

Pastor's Report to Congregation Council

February, 2021

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January Worship Attendance

Week	2021			2020			Change from 2020	
	Sunday	Wednesday	Total	Sunday	Wednesday	Total	Sunday	Weekly
First	134	38	172	126		126	106.3%	136.5%
Second	152	33	185	148		148	102.7%	125.0%
Third	152	33	185	157		157	96.8%	117.8%
Fourth	167	30	197	160		160	104.4%	123.1%
Fifth	156		156					
Average	152.2	33.5	185.7	147.8		147.8	103.0%	125.7%

Average Sunday and Weekly Worship Attendance

Year	Sunday	Wednesday	Total	Change from Prior Yr.	
				Sunday	Weekly
2011	196.2		196.2		
2012	177.6		177.6	-9.5%	-9.5%
2013	162.4		162.4	-8.6%	-8.6%
2014	171.0		171.0	5.3%	5.3%
2015	168.1		168.1	-1.7%	-1.7%
2016	166.4		166.4	-1.0%	-1.0%
2017	158.1		158.1	-5.0%	-5.0%
2018	162.6		162.6	2.8%	2.8%
2019	145.1		145.1	-10.8%	-10.8%
2020	149.7	31.9	181.6	3.2%	25.2%
2021	152.5	33.5	186.0	1.9%	2.4%

Average Sunday Worship Attendance

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Ave.	% Change
2011	185.8	195.5	209	305.5	198.4	171.3	145.6	172.3	170.5	178.8	203.5	218.4	196.2	
2012	177.4	185.8	170.8	239.2	161.8	172.8	155	160.5	187	176	172.8	172.6	177.6	-9.5%
2013	156.3	153.8	206	159.5	170.8	138.8	140.5	154.8	155.4	165.8	184	163	162.4	-8.6%
2014	160.3	188.3	182.6	244.8	177.3	156.2	136.3	150	162.5	157.3	169.6	166.5	171.0	5.3%
2015	170.8	161.8	170.6	231.3	173	148.0	134.8	160.0	144.3	178.3	182.2	161.5	168.1	-1.7%
2016	150.8	181.0	227.3	180.6	167.6	127.0	141.4	158.3	146.5	162.6	180.5	172.7	166.4	-1.0%
2017	168.6	159.5	158.0	215.4	162.0	134.3	128.0	131.5	148.0	151.2	164.8	176.3	158.1	-4.9%
2018	155.8	175.5	181.3	201.0	178.5	148.0	140.2	143.3	154.0	158.0	162.3	153.0	162.6	2.8%
2019	158.5	158.5	142.4	204.8	142.0	131.5	118.3	130.3	121.4	135.5	157.4	140.6	145.1	-10.7%
2020	147.8	139.3	142.0	198.5	167.4	144.8	128.3	139.0	137.6	141.3	156.4	153.8	149.7	3.2%
2021	152.5												152.5	1.9%

Average Wednesday Worship Attendance

Year	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Ave.	% Change
2020			51.8	25.0	31.0	34.0	21.0	19.5	23.0	23.0	37.0	46.0	31.1	
2021	33.5												33.5	7.6%

Comments

For my monthly report I am submitting to the Congregation Council the text of my "State of the Congregation" address from our February 14, 2021 Annual Congregation Meeting. I do so with deep gratitude for all the efforts staff, council members and volunteer leaders have given during this past year, as well as the commitment so many of our participants have made to our life together. Thank you so much. We never would have made it to the end of this year without your contributions!

It hardly needs to be said that 2020 was quite a year. It was a year we never could have anticipated. It was a year we likely will never forget. As I reflect on the year, I am aware that it can be understood to have had two distinct chapters: January 1 - March 13, and March 14 - December 31.

The year began with the acknowledgment that some degree of change was necessary if Saint Peter was going to thrive in coming years. Although we have experienced strong financial support and faithful leadership (staff, elected, and volunteer) in recent past, at the same time we have observed declining membership and declining participation in a variety of ministries, particularly worship and youth ministries. Among leaders, the consensus was that Saint Peter needed to discover a new vitality for a new reality. We decided that with our 40th Anniversary of Ministry on the horizon, it was time to consider what adaptive changes could be made to set us on a stronger course for the future.

With this in mind, we contracted with Pastor Dana Peterson of the Rocky Mountain Synod to hold a Strategic Ministry Review over the weekend of March 6-8. After considering strengths and growth areas at Saint Peter, the following five ministry areas were identified as potential areas of focus that could help to revitalize our congregation:

- Grounded in Worship
- Generous, Grace-Filled Servanthood
- Transformative Spirituality
- Life-Giving Deep Relationships
- Energized, Faithful Youth

Our hope was to develop a number of creative ministry initiatives that we would put in place by the fall of 2020, which might increase the participation, ownership and enthusiasm of Saint Peter leaders and members, leading up to our anniversary on April 12, 2021.

