

Vestry Check-In May 7, 2020 Minutes

Highlights:

- *Emily briefed the Vestry on the Michigan Bishops' directive on a gradual return to in-person worship. When an area has two weeks of continuous declines in Covid-19 cases, the local Bishop will give us 10 days' advance notice that it's okay to resume limited worship services with health safeguards in place. That probably means no choral or congregational singing. And a return to no in-person worship is still possible, depending on medical and civic facts. The goals are safety first, then inclusion and participation.
- *It's unlikely we'll have an in-person Reading Camp, but we are discussing with partners ways to re-imagine it.
- *Vestry discussed ways to make it easier for all members to access the online worship service, including ways to provide hardware and/or tech support for those needing help.

Present: Emily Williams Guffey, Anthony Estes, Lisa Jones, Roger Basse, Betty Warner, Desmond Jones, Denise Crenshaw, Chuck Atwater, Christine Galli, Carolyn Maher, Jim Treece, George Port, Howard Matthew, Phil Brown.

Underlining indicates action item.

Emily opened the meeting just after 6:00 with the Prayer for Guidance (BCP, p. 832).

Minutes from the April 30 check-in meeting were **approved**.

Emily led us through an extensive discussion of the latest Directive from Michigan's three Bishops -- <https://www.edomi.org/maybishopsdirective/> -- and how it affects our future plans. The directive lays out three phases towards reopening. We're currently in Phase I – Hiatus. Phase II, Re-entry, would see a very gradual, very limited opening of some things. The Bishops will consider moving us to Phase II when there have been two weeks of continuous decline in cases in our area, after which they'll give us 10 days' advance notice. Today is the fourth day of consecutive declines in Covid-19 cases in Detroit. If we get to two weeks of declining cases, and add 10 days' lead time, that would put us at roughly June 1 for moving into Phase II. Phase III, Deeper Participation, aka much more like "normal," is still pretty far away – and we may need to move back to Phase I as necessary, even after we've moved into Phase II. Emily admitted that it's "somewhat frustrating" to have no firm dates, but added that it's also "wise" because the changes will depend on medical and civic facts as they unfold. She then turned to specific impacts of the directive.

***Buildings & Grounds projects.** Some of what followed was brand new, due to a flurry of emails over the previous couple of hours. The Bishops' directive says nothing about B&G, maintenance or repair, so Emily had asked Canon Jo Hardy about our three major pending projects: The Bell Tower, security cameras, and the sanctuary floor, which is tied to the stormwater project. Canon Hardy believes that anything indoors clearly has to wait for Phase II, or Phase III if people need to be in close proximity. For example, a walkthrough with potential contractors to prepare bids on the floor project has to wait for Phase II, meaning June 1 at the earliest. For the cameras, Desmond and Emily will talk later on details about laying necessary wiring. Desmond said the camera vendor was asked to put everything in writing with a view towards possibly starting next week. The status of the Bell Tower project is still unclear, but we may know more tomorrow (May 8). Ram Construction first had said they'd maintain social distance as much as possible, as would project overseer Quinn Evans and Facilities Manager KaClarence. Based on Emily's statement of a minimum of four people working at a time and a need for occasional restroom access, Canon Hardy thought that was also Phase II project. Just before this meeting, though, Emily asked Quinn Evans/Ram if any modifications could make it possible to begin before Phase II. Our Quinn Evans contact said she could do some oversight by FaceTime, reducing the number of people on site, and Ram said two people definitely could maintain social distance. Emily will get back to Canon Hardy to see if

this can start with these conditions. But if not, then the start might be delayed until mid-summer. We'll see what the Bishop's office says. Desmond said a Stormwater meeting is set for next Friday, May 15, to discuss all of the projects related to that.

***Reading Camp.** The Directive says no in-person summer programming. Denise Crenshaw, Seth Lloyd (of Outreach), Calebria Webb, Lisa Jones and Emily are talking about re-imagining it in new ways. They will reach out to neighborhood partners.

***Music.** New information describes the dangers of choral & congregational singing (see [What Do Science and Data Say About the Near Term Future of Singing: May 5, 2020](#)) and the directive says to proceed with caution. The consensus is no congregational or choral singing until we have a vaccine or similar medical safeguard. Emily's hasn't had a chance to discuss with Director of Music Edward Maki-Schramm and Youth Choir Director Katrina van Maanen the implications in detail.

***Worship.** In general, it will remain online for the foreseeable future, even in Phase II. The capacity for gatherings is still very small. Our space allows us to spread out, but the plan specifies a need to disinfect every surface after every gathering. That may not be possible. Emily's top priority is inclusion and participation. For those who don't want to or are unable to take the physical risk, coming to an in-person worship service is not worth it. In Phase II, Ed can record on the organ, and one or more worship leaders may be able to speak in the church. Christine noted that it would be a strain to do both an in-person and online service. George asked, when we open our doors and invite people in, even a small group of three or six, what would our insurance liability be? If we invite people into our sanctuary, they are our problem. The costs for both insurance and disinfecting the church could be inordinately high. He added, "I think we need to be prepared to be closed for a long time." Chuck noted that's particularly true without mass testing, to know who's a carrier or who has had it. Lisa cited the example of some employers, who designate some folks as essential workers, but before they can even step inside a building, they're asked questions and have their temperatures taken. We need to determine what we think is essential, she said, but doing so will be onerous, and probably not something we can do anytime soon.

This led to an extended discussion of what we can do currently and going forward, rather than what we can't. Denise said that quite a few people show up for our virtual service, including some who haven't been able to attend for a long time. When we get back to some form of normal, she asked, how can we take advantage of this? Christine suggested we find out who's not attending when the Shepherds and others call parishioners.

