

Commission on Witness “How are We Witnessing” Survey

As we navigate our way through the suggestions and regulations for gathering during the Coronavirus Pandemic, each of our congregations are needing to be creative as we share the Good News with each other, with the unchurched, and with our children and youth. Thank you for answering the following survey.

-Mary St. John, Director of District Conference, Nurture, and Witness

1. Is your congregation predominately using technology to reach out? If yes, please share which technological formats you are using and give a brief reason why this one seems to work best. (ZOOM, emails, conference calls, YouTube, Facebook, etc.)

- **ZOOM** works well for most meetings and fairly easy to understand. **Email** and **Facebook** are primary means of communication, plus, “Call-em-all” **phone** and **text** systems. **Youtube** is our video format for recorded worships and other worship offerings.
- **Facebook** live for Sunday Worship Service. It reaches the largest percent of our congregation. Our worship service involves a worship leader, a shared “children’s story”, special singing, preaching of the Gospel, staffing for audio and media. We use **ZOOM** for mid-week Bible study, so that individuals can see and interact with each other. **Email, texting, phone** to make individual contacts. A pastoral letter is sent weekly to those in the congregation who do not have computers or internet access. The letter is informative concerning activities of the congregation, prayer requests, and a brief outline of the Sunday worship.
- We record our Sunday morning service on **Youtube** with a sermon, a “children’s story”, and special music from one or several of our musicians. One of our Adult Sunday School classes uses **ZOOM** for meeting together. We have had a Church board meeting via conference call technology. Weekly Wednesday devotional is on **Youtube**. Some members who have internet but not Facebook, prefer Youtube. This can be accessed with a smart TV or cable.
- **Email, texting**, prayer chain email and prayer chain **phone** tree to keep in touch with people and to let others know of any updates.
- **Facebook** and recorded CDs
- Live streaming on **Facebook**. Our media technician feels Facebook Live is best resource for us. It has worked well for us with over 400 views per week.
- **ZOOM** for Bible Study and Sunday morning fellowship and worship. I **email** to get out information. We have stated a **Youtube** channel where joint congregations have uploaded prayers. We continue to use Faith Life’s Proclaim software to record our worship services, which are then shared on **Facebook** and via email. This was something we already had prior to this time. Each works well, with different people connecting, however they choose or are able.
- Online service each Sunday with the Pastor’s message and a recorded video of several families singing contemporary songs. For those who prefer the traditional service, there are recorded hymns with words for those who would like to sing along. Often a children’s message is shared by the associate pastor. **ZOOM** is used for Bible Study, Fellowship time, and Prayer Group, 6 days a week.

- **Email** the bulletin each Sunday which includes announcements, music, message, etc. Links go to music offered on **Youtube**. For those without email, the pastor calls and does the whole service on the phone. Pastor tells the song titles, but does not sing the songs over the phone. Some members receive everything via **USPS mail**. On Wednesday, there is a set time for everyone to pray. Members receive a reminder with prayer concerns and joys earlier in the day. On Thursdays, the pastor sends out a mid-week connection message. Just started a **ZOOM** connect on Sunday evening and Wednesday evening so people can see one another. Pastor also stays in touch via **phone** and **text**.
- **ZOOM** is used for Tuesday informal fellowship and prayer, Wednesday evening Bible study, Friday evening prayer time and Sunday morning worship. During the week, several from church staff and leadership meet to video a devotion service with music, and the pastor videos a Sunday message to have on the church **Facebook** page. Two members video a children's message for viewing on **Facebook**. **ZOOM** creates complications with logging in for some using their cell phones, and having to use long distance eats up their minutes. We have a Monday morning extensive **email** with prayer concerns, joys and announcements.
- **ZOOM** worked best for pastor and others

2. Is your congregation unable to communicate with technology? If yes, then are you finding an increase in mailings of newsletters, prayer concerns, etc.

How are you keeping in personal contact?

