

Shadow Rock friends: these questions and responses were part of our grant application to the Southwest Conference. The staff and volunteers who are involved in hybrid worship have big ideas and big plans! Thanks for reading. :)

Hybrid Church Grant Narrative

A. Describe the hybrid experience you are trying to create.

We were moving toward hybrid experiences pre-COVID, with live streaming to YouTube. We are anticipating continuing with in-person and online worship and spiritual formation for the foreseeable future. Some priorities that our hybrid initiative is keeping alive include integrating our worship 'personality' in the virtual space with a warm and playful feel with plenty of opportunities for interaction in both venues. For Zoom worshippers, we aim for an experience similar to the old MTV pop up video, with an enriched multimedia environment using Zoom features to give additional information and resources. For example, in a typical hybrid experience, Zoom participants may get slides via screen sharing, links to YouTube music related to what's shared in worship, additional information about the scripture or other resources through the Zoom chat box.

Our hybrid experience will include these touchstones that are part of Shadow Rock's tradition and culture:

- Acknowledging our human needs for connection and meaning-making
- Encouragement for participants to discover their gifts and their calling in the world
- Shared responsibility for exhortation and spiritual care for one another
- Culture of celebration, where worshippers get to know one another across geography through sharing large and small celebrations and concerns

We've had some success with hybrid worship with a tiny budget, existing staff, and renewed volunteer efforts. The SWC grant funding will enable us to build more robust systems and build on a foundation of experimentation and joy.

B. What need or purpose is being addressed?

In the sanctuary or online, we are living into being the church that we're called to be. Shadow Rock is a congregation that's unusually aware of its unique expression of God's image in the world. Hybrid worship is the tool that is helping us make that happen. Specifically, we are seeking funding to better position ourselves with

- technology that's robust enough (and managed competently) so that it disappears for the user
- ease of connection between in-person and online congregants

In our team's conversations with one another, we've described our current system as "brittle." There are lots of moving parts and different levels of reliability. Both staff and volunteer leadership have a strong make-it-happen attitude, so we've been moving forward with small purchases and plenty of real time troubleshooting.. Full funding of our request will help us build a more reliably functioning system.

C. What resources are needed that you currently do not have to meet this goal?

The overall goal for new purchases is to build Zoom/streaming capacity for both our sanctuary and multipurpose room. Larger monitors and additional cameras will make interactions between in-person and Zoom participants easy. Duplicate systems in both buildings will keep us nimble and better able to use existing staff and volunteer resources.

D. How will this project impact church vitality?

We've had members seeking a path to "virtual Shadow Rock" for several years now and we've considered planting communities in different locations. The pandemic brought these decisions to the foreground. The hope is not just that new people will engage and our sphere of influence will grow but also that current leadership will be energized and encouraged by new ways to be the church.

The core purpose of this project is not growing metrics for their own sake, but expanding the reach of our core values of justice, inclusion, and spirituality.

E. Describe your implementation plan or schedule

We have been engaged in different forms of hybrid church since fall 2020 - FM transmission in our parking lot, drive through / livestream on Christmas Eve, Facebook Live for spiritual disciplines, and Sunday morning in-person / Zoom worship (since Easter 2021). Conference financial support will enable us to quickly improve on what we're already doing. We are anticipating full implementation within 6 weeks of funding notification.

Our hybrid worship team includes
Rev Ken Heintzelman, Senior Minister
Joe Hesley, sound engineer and volunteer
Bryan Baca, volunteer (streaming and OBS production)
Karen Richter, Director of Spiritual Formation (Zoom production)

Additional support is available from Roy Zaborowski (Shadow Rock facilities team) and Heidi Zinn (Finance and Technology staff).

This team has been meeting for nearly a year already to manage the events above. Because our request is largely for improved and more robust hardware, we will be able to continue well beyond next year. Our goals beyond this grant request include building in redundancies in staff and volunteer positions to better prepare for the future. This may include additional staff, such as a part-time intern for technology, social media, and website development. The funding of this possible new position is a priority for the Shadow Rock board this fall and moving into 2022.

F. What is your financial plan?

We will continue with hybrid church with or without SWC funding. Our current volunteer expertise is phenomenal. Funding our request will help us do what we're doing, faster and more effectively.

Because we're committed to contact tracing, we've been tracking volunteer presence on Sunday mornings very closely. We have 10-12 "worker bees" on Sunday mornings including both staff and volunteers. The most technical tasks that make our streaming services in particular happen on Sundays are carried out exclusively by volunteers.

Additional fundraising is planned. Shadow Rock began a specific appeal for facilities improvements and proactive maintenance in 2014. That effort is called Momentum@Work. An effort to replenish this fund is planned for Fall 2021.