

Interviewee: Brad Peterson

Interviewer: Amber Retzloff

Date: December 3, 2021

Format: Video recording, Zoom

Location Of interview: Boyceville, Wisconsin

Transcriber: Amber Retloff

Additional Transcription Equipment used: Otter.ai

Project in association with: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Abstract:

Brad Peterson is currently a pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Boyceville, Wisconsin. In this interview, Brad discusses COVID-19 and its impact on his career as a pastor, the community's response to the pandemic, and his personal life. He talks about the challenges he has faced, specifically, living within a community that has shown resistance to COVID-19 regulations. COVID-19 has created many implications but Brad tries to focus on the positive outcomes of COVID-19. For example, Trinity Church now offers online worship and will continue to offer online services as it has proven to be a popular and comfortable way to worship.

Amber Retzloff 0:00

To the Cloud.

AR 0:02

Okay, perfect. All right, today is December 3 2021. I'm here with Brad Peterson. And before we get started, I would just like to give some COVID updates. According to the CDC 74.5% of people five years or older have at least one vaccination shot. In the last 30 days, there have been 48,160,971 COVID cases and among those numbers, there's 776,703 COVID related deaths within the past 30 days. Uh, now that I've set the tone of this interview on a more sad note, I'd like to welcome Brad Peterson and thank him for his time, and his contribution to western Wisconsin COVID-19. So, uh PB as we often call him back home, would you like to introduce yourself? mentioned a little bit of what to do. And also with that, could you add in your demographics your gender, race, age, ethnicity, ethnicity? Oh, English is hard.

Brad Peterson 1:06

No problem. I'm Brad Peterson. I'm a pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Boyceville, where I've lived for the last 19 years. I am 45 years old, I am white and Caucasian. And I am male.

AR 1:22

And so you mentioned you were a pastor what made you want to pursue a career in pastor?

PB 1:30

I felt a call to ministry when I was in college when I was a junior in college after working the summer before at a bible camp, and always had been very involved in church and in ministry and realized that's what I want to do with my life. So after I graduated with my bachelor's degree in zoology with teacher education, I went on to graduate work at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. And that was for four years. And then in 2002, and August 2002, it came to Boyceville. And the rest is history.

AR 2:07

So can you talk a little bit about Boyceville, obviously, I mean, I know my fair share. But for the for the folks watching, they probably have never heard of Boyceville. Not that many people have

PB 2:17

No. Boyceville is an incredibly small town in Northwest Wisconsin has 1083 people, I believe from our last last count. It is located directly due east Minneapolis, St. Paul about an hour and a half of Minneapolis, St. Paul, Minnesota, it is still a farming town, but majority of people will actually leave the town for work. They either go to Menomonie or Eau Claire or to the twin cities themselves to bigger businesses. It's a fairly close knit town, a lot of people know everybody and know everything about everybody. And they can tell you who lived in the house on the corner three or four generations back if they if you can meet the right people. Because of this, they they can be incredibly incredibly supportive. And you know, kind of rally together around things in a town. And it's kind of one of those places to that you can be gone for for a long time or you can come back and you're still kind of part of town. So you know, they don't really ever kind of forget you that way. Yeah, I think that said that's probably the biggest stuff has a school so we still have our own school. But there's not much other services in town though there are more things in town and there has been we have a Dollar General. We have a fitness center. You know, some of those kinds of things have kind of come into the community but still like if you want groceries and let's go to the dollar you're heading to the gas station or heading, driving 15 minutes to Menomine for your groceries or basic services.

AR 3:55

And as you as a pastor in the community, what is your relationship within the community look like?

