

4th Quarter Board Report from Interim Rev. Jerri Handy Submitted for Consent Agenda

Rev. Jerri Handy, Interim Co—Minister.

As we step into 2021 it is time to begin making decisions, not New Year resolutions but big decisions that will set the course for ministry, worship, service, spiritual formation, and a host of other decisions. I find great hope in the future of this congregation, I desire for every friend and member of First Christian Church to see that our light still shines from the heart of Eugene.

Our current sermon series is “Who are We Becoming?” and is meant to help us focus our thoughts and actions to shaping our future as a congregation. It is a question that is raised in many Zoom rooms where I am present. It is meant to help us as a congregation to answer the congregational survey that will go out in 3 stages. Your answers will inform the Transition Team and help formulate plans for leading this congregation forward.

Areas of responsibility for leadership are currently shared between Pastor April Oristano and me. This team/ Co—Pastor approach to ministry has been both encouraging to each of us and built a new model of ministry where there is no Sr. Pastor but a shared responsibility for the care of the congregation. It is a leadership style with which I am comfortable. I value working alongside April.

Change is difficult. There have been so many changes in 2020. Rev. Dan Bryant’s Retirement, after spending 30 Easter worship services with this congregation. He was an integral part of the life of, not only the church, but also, in the lives of individual members and friends. Rev. Bryant dedicated your babies, married many of you and your children, released the souls of parents, spouses, children into God’s eternal embrace. There is continuing grief about this loss. And the COVID Pandemic made a proper ‘Good—Bye’ impossible. The presence of Judy Bryant was also important in many areas of the church, perhaps most poignant in the music of the New Celebration. Her absence is also noticed.

COVID 19 has called for some of the most impactful changes to the life of the church. No In person worship from March 13th to this very day. It has been the most difficult point of change for our church. The rise of COVID coinciding with the end of Dan’s ministry has complicated our grief. So much change, so much pain. Below is my pastor’s view of my participation in CRRT

COVID 19 brought with it the need for State and Local mandates for the wearing of masks, cleaning protocols, how many people can be in the building at any one time and further how many people can be in a single area at any one time. Request for entering the building must now be completed and granted to even come into the building. While not insurmountable these requirements are inconvenient and go against the grain of our sense of welcome and service.

The COVID Rapid Response Team (CRRT) was formed to provide oversight to following the (everchanging) State mandates. It was decided the person appointed responsible for the day-to-day management of COVID protocols was to be Yvette Diggs, our Operations

Administrator. I believe it is important to state clearly that Yvette serves on the CRRT and carries out the decisions of the CRRT. There has been a misconception that she is making the decisions on her own. This is not the case.

State Mandates give guidelines for modern well-ventilated buildings. We have a beautiful building that does not have well ventilated air. This further diminishes the number of people who can be in the building.

Fire Department directives that say we can resume use our kitchen once specific upgrades are made. Installation of appropriate hood with flame suppression system will be needed but that is under Property Committee and not CRRT.

Another issue is there are also problems with insufficient lighting in Egress or getting out of the basement in case of an emergency. There is no sprinkler system in our church thus the magnifying need for proper emergency lighting and egress, again a Property Committee issue.

There are various regular and emergency maintenance vendors that need access to the building. It is important to calculate the number of people who will be in any one area of the building at any given time.

These four areas must be understood as a set of mandates and other building needs which must be followed. Yvette is involved in scheduling the building access for Vendors. CRRT works with all building entrance requests. Once approved the scheduling needs to go through the Church Office.

I am aware that this is a lengthy area of my report, it is a big part of where I spend my time as your Interim Co Pastor. I have spent 16.75 hours (since Christmas) on working at preserving relationships and ministries and assisting in the creation of clarifying documents for the congregation and users of the building.

Community Ministry Teams

This is a large and busy area of our congregational presence in the Heart of Eugene. COVID has impacted every part of this vital ministry group. (see Community Ministries Team Report for fuller details.

