

Experiencing Services in a different way for the Life of the Church

A community of faith often finds its strength within the gathering of its people. In times of celebration and sorrow the faithful gather to support one another spiritually, emotionally and physically. We discern the movement of the Spirit together, we laugh together, we cry together, we celebrate new life together, we commemorate death together, and when the community of faithful experience crisis, we come together in solidarity.

Many of the services that mark the life of the local church and her people are purposefully held in community so all can observe and participate.

- In the service of Ordination the people of God celebrate Christ's gift of ministry to the church.
- The Installations of clergy with the local church confirm and celebrate the covenant between a local church and a newly called pastor and teacher and reaffirm the covenantal relationship of all the churches in the association.
- Installation of lay ministers allows the local church to celebrate the diverse ministries to which God calls all baptized people, recognizing and installing those who consent to serve in an elected or appointed office in the church.
- Baptism is not only personal celebration in the lives of the individual candidates and their families; it is also a central celebration in the life of the local church which embodies the universal church in a particular place.
- Let us not forget Seasonal Services that take place in the life of the local church. The United Church of Christ Book of Worship tells us, "It is important to observe special occasions in the life of a local church that mark points of passage and growth."

All of these services are important to commemorate in the life of God's beloved community and during this time of physical separation it is important to continue honoring these passages in manner that keeps everyone safe and healthy. If services cannot be postponed and rescheduled the many electronic platforms available might be utilized for installations and ordination services to be held in an abbreviated manner.

The suggested way to do this is using the Zoom platform with the primary members of the service to be present for the liturgy:

- Ordination liturgy would include the ordinand, conference staff, chair of Church and Ministry and the ordinand's clergy person.
- Installation of clergy would include the Consistory President or Council chair, the newly called clergy person and conference staff and Committee on Ministry Leadership.
- Baptism can include the clergy person, candidate, parents or family, and sponsors. The Clergy person can bless water by way of the Zoom connection. Parents or family can provide the applying of the water at the correct time in the liturgy.

These are just some of the examples of how we can continue coming together at important times in the life of the church and her beloved people. When our public health circumstances change and the social isolation is a thing of the past, communities can gather and hold celebrations not just for the services that were held but for life itself.