

The Church Has Left the Building

Oklahoma Conference of The United Methodist Church
05/01/2020

Pastors across Oklahoma have been putting the adage “the church is not the building, it’s the people” into literal action since in-person gatherings were restricted to 10 or fewer on March 24 in response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Rev. David Player, who pastors Guymon-Victory Memorial, has worked to keep his congregation in ministry with their community. He’s taken blessing bags made by volunteers to local truck stops for truck drivers who have to continue their deliveries. He’s made a point to text members on a regular basis as individuals and families have been self-quarantined at home.

Like many pastors, Player has joined the world of online worship. A weekly worship service is recorded in the sanctuary with a piano, hymns and leaders who practice social distancing. By contrast, a weekly devotion featuring only Player and a guitar is recorded on a smartphone. He’s received positive feedback from members regarding online worship, and an average of 120 participate online each week.

“Broadcasting over YouTube Live Streaming and Facebook Live is simple, low-cost, and easy,” Player said. “Select the YouTube Live or Facebook Live application, have your thoughts prepared and ready to share, [and] hit record, share, and then end. Easy peasy, lemon squeezy.”

Rev. Robert Rose, who leads Duncan-First, has also been recording services in the sanctuary. He said they have people from other states joining them on a regular basis, and they get just as much viewership during the week as they do during the live worship on Sunday morning. In addition to music and a sermon, every other week a nurse from the congregation will close with tips on how to stay healthy while sheltering in place.

“We try not to scare people, but empower people. Right now, a lot of people just feel helpless, and when you give them tangible things they can do, then they’re able to feel like they’re more in control,” Rose said. “That’s just the same way you handle grief; you just try to help people give more control over their life, and it gives them comfort.”

Rose said the church has been divided into several “flocks” with each led by a “lay shepherd” who is in communication with their group every week. Bible studies take place by Zoom, an online meeting software, and individual pre-packaged communion cups are delivered to homes of members who want them for Sunday.

“I just remind people we’re not on our own, we’re not alone,” Rose said. “God is with us. There is a resurrection after Good Friday.”

Though Rev. Jinx Barber has also used Zoom for discipleship and livestreaming for worship, his church in Dewey has organized a drive-in approach for worship. Barber credits Rev. Tari Carbaugh, who serves at Samaritan Counseling and Growth Center, with having the prior experience to put it together in a safe manner.

stage wide enough to accommodate social distancing for the worship team is set up in the parking lot of a local park, and families pull into parking spaces and stay in their cars. The service is broadcast on KRIG 104.9 FM, a local country station, which allows members who can’t attend or who don’t have livestreaming capabilities to listen in. Visitors from different churches have come, but there’s no desire to lure them away from their church homes.

“We’ve had some people go to other drive-in worships and say it feels just like church in the open, but when they come here, they feel like they’re a part of something,” Barber said. “That’s when we know we’ve hit the nail on the head.”

Alyssa Hamilton, who attends Dewey and participates in the drive-in weekly worship, said the energy in the cars is contagious.

“It feels 110% like worship. It’s funny how when the situation changes from what we are always used to and we think outside the box we live even more in the moment,” Hamilton said. “This is one of the most unreal times in our lives. Nothing is ‘normal.’ Having church keeps some sense of ‘normal’ and helps keep you surrounded by community even if it’s from a physical distance.”

Barber said his congregation isn’t rushing to go back to the building in May because no one can truly predict what the next few months will look like for communities. Among the uncertainty, however, he has seen his members step up to help each other in practical ways. He expressed both gladness that people are more aware of each other’s needs and sadness that it took a pandemic to make it happen.

“When church left the building, we had to learn to be the church,” Barber said. “We’re not always good at taking care of people when they’re in our building, and now this pandemic has forced us to be a better church.”

Rose agrees, and he thinks the church will be stronger for the experience.

“I wish the coronavirus had never happened, but I think coming out of this, the church is going to be so much stronger,” Rose said. “I believe this will be a defining moment for our generation, and the church is being forced to reach out in ways and to gain expertise that I don’t think we would’ve otherwise gained.”

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Spirit CONNECTION

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER|DEWEY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH | SUMMER 2020



Tentative Timeline

June 21—Phase 1

2 Services

9am—Classic Worship

Livestream Only

11—Modern Worship

Livestream & FM Only

July 19—Phase 2

Services will be available to the public wearing masks and practicing Social Distancing.

9am—Classic Worship

11—Modern Worship

Livestream & FM will continue until a later date.

Time to plan our return to in-person worship services.