- Good Samaritans
 - Most impacted by COVID they have not been able to sit and talk with our unsheltered friends of the street. This has been deeply grieved by the team and staff of the church as well as the negative impact it has made on those who depended on the compassion and support, they received.
- Helping Hands
 - also deeply impacted by COVID-19, has found a way to continue getting warm clothes, coats, gloves, hats, tarps and tents, sleeping bags and blankets into the hands of people who depend on FCC for survival in the winter. Each week a group of HH members bags and delivers 15-20 large black plastic bags of winter items to 3 local agencies.

- The ministry has struggled and even lost members to the team and the church. This is a cause for deep sadness.
- In the loss of key members of HH the Good Samaritans have found a way to be of help and service by partnering with HH to see that essential needs are being met in the community.
- Sunday Interfaith Breakfast—Downtown Food Hub—Interfaith Food Hub.
 - Not only deeply impacted by COVID restrictions but also the Fire Department this group of Interfaith partners continues to find a way to feed the hungry.
 - Limited access to the Kitchen at FCC
 - Fire Department closed the Sunday Interfaith Breakfast (See above notes.)
 - COVID Mandates limited access.
 - Days and times needed to be scheduled and monitored.
 - SIB gave birth to Downtown Food Hub
 - Morphing ministry to meet needs of food happened when SIB could no longer serve the breakfast.
 - This group began making sandwiches and delivering them to the unsheltered.
 - Downtown Food Hub gave birth to Interfaith Food Hub
 - The Interfaith Partners came together in reclaiming the Interfaith connections that drive this ministry.
 - This group that feeds the hungry found, not only, the COVID restriction limiting how much and how often they could gather to keep up with the increasing requests for bag lunches, but also, the state of our building limitations to be troublesome.
 - Broken Pipes and clogged drains meant needing to find a new place, on a moment's notice.
 - After much discussion, discernment as a group shared understanding that the building was holding Interfaith Food Hub back in their efforts to feed the hungry.
 - For the past few months, a search was made for new space to host the ministry. St. Mary's Episcopal Church is that new home.
 - There is cause for celebration! A vital ministry to our cities unsheltered population, has outgrown our building. We have been hosting this ministry for many years. We share this ministry with our Interfaith Partners. We can now Bless them as they move into different production space. This vital ministry of our congregation continues. We are no longer the hosting Interfaith member but now become a sustaining member. We support both financially and with volunteer 'hands on' work in making and distributing sandwiches. This is a cause for celebration!

Transition Team

Transition is well underway. On the 20th of January 2021, the first of 3 surveys will be sent to our congregation. The questions in each survey will be deeper at each level and subsequent surveys (#2&3) will be based on the previous surveys. Your participation is vital to the shaping of the next call of Minister(s), Worship, Ministries, Building(s). For a more complete report see the Transition Team report.

Worship

Over the time I have been here at FCC I have been encouraged by the people who work together to bring the online live stream of Worship services to our members and friends. There (was) is a huge learning curve in learning how to be present for, to, and with the congregation when I have only met those who serve on committees. I know there are more out there with whom I have never met.

Our current series “Who Are We Becoming?” is meant to help us as we delve into our transitional process. There is no need for us to wait until COVID is over. We can and are beginning to live into who we want to be when COVID is over.

We experimented with a meditative service during ADVENT and plan to have a similar worship plan for LENT. This Lenten season it will be a second service, shorter, meditative, and live (few to no recorded parts). Having fewer recordings will help the services run more smoothly. We will offer Lenten Boxes for this season, filled with ‘helps’ for enriching your Lenten experience. Our poems for lent will focus on the work of Wendell Berry. More information on getting these boxes will follow.

I have been together in ministry with the congregation First Christian Church, Eugene since May 1, 2020 (7.5 months). I am deeply grateful for the life and faithfulness of this congregation. Thank you for extending a call to Interim Co—Pastoral ministry. It continues to be an honor and pleasure to serve here with you.

Thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted

Rev. Jerri Handy

