

## **Summary Report: Rev. Ruth Everhart, Transitional Pastor, Feb-Sept, 2021**

Our time together has been circumscribed by the coronavirus pandemic in ways both obvious and invisible.

I met many of you on March 1, 2020, in a time we now recall fondly as the “Before Times.” At Rev. Elizabeth Hagan’s invitation, I guest preached at PCC. It was the First Sunday of Lent, so I preached on the temptation of Jesus. The choir sang. Pastor Elizabeth and I presided together at the communion table.

After the service, in the fellowship hall, I talked about my (then new) book, “The #MeToo Reckoning: Facing the Church’s Complicity in Sexual Abuse and Misconduct.” I recall speaking with many of you individually and signing books, but mainly I remember the sumptuous brunch that Kevin Hagan prepared.

That event was one of many planned for my book launch, although it turned out to be the last time I spoke about that book in person. Just ten days later, the world shut down due to the coronavirus. Like everyone else, I watched as new ways of being emerged online. I saw my clergy friends work hard to create new forms of ministry, and I learned to preach to a camera lens.

When the Hagans moved to Georgia in January of 2021, that created an opening during a challenging time. When Elizabeth asked me if I was interested in serving the church in a transitional role, I was happy to be of service, and was glad the committee chose to hire me.

My first task as the Transitional Pastor at PCC was on January 24, when I attended the Annual Meeting virtually. That was my first time seeing all your faces in little boxes on my screen. My first couple of Sundays I preached from home because there was snow and freezing rain. Polly Johnson was a mainstay, stepping into the technology support role previously filled by Kevin Hagan.

On February 21 Elise Emil organized the annual Souperbowl event by moving it outdoors. Excitingly, the local NBC affiliate featured PCC on the news that evening.

Through the winter and spring I continued to host a Wednesday evening Zoom call for anyone who wanted to drop in and chat for a bit. Among other topics, we talked about the identity of PCC, preparatory to the work of a Pastor Search Committee. For a time we pursued the idea of hiring a Worship Coordinator to manage music functions, as Pastor Elizabeth originally envisioned, but we decided to let that pursuit go.

Eventually we settled into a new routine of worship in the sanctuary. Pastor Beth McKinney created beautiful altarpieces that few people saw IRL, but which can now be enjoyed on the website. Music was provided by Zoom or video — solos by Harper Denhard and others, with piano, organ and harpsichord music by Nina Schierow and

others. For Easter a guest organist, Adam Graham, and an anonymous opera soloist created videos in PCC's sanctuary.

As folks were able to be vaccinated over April and May, we phased into a "hybrid" model of worship, with a few people in the sanctuary, while others watched via Zoom at home. We resumed using live piano in the sanctuary because it was easier to sing that way, which people did while wearing masks. Currently pianists Connie Rhodes and Francine Krasowska alternate.

We eventually added a monitor in the sanctuary to help tie the two audiences together. Some Sundays I preached a "traditional" sermon, usually based on the lectionary text. Many summer Sundays were more conversational, as we explored a question or topic together, often using the chat feature of Zoom.

Meanwhile . . . back at the Palisades Hub, a new life was forming. Julie Simonton became the founding Executive Director in February. The intrepid Polly Johnson gradually shifted her focus from the faith community to the Palisades Hub. That created some gaps, which I attempted to fill. I maintained and updated PCC's website, created the weekly emails on Constant Contact, created and printed the weekly worship bulletins, and managed technical support for Zoom. For a time we hired a Technology Assistant, Olivia Nangle. The motto during this time was "making it up as we go" and trusting God to bless it.

Over the spring and summer the Palisades Hub gathered speed. On June 6 PCC and the Hub co-sponsored our first event, an outdoor jazz concert after worship. On June 13 we co-sponsored an event for Elizabeth Hagan and her new book "Brave Church: Tackling Tough Topics Together." On July 4 both entities marched in the annual Palisades Parade. I created a postcard for the church, and Julie Simonton created paper fans for the Hub.

Over the summer I made a concerted effort to reach every person in the PCC directory by email and/or phone. As a result, the Church Council updated the Member and Friend Rolls. I believe this work will be helpful to the next settled pastor.

The partnership between the faith community and the Palisades Hub is moving from its infancy into its toddlerhood — and should continue to receive a great deal of time and attention in the year ahead.

My contract ends on September 30, and I look forward to a season of travel with my newly-retired husband, Doug. I will be blogging that trip and invite you to follow along.

I leave you in capable hands, for which I am grateful. PCC is fortunate to have continuity in the leadership of Rev. Beth McKinney, the Parish Associate. The Church Council, though (too) small, is filled with capable leaders as well. There is always room for new leaders to step up, so do not hesitate to offer your gifts and talents to this enduring Body of Christ.