

**Pastor's Report - February 2022**  
**Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm**

**General Updates**

Wow! What a start to 2022. I suppose at this phase of the game nothing should surprise us, but at the end of 2021 I did not anticipate that we would have gone back to Zoom only worship for the first six weeks of 2022. (As I type this the following headline just showed up in my newsfeed from NPR: *More contagious version of omicron spreads in U.S., fueling worries* - sigh). Our return to worship on Sunday, February 20 was sheer delight, and the sanctuary was as full as I've seen it outside of Christmas Eve 2021 during this Covid - 19 hybrid worship season.

Erin's last official day is 2/28 and the Sunday School/Nursery schedule is set through the end of the program year in May. At this point I have had conversations with two different folks recommended to us for the full time position we are imagining and, while both have been very interested, their obligations elsewhere prevent them from pursuing the position further. I have the job description ready for a final review and will plan to post it in the appropriate channels so that we can begin the search/hiring process with hopes of having the position filled by 7/1.

**Pastoral Care/Worship/Ministry Updates**

This week I will be setting the PrayGround back up with quiet toys/books as this past week proved that we have a lot of kids back in worship with us, Thanks Be to God.

Our Ash Wednesday Service will be March 2, 2022 at 5:30 pm. Palm Sunday is 4/10 and Easter is 4/17.

I would like to get a congregation-wide Zoom conversation with Henry scheduled for sometime in March. I will confirm possible dates with him soon.

There have been several regular visitors at our church in recent months so I'm hoping to host a membership conversation with them soon to see if there is any interest in joining the church in a more official capacity.

**Wider Ministerial/Denomination/Continuing Education Updates/Miscellaneous**

I will be on vacation 3/12-3/19. I am in the process of securing a guest preacher for 3/13.

The Spring Meeting for the Central Association of the Iowa Conference UCC will occur via Zoom on 3/26. At that time I will become the chair for the Central Association Committee on Ministry.

In fulfillment of a lifelong dream, I have applied for the Doctor of Ministry in Preaching program at Chicago Theological Seminary. Hopefully I will find out this spring if I am accepted. If so I will be in Chicago for three weeks each summer for the next three summers. The rest of the coursework happens remotely within this ministerial context. I am grateful for the support I have received from the Pastoral Relations Committee and the Mod Squad. Once I know more about the time and financial expectations of the program, I will create a proposed continuing ed and travel budget that can be part of the 2023 budget conversation as per the recommendation of the PRC and Mod Squad. My current travel and continuing education budget should be sufficient for this first ½ year.

With Gratitude, Pastor Jessica