PB 4:03

One relationship in the community is I mean besides obviously ministering to them and in all phases of life, but birth death marriages, all the all the things in between, um, you know, one of the one of the big things I do is just try to keep connection with people make connections with people whether they're young or old. I in the community besides doing pastoring and I done thing I like announce football games and basketball games. I work as a crossing guard I'm involved in in other community activities, just as to be part of the community because in a small town setting to do what I do, it's all about connection and relationship. People don't come to our church because we have the best program or the most money or fancy equipment. It's all about connecting with people where they are knowing who they are valuing who they are encouraging them and who they are. And that tends to, to be the main thing. Our, our church is the largest church in town, and has been was even the largest church in town before I arrived. But we tend to pull from a lot of different aspects of the town and surrounding areas.

AR 5:20

Yeah, for sure. Sound like a super, super involved guy in the community. And to switch it up a little bit because-I at the beginning, I started talking about COVID being an active member within your community, with COVID, hitting just a few years ago now, what is your role in the community looked like? I mean, has it changed a lot? Are you still involved? Are you still getting these opportunities to be as involved?

PB 5:46

Well, obviously, initially, you know, in the in the first wave of COVID, obviously, we shut down like everybody else, school shut down, businesses shut down, we sat down, we moved to entirely online model of worship, and then actually went to an outside model where people were in their vehicles, and also could still watch online, we'd been prior to COVID, we had been doing some online stuff. And I'll always remember, there was a meeting of worship meeting a month, really before COVID hit where we talked about how we didn't advertise the live stream of Christmas Eve enough, and that we needed to make sure we did that, because we heard people like enjoyed it, because they couldn't leave families and the families gathered around and watched it. And so we kind of made like, maybe we should do this more often. And then obviously COVID hit, and we didn't have really a choice. Um, the biggest change for me, I mean, the initially was just being completely disconnected. You know, we, you know, everything was on, everything was online, or through phone call, or through text, no home visits, no hospital visits, I still unless it is end of life, cannot go into a hospital to see anybody. So you, you know, if you broke your leg, and I wanted to come see you, you were in the hospital, you're going to be there a couple days, because you had to have surgery, I can't come see you. In most cases. Same thing with nursing

homes and our nursing home, people were very isolated, um I would do video calls with them and that kind of stuff. Now I can go into the nursing home because I'm vaccinated um with along with all the other restrictions. The other big change for me, and Amber, you will know this from your time here is I don't go into the school anymore. I've not been into the I've not been into the high school since 2019. To walk I would walk around in the mornings. Uh my wife is a teacher at the school for those that don't know, so. And I would ask permission of the administration to be able to walk into schools and, and say hi to kids, some of that now is because I'm doing crossing guard, but they don't want any extra visitors in the school. So other than for something formal, or if I'm helping my wife or something after school hours, I'm not in the building. So it makes it a little harder to connect with, especially with our high school kids, um, kind of have those kinds of things. The other thing is, you know, we is you know, we have adjusted how we do worship, we are we tend to be a little more open now than we were a year ago of course, with restrictions and you know, concerns and kind of that kind of stuff, but I'm the biggest thing was just not being able to connect with people. And in doing so, when you did connect with people, it became like much longer. So like when you if you if I was on a walk outside and I saw somebody we'd at six feet apart, but instead of like the five minute conversation, it would be a 15 minute conversation. Because people were craving connection as I was too. I'm an extrovert. So to be to not be with people was a little maddening. So

AR 8:51

Yeah. And I, you had started to talk about um some of the different changes you had to make within your church in the congregation was the so you talked about you had to move online, and then you guys moved to, um, you move to doing the car where you did (Yeah) the outside service. Were there any other really big changes you guys made?

