

Pastor's Report - June/July 2023

Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm

Staff Updates

Much of our staff energy this summer has gone into the planning and upcoming implementation of the Suds of Love event happening Wednesday, July 26, 2023. I'll say more about this in the Ministry Programming section, but the energy and excitement we are feeling as a staff as a result of the energy and excitement we have received from the congregation is encouraging. Plans continue for Lindsey to maintain her position as Director of Outreach and Education after their family moves to Coralville. Lindsey's move date is the last weekend in July and she will commute to the office on Wednesdays and Sundays and work from home three other days a week. I will be on vacation July 27-August 3 and John Ashby will be preaching on July 30th in my absence. When RAGBRAI comes through town on July 27, several community agencies will be setting up space on our lawn and our building will be available as an emergency shelter in the event of severe weather. Elizabeth will be in the building that day, but the building will remain closed to the public unless there is an emergency.

Pastoral Care

This summer several of our church members have moved into different levels of assisted living communities. I officiated a funeral for a long time Grinnellian Dick Purcell. I am thankful to Henry, Judy and Bonnie who were available on-call for pastoral care needs while I was out of the office for my doctorate intensive.

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. The music team including John Rommereim and Erin Bustin will meet again soon to pull the music pieces together for the start of the program year.

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 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.

With Gratitude, Pastor Jessica