

Pastor's Report - January 2023

Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm

Staff Updates

Our Christmas Day service brought an end to Ken's tenure with Grinnell UCC. We are incredibly grateful for his service to us and wish him well on his move to IL and during retirement. Pastor Jessica has secured music supply for every Sunday Jan 8 - March 26 with the exception of March 5 which is still vacant. This should give the Music Task Force time to finish their work surveying and exploring with the congregation and getting a job description together for whomever we hire next. Elizabeth completed all of the year end financials and documentation and reporting, year end statements go out today. Compiling the Annual Report will be the next major task in January. Lindsey is finalizing plans for our next round of Our Whole Lives classes which will include OWL for elementary grades 4-5 and high school grades 10-12 both beginning January 15.

Pastoral Care

While the majority of our congregation has remained well through the end of 2022, many within our community are heavy with concern for family, friends and loved ones. I am thankful for our Care Connections Prayer team who sets aside the 3rd Thursday of every month for intentional prayer for our community.

We are delighted to welcome the Altenhofen family into our church membership through baptism on 1/8/23.

Worship/Ministry Programming Updates

Our "start the year with Sabbath" online Zoom worship service went well on 1/1/23 and I received good feedback on the Star Word component of that Epiphany worship. As noted before, two sessions of Our Whole Lives will begin this month. Sunday School for all ages resumes on January 15. Rabbi Rob has decided after many years of faithfully leading our Seekers class, that it is time to step away so he has a full weekend for rest and restoration. Many thanks to John Ashby who is stepping in to lead the class for the first six sessions of 2023, and then Pastor Jessica will lead a special Lenten session focused on more of the notable folks who have filled the pulpit in the past. There is currently a music ministry survey circulating, collecting data on the congregation's preferences and desires for the future of our music ministry and we hope to have a zoom Music Ministry workshop with the music consultant in the near future. Our Church's annual meeting will be Sunday, January 29, 2023.

Wider Ministerial/Denomination Updates

Interim Conference Minister Phil Hart is leading a book study on A Beautiful Constraint by Adam Morgan and Mark Barden Dates: 6 Weeks on Thursday Evenings starting on January 5th Time: 7:00pm-8:00pm CT.

My work as the chairperson of the Committee on Ministry continues and I am grateful to serve the wider denomination in this way. Our work has been particularly challenging as of late. Our next meeting is February 16th, 2023.

Continuing Education Updates

I preach my third ACTS DMin in Preaching Year 1 Sermon on 1/8/23 and will submit all of the required assignments for this second sermon on 1/23/23. I am especially thankful to Henry Rietz, Gayle Strickler, Jean Pendleton, Skadi Snook, Tommy Haas and Elizabeth Haas for being a part of my parish project group who helped shape the direction of the sermon, gave direct feedback and collected additional feedback from the congregation about the sermon, and will submit a report to my advisor and professors as to how I worked toward/met my learning goals with this first sermon.

I will be on vacation January 14-21, 2023 and church member Rev. Bonnie Lipton will be preaching in my absence for which I am very grateful.

With Gratitude, Pastor Jessica