

Douglas Congregational United Church of Christ

Pastor's Report

February 15, 2022

End of Epiphany: The Season of Epiphany comes to a close at the end of this month. Next month, we will begin the Season of Lent on March 2, which is Ash Wednesday. As in previous years, we will be joining our friends at 1st Congregational Church in Saugatuck on Ash Wednesday for “Ashes-to-Go” along Butler Street.

Afghan Family: It has been four weeks now since the arrival of the Afghan family our church is sponsoring at the Spring Street house. Our church members have been helping them with learning English, writing resumes, applying for jobs, studying for driver's tests, and shopping for groceries. On January 27, I joined the family for tea and gave them a tour of our church campus. The family also joined us in the Friendship Hall after worship on February 6 for a “meet-and-greet.” We are so grateful to Bob Kenny (our Afghan Task Force facilitator) and all who have donated their time, talents, and treasure to helping the family. Both our local *Commercial Record* newspaper and the National UCC website ran articles about our church's efforts.

Building Improvements: Our church's Design Team (Bud Baty, Josephine Berault, and Floyd Fleming) have agreed to lead the Facilities Team in making some improvements to our church building this upcoming year, including refurbishing our front doors and putting up new wallpaper in the sanctuary. Earlier this month, they met with professional wallpaper installers and door refinishers to get costs and estimates for the project.

Church Meetings: On January 20, I attended the Grand West Association meeting on Zoom; On January 21, I met with our Grant Proposal Committee facilitator, Karen Clark, about recent grant requests; On January 25, I met with Afghan Task Force facilitator, Bob Kenny, for an update on the Afghan family; On January 25, I met with our church's Stephen Ministers for their monthly supervision meeting; On February 8, I attended the GWA Planning Committee Meeting on Zoom; On February 10, I attended the Afghan Task Force meeting on Zoom; and this past month, I also met with nine church members for one-on-one sessions in my office.

140th Anniversary: This year marks our church's 140th Anniversary, and we are currently working on some ideas for a celebration this summer. We will keep you posted.

Upcoming: On Sunday, March 6, I have been invited to speak at Newaygo UCC, as they are considering becoming an “Open & Affirming” church. And, during the Season of Lent, I have been invited to lead a weekly Wednesday series at Park UCC in Downtown Grand Rapids.

Kudos: Thank you to David Geen, Peter Black, and Gregg Smith who have been helping with snow shoveling outside the church on Sunday mornings this winter.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Salvatore Sapienza, Pastor