PB 9:15

Yeah. So our progression was we started with completely online and did that for really about a month. Then we went um outside where we were outside and online at the same time. But again, people in their cars and they were told not to get other vehicles for any reason. We had ushers that went around the collected offering so the interactions were very short. Everybody was everybody that was interacting with a car like if I went up to a car I was in a mask, and oftentimes we even had them keep the window up. Over time. Then we went to where we added an early 8 AM service are normal services at nine. The nine state outside but the 8 AM went inside and that allowed us you know once we got to a place we get 20 to 25 people in the building We did that with social distancing moving our pews to be six feet apart, all that kind of stuff, we stopped passing an offering played around, we stopped, you know, we stopped sharing peace of physical expression of peace, they communion was all in one little thing that they would pick up on the way in and then take out with them and throw it out, which is also what we use for

the, for the outdoor services. We did do drive to communion in which I would be masked and gloved and everything would be pre made, and put on a little plate and just hand it to them. And they would take the plate, we did that, especially on Easter and a couple of other times. As we as we got through 2020 and got into the into this time of year, we decided to go ahead and have in person Christmas Eve services. And normally we do two. And we actually did five, with a reservation system with a max of 50 people, we had our we had been able to go up to 50. And again, socially distance all the other kinds of things mass required at all times, no singing, which every once we started, we did not have communal seating, we had a song leader, I even stayed masked even though I didn't need to almost the entire time of this. So I was preaching in a mask and talking in a mask. And always in a mask. Even Even if I was 20 feet away, I stayed in a mask. Some of that was to model masking behavior in our community, which was something of a uphill battle early on. And it's still frankly, an uphill battle. Um, and then as things opened up and got loot, better, we eventually in July of this year, merged back to one service, we ended the outdoor Service came back inside, started again with with masks required and distancing, and no singing and eventually just removed all of the restrictions as we as we've gone on. And that's where we are at now, we still continue to livestream every service because people still want to do that. We do have people in our congregation that wear masks, I wear a mask when I'm interacting. So when I'm giving communion, I have a mask on. Before service after service, I have a mask on unless for some reason I have to have it off for some specific purpose. We also during the time, confirmation classes were all online for our youth Sunday school was was was virtual and was pre taped and sent out. We had no vacation bible school during, during COVID time during 2020, and then even in 2021. So those were some of the big, big kind of things that we we had to change. And obviously, besides stuff like hand sanitizer everywhere, and just being, you know, like after the Christmas services, every service, we wiped down every surface that somebody was at. So that meant the pew that meant door handles that meant everything you just we had a little team we got we get a clean team. And they would they would grab all grab stuff and clean stuff as one one group left, and then another group got ready to come back in. So that's kind of all the COVID prep that we did.

AR 13:19

Right. And you said, you guys on Christmas Eve, you had five, like five sets of it. So then cleaning after every (YEAH) you probably had some (YEAH) good leaders on that clean team there.

PB 13:30

We did at each service kind of the ushers, and then one or two others would come in, and I would do it like, we just got in this habit like well, we all like took a section. So like I'd be I'd go this way and somebody would go that way. And somebody else would go that way. And it went, it

went fairly, fairly quick that way. We also would open the doors up in between the services to try to vent building as best we could. And we have, okay, a track but it's not, you know, what you would want in these kinds of situations. So we tried to get a lot of fresh air and as much as we could in between, in between the services.

AR 14:04

So yeah, and as someone who is from Boyceville, I knew that there was kind of a battle with mask, especially early on. So it's great to hear that you were, you know, using your positive role in the community and trying to, you know, encourage it to the best you can and to set a good example. I know you you briefly mentioned that, you know, the community's response to mask and stuff. So how, how do you in the actual church, though? I mean, did you did you have most most of the communion, they would abide by the COVID restrictions were people pretty, like pretty open to what was going on within the church at the time.

