

Pastor's September Report,

Both the strength and openness of our arms have been tested and proven in the past year and a half. We have been changed in ways we are only just now beginning to understand ... and yet fundamentally we are the same: God's beloved community of radical inclusion, courageous justice, joyful spirituality and ethical stewardship. A table where whoever you are and wherever you find yourself on your journey of faith, you are welcome.

As we come together ... many of us for the first time in a year and a half ... it is a good time to look back and reflect, and look forward as we take our next steps into the future.

Over the past 18 months, we have:

- Found new opportunities for mission and ministry, including the **Richmond Back Pack** program - late materials will go out after the New Year 2022
- Trusted science and acted in love to create guidelines for common sense risk reduction as we've taken incremental steps back to in-person gathering

And now, as we begin to look forward, there is much that is still uncertain. We are at **different comfort levels** in coming back together for worship and in-person activity. Our children 12 and under are still unvaccinated and we need to take the utmost care with their health. We are at every possible place on the spectrum between deep grief and joyful celebration. We are at once exhausted and itching to get going once more.

A phrase we are going to use a lot over the coming months is "**we're going to try this on.**" Trying on is nothing new for us. Historically, we are a community of innovation. And at a time such as this when so much is in flux and being nimble enough to attend to shifting community needs is paramount, this is not the time to say "here is how it is going to be from now on."

So here are some things we are going to "**try on**" this fall. And then we will listen to each other, pray for guidance, and discern together what comes next.

- We will continue in-person and on-line [improved] worship
- We are planning to have the auction. If need be we will move it to an on-line auction depending on the Delta variant.

- We suggest safety as more return, praying and singing in worship.
- We will lament what we have lost as we look forward to what we can build.
- We will be trying on new hybrid “in person/online” models for worship and other meetings, building on the best of who we've been as an incarnationally gathered community and what we've learned about how to gather digitally.
- **We might consider having a drive through Christmas Meal?**
- A few calls came to office regarding the rent a spot in the lot for sales

We are going to take this slow ... and we are going to hold each other in grace and love each other through this unprecedented time. We are going to give ourselves the chance to weep and to rejoice. We are going to take the time just to get to know each other again ... to say goodbye to some who have left us over the past 18 months ... and to welcome new faces in our midst.

Know that whatever your comfort level for being together in-person — and for any number of other things — First UCC will meet you and love you as you are.

Whether you connect in person or at home or without a home, know that this community of faith receives YOU/ALL with strong and open arms, claiming you as God's own special cherished treasure.

Middle School and high schoolers have been receiving their own Sunday Message over this time via email and the younger children have been receiving lessons generated with activities. I can only hope that maybe the oldest sibling has been assisting the younger children during this time. We are small and at present even if parents felt safe about the children and Sunday School the number of young children wouldn't excite kids to participating. Hopefully the lessons sent have been used with cousins or even friends of the children.

Sally McNinch is living with a son at present. **Lucia** makes sure to get out to lunch with her once a week. **Glen and Ron** pretty much took care of parking and selling of pop and water at the Good Old Days Parade. **Logan and Jen** assisted until it was time for Logan to march in parade. Thank you Glen, Ron, Logan and Jen! Two others offered to assist with water and pop but couldn't make it, one because with her broken foot she needs assistance getting around with that scooter like appliance she uses at present. Our Amy and Rob were spotted on their bikes at the parade.

The Richmond Community Choir is resuming and will have their **final** Christmas Concert this year. I continue to make phone visits to those we haven't seen and drop in un-announced when I can. Un-announced visits give a real indication as to how someone is actually doing. Our two eldest gentlemen welcome [Jim and Hank] the drop by visits as does our Church mother [our eldest female Joyce [that worships regularly]]. She was so sure she wasn't the 'Church Mother' while Doris Anne Ensley was with us but she then realized that yes she is and has been our CHURCH MOTHER for a time. Lucille Trombley is eldest in our membership.

As a community of faith we have hung in there together, praying together, communicating with each other, and supporting any with issues of loneliness and/or depression. Richmond grows 'em strong and resilient. Now it is move forward time. KatieD+

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I am thankful that our 'Church Council' will lead worship on **September 19**. I know the community of faith will be as welcoming as usual.

VOICE MAIL is Tu Th and Sat and Ron Schrote puts it on the web site. This week it was sent to the membership along with the flyer about the Richmond Community Choir. Jen Northam handles our facebook.

Price D Smith welcomes any who want to use their talents for God's community of faith. Young people are gifted with technology savvy and they also need 'service hours' in place when they enroll in University or serve on Student Council/National Honor Society. Some hours can be earned right here: camera, power point, musical abilities, acting out the Gospel stories. All of us are ministers, all of us need to make the invite.

As always, it was great being with Pastors Alex and Tom and having our faith communities come together to pray, praise, and worship and share in the MCREST program. I've been informed that several from First UCC have offered to assist with MCREST and some others, after it was mentioned in the Prayers of the People on Sunday, were offering to assist. I am so glad we have each other.

One thing I must remember is that just because someone has email; it doesn't mean they go on it and a majority of our membership NEVER access our facebook live but wait until the link is sent to them. The improvement in our technology equipment will make a difference. Respectfully Submitted, KatieD+

COME JOIN THE
music

RICHMOND COMMUNITY CHOIR
SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2021 • 7:00-9:00 PM
CONCERTS DECEMBER 3RD & 5TH

IF YOU ENJOY *music*
AND ALL THE *fun* THAT GOES WITH IT,
WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN OUR
final CHRISTMAS SEASON TOGETHER!

**Rehersals held in the Richmond High School Band/Choir room
at 35320 Division Road.**
Park behind the auditorium and use the back entrance.
High school age and above. All are welcome!

For more information
810-305-1385 or 586-255-3938
www.richmondcommunitychoir.com