

Life at Cokesbury

September 3, 2020

A Note from the Pastor

We enter the Labor Day weekend with so many questions. For us as a church, the questions are good and necessary challenges. They give us a chance to get clear on what really matters.

Before I get into that, I have to let you know that I miss seeing people in person. I'm an introvert but I like people—that means that I love being around folks, but y'all wear me out (just kidding! hahahaha). Seriously, I miss being able to lay eyes on folks because that's one of the ways I know how people are doing and even our silly conversations are how I connect with you. I miss watching faces reacting to sermons and announcements and small talk. But for all of the unusual circumstances, this Covid thing has given me some time for reflection about my ministry and about our ministry together.

Cokesbury is a group of people who value serving the community, who love to be active among people, who have become family for each other (even when not genetically related), who love to be together, and who love Jesus. It's that love of Jesus that has motivated my thinking and preaching lately.

Who is Jesus at Cokesbury? Jesus at CUMC calls us to serve those who might be overlooked elsewhere. Jesus at CUMC knows the brokenness we all have. Jesus at CUMC calls us to welcome each other not with patronizing and cheap hospitality, but with deep and shared hospitality that touches hearts. This is the kind of hospitality that values the dignity of everyone who comes and welcomes them to be as much a part of our life together as someone who has been with us since 1958. That's our new frontier of ministry.

In this time, maybe we all have to think about who we are handing over our ministry to? We know it won't always be the children of our members, but with all of the changes in our neighborhood, it likely should be people we haven't met yet in our neighborhood. The future mission of Cokesbury will not be what it was in the past, but it will have to take shape in the hands of people we might not have met yet who have experiences and stories that are unfamiliar to us. Our job as faithful followers of Jesus is to let Jesus be Christ in our neighborhood and at our church campus—that means that our job is to introduce the Jesus who welcomes every sinner, every broken or wounded person, and invites them to journey with him just like we have.

Peace,
Jonathan

COMMUNION UNDER THE TENT

This Sunday, September 6, we will share Communion under the tent as part of our 9a.m. worship service. In the month that we've worshiped under the tent, it's been a wonderful way to share our faith, to be a gathered community welcoming our neighborhood, and, for sure, to see each other. Go to the bathroom before you leave home, bring your own chair, wear your mask, and bring your full presence. We look forward to seeing those who feel comfortable getting out this Sunday at 9a.m.

OFFERINGS AND GIFTS

We continue to be incredibly fortunate for the financial stewardship of our congregation. We are blessed with faithful givers who have enabled the work that we've done during the coronavirus crisis. Whether you've given to purchasing the hot dog cart (that will enable lots of existing and new ministries), contributed to the ministries where we've given away produce, hot meals, or hot dog meals, or to audio-visual equipment, you've empowered Cokesbury to increase our presence online and in the community. Even if you have been unable to physically participate in our ministries, you have been vital to our mission in this season. Thank you for answering God's call!

WHEN CAN WE GET BACK TO NORMAL?

After the Governor's recent comments about how North Carolina is trying to manage public gatherings, there have been a number of questions about activity at Cokesbury. We are still working under the guidelines provided by the WNC Conference of the United Methodist Church. Those safety guidelines for churches during the Covid-19 crisis ask us to limit worship to outdoors or online only. They also ask us to limit any in-person gatherings to 10 or fewer. So, for the foreseeable future our current programming will continue to be mostly online, with our in-person mission and worship gatherings continuing to be limited to food distribution and outdoor worship opportunities.

That said, there are some safer options for getting together that you might consider. Perhaps you could invite your neighbors to get together for brunch, lunch, coffee, or dinner on Sundays for a "watch party" to watch the online worship services. If you are part of a small group, you can gather virtually in a ZOOM conference, you can gather in person on someone's deck or yard, you can even arrange to come to the church and set up chairs under the tent. In all of these options, carry your own chair, wear your mask, and stay distanced from each other as much as possible.

Please Keep These People in Your Prayers

Serét Dinkler

Pam Betts

Dan Dumas

Doug Hargett

Deanna Long

Randy Pitcock & his sister, Cindy

Steve Kinzler (friend of Jonathan's, diagnosed with Covid-19)

Teachers, staff, parents, and students going back to school

The extroverts in our church