

Pastor's Report - August 2023

Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm

Staff Updates

August began with time off/away for me as I traveled to Kentucky and North Carolina to be with family and friends, as well as time off for Lindsey to get moved into their new home in Coralville. Elizabeth is taking some time off at the end of the month and we are all hopeful that as we move into September and the program year begins anew we will be refreshed and ready to hit the ground running. The preschool staff - Tammy, Jen and Jayden - have been in the classroom preparing for the start of their school year next week. We are all eager to have the life giving presence of the students back in the building.

Pastoral Care

August brought the passing of one of our long time church members and a faithful minister in the UCC, John Saxton. John's funeral service will take place on September 30th. I spent much time this past week supporting Caroline as she was in town handling her dad's end of life needs and memorial planning.

Worship/Ministry Programming Updates

I continue to be thankful to John Rommereim, Joyce Wubbels, Allen Ricks, Ian Moschenross and now Denise Baustian who have provided a rotation of music for us during worship. I am thankful that Shane Estes and Liz Rodrigues have done the leg work of selecting hymns and scheduling accompanists for the summer. Choir begins again with rehearsal the first week of September and there seems to be some energy and eagerness for that to resume, this time under the leadership of John Rommereim.

The second Suds of Love event will take place on August 30th, with all volunteer shifts filled and word spreading throughout the community. I am so impressed with the work Lindsey has put into making this dream a reality and the benefits this program brings to our Grinnell neighbors.

The program year is fully staffed with a teacher training orientation taking place on August 27th following worship. In addition OWL for grades 9-11 will kick off in September with two new facilitators taking the training course in anticipation of that as well.

Wider Ministerial/Denomination Updates

Judy Scheer continues her work toward ordination as a member in discernment and awaits next steps from the CCAM. The Central Association Fall Meeting will be held

here at Grinnell UCC on September 17th and the Iowa Conference of the UCC annual meeting will be held on October 14th at Urbandale UCC.

Continuing Education Updates

My summer intensive coursework has concluded and the work of preaching and writing throughout the next year is underway. My PPG met for the first time on August 13th and will meet September 3rd in anticipation of my first sermon.

My second year preaching project will focus on, "Preaching to Recognize our Commitment to Justice: On the way to Re-imagining the Activist Roots of Grinnell United Church of Christ - Congregational for the Twenty-first Century" I will shift from looking back through our church's activist history to assessing and addressing Grinnell United Church of Christ's activist work in the present and more recent past, recognizing the ways in which we remain a force for social justice in our community and beyond, naming our strengths and identifying areas in need of growth for our current setting. My first sermon for this year's project will be on September 10.

Sabbatical plans for the Spring/Summer of 2024 continue with John Ashby, Judy Scheer, Henry Rietz and Bonnie Lipton agreeing to preach and provide emergency pastoral care for April, May, June and July respectively. During our August Governing Board meeting I will share updates about funding for this coverage and some suggestions for further supplemental funds as needed.

With Gratitude, Pastor Jessica