

Douglas Congregational United Church of Christ Pastor's Report: December 20, 2022

Christmas Blessings: As we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Light of the World, please know how grateful we are for the Light that each and every one of you brings to our church. We are so thankful for your presence, support, encouragement, and generosity this past year. Wishing you all a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Season of Giving: Thank you to all who fulfilled the gift tag requests from our annual Holiday Giving Tree for area families in need. Our collection box was overflowing with gifts! We are so grateful for your generous giving. Thank you to Wendy Hamlin and Joyce Wright for facilitating and delivering.

In Memoriam: Our hearts are heavy as we say goodbye to two of our longstanding church members. Alan Weathers died suddenly at his home on November 21, and Sidney Matheis passed away on November 22 in the hospital after suffering a stroke. Pastor Sal has been in touch with Alan's family, and he said prayers at Sidney's bedside just a few hours before he passed. Please hold both families in your prayers. We will keep you posted when memorial services are planned.

UCC Association: On December 8, Dan Mack, Barb Lucier, and I represented our church at the Ecclesiastical Council for Rev. Shannon Jammal-Holleman, who was granted Privilege of Call in the United Church of Christ.

Sedona Trip: Last month, I led 15 retreatants from our church on a week-long spiritual journey to Sedona and the Grand Canyon. We visited the Church of the Red Rocks (our UCC church in Sedona), as well as the Chapel of the Holy Cross, the Buddhist Peace Park, and several sacred Native American sites. Many thanks to church member, David Geen, for organizing the trip.

Afghan Family Update: This past month, the Afghan family that we have been sponsoring on our church campus since January was able to secure permanent housing in Holland. The family expressed gratitude for the continued presence of our congregation and for the opportunities our support and service provided them. This move is not the end of our relationship but rather the beginning of a new phase for the family. We will continue to work with them – and walk with them – as they continue to acclimate to their new life here in the United States. Thank you to everyone from the Afghan Task Force and to Bob and Louise Kenny for their dedicated leadership.

New Members Class: On December 4, we officially welcomed eight new members to our church: Tom Fahlstrom; Carol Gray; Beth Stallinga; Kirsten and Gordon Stannis; Patrice Greene; Brent Langman and Ray Bonvini. Each of them received a pin and certificate from the United Church of Christ.

Church Security: On December 9, Peter Mueller, Mike VerMerris, and Kelly Wright attended a workshop at the Community Church of Douglas on the topic of "Church Safety." The event was facilitated by the Douglas Police Department.

Christmas Services: Christmas falls on a Sunday this year, so we will be having both a Christmas Eve and Christmas morning service. Our Annual Christmas Eve service of the "Lessons & Carols" will be at 6 PM, featuring the Douglas UCC Holiday Choir. At our Christmas morning service, we will be taking a special collection for the UCC's Christmas Fund. Afterwards, there will be a holiday cookie exchange.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Sal

Rev. Salvatore Sapienza, Pastor