

Creative Team Ministry Update

April 15, 2024

Members: Reverend Keith Mazingo, Lucia Chappelle, Sandra Contreras, Louis Ramirez, Larry Rodriguez

Overview

The Creative Team is charged with bringing worship alive, and deepening the worship experience through meaningful, worshipful, spiritually-grounded, multisensory, and transformative ritual actions and activities.

Major Accomplishments In The Past 12 months:

Much has happened in the Creative Team over the past 12 months. We lost the multi-talented Norm Cox, who passed after a heart attack. Also, Reverend Alejandro Escoto and Peter Kirkpatrick resigned their positions. Many thanks to the people who put together the Celebration of Ministry for Reverend Escoto.

We were also blessed to add two new members, the gifted musician, Louis Ramirez, and the talented tech-savvy Sandra Contreras.

Last year's Easter Service was highlighted by a sermon delivered by Pastor Penny Costal. Pastor Penny's appearance was to mark the first Drag Protest March that day. Pastor Penny was joined in service by many from the drag community.

A highlight in May was the celebration of Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month and the gracefully moving performance by the Johannes Line Dancers of "Here I Am God."

Our Multilingual One Worship Services over the two June Pride weekends included stirring personal stories of Pride, including a video from Arisdo Gonzalez, a survivor of conversion therapy in Indonesia. Additionally, the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles graced us with music in celebration of Trans Pride.

Because of COVID precautions, until the end of June, onsite communion was only by distribution of individual packets. By the end of June, we moved to the "hybrid" communion which has been refined over the months to the type of communion service now in use.

It was also at this time we began to up our social media presence by the use of video shorts, some of which were used to announce special events and worship services. This is an ongoing ministry which needs to grow.

Tropical Storm Hillary forced the cancellation of Sunday worship services. Later, in Fall, we celebrated Latin Heritage Month with a number of video presentations.

October saw a special 55th Anniversary Multilingual One Worship Celebration Service, including photo displays and other archival presentations. Many thanks to the group that produced the Anniversary Concert and Reception the day before – that event prepared us for a joyous Sunday celebration. Later in the month, we celebrated Filipino American Heritage Month with the amazing Ancestral Vision Movement dancers. A Celebration of Life memorial service for Keith Meinen, Christine Miller, and Natasha Santillán was held. The month ended with our traditional

honoring of family and friends who have passed as part of the All Saints Day / Día de los Muertos services.

November was the beginning of “A Month of Thanks Giving,” starting with the celebration of the ministries of Reverend Dr. Lori Dick, and Reverend Sandy Williams. The urgent need to address the growing hostilities toward the trans community helped form our observance of Transgender Day Of Remembrance, and our remembering and honoring those who have been lost to hatred and violence. The video from Reverend Kai Miller and the songs from the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles were stirring.

December began the Season of Advent with the theme “Songs For The Reason.” Each week the back story of a Christmas song became the focus of the service. The highlight was the Sunday, December 24th performance of “And The Angels Sang,” an original cantata written by Louis Ramirez. This month also saw the Celebration of Life funeral service honoring Norm Cox. Finally, we rang out the old year on December 31 with a celebration of Kwanzaa. Of course, we cannot forget the “Have You Seen Jesus?” incident that made the local TV broadcast news.

The new year, 2024, saw improvements in the broadcast sound with the addition of a sound operator in the upstairs broadcast booth. Over a period of months, most (not all) of the sound issues that had plagued the broadcast have been resolved.

Ash Wednesday was observed onsite with “Ashes To Go” on the street during the day, and in the Chapel in the evening. Over 40 people participated. As an experiment, in place of an on-site Ash Wednesday service, a self-directed Ash Wednesday Meditation was created based on a denominational resource and made available online both in English and Spanish. Over 100 people combined participated in the self-guided meditation in each language. The meditation was also made available as a resource to the denomination.

Ash Wednesday marked the beginning of Lent and the series “The Color Purple.” March also included the celebration of Women’s History Month. The Team created ways for people, both online and onsite, to participate in the series, including the “Color Me Purple” photos. The Palm Sunday Service began with a #ColorMePurple social media thunderclap on the steps of the church, followed by a procession into the church to the singing of the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles, in celebration of Transgender Day Of Visibility. A meditative Good Friday service ended the Season of Lent.

As Larry Rodriguez is leaving the Sanctuary Design post he inherited from Norm Cox, a great crew of new volunteers transformed the Sanctuary into the gold splendor of Easter.

Easter Sunday was a celebration with the theme of “No More Tombs!” The opening play, written by Lucia Chappelle and performed by the FMCC Players, was well received. The music and sermon were excellent, and the service was well attended, especially given the rainy day weather.

Major Goals For The Next 6 Months:

The celebrations of Pentecost and Pride Month will be upon us shortly. We will continue working on both of the major celebrations. And, of course, it is never too early to begin

planning for the 56th Church Anniversary Services. The Team will gather this summer to make plans through January 2025.

Needs and Challenges:

The COVID pandemic accelerated a change in habits in faith communities that had begun before the pandemic. Fewer people attend church onsite each year. This shift in habits is not just a Founders MCC phenomenon, but it is a shift seen in all faith communities.

The Team recognizes the need to continue to explore ways to engage both the online and onsite worship participants.

Production of two both online and onsite experience requires more crew (volunteers). The Team is working on ways to include more people in the actual service. Azariah Southworth's "welcome" each Sunday during the opening of worship is an example of those efforts. We need to train more camera operators and soundboard personnel. People interested in participating in worship as scripture readers, responsive reading leaders, communion celebrants and acolytes, and prayer partners are encouraged to contact Don Mueller or the Creative Team. People interested in learning camera operation and soundboard operation should contact the Creative Team.