

Worship Circle Annual Report for 2021-22 Church Year:

May 21, 2023

Dave Lloyd, Circle Coordinator

This year the Worship Committee met one of the strongest challenges reasonably imaginable: Having our minister retire while facing the ongoing difficulties of the Covid pandemic. This included, most significantly, the disruption of the normal search process for a new minister. By the end of the winter, the church hired Rev. Beth Johnson as our new minister, and we are set to support Rev. Beth in the coming year.

Rev. Pam Rumancik's last service was on June 12, 2022, and the congregation held a going-away party on the church lawn after the service. Rev. Pam served our church for eight years, and in a normal time we would miss her, but carry on with an interim minister and a new search process. Instead, the Committee had to mobilize to provide services every Sunday, starting the very next Sunday, June 19.

We were very fortunate that our Director of Programs, Pam Fodor, sent out the call for ministers to provide services on various Sundays, and between September and February, we had 13 services provided by guest ministers. Thank you to Pam and to all our guests, who were, without exception, flexible and friendly, and all presented interesting and vibrant services.

We started the summer with a number of services—mostly outside in the Conversation Circle, but moved inside in inclement weather—that included a great deal of member participation. Service leaders would tell a story, recite poetry, or ask questions, and church members picked up the theme with their own contributions. This was a fun and less formal way to conduct church and the services were well-received. Committee members led services for twelve Sundays in a row in this way.

When we returned to holding services inside the church in September, in addition to the services led by guest ministers, we had three services led by Pam Fodor on traditional themes like Water Communion and holidays, one service by the Membership Committee to recognize new members, and seven services led by members of the Worship Committee.

Our final service before Rev. Beth's arrival was on February 26, 2023, led by the entire Worship Committee. Each member had a chance to reflect on the changes wrought by the pandemic and the challenge of providing worship services every Sunday.

Rev. Beth arrived for her first service on March 5, and conducted a "getting to know you" service with questions to and from the congregation. Rev. Beth has brought an infusion of energy and new plans and ideas for the church, and the next year promises to be an exciting one.

We have continued to hold services at the church and streamed on-line via YouTube. We have also continued the practices that we developed during the plague years, with more video, a variety of music, and guests to enliven our worship.

As always, our services have been enriched with music provided by Music Director Jamie Pastman and the Celebration Singers choir, led by Julia Beckman. The challenge of holding services that are both live and streaming has been met and conquered by our tech team: Gene Schafer and Alex Dvorak. Without the work of all these experts, our services would be dull and painful.

One of the benefits of membership on the Worship Committee is the opportunity to learn from the research that goes into putting together a service. This is along with the joy of seeing your ideas turned into an inspiring service, and the fellowship of working with the minister and each other. We always welcome new people who want to participate in worship.

People who have participated in church services or otherwise served on the committee in the past year include Julia Beckman, Charlie Fischer, Jane Foulser, Megan Griffin, Pat Gwozdz, Jonathan Hand, Susan Morrison Hebble, Darren Howard, Anita Jencks, Karen McDowell, Pat Miller, Linda Rio, Gene Schafer, Paula Sejut-Dvorak, and Ron Solberg—and maybe more, to whom I apologize if I have omitted you.

The efforts of the members of the Committee, church staff, visiting ministers, and especially the members of the congregation, who have listened and participated so readily, enthusiastically, and patiently, have all combined so that, if this church should last another 152 years, people in the future will be able to say “This was their finest hour.”