



The Rolling Stone

Rollstone Congregational Church

September 2020

As Summer Fades

As I sit here on a warm and muggy summer night there is much to which I and we should be pondering. Normally, at this point in time I would be frantic about the church year that we have awaiting us, but there are really very few norms to which we have grown fully accustomed.

In years past I would have started to focus not only the return from the summer hiatus, but would have started to plan the marathon that would lead us into Advent and Christmas (Christmas is only 116 days from September 1st). Typically, as the days begin to become cooler and the sunsets become earlier and earlier, there is a sense of excitement because we are gathering together and planning so many activities. This year is different in so many strange and interesting ways. First, we have found ways to keep connected, albeit at a distance. Weekends have become obscured making it difficult to actually know what day of the week it is (is that what I can look forward to in a few years once I retire to only doing ministry?) The pandemic and uncertainty of what the immediate future has in store has led us to recording all of our services and putting them up onto youtube and Facebook as the alternative to sitting in worship together. We have been recording the services earlier in the week to give ample time to prepare the service for posting and broadcast. This has resulted in me reliving my childhood when I would go to church on Wednesday evenings, plus twice on Sunday. We have learned through these experiences that we have an opportunity to reach people from the community and outside world through a recorded ministry, which now has led us to embrace the concept that all services will be recorded and put up for viewing on social media. A thank you needs to go out to those who are making this possible by giving of themselves and time. Imagine being the poor person that has to edit and upload the video so that it is there on Saturday night by spending the original hour for recording then another five to six hours preparing the video, they might be able to quote the sermon and scripture from memory. With all foolishness aside, I am extremely grateful for each person involved in this new and exciting ministry.

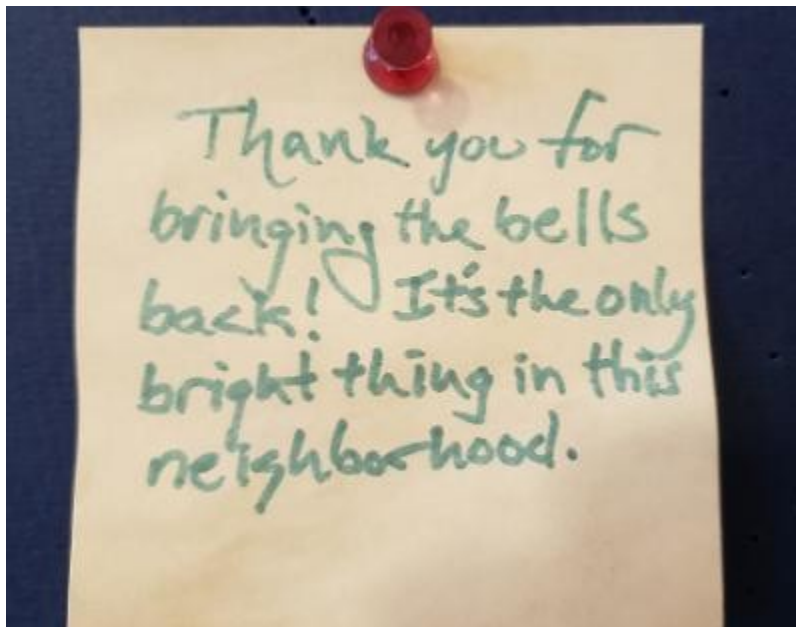
In planning for the fall and the winter there are so many unknowns that we are trying to maneuver around while we plan to gather within the church facility. I can say without hesitation that we do not know when we will be able to gather together in one place, albeit with masks and practicing social distancing. The decisions are being made with input of so many of our church leadership who have been working hard throughout the summer to plan for our coming together. Our return is in a constant state of fluctuation as we await clear guidance for the CDC, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Southern New England Conference of the UCC, and the trends within the community. We are grateful that so many of you have expressed your hopes and concerns, while still being respectful about the concern for all of our members and friends. The only concern I have to convey is that we do not want to put

ourselves into a situation that we have to close again after re-assembling for worship and community. We have been slow to move forward because we do not want to leave anyone disheartened because we have to close the building once again. With confidence we can state that we will come through this time, even if it means interjecting bits of humor in our building and worship.

