

Pastor's Report - September/October 2023

Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm

Staff Updates

The priority for church staff over the last couple months have been the start of the program year, the continuation of the Suds of Love programming, High School OWL, and finalizing the 2024 budget. Lindsey continues to work from the church office Wednesdays and Sundays and from home Monday, Tuesday and Thursday (Friday/Saturday is her weekend). Elizabeth works from home on Monday, from the church office on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and Sunday (Friday/Saturday is also her weekend). Mondays are now my Sabbath day and I am working from the office, home, car and everywhere else Tuesday through Friday, and of course from church on Sunday. Saturday is my other day off each week.

Pastoral Care

John Saxton's funeral took place here at the church on September 30th. I provided pastoral care to a few people who were near to John per request. I am grateful for the Mayflower Wine and Cheese gatherings which also allows time for some sharing and pastoral care in a collective setting.

Worship/Ministry Programming Updates

So much life and energy is currently infusing our worship and ministry programs. High School OWL is going great and 65% of the students taking the course are from outside of our congregation. Planning is underway for a K-1 OWL class which will happen Jan-March 2024. Suds of Love is quickly becoming a highlight of the month - not only for me - but for our volunteers and the friends from our community that are making good use of the program. Each month things run more smoothly, our relationships with the Maytag staff and our neighbors deepen and we are dreaming big dreams about how to make this program sustainable and even more impactful in the long term.

Having the choir back in action has been wonderful and it is so cool to see college students who sing with the choir on choir days attending worship on other Sundays as well. The mix of singers, ages 14-91, truly proves how intergenerational music programming can be!

Upcoming we are planning for Jingle Bell Holiday on November 17th which is a fun, annual collaboration between the Grinnell UCC Preschool, the Grinnell Children's Choir and our church. A parents and young professionals night out at Solera on Dec 3rd - with childcare happening here at the church. And the Christmas program which, this year, will be a service of lessons and carols.

Wider Ministerial/Denomination Updates

These past two months have been busy as far as wider church work is concerned. Grinnell UCC hosted the Fall Gathering of the Central Association of the Iowa Conference of the United Church of Christ on September 17th. The Annual Meeting for the Iowa Conference of the United Church of Christ was held at Urbandale UCC on October 14th. Grinnell UCC was represented by Dorothy and John Noer, Julie and Dave Eberbach, Bonnie and Pat Lipton, Pastor Jessica and Judy Scheer. Our Conference Deacon, Brice Hughes wrote up good reflections on both of these meetings which have been/will be included in our recent newsletters. Pastor Jessica and Dave and Julie Eberbach expressed interest in being official delegates for the Iowa Conference to the 2025 Synod Gathering which will be in Kansas City.

Continuing Education Updates

My second year preaching project, focusing 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" is underway. I preached my first sermon for this year's project on September 10. My second sermon is on November 5th. I'm grateful for the ongoing partnership of my Parish Project Group as I continue this work. Our Advent Study will take place December 3, 10, 17 and will be a group read of An Abolitionist's Handbook: 12 Steps to Changing Yourself and the World Hardcover by Patrisse Cullors.

I will be out of the office and working from Kentucky from November 13-16th to be with my mom while she has foot surgery.

With Gratitude, Pastor Jessica