Presbytery Forum notes – 5.13.2020

I apologize that I was late getting into the meeting, so I did not get notes on everyone’s status.

Kathleen Splitt

* I am needing to get started on my chapter of the COVID bible, but so far I have not, though I signed up for a chapter
* All three sons called for Mother’s Day

Stephen Earl

Sue Babovec

Duane W – Pawnee

* Caution about starting worship too soon – we have to weigh the risk – a lot of pressure to do so
* Looking to retire; renters will be out of Lincoln home, so will start the move in July
* Retirement date is October 1st

Jeff Hopson

Zac Wolfe

Dennis Hett

Douglas Hileman

* Our secretary at the church is retiring
* Continue to record and are adding people to the worship service by recording at home and then sending it to me.
* We are currently working on and planning to resume worship in June, but that date may get changed.

Jim Splitt

John J Duling

* Had zoom with sons and daughter-in-law on Mother’s Day
* Writing the COVID Bible – there are clear guidelines on how to do it.
* I have been out to the store wearing my mask

Joungnam lee

* Very good, tried to join last two times, but missed it.
* Every Saturday night recording worship on laptop and a member uploads it to home page.
* Prayer meeting every Wednesday night or Thursday night in June
* Today going to airport because daughter graduated in Michigan and she is coming – found a job, but working at home

Karen Moritz

* This is 2nd of 4 zoom meetings today – kind of have a headache
* Recorded our service for this week (musician and administrator is here on Tuesday so we do it on Tuesday) working at home other days
* Convening a re-opening conversation group – had hoped for Pentecost, but now doubting the wisdom of that
* I’m tired today
* Doing the video worship seems to take almost more time and energy; a whole different rhythm to have it the beginning of the week
* Helping care for a retired minister – with early signs of dimentia – not going all that well (from my perspective). I’m not ready even the first Sunday in June since Lincoln is not declining in cases yet.
* Isolation and self-quarantine isn’t good for mental health for those on the edge in normal times
* Finished my class
* Now doing a virtual coffee hour on Zoom – this week will be our third one – has been a way to reconnect and be in touch with each other
* Board meeting (first one) on zoom is coming up
* I’m thankful for zoom, but it can be very wearing – I get tired of staring at a computer screen all day

Stephen Niles

Teresa Bartlett

Tommy Osborne

* Nothing has changed from last week.
* Anxiety in community because of COVID at the Cargill plant
* So some are now agreeing that it was best they didn’t start sooner
* Planning to start worship in June

Sue Babovec Rev. Dr. Miriam Bennett (an M.D. and Mdiv) in Philadelphia

* Acknowledged that some of what she had to say might not be applicable for small, rural congregations
* A test is good at the time it is taken, and before you get the results your exposure and infection may change
* First thing every church needs is a disaster plan – as chair of disaster committee, coming to the May Presbytery meeting will provide a disaster plan based on FEMA’s guidelines
* There are very few churches in metropolitan areas at least that are gathering for worship yet
* We live in a society that is sue-happy, so we need to be sure the building is cleaned and it is documented cleaned, and needs to be professionally cleaned, even the duct-work, because we really don’t know how long COVID will remain
* You will use only 25% of sanctuary because of the 6 foot distancing – so multiple services likely
* Will need pre-registration for who comes to which service
* If children come, the children will have to stay with them and not run to a favorite relative or friend – something we all will need to work on doing – Christians tend to be huggy, but we cannot be anymore with this virus
* Constantly be in contact with people to let them know the plan and when they can attend
* Must have hand sanitization station at all doors, and all must be left in the car except for the car key because all has the potential to carry the virus. Offering can be provided at the door
* Bottled water needs to be available
* No singing – remove the hymn books and all other stuff in the pews
* All needs to be projected on the wall.
* Soloists need to be 20 feet away from anyone else
* If you have a daycare or preschool, requires same professional cleaning and all toys and books also need to be cleaned
* COVID 19 is just as serious today as it was when it was first heard of, but we are beginning to be more aware of hand-washing, masks, etc.
* She is not sure we will ever be able to worship like we have in the past, but definitely not until there is a vaccine
* We need to know that if we re-open we may have to close again
* Needs to be a non-touch way to take temperatures as people enter

Jim Splitt – Was she speaking officially or on her own authority?

Sue does not know, but thinks FEMA doesn’t make mandates like the above, so not sure but she will try to find out.

Jeff Hopson

* On the one hand it feels draconian, but on the other hand it points out some things we need to think about
* We are working on the 24 questions to be asked before starting again
* I think our planning and gathering will be measured, hopeful and careful

Sue, We need to be as wise as serpents and as gentle as doves.

Jane Holtzclaw

* We had session, and no one is eager to open up, and we will probably be waiting another month or two at least
* Every time I hear the kind of things you shared, Sue, it makes me know how complicated this will be; opening up will be more complex than we expect it will be.
* From a medical point of view, it is scary. There is a lot that isn’t known, and that we don’t know but may be known. The trajectory is still going up. Personally, I’m not going out eating in restaurants. I think we need to be cautious and see where we are a month or two down the pike we will know more. Our congregation includes many members who are 70s, 80s and so on. And the ones who are most dedicated to worship are the ones who are more vulnerable.

Duane Westing

* The medical folks who are working with COVID patients seem to be less vulnerable than the general public, according to Cuomo – the percentage of medical professionals getting COVID is lower than the general public

Jane Holtzclaw

* As the caution increased with medical profession, the numbers of infected has lowered

Zac Wolfe

* I wrestle with the faithful, theologically speaking, approach to opening up again. We need to be mindful that we are putting people at risk whenever we open, and we must raise the theological questions as well as the practical questions.

Kathleen Splitt

* Walter Brueggemann has written a book since the pandemic began titled Virus As A Summons to Faith: Biblical Reflections in a Time of Loss, Grief and Uncertainty. I cannot say if it speaks directly to the practical things we have been discussing, but it is an excellent book to help us as a prophetic voice in our congregations.

There was some discussion about the small groups that we hope to begin, the covenant groups. That discussion will continue via email as we were out of time.

Kathleen Splitt closed the forum with prayers.