Without a clear plan of what is happening in the immediate future I would like to offer a few suggestions of how to utilize that extra time you have at your disposal now. First, I would say be as Christ like as you possibly can be, love each other, pray for each other, help those who are less fortunate and give hope to those who are struggling through this time. If you need to experience God in dynamic and living ways, utilize the Sunday mornings and even the weekends to experience the awesome changing of the seasons that we have here in New England with the changing of the foliage. Take a moment to smell the crisp fall air along with filling your senses with the fragrance of fresh baked apple and pumpkin pies. I would even encourage you to make a homemade apple pie and share it with a friend over tea and coffee. Above all take a moment to breathe in the breath of God that is contained within the air that gives us life.

Until we gather together, I invite you to live and love life, take this difficult time and turn it into an everlasting memory of God's grace and love for each of us. I hope to see you soon and hear your voices, until that time comes, be safe, and be in contact with one another.

Pastor Dave



The note in the picture was written on a small yellow sticky note and was left on the back door outside of the Church. It was from one of the nearby neighbors and they were thanking us for turning on the Church's carillon bells to play some hymns during the day. The bells were turned on at the end of March during the onset of the COVID-19 virus outbreak and the start of people facing a time of quarantine.

Andy

WAYSIDE PULPIT

All Together All Alone

During these months of partly chosen, partly forced, social distancing to preserve public health, there is a pronounced tendency to succumb to a feeling of loneliness. This feeling may be inescapable, but it is not entirely justified. There is some comfort to be had in the understanding that in staying apart, we are doing so in concert with our entire circle of family, friends and acquaintances. And there is a further way in which we are not truly alone.

Even when there is no one around, I sense a real presence of many people: My parents, siblings and friends now long passed away, and the presence of a host of close friends and acquaintances living nearby or living very far away.

On the first Sunday of each month, we share the experience of a common meal with not only those gathered in our sanctuary, but with all those who are sharing or have shared such a meal in every part of the world and throughout two millennia.

We can overcome the loneliness of our separation by cultivating the awareness, each time we take a meal, that we are sharing it not merely with those with us in our homes, but with all those present within our souls.

Chuck Funk

From the Moderator's view

The last 6 months we have been actively trying to keep parishioners engaged with the church. To accomplish this we have had the help of numerous people. Our efforts have been in several directions, including:

- The church's Website (www.Rollstone.org)
- The Rollstone YouTube channel (reached from the church's website's home page by clicking on the "Rollstone YouTube Channel" button)
- Virtual Coffee Hours & meetings on ZOOM
- Our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/rollstone)
- Emails
- Direct mailings
- Deacons contacting

www.Rollstone.org – Hopefully people are checking this site regularly. Among other things are the current Prayer List, current news items about the church including reopening plans, all the Sunday Services since the beginning of May, the Rollstone Newsletter for the last 2 years, and a lot of other interesting tidbits including "Janet's Musings", a travelogue on New Zealand by Vicki Pollice, a 1941 Video of Fitchburg and several articles on the Relay for Life. Also linked to the website is the church's Google calendar that lists meetings & activities at the church and ZOOM links if needed.

The Rollstone YouTube Channel – search YouTube for "Rollstone Church" or click the button on Rollstone's website's Home Page – Our channel currently has 30 videos including all the Sunday Services since the beginning of May, several music videos of Gavin playing our organ and accompanying various singers. Be sure to subscribe to it to make it easier to find.

