup>th</sup> the Governor is mandating that outside gatherings be no more than 50 and that indoor be no larger than 25. That tells us that it is not safe to be indoors together yet.

The worship and building task teams have been preparing for the day when we can gather and will continue to do so.

**We have as a current goal to be back in the sanctuary to worship on November 29th (the first Sunday of Advent).**

That may seem like a long ways off but it is not. That also does not mean that we stop all our worship, our faith formation, our mission work, or our connecting.

**Worship will continue** through Zoom, Facebook, and Cable. We are proving that we are reaching more people than we have in the past! God has forced us to reach out and what a blessing it is becoming!

**Mission work will continue**, like grocery cards, the Food Pantry, IHN, Dismas House, Habitat, and mask making!

**Creative Connecting will continue** There is commitment by our leadership and staff to reaching out to parents, children, teens, adults and seniors in a variety of ways.

**Faith Formation will continue and so will fellowship.** For instance, **The Men's group** continues to gain an audience with their Zoom fellowship, allowing people to attend even from distant places.

**Confirmation** will be picked up by Pete Graham and he will be reaching out to this current class in the coming days. When the new Pastor is called, the future of Confirmation can be talked about. Can we try new ways to do old things?

**Adult Ed** opportunities will continue --like our Wednesday evening programs of movie reviews and hymn sings.

### DO YOU HAVE SOME IDEAS?

*Here are some of the ideas we have talked about:*

- 1. Perhaps we organize a parking lot gathering for ice cream! (Once the numbers allowed increase)*
- 2. Perhaps we organize a "not so" progressive but rather "At home" breakfast - with a gathering on a Sunday morning during worship? Isn't that what home churches did in 1918?*
- 3. Perhaps we do a book study, a prayer group, a program sent to the Willows to view? The possibilities are endless.*
- 4. Perhaps we use this time as a time like Lent - when we prepare our own selves - spend time with Scripture, read some good books, take walks, spend time with our own faith walks*

We know that there is nothing like being physically together and we pray that day will come soon. We know that "doing church" now must be done differently and that is stretching us in new and sometimes challenging ways. We also know that we can worship God anywhere and thanks to technology can connect in a variety of ways. So, until we know it is safe to include as many people as possible, let us continue to practice safe gatherings. Until we can see each other in person, let us not grow weary - let us keep reaching out, let us pray. Rev. Sue

(If you would like to chat - call me at 781-724-9831)

## ANNUAL BOARDS AND COMMITTEES MEETING

*Rich Lord*



We held our annual Boards and Committees meeting on Wednesday, August 5 (on Zoom, of course). Unfortunately, we couldn't serve food with this new format; but we did have some fun together. We reviewed the goals that we've established for our church from the Visioning project and outlined parts of our Church Profile that we've been using for our Pastoral Search Committee. Each Board, Committee and Staff member outlined their plans and goals for the coming year. This was a great opportunity to learn more about what others are doing here – lots of good energy and new ideas! – and we learned how we can stay connected and involved with our church during these crazy times. Many thanks to all who attended and contributed to the evening.

## ATTENDANCE STATS

*Recorded by Rachel Graham*

**NOTE:** We conservatively estimate number of actual attendees on Zoom by multiplying the number of individual logins by 1.5. I believe this is a low number, so if we think it's more accurate to estimate x2 or even x3 with families, I'm happy to update the math.

**OVERVIEW:** Not surprisingly, we've seen a dip in participation once summer hit, but the numbers are far higher than it would be in a live setting, since we're seeing people log in from their vacation spots (Cape Cod, Maine etc.) as well as other folks from other locations. Still, our overall totals since heading into quarantine are very strong:

**Facebook estimated total to date: 3478**

**Zoom estimated total to date: 1962**

**Estimated total: 5440**

**Participation Online since June:**

	INDIVIDUALS:		HOUSEHOLDS:
	FACEBOOK VIEWS	Estimated Live Zoom (x1.5)	Zoom Count (households)
June 7	191	102	68
June 14	167	98	65
June 21	133	75	50
June 28	121	81	54
July 5	107	50	33
July 12	112	77	51
July 19	119	63	42
July 26	90	63	42
August 2	<b>112</b>	63	42
August 9	<b>61</b>	56	37

*\* Now is a great time to invite your friends and families to join us for online worship!*

Staffing changes and an ongoing pandemic have called the CE committee to demonstrate flexibility and faith, and reiterate our church's commitment to children and youth.

The committee is working to delineate roles and responsibilities as we begin a search and discernment process. In the interim period, programming will continue with:

- Amy Glennon as the primary contact for Faith Formation.
- Lori Fox serving as the primary contact for Youth Group.
- Pete Graham serving as the primary contact for Confirmation.

