

Pastor's Report - December 2020
Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm

As I write this I have just watched the final compilation of our DIY Christmas Pageant and for the first time during this Advent/Christmas season my heart is full of joy. The timelessness of the Christmas story, the way the words of the carols are imprinted deep in my heart, the amazing creativity and humor and good-sportiness and talent of our church family has been one of the few very, very good things about this year. In so many ways I am exhausted with finding “new and creative” ways to be church while socially distanced and at the mercy of technology - but I may never want to go back to a traditional pageant again!

Staff Updates

While I know this year has been so hard on everyone, and while I know there have been other churches who have likely done more or better than we have, I cannot say one negative thing about how our church staff has adapted, adjusted, learned, innovated and kept on doing their very, very best this year. Elizabeth, Erin and Ken deserve all of the love, support and care we can give them and I invite our board to reach out to each of them individually with words of thanks and support. As a team we've been able to take what felt like half-baked, impossible ideas and turn them into meaningful, soul filling experiences for our socially distanced family of faith in the midst of really crummy odds.

Although we all have high hopes for 2021, the truth is the start of the year will continue much like most of 2020 has been. We are imagining ways to make our online Sunday worship even more interactive, Erin is working on new ideas for Sunday School, Elizabeth will be pulling together our annual report and, after some much needed time off, I will begin the hiring process for a new building maintenance custodian.

Pastoral Care/Worship/Ministry Updates

As our community of faith has evolved and innovated when it comes to our worship platform, education offerings and community building - one thing that has remained steadfast is our willingness to pray for one another. I am incredibly grateful for Sara Adams and Robin Estes, members of the Care Connections Team, who have recruited a team of prayerful church members and are setting aside one day a month for focused prayer. We extended a call to our wider community for prayer requests and they flooded in. I am so grateful for our willingness to bear one another's burdens in this way.

Please refer to the December 2020 Grinnell UCC Newsletter for the results of a worship feedback Zoom session held at the end of November. We will begin offering more “live” interactive worship experiences in January, in addition to our recorded youtube options. I am especially grateful for the folks within our community who have more tech skills and patience than I do and are willing to help us make these requested changes.

Wider Ministerial/Denomination/Continuing Education Updates

In 2021 I will continue on the Central Association Committee on Ministry and will begin my term as the Moderator for the 2021 Annual Meeting for the Iowa Conference of the UCC. I will be taking time off December 25-January 2 and January 14-21. The church staff continues to work from home as much as possible to mitigate the spread of Covid-19.

If, in hindsight, all we can say about this year is that we learned some things, God was with us and we survived it, I'm calling that good enough. Thank you, to each and every board and staff member, for your continued leadership and support

With Grace and Peace, Pastor Jessica