PB 14:45

Yes, I mean, the we had our leadership was in agreements. We actually opened up for one day in October, one Sunday decided to go mask optional and then a breakout happened in the school and it was immediate, and then we didn't come we didn't shift again. So we added that service, but they were, what we found was that the people that came, never complained or questioned the protocols, when they walked in the building. Now we had people who did not come into the building, and said they would not come into the building because of the requirements. And some of that was some of that was political. Some of that was what they liked best about being in church, which was socializing, and, and they felt like, well, I can worship at home, but I miss is sitting down for coffee, right? We didn't have that we didn't, we didn't offer fellowship, we didn't do fellowship until we fully opened up, we didn't have those times. So they said, well, and even if I do that, no art can even try to do that I have to wear a mask on that, that doesn't, you know, appeal to me, I want to see people's faces, I want them to see my face. And so they never like, we didn't have like anybody that wrote angry letters or show up at a meeting and say, what we were doing is wrong, or against it. And we never had luckily, we never had any of that. At at that time. I'm not sure if that would be the case. Now, to be honest, that would you know, the political landscape has really shifted, but at the time, they they understood and, and the leadership backed us, you know, like, sometimes they didn't go quite as far as I wanted to go, but they still were like, Yeah, we need to be masked, we need to be distant. We knew these things now. And then when the time came that they felt like we should be open than we were open. (RIGHT) So but it wasn't uncommon for me to go into go into, say, the gas station, and be the only one with a mask on including the workers. I'd be the only one. And so that that was not uncommon.

AR 16:47

Yeah. Um, so still kind of on? This is a little bit deeper question, but on the people's thoughts and reactions. Specifically, I wanted to ask you about how the congregation's relations with God has been affected with COVID. I've actually thought about this, you know, if you you encountered a lot of people who are who are just mad and blamed God, if there's a lot more people who turn to God, like what was the overall like, I don't know, consensus of the relationship between man and God.

PB 17:23

Why, in some ways, it was a reminder I had early on I think, like, within the first month, I had somebody that sent me a message that said, you know, PB, you've been telling us for years that the church is not a building. And I don't think I realized that until now. Like, I don't think I believed you until now. Like, they realized that they could have relationship with God that did not require them to be in a specific building, that worshipping was not necessarily about being in a specific place, but gathering with other people in whatever way you could. Um, there were definitely some that I think, whose faith was impacted, you know, and they increased, we actually did a baptism of a guy that lives in Eau Claire that found us online and started watching our services, decided to become baptized and called me up and asked to if my family lives, like in the South and just ask him, can I come and do baptism? We said sure. And we baptized him was super cool. I think for some being out of that social aspect hurt their faith. You know, they didn't have that encouragement that that place to go. There was some it definitely felt a lot more isolation. And that hurt their faith, others I think, allowed them to explore their faith and a little bit different way. The The other thing is we, because of the online presence, we reached so many other people that we may be what, so a great example of this is my wife. My wife does not attend church on a weekly basis in person, and she did not before the pandemic, but she never misses an online service. She has missed maybe three since we started them when in March of 2020. And one of them she was in California, and another one she was gone for something else. So she actually worships more now than she did then. But now she can do it with the dog on her lap dogs behind me here the dog on the lap, coffee mug in there, doesn't have to worry she's she's an introvert doesn't have to worry about people hugging her or coming up to her if she doesn't want it. It doesn't. You know she can. She can doesn't have to get dressed up. She always felt like she had to be dressed up, she can stay in her pajamas. And so for some families that has become the way that they worship, they gather their kids around, they make some pancakes, they've all slept in and they do that. And I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I actually think that that can, you know, again, they're still worshipping in their own way. There's there's a a very large comment community that goes on during the show. services where people say hi to each other and do that kind of stuff. And I, when we were outside, we honked horns for like the sharing of the piece of things. And that kind of became a deal. But there were definitely some that being away from the community mental aspect was a detriment to their faith. And I saw that a lot on that on Christmas Eve was was the first time we had opened. And we in really reality since since

March. And and people cried when they were in the building, like they missed their the connection for some of them, and those that came at eight. And those early services, when we opened up and just had eight, they came because that's what they missed. They actually they missed their pew, or they found a new Pew, they missed being in the sanctuary space feeling the kind of presence of God that they said they just didn't feel it when they were watching online. But for others, it didn't make as much difference. So I think that's so I think, yeah, some, some improved, some grew some we connected and some, you know, some it hurt some they disconnected a little bit more. So I think it kind of just depended on on the people and what they and sometimes what they look for when they come to church what that means to them.

