

March 22, 2022

Ferry Innovative

[Luke 13:1-9](#)

⁶ Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷ So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ ⁸ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

When we first visited Sistersville, West Virginia, several people shared memories of riding the ferry boat. It is a source of great pride for this historic town to have the only ferry in West Virginia that crosses the Ohio River, especially since the nearest bridges are about a 20-minute drive.

People continue to use the ferry on their commute to work, to eat at the Riverview Restaurant in Ohio, visit family and friends, and now even take party cruises. It typically runs from about May-October during daylight hours several days a week. Tractor trailer trucks can often be found idling on nearby roads looking for a bridge, as their GPS systems group bridges and ferries together.

It is a unique method of transportation, but is not always available. In fact, it did not run at all in 2020 because there was no pilot to operate it. Many people wondered if it would ever return to service. It did, in fact, return in 2021, which brought joy to area residents.

Many of our churches have been through a similar experience during the pandemic. When congregations had to refrain from in-person gatherings, some people had concerns about the future of the church.

At a time when there was such uncertainty, we saw a wide array of worship opportunities emerge such as: live-streamed, outdoor, radio broadcasted, CD and DVD recorded services, etc. Congregations felt connected when they could not be together physically.

Challenging times can cause many types of hardships, but it can also be the impetus for innovation. In the most unusual circumstances many of us will ever see, we found hope in digital communication. Thanks to video conferencing platforms, families shared special events while apart. Thanks to digital apps, friends read and discussed devotional Bible studies together. We want to keep the traditions that hold so many memories for us, but it is also important to make room for connecting in unexpected ways.

***Prayer:** God of Grace, We thank you for blessing us with rich traditions and beautiful memories. Please give us the wisdom to know when to prune, when to be patient, and when to seek new opportunities. Forgive us our sins so that we may offer forgiveness to our neighbors. Above all, help us to reach out and connect with others. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

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