

Pastor's Report (2020) **Carissa Surber**

This report should cover as fully as possible the work of the pastor. Care should be taken not to duplicate the reports of the Church Council, committees, organizations, and officers of the charge.

Submit this report by October 1, 2020.

Pastor's First Name

Carissa

Pastor's Last Name

Surber

Church Name

AN | Severna Park || Severna Park ||| 1510

The Pastor shall give a report on the state of the church and an account of pastoral ministry as it relates to (§ 340):

A. Providing support, guidance, and training to the lay membership in the church; ministering within the congregation and to the world; and administering the temporal affairs of the congregation.

This year has been defined by challenge, change, and uncertainty. After completing my maternity leave in late January, I returned to work for only 6 weeks before we had to move to remote work and virtual ministry on March 15. We immediately shifted to 10am live stream worship on Facebook (made possible by the skill and dedication of key staff members and volunteers), and have continued to lead worship live online each Sunday since, making continual improvements to our technology set up and quality. While this was obviously challenging, we found that our congregation was overwhelmingly supportive and grateful for our efforts. Before March 15, we had been gathering for 3 worship services each Sunday morning (8, 9:30, and 11), each with its own worship style and culture. It has been a creative challenge and uplifting experience to unify these styles into one worship experience each week, and we have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from our congregation and the folks across the nation who join us for virtual worship each Sunday.

Starting in late March, we also experimented with a number of other virtual ministries. These included daily Morning Prayer (on Zoom), weekly pastor-led Bible Study (on Zoom), and weekly Evensong (on Facebook Live). All of these ministries have evolved since their inception, but have been received positively by the congregation. In many cases, we have seen more weekday discipleship connections being made during this time than we did before virtual ministry began!

In addition to holding online services each Sunday, we held outdoor face-to-face services on Wednesday evenings during July, August, and September. On September 13, we started holding outdoor, face-to-face services on Sunday mornings as well, and we plan to continue this as far into the fall as possible.

One of the areas where I provide leadership is in managing our talented staff team. The shift to remote work has been challenging for our team, with many of us facing anxiety and depression in a new way. Ron and I have worked to provide support and encouragement wherever we can, and we continue to make space for each person on our team to take care of themselves and their families. While it has been a challenge to balance self care and the new pressures of virtual ministry, our team has risen to the occasion time and time again, caring for one another and for the congregation.

Pastor's Report (2020)

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B. Provide an update on the status of the vision / mission goals set at last year's church conference.

- 1) **WORSHIP:** Throughout changing worship methodologies, our series have remained strong, guiding and teaching the congregation while maintaining solidly Biblical grounding. Our themes have been: (Not So) Silly Love Songs (February); Living the Questions (Lent); A Different Kind of PPE: Prayerful Practices for Everyday (Eastertide); Every Breath You Take (June); Asking For a Friend (July-August); and Love* (*And Other Super Powers) Will Hold Us Together (September-October). One of the major ways I have contributed to these worship series is by developing unique video content to include in virtual worship, such as interviewing congregation members about their prayer life, and creating video liturgies that include laity from different segments of the congregation. I have enjoyed connecting with small groups of our members in this way, and it has been uplifting to see them helping to lead worship through these videos.
- 2) **YOUNG ADULTS:** My goal of expanding the network of small groups needed to shift due to the nature of virtual ministry. Several of the young adult small groups launched in 2019 are still meeting virtually, and the communities and relationships formed there have been incredibly fruitful. I plan to carry this goal on into 2021, seeking strategies for helping young adults form new relationships when face-to-face ministry is rare/dangerous.
- 3) **MISSIONS:** We have identified a strong new chair of the Missions Committee who will begin in 2021, and are keeping other leadership the same, in these changing times.
- 4) **STAFF:** I got to lead the staff through a great deal more change than I anticipated this year! I am grateful for a strong partner in Ron, and for the ways in which the changes of 2020 have pushed aside other controversial issues that were creating conflict in our church a year ago.
- 5) **SPIRITUAL FORMATION:** When virtual ministry began, I launched a Morning Prayer group that met every weekday to read scripture, share joys and concerns, and pray. This evolved into a group led by a rotation of pastors, and has now been handed over to a lay leader. I am amazed at how much that Morning Prayer time has come to mean to that group of folks, and how they have come to care so deeply for one another. I also helped teach the pastor-led virtual Bible study, as we rotated leadership throughout the spring and summer. This fall, I am co-teaching "Better Together" (a marriage enrichment class based on the Prepare & Enrich curriculum) with my husband. I'm looking forward to developing creative ways to engage our congregation in spiritual formation through virtual ministry this Advent and Christmas.
- 6) **CONFERENCE ENGAGEMENT:** My pursuit of developing resources for BWC's Young People's Ministries has been interrupted by COVID. I hope to pick this back up next year.
- 7) **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT:** I set out to develop new rhythms of work and rest that honored both ministry and family as I entered motherhood this year. Little did I know how much my rhythms of life would be changing! I am currently in a healthy balance, as I care for my son and for my professional vocation, working from home most days.

