

Pastor's Report - September 2025

Rev. Jessica Margrave Schirm

Staff Updates

As we've transitioned into the 2025-26 program year we are off to a good start, despite being down a staff person while Lindsey is in her last month of maternity leave. Lindsey will be back in the swing of things on Tuesday October 7th. The plan is for her to work from her home office during the week while prioritizing in person trips to Grinnell for OWL and Suds of Love responsibilities. I will continue to oversee Sunday School responsibilities for the moment since that is already going seamlessly. College Students Anderson Schirm and Makenna Hall are teaching Connect and I am teaching Confirm not Confirm with college student Michael Murray.

Elizabeth and I have been working diligently on the proposed 2026 budget and have offered the governing board several options/variations to consider. One of those options includes the possibility of increasing the budget to include hiring a more permanent part time music minister position or a variety of more professional musicians, to shore up a more engaging and professional feeling Sunday worship experience. This came out of a conversation I had with our retirees at a recent wine and cheese gathering where, almost to a person, they expressed a deep desire to see a change / increased investment in this area of our worship ministry which would necessitate an increase in staffing/budget for staffing. More discussion of this will take place during our governing board meeting.

Pastoral Care

We have had quite an intense pastoral care caseload this summer/fall with the passing of several church members and folks acquainted with our church. The Care Connections team and prayer team continues to stay on top of pastoral care routine needs and emergencies - especially when I am away and while Associate Pastor Judy Scheer has been unavailable for the last half of the summer healing from her own injuries. I am currently completing a self-directed Grief Coaching certification course to maintain my skills in this area to better support our congregation and wider community.

Worship/Ministry Programming Updates

See previous sections for current conversations and information about worship. Our upcoming session of OWL for grades 406 is currently open for registration and we are in good shape for that being ready to go in November once Lindsey is back in action post-leave. There is a CWS kit session happening 9/28 and a family night out event happening October 12th.

Continuing Education Updates/Wider Denominational Meetings

Our church will be hosting a continuing education event for clergy, in conjunction with Ames UCC Theologian in Residence event on October 24th and the Annual Meeting for the Iowa Conference of the UCC is October 11 in Des Moines.

Gratefully, Pastor Jessica