



WOODBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Rev. John A. Thomason, Pastor

The Life of the Church

by Pastor John

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Dear Church Family,

“Live from New York, it’s Saturday night!” “Live from Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida, it’s Super Bowl LIV!” There was a time when introductions like these were common for TV programs. Many shows were broadcast live – with no margin for error, no re-takes, and no opportunity to edit out bloopers. Today, we take for granted that most of the programs we see on TV are pre-recorded.

This is why I took it as a compliment when a church member told me last week that she thought our worship services were being broadcast live. “The services seem so immediate and real,” she said. I almost hated to tell her: what she and others see at 10:30 on Sunday mornings is produced at least two days earlier and then carefully refined into the finished product we all find so amazing. We pre-record for several reasons: (1) the online picture and sound quality is so much better than with livestreaming; (2) we can record from multiple sites at multiple times; (3) we can involve more people in the service without assembling a large group in the sanctuary; and (4) we can edit the recordings and make additions to them that enhance the service.

I’d like for you to be aware of our recording process, because it reflects not only the “miracle of modern technology”; it also reflects a lot of hard work by people who are far more skilled and creative than I am! The process begins by mid-week with a variety of church members recording hymns, special music, and a Children’s Time, usually on their cellphones. On occasion, these recordings are done in the sanctuary, but most originate from people’s homes. *Catherine Mason* offers lectionary resources for children to guide families in creating a Children’s Time. *Chris Shay* records music which he provides to the singers and which they listen to through earbuds. Though they are all singing from separate places, they produce a unified sound. Again, amazing!

Chris also works in advance to record instrumental music, which is accompanied in our broadcasts by visual images chosen by Chris, *Bill Wilhelms*, *Theron Kissinger*, and more recently by Catherine Mason and *Mark Davis*. Images of springtime blossoming in Connecticut and photos of our youth, children, and other church members have been very moving.

Open Hearts . Open Minds . Open Doors

On Friday mornings at 11:00 AM, we record the spoken parts to the service. The liturgist and I are the only persons present in the sanctuary besides our trusty cameraman, Theron Kissinger. At times, we've done something we cannot do in a "live" worship service – we've done retakes when there have been miscues or technical glitches. How many times have I wanted to do something over in a worship service, but faced the reality that do-overs were impossible! By pre-recording the service, we can repeat parts of the service until we get them right.

The recording in the sanctuary takes less than 45 minutes. And then Theron starts working his magic! All contributors to the service submit their videos to Theron, and he weaves them together into a seamless tapestry. The editing process takes between 3 and 6 hours, depending on the amount and complexity of the material he has to assemble. He is able to add creative touches, such as the Congregational Collage for last Sunday's opening hymn and the Youth Choir Collage for the Children's Time. Multiple faces pop up on the computer screen, like the iconic opening to the old TV series, *The Brady Bunch*! Theron's handiwork is a true labor of love – which is to say that it is laborious and also that it is done voluntarily as an expression of his love for God and God's people at WUMC. Many people contribute to each worship service, but without Theron's skill and dedication, our contributions would go for naught.

The purpose of this whole recording process is not to demonstrate our technical skill and artistry; it is to make possible a worship experience that would otherwise be impossible under our current circumstances. The end result is that church members and others who are isolated by the pandemic become connected to each other and to God. One prime example is our homebound 101-year old church matriarch, *Florence Brown*, who is shown below watching last Sunday's service on her caregiver's laptop. Indeed, what a blessing for all of us to be the church when we cannot attend church!

Grace and peace,
John