- Most of our congregation is able to communicate via technology.
- For those of our congregation who struggle with technology, we print weekly updates that are **emailed** or **USPS mailed** to homes. Still mail a monthly printed newsletter. We use One Call Now, for prayer concerns and announcements.
- Most of our members do not have internet access. Some do not have cell phones or computers. We keep in contact with **phone** chains.
- We use **phone** calling to connect.
- We have not used **USPS mail** much at all, other than through our card ministry, primarily birthday, get well, and sympathy cards. One of our Youth Workers has **mailed** to all the children and youth packets for personal Bible study, coloring pages and word searches on a weekly basis.
- A few of our members are unable to communicate using technology, so the pastor sends them the worship materials every couple of weeks by **mail**.
- Deacons, members and pastors have made extra efforts to **call** the shut-ins, those members in nursing care facilities, those without internet, and those living alone.
- These methods are making one pastor feel busier than when we were able to meet in the building.
- Several of our members do not have internet access at their homes. Also, some of our members come with grandparents and do not live with them, so that makes phone calls and texting important. We have a card ministry and encourage members and deacons to **mail** cards to shut ins and marginal families.
- **ZOOM**, calls and newsletter

3. Does your church allow entry of any sort, such as for private prayer time, musical instrument usage, etc.? If yes, how often do you have congregants coming to the building?

- The Pastor and Office Secretary enter the building a couple times per week to check mail and building condition. Until this month (May), a select group used the sanctuary to record worship services. A handful also have keys to enter the building to check their mailboxes for bills, etc.
- Individuals come and go throughout the week – Church office and Pastor’s Study is open to any in the congregation during the week (10 -5). Sanctuary is always open. (All active members have a key to the building.)
- Two staff come in four days a week. The Pastor comes in five days a week. People come to the building during office hours to drop off their offerings, pick-up mail, etc. Sermons are recorded on Youtube on Saturdays. Also, on Saturday, a media team member comes to the church to compile the sermon, children’s story and music to create a seamless service that is uploaded to Youtube.
- No entry is allowed.
- Yes, entry is allowed as often as members feel led.
- The musicians and the pastor have met each and every Friday to practice for Sunday’s live-streaming. One musician comes on another day to record a song on her Facebook page. Several members come just long enough to either pick up something, like an Upper Room devotional, or to drop something off, like their tithe.
- Pastor is at the office on Mondays, and others stop by to bring the mail, check on the Little Free Pantry, and clean. Other than that, no entry.
- The church office is open with the pastor keeping office hours and the secretary has been given a shortened schedule. Four or five people at a time gather for maintenance, recorded services, to drop off community service food items, to count the offering, and to prepare the worship center table, which is viewed on the videos.
- Entry is allowed on Sunday morning for the 2 people who come to do music and singing and the secretary works in the office one day per week to open mail. Other work is being done at home.

4. Does your church participate in “Drive-In” worships? If yes, do you instruct people where to park? Do you have a full-service time? Is there music offered?

- Mid-May, we just began doing “drive-in” worships. We have parking cones and three parking coordinators directing traffic. We have speaking and music through an outdoor PA system. No offering is collected, but there is a container for people to drive by and toss offerings into.
- We do not have “drive-in” service.
- We had a drive-through ice cream social on May 3.
- No, church parking lot is not conducive for this.
- No, we do not have “drive-in’ services.
- We have not participated in “drive-in” worship.

- No
- Our church is not considering a drive-in service due to inner city location.
- We have not hosted a drive-in service and have not considered one.
- No drive-in services at this time

5. Do you have a supply closet or food pantry? If yes, how are you safely sharing these things with your members and/or communities?

- No closet or pantry.
- We do not have a food pantry; we work closely with Grace Network and other organizations in the community.
- We do, but we have suspended it because we are having difficulty replenishing supplies with the limitations at the grocery stores. (We do not get out items from Food Bank because of restrictions.)
- No
- No
- We have not had a food pantry in over 20 years.
- We have a Little Food Pantry outside the church. People in need can access it at any time.
- We do not maintain a personal food pantry, but members donate food and baby supplies to the Presbyterian Center in S.E. Roanoke. The pastor or a deacon tries to take the donations to the center soon after they arrive. The need in the community is great.
- When pastor is working in the office, the pantry is restocked at that time.

6. Do you regularly have a phone chain or prayer chain? If yes, are you finding more ways to add people who may be marginal attendees, so that their concerns may be added?

- We have a Call-em-all mass calling and texting system. We have to invite or ask individuals for their phone numbers to add them.
- We have a prayer chain: Congregation is divided among seven deacons. We use “group texting” and phone to make the contacts. Prayer requests are shared during the Sunday Worship service – these are made known by calling the Church office or by email. We also have an individual who is responsible for gathering additional prayer needs and thanksgivings.
- We use “One Call Now” as a phone tree.
- Yes, we have those on these chains who have email, internet or for those who find other ways of staying in touch.
- Yes, we have a phone chain and we are trying to find ways to add people.
- We have a regular phone tree message, (we use “Call Multiplier) on Sunday as our “Sunday Devotional Minute” and on Wednesday as our “Wednesday Biblical Thought of the Day”. If there are prayer concerns, they go out as needed. Four of our deacons have divided the membership into four lists and everyone is receiving a call once a week. The lists are rotated every week so there is a different deacon calling over four weeks. The pastor also calls everyone. It takes 9-10 days to phone through the entire membership.

