

Vicar Sue Hoff
Annual Report 2020

What a year! Just six months into getting to know this wonderful congregation and a semester of seminary behind me, in January of last year I looked forward to new relationships, new learning and spiritual growth here at Shepherd of the Hill.

Was that just a year ago? Could this past year of managing through COVID-19, in the midst of social and political upheaval while living fairly physically isolated from most people have provided the opportunities for relationship, learning and spiritual growth I had expected? Probably more than I expected. This year has given many of us the chance to learn how to adapt to unexpected circumstances. It has been a journey through keeping in touch while keeping away . . . virtual learning . . . virtual relationships.

It has been a year of grappling with new things like online worship, constant sanitizing and always wearing a mask. It has been a year of letting go as well of physical touch, in person worship and coffee hour, potluck dinners and in-person meetings. A year of lost friends and grief. In the middle of all of that however, many positive things have happened.

We have learned to worship in new ways, both outside and online. I have been blessed to be part of the creativity of worship this year.

We have learned to use Zoom to engage in multi-media book studies and I have been blessed to be part of the spiritual growth that has occurred.

We learned to bring our coffee to Zoom Coffee hour each Sunday and to bring young people together online for WOW and that has helped me to build new relationships.

We began a LEAD journey to enable us to listen to each other, our neighborhood and to help us understand where the Holy Spirit is leading this congregation in service and mission. That too has provided relationship building, spiritual growth and learning and I am grateful.

I am grateful too for the opportunity I had this year to become more a part of our weekly planning for worship and special services, which have given me a better understanding of the nuts and bolts of planning and doing worship. It also gave me a chance to connect with many of our confirmation and WOWs children and many other members as we recruited for participation in online services. It was a delightful chance to “see” many people over the course of this year.

Last year was different. But it provided unexpected opportunities to be and learn and do the things I expected to do. 2020 also gave me a chance to work with volunteers on projects and I deeply appreciate them and the work the effort they put into all aspects of planning for outdoor worship, indoor worship, special services and our prayer stations. Thank you Amy Haut, Fern Kinder, Jerry Liston, Rick McManis, Amber Nickel, Sonya Pedersen, Ellen Schroll, Dawn Virva and Carole Ziemke for helping me grow in this aspect this year.

My seminary education continued without interruption this year. Fortunately, Wartburg Theological Seminary was already operating a fully “face-to-face” online class offering, there were no changes to my educational plan. I meet “in person” via Zoom for all of my classes.

In February, I will begin an 18-month internship here at Shepherd of the Hill, which is part of the four-year collaborative learning program at Wartburg. I look forward to working with and

would like to thank the people who have agreed to be part of the Ministry Site Committee; Jerry Liston, Antonio Lopez, Jeri Rigoni, Collette Rosynek, Donna Rothlisberger, and Steve Silic. They will both accompany me on the journey and provide guidance and feedback.

I am also grateful for the guidance and spirit of teaching of Pastor Jon. I have learned much this year and know I have much to learn.

What will 2021 bring? Whatever it is, I am so grateful to be in the midst of this body of Christ, experiencing and learning and growing. I look forward most of all to worshipping in person, attending meetings, coffee hour, book and bible studies . . . and hugging hello . . . when it is safe.

In Christ,

Vicar Sue Hoff