



The Rolling Stone

Rollstone Congregational Church

October 2020

The Pastor's Musings

Greetings brothers, sisters, and friends of Rollstone Congregational Church,

Welcome to the autumn season when the leaves begin to turn vibrant shades of red, orange, gold, and yellow. The seasons are changing which means for us that the nights will begin to be cooler and longer, leading to many different changes that we expect, but rarely give much thought to. During these past several months we have been focused upon the changes that were unexpected as we have tried to keep ahead of COVID-19 and the impact it has had upon our church life.

In a recent meeting of the church leadership group we talked about what are those things that have had the most impact on the church. We pointed out that the membership has experience a sense of isolation and separation because we have not been meeting at the church building for worship or conducting the business without the use of digital means. We recognize that this is distressing some more than others and we are working diligently to correct this by planning for a safe re-opening of the church for worship experiences. These services will be totally different than we have ever experienced because we are implementing changes in how we worship while maintaining the social distancing requirements. As we implement these changes it is with important that they are done to keep each of you safe while protecting the church.

During the meeting the question was raised, "How is the church doing financially?" There were many helpful insights that we came away from the data that was available which needs to be shared with each of you as we look towards the future and especially 2021. The church is not in financial trouble because we have a significant endowment to provide the safety net we need to manage through these difficult times. With that said we cannot rely on the safety net to cover our everyday bills and financial obligations.

So what exactly is happening? The giving and contributions are down (thank you to all who have sent their contributions either electronically or by mail). Our fund raising is non-existent which is expected when we cannot gather. Our everyday expenses are down, but not sufficiently enough to make up the difference. There are expenses we are incurring that could not have been predicted when we approved the budget at the last annual meeting that are almost all related to COVID-19.

What can we do help this situation now and in 2021? If you are able please send in your pledges and contributions that you would have normally have made, this will help to close the gap between

expenses paid and the income/contributions. Begin to consider how you will support the church in 2021 before the trustees begin the process of creating a budget. We already know that we are going to have re-occurring additional expenses in the budget that we haven't had to budget before such as sexton/cleaning expenses, cleaning supplies for disinfection of the sanctuary, restrooms, and eventually Cookman Hall. We are having to plan for a much colder and snowier winter than usual as predicted by the Farmer's Almanac and the National Weather Services.

Traditionally the Trustees have the rough first draft of the budget done by their meeting in mid-November. Hopefully, they will have a better sense of what they will have available in pledges prior to that meeting. We would have Stewardship Moments from late October until the beginning of November to give each of you a chance to reflect on how you plan to support the church in the coming year, while that will be almost impossible to accomplish without being together, I am asking that if anyone would like to share their story of "why I support the church" or "what the church means to me", please let me know so that I can schedule you into the service. Additionally, we will be mailing to each member and friend a packet with the stewardship materials so that you can prayerfully consider how to support Rollstone Church in 2021.

Thank you to all for reading my rant about stewardship, but as one of your church leaders, I would be remiss if I didn't bring up this topic. On a more exciting note we are now looking at ways to have you enjoy the beauty and sound of our organ and the masterful playing by our organist Gavin Klein at a monthly organ recital following worship. You will not want to miss this music that will absolutely touch your hearts and souls.

Please continue to be safe until we meet again.

Pastor Dave

A Message from the Moderator

After a careful review of our re-opening plans and discussion about them with the Fitchburg Board of Health and their lead inspector we have decided that it is not practical to hold safe, in-person services in our sanctuary for the time being.

We plan to continue our video taping of the services for showing on Facebook and YouTube. In addition, if anyone would like to attend the taping we will make provisions for up to 20 people to be present during the taping of the service. These services are currently be held on Wednesday evenings at 6:30. If you would like to attend please contact Paul Stansel (978) 337-1608 for reservations and the latest update on the service's status.

We apologize for the change in plans, but keeping all our members safe is our highest priority. We are hoping to be able to re-open Thanksgiving weekend if conditions allow.

If you would like more information about this decision or have thoughts or ideas on ways to improve our services please contact me anytime.

Paul Stansel, Moderator, (978) 337-1608

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Joseph ...Foster Father of Jesus Matthew 1-2; Luke 1-2

Joseph was a simple, decent man who probably never dreamed that anything great could happen to him. He, in fact, did little more than one would expect any father to do, and yet in doing that he responded to God's call in a wondrous manner.

Joseph was a carpenter in the small town of Nazareth. He was betrothed to Mary, a girl from the same town. When word came to him that Mary was pregnant, he was perplexed. Technically, she could be condemned for being an adultress and stoned to death.

Being compassionate, Joseph decided to divorce her quietly and let it go at that. He had a dream, though, that changed his plans. An angel appeared to him and explained that Mary had conceived by the Holy Spirit. Accepting this revelation with full faith, he took Mary to himself.

When the Roman emperor ordered a census to be conducted, Joseph took his wife down to Bethlehem, his ancestral village (for he was of the house of David). There Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable (for there was no room in the inn). Shepherds from the neighboring fields came to adore him followed by three Magi who had traveled from afar.

However, the visit of the Magi endangered the life of Jesus, for through them King Herod heard of His birth and he sought to kill Him. Forewarned in a dream, Joseph took the child and His mother and fled to Egypt where he remained until Herod died. Afterward he returned to Nazareth.