- We have relied on emails and on-line for a while in regards to prayer concerns and such. Those who do not have email, only a couple of people, have family members who keep them informed.
- Deacons, members and pastors are calling shut ins and marginalized.
- We maintain email and a phone prayer chain. The weekly ZOOM meetings have allowed more opportunities during the week for people to express their joys and concerns. Members are replying to emails more often to add or correct information.
- Use prayer chain

7. Are you encouraging card ministry? If yes, have you organized a way to include ALL members, even those who do not attend regularly?

- The Deacons are leading a card ministry focusing on shut-ins, folks of concern, and the elderly.
- Many of our members and the Deacons send out cards.
- We have a few people who send out cards to those who do not stay in close contact with others.
- Yes, we encourage card ministry.
- We have a basic card system remembering birthdays, get well, and sympathy. Pastor sent a card of encouragement to all children and youth in early May. Pastor also sent “thinking of you” cards to all nursing home residents around week 3 and week 6 of the stay at home restrictions. Youth Worker has mailed packets to all the children and youth for personal Bible study, coloring pages and word searches on a weekly basis.
- Yes, we have sent out cards to members who live alone, but not to every member.
- We encourage card ministry on a regular basis, but recently we as a church have sent out “card blasts” during this time. Members send to each other, those who live alone, or those who are hospitalized and shut in. On Mother’s Day, for example, we sent a women’s appreciation letter to an expansive list of adult women, those who are members, those who normally visit on Mother’s Day, etc.
- Members are encouraged in the newsletter to keep in touch with one another.

8. Are you encouraging tithing? If yes, how are you making it easier for people to give?

- We still encourage tithing and giving. We promote online our new **Tithe.ly app** on our church website, in Youtube descriptions, and through other online communication.
- Tithing is encouraged. The wonderful saints at Collinsville have been very faithful with their tithes and offerings. They are encouraged to continue their tithes by mailing, dropping off at church office, and electronically
- We are asking for tithes and offerings in our services and printed material. People mail or bring their tithes in.
- We sent out a letter encouraging people to send their monies to the church via postal service or personal drop off.
- Our offerings have held steady and have maybe even experienced a slight increase since we have suspended in-person worship. Two methods of giving that we are encouraging are sending checks through USPS mail or dropping off the offering envelope by the

church office during office hours. We are in the process of establishing a **Tithe.ly app** for online giving, and hope to be ready by the Fall.

- Most send tithes to the treasurer.
- We encourage tithing periodically. It has been down somewhat, but not horrible.
- Yes, we encourage tithing. People mail it or drop it by the church office.
- Yes, encourage mail-in offerings. Secretary opens the mail once a week for deposit by the counting team.

9. Is someone in your congregation keeping in touch with each family who has a child or teenager in their home? If yes, are you finding ways to keep them interested in Bible study at home?

- We have active youth leaders who are also parents of youth. They host weekly ZOOM gatherings with activities. The Pastor joins them for devotions. The youth themselves have organized joint Bible Reading plans through the **YOUVersion App**. Some special events are still being coordinated.
- The Children and Youth Director sends them weekly packets of Bible Study materials, age appropriate, and other printed material. She stays in touch with them through text or phone.
- N/A to our congregation as far as children are concerned.
- Our youth leader has been reaching out by phone and text to families with children and youth, and the pastor has included those families on his regular call list. A children's story is recorded each week and texted to the families with the link. We have explored ways to helping the youth to meet virtually, but at least one of the households has internet difficulties and must leave home to get internet.
- We keep in touch with children and teenagers.
- One of our Youth Workers has mailed to all our children and youth packets for personal Bible study, coloring pages and word searches on a weekly basis.
- Our Discipleship Chair has sent out resources to families, and we prepared Easter boxes for the elementary and middle school aged kids. The pastor has stayed in touch with the high school youth.
- A children's message is shared on the recorded worship time.
- Yes, honoring graduates, etc.

10. Are the elderly hospitalized and shut-in members being ministered to? If yes, tell how you have managed to keep a sense of visitation and comfort to those in need.