**The committee continues to actively recruit both adults and youth who would like to take a leadership or volunteer role to support the program. There are a variety of ways to be a part of this – small and larger. Please email Amy (amyglennon@gmail.com) if you are interested.**

In order to allow for full participation as we move forward, a **brief questionnaire will be sent to the entire congregation via email.** Your answers will help us to make programmatic decisions about how to conduct Faith Formation and Youth Group during this time of virtual church and as we eventually move back into in-person worship. We welcome feedback from EVERYONE, and are eager to provide dynamic, interactive, instructional Faith Formation and Youth Group opportunities, whether we are operating virtually or in person. How do you feel about an Ice Cream Social? Care packages for kids? Delivering cards? Supporting the food pantry with a can drive-by? Virtual Movie Night? These are just a few of the ideas we're exploring, and we're excited to hear from YOU!

Please be on the lookout for the survey in your inbox.

Based on feedback from the previous survey, the following goals have been identified and remain a priority for the committee.

- Help families and children deepen their faith.
- Increase opportunities for intergenerational work.
- Increase involvement for youth, adults, and volunteers.
- Involve children and youth in all aspects of ministry and worship.
- Focus on inclusion, acceptance, and equity.
- Solicit feedback regularly, and include goal setting as a priority.

We are grateful to be part of a congregation that values and prioritizes young people, and we are enthusiastic about growing in faith together.

## CONFIRMATION CONTINUES THIS FALL

Led by Pete Graham

I am so excited to be leading confirmation class when it returns from summer break this September. This year's confirmands have already made an impact on our community and have shown themselves to be leaders not only of the future but in today's church. In the coming weeks they will wrestle with the questions we all have in our faith as we refine our beliefs. They will seek to discover their own places in the life and work of the church alongside their fellow members, adding their own special gifts to the body of Christ. It will be my joy to walk alongside them on their path to confirmation and on their continued journey of faith exploration.

We will hold a Zoom meeting on Sunday, August 30, at 7:00 pm so that the confirmands and I can begin to get to know each other and to discuss the plans for the remainder of confirmation. Keep an eye out for more information to come.

Pete

Our Workcamp 2020 trip to Waverly NY was cancelled due to COVID 19. Group Mission Trips had to cancel all summer programs this year and as a result lost most of their operational funding and laid off a huge portion of their staff.

Our Mission and Social Concerns Committee sponsored a fundraiser for Group Mission Trips with a matching donor (up to \$1000) from our Church. Our hope was to give back to this great mission that has given so much to our youth and our adult leaders for decades. The total collected through July from the fundraiser was \$1905. With the matching pledge and a little extra we will be sending a total of \$3000 to Group!

Plans to host Workcamp in Westborough in July of 2021 have also been suspended for now. Most of the 2020 camps were pushed out to 2021. We haven't been able to secure local lodging due to COVID restrictions and stress on local schools. It's hard to imagine when we might be able to convince any district or institution to open their doors to 300+ youth and adults from all over the country! Should we move forward, we will be looking for several new team members to replace those who have recently left our church.

We do have MANY youth and adults EAGER to attend another Workcamp as soon as they are safely re-opened. Potential sites for a 2021 camp include Pennsylvania and South Dakota! Stay tuned for updates as plans unfold.

Workcamp changes lives year after year after year. We appreciate your financial and spiritual support and hope we can continue our participation in this beloved mission for years to come.

## PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE (8/6/20)

*by Doug Wales*

At this point, we are now deep into summer. Since our last update, we have received many, many ministerial resumes. We have read through many candidate profiles and selected those with whom we want to journey further. We are in the thick of interviewing candidates, and, to be candid, are a bit picky. We want the right minister for our church!

Our initial plans to have a minister onboard starting sometime in September have now slipped a bit. Perhaps, given that we are still interviewing, this update can be most helpful by focusing on what's next. In a regular year (minus the Covid pandemic), we would finish interviewing, issue a Call to a minister, and then set up a Candidating Weekend. That weekend would include some small group meetings to get to know the pastor, possibly a meal together, and then, on Sunday morning, a worship service with a Sermon by the chosen candidate minister. We in the church would be given ballots to vote in the new pastor. The vote counted, the Call would be accepted and we would be off and running.

Not so fast in a pandemic! After a Call is issued and tentatively agreed to, we will be planning a pandemic-safe version of the Candidating Weekend. Plans are not firm yet, but we would hold some small group meetings using the pandemic guidelines of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the CDC, and our local Health Department. An example might be some limited group meetings with social distancing in the church parking lot or meetings, again with social distancing, in the back yards of some willing church members, to get to know the pastor in (socially distanced) person. The worship service and Sermon will likely be by Zoom which actually is not bad because we will continue to offer online services even after the pandemic (because they reach more people). The method of voting is yet to be determined but may be largely by computer. Other churches accepting newly called ministers are trying various methods and we are looking at their experiences for straightforward best practices. Once the vote has been taken and counted, the Call will be finalized and we will have our new pastor.

If you have specific questions, let us know. We appreciate your prayers and well wishes. We will keep in touch through updates as needed. When we are ready for a Candidating Weekend, we will reach out to everybody to let you know, likely by first class letter. The one thing you can do is to make sure the Church Office (Bonnie) has your most current address and contact information. Thanks for your support!