Sunday Services – Our services have been greatly enhanced by our new organist, Gavin Klein. He has participated in all our taping of the services as well as he's done several music videos of organ music that are on our YouTube channel. To help with utilizing the internet to reach out to our parishioners we have purchased video equipment to facilitate improved recording of our Sunday services. By integrating the video camera with the new sound system and the personalized hearing aids brought over from Faith

United we have been able to get an excellent picture & audio recording. To facilitate creating the videos we have purchased software that gives us the ability to edit them and splice together different clips to make a complete presentation. Typically on Wednesday evening Andy Lipasti, Ron Smith and I have been taping the services and putting them up on YouTube by Saturday evening. In addition to the taping of the services Don Cloutier has generated a 8 page bulletin for each service which Marie & I distribute on both the church's website and thru the mail to folks without internet.

In addition to having the services on YouTube, Don Cloutier has been recording the services on both an iPad & iPhone to put them on his, Dave's and the church's Facebook pages. Between the YouTube and Facebook videos we believe we are reach 70+ people each week. We have heard back from England & Guatemala that they have seen them.

Virtual Coffee Hours – We have begun holding Coffee Hours on ZOOM (see below) after the normal Sunday service as an opportunity for members & friends to informally stay in touch. Join us between 10:45 & noon for good old fashion Rollstone gossip. (Unfortunately you have to provide your own coffee!)

ZOOM – The church has purchased a ZOOM account to facilitate holding meetings and other get togethers. This account allows for unlimited people & time to hold meetings. It also makes it possible for people who do not have internet to use a phone to call in and participate in ZOOM meetings. The information on these meetings will be listed on the church's calendar, www.Rollstone.org/calendar.

Emails - We have tried to keep folks aware of the news relating to Rollstone by sending out emails as regularly as possible. In general we send an email every week, typically at the end of the week. If you are not getting them contact me to let me know.

Direct Mailings – for folks who do not have access to the internet we are mailing the Sunday bulletin each week. If you would like to have a copy mailed to you let me know.

The Deacons and the Trustees have been meeting monthly to keep the business of the church going. If you have any concerns please let us know so we can address them.

Other items around the church –

- With the help of Rick Lane & Ron Smith we replaced the sanctuary light over the choir loft. We have even removed the staging! The next project for the staging is to install the 2 lights that are missing in Cookman Hall and repaint the damaged part of the ceiling.
- Thanks to Hal Smith for keeping the outside of the church looking good as well as taking care of other items in the church daily.
- In the near future we will be replacing the flat rubber roof over Cookman Hall.
- We have received a check from the state for about \$6,300 that came from the state's missing money fund.
- Finicky Fork is still actively using our kitchen. The Trustees lowered their rent to help them weather the pandemic and they are now starting to bring their rent payments back to normal.
- The Trustees are exploring ideas for refinishing the front & Snow St doors. This appears to be a big project. If you have any ideas let us know.
- Gavin has reactivated the chimes on the steeple. They are playing 2 selections at 10, 12, 3 & 6 pm. We have had several nice comments from folks who have missed them.
- Cookman hall will again be used by Ward 5 for voting this fall.

Finally don't forget to vote in the primary & general elections this fall. If you need a ride to the polls give us a call and we'll help you get there.



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For the last 12 years Rollstone Church has actively supported the fight against cancer with participation in the American Cancer Society's "Relay for Life". During these 12 years Rollstone's efforts, led by Kim Bourque & Mary Lyman, has raised \$82,396! This year the Relay had to cancel the live fund raiser, but even so the Rollstone Rollers exceeded their goal of \$5,000 by raising \$6,189. This earned them 4th place in the Gardner Relay this year.

This year has been a particular tough year to do cancer fund raising. Fortunately, the team had the income from last year's 4th of July block party and the craft fair they held at Rollstone in November to get them off to a good start. The June Relay for Life turned into a virtual Relay. The Rollstone Rollers participated by having displays at both Kim & Mary's house as you can see in the pictures.