- Visitation is being accomplished through phone calls. The Deacons have arranged a plan for reaching all those who are shut-in, in need, or elderly.
- These precious brothers and sisters are always high on the list for ministry by pastor, deacons, and leadership.
- Since hospital and nursing home visits have been suspended, we send weekly update mailings, Newsletter, and cards. Regular phone calls are made by the pastor, Deacons, and others. Some have driven by their homes and waved and greeted them from their cars. Some have purchased grocery items for them.

- Make phone calls to the nursing home in the hopes that the messages are being delivered by the staff member.
- Cards and phone calls have been the primary method for reaching out. A challenge for reaching those hospitalized is not learning they were in the hospital until they were back home. Communication in and out of the hospitals is more difficult due to visitor restrictions. Some maybe reluctant to call the pastor, knowing he or she cannot pay a visit anyway.
- By phone and delivering Newsletters and pastors' ponderings.
- Four Deacons have divided the membership into four lists and everyone is receiving a call once a week. That includes the elderly, hospitalized and shut-in members. The pastor also calls these persons in addition.
- We send phone calls, cards, care packages, and printed sermons regularly. The Pastor has stayed in touch with everyone else, regardless of age, on a bi-weekly basis.
- Deacons and members and the pastor have made extra efforts to call our shut-ins, those members in nursing care facilities, those without internet, and those living alone.
- On Thursday, pastor sends out a mid-week connection message.
- Call the shut-in for visitation

11. For those who have had to comfort members due to loss of life, how have you been able to honor the lives of those who would have had a memorial service, but due to current restrictions were limited to immediate family graveside services?

- Pastor met once in a family home for a final anointing and prayer, attempting social distancing. One family service was at a funeral home with maintained distance. Other contacts have been made via **phone**.
- No loss of life for our congregation in a 7 weeks period
- For those who have had to comfort members due to loss of life, **phone calls** and **sympathy cards** are encouraged, although there has been no loss so far.
- N/A at the time of this survey
- We have lost 4 members during the pandemic physical distancing. In addition to those members, at least one family has lost a parent and others have lost non-member relatives. To honor those members who died and could not have traditional funerals, we had a service of remembrance through one of our ZOOM meetings. Pastor provided scripture, participants shared stories and remembrances for each person, followed with a thanksgiving prayer for that life. The service was very well received during this time and it is recommended for other congregations to consider a similar on-line service. **Calls** and **sympathy cards** are also encouraged. Some families are planning memorial services for church and family at a later date.
- We have only conducted graveside services with immediate family members wearing masks. We have many memorial services on hold until after this is over.
- Pastor visited families at their request with the necessary health precautions. News of their passing was put on the **phone** tree prayer chain. **Sympathy cards** encouraged.
- Only experienced one death in a family and that person lived in another state. Text/email of concern and care was sent per their request.

12. Are pastors, deacons, and other leaders in the church meeting regularly? If yes, are you communicating your needs effectively to one another?

- Deacons and Church board met together virtually at the start of the quarantine and organized plans to meet needs and continue ministries. They have not all met together since. No immediate needs have arisen to require another meeting.
- Yes, we've met and are communicating our needs to one another.
- We meet by phone calls and conference calling.
- We have not met but continue contacts through phone calls.
- The Executive Committee has met once by ZOOM and once in person. The Board met once through ZOOM to discuss reopening procedures. Pastor and Board Chair meet once a week in person to record a weekly devotion. Deacons have under-shepherd list where each deacon and deacon couple is independently responsible for certain assigned members.
- Yes, we meet regularly and communicate effectively.
- Pastor, leadership of Deacons and Board representatives have met several times to see what is working well and what may need some improvement.
- Executive Committee is communicating regularly by email and ZOOM. We've met three times since March 15.
- Yes, we meet by ZOOM.

13. Are you finding ways to keep up Bible study, Sunday School lessons, and other devotions in a shared format? If yes, explain how members can study and ask questions together.