C. Provide vision / mission goals for the upcoming year

Pastor's Report (2020)
Carissa Surber

- 1) WORSHIP: Empower more lay people to participate in and lead worship.
- 2) YOUNG ADULTS: Create and execute a strategy for strengthening and expanding the network of young adult small groups.
- 3) MISSIONS: Collaborate with new Missions Committee chair to ensure that all our mission areas are active in 2021 and/or have pivoted to another approach if their usual ministry is not possible due to COVID.
- 4) STAFF/LEADERSHIP: Develop systems and resources that will support our staff and leaders in the event that I am reappointed to another congregation in July 2021.
- 5) SPIRITUAL FORMATION: Teach 2 classes that fit into SPUMC's intentional discipleship pathways.
- 6) CONFERENCE ENGAGEMENT: Contribute to the BWC's Young People's Ministries team by developing resources for other churches to work with young adults.
- 7) PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: Care for the mental health of myself and our staff team, such that we are able to love, serve, and follow faithfully.

D. Include as a part of the report a statement outlining the pastor's program of continuing education and spiritual growth for the past year and plans for the year to come (§ 350.1).

During 2020, I participated in numerous webinars to educate myself about best practices for managing a remote team and leading virtual ministry. I especially developed my skills around video editing, becoming competent in iMovie and Adobe Premiere Pro. I also participated in the Leadership Institute through Church of the Resurrection (9/24-25) and the Mediation Skills Training Institute through the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (10/5-9). In the coming year, I plan to either audit a seminary course or attend a conference that will hone my leadership and preaching skills. These plans are in flux due to the changing landscape because of COVID.

Discipleship

E. How are you and the congregation engaging with the spiritual discipline of Justice and specifically, the NEJ Call To Action on Racial Justice?

Our church has taken very seriously the call to engage with Racial Justice, and our leaders have spent a great deal of time in holy conversation about how to authentically live into the call to be an Anti-Racist Church. We are participating in this call by taking these 4 steps: (1) Broadening and deepening the work of The Faith & Race Group to engage more people in the congregation (in addition to book studies, continue to offer movie viewing, field trips, ongoing resources and other experiences to learn about the realities of our racialized past and present); (2) Committing as the pastors and leaders of SPUMC to do our own "homework" and risk hard and honest conversations around issues of racial inequity; (3) Seeking to build meaningful cross-racial relationships and partnerships in worship, study and missions; and (4) Forming a Task Force to keep us accountable and to help us do this work in loving, courageous and creative ways.

Pastor's Signature:
Carissa Surber

Date:
09/24/2020



Baltimore-Washington Conference
The United Methodist Church

Pastor's Report (2020)
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Form Status:
Complete