

Pastor's Report - October 2021

General Updates

Since my last pastoral report so much has happened! It is good to be able to share things that feel life-giving, hopeful and exciting. On a personal level our family has made the decision to sell our home in Pella (which we had purchased not long before I was called to be pastor here at Grinnell UCC - making a move at that time impossible) and move our permanent residence to Grinnell - much to our family's delight. Our primary tie to Pella was my spouse's job at Central College and now that Matt is self-employed we have the freedom to relocate. We will maintain an apartment residence in Pella to allow our kids the option to finish out the school year there. Anderson is on the fence as to whether or not he wants to change schools mid-high school and we are supporting his agency in that. Gabriel will begin 4th grade in Grinnell next fall and Langston is ECSTATIC to begin three-year-old preschool here at the UCC Preschool on November 2. Thank you to everyone who has supported us in this frantic season of transition, those who have offered help with and prayers for the move, and for the congregation's patience at having a pastor who has lived out of town for a while. We can't wait to put down roots in Grinnell.

I also want to express deep gratitude to the Governing Board and the Pastoral Relations Committee and the Church Staff for supporting me as I was away from the office October 11-17 to care for my mother as she had and began her recovery from a major surgery. I am thankful for the PRC heeding the leadership of the wider church, particularly our Tri-Conference leadership, who advocated for pastors having some additional time away and for the use of the worship resources they provided. While, unfortunately, I was not able to use time away for rest and restoration as was the intended purpose imagined by the conference and rather used this time away as personal leave to provide caregiving for my mother, I am grateful for the prayers and steadfastness that allowed me to be away and focus 100% on my mom knowing that everything here was in good hands. Special thanks to John Ashby for preaching and to Judy Scheer for being available for urgent pastoral care as needed.

Pastoral Care/Worship/Ministry Updates

This past month has seen an uptick in pastoral care and bereavement needs and increased health issues within our congregation. I'm grateful for when our faith community lets me know of these needs, it is sacred space and I am honored to be a part. Currently I am working with the Strickler family, at their own pace, regarding details for an upcoming memorial service honoring Lois. Our All Saints Day Service / Outdoor Hymn sing on 10/31 will honor the three members of our congregation that have died in the last year. Incoming Moderator Julie Eberbach, Elizabeth and I are in collaboration about the upcoming Stewardship campaign. November worship will feature a stewardship spotlight to help maintain our focus on pledges. Advent is a month away and we are in pre-planning mode to make that season in the life of our church as meaningful and safe as possible.

Wider Ministerial/Denomination/Continuing Education Updates

On October 5th Elizabeth and I attended a webinar entitled: UCC Disaster Ministries: "Staying Sane in Today's World of Covid-19: Increasing your Resiliency" It was a wonderful, wonderful class. I am happy to share the .pdf of the slideshow if anyone is interested. I'm grateful for our denomination providing resources like this during this long, strange season.

The highlight of October 2021 will surely be the Ecclesiastical Council for our own Henry Rietz. Henry's journey to ordained ministry has been long, intentional and thorough. This EC is the last step before he is approved for ordination in view of a call. Our church will support him during this council on Sunday, October 24 at 6pm via zoom and, anticipating all goes well which I am sure it will, we can move forward with planning an ordination service for Henry after the first of the year!

**With Grace and Peace,
Pastor Jessica**