



The Rolling Stone

Rollstone Congregational Church

January, 2021!

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day have come and gone with us all looking forward to the new year. This past year has been tumultuous with many unexpected twists and turns. We have not been able to meet as a church family in person since the beginning of March often causing us to feel isolated and disconnected from one another. The greatest plans made by your church leadership have had to be placed on hold as we learned to adapt to many new norms at the church, in the community, and around the world. This past year was filled with challenges which led us to doing things in many new ways.

The traditions and even the things we have done in the past were either done differently or didn't happen at all. Even with everything that happened or didn't happen we have survived and prevailed, ready to march into 2021 with a renewed sense of purpose.

Not everything about 2020 was horrible and for that we are extremely grateful. So what was good about 2020? Well, there are many things that happened that might have been overlooked in the need to be socially distant. This church embarked upon the process of updating the church by-laws which are coming along nicely and are opening the doors to some needed changes within the church. The church hired a new organist in Gavin Klien who has brought new life to our music ministry. We have been doing all of our services utilizing different types of social media and digital technology. The church has had many people checking us out through the online services with people expressing a desire to be a part of this faith community once we are able to gather together in person. The people have taken it upon themselves to reach out to other church members in an effort to have the assurance that nobody is being forgotten or is in need. The church finances remained stable as people found ways to send in their tithes and offerings either via the mail or electronic deposits. Not everything was a complete disaster and really offers us hope for the new year and the years to come.

What do we have to look forward to and where is our hope? We can look forward to a year where the medical experts are given an opportunity to use their knowledge and expertise to bring this global pandemic under control so that all of us can work together in focussing upon implementing the new norms. We can continue to pray and hope for a government that can work together towards the common interest of all of the people. We can continue to pray for a resurgence of our church through a strengthen music program and choir, for a church leadership that has been granted an opportunity to lead this church with new life and a greater vision for the future, for pastoral leadership that has been given the opportunity to focus fully on the people and the mission of the church. The one gift that 2020 has given to this church is an opportunity to reflect upon what can we do better for the people and the community. This church

also has the opportunity to be center of new construction of housing in our neighborhood. We have weathered the storm because God has a plan for us individually and for this church collectively. That fact is exciting and should be exciting to you also. I ask that each of you prayerfully consider how you personally can be involved in this opportunity.

Pastor David

"Rollstone's Strategy for 2021"

Introduction

Rollstone Church is faced with an upcoming year with many unique challenges, BUT we also have a unique opportunity to meet these challenges and expand Rollstone's influence in the Fitchburg community. It is important for us as members and leaders of Rollstone to seize the opportunities that God has presented us with and move Rollstone into the future.

Goals for 2021

Continue Online services & re-open when able

- Revitalize the Music Ministry
- Reconnect with the congregation
- Reach out to the community
- Reach out to Fitchburg State University

Here are some of the actions being implemented to achieve these goals:

- REOPEN - as soon as it is safe to do
- Taping of the services for playing on the church's YouTube channel will continue for the foreseeable future
- Enhancements to the music program
- Warrant & Annual Meeting - The warrant for the Annual Meeting will be issued as in the past. The Annual meeting will be held on Sunday January 31st. NOTE, we fully expect to not have a quorum and will postpone the meeting to one month after we reopen.
- We are working on an updated Pastoral Call with Rev Hanks that will reflect 30 hours per week coverage.
- Dave & Don are planning to relocate to the Fitchburg area as soon as practical
- A new accounting system is being put in place.
- A new set of By-laws are being developed
- Nominations - We are asking everyone to continue in the same positions as this year for 2021. If you are unable to please contact Amy Larsen.
- Annual Report - please submit any items for this years Annual Report to me as soon as practical
- Additional work on the building is being planned, including additional lighting in Cookman Hall, refinishing of the front doors & an outside storage building.
- Improvement to our webpage & Facebook page
- Refurbish the nursery

Paul Stansel, Moderator

Epiphany

January 6, 2021

Many Christians around the world annually celebrate Epiphany on January 6 which is 12 days after Christmas. They believe that the 12 days mark the amount of time it took after the birth of Jesus for the magi, or wise men, to travel to Bethlehem when they recognized him as the son of God. Epiphany is also known as when John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the River Jordan.

Celebrating Epiphany

Epiphany is commonly known as Three Kings' Day or the Feast of the Epiphany and is celebrated with a wide array of customs around the world. In some cultures, the greenery and nativity scenes put up at Christmas are taken down at Epiphany. In some European countries, such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia, children dress as the three kings and visit houses. In their roles as the kings, or wise men, they sing about Jesus birth and pay homage to the "king of kings". They are rewarded with praise and cookies.

In many Latin American countries, it is the three wise men and not Santa Claus who bring gifts for children. In Spain, children fill their shoes with straw or grain for the three kings' horses to eat and place them on balconies or by the front door on Epiphany Eve. The next day they find cookies, sweets or gifts in their place. The "three kings" make an entry in many cities in Spain on Epiphany Eve, accompanied by military bands and drummers in medieval dress.

In the United States, in Louisiana, Epiphany is the beginning of the Carnival season during which time it is customary to bake King Cakes. The interval between Epiphany and Mardi Gras is sometimes known as "king cake season", and many may be consumed during this period. In some other Churches, the Feast of the Epiphany initiates the Epiphany season which applies to the period from Epiphany to the day before Ash Wednesday.

