

Ely United Methodist Church
Church Conference – 2020
December 16, 2020
State of the Church

As the New Year 2020 began less than twelve months ago, who could have imagined what we were about to experience? What has come upon us still seems unreal to me after being in the teeth of the pandemic for nine months. This is still the case even now with the arrival of several vaccines seeming to promise a swifter end than we ever thought possible.

Every dimension of our lives has been turned upside down and the church is no exception. It's been bewildering, painful, frustrating, and discouraging all at the same time.

It's far too soon to see what life will be like when the pandemic is over; in our schools, with the restaurant, hospitality, and travel industry, in our families, with health care, and then, of course, in the church. Some people are foreseeing huge changes in what churches and church life will be like. My guess is here in Ely we'll be less affected than in larger towns.

That's all in the future. In the present, I'm heartened and encouraged by the way our church has responded and adjusted to the reality of Covid-19 descending upon us.

- In May we quickly pivoted to an outdoors service in our parking lot that was carefully planned, thoughtfully carried out, and well received.
- We moved our Bible Study and church meetings to the Zoom online meeting format. This has been efficient and essential. I don't think our planning and decision-making has missed a beat.
- We began a weekly "Parish News" update that went out to a seventy-person email Google group as well as snail mail to about seventeen homes in Ely and beyond.
- We are in the process of installing a technology upgrade, which will give us the ability to "broadcast" Sunday morning church services, as well as funerals, into our church basement. This will also bring improvements to in-house study groups and meetings.
- In November we began streaming worship services on Facebook Live. We have had some growing pains with our audiovisual quality due to the limitations of our existing technology. We are making slow improvements and the services, as with our outdoor summer service, have been well received.

I am grateful beyond words for the resilience, patience, maturity, and good humor of our congregation, as we have walked this difficult year together. It hasn't been easy for any of us, but I think with God's help we have done our very best.

I'm looking forward next year to typing up this report having been worshipping together in our sanctuary again, seeing each other's faces, and singing our shared praises and love for God and for each other.

With my gratitude and appreciation,

Pastor Craig Haberman