

What's Next?

Key Learnings

- “Out of tragedy comes opportunities”
- We are creative, we are innovators and we are a people who love Jesus
- Causes us to ask what we really value in the life of church and faith
- Culture of busyness came to a screeching halt
- Identity changing – church change along with culture
- Importance/gift of UMC connection - Churches sharing resources and creative ideas among missional hub
- Importance of calling teams to contact congregation throughout the week
- Realize how much of a role our older people play in ministry and outreach
- Financial resources-tithes and offerings are being mailed in from seasonal members who are not necessarily present during this season
- Technology
 - People feel safe and not as intimidated to enter the digital doors of our churches, and that's a great new opportunity to reach people we haven't reached before now.
 - Nuances of technology for those equipped and familiar with online worship and streaming (lighting, sound, etc)
 - “We have broken up church into internal and external digital usage. Internal we are using Zoom—prayer, worship. External we are using Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram.”
 - Need multiple options, especially rural areas
 - Need to connect with those who have no/limited internet
 - Need for resources beyond technology
- Online Worship
 - There has been very real and authentic worship (cameras set up on books, outside worship and services, Bible studies from the living room couch), and this has been a good thing. We can be our own worst critics at time, and we can keep this realness even when we are back in sanctuary worship
 - Shorter sermons needed online
 - Recognition that leading worship in an empty sanctuary is more tiring than they thought

Key Topics

- Digital Presence
 - How do we introduce/teach congregational about a new platform and/or unsure how to use?
 - What are key ways to continue digital reach? Keep online worship creative, fresh and relevant?
 - Excitement that we are feeling about moving forward with these new digital tools, Sunday worship, small groups/life groups, etc.... beyond pandemic despite huge learning curve
 - Struggle to combine several worship services to minister and reach many people who like different styles of worship
 - Create digital spaces to connect and build community
 - Continue to learn and use new technology
 - Learn best practices for using different technologies

- Necessary to use laity who use/understand technologies, especially millennials
- Balance ministry expectations pre-pandemic and post-pandemic. Many churches do not have staff leaving full responsibility of ministries to pastor. How can we help pastors balance congregation's expectation for returning to ministries happening pre-pandemic and new expectations of digital presence post-pandemic?
- I know for me teaching and preaching into a camera is totally different and I am not yet accustomed to it. I find it difficult.
- Don't underestimate your people, especially older congregation. They use technology more than you know
- Laity are gaining new ideas from visiting many worship services online
- I feel like we need our D.S.'s and conference level to impress upon our churches that our churches will be expected to continue with our online presence and other technological work or it won't happen. Can it become a part of our Charge Conference reports? Questions about how we are continuing to advance our online presence and outreach?
- **Creative/Innovative Ideas**
 - One church is using pre-recordings of worship services but doing FB live before and after as time of greeting and wrap up.
 - Also using slides before and after services to facilitate conversation among viewers has been helpful.
 - Zoom meeting after FB worship service to serve as a "gathering time" with clergy but also a time for a "sermon talk back"
 - "Weekend Worship and Guest Services" Facebook page
 - Encourage laity to be involved by recording scripture readings, witnesses, videos of singing, or stewardship moments to share in larger worship offerings. I send them instructions so they can do it well.
 - Brett Hyberger created a fantastic Children's choir video that's also a great example of what can be done and shared.
- **Congregational Care**
 - What are creative ways can celebrate, grieve, etc...with congregational members?
 - In times of social distancing, need new ways to connect congregation, especially
 - Pastoral visits
 - Hospital visits
 - No closure and unable to grieve corporately at time of deaths
 - Ministry with visitors/guest moving to membership
 - People who are not on social media (i.e. older folks)
 - Those experiencing isolation
 - Choirs and music teams; how much these individuals miss being together to sing and create the music all together – realize that this is their community
 - Preschoolers and elementary age children, especially if not children and youth staff
 - Martial issues, parenting issues, family issues, etc...
 - Mental health, addiction, etc..
 - **Creative, Intentional Ideas**
 - Calling teams checking on membership weekly
 - “Zoom meetings can accommodate old-fashioned phone call-ins. Anything north of carrier pigeon will work. That can still engage older members with low tech.”

