

## Pastor's Report - June 2021

### Staff Updates

With continued flexibility related to work/life balance and ongoing personal needs related to Covid-19 safety we are mostly “back to normal” as far as office and staff schedules go. Ken continues to work at the church just one day a week, Sunday, (except for every third week for our staff meeting which he prefers to be present for) as it doesn't make sense for him to make the trip to Grinnell twice a week, every week until it is safe for the choir to resume.

One of the gifts of this “back to normal” office life is that we've been able to welcome a summer intern, Andy Kenley. Andy is a Grinnell College student who will be working with us through August and his primary work will center upon: Mutual Aid efforts throughout Grinnell that align with our church mission and vision; archiving and documenting the artifacts from the George Floyd Memorial last summer, and helping us develop a robust social media presence that better aligns with our identity and reaches wider communities of folk who long to know an Open and Affirming faith community like ours exists. We have applied to host a permanent internship / work study position with the College to continue the Mutual Aid efforts Andy is able to get off the ground this summer that will allow us to sustain those projects, in partnership with the college, year round.

Because the very last thing anyone needed during the most challenging year in our collective human memory was a performance evaluation, we did not complete Annual Reviews as a staff last year. I am in the process of altering the evaluations that we usually complete to be more reflective and mindful of the year we have endured/survived/experienced. We will complete these as a staff in August and then will resume the practice of anniversary/hire date Annual Reviews in 2022.

Insurance Changes - The Schirm family is in a state of transition as my spouse, Matt, has recently resigned as the Head Baseball Coach at Central College to take a position as a regional advisor with College Athlete Advantage - a nationwide college baseball recruiting service. Our family will remain where we are, as one major life transition at a time feels like the wisest decision at the moment, while Matt gets settled into this new position. In addition to losing 50% of our income (which we are hopeful he will be able to recoup quickly in this new venture) we also find ourselves in a position where we need to transition to the United Church of Christ/Pension Board Insurance Plan for our family as our insurance coverage with the college comes to an end. My call agreement states that “Should you need or desire to change your healthcare coverage, our church will pay, on your behalf, the full annual premium for you and your eligible immediate family members in the United Church of Christ Medical and Dental Benefits Plan.” Our current benefits with the college remain in effect until July 31. After conversations with the PRC and the Moderators, I have begun the application process for the UCC Insurance.

## **Pastoral Care/Worship/Ministry Updates**

I rejoice that we are both back to in person worship AND have figured out live stream options that, while still needing some tweaking, seem to work as intended to allow folks to participate in worship and Seekers class either in person or remotely. Please take a moment to thank Dave Eberbach, Josh Sandquist, John and Barb Ashby, Rabbi Rob, Elizabeth Haas and Lee Walker for the work they've done to make this happen.

Thus far feedback is positive and, with the exception of some questions surrounding our ongoing mask requirements which are in place out of love for the unvaccinated and immunocompromised among us, folks seem to understand why things are a bit different during in-person worship and are graciously complying with the changes. I'd welcome your feedback, encouragement, ideas and help and I know the tech folks would too!

Two long time members of our congregation passed away recently. Addison Jones' funeral was 6/24, officiated by retired UCC minister and member of our congregation Orlan Mitchell. Wilma Vosburg's funeral will be at the church on 7/2 and I will be the officiant. Please keep both of these families in your prayers. As the pandemic wanes and more and more folks are vaccinated I am able to make in person pastoral care connections with folks. This has been extremely life-giving. I am so grateful to be able to see people face to face, again.

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

The 2021 Annual Meeting for the Iowa Conference took place June 24-25 with a theme of Creation Care: Understanding our Commitment to Eco-Justice. You can learn more here: <https://ucctcm.org/annualmeeting/> I was the moderator for this year's Iowa Business Meeting.

I will be attending a continuing education retreat July 19-23 called Grace Filled Turnings which is an initiative of Women Touched by Grace—Thriving in Ministry, a Lilly Endowment-funded program, to provide women clergy with the tools and encouragement to meet life's transitions. I will be away from the pulpit as part of my travel for this on Sunday 7/25. I have asks out to several folks who might be able to pulpit-fill for me. I will also be out of the office July 5-8 using comp time for the Annual meeting and July 4 plus my two regular days off. Judy Scheer will be providing emergency pastoral care as needed while I am away.

**With Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Jessica**