AR 21:21

Yeah, no, I, I had never even thought I had never considered the those people had never thought about, you know, pews and just being there in the socializing and how much of a difference that made. But it is great that, you know, COVID has impacted us in a lot of bad ways. But we have, you know, this is a great example is you know, technology and online, Zoom resources. That is a good thing. It's a very convenient thing that has come out of the pandemic. And honestly, yeah, sitting around having pancakes and listening to worship, like, that doesn't sound too bad.

PB 21:55

You know, we, we I told our leadership that we would not we will never not have and online worship like it. Actually our Christmas Day worship this year is only online, we're not doing it in person, we're gonna tape it in advance, we're gonna put it up. And one of the reasons was, we actually tried to have an on in person Christmas Day, again, trying to spread out. And we had like, two people show up, but 50 people watched online on Christmas morning. And I heard Yeah, they just were they were kids were down opening the presents, and they, they were on their phone, and that notification came up that Christmas worship was out. So they flipped it on their TV and, and Watched with their kids where their kids played with the new toys and, and whatever. And the parents tried to you know, like, relax for half a second in the midst of chaos. And and so that's something we never would have done two years ago, we never would have thought, let's just post a service so people can see it never, ever would have thought about. So it definitely has has changed and changed that expectation level too. So

AR 21:55

Right.

AR 22:58

Yeah, and I mean, as we're like, I just read on the news that there's another new variant within COVID. COVID is obviously not going to go away or just up and disappear. So I'm sure those who do have anxiety about you know, COVID for upcoming years, as you know, eventually when it does fizzle out, this option will be really great for them. So (YEAH) I'm glad that there's something good that came out of this, um, switch it up a little bit, I want to ask how COVID has changed you as a as a pastor and how how that has affected just your employment in general. If you've I don't, I'm not quite sure how employment works for you. But if you've had to cut back hours are you just what that looks like from your eyes

PB 23:42

Not not necessarily not been really the biggest thing that that changes during COVID. I was in the office by myself. So you know, Amy was was home my wife was home teaching from home. I am so, so we weren't both here I was at church my my secretary at the time was not comfortable being in the building when I was in the building. So I would be there in the morning and she would come in the afternoon so a but my hours my salary, none of that changed. Just kind of what I did change a lot more online stuff I was actually doing more you know, like I you know, you got to do the posting, you got to do all that kind of stuff, uploading all those things. But I was often in the building just kind of on my own for a while for a long time. And obviously there was they were you know, they weren't people really stopping by there was we had canceled all our activities. So there wasn't like there was activities. So in some regards, it was a little easier. I didn't have the three meetings a night I didn't have the Wednesday night where you're jumping from four youth things in a row. But at the same time, you're just doing a lot of other stuff. A lot of calling, a lot of texting, a lot of email, a lot of Checking in now that we're now Basically, you know, we're operating as normal, then, you know, it's just, the only difference is we're still posting, we're still uploading, we're still doing that, where we're doing all the other kinds of things. So

AR 25:12

have you have you found it hard to transition back into like the normal, you know, regular church,

PB 25:19

You know, at first it was just, it was just like getting back into the, into the groove again, right, you're just like, you know, I then I got spoiled being home every night, like I was just home every night eating dinner, sitting around and watching, you know, the bachelor and not having to worry about are we gonna watch it later or taped or anything like that. So, so hat was probably the biggest was getting back into that kind of groove. In in some sense, it made me it gave me

