

Douglas Congregational United Church of Christ

Pastor's Report: January 17, 2023

Happy New Year: At this start of the New Year, we look back in gratitude at all of the blessings of 2022, and we look forward with great expectations to all that 2023 has in store for us. As Scripture says, *"You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip with abundance"* (Psalm 65:11).

Christmas Services: We, sadly, had to cancel our Christmas Eve and Christmas Morning services due to a blizzard and hazardous road conditions. Thankfully, our Holiday Choir under the direction of Peter Black was able to perform their beautiful song for us on New Year's Day.

Christmas Fund: Thank you to all who contributed to the annual UCC Christmas Fund special collection to help retired clergy and church staff who are experiencing financial difficulties. We collected \$661, which our church will match for a total of \$1,322 to the United Church of Christ. Thank you for your generous giving.

Coffee Hour: The return of our Sunday Coffee Hour has been a great success, with many staying after worship for a time of fellowship and connection. Thank you to Joyce Wright for coordinating and to all who have signed up to provide treats and clean up afterwards.

New Schedules: Thank you to Mike VerMerris and Peter Black for putting together the new schedules for Sunday volunteers and musicians from January 1 to May 1. The schedules are posted on the bulletin board in Friendship Hall and on our church's website. We are grateful for to Mike, Peter, and all our Sunday volunteers.

Congregational Meeting: More than 60 people attended our Congregational Meeting on January 8, where we looked back in gratitude on 2022 and set our vision on 2023. Thank you to all who participated. We are grateful to our Church Council and to all who presented: Chris Clark, Kathleen Mueller, Peter Mueller, and Kelly Wright. We are also grateful to Beverly Hawkes for taking minutes and to Julie Ridl for monitoring those joining via Zoom.

2023 Projects: As was presented at the Congregational Meeting on January 8, we are considering two exciting projects for the new year: a refresh of the Spring Street house as administrative offices/meeting space and the construction of a garden with native plants, trees, and a labyrinth behind the Retreat House. Teams have been formed to research and help plan these projects, and we will keep everyone posted on their progress. A fundraising drive will also be rolled out in the coming months to help defer the cost of these projects.

Donor Letters: Thank you to all for your generous giving in 2022. All of the end-of-year donor letters have been mailed out. If you did not receive your letter, please let us know. Thank you to our Financial Secretary, Jim Kern, for all of his hard work in preparing and mailing the letters.

Upcoming: I will be representing our church on Sunday, February 5, at 3 PM at the installation of Rev. Darryl Kistler at Park Church in Grand Rapids...I been invited to give the message at Fountain Street Church in Downtown Grand Rapids on Sunday, February 19. Rev. Marchiene Rienstra will be leading worship at Douglas UCC that day...A party will be held on Friday, February 24, at 6 PM at Alley's in Douglas for our singers, musicians, and sound volunteers, as our way of saying "thank you" for all they do to make our Sunday worship so meaningful...On Saturday, March 11, we will host an evening with author, John Pavlovitz, at Douglas UCC.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Sal

Rev. Salvatore Sapienza, Pastor