All of this changed on March 14, 2020, when we made one of the hardest decisions I have ever seen congregational leaders make. Out of concern for our community, we declared our buildings closed, and committed to worshipping online for the foreseeable future. We did so out of our concern that we not exacerbate an already dangerous viral spread. It was an experiment no congregation had ever tried before, to my knowledge, and we had no idea of how it might impact the future of our congregation.

Now, with 101 online worship services under our belt, we have a better idea of the impact this decision has made on our life together. Surprisingly enough, much of it is quite positive:

- Worship attendance has been strong, with weekly participation numbers well above anything we have seen in the past decade.
- Efforts to be of service to our community have continued, with much gratitude due to the Church Chicks, the Covenant Cupboard, support of Selian Lutheran Hospital, and our Faith Formation group.
- Faith Forum and Issues Studies have attracted more participants than ever, and have led to some challenging and inspiring conversations.
- More recently, a Faith in Action Team has been created, with the goal of leading us into conversations and ministries that can strengthen our capacity to make a difference in our community and in our world.
- A number of work days hosted by our Property Team (led by Dave Prichard and Steve Haigh) have left our facility looking better than it has for a long time.

One only needs to download the December 14th [Weekly](#) to see how much ministry is taking place through Saint Peter Lutheran Church these days.

So what themes connect these two chapters of our life together in 2020? I would identify two as being of significant importance: the growth of strong, faithful, committed leaders, and a renewed vitality among leaders and supporters of our ministries.

Worship Leaders

There are a growing number of participants who have strengthened their commitments, or made new commitments, to lead us in worship. We now have a roster of 50 scheduled worship leaders, and I am in the process of recruiting 23 more. (If any of you are interested, please let me know. I'd love to include you in this.)

Worship Participants

Many of our families have demonstrated a heightened commitment to weekly worship. They join us on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings with their cameras on, and fully participate in worship. They are "all in." And for the first time in Saint Peter's history, we have gathered for Evening Prayer on Wednesday throughout the entire year.

Elected Leaders and Team Leaders

This has been a year when many of our leaders learned to pivot, adapt, and create new possibilities. In doing so they have helped us to envision the future of the church. These dramatically changing times call for dramatically changing approaches to ministry, and a number of our leaders have begun the work of pioneering new ways for us to pursue our mission.

Staff Members

We are fortunate to have a group of talented, faithful, committed staff members. They have seen this year not as a time to lay back and wait for change to come, but to dig in and become part of the change that is necessary. Some have invested themselves in levels that would surprise many. In doing so, they have discovered new and vital ways to pursue their call to ministry, in a unique and unfamiliar environment.

A New Vitality

In some ways, we have already begun to experience what we sought in the first months of this past year. There is a new strength and vitality among our leaders. As we further develop our life together we will need many more to join them. Are you feeling the tug of God on your heart to become part of our leadership team? Do you have gifts and abilities that you might be willing to put to work in strengthening Saint Peter's ministries? If so, please reach out to me. I would love to explore with you ways of serving that you might find to be inspiring, and helpful for our life together.

If we are to experience another strong forty years together, it will take a deeper commitment from all of our leaders and participants. We will need to plan and organize in ways that are more creative and adaptable than ever. These are two of the most important assets that faith communities will need to thrive in a changing world. I am grateful for current leaders who have shown the ability to function in these ways, and look forward to adding others to the mix.

The bottom line for me is that I feel more hopeful about Saint Peter's future right now than I have for years. And I am so grateful to those of you who have made this possible.

So what can we say about Saint Peter's future? One of the questions I hear most often has to do with when we will begin to use our facility again for indoor, in-person gatherings. I should emphasize that the day when we do so is certainly coming, and my hope is that it will happen sooner rather than later. But before it happens, we have some significant hurdles to clear.

First, and most importantly, this virus is not done with us yet. Experts caution that March and April could be more challenging than anything we have experienced to date, and we need to be on guard for this. When we do begin to gather outdoors in larger numbers, and eventually indoor, we will need to show a strong commitment to masking, distancing, and hygiene.

The timetable for regathering will be determined by an understanding of the trajectory of this pandemic, the impact of public gatherings on viral spread, and the complexities of a facility with aging HVAC systems, a relatively small footprint, and limited access and egress pathways. As we make decisions on behalf of the congregation, we will continue to consult the

guidance provided to us from our Bishop's office, the Governor's office, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and others.

I am grateful for the faithful and courageous leadership of our Congregation Council and our COVID-19 Advisory Team. I can tell you this: me being in this room alone for worship 101 times is already more than enough! And I can promise you this: you will be hearing more from us on a regular basis, as we move further into our re-gathering plans.

The future of our worship life will also be impacted by this experience. We are preparing ourselves for a lengthy transition. We fully expect that there will be nine to twelve months between the time when the first of us choose to worship in-person again and when the last of us do so. During this time there will always be an option for online worship, and we anticipate that this will continue permanently once we are fully back in the building. With your support, we also hope to continue our mid-week gathering for Evening Prayer. This has been a rich experience for many of us, and if you haven't yet made this a weekly discipline, we encourage you to give it a try.