more energy, because I was interacting with people again, which gives me a lot of energy. At the same time, it was, was also tiring, like, as I'll get out, like, the first time, we had a real Wednesday, where we had our 55 3rd through sixth graders there and then to worship and then a confirmation, I thought it was going to just pass out at the end, I so tired, just wasn't used to that energy and having to maintain the energy the entire time. But now it's just kind of, you know, it's just kind of back to back to business as usual. Um, the one thing we have found is in our, some of our social gatherings, like our social events, we've had more people than in years past in some of those regards, and in other years, other ways, we've we've had a little less, and that has all depended upon what's going on around us. So like, when we had our fall fest, and things were fairly stable. We had peep, we're the biggest one we ever had. We had so many people, I mean, we ran out of food, we ran out of everything, people just kids everywhere. And then when we did our, our potato pancake meal with our men's concert here, early November, we had outbreak going on through parts of the school. So that meant that definitely, we had, you know, some lesser, you know, a lesser crowd than would have, because people were concerned about the outbreak a little bit, there was obviously people who normally would have been there that were quarantined at home with their kids, or quarantine themselves. And so, so it kind of has gone up and down depending on what's going on around us right now. Dunn County's in a not great spot. You know, they've they've had a lot of bad cases. But right now, the school is fairly free right now, there's a few but there, it's not like what it was where I had, like, basically entire section of you know, middle school would be gone. So, so we're kind of in that kind of flow.

AR 27:49

So um, Amy, your wife works at the school has she had to be quarantined? And then have you had to be quarantine then? Or no, not quite.

PB 27:52

Yeah.

PB 27:57

We both have been incredibly lucky. None of us believe me neither have had to be quarantined. We've not had a close contact. We had once at one scare where we came back from our mission trip and we had a kid that tested positive and everybody got tested and we found out that the kid end up having a false positive. So he had come back with a with a cold, but he had COVID symptoms he went down, got the rapid test came back positive. I made like 30 phone calls and like an hour to call everybody tell everybody go get tested. I went I was actually at bible camp, I had to run at the lead Bible campus because you know, basically run out of camp and, and I ran I got tested and I was negative. And I even got tested again a couple days later just to make sure.

And then everybody when they got tested, so then when he went back in after everybody else in the group, including I slept next I slept for five feet away from them for a week. So it's like if if somebody wasn't going to get I should have been getting it in we had we were in a van with other none of them had it so he went got retested and was negative and so then that's probably the closest scare we've we've had.

AR 29:07

Good I'm I'm glad that your health your yours and Amy's health have been in tech this whole time. I wondered because you and Amy both come in contact with a lot of people if you guys had experienced anything with COVID or quarantining so good, I'm glad.

PB 29:18

Yeah.

PB 29:21

Luckily, luckily. Yeah.

AR 29:24

So to switch it up a little bit. I was going to ask you, ask you, about vaccinations specifically. I've been seeing in the news here and there that there's a lot of not pushback, but maybe collision between vaccination and religion that goes against some religion. You teach it or teach you. You preach at a Lutheran church, but are you seeing any of that or any pushback between vaccinations, religions, any correlations there?

PB 29:50

Yeah.

PB 29:57

Well, I've seen that unfortunately, the religious arguments doesn't really hold a lot of water. You know, the the I actually ironically, at the start of this, I had somebody asked me for religious exemption for the flu vaccine for the flu shot, they wanted to, they're gonna get a job. This was just as we were studying down and their employer was requiring a flu shot. They didn't want to get a flu shot because they felt like it was being developed using stem cells and that whole thing, and I said, Well, no, I get the flu shot. So I can't I can't give you religious exemption,

