

**INTERIM MINISTER**  
**Annual Report**  
**2021**

A wise person once said, “When you get to the end of your rope, let go!”

I know our usual response to sudden and severe change is to “tie a knot and hold on,” but often the better response is to let go and to see where things fall. Such was the case in 2020.

Less than two months after our last annual meeting, the world was turned upside down by the worst pandemic in a century. Ohio postponed a primary election. Restaurants were reduced to carry-out only. And churches like ours halted in-person worship and gatherings.

Consequently, all our discussions of an Open and Affirming process were put on hold. Even Holy Week and Easter Services were cancelled.

But as traditional gatherings were cancelled, new ways of being the church evolved.

Initially short weekly meditations were posted on Facebook.

Our Thursday Theologians study and discussion group began meeting via Zoom.

When worship did resume, we met outside around the gazebo as much as possible. When forced inside, worship was modified to reduce personal contact. (For example, passing the peace was eliminated, and the offering was collected at the door rather than passing the plate. And communion was “self-serve” with juice and Goldfish crackers picked up in individual cups.)

In December, when another major surge of Covid cases hit Portage County, we again cancelled in-person worship. But by this time we were able to hold worship by way of a zoom internet connection.

A big thanks goes out to Jack Valenzza, our organist, and to Jane Moser, our “choir,” for providing the music for those December services.

We even held our Christmas Eve service on Zoom with the additional help of Susan Forgacs, and Megan, Brynn, and Lauren Moser. Even though we could not pass “the light of Christ” from one to another at the end of the service, I did ask people to light their own candle at the appropriate time. One parishioner texted me later and said it made her feel like she was actually there.

Thanks to Zoom, we even had one worshipper join us from San Francisco; something that would never have happened had not the pandemic forced us into new ways of being the church.

A lot changed in 2020. Thankfully, vaccinations are now underway and we’re hopeful that we’ll soon conquer the Corona Virus. But how much we’ll be able to return to old ways; how many of our “temporary” changes will endure; or what new things God will lead us into in 2021, we cannot say.

All we know is that God always guides us through every wilderness as we journey to a new land.

*Rev. Jerry Kruse*