



*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for;
the conviction of things not seen.
Hebrews 11.1 (NRSV)*

September 2021

Beloved in Christ:

A year ago, I wrote extending greetings of Christ's abiding peace. We did not know then that we would still be facing the effects of the pandemic one year later—that we would still be in constant need of the peace that passes all understanding and that abides with us always. I give thanks to God every day for the many creative and impactful ways you have faithfully persevered in serving Christ when and where there is such great need. In the midst of all that we encounter, we return to school and our fall schedules, and turn also to our church conference season.

In light of recent increases in COVID-19 cases around Vermont, I will be conducting church conferences (and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee meetings preceding them) via Zoom for the month of October, and then revisiting the possibility of being in person for some church conferences in November. If your congregation is scheduled for an October church conference and has limited or no access to Zoom, the meeting will be conducted by phone. If the case numbers improve, I will attempt to be in person in November at the churches where meeting virtually last year was more of a challenge. **If we are able to be in person, we will not have communion or food and drink. Masks will be mandatory for each person in attendance at all in-person conferences.** If these practices are not possible, the church conference will need to be on Zoom. If you have been scheduled for a virtual meeting but feel strongly that in-person would be beneficial, contact the district office at your earliest convenience.

All virtual church conferences, like in-person church conferences, still need to be properly warned at least ten days in advance and in at least two ways. The Zoom platform allows people to join the meeting via computer, cell phone, or home phone/land line (long-distance call). It will be important to make sure that people are technologically prepared for this way of meeting; so, please practice ahead of time if you can. I have a Zoom account and will host the meetings. If you have any concerns about the virtual nature of the meeting, please contact me at the district office as soon as possible.

I will meet with every SPRC this fall the hour before the church conference when possible. I will also preside at all church conferences.

You may notice that the parsonage inspection report is not included in this year's items that need to be completed. This is an intentional omission. Since the completion of this report is contingent

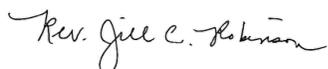
upon a member of Trustees, a member of SPRC, and me walking through the parsonage with the pastor, and since having people enter a pastor's home may not be a safe practice during COVID-19, we will not be conducting parsonage walk-throughs. Rather, I encourage the pastor, SPRC, and Trustees to discuss and address any matters that may need attention at the parsonage. If there are concerns that you are unable to address due to conflicts or challenges that arise, please reach out to me directly naming your issues in writing and I will consult with you. If yours is a parsonage that you know is going to have new occupants in July 2022 due to a retirement, etc., please send me your best description of the parsonage, including any repairs that will need to be made before the next pastor and family reside there.

You may also notice that some of the conference forms have been updated, adapted, or changed since last year. Please note that a completed but unsigned copy of the Pastoral Compensation Report needs to be postmarked (if using the mail) or scanned and emailed two weeks ahead of the scheduled church conference. In anticipation of our welcoming a new Bishop at the end of 2022, every SPRC and pastor is expected to update and submit a profile this year. **All forms plus nominations and reports must be *received* one week ahead of time via email or mail regardless of the format of the meeting.** (Evie checks the mail Monday through Thursday of each week.) When sending forms by mail, please keep copies as back up. Also, per usual, I should be informed about any new candidates for ministry when the church conference schedule is published.

If the church conference is scheduled for a date after December 1, the Church Council (Administrative Council/Administrative Board/One Board) should meet prior to December 1 to approve the pastor's salary pending final vote at the upcoming church conference and submit the compensation form without signatures. You can then ratify the compensation at the church conference, sign, and send in the form to the district office.

Thank you for your patience and perseverance as Evie and I endeavor to move forward with preparations for the church conference season. Please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns ahead of your church conference. Thank you for leaving a voice message if you call the office.

In prayer for us all,



Rev. Jill Colley Robinson
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