

Cross Roads Presbyterian Church in Gibsonia, PA, is a smaller, family church. When I began here on Dec. 1, 2019, I was starting in my first solo pastorate and full of excitement for all of the great visioning we would do together as a congregation and how to move forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (a little more than we already were.) Part of that was to upgrade some of the church technology, overhaul the church website and hopefully convince the congregation that the ability to livestream and put worship up to be available online were all great ideas for doing so.

Well, what I had envisioned taking a couple of years to do was given a violent shove forward on March 15, 2020. Like many churches around the country, our session voted to halt in-person worship and move to some kind of virtual offering for two weeks to help “flatten the curve.” It would be over 200 days until we were back in our sanctuary together, with things looking very different than when we left. March 16, I signed up for our church’s very own Zoom account and watched tutorials. I asked other clergy if they knew how to best pre-record worship and edit it to put it up somewhere online for the congregation to view. Lots of clergy were asking these same questions. I figured it out, but my laptop took 13 hours to render a 30-minute video for audio recording and a video recording. Did it really need to take that long? Thank God it would only be for two weeks.

Two weeks became four weeks. Four weeks became “hopefully Easter Sunday,” which became “maybe Pentecost.” In the midst of all of that, my ability to put together worship and participate in webinars was drastically impeded by my dinosaur of a laptop. Our small church was worried about its budget and how COVID was going to impact it over the coming months. So, we looked for a possible lifeline. Thank goodness for the Synod Technology Grant. Our grant allowed us to purchase a new laptop for my use, as well as help to pay for the Zoom account we needed for meetings and worship. As we have moved back into our sanctuary for in-person worship, its speed has been incredibly necessary for helping us to livestream for those who do not yet feel safe being in the sanctuary for worship. It allows us to have Zoom Trivia Nights together, conduct the business of the church during committee meetings, and has even allowed for us to reach new people in our congregation to serve as elders and deacons who couldn’t previously serve due to busy schedules or driving at night.

We’re so grateful we were able to secure a grant from the Synod of the Trinity. It’s allowed for us to accomplish a great deal, including starting to build a brand-new website for our church that will help us to reach others in our community. Without the help of the grant to pay for some new technology, I’d still be stuck with my very old laptop, still waiting for my editing software to load...

Our congregation is so grateful to the Synod for approving this grant!

Blessings,

Rev. Niki Atkinson

Cross Roads Presbyterian Church, Gibsonia, PA