

## **Pastor's Report - April 2023**

### **Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm**

#### **Staff Updates**

The biggest update for April is that our Director of Outreach and Education, Lindsey Altenhofen, has submitted her resignation effective at the end of July. Lindsey, has multiple degrees in education and literacy, is following her heart back into the public school classroom and will take a teaching position at Davis Elementary this fall. Lindsey will be sharing this news with the wider congregation in our May Newsletter, and has shared with me personally that it was her work with the amazing kiddos in our church who made her realize how much she missed being with kids in the classroom every day. While it is discouraging to have to start over in our search for a DOE and to channel energy back into that process, I am fully supportive of Lindsey's decision and proud of her self-awareness as part of this process. She will be missed as part of our church staff, but as members of our congregation and now as a trailed Godly Play and OWL facilitator we will still have Lindsey, and the whole Altenhofen family, as part of our community of faith. Our hope is to have the job description posted in a variety of outlets by mid - May with a goal of having someone in place by July so that the outgoing and incoming Directors of Outreach and Education can overlap for a few weeks to ensure we are prepared for our fall program year. With the end of our program year and college students returning home or to summer obligations we are in need of additional staffing for our Nursery as well in an effort to keep two adults in there at all times. We will be posting this position on handshake and facebook too in the upcoming days.

#### **Pastoral Care**

April has been a pastoral care gauntlet with the funeral for John and Pasha Buck occurring during Holy Week and several of our church members having surgeries and extended hospitalizations. I am so grateful for our prayer chain and care connections team who are so faithful in holding the needs and burdens of our congregation in prayer.

#### **Worship/Ministry Programming Updates**

I am thankful to John Rommereim, Joyce Wubbels, Allen Ricks and Ian Moschenross who have continued to provide a rotation of music for us during worship. With the exception of May 14 I have all Sunday's scheduled through June. Shane Estes and Liz Rodrigues have volunteered to be part of the worship and music team to help plan for the next steps of our music ministry going forward. More to come on this as we begin meeting and discussing what is to come next.

#### **Wider Ministerial/Denomination Updates**

The Central Association Spring meeting took place last weekend at Pilgrim Heights. An update was provided on the current conference staffing structure and it was noted that the conference has recently extended a call for 10 Conference Deacons who will work five hours a week to help churches in their assigned region connect and collaborate with the conference. There is currently a call out for

another half time ACM and a 5 hour a week communications support person. I am eager to meet these people and be part of the work of helping the Conference find solid ground again.

One of the most delightful things that has occurred recently is that Judy Scheer has begun the process of becoming a member in discernment. Judy has been in ministry, pastoring churches and providing pulpit supply for decades now as a lay minister. She entertained the idea for ordination in the late nineties but the expectations at that time exceeded her capacity at the time. Last fall Judy approached me with a desire to enter into the member in discernment process and she has my full support. In collaboration with ACM Jonna Jensen and CCAM chairperson Carl Vass, Judy was given the greenlight to convene a discernment committee and to begin the process of completing some of the initial documents for the process. Judy's discernment committee is made up of Laura Nelson Lof, Sue Drake, Henry Rietz, Rick Ramsey, Sara Adams and Robin Estes. We will have our third meeting with Judy this coming week and I anticipate at this time we will move forward with recommending Judy for Member in Discernment Status with the CCAM (Conference Committee on Authorized Ministry). To do so, Judy will need a letter from the church leadership affirming this recommendation. I have created a draft of this letter which you can review here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lfy9BTOnwUaAh1RLPcebUpP-OhBO9iHobSTXej77z-s/edit?usp=sharing> Once Judy completes the process with the CCAM she will be referred back to the Central Association Committee on Ministry for an ecclesiastical council and the possibility of being approved for ordination.

### **Continuing Education Updates**

Barely having time to take a deep breath after completing my ACTS DMin in Preaching Year 1 - I am officially underway with year two. As I write this I am attending our 2023-2024 orientation session (shhh....don't tell that I am multitasking) and have two assignments due by April 30. I will be away for my three week intensive June 12-18; June 19-25; and June 26-July 2. Henry Rietz will be preaching on June 18th and I have asks out to a few others for the additional Sundays.

Finally, as I mentioned in last month's report, I am in the very beginning stages of planning for a sabbatical in 2024. My five year anniversary as pastor of Grinnell UCC is in September 2023. This is the first time in my pastoral career that I have become eligible for a sabbatical and I am very eager for this opportunity. I am anticipating the following:

### **SABBATICAL - Three Months earned after five year anniversary (Sept 2023)**

April; May; (June one week vacation and DMin intensive); July; Return August 4, 2024: I have spoken with our Associate Pastor Henry Rietz who will be able to cover for June and half of July, and I will be reaching out to other ordained and lay ministers in our congregation about what it might look like to pulpit fill and provide pastoral care in my absence. In addition to rest and recuperation, and being tender and gentle with my emotional and spiritual well-being, I anticipate that I will be spending the bulk of this sabbatical writing the initial draft of my doctoral thesis which will be due in December 2024. I will communicate more as it gets closer and as plans progress.

With Gratitude, Pastor Jessica