- Bible study is done on ZOOM. Sessions are recorded and can be requested by individuals via email. Daily Video Devotions are prepared by the pastor and posted on YouTube and Facebook. Conversation is more difficult, but some have embraced the technology to pursue questions and topics.
- ZOOM for mid-week bible Study, and participants can see and interact with each other.
- One Adult Sunday School Class meets weekly on ZOOM for Bible Study. Pastor has a weekly devotional on YouTube.
- No
- We have not held Sunday School during this time, but have had excellent participation in weekly Bible Studies by ZOOM.
- Some are doing Facebook, others are meeting as families, studying scripture
- We have had limited shared format opportunities. A few families have done Bible Study online with each other, at their own interaction.
- Pastor did a daily devotional/blog on church website/Facebook during Lent. Met on ZOOM for Bible Study since March 18.
- Bible Study on ZOOM Mondays and Thursdays, and Prayer time on Saturday mornings on ZOOM
- Started ZOOM connection on Sunday evenings and Wednesday evenings.
- Yes, Bible study and even extending the time by starting a new study together.

14. Are you finding it difficult to maintain the church property, as volunteering and staffing have perhaps become less available? If yes, explain these difficulties.

- Cleaning service still comes weekly, but with less to do. All used surfaces are cleaned and wiped down. We had on broken water heater with some leaks. Pastor called Stewards to address this problem and now makes regular walks through the building to check on things.
- No difficulty keeping the building maintained and cleaned.
- No problems so far.
- No.
- Our caretaker, a lay staff person, has been doing an excellent job maintaining the church property during this time
- No problem, our people are working well at keeping the property clean.
- Our custodians are coming and cleaning on a very basic level in the areas that are being used on a weekly basis. Buildings and Grounds Commission has maintained the repair needs for the building and grounds, such as mowing.
- Not really.
- No, we are able to call property and finance and he comes to take care of problems. The church is being cleaned weekly by the custodian. (Surfaces cleaned, doors, restrooms, etc.)

15. Share with us, in hopes of providing a creative idea that we can all use, some of the new ways your congregation has chosen to share the Good News with others.

- The youth group filmed themselves reading worship pieces, devotions, and music to be edited and posted online for Youth Sunday. Others are being invited to do filmed devotions and scripture reflections.
- The congregation is encouraged to not be ashamed of who they are in Christ and to share (wherever they may be) the hope, love, and joy of knowing Jesus by letting their light shine that others might behold their good works and glorify their Heavenly Father.
- We had a virtual Love Feast on Maundy Thursday, led by the Pastor. People were instructed ahead of time to have the items ready for communion, foot washing or hand washing, as well as to eat a meal of a comfort food just before the service began.
- This is difficult for us since there are those who do not have technological means.
- Several of our members have been maintaining a sidewalk art ministry of writing encouraging messages in chalk on their driveway. It has been very well received in their neighborhood. Facebook engagement has moved well beyond the circle of folks who normally interact with our congregation.
- Joined with the Floyd County Ministerial Association in mailing over 7,000 booklets of the Gospel of John and the Epistle of Romans to every household in Floyd County, VA during the Pandemic.
- Some of our new way of doing things was reactive to Covid-19, rather than us being proactive.

- We set Easter Cross out by the road and received feedback from that. We've also seen more traffic on our Faith Life site, the website, and our Facebook page as more people check it out. Our little free pantry has been visited and we hope it will be more popular and serve as a resource for our neighbors in need.
- We have added a Tuesday and Friday social time on ZOOM with no agenda but just as a time to check in with each other and talk.
- Drive-through Ice Cream Social...pick up and stay in cars to eat.
- Everything we are doing has been creative and this has kept this pastor busier than when we were in the building!
- Good for those who can't attend to use on-line worship and Bible study. People are "attending" that don't get to otherwise. We also have held a "drive-thru" food pantry/offering collection event. Members dropped off food/offering outside and several volunteers collected items and restocked shelves. Very successful.
- Since our church is technologically challenged, we mail an activity sheet each month to every member. The sheet is a full list of activities that can be done from home. For example, "Go outside and sing your favorite camp song. Now reflect on what that meant to you in your life." "Find old church directories and say the name of each family aloud as you pray for them.", etc. Bible verses and prayers are attached for additional meditation.

TECHNOLOGY USED

ZOOM

Email

YouTube

Facebook

Texting

Telephone

YOUVersion app

Call-em-All phone chain

Call Multiplier

Recorded CDs

Faith Life's Proclaim Software

Tithely.app

TRADITIONAL OUTREACH

Mailing cards and newsletters

Prayer Chains by phone

Deacon/Pastoral Caregiving

Pantry item deliveries

Bulletin mailings

Anointing

Limited in-person meetings

Thank you to everyone who took the time to let the Virginia Commission on Witness know who your congregation is providing Ministry during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

God bless you and keep you as you continue the work of Jesus in your congregations, your communities, and your world.