On the Feast of the Epiphany in some parts of central Europe, a priest, wearing white vestments, blesses Epiphany water, frankincense, gold, and chalk. The chalk is used to write the initials of the three magi (traditionally, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar), over the doors of churches and homes. The initials CMB may also be interpreted as the Latin phrase, *Christus mansionem benedicat* (may Christ bless this house).

To celebrate Epiphany is to follow through to the conclusion what started in the weeks of anticipation in November with the first week of Advent. The feast completes the season of Christmas by inviting us, like the Wise ones themselves, to discover for ourselves the identity of the Christ child.

Andy Lipasti

WAYSIDE PULPIT

Happiest New Year

Every January first, we look back upon the year just ended, and ahead to the year just beginning. We weigh what has been good and what has been bad for us in the last year, and share great hopes and expectations for more happiness in the next. In my lifetime there has been no new year so much to be welcomed, no year less to be remembered favorably, than 2020, and none with greater promise of improvement than 2021.

The previous New Year marked by the passing of a year with so much bad news was 1964. President Kennedy had been killed on November 22, and my father had died of cancer just one week before, but these tragedies were far more limited than those in the year of covid-19 in both geographic scope and extent of practical impact.

Also, at the new year of 1964, there seemed to be little to convince us that the next year would be happier than the last. Today, there are a raft of hopeful signs. Not just one, but several COVID-19 vaccines will be available for everyone who wants one, sometime this year. The election aftermath will eventually end, and we can hope that new leaders and new policies might begin to narrow the giant rift which has been growing between America's political factions. There is in the winds of public discourse a hint that relations between the races may undergo more improvement now than in any single year in many lifetimes.

But none of these happy prospects is guaranteed. After all, last New Year's Day we had no conception that we were entering a year of international pandemic. Twenty-twenty-one could hold its own tragic surprises. Our hope for happiness has never relied on the changing of the years, but on our faith in the One who is beyond time and in control of all our years. Our hope for happiness relies upon our faith, as it always has.

Chuck Funk

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

As this year draws to a close, I feel the need to give thanks to the many people in our church that have made it a better place. We are so driven to be thankful that this year is over, and I can certainly understand that, but because of the pandemic this year, we have in many ways found our best selves.

I am thankful for the leadership team in the church that has worked to keep the 'place' going. They have had much help with those who have come together to financially support the church. They have made sure the bills are paid, the heat is on and our obligations to our parishioners are supported.

We have people who have worked to keep the church building clean and functioning. We have those who devised a way to keep us in touch through media. There are those who have helped to augment and extend our online services. In fact, we have people in other countries who have connected with our services. And we learned about Zoom!

We have people who reach out to others with notes and phone calls and emails. These gifts mean so much to all of us and many of us are on the receiving end of this generosity. We have people who give time to send out articles to our newsletter. I look back to the vicarious travel I have been given through travelogues.

I only hope I have included all who helped us in this difficult year. Thank you to you all,

Kathy Rowe

BIRTHDAYS IN JANUARY

Best wishes to you all!

January 12 - Jasmine Paine – Hal Smith's granddaughter

January 24 – Lois Schrader

January 28 – Aurelia Lyman

Children's Sermon for ALL of us!!



New Year's Resolutions!

Resolutions are a tradition - Let's all aim to Lie, Cheat, Drink, Swear, and Steal more this year.

Resolutions are promises concerning things that we will try to accomplish in the year to come. Usually, they have to do with bettering our physical selves. But let's learn something new...

A wise man once made a list of resolutions that I want to share. I believe that these are resolutions that will help to ensure that we will have a happy and prosperous New Year.

In the New Year, be sure to LIE, CHEAT, DRINK, SWEAR and STEAL more than you did last year.

LIE back and relax just a little more this new year. Let a little more life happen to you without so much worry.

CHEAT failure. Don't be afraid to try something new because you think you may fail. It is through failure that we learn the most valuable lessons.

DRINK from the fountain of knowledge. People around you have already been down roads you may soon travel. Learn from mistakes they have made. Take what they have learned and use it.

SWEAR to do your best. All the time, in every situation. That is all anybody will ever ask.

STEAL a little time for God. Everyday take a little more time to develop your relationship with God.

So, if you lie, cheat, drink, swear and steal just a little more in the next year, you will have a profitable and enjoyable year ahead! God bless you in the new year!



Dear Lord, help us to live this year in a way that will be pleasing to you. Amen.

Scripture: *For I resolved to know nothing...except Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:2*

This year has been difficult in many ways! **But** I keep hearing the small things that have blessed people through it all. What positives have you experienced this year while you were “stuck” at home? What new things have you learned to do or enjoyed doing more? Perhaps talk by phone or zoom with people? Taking out the bread maker, cooking old favorites, sending more cards, reading, puzzles, knitting, **having church services online for us**, **blessed with beautiful organ music**, and the list must be LONG. Perhaps we will all look back and say - there were in fact - positives over 2020! May we remember more of the positives and find 2021 the year we **return to our fellowship with renewed excitement!!**

Blessings to all, Beth and Hal