

Pastor's Report -May 2021

Staff Updates

The anxiety level is high in the church office - we are having touch-bases upon touch-bases, emails are flying back and forth, text messages abound - but this anxiety is for a much different reason than it has been over the last 14 months - we are about to return to in person worship!! At this point there are more questions than answers regarding how we will pull off a safe, welcoming, inclusive in-person worship while also providing a welcoming, inclusive, decent quality concurrent live-stream option - but the ball is rolling. I am exceedingly grateful for the lay leaders in our community who have stepped up with interest and excitement to take the lead on this transition. Elizabeth, in collaboration with those leaders, have lots of great ideas that will soon become reality. Ken is ramping his work hours back up - recruiting musicians and soloists and imagining how to pull together a small bell choir so that our in person worship will be robust and meaningful even if we cannot have congregational signing for a while yet. Erin has been focused on recruiting an intern for the summer/upcoming school year to assist with our social media platforms and is busy with word of mouth advertising for a new session of middle school OWL this fall. To see our team excited, engaged, smiling and laughing despite our anxieties about what is to come, has been life-giving for me as your pastor.

Pastoral Care/Worship/Ministry Updates

As Covid numbers continue to decrease and restrictions are lifted my availability for in person pastoral care is increasing. In our upcoming June newsletter I will advertise some "office hours" specifically for folks who might want to drop in and visit/chat/pray. I am also looking for ways I can continue to meet the pastoral needs of our folks who may not yet be comfortable with such things. I am grateful for our Care Connections team who is currently reading and studying A Rhythm of Prayer (<https://www.sarahbessey.com/books/rhythm-of-prayer>) edited by Sarah Bessey. This pastoral care team continues to conduct a monthly day of prayer for our congregation and the wider community. This is a gift and a blessing for everyone involved.

Wider Ministerial/Denomination/Continuing Education Updates

The 2021 Annual Meeting for the Iowa Conference will take 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/>

With the board's blessing, 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 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.

**With Grace and Peace,
Pastor Jessica**