

Pastor's Corner, October 2021

The pandemic has ushered in many new ways of doing everything, including ministry. It's funny how two years ago, few people knew what Zoom was, and yet today, I often hear people lamenting their "Zoom fatigue." Who knew as recently as 18 months ago that churches would shift from having exclusively in-person worship services to going exclusively online? And now, in the fall of 2021, we're using a hybrid format with both in-person and online options. While the shifts and course-corrections have been challenging at times, I continue to be grateful for the fresh new ways we can understand and embody ministry, regardless of what our circumstances might look like on any given day.

At the end of May 2020, I began a pastoral and worship internship at a church in Plano, Texas. I had to participate in a year-long internship to complete the requirements for my degree from Perkins, and I was thrilled to have the opportunity to get out of a classroom and do "real" ministry. Of course, the world had basically shut down by May 2020, so the church in Plano was only offering online worship services. Once we were able to re-open for in-person worship, we recorded and aired videos at the beginning and end of each service, which informed our guests what the current covid protocols were so they would know what to expect. We referred to the videos as "pre-flight" and "post-flight" videos. We joked that during the "post-flight" video, we should make it even more like a true airline-related video and include the announcement, "We know you have a choice where you worship, and we're so glad you chose to worship with us. We hope you worship with us again soon."

Levity aside, we really do have choices regarding when and where we worship. We get to choose which faith tradition we want to embrace. I was reminded of that just last week when I recorded the second episode of Coffee with the Pastor, a new online series I've recently started.

Each week, I've had the joy of recording faith-based conversations with different friends and have been streaming the conversations on the Northgate Facebook page and YouTube channel. During a recent conversation, I chatted with my friend and clergy colleague Rev. Andy Roberts about what makes us Wesleyan. It was a wonderful, wide-ranging discussion (we even covered Thanksgiving side dishes, among other topics). Among other things, it really reminded me of all the reasons I chose to convert to the United Methodist Church and why I still worship in our denomination today. Come what may, I absolutely love and remain deeply committed to our grace-filled theology and our emphasis on God's work in us throughout our entire lives.

When life feels particularly crazy (like when a global pandemic arrives), I know God's grace is a constant in my life and God abundantly offers all of us grace every day. Tell me, friends, what kinds of choices have you made in your faith journey? My prayer for all of us is that we can continue to seek God through the choices we make in our lives and that we always see how God's grace is sufficient for us every day. We all have choices about where we worship, and I'm so glad we get to worship together.

Gratefully,

Pastor Jennifer