

Mark & Doreen of Bellingham Covenant Church (BCC)

Mark and Doreen are husband and wife members of the Regent Exchange team from Bellingham Covenant Church in western Washington. Mark shared about the surprising hopes and opportunities for learning and growth that have come during the pandemic season.

Vocation: Gathered, Scattered, Never Closed

When BCC physically shut down, the leadership taught and utilized the language of “the church scattered versus the church gathered” as a way to frame their calling and vocation in this period of uncertainty and physical distance. Mark credits this framework for helping everyone understand that while they are not meeting together physically, they are still the church. “Sometimes the church is gathered, sometimes it is scattered, but it is never closed.”

Called to Change

Mark noted that the experience of grief due to the loss of physical contact and connection was experienced at varying degrees by people in their church. Yet, he found that BCC was quick to creatively pivot to digital interactions. Notably, one staff member who was already interested in and adept at video editing and other relevant technology was appointed to oversee the church’s online offerings. Because of this, the staff were able, from very early on, to bring high quality, joyous, and fun worship and teaching experiences to their congregation.

Called to Creative Use of Technology

Mark and Doreen engaged in a variety of online spiritual formation groups both as leaders/facilitators and participants, including a book study, a contemplative prayer group, adult formation (teaching) classes, movie and discussion, a Bible reading hour, and a coffee hour. They were and continue to be surprised and encouraged by the depth and quality of engagement made possible through technology such as zoom. They also noticed increased engagement from those who, in the past, tended to say little and keep “to the sidelines.” New voices are emerging.

Called to New Learning

Never before in BCC’s history have they engaged in teaching and learning around racial justice and creation care. Yet in the midst of this difficult season, BCC chose to dive into both of these topics, and have used technology to do so. These topical engagements are a true sign of hope for this church as they go through this fraught period of time together. As a couple, Mark and Doreen have also felt called to more intentional connection with one another, and with God through renewing contemplative practices in their own lives.

Overall, while the difficulties of the pandemic are certainly top of mind, the willingness to pivot and embrace change has helped Bellingham Covenant Church live more fully into their vocation as the church scattered but never closed.