- “There is something to be said about old fashion note writing. I appreciate receiving handwritten notes and continue to do so myself.”
 - Home visits and stand in the yard
 - Yard signs (message of hope, graduation congratulations, etc...)
 - Intergenerational faith kits (family devotions, crafts, snack, etc...)delivered to church members
 - Once gather again, acknowledge significant life events of congregation – birthdays, graduations, marriages, etc....
 - Possibility of small groups to form around pastoral care needs, i.e. finances, relationships, etc. and offering those for the community.
 - Rethink All Saints as a time to corporately grieve those who died during this time of social distancing
- Community Outreach
 - Needs Board to match need with person(s) to fulfill need. For more information check with Susan Arnold at joyfullyinchrist@yahoo.com about community-wide Facebook Group or Anne Bosarge in South Georgia at www.thechapelministries.com. Could also use surveymonkey.com. After relaunch, have a physical need board that we have set up all the time where people post a need or meet a need independently on their own- this is just a digital version of our needs board.
 - Blessing Box – touching to the community.
 - Brook Atchley; batchley@umcmmission.org and Anna Lee; alee@cokesbury.tv are doing some innovative outreach
 - For those of us who have food pantries, would the congregations that do not have pantries consider sharing financial resources? We are trying to cover broad territories these days, so we might be able to share more resources so as not to deplete limited resources in certain congregations. Thanks!
 - Alleviate concerns about the safety/health of my members and our neighbors. Folks are very appreciative for the food and for the visit.
 - Continue to support our foreign missions when so many of the short team mission trips have been canceled. So, COVID 19 is greatly impacting those whom we love to minister with throughout the world. Let’s be sure to still send the financial support to those international missionaries and locations that we would have been traveling to. They still have their needs and have been planning on our support.
 - Pastor/staff stress
 - Exhaustion
 - Work is harder... Increase demand of maintaining key ministries with few volunteers
 - “Generally, most do not have staff to help assemble or produce a worship service. Therefore, we are all feeling very busy and finding our goals for the week have changed.”
 - Being a pastor, father, teacher, stay at home parent, at the same time, can be difficult.
 - Excited, but anxious for future possibilities
 - Need for a breather... find time to recharge/disconnect as clergy,

Iowa Conference has said all clergy are to take a mandatory 3-day rest -- NO WORK.

<https://www.iaumc.org/newsdetail/an-important-message-from-bishop-laurie-three-day-renewal-leave-required->

[for-clergy-church-staffs-and-worship-teams-13626490](#) - Would each District Superintendent consider recording a sermon/message for clergy in the respective Districts to use? That opportunity would give some of us a little break from managing every aspect of ministry each week. I personally think a week, rather than just 3-days, is needed. Most of us have been eating, sleeping, and everything else about this since mid-March. A week, NOT counting against our vacation, would be welcomed.

- Relaunch

- Managing fear
 - How do we assure folks that steps taking to stay safe?
 - Fear of engagement in the midst of the pandemic and how to keep our people safe but engaged.
- Prefer open first with small groups before large worship gathering
- Lay leadership o help rethink plans and new congregational expectations greeting/welcome, offering, choir, etc..
- Will older adults return before vaccine available?
- Storytelling to help face reality. If we can help them realize that the way things are isn't going to be the same, I think they will be more apt to embrace the new normal. I think we have to tell stories of new people we are reaching and new things we are doing in the online digital community. As they see that this new platform is helping us make disciples in new ways, they will be more encouraged to engage. Talk about the things that you want to become permanent as additions to your new normal, so they know what to expect in the future.
- Refer https://issuu.com/holstonac/docs/first_sunday_back_magazine?fr=sNzUwYTEyNzM0ODc produced by Terry Goodman, Director of Clergy Services
- Path-1 has some great info out for relaunching your church, including a worksheet/reflection for your leadership team.

