

Pastor's Report - November 2022

Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm

Staff Updates

November was a month filled with staff using up comp days and vacation days which has meant a lot of passing like ships in the night for our team. Thankfully our communication skills are top notch and everything has continued unphased. I am grateful to Elizabeth who has worked hard to get the Stewardship Campaign materials compiled and sent out during the first week of November, and to Lindsey for putting everything together for a wonderfully successful and fun Jingle Bell Holiday event at the church.

We celebrated Ken's upcoming retirement on November 13 with a hymn sing and fellowship and the Music Ministry Task Force met with the music consultant to get some ideas on how to move forward with the congregation during this season of discernment.

Lindsey and Ken are collaborating on the Christmas pageant which will take place on 12/18.

Pastoral Care

November included the funeral for George Drake, in collaboration with Rev. Deanna Shorb the Grinnell College Chaplain and a host of other folks from the college and George's life. It was a meaningful day of celebration and remembrance. I am grateful to Henry Rietz, John Ashby and Judy Scheer for being "on call" in the event of a pastoral care emergency while I was away this month.

Worship/Ministry Programming Updates

As noted before, the music ministry task force met with Sarah Dan Jones, a music ministry consultant to continue the dreaming and visioning process for the future of our church's music program. The task force is planning a church wide survey and workshop with Sarah Dan in the coming months. The plan will be to find substitute accompanists for the first three months of 2023 until we have a clearer picture of what we need for our music ministry going forward.

Advent begins 11/27, the Christmas Pageant will be 12/18. Christmas Eve falls on a Saturday and Christmas Day is a Sunday so we will have back to back services as a result. New Year's Day also falls on a Sunday and the staff is exploring options for worship on this day.

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 in January.

Wider Ministerial/Denomination Updates

There has been more turnover on our Conference Staff with the exit of ACM Sam Houser which leaves the Tri-Conference even more in flux. We are awaiting information regarding the realignment of profiles and leadership with the remaining ACMS.

My work as the chairperson of the Committee on Ministry continues and I am grateful to serve the wider denomination in this way. Our next meeting is December 15, 2023.

Continuing Education Updates

I preached my second ACTS DMin in Preaching Year 1 Sermon on 11/6 and submitted all of the required assignments for this second sermon on 11/19. 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 submitted a report to my advisor and professors as to how I worked toward/met my learning goals with this first sermon. My next sermon is assigned for 1/8 and preparations are well underway.

With Gratitude, Pastor Jessica