

I am extremely pleased to share what we at Church of Peace UCC in Fond du Lac have been doing during this pandemic time to keep our members connected.

Our last service open to members was March 15th. During that week, our interim, Pastor J reached out to a few members and decided to do a live service on Facebook on Sunday mornings. The response was good, so she pursued doing live chats on Facebook at 2:00 Monday-Friday until the middle of May. She also was doing a zoom meeting twice a week at 3:00 so members could see each other and feel connected. We have now decided to go to 2 chats and 2 zooms (still being in touch 4 times a week) and continue holding live Sunday services.

Since this pandemic was during Lent, Holy Week and Easter there were extra live services available. We had a Tenebrae service on Maundy Thursday where we had 10 people, socially distanced sitting in the pews and on their reading, extinguish a candle.

We held "drive thru" communions on Palm Sunday, Easter, 1st Sundays in May and June. The first 2 communions my husband, Pastor Jeannie and I wore white painter suits, masks, and gloves. We had prepackaged communion cups with the wafer on top of the grape juice. Pastor Jeannie and I handed out the communion, arm's length away from the member sitting in their car and if anyone brought an offering, my husband would collect. We used every possible safety protocol we could think of.

Before the beginning of the pandemic, we had an in-person interview with the candidate we had chosen as the best fit for Church of Peace. There was a verbal offer on the table that had been accepted by our candidate. There was agreement with the Search Committee and the candidate to wait to see how long this would go on. We continued to keep in contact during this time.

On May 11th I had conversation with our Associate Conference Minister that we had a candidate who accepted our verbal offer. We talked about going forward and planning a Call Sermon. I then reached out to my committee and through prayer and discernment we developed a plan to do a Meet & Greet and Call Sermon in the safest way possible.

I am attaching the first and second letters announcing the Call Sermon to our members. Once the second letter introducing our candidate was sent out, our Council members called each members, asking if they received the letters and reminded them to RSVP as requested in order to attend the Meet & Greet and Sunday service. There was one Council member who sent me a detailed report for every call he made. It was awesome. Members were excited, some were hesitant, but we offered them a zoom webinar meeting to attend and watch the Call Sermon and vote on-line. For the zoom webinar, we offered a test run during that week and then the invite with directions for voting was sent to all with email addresses.

Then the planning of just how to do things. That plan is described in the attached letters. Besides the letters and my duties for Sunday in church, we marked off our pews, so people were social distanced. The ballots were in a plastic bag, the pencil had been wiped with a sanitizer and placed in the bag. This was prepared with gloved hands. The ballots were handed out with gloved hands, no reaching in front of a person to pass out. The ushers walked from the front to the back and waited there until the ballots were ready to pick up. They then walked back the front and off to the sacristy to count the ballots.

We held our Meet & Greet with half hour sessions and allowing up to 20 members at a time in our Fellowship Hall to meet and have a question and answer time. On Sunday, we were allowing up to 25% of what our sanctuary holds for being in-person attendees. This was for members who did not have technology to do a zoom meeting on Sunday. As members attended the session, their names were

marked off as we requested RSVP to attend. Masks were required and hand sanitizer was offered, and temps were checked when entering the church building. We also had a list of those attending Sunday. These will be kept as a tracking if there would be an issue.

This plan took lots of extra thought and preparing, but it was so worth it. We had a vote from 48 members in the church and 74 members on zoom webinar. Our vote was to extend a call offer to Rev. S to be our next settled pastor.

Through this process, Church of Peace has purchased additional hand sanitizer dispensers to be placed at entrance/exit areas of the church. We have a large staircase and an elevator entering the sanctuary. We have sanitizer available downstairs as well as upstairs. We encourage all to use the sanitizer as they enter the sanctuary and as they exit. There is a plan that we have greeters at the doors opening so only one pair of hands touches, our custodian will wipe areas during any function.

I sincerely hope this will help other churches through their transition. Many of our members who attended one or both of our functions expressed how good it felt to be able to come into the church again and how they are missing their church family. We are hoping that soon we will be able to enter for service using social distancing guidelines.