



WOODBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Rev. John A. Thomason, Pastor

The Life of the Church

by Pastor John

August 19, 2020

Dear Church Family,

Here are some odds and ends at summer's end – and what an unforgettable summer it's been!

Outdoor worship – We have held five outdoor worship services with an average attendance of 35 people and a maximum attendance of 49 people. The weather has been excellent with plenty of shaded area for seating, while maintaining at least 10 feet social distancing. It has been a wonderful experience, harkening back to days of old. It has also been a very visible presence in our community that has attracted several families who have not attended our services before.

First indoor worship – A light rain required us to move our worship service from the North Green into the sanctuary last Sunday morning – the first time we have gathered in that space in five months. Thank you to those who prepared the sanctuary for safe usage and to the worshipers who cooperated beautifully with the protocol to keep themselves and others safe. I regret that I was not present last Sunday due to illness (not COVID-related!). I'm grateful to my ministry colleague and friend *Garrett Walkup* for stepping in to preach so ably at the last minute. Just to review our worship procedures: we will continue to meet on the North Green into September; if it is raining on Sunday morning, the service will shift automatically to the sanctuary and is open to anyone (not just worship leaders) up to a limit of 50 people.

Lawn signs – For several months, the church lawn facing Main Street has been dotted with signs created by some of our youth. The signs express support of two groups: essential workers during the pandemic and the Black community in its struggle for racial justice. Predictably, the signs evoked a variety of responses from church members and community neighbors and also raised some important questions: How long should these particular signs remain on display? For future purposes, what kinds of “message signs” are appropriate on church property, and who should make these decisions? At their August 13 meeting, the Church Council voiced gratitude to the youth who participated in this project and bore witness to their faith in such a tangible way. In view of the fact that national political conventions are taking place in August ahead of a volatile fall presidential election campaign, the Council voted to remove signs that could be construed as politically partisan. The remaining signs express our church's unequivocal commitment to social justice and love of neighbor. The Council authorized the creation of an ad hoc committee to develop a policy about future message signs on church property. Members of our leadership team

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also expressed the desire to move beyond posting signs to a more direct, face-to-face engagement with the Black community and their urgent concerns.

COVID-19 support fund – Please be reminded that the Church Council created a special fund to assist persons experiencing a financial emergency during the pandemic. No one has requested help thus far; but as the health and economic crisis is prolonged, more and more people may be caught in a shortfall. Please do not hesitate to call me (845-707-5152) if you need assistance.

Helping Hands Service Corps – The Church Council has approved a detailed proposal for a new ministry to our community. The ministry will extend “helping hands” to our neighbors who need practical, short-term help on matters such as home repairs and upkeep, transportation, and respite care. The team heading this project will be seeking to identify potential volunteers who possess the needed skill sets as well as the heart for Christian service.

#20 Church Street – The long-time tenants at our second parsonage moved out on August 1. The Board of Trustees acted quickly to advertise the vacancy and make repairs and upgrades on the house in anticipation of new lessees. Income from renters helps to fund our operating budget, so every effort is being made to expedite this process as quickly as possible. After reviewing a handful of applications, a new tenant has been chosen, and the lease will be signed to occupy the property on September 1st. We’re grateful to the Trustees for their planning and hands-on labors.

To be in a time when “nothing seems to be happening” in the life of our church, a lot sure is happening!

Grace and peace,
John