If you would like to donate to the team please go to this link or you can send a check made out to the Rollstone Rollers to 253 Elm Street Gardner, MA 01440 (this is Mary's home address).

https://secure.acevents.org/site/STR/RelayForLife/RFLCY20NER?team_id=2483273&pg=team&fr_id=96448

I would like to thank Paul Stansel for writing this article for the website.

Noah ...And the Flood Genesis 6-10

No matter how much patience one has, a moment arrives when a person concludes that things must change. The only possibility left open is to take some form of drastic action.

This is the impression we receive upon reading the first chapters of the book of Genesis. Once Adam and Eve had sinned, things rapidly became worse and worse. Humankind degenerated until people were beastlike. God, who

had created human beings to be good, was bitterly disappointed at this turn of events.

God decided that the only way to deal with the problem was to annihilate what He had created and to begin all over again from scratch. To do this, He chose one good man, Noah, and told him to build an ark. He was to take his family into the ark along with all different types of animals. Once they were safely inside the ark, God opened the floodgates of heaven and allowed the whole world to be inundated.

After forty days of rain, the Lord once again closed the flood gates of heaven. Slowly the earth dried up, and when dry land appeared, Noah and his family descended from the ark. They gave thanks to God for their deliverance and presented a sacrificial offering to him.

God was gratified at the show of gratitude on the part of humans (as opposed to the rampant disobedience before the flood). He promised humankind that He would never again destroy the earth by flood, and as a sign of His pledge He placed the rainbow in the sky.

This is the first of the covenants (or pacts) reported in the Bible. Gradually God would bind Himself closer and closer to humankind by these covenants until He would become one with us in the new covenant, Jesus.

The story of Noah, like the stories of most of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, should not be accepted too historically. The authors of these chapters wanted to present lessons rather than biographies, and to do that they borrowed some details from pagan myths.

Noah's story, for example, bears striking similarity to the Mesopotamian story, "Gilgamesh." Some scholars have said that Noah was nothing other than a cheap plagiarism of Gilgamesh. That evaluation is unfair, though, for there are also major differences between the two accounts.

Although the biblical authors began with the Gilgamesh story, they changed the details of the story in a striking manner. One of the most important of their changes is the attitude of God during the flood. The Mesopotamian gods never show love – they are selfish and capricious. The God of the Israelites is a God who loves and who even binds Himself to a covenant – a promise that was fulfilled only in the birth and death of Jesus.

1. Excerpt from the book: "Great People of the Bible" by Rev. Jude Winkler

Thanks to Andy Lipasti for sending this to us.

From the Organ Bench.....

Hey Everybody!

I hope you are all staying well, and safe at this time. I hope you all were able to have an enjoyable Summer given the situation we are in.

First and foremost, I just want to send a huge shoutout to Paul, our moderator, for spearheading our new “production company”. Paul has been behind the scenes editing all our videos and uploading them, which does take some extensive patients! I also want to send a shoutout to Pastor Dave and Don for putting together the services and bulletins. There are more people to thank here than I can name such as our Lay Liturgists, our Trustees, and our Deacons, (please forgive me if I forgot anyone!) but all your efforts are so much appreciated by so many! Also, huge thank you to our Congregation for staying faithful, prayerful, and loving to one another during this crazy time!

As for musical news, I don’t really have anything new to report. I am hoping to maybe do some virtual type things possibly such as a virtual Organ Tour, or something like that within the near future. But I will say, I hope that the music being offered on the online services has been to your liking and has been able to bring you closer to God during this time. I encourage all of you to never hesitate to reach out if you ever have a certain hymn or song you would like to hear within the service or played on the Carillon, or if there was a certain song within the service that you really liked, or disliked. Any feedback would be greatly appreciated! I want to make sure that I am serving you all in the best ways possible!

My hope is that next time I am at the church, to set up the Carillon to also chime the hour when it goes off as a way of “homage” to the original use of the Church bell. Some history here: The first known record we have of bells being rung in Christian churches dates back to the Fifth Century AD. A group of Italian Monks built a chapel with a bell which rang to mark times of worship and prayer, sounded when there was an emergency within the village it was located in, and most importantly, rang the hours of each day. One can assume this “trendy” idea caught on pretty quickly considering that most churches since then have something ringing in their steeples! I am very curious to see how far the Carillon can be heard around town. So if you can hear it from where you live, or work, please let me know!