We know Joseph was a religious man for he led his family in the fulfillment of the prescribed rites in the temple when Jesus was born. Joseph took his family to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old (the trip during which Jesus remained behind for three days and was finally found teaching the doctors of the temple). After that incident, nothing more is heard of Joseph. It is presumed that he died sometime before Jesus began His public ministry.

It cannot be said, however, that Joseph's contribution to salvation history was inconsequential. He protected the child Messiah and taught Him his trade. He must have also taught Him some of his kindness and concern for the downtrodden. Modern psychology tells us that so much of our personality is formed in our early years, and Joseph and Mary were around Jesus and taught Him in word and deed during those years of His life.

Joseph is a model for every father – a man of self-sacrifice, of concern. He didn't have to do great things to be great; he only had to be a loving father and husband.

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

Andy Lipasti

Deacon News

Hi everyone, I can't believe summer is over and we are into fall. I love the warm weather and fall but must admit I do not like winter.

This has been a very bad time for us and the country. The fires, hurricanes, covid, floods, and the political scene, and the racial unrest. I am thankful that I have my faith otherwise I would be lost.

I will be so happy when we can get back to church and worship together. I miss all my friends and fellowship. It is wonderful that we can see the worship service on you tube and facebook.

The service is also sent out by snail mail so all can enjoy it.

The Deacons are still meeting via zoom. Mary Anne is still sending out cards. If anyone needs a little cheering up let her know. If anyone needs a visit or call also let us know.

On a lighter note last night I was feeling a little low having a rather sad day. Guess what I decided to do. I decided to sing. Now mind you I do not have a good voice. I have always envied people who could open their mouth and have this beautiful music come out. I sang some of the old crazy songs that we use to sing when I was younger. My dog and cat, I am sure, thought I was nuts. When I was done I felt much better. The power of music. You should try it.

I also like to read. A long time ago I read Pillars of the Earth. It is a long, long book. I loved it. It will entertain you for a long time.

If anyone has any good ideas that you can share on how to keep one's spirit up please share.

I hope to see you all in the near future. Until then I miss you all, stay well, stay safe, and wash your hands.

Linda Haas

Hello all,

The Board of Trustees all hope this finds you well. We are currently still meeting via zoom, but are looking forward to the day we can all be together again.

We have many projects underway: the rubber roof is being replaced, the Snow Street doors are being restored, and we are looking to meet Covid Compliance for in person meetings.

We are approaching that time of year that the stewardship drive will be taking place, please be on the lookout for further information.

We hope you are all safe and well.

God Bless,

Amy Larsen, Chairperson Board of Trustees

From the Organ Bench.....

Hey Everybody!

Happy Fall to you all! I hope that this finds you all well, safe, and healthy! What a crazy year it has been- and it is still not over!

Musically speaking, there is not really anything new going on or anything new to report! I am still trying to do some research and put a little something together about the organ, and some pictures of all the mechanical workings on the inside. There is so much going on behind the pipe facade that very few people get to see!

A quick little fun fact about the organ is that the gold pipes that you see on the outside don't actually play! As a matter of fact, they are strictly there to hide all the less attractive inner workings of the organ, as well as to add some architectural "flare". However, they did play at one point- all the way back in 1870 when the organ was first put in! A few people have asked me this question in the past, so I thought I would just put it out there.

The Carillon has been a bit fussy lately, but it should be chiming the hour between ten in the morning, and six in the evening, as well as continuing to play hymns at the usual times. Keep your ears open folks, I'll be changing to some requested hymns pretty soon!

Alright, as always, here are a few "tidbits" that I leave for you to think about:

I happened to be going to the Post Office after school last week, and there was a letter in the mail addressed to me from a member of a church where I first played the organ when I was much younger. I recognized the name on the envelope, but did not know who it was at first. As soon as I got in the car, I opened it up. To my surprise, it was an older lady who turned out to be the first person to ever encourage me to try the organ! I vaguely remember her, but her letter brought her face back to me in my mind. She wrote how she "always wondered what happened to the little kid who played the organ." Her little words of encouragement went all the way to where I am now.

God works in mysterious ways. Ways that we might not understand. Ways in which we don't know what is going to happen. Ways where we might question ourselves. But he has a plan for each and everyone of us. He has a plan for me, you, your family, friends, even your dog or cat! Even if we may not know our life plan immediately, or where life is going to take us tomorrow, doesn't God? Doesn't everything really happen for a reason?

I'll leave you with those two questions to ponder.....

Alright folks, that's my little blurb for this month. I am super excited to see you all in a few weeks, even if that means we can't sit together. If you could keep the hymn requests coming I'd really appreciate it. Don't ever hesitate to reach out if you ever need anything! I am always here!

Continue to be well, to stay safe, and don't forget to look out for another! I'll see you all soon!

And until we meet again, may God be with you! Christus est in pace (Peace in Christ),

Gavin

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Sunday morning 'Virtual Coffee Hour' after the service. Please join us Sunday mornings from 10:45 to noon for a chance visit with other members of your church family. The ZOOM link for these get togethers is on the front page of the church's website, www.Rollstone.org. It is the same link every week until mid - December.

If you do not have internet access you can still phone in and join us. The phone number is (929) 205-6099, then enter the Meeting ID: 927 6366 2394 and the Passcode: 763800.

Looking forward to have you join us,

Paul Stansel