because obviously, I'm taking it. And the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has, which is the denomination that I'm a part of that Trinity is a part of. They have said that there is no basis for religious exemption for vaccine. There's nothing in the making of the vaccine, or the technology that used the vaccine that would go against our core Christian beliefs. And so there is no need, and actually, our national church, and even our Senate. So just for those that don't know, our denomination is broken down into 65 smaller units called Sinades, and then it goes from Sinade to congregation, our Sinade has also and our denomination, has been very, very vaccine forward. So I got the vaccine as soon as I possibly could, I got the booster as soon as I possibly could to protect myself and others and our our churches, our Sinades vaccine is a way of showing your Christian faith because it's about loving your neighbor. It's not only about protecting you, but protecting your neighbor. So also vaccination allowed me to do my job again, I wish I could not go into the nursing home without a vaccination. I felt a lot better doing a funeral or a wedding because I was vaccinated. Even if other people around the world at least I felt I had a level of protection and could protect others by having the vaccination status. So but there is that that component where sometimes the way that the vaccine is being made, is you know, and most of that stuff has been to my knowledge has been debunked, but I don't think, you know, nobody says anything about taking a vaccine for measles, or polio or mumps or all those other things. There, you know, this is no different in my eyes.

AR 32:22

Right. And are members of the congregation are they getting vaccinated? Like is it kind of split?

PB 32:29

I think it's split, there's definitely some that are there are definitely some that have no desire to there are some that are kind of kind of waffled there some that they never going to and that a family members got COVID. And so then they decided to get vaccinated. It's kind of all over all over the map, I don't know most people's vaccination status. One thing that we did do is before our mission trip, I told all of our youth, we're able were eligible for the vaccine. I said you I said, if you want to go on this trip, I encourage you to get vaccinated. Because if you have to have a COVID test, two days before we go, and if you're positive, you're out, and obviously we're going to be going to another place and you want to protect yourself. We only had one kid vaccinated out of all of them. Now, many of them have got vaccinated since they came back. But there are definitely some that were like I'm not getting vaccinated under any circumstances. So and we do have adults that weigh you know, who view the vaccine as poison or as government conspiracy or, or that kind of stuff or just feel like it hasn't, you know, the big argument heard for a long time was it wasn't fully approved. And then after it's fully approved, they're like, Well, I it was too fast of approval and that kind of stuff. As continues to go. The same stuff you hear in the media is is also swirling around in our community as well.

AR 33:55

Yeah, so I'm assuming those within the congregation tend to, I don't want to say confide, but kind of confide into you or they, they like to talk about their I don't know, distrust in the vaccine, like do a lot of members come to you about it?

PB 34:08

Not really no, I they all know that I was you know, pro vaccine, they they know that I you know, I I did not post on social media when I got the shot, but I didn't. I also would, you know, would talk about it with people and say, Hey, I'm excited, I got my shot. Or, Hey, I got my shot this these are my side effects and yada yada. But they not not really, you know, in this area, people's medical stuff unless they really want to tell you they tend to keep that private, and that kind of but I just you know, you would hear just chatter from people here and there. Or if somebody say, Oh, I'm vaccinated, oh, I'm not getting vaccinated because of so and so because of this reason or that reason. So not now. I know a it nobody ever came to me and said, Pastor, should I get vaccinated or should I not get vaccinated Or, Don't want to get vaccinated because of this reason. Is this real? You think this reason is correct? None of that has happened to me at least.

AR 35:07

Okay. Yeah, I was just curious. I know a lot of people like to confide in, you know, religious figures. (YEAH) So I kind of wondered if, if the vaccine would be one of those. But yeah, I kind of, you know, knowing a little bit about Boyceville, I wondered where, where everyone was sitting and within the congregation. So I don't have a whole lot left here with with COVID related questions on my end, maybe just a few personal follow up questions, if you're okay (YEAH) with answering that. (SURE) Um, so as, as we know, COVID has affected people's mental health a lot. And I know, you said that you're very extroverted, how is being isolated, and, you know, just away from your, you know, doing what you do every day, how has that affected your mental health?

PB 35:37

Yeah. Sure.

