

Report of the Worship Committee
October, 2021
Jon Montan, Chair

Overview

The Worship Team has spent this year coping with the ramifications of the continuing Covid -19 pandemic. Our efforts have been to provide meaningful worship services to people who choose to attend in-person and those who choose to attend remotely through the Zoom platform.

Historically, (before the Covid pandemic) the Team has been responsible for securing guest speakers during times when the minister has time off or is absent from illness. This responsibility is ongoing and involves designating and scheduling someone on the Team as a Lay Leader who works with the guest speaker and other service participants, generates an order of service, and oversees to set-up and conduct of the service.

With the onset of the pandemic in 2020 and shift to virtual worship services, the physical tasks associated with in-person worship shifted to preparing both a script and an order of service. The script (which is akin to one for a play) guides those who are conducting the service so that the Zoom session proceeds as smoothly as possible. Roles include Zoom host, co-hosts and chat monitor. These roles will continue as we continue to use the Zoom platform.

During the summer of 2021, it appeared that the pandemic was waning locally and we might be able to return to a semblance of in-person worship, yet the value of having the virtual option remained, so we transitioned to hybrid worship. Hybrid worship added a new level of complexity in that we needed to marry the in-person characteristics of worship with the virtual experience. This has been done by using cameras that are managed by an operator using a computer program called ManyCam. In September of this year, the Church contracted with two paid operators (Billie McClosky and Elias Nelson) who perform this weekly function and free up Team volunteers to perform other heretofore-mentioned tasks. At this writing, hybrid worship is expected to be the *modus operandi* going forward. The total annual cost for both operators together is approximately \$2500. They are paid \$50 a service.

Summary of Worship Services

During 2021, we were joined by the following guest speakers via Zoom:

Rev. Evin Carvill-Ziemer
Kim Bouchard
Rev. Lyn Marshall
Rev. Lane Campbell (also once in person)
Rev. Schuyler Vogel
Rev. Dr. Shaun Whitehead

Rev. Jan Hutslar
Rev. Douglas McCusker
Revs. Anne Marsh and Wade Wheelock
Doug Rubio
Tricia Pethic (her sermon read in her absence)
Rev. Roger Jones

We also heard sermons (in whole or in part) delivered by members of the Worship Team and staff:

Cathy Crosby
Rajiv Narula
Arianna Whittaker
Jon Montan
Ben Hunkins
Dave Nelson
Carol Zimmerman (staff)

On a few occasions we visited other congregations' services via Zoom:

UU Society of Schenectady
First Universalist Church of Rochester, NY
Adirondack UU Community
UUA General Assembly

Worship Team

The current Team is comprised of:

Jon Montan (Chair)
Ben Hunkins
David Nelson
Robin Collen
Rajiv Narula
Cathy Crosby

Doug Rubio has taken a sabbatical from the Team as of Sept. 1, having served magnificently for many years. Arianna Whittaker, who has been a valued part of the Team, has also stepped down as she is attending SUNY Geneseo. The Rev. James Galasinski attends team meetings and we coordinate speakers and schedules jointly. The Team also works closely with Church Council and the rest of the staff and our contractual operators to try and ensure that all policies are being followed. The Team has scheduled its regular meeting time for 7 PM on the third Monday of each month.

Looking Toward the Future

We have three near-term goals:

1. Make sure worship services are conducted well during Rev. James's sabbatical from January through May, 2022.
2. Recruit (a small number of) new members to the Team for new ideas and to spread out the workload.
3. Prepare a realistic budget for 2022.

Regarding Goal 1, Rev. James has lined up speakers for the Sundays he normally would be covering, but the Team needs to find speakers for several yet-to-be-scheduled Sundays. We always gratefully welcome speaker and theme suggestions from members and friends of the Church. Regarding Goal 2, we have had a couple of people express interest in assisting the Team on a case-by-case basis, but not serve as regular Team members. It would be very helpful if we could add two new members to replace the void left by the departure of Doug Rubio and Arianna Whittaker. Regarding Goal 3, our annual budget is basically comprised of two expense categories: (1) speaker honoraria, and (2) miscellaneous such as candles, chalice alcohol, etc. Official clergy guest speakers are paid \$270 for a service, and lay speakers are paid \$150. Church members are unpaid, as it is seen as part of their annual contribution. Sometimes guests will waive their honorarium and sometimes guests are part of a pulpit exchange with Rev. James where payment would be inappropriate.

The Team uses a form to help both us and potential new members evaluate their ability to serve. Worship services are for many the "face" of the Church and the Team takes our mission very seriously. We also strongly believe in having FUN while we work to bring healing and inspiration to people.

I want to close this report by thanking the members of the Team and everyone who helps make services meaningful and beautiful. It is such a pleasure to work with you.