Our leaders are also exploring how small group gatherings can become a more central part of our community experience. A number of you participated in a rich small group initiative last summer, and we hope to build on this in months to come. We'll establish some new, ongoing groups, and help to revitalize and re-focus some of our existing groups. Connecting with one another seems to be the key, and an important aspect of who we are as a congregation. We are hoping that a more robust commitment to regularly gathering in small groups can build on this current congregational strength.

And we will continue to expand and deepen our leadership corps. Future ministry plans will require additional leaders. Might God be calling you to this? If you suspect this to be the case, please let me know. I'd love to explore some options with you.

Let me express my gratitude to you all. Thank you for your whole-hearted participation in our life together this past year. Thank you to faithful leaders who have been willing to serve in a challenging time. Thank you for your continued financial generosity — your gifts are both humbling and inspiring. Thank you for your consistent efforts to care for one another — your acts of kindness are more important than ever these days. Thank you for reaching out beyond yourselves to be of service to neighbors of ours in the community. Thank you for your prayers, your kind words of encouragement, your creative suggestions about how we might move forward, and your unwavering support of our life together. It truly does make a difference!

Finally, let us all remember that we are the people of Saint Peter Lutheran Church. Welcomed into God's love, just as we are. Sent into God's world as a reflection of Christ. Thank you, so much, for your partnership in ministry.

Re-Gathering Plan

We are currently in Stage II
Beginning to Gather

All Saint Peter buildings (including rest rooms) are closed to the public. Outside gatherings of up to 15 people are allowed, excluding worship services, with Congregation Council notification required for each individual occasion. Worship and most congregational gatherings will continue to take place on an online / digital platform.

Pastoral Care will be provided through telephone calls and video conferencing. Liturgies to commemorate births, baptisms, marriages and funerals are conducted online or postponed.

Staff members will work from home as much as they can, but are allowed to enter the office occasionally to complete work that cannot be accomplished at home. When they are in individual offices alone, with doors closed, no precautions are necessary. When they are in public areas, face coverings and physical distancing are required.

When gathering for a Congregation Council approved outdoor event involving 15 or fewer people, the following guidelines must be followed:

- A trained and approved host is required for each gathering. The host will be responsible to ensure that participants understand and follow these guidelines. The host will file a report with the Administrator detailing who participated, and including contact information for each individual.
- All leaders and participants will have temperatures taken and symptoms screened.¹
- Face coverings are required at all times for all leaders and participants.²
- Face coverings must be made available for those who do not have one of their own. Those who are unwilling to wear a face covering will be invited to leave.
- Groups from different households must stay 6-8 feet apart at all times.
- Greetings are not to include physical touch. (Waves and bows are encouraged.)
- No nursery care will be provided for any gatherings.

No food or beverage may be provided, or brought in to share with others.

Seniors and those with underlying health concerns, or who are otherwise uncomfortable gathering in person, are encouraged to participate using online / digital options.

5 STAGES TOWARD REGATHERING DURING COVID-19				
NOTE: Online worship will be available through all five stages.				
STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5
Shelter at Home	Begin to Gather	Continue to Gather	Worship In-Person	End of Guidelines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability (including outdoor) closed - No face-to-face meetings - Pastors/ministers provided by phone or video - Liturgies to commemorate births, baptisms, marriages and funerals conducted online or postponed - Staff members work from home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability (including outdoor) closed - Outside coffee lines of up to 15 people allowed, including no table services with condiments and reserved for non-cesses of outdoor gatherings followed - Pastors and ministers provided by telephone or video - Liturgies to commemorate births, baptisms, marriages and funerals conducted online or postponed - Staff members work from home but may enter building to work that cannot be done home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability (including outdoor) closed - Occasional outside coffee lines of up to 15 people may be permitted by request of following guidelines followed - Pastors and ministers provided by telephone or video - Liturgies to commemorate births, baptisms, marriages and funerals conducted online or postponed - Staff members work from home but may enter building to work that cannot be done at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ability open - Gatherings via in-person allowed in outdoor or staff areas, face masks at entry and following guidelines as outlined (tables, condiments, marriages are allowed) - Pastors and ministers provided by telephone or video - Staff members work from home but may enter building to work that cannot be done at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No social distancing - Greeting protocols taken to avoid the aerosol spread of illness

Saint Peter
METHODIST CHURCH

¹ Symptom screening includes: Anyone with a temperature over 100.4 or showing COVID-19 symptoms, or who has been exposed to a coronavirus patient within the past 14 days will be asked to leave.

People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19: fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea.

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html> — 7/5/2020)

² Suitable face coverings must be used, and must cover both the nose and the mouth. See CDC recommendations.