What a year this has been! I know that all our plans as individuals, families, businesses, and even churches were interrupted. This has given us a chance to step back and see what changes need to be made to not just relaunch our church in the era of COVID-19, but also to see how we can prepare to meet the future head on.

This newsletter is special because it contains information regarding our processes for reopening. One thing we need to keep in mind is that the dates listed here are only tentative, because we need to remember the virus could change or delay our plans.

Thank you for being patient as we enter this new age, and learn to navigate so that we can be an effective church to our community.

Rev. Jinx

Dewey United Methodist Holds Drive-In Church Service

Posted: Mar 29, 2020 11:38 AM Updated: Mar 29, 2020 11:56 AM

Garrett Giles

The parking lot of Don Tyler Park in Dewey was full of God-fearing believers on Sunday as one local church brought glory to the Man upstairs in a unique way during a global pandemic.

Dewey United Methodist Church held a Drive-In Church service on Sunday at Don Tyler Park as our local communities find a way to worship God with the rest of the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. The idea behind this is to give you an opportunity to worship with others while still being safe in your car.

Associate Pastor Tari Carbaugh said "Dewey UMC will keep holding these drive-in church services at Don Tyler Park at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays until the Coronavirus fades into our distant memories. She said every service like Sunday's service will be broadcast live on Real Country KRIG 104.9 so you can listen to her, Senior Pastor Jinx Barber, and the worship band from the

safety of your car. And if you hear something you like, you can honk your car horn as a way to say, "AMEN!"

Carbaugh said we need to honk our horns, make some noise, worship God, be together and be well. She said we will get through the Coronavirus scare together by being people of faith that love one another, love God and love the well-being of our communities.

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, and Carbaugh said they will bring in donkeys for their upcoming drive-in church service. She said they will hold a "Donkey Parade" then to commemorate Jesus and his triumphal entry into Jerusalem before his crucifixion on the cross where he died for our sins.

Senior Pastor Jinx Barber said you can even interact with them on Facebook during the Drive-In Church service.

Two Sundays ago, Dewey UMC held a St. Patrick's Day quiz and had prizes for all to enjoy.

Pastor Barber said one person was even surprised by how much they knew about the holiday during the service, and that they had a blast with the interaction.

All you have to do is search "Dewey UMC" on Facebook to interact with them online, but they really want the community to visit them at Don Tyler Park for church on Sunday for a healthy alternative during this difficult time with the Coronavirus.

Carbaugh added that they have other great ideas in mind for Easter, so stay tuned for those interactions as well. Until then, Dewey United Methodist Church invites you to Drive-In Church at Don Tyler Park on Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

To listen to the service, you can tune your radio to KRIG 104.9. You can also stream the service from your phone using the Bartlesville Radio app or online at bartlesvillerradio.com.



Relaunch Plan

A MESSAGE FROM REV. JINX M. BARBER

The good news is that we will get to return to our building soon, the bad news is that we still have a way to go before we can open fully to the public.

These first few weeks from June 21 until around July 19th will be spent working out the kinks of two worship services, but mostly we will be training our ushers, greeters, and other volunteers on all the new procedures that we will be following to ensure your safety. Once we open to the public, we will still be following guidelines established by the CDC, OK Dept of Health, and The Oklahoma Conference of the UMC.

Please look over the following guidelines and familiarize yourself and your

family with them. The quicker we all learn these, the quicker we can move on to identifying the next areas of ministry to open publicly.

I know that these will sound like a lot of rules, but really there are just three. The same three that Methodists have used since John Wesley's Class Meetings. Those rules are; **Do No Harm, Do Good, and Stay in Love with God.**

⇒ As always, if you are not feeling well, if you are concerned for your own health and safety; we ask that you stay home.

⇒ When you arrive at the church, we ask that you wear a mask at all times. If you do not have one, we will provide you one.

⇒ We take your temperature with a no-touch thermometer and ask 2 questions. If your temperature is above 99.5, or you answer yes to any of the following questions, you will be asked to return home. Those questions are; *Do you have a new or changing cough? Do you have shortness of breath?*

⇒ Your contact information will be verified, and you will be seated.

⇒ 9am Service uses Main Entrance

⇒ 11am Service uses Gym Entrance.

Thank you for your patience as we navigate a new era.

Things you will miss until we can safely do them

- ◇ No areas for fellowship or conversation
- ◇ Sunday School groups are asked to meet virtually or by phone and will not meet in person during phase 1 or 2.
- ◇ Children and youth ministries will not meet in person, if children or youth are present, they are required to sit with family.
- ◇ Nursery is unavailable at this time.
- ◇ Coffee Service will not be provided and the water fountains will be blocked.