

CPMC Conference Ministers and Congregational Pastors

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

Today is the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Susan shared that she had seen a rainbow on her way to work this morning and it reminded her of God's promise to Noah never to destroy the earth by flood again. She then opened with prayer.

Pastors were reminded of the ever-expanding list of resources regarding the COVID-19 pandemic on the CPMC website. This list is constantly being updated and added to as new resources become available.

Pastors were also reminded that CPMC Annual Meeting will be virtual this year and to keep watching their email for more information as it becomes available. For now, congregations should be naming their delegates and reporting that information to office manager, Monica Clem. And, name a Youth Delegate! They will have a special session of their own, in addition to the June 20 delegate session.

Holly Blosser Yoder and her son Jacob attended the partnership meetings in Ecuador this past March and have information from that time to share. We expect that they will have some reporting to the Annual Meeting gathering, but there may also be some other forms of reporting made available from them.

Later today (Wed., April 22) the ministry staff will provide links to the greeting & prayer (offered by Nathan), Scripture reading from the NRSV (read by Susan), and the sermon (delivered by Amanda) that they are offering to pastors as a gift for use on the Sunday it works for them to use this resource. A manuscript will also be available for distribution to those without electronic capability. These resources will be recorded on YouTube and churches will access it that way.

Questions from the pastors:

- What will the new normal after this time of social isolation look like? How do we encourage people to keep moving forward? "finding goodness in the midst of chaos."
 - Susan wondered, "What is the sense of the people in the congregation? Are they expecting to go *back* to how things were before this pandemic disrupted our lives? Or, do they have an understanding/expectation that things will be different going forward?"
 - Amanda reminded pastors that they have power to name new realities. What we are doing now IS real community. This time matters and it is not just a "time-out." The people behind the screens are real people and real dreams for ministry and real community are still happening.
- This time has exposed how our relationships were superficial before. We were filling up time with activities and glossed over the reality that we were quietly lonely and isolated, in spite of our busyness. Now, without all the activities to fill our time, we are confronted with our loneliness and exposing the lack of community that had existed before.

- As an interim pastor whose term ends soon, how do we bring closure to my time in this congregation? There are several pastors who are ending their time at their congregation and will not be able to say “good-bye” in person. How do you say “good-bye” when you can’t be together?
 - Give affirmations and possibly suggest some things that still need work.
 - Consider going back at some point to say an in-person farewell to the congregation. Just knowing this is an option can be reassuring.
 - Given what is needed to give comfort and normalcy in this time of upheaval, adding to it by challenging congregations to do new things doesn’t seem right.
 - Susan encouraged emphasizing the foundational truths right now.

Nick Detweiler Stoddard, Salem MC, SD – Talked about 3 stages of looking at change:

- The naming stage – naming what has changed.
- The imagining stage – dreaming about what could come of this
- The putting-into-practice stage – how do we make the dreams come to fruition

Susan suggested that individuals and groups go through these stages at different rates and that there can be fits and starts as progress is made.

Taric Leichty, Bellwood MC – introduced the group to his 3-week-old son. He and his wife, Katy, are in the process of adopting a baby who represents a bright spot in the midst of disruption and death brought on by the coronavirus. Taric gave testimony through the sharing of the timeline they have experienced: On March 17 they were informed of a woman, 3 weeks from her due date, who was giving her child up for adoption. Two weeks later, the baby was born. Taric and Katy had not yet gone through their adoption home study, a process that normally takes 8 weeks to complete. Miraculously, their home study was completed in 5 days and they are currently in Oklahoma working on the adoption and learning to know their new son. We rejoice with Taric and Katy on the birth of their son and the forming of this family!

Susan requested feedback from pastors on their desire to continue meeting weekly or would a different time-frame work better. Let the ministry staff know.

The meeting ended in ZOOM breakout-groups for sharing and prayer.