

Douglas Congregational United Church of Christ --- Pastor's Report

May 17, 2022

Season of Easter: In this season of rebirth and new life, we have been seeing more-and-more people returning to in-person church. Our attendance keeps growing each Sunday with many returning faces and several newcomers, too. We are grateful for that and for our continued online viewership, as well.

Creation Justice Team: Thank you to our church's Creation Justice Team for all of their work in the community this past month. Eighteen church members took part in the Highway Clean-up on April 23 and more than 30 people attended the "City Dark" movie presentation on April 27. And, thanks to the team's efforts, we installed 'dark sky'-compliant exterior lighting on all the buildings of our church campus this past month.

GWA Spring Meeting: I represented our church at the Grand West Association Spring Meeting on May 1 at Hudsonville UCC. The keynote speaker was author, Rev. Amy Brooks, who spoke about Creative Arts in worship. There was also an Ecclesiastical Council for Rev. Alyssa Anten, pastor of Lowell UCC.

Afghan Family Update: Thank you to all who have been driving Reza to and from his job in Holland each day. We're happy to report that he just passed his driver's test!! Soon, he will be receiving the car donated by church member, Mark Johnston. The family is thriving, and we are grateful to leaders, Bob and Louise Kenny, and all who have been helping the family each and every week.

Stephen Ministry: On April 26, I attended the Stephen Ministry Supervision meeting in the Friendship Hall. I am also happy to share that Beverly Hawkes will be completing her Stephen Leadership training later this month. I met with her and our other Stephen Leaders on May 12.

Retreat House: A UCC clergy member from Ann Arbor is staying at our church's Retreat House this week. Then – from June thru August – our Retreat House will be hosting college-age interns who will be working at area non-profits. Thank you to Retreat House coordinator, Kathleen Mueller, and to Laurie VandenBeldt for cleaning.

Spring Street Update: The unsafe wooden deck on the side of the Spring Street house has now been removed and replaced with stairs thanks to church members, Kelly Wright, Mike White, and Larry Fuerst.

Memorial Service: More than 100 people attended Paul Murphy's memorial service in the church on May 10, followed by the internment of ashes in our church's Memorial Garden. Thank you to Mike VerMerris for installing Paul's plaque on the Memorial Wall and to Stacy Honson and Dick Bont for tending the grounds.

Christian Neighbors: On May 22, I will be representing our church at a benefit for Christian Neighbors Food Pantry in Douglas.

Pastoral Relations Committee: I will be meeting with our church's Pastoral Relations Committee on May 18 in the Friendship Hall.

Community Pride: Our church is proud to be a Silver Sponsor of the Community Pride event in Saugatuck/Douglas from June 1-6. Church member, Greg Harvath, and I appeared on the local radio show on May 7 to talk about our church's involvement with the event.

New Members Class: Twelve people took part in the New Members class I led at the Retreat House on May 15. We will officially install them as members on Pentecost Sunday, June 5.

140th Anniversary: A block party will be held in front of our church on Sunday, June 5, from 11 AM to 1 PM in celebration of our church's 140th Anniversary. Several of our church's previous pastors will be returning for the celebration.

Kudos: Thank you to Bob Ruddy for filling in as our pianist these past two Sundays, while our Director of Music, Peter Black, took a very well-deserved vacation.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Sal

Rev. Salvatore Sapienza, Pastor