

Associate Pastor's Annual Report December 12, 2010

This has been another great year for me! Each year I feel I am learning more and more about how to serve the spiritual needs of this congregation. I appreciate Pastor Jon's willingness to let me be an active part in leading worship here, his faith in letting me be "in charge" while he is gone, and Teri's help in making it all happen smoothly. Even more, I appreciate the support this congregation has given to me in my efforts to serve. I'm proud to be part of the spiritual journey we are all making together.

Throughout the year, I worked with several commissions on projects to enhance the life and outreach of The United Church. I assisted the Member/New Member Care Commission with a survey to determine the needs of members within our congregation, helped with the planning for the Caregiver Resources presentation, and helped create a document outlining the duties of the commission. In Campus Ministry the focus was on the establishment of a Facebook page and coordinating the end of the semester "Study Break Sitter" sessions for children of FSU students. My assistance to the Mission Commission involved inviting FSU students to celebrate an Alternative Spring Break in 2011 by joining us on a mission trip to Houma, Louisiana. These trips to help people rebuild their lives are great experiences and I hope you all get a chance to go on a similar trip in the future. In Spiritual Life I helped coordinate the adult retreat coming up in February and assisted with the various activities of decorating and un-decorating the church for each liturgical season.

I have been able to enhance my pastoral service to the church by planning and presenting 12 Sunday morning worship services, assisting with the new member installation, and participating in most worship services. I was involved in Vacation Bible School as a story teller and "rover" and helped with WinterFest by coordinating efforts to present a play to the students. I visited people in hospitals, took communion to those in nursing homes, and delivered flowers to long-time members who are not able to attend church regularly so that they could share in the Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving celebrations of our faith family. I officiated at three weddings and one funeral.

In SASS-EE (Society of Active Single Sisters for Entertaining Escapades), among other things, we explored the world of Dale Chihuly at Meijer Gardens and learned from Betty Goldammer about the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) conference and their efforts to empower women in rural areas around the world. On other occasions, we watched movies (with snacks), attended concerts and plays, and went out to dinner. A grand time was had by all; come and join us.

In community interaction, I met regularly with pastors in the Big Rapids Ministerial Association and participated in ecumenical community wide services. I was pleased to be invited to participate in other community services; the installation of Rev. Clay Bates at Immanuel Lutheran Church, a blessing for a new Habitat for Humanity home, and the Big Rapids Luminary Tribute for Veterans on November 11. I also have been part of the Crisis Support Team for Mecosta and Osceola counties. The team responds to events such as the accidental or suicidal death of a student, natural disasters that affect many

community members, workplace incidents that create trauma for the group. This past year I was part of the teams who responded to the needs of faculty, staff, and students at Crossroads Charter Academy upon the sudden death of their high school principal and Pine River School after the death of a beloved coach.

I am also becoming more involved in the activities of the denomination. I attended the Michigan UCC Gathering in June and helped with a worship service. In the UCC Grand West Association, Dee Van Horn and I presented a program about some of the mission projects our church supports. I will be even more involved during the coming year, since I have been elected Vice-Moderator of the Grand West Association. Please come join Pastor Jon and me in representing our congregation in the Association.

Finally, and perhaps most important for me, was my interaction with this year's Confirmation Class. The discussions in class were spirited and full of questions. We had a joyful celebration on May 30th when 5 young people in the church decided to join us in the work of the church. It is a pleasure to know that the future of our church is in such good hands.

In Christian Love,

Pastor Jerena