

## Pastor's report February 2024

We are in the season of Lent, a time to reflect on what it means to live a life of meaning, rooted in the way of Christ, choosing how we pay attention and how we live out the call to 'follow me'. This year we're using materials that focus around a central theme of broadening our hearts and preparing the way, making room for careful attention to what matters most.

Careful attention to what matters most - my hope and prayer is that I ground my everyday work in this ideal. What matters most today? How do I serve the living God in the midst of the ordinariness of our daily lives and this community? I offer these updates on what the past 3 months have held.

In Christ,

Kate

Updates:

1. Worship: Our Advent/Christmas season focused on 'How will we know?' a season of watching and waiting, even when we have questions and even doubts, knowing God is still with us; still then, God is working, materials from the Mennonite Publication "Leader Magazine". We followed that with 2 Sundays focused on Baptism, hearing stories from our community, and then 2 Sundays where we considered MLK's 6 Principles of Nonviolence. As noted above, we have just begun the journey of Lent. Each series strives to make space for questions of how we live our faith, today, thoughtfully, intentionally and with integrity. Hearing from multiple voices in the congregation is woven in as we live out the Anabaptist principle of being a priesthood of all believers, believing that we come to know what it means to follow Jesus through living in community.
2. Worship committee has been active in choosing themes for worship and is currently creating 'guidelines for worship', exploring our vision for worship and the nuts and bolts of what is expected in leading. Our hope is that this will create a common experience for leaders and give a systematic way of understanding all of the elements involved in leading. The committee put forth a proposal to the Leadership Team regarding creating a 'masking only' seating space in the sanctuary, which was implemented as a trial on January 28, in response to the needs of some in the congregation. Our attendance has continued to be steady, with 60-65 in attendance in person and 8-15 screens zooming in weekly.
3. Work with the Adult Christian education committee -In December 2023 we moved to having Sunday school every Sunday. The committee has worked to clarify what's offered on various Sundays. The first Sunday, in conjunction with the children's programming, will be an intergenerational gathering (began February 2024 with donut making and stories of Lent). The fourth Sunday of the month will be used by the Visioning Committee for the foreseeable future. Remaining Sundays are sermon-discussion time. I continue to work with the committee as an interface between the different options, supporting their work.
4. Work with the Children and Youth committee. Full time Sunday school resumed in December, with one multi-age class for ages pre-K through 6th grade. Right now Bethany Spicher

Schonberg is the person planning and creating activities. There is ongoing conversation between us about how to make this program more sustainable, and what's needed to educate our children in their faith and community life.

5. Working with the elders - I meet monthly with Elders and reach out regularly to assess the spiritual and physical needs of our congregation.
6. Working with the Leadership Team (LT)- the visioning process has begun and I am a part of this 6 person team. I work closely with Joel to determine what's important to bring before the congregation and how to engage in the healthy functioning of a congregation. I have submitted a proposal to use the final 2 months of sabbatical time in August and September of this year. A conversation around the need for a "Peace and Justice committee" will take place in the upcoming congregational meeting.
7. Support of community through visitation - I continue to reach out regularly, trying to find ways to connect by taking walks, sharing meals, meeting on zoom, visiting in homes as well as phone check-ins. Being available as a spiritual support as we walk this journey of life continues to be a high priority of my ministry at UMC.
8. Creation Care committee - support the work of this committee as we are preparing for phase 2 of our move towards becoming more energy efficient, bringing a proposal to install heat pumps in the basement..
9. New members - no new member classes this quarter.
10. Baby dedications - no babies dedicated this quarter. One is planned for March 2024.
11. No funerals this quarter..
12. Supporting the State College Interfaith (SCI) group by being the note taker and attending meetings as we consider hosting another refugee family.
13. Mid-week News continues to be a regular way to share news and offer a midweek connection.
14. Tuesday sharing and prayer continues to be a group that shares deeply from our lives and engages in a lectio divina style of engaging scripture.
15. Community involvement - Community Oversight Board (COB) member; attend monthly Campus and Community in Unity (CCU) meetings. Attend local Interfaith clergy gatherings. Continue to help lead the Monday evening Lights for Peace silent vigil held downtown. Attend "Interfaith Gun Safety Coalition for Centre County" and sit on a sub-committee exploring how to keep our congregations as safe as possible. Lead an interfaith Mennonite Action demonstration at US Rep. Glenn Thompson's office on December 19 2023, pulling together various faith traditions and community members in calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.
16. Allegheny Mennonite Conference involvement: Sit on the credentialing committee and the Search committee formed to replace conference minister Dave Mishler. Working with those who regularly attend Laurelville summer celebration as UMC will lead the worship there this summer.
17. Sabbatical. I am planning to use the final 2 months of the sabbatical time from August 6 through September 30 2024, remembering that "a leave is not an entitlement for pastors, but a part of the congregation's and the pastor's strategy for enhancing ministry. It is an investment in future ministry." (From [MC USA sabbatical guidelines](#)) I plan on spending nearly 5 weeks at [Holden Village](#), an ecumenical retreat in Washington state that encourages people to come renew relationships with God, creation and one another. One week will be spent engaging in "Solvitur Ambulando", a phrase attributed to Saint Augustine which roughly translates to "In walking, it is solved." This week of backpacking will create the space and time to be available

to the loving call and presence of our God. The final two weeks will be spent in independent study, using a contemplative reading and journaling approach.

18. Continuing education -

- Participate in Spiritual Direction on a regular (nearly monthly) basis.
- Attended Shalom Institute at EMU in January.
- Monthly meeting with pastors from the Eccumenical Center for Clergy Spiritual Renewal program
- 8 month program through Eastern Mennonite Seminary: Seminar in Family and Congregational Systems.