Last year at this time, I was doing a phone interview with KCUR about our plans for worship that coming Sunday and the next day I was in-studio with three other pastors to discuss our careful plans and the uncertainty of what was to come. We gathered on Sunday, March 15 with a small group scattered about the sanctuary - with no 8:30 a.m. service in the chapel. I can’t even remember it now, not the details anyway. I went back this morning and re-read my newsbulletin article for that Sunday; I had forgotten that originally we had just “limited” our activities for “the next 21 days.”

By the following Monday, I was writing you a pastoral letter and we had begun our transition into the digital reformation. That week’s newsletter started with these words, “This.is.hard. This is really hard. Perhaps you’ve seen the social media meme that says, ‘I wasn’t planning on giving up THIS much for Lent.’ It’s easy in days like this to feel overwhelmed. There is so much uncertainty. Where does one even start?”

I’ve gone back through my planner/journal from March 2020 and it’s been quite a walk down memory lane. Trying to pivot, notes of creativity, a million questions in the margins, and then on March 20, I wrote, “I’m looking forward to coronavirus running its course.”

And today, as March Madness is in full swing with the Big 12 Basketball tournament in town - I’ll never forget sitting over at Cafe Trio on March 12 when we got the news it was cancelled - there is so much running through my mind. One of my dear clergy sisters who lives in New York City posted on Twitter yesterday, “Today is day 365 of my Covid year. I went outside 21 of those 365.” And I can not imagine.

As I sit here this morning, I just keep singing the song from the Broadway musical, “Rent.”

Five hundred twenty five thousand six hundred minutes.
Five hundred twenty five thousand moments so dear.
Five hundred twenty five thousand six hundred minutes.

How do you measure,
Measure a year?

Of course, the title of that iconic song is “Seasons of Love.” We’ll talk more about that on Sunday. I hope you’ll join us.

Rev. Shanna

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**Planning for Easter**

Our deacons met on Sunday, March 7, to begin planning the logistics for our outdoor Easter service, which will be held at Theis Park. The initial plan was discussed at the Worship Team meeting on Tuesday, March 9 and the combined plan will be presented to the Administrative Council during the regularly scheduled meeting next Tuesday, March 16. All the plans will be published in the newsletter during the upcoming weeks as we prepare for Holy Week (see information below). RSVPs will help us accurately prepare for our outdoor service, so please start thinking about which of our Easter opportunities might be the best choice for you and your family! We’ll have a link to RSVP for the outdoor
Holy Week Opportunities

This year our Holy Week opportunities provide both in-person and online experiences.

Virtual opportunities: Every day of Holy Week we will release a short devotional via our social media platforms. One of our staff will read a portion of the Holy Week narrative paired with a piece of music and a prayer. We received a good deal of feedback from across the congregation that indicated a desire for “something I can watch at my desk over lunch (10-15 minutes) to reset myself,” (to quote one of our leaders). These will be similar to our morning Ash Wednesday devotion. We hope you will share them with others and that they will guide your final days toward Easter.

In-Person: Reserved times in the chapel will be available with interactive Stations of the Cross every day of Holy Week. A prayer booklet will be available to guide your experience and there will be items to help the story come alive - things to touch, taste, smell. To reserve a time in the chapel, fill out the SignUp Genius form here: http://bit.ly/C3StationsSignUp. More times will be made available tomorrow, so if you don’t see one that works for you, check back in the coming days.

We are also using the stories from two different Gospels for a diverse and varied exploration of the scripture narratives. The digital devotions will use the Gospel of John and the in-person stations will use Mark.

Both experiences will root us in the Divine Presence as we prepare for Easter Sunday - and pray for good weather for our outdoor service! As we have shared the last several weeks, our Easter experiences will also be in a hybrid model. Two pre-recorded services - a sunrise service, as well as a pre-recorded service that will be available at our regular worship time (10 a.m. piano prelude and 10:30 worship). All the details for our live worship gathering in Theis Park will be shared in the coming weeks as things are finalized. We thought last year was a “once in a lifetime” Holy Week but alas. So a special thanks to everyone involved in helping to make our Holy Week sacred as we look forward to an Easter than will bring new meaning to our understanding of new life!

Sabbatical Update

Two weeks ago, Rev. Shanna shared a few initial details about Community’s sabbatical summer. As a reminder, in April of 2019 Community applied for a Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Grant and in late August of that year we learned we were one of 150 congregations across the country to receive this grant (that seems like a lifetime ago). There are funds for Rev. Shanna and her family, as well as funds specifically designated for the congregation while she is away.

Last year at this time, we were nearly halfway through publishing a series of articles from our sabbatical team to prepare us for this experience. Obviously the details of the original grant application have changed significantly. However, the sabbatical team is hard at work to create a summer of engaging and community-building activities!

Our Sabbatical Summer will kick off on May 23 with a Sabbatical Send-off Service. For those doing the math, that’s only 11 Sundays away! There is much to decide and coordinate between now and then so the team wanted to begin again a series of articles regarding this next season of our shared life together.

This article is adapted slightly from the one originally published on March 1, 2020 written by Lura Cayton, reminding us what a sabbatical is and why it matters for Rev. Shanna as well as the congregation. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact Rev. Shanna, Rev. Ryan, or any member of the sabbatical team: Scott Duschen, Ann Thompson, Aaron Blackburn, Ingrid Busch, Lura Cayton, Jan Jones, Bill Langley, and Sandra Stites.