PB 35:55

You know, earlier, it was, you know, early on, it was a little harder I got, you know, the, the one nice thing that I had was one of my favorite activities to do in the world is play golf, which is one of the few activities you could do during pandemic. And the people I play golf with, you know,

were people who were careful who wore masks who kept the distance. And that really helped to have like, we would get together weekly, and to play around a golf and have that made a lot. But it definitely one of the biggest tolls, I think mentally on it is just all, especially for a long time was all the unknowns. You know, when are we going to be able to get back, I'm a guy that likes to plan, I like to think ahead, I like to have things kind of mapped out and to not have that and to constantly, you know, frankly, constant worry, like, the word decisions we were making that I was making that I was advocating for. Were they the right decisions for us, as a congregation, for me as a pastor for our community. You know, Weighing you know, oftentimes it was spiritual health and physical health, and where do we draw the line? You know, on on, where do we need to, you know, where can we do that, and, and take care of people's spiritual health, do it safely, that we're not jeopardizing their actual health. That's the stuff that really weighed in. And in our area, we were all over the map. With that there were churches that were doing whatever they wanted, there were other churches that are shut down completely and are still shut down. Frankly, there was pressure from you know, denominational leadership about certain ways to do things. And so you just that was the mental toll was, what's the right decision, being comfortable with that decision, being comfortable that we were moving in the correct direction. So that was some of it, it was obviously hard not to see my extended family. We saw each other for the first time in July, once the entire family was vaccinated, to protect each other. So obviously, that was, you know, but in some ways, again, I was also healthier mentally, because I was home all the time. And I was getting plenty of rest. And I was, you know, I didn't have as much other kinds of stress. So. But yeah, that I would say, that's kind of where I kind of went now, I think I've been in a fairly, fairly good and positive place, I have concern for the world, and especially how we treat each other. And that that weighs on me mentally, you know, I think we have degraded a little bit in how we interact with each other and the ways that we do so with respect and kindness. And that pops up a lot now in my ministry is just like, what is, you know, how does this look in the world, you know? You know, remember the person who remember the person who voted for Biden is not your mortal enemy, and the person who voted for Trump is not your mortal enemy. They're not, you know, the most evil thing in the world. Yada, yada, yada, trying to try to play around with that. So

AR 39:06

Yeah, I admire your positivity. I know, you're pretty positive guy, and I'm sure you, you've done your best, especially as a leader in the community to keep that positive, you know, positive attitude. Yeah, so I think that pretty much just about covers everything I had to talk about unless Is there anything else you can wanted to add? COVID related, you know, your life, anything.

PB 39:25

Yeah.

PB 39:30

I think that, you know, the biggest thing that I've I've been trying to tell people is that this is just going to be our new normal, like we're going to have people that are going to have COVID I mean, it seems to me that that you know, it's in many instances gonna be mild but you know, we're gonna always have to deal with you know, somebody being quarantine or, or having to do wear a mask. Here or there. I started, you know, for a while in the summer. Things are good. I didn't wear a mask. In stores now, I went to Walmart right before we met this had a mask on the entire time. So I think the the biggest thing for, you know us as a society moving forward in continuing to pandemic is to not let the the fear of everything drive us. But rather to try to, you know, do what we can for the sake of our neighbor. But at the same time, also try to stay positive and appreciate the times that we we can we do have together I think, if nothing else, I think especially this Christmas, people are going to be incredibly appreciative of being able to hopefully gather together and see people again, unlike, you know, last year, so I think, I mean, I think that's the big thing is, I think, in some ways, there are there are lots of things about life we took for granted. And now my hope is that we'll treasure those, and maybe also let some of the things that we kind of turned into for a while, you know, go away, you know, this attacking, messy, um, kind of thing that we have going on, you know, so I'm hoping that that will dissipate as as we as we keep going here.

AR 41:17

Yeah, no, for sure. Well, thank you so much for your time and your, your community. I genuinely appreciate it. I know the historians in however many years will appreciate this. And so yeah, so again, thank you kindly. Have a great day. It's Friday. Have a great weekend.

PB 41:22

Thanks Amber.

PB 41:33

You're welcome.

PB 41:39

You do you take care. Good to see you. Bye