

Life at Cokesbury

November 12, 2020

A Word from the Pastor

Well, we were cruising pretty well for a hot minute, weren't we? In person worship felt really nice with faces in the sanctuary and the kindness and spirit of friendship all together. But, lest we forget, we are in the midst of a global pandemic, one that puts members of our congregation at particular risk. New guidelines came from the Governor this week reducing the recommended gathering size to ten persons or fewer. I know that churches are exempt, but this just doesn't seem like the right place for our church to exercise our unique privilege afforded to us. So I have determined that, upon weighing our options, we should suspend in-person worship until conditions change. For sure it messes up everything, schedule-wise, but that's the norm for 2020, I guess.

This would normally be a chance for Cokesbury to congratulate Joan Gillis for her years of service to our congregation. Joan has earned her retirement by her dependability, kindness, and high competence. She deserves a fitting thank you from our congregation, but this is all a new and different situation—2020 again.

If we look back at the Bible, the people of God never expect things to go according to form. Even Jesus made adjustments and improvisations along the way, inviting his followers to journey with him—not to sit still in one place. The people of God are always on the move, always in transition (that's what life is like), always "going on to perfection."

I wish things felt more secure and stable, but the realities of life don't work that way. But the people of God always find our security not in buildings, or systems, or programs; instead our security is our Rock and Salvation, the God of all creation. Our true sanctuary was never made of brick, wood, and stained glass, but Christ. Like all churches, we are faced with transitions and changes that are out of our control. But we've got this because Jesus has got this.

It's not fair that I don't get to see you all, but instead you will see me (and I won't even know if you are making faces at me or not!) on our livestream worship service. A dear friend used to say that "whoever told you life is fair either lied or was just badly mistaken." Life isn't fair, but God is always Grace and Christ is always present through our love for one another. Hang in there and take deep breaths because as much as I love you all and as much as you all love each other, God loves you even more.

Grace.

Jonathan

Worship Changes

Due to the fast increase in Covid 19 cases in Mecklenburg County, we will suspend in-person worship until further notice. The Governor issued new guidelines for in-person gatherings that, while churches are exempt, have influenced this decision. The safety of our congregation is a top priority, especially because we have older and more vulnerable members. We will continue to make our plans in accordance with the best wisdom from the health department at both the state and county levels.

This Sunday we will, however, continue to broadcast our livestream worship service via Facebook Live and YouTube. We are also exploring ways that we can make use of the tent for outdoor worship. Our plans for services during the Advent season, including Christmas Eve, are still being discussed. We'll keep you updated as soon as we make decisions about what to try next. If you have ideas, suggestions, or requests, please email Pastor Jonathan (jonathan@cokeburyumc.net).

Consecration of Estimate of Giving Cards for 2021

By now everyone should have received your “Estimate of Giving” cards in the mail. If you are able, mail those to the church as soon as possible. As a part of the livestream worship service on Nov. 15, the pastor will pray a prayer of consecration over all of the cards, whether received or not. Your faithfulness to the work of God through Cokesbury is a powerful witness of your faith and this year that has been especially evident, even with all of the changes and adjustments we’ve had to make due to the coronavirus pandemic. YOU have demonstrated the faith that has maintained this church. We simply ask that you continue your deep prayers about what you believe God is asking of you. Because we value confidentiality, our church financial secretary will be the person who tallies your estimates, but because we are working our hardest to create the most responsible budget possible, everyone’s estimates of giving provide the basis for our 2021 budget. The Ministry Board, led by our Finance chair, Nancy Cottingham, will set the direction for ministry based largely upon what our congregation members feel led to contribute. May our decisions be led by the Spirit of God, who has far more invested in us than even we do.

Farewell to Joan Gillis

Our church secretary of 22 years, Joan Gillis, is retiring this coming week. Joan has been an integral part of our church family and the day to day work at the church. Because she has been so important to us, you may want to thank Joan in person. If you would like to thank Joan personally, the best “Covid-safe” ways are to call her at the church office (Monday-Thursday mornings next week) or to schedule a time to stop by on Thursday, November 19, to have some time with Joan in person. To schedule a time on Thursday, email Pastor Jonathan (jonathan@cokeburyumc.net) so that we can ensure we don’t have too many people together at one time and to make sure that those who want to see Joan in person have a chance to do so. Of course, your relationships with Joan go way back, so you can always reach out to her, yourself. These are just the “official” opportunities we can make available at this time.

Transition in the Church Office

We are very fortunate as a congregation to have someone who is already a part of our church family who can fill in after Joan Gillis’s retirement. The Staff-parish Relations Committee are working on a new job description before we advertise the position. For sure there will be changes in that office role necessitated by the coronavirus and by the evolution of how churches operate. Mia Cabaniss has agreed to fill-in for a few weeks after Joan’s last day. Mia has already familiarized herself with church operations and will be a tremendous asset to our understanding of how we can move forward. If you get a chance, reach out to Mia as she steps in to help us out.

Please Keep These People in Your Prayers

Dan & Kay Dumas, Diane Bolster, Linda Horne, Katie Postel