

# TOWER TOPICS

## The Church-in-the-Gardens

50 Ascan Ave., Forest Hills, NY 11375-6009

Tel: 718-268-6704 Fax: 718-268-5477

Website: [www.thecitg.org](http://www.thecitg.org) Email: [admin@thecitg.org](mailto:admin@thecitg.org)



### A Letter from Your Music Director

Dear Friends:

What a strange year it has been! As I walk from my apartment to the church, Austin Street looks next-to-normal except for the masks on most of the passers-by and the police barricades that have made it safer for outside dining. It is strange how people can get used to anything. Almost.

March 8th feels like a very long time ago. That was the last Sunday that we were in the Sanctuary together. The CITG Choir was part way through learning a large choral work that I've always wanted to perform with them called "The Last Seven Words of Christ" by Théodore Dubois. They were really engaged with the piece and performing magnificently.

The CITG Praise Band was in fine form with a whole host of rotating singers and performers. The Garden Players kids were working on a new musical written by me with Betina Hershey, called "Magic It Up". And then... poof! Like magic, life as we knew it seemed to disappear so quickly while COVID-19 entered into our new global consciousness.

Most people uploaded their lives to be entirely online in the space of a week. For me, that included teaching private music lessons through FaceTime, lecturing at two universities through Google Classroom, and leading worship through Zoom. If you look under "stress" in the dictionary, you will find a picture of me from that initial transition. That first Sunday service was very much guided by: 1) The Holy Spirit and 2) Pastor Elizabeth Perry who had the most experience with Zoom. For reference, there were still singers in the lounge with me sitting 6 feet apart. Then, everything shut down in NYC on March 17th. I especially remember the second week of online service due to the stark silence; I was all alone in the church on a Sunday morning for the first time ever. Yet, seeing all of your faces on my computer, I felt then as I still do now, that it's not the building that makes a church, it's the people.

So, we continued. Right through Lent, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter. We voted on a Pastor and when that didn't work out, we had meetings and more meetings, and here we are, in the middle of summer. With Rama Waworuntu's technical help every Sunday and our rotating set of guest ministers and liturgists leading us in service, I am proud and touched that we have managed to come together for worship on a regular basis despite the difficulties of our time.

After four months of doing online services, it happens now almost like clockwork. Every Tuesday,



**Dr. Sunny Knable**

I communicate with the Pastor, asking him//her to finalize the readings and sermon title for the coming Sunday. On Wednesday, I respond by choosing hymns that will match the message of the day and represent a variety of tastes -- those that might gravitate to the 9am vs. 11am style of worship. Then I input all of the readings into the digital bulletin for the week. By Wednesday night, I send a rough draft of the bulletin to the Pastor and liturgist to look over and ask the Pastor to approve my musical selections. There might be one or two adjustments if any. A rehearsal is set for our small team of worship leaders on Zoom, usually on Friday afternoons. This is when we walk through the service together, addressing any technical concerns, pronunciation issues, typographical errors, adjustments to the visual layout, and more. All of this is done from the lounge. It's the only room in the church with WiFi and a piano, so that has become my office for the time being.

Around 8:45 am on Sunday morning, I set up my computer, my external microphone, and my sound system. I practice all the hymns one more time and then sign in Zoom. Around 9:45am our worship team gathers to make sure we are all on the same page, perhaps updating something in the digital bulletin. When 10am arrives, Rama lets everyone into the "room" as the host. When the little red light comes on (which means it's recording), I know that it is time to start the prelude. The next part, you know already.

This is what it is like in the time of COVID for The Church-in-the-Gardens. I hope to read this in a year and smile at the progress we have made since this moment, but we can't really know what the future will bring. It is a strange time in which, in order to respect your neighbor, in order to protect your family, in order to worship and pray together, you must put distance between yourself and those you love. Though masks and barricades may look strange and unfriendly, they are a representation of compassion. I know that we care about each other because of the provisions we have made to protect one from another. Whether you are able to tune into online service or not in this strange time, we are still a church and you are still my family. God bless you all.

En francais, "I miss you" is expressed as "Vous me manquez" which literally means "You are missing from me." It is closer to the sentiment that in order for me to be complete, I need you. Congregants of The CITG, "Vous me manquez beaucoup! A bientôt !"

—*Sunny Knable*