

Pastor's Report  
January 15, 2022

We learned so much in 2021. I know it was a difficult year for Community Congregational Church. The past year was difficult for all churches. It was difficult for many of us personally. Some of us lost family members or friends. Some of us struggled under that weight of loneliness or saw our finances strained. Some of us simply saw our dream of returning to "normalcy" get snatched away. Whatever your specific situation, I'm sure you saw your share of challenges in 2021. I think, as a church, we learned some things.

We learned a lot about flexibility. We opened the church doors for in-person in June; we closed them again at the turn of the year. We faced difficulties in obtaining new music for worship and had to explore different avenues for music. This led to different instrumentation and different sounds than we have previously embraced. Much of the feedback has been positive as we have embraced change in ways that we had resisted before. We have had to be flexible and open to the Spirit's leading through it all.

We learned how to make "hybrid worship" work. Things were clunky at first. It was difficult to work out the sound. Camera angles are sometimes less than ideal. Yet we continued to improve and to tweak what we were doing through the end of the year, trying to create the best possible worship experience no matter how you were attending on any given Sunday. There were many ways to attend too: in-person, by computer, or by phone.

Another thing we learned is how to make hybrid worship work without the pastor. During the summer of 2021, I took the sabbatical that had originally been scheduled for summer 2020. It took a team effort and good substitute pastors to keep things running smoothly. Thank you all for the work that you put into that time.

Now at the beginning of the new year, I am discouraged but not surprised that we are once again worshipping virtually only. I am proud of this congregation for continuing to prioritize safety during each phase of this pandemic. We have been conscious on our Biblical call to care for one another. It has been one of the ways that we have lived our faith during this time of COVID.

I want us to consider what other ways we are being called to be the Church at this time. We passed a difficult budget last month, and mission giving was reduced. During the coming months, I'm going to ask you what you believe God is calling us to physically do to further God's kingdom in our community. This will be part of a visioning process in which we will invite God to help us imagine what this church will be ten years from now. Twenty years from now. We will be asking hard questions about what is sustainable and what is possible.

It is a difficult and it is an exciting time to be the church! Think of all we have learned and accomplished these past couple years. Let's use it all in visioning a bright future for Community Congregational Church.