So with that, I’ll leave you with a few words to reflect on as per usual!

Not too long ago, I was speaking with a friend on the phone, and she had brought up to me how she felt that God was turning away from her, and that the faith did not feel the same as it was before the pandemic began. I offer you this from that experience:

As we continue to live out our lives in this time of uncertainty, and hardship, it’s very easy to fall away from the faith. I get how easy it can be! For so many of us, prayer is a huge part of our lives. Over and over again, we pray for the pandemic to end, and yet it seems to be this chronic “annoyance” that does not seem to go away! Not overnight, not tomorrow, and not even over a few months. We hear of families losing loved ones, friends losing loved ones, spouses losing their spouse, and in some cases, parents losing their children. All to a virus that we too are at risk of getting. It’s easy to feel like God is turning away from us.

But the truth is, God will never leave our side. If we fall away from him, he’ll still be with us. God gave us this gift of life. One life, where we can make a difference in the world. This precious gift where we all live together on earth, and then can be united with God in heaven for eternity. Is this gift of life not enough to trust him? Just a little something to ponder on.....

All in all, I can’t wait to be with you all someday when it is safe to do so! Continue to be well, to stay safe, and don’t forget to look out for another! And until we meet again, may God be with you.

Christus est in pace (Peace in Christ),

Gavin Klein

thefifeingorganist@gmail.com

Church School News - September 2020

Greetings to all,

It has been a very long time since we have been together. However, our church leadership and members have done an amazing job "REACHING OUT". Through phone calls, Zoom meets, sending cards, and especially our Sunday Service - ready for us each week. We are grateful for each one of our members and some day we will look back and see that fellowship in many forms can hold a group together and see us through the most difficult times.

Here is an article from the Fitchburg State University Summer Contact Magazine. Heidi is the daughter of Enid and Marge (Hassett) Warpula (past members of RCC) and sister of Kris Bingham who is a member still. Heidi has written a book to assure her students that they should "Be Brave and Try Something New" - like she did by writing this book and reading it ON-LINE! She tells them "This won't last forever. We'll be back together soon. But until then, I bet ... There's time to clean your room."

Here is the article about her book and if you would like to hear her read it live to her students perhaps you can log on and hear her reaching out to comfort her students. vimeo.com/410204515

So let's keep Reaching out to our Rollstone Members and let them know that this won't last forever and we'll be back together soon.
Blessings to all,

Beth and Hal

REACHING EACH OTHER



Heidi Cowley '11 has teaching in her blood. Cowley has taught art for kindergarten to 5th grade at Page Hilltop School in Ayer for the past 14 years, and her grandmother, Mildred (Crooker) Hassett, a 1917 graduate of the Normal School at Fitchburg (known today as Fitchburg State University) was also an educator. In those days, teachers weren't allowed to be

married (for one thing). But Cowley learned about an unexpected parallel in her family history this spring.

Her grandmother was teaching in Athol when the influenza pandemic of 1918 shuttered schools. In one of the detailed journals that Cowley recently discovered, Crooker wrote on Sept. 24 of that year that nine of her 14 students were absent. The following day the school was closed, and Crooker was out of work. She took the train home, found another job, and eventually married and started a family.

Cowley, who completed a master's degree in visual arts education at Fitchburg State, is grateful she had other options when she was separated from her students. "I had to think about how to reach my students online, and that's when I started with the idea of a book," she said. The result was a self-published book, *Just Stay Home*, now available via Blurb.com in standard and coloring book formats.

Cowley encourages students to record their experiences of the current time, just as her grandmother did. "Maybe there's a hopefulness in seeing this has happened before, and we've come through it."