

Pastor's Report - April 2022

Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm

General Updates

Whew - we made it to and through Easter. What a joyful celebration on Easter Sunday! Seeing the sanctuary full of familiar faces who've been away for a long time and guests and family members who were able to join us for worship was incredible. And, wow, the emotions that poured out when we stood to sing that first hymn. It was glorious, and honestly, a bit overwhelming in the best possible way. Now the program year begins to wind down - with last dates for Sunday School being May 22.

We anticipate a spirit filled celebration of Pentecost on June 5th before we transition into summer and ordinary time, with plans to host Henry's ordination that afternoon if the congregational vote passes on 4/24 as I hope it will.

The advertisement for the full time Director of Outreach and Education has been posted on Handshake - sent to colleges all over Iowa - since April 4 and posted to Indeed and Facebook since April 18. Thus far I haven't received any applications. If that is still the case after the next week or so I will try to boost the listings with some ads. I am grateful for folks who are spreading the word around town and across social media. I am trusting and praying that the right person will find their way to this position and to Grinnell UCC.

Pastoral Care/Worship/Ministry Updates

This has been a significant month for pastoral care - I officiated the funeral for JoAnne Bunge on April 1, I made several pastoral care visits to parishioners with increased health care needs, including someone now with hospice care. We experienced the loss of another church member during Holy Week and I am co-officiating another memorial for Lois Strickler, this time with her Urbandale Church family, on May 7th. In addition I have officiated one wedding for members of the wider community this month and have begun the planning process for a wedding for a church member which will take place in DSM in October. Elizabeth and I also hosted a luncheon for the college students and other hourly employees who work in the nursery, Sunday School and with OWL to say thank you for their service with us and to explore how Grinnell UCC might better support and connect with the college students who are drawn to our community. It is a gift to be a part of these meaningful transition points in peoples' lives.

Wider Ministerial/Denomination/Continuing Education Updates/Miscellaneous

Much to my surprise - the ACTS DMin Preaching program that I am enrolled in with Chicago Theological does not, in fact, begin in May, but rather in April! Imagine my surprise (i.e. panic) - when I went to load all my school related dates into my calendar on April 11, so that I would be ahead of the game when May rolled around, only to discover I had an assignment due that very day and one due the week after Easter! Well, that's one way to hit the ground running. It is true that the official orientations for the courses are in May, but there is quite a bit of pre-work required before those sessions so I am already lugging textbooks with me everywhere I go. I am still filled with gratitude for

the opportunity to do this program and the support I've received from the congregation. I have booked my flights to be away for the three week intensive June 18 - July 9 and will be working in advance to ensure pulpit supply and pastoral care are in place before I leave.

My tenure as the Chairperson for the Central Association Committee on Ministry, which also means I am now on the Central Association Advisory Council as COM representative, officially begins in April. There is significant transition happening in the Iowa Conference right now with the resignation of one of our ACMs - Ellis Arnold and our ECM - Brigit Stevens. I am hoping that the leadership within our own Central Association will provide some balance and buffer for our church and the other churches in our association during this season of change.

Looking/planning ahead, Elizabeth will be on vacation June 11-18 and I will be on vacation July 21-28th.

With Gratitude, Pastor Jessica