- Engagement

- How do we engage church members when not connected?
- How do you keep persons engaged? How do we engage those who have checked out? How continue engagement, discipleship, strengthen connection?
- How do you engage volunteers safely?
- How do we connect and engage persons where there is exponentially reach (example: Wabash Circuit - 14 churches - increased worship from 280 to 1,400)?
- Small group resources to get people up and going quickly without overwhelming them as small group leaders
- “Flat Jesus” program has been really successful for us as a church.
- Discover the gift of community connections
- Redefine way we are known to community
- Digital Connection Card they use at Concord that is on their home page as a way to connect; <https://www.concordumc.com>
- New connections and reconnecting with pastors through online groups. Forced us into technology but it has been good. Will continue in “Connectional” nature.
- My heart is for deconstructing people from evangelical faith – I have meet many people in this time period who are leaving fundamentalism who are specifically looking at this time. This has

been a good time for us to connect with those groups. Specifically through recovery ministry, entrepreneurship, housing.

Key Questions

- Metrics? How to measure engagement? How do we register attendance and evaluate attendance, especially since attendance is not equal to views? Are there measures to appropriate view to attendance ratio? What is considered a visitor - engaging- staying on the sight?
 - Concord UMC uses notes on VitalSigns, each Sunday. Probably a good place to indicate the variance of the numbers for attendance.
 - Michael Vaughn: We just started using a digital connect card (Google Forms) to engage online, but also as a way to "count" as well as prayer request info
- Clarity and guidance on copywrite issues for posting videos would be helpful. One thing is to defer to your church's CCLI license if you have one. We upgraded ours to include live streaming, just so we would infringe on any copyright issues. Also, a number of older hymns are considered public domain, and can be performed. It's good to check on a song before doing any recording.
- How will this wave of innovation affect how we as the clergy use it for meetings, like this amongst ourselves? Will there be online opportunities vs. traveling to meetings?

Key Resources

- Tech Resources
 - Freeconferencecall.com – Call-in prayer/sermon to those without internet. I set a time and they call in to hear prayer and sermon.
 - Freeconferencecalling.com, which I find to be easier than freeconferencecall.com.
 - Facebook Premiere
 - OneCall Now / CallingPost
 - A good non-video app that I use, in another context, is Slack. You can set groups, share various files, etc. It is great because there is a record of conversations and files.
 - Similar to Slack, if you already have Office365, you likely already have Microsoft Teams. Very great collaboration group software.
 - Tech onboard, but could you use an amazon fire tablet to view online services. They are very affordable. Would require the person to have wi-fi...but could get them to those that might not have the required technology.
 - For those w/o internet provide DVDs and CDs. I found some folks that don't have a DVD player.
 - OBS (for sharing screen during Facebook services (prerecorded or live),
 - Subsplash, for online giving
 - Centre for Digital Theology at University of Durham
- Utilize different people with different skills and abilities
- UMC Discipleship has a repository of recorded hymns played from piano. Plus, this is a helpful music resource: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/piano-accompaniment-recordings>
- Fresh Expressions – multiple webinars, articles, and online courses
- Books
 - "Canoeing the Mountains" by Tod Bolsinger

- "A Beautiful Constraint" by Adam Morgan and Mark Barden
- Clayton Smith, "Growing Through Trauma"

Needs

- Grace – Sabbath rest
- Possibility of the Conference (or denomination) to leverage buying power to ensure churches and pastors are able to acquire up-to-date tech/devices? Not just desktop machines, but especially mobile devices.
- Resources learning/using variety online platforms/tech
- Practical resources, not so theoretical
- Guidance on vision casting for when we return
- Developing a resource bank of good counselors and mental health/family therapy professionals.
- I personally would appreciate more resources for churches/pastors who are going to be transitioning during this unknown time.
- Would Holston consider having a Conference-wide color or sign/symbol for our doors or windows to show unity and compassion? Some communities are placing teddy bears in windows (for children), Palm Sunday branches on front doors (we did that), yard signs, adding green lights to windows/doors, etc. I can create a symbol for my church, but I'm wondering about a more unified effort.