

Church of the Holy Apostles
Worship Committee Report 2020

I. Introduction

It goes without saying that the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on our worship in 2020. The challenge for the Worship Committee has been to keep as many of our familiar traditions and practices as possible while still being open to the new approaches that were made necessary because of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. With the help of many in the congregation, the Worship Committee has tried to meet these challenges with both creativity and flexibility as conditions and diocesan guidelines evolved over the year.

II. Early Days – March to May 2020

A. The end of in-person services meant that we needed a new approach to our worship services. Jean and Katie Gentile and their talented technology team (including Joe Zorc and David Lees) swiftly set us up for virtual services. Our first services used pre-recordings, done by James in his own home.

B. The next step was production of fully livestreamed weekly services in the church, including Holy Week. A small group of volunteers read the passion on Palm Sunday.

C. Choir music returned to our service on Sunday, April 26th, with the debut of our virtual choir. Music was selected by James and Paul, and the accompaniment was pre-recorded by Jean. Individual choir members submitted audio tracks, which were then mixed together by Jean Gentile to produce the final version of the hymns. Many of our regular choir members participated, as well as their friends and family members.

D. On May 3, 2020, Katie Gentile launched her very successful effort to co-ordinate readers and intercessors for our virtual services, making it possible to sign up for a specific Sunday. Recordings were done at home, then submitted for inclusion in the service. Many of our parishioners, adults and children, participated in this program.

III. Summer 2020

A. On June 21st we returned to in-person worship with a 25-person limit, in accordance with the guidelines from the diocese. The Johnson family produced an instructional video to help parishioners understand what to expect and to help them to feel comfortable with new seating and communion procedures.

B. We continued to have online sign-up for reader and intercessor volunteers, with an option to record from home for those who did not wish to attend church in person.

C. Starting on July 5th, we offered an alternate outdoor service twice per month.

D. In-person worship allowed a return to live organ music. In addition to the virtual choir, individual cantors were used on some Sundays.

E. Our technical team recommended new AV equipment in the sanctuary, and with vestry approval, it was installed.

III. Fall 2020

A. The diocese issued new guidelines for in-person singing, allowing for up to 4 singers. Our organist, Paul, organized this effort. Our first small in-person choir was on September 27th.

B. As Thanksgiving and Advent approached, the Committee met on Zoom several times to brainstorm options for meaningful experiences that would honor our previous traditions within the constraints of this unusual year. We offered a fully pre-recorded service for Thanksgiving Eve, followed by a Zoom happy hour.

C. Then, we received news that we needed to move to a maximum of 10 attendees. In December, we produced limited attendance weekly Advent services while still holding to the beauty of our holiday traditions. Many thanks to the efforts of Michelle Gallagher, Joe Zorc, and numerous children and choir members who produced a magnificent, fully recorded Christmas pageant!

D. We produced two services on Christmas Eve and one on Christmas Day. Our traditional Christmas Eve candlelight rendition of "Silent Night" included videos of families with candles in their homes.

E. The virtual choir recorded over 15 carols for the season including our annual Lessons and Carols service on the Sunday after Christmas.

In conclusion, the Worship Committee deeply appreciates the efforts of so many parishioners who have stepped up with dedication and creativity to sustain our worship during this difficult year. We gratefully acknowledge the leadership and contributions of our technology team, the talents and creativity of those who coordinated our readers, intercessors, and cantors, and the unwavering love, support, and leadership supplied by James.

Thank you all, and may we meet in-person soon!

Respectfully Submitted,
Toni Meiers and Judi Kraft