***Access to online services.** Christine said, "If I didn't send my mom a specific link each time, she wouldn't be on" the streamed worship service. "We may need a buddy system to ensure people who want to, can participate." While we currently invite would-be attendees to "Click Here," they can easily be dissuaded by technology hurdles. We need to find ways to make sure everybody can participate. Betty related that she had spent some time with Merle Watts to get her online, but had problems with the microphone. Roger said the Shepherds already had tried to ask people if they were connected. They found examples of people resistant to online worship, as well as ones whose computer access and/or skills were an issue. Christine recommended the YouTube link as "seamless," and much easier to navigate than Facebook. After further discussion, the consensus was to have the link in the e-newsletter connect via YouTube rather than Facebook. Christine will send a YouTube link to Denise, to test the ease of access, similar to our previous test of ease of donating online via both Apple and Android devices. Emily said maybe we need to offer "office hours" when members can ask questions about anything tech-related. Carolyn volunteered her teenagers to do that; she will follow up.

Betty said she was trying to figure out if she had an extra iPad or iPhone to lend someone. Christine said that some form of technology donation would be "a great form of ministry." Lisa agreed to check, while Christine said she thought there were old Nooks at the church. Emily: Let's put the call out for that in the newsletter. Roger will get the word about the hiatus out to the Shepherds and thus to their flocks, asking also who else wants to be more involved in the online worship service, and who need help getting online.

We then turned to the 175th Anniversary, keeping in mind the Bishops' directives. Emily said some digital ideas are bubbling up. For example, the Heritage committee is spearheading developing more

digestible pieces of the elder interviews. She hopes some small portion of that will be included on May 31, Pentecost Sunday. The Music team is starting to consider what music can be included, as well as how music can evolve in this longer period of online worship.

To do so, though, some staffers need computers for home use. Anthony needs one to work at home. His background is in digital communications, so he's a natural fit for technology, but he needs a new computer at home to handle these additional video editing chores. Katrina has become our unofficial music editor. Last Sunday, she was able to edit a music program that included both Maki-Schramms plus four singers—her first try at that sort of combination. It was kind of luck that it turned out, though. With her current computer and software, it was very close to not working. If we're looking at a long period of wanting to put together music that reflects our community, she needs another computer, and special software (Final Cut Pro). Katrina already has priced out what she'd need. Emily said she hasn't wrapped it up into a proposal yet, but to put together Pentecost music, we'd need to order it in the next few days. We discussed where she might look for a good deal on the desired Apple products (for their editing capabilities), that Katrina can get an education discount which should put the price at around \$2,000, and that the funds would come from office expenses. Jim: Let's mention this to the congregation and see if someone will offer to fund it, as a member did for the junior acolyte robes.

Resolved: That Emily checks out possible computers for two staffers, and put together a proposal for Anthony and Katrina to continue their ministry. Approved.

In Brief Committee Updates, George Port offered the following motions on behalf of the Finance Committee:

Resolved that, other than in the case of an emergency, any expenditure of \$1500 or more made by any committee of the church, whether within the budget or not, must be approved by the Vestry. Approved.

Resolved that all checks in the amount of \$500 or more shall require two signatures. Approved.

Jim, noting that the timing of the second motion might strike some as odd, affirmed, and Vestry agreed, that Vestry's previous decision stands that, due to social distancing, some checks wouldn't get two signatures, but our processes will make sure that the rule is met in principle.

As time wound down, Lisa said that going forward with our weekly check-in meetings, we may spend 15 minutes max on some of these updates and committee reports, and then hunker down and devote time to several major topics: Reopening; our 175th Anniversary; plans for a Capital Campaign; and Implementing Sacred Spaces work and thoughts.

Finally, we turned to **Communications and Connections**, i.e., what are we hearing, and are we finding ways to connect people, whether virtually or otherwise. Emily: Someone who has never set foot in Christ Church, but recently moved to the area, found us online, already has contributed, and plans to join us when we can reopen. With so many things we can't do that we want to, she said, our communications should emphasize our belonging, so that we all feel valued and supported. That's true even as we convey information about the reality.

Emily and Anthony reported on their Wednesday Bible Study. They had maybe eight people the first time and five yesterday. Barbara Cushing was at both. Emily: On a regular Sunday morning, I cannot be in her Bible study, so it's a blessing to me to be in one with her. Two households of young parents, who usually cannot attend Sunday morning Adult Bible Study, also joined. Emily also has received a request for Episcopal 101—what's it mean to be an Episcopalian. With Anthony on board, watch for more opportunities for online connections. Denise reported that more people are coming to the online centering prayer gathering than used to come in person. Emily: I heard from a colleague in the diocese that she's watching our services, and she's starting to recommend our services to other clergy (i.e., "Hey, do it this way."), which is a huge compliment. Lisa noted that a lot is happening during the day. Could we replicate some daytime things for after 6 p.m., for those who can't peel away during office hours? Christine said that we have the opportunity to be very, very far-reaching with our online presence if we get the word out. She cited the example of an accounting-group conference which usually draws about 300 attendees. Due to Covid-19, the organizer took it online, and 12,000 accountants took part. "With the right lens, and looking at how we can get out there in a bigger way, our service has so much to offer," she said. Betty

asked if we could we put up a sign about the online worship? Jim will send around a photo of the electronic sign, showing the online worship service notice. Jim: Do you want more of a banner? Betty: That or a fixed electronic sign or one that every other message is “Sunday Streaming.” Christine: When we get the scaffolding up, put a banner up high.

Adjourned shortly after 7 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Treece, secretary