This is the first article in a series regarding our 2021 Sabbatical Summer:
What is sabbatical? Academic or business communities give sabbaticals, times when a person takes off from regular duties for a project and are expected to have a “product” at the end, like a book or an article. Sabbatical in our religious context is different - sabbatical means time apart for both clergy and congregation to grow spiritually. Sabbaticals are written into a Letter of Call when clergy are hired.

Notice I said it was a time for both clergy and congregation. The last six years for Community have been a time of change in financial stability, renewed and shared leadership, as well as growth in worship. And the last twelve months have added additional layers of stress, challenge, transition, and change that we never could have imagined. We need a time of separation with, as the grant says, a hope that “our new way of being in ministry will find time and space to mature… apart from the guidance of a Senior Minister.” Together we will explore ways of spiritual development just as Rev. Shanna does the same apart from us. This also means that other individuals will need to take responsibility in ministries often done by our staff.

For Rev. Shanna, sabbatical is a period of stepping away from the day-to-day responsibilities to focus on her own renewal and spiritual growth with a commitment to return to the congregation with renewed energy for ministry. “Stepping away” is a key element; it means very little to no contact with the congregation, as such contact could physically or mentally bring her back into the role of pastor. It’s not that she’ll be trying to forget us - how could she!? - but her focus is on renewal time with Jacob and Audrey, with her Ryan, and her own growth. Just as she commits not to forget us in her prayers, we will not forget her in our prayers.

The end of the sabbatical and the period of “re-entry” is always a challenge. The Sabbatical Team is working diligently for smooth transitions, continuity of ministry, and opportunities for growth for the congregation. If you have any questions, we look forward to helping you understand this important season of our congregation.

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**Lenten Vespers**

Our Lenten Vespers services continue every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. These short services are livestreamed on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com). They offer moments of prayer and reflection along with music from Tim Whitmer.

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**Lenten Devotional and Discussion**

Our Lenten Devotional book is *Sacred and Desecrated: Forty Days with Wendall Berry*. The Deacon’s Sunday school class will devote time to reviewing, questioning and talking about this devotional. Even if you haven’t been in the class before, we invite you to join for Community’s Lenten spiritual journey at 9 a.m. each Sunday. You can join Sunday School on Zoom here: [http://bit.ly/steitzss](http://bit.ly/steitzss).

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**Tall Oaks Camp Dates**

2021 Tall Oaks camp dates are here for you to pencil in on your calendar! Community participates in summer camps for our youth and children by joining with other Disciples churches from around the Kansas City Metro. Tall Oaks is located just outside Linwood Kansas. We'll share more camp details as we get them but if you have questions, don't hesitate to ask!

**Grandparents Camp** *(grandparents and kids grades K-6)*: July 2-July 4; July 25-July 27
**Day Camp** *(grades K-1)*: June 12; July 17 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
**Primary Camp** *(grades 2-3)*: July 25-July 27
**Junior Camp** *(grades 4-5)*: June 22-June 25; July 6-July 9
**Chi Rho Fine Art** *(grades 6-7)*: June 21-June 25
**Chi Rho Classic** *(grades 6-7)*: July 25-July 29
**Eighter's Camp** *(grade 8)*: July 5-July 11
In Case You Missed It

In case you missed it, here are links to check out what’s been going on at Community this past week! You can click here to watch our talented choir section leaders perform “Beside a Stream of Living Water” and click here to see their performance of “Water.” If you weren’t able to tune in to yesterday’s Lenten Vespers service, you can still watch that here.

This Sunday at Community

This Sunday, March 14, we will continue on our Lenten journey as we focus on scripture from John 9 and look at another poem by Wendell Berry for the coming week.

Online Giving

If you’d like to give offering donations to the church during this time, you can mail donations to the church. Mail is still being checked daily and your gifts are gratefully received. If you’d like to give online, you may do so in one of two ways:

- Visit bit.ly/c4kgive
- Text the word "Give" to 816-484-3433 and follow the instructions that are sent to you. The first time you text to give you’ll have to set up an account, but from there on out your information will be stored so you can easily text to give.

There will also be a QR code shown during livestreamed worship that will take you directly to the website listed above to donate. Links can also be found in the livestreamed worship comments and on our website.

Connect with us online throughout the week!

Sunday
- 9 a.m. Sunday School for all ages on Zoom
  - bit.ly/steitzss
- 10 a.m. Piano prelude with Jonathon Antle on Facebook and YouTube
- 10:30 a.m. Worship on Facebook and YouTube

Wednesday
- 6:30 p.m. Lenten Vespers on Facebook and YouTube

Thursday
- Newsletter email sent

Saturday
- 8 a.m. Saturday Sit with Shanna on Zoom
  - bit.ly/saturdaysit

Prayers of Sorrow and Thanksgiving

Please hold the following members of our Community in your prayers:

Family of Community member Nan Borden, who passed away on March 9. Services will be Saturday, March 13, at Johnson County Memorial Gardens. Her obituary can be found here;

Marcie and John Files, on the passing of Marcie’s step-dad, John Taylor, on March 10;

Sondra and Ed Bowers, on the passing of Sondra’s mother, Mary Jane Wagnon, on
March 3;
David and Carol Thompson, on the passing of David's father, Francis Thompson, on February 26;

Donna Birts-Butler;
Equilla Ross;
Lucille Clark-Autry;
David Anderson;

Teachers and school staff, many of whom are transitioning to different models of educating and working with students in-person

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