

Pastor Report for 2/18/2024

Believe me, it is not fun having worship without a real person on the piano keys. A you tube will bounce the computer off and it needs to be re-booted. Those present at worship have been so patient, THANK YOU. Ash Wednesday I had background music and the new way of doing it seems to work, that is what I will do on February 18. And then on February 25, the visiting preacher has offered to play. She is being looked at by another church so some of their search committee will be joining us on that day. Rev. Bre Ryan was ordained in 2009 so she is experienced and eager to make a good impression. Because we don't have anybody on board she asked if she could also do music that day.

Kevin Birchelder intended on helping us until Easter and he still will get us up and running with the computer that he has donated to be designated for our on-line presence. He did not get equipped with some material he expected to receive but he still wants to, because he promised, get us up and functioning.

Robin O'Neill is willing to come on board come March. However, she still works full time within a school system as music teacher/choir director. Helen still had her number from when Beth came on board and Helen gave her a jingle and she said yes. Not having any intention until the phone call she and her husband Doug already had vacation plans for Holy Week inclusive of Easter.

I've been mulling round the idea of, Who are we? We are a local church of the United Church of Christ where every local church has autonomy. Now, autonomy is good and some in our Association think it is bad as they expect every local church to push for the agenda of the MI Conference. This local church likes being autonomous. We are not politically far left or far right in our thinking. We are not Red and we are not Blue and we are not and do not want to be political. So we are a purple church. We want to remain Bible Based and Christ centered. We are a Matthew 18 church. We are Bible-believing, inclusive, welcoming, Spirit-led, missional, and relevant. We walk a delicate balance of in-between. When people come in our doors they can expect to be loved, understood, and forgiven. This is a place where people come first, not politics. We are young and old, established and visitors, spiritually mature and seekers. All have a place in our sanctuary, in church leadership and in the heart of God. It's not

important that we agree politically or on divisive issues but we have vowed to be Christian together.

Genuine welcome is hard work. Everyone gives a lot, bends a little, and practices grace. We are curious about others, we listen well and are vulnerable at present because we are so small. We are uncomfortable sometimes, maybe even angry, befuddled and even hurt; yet with God's help, we love and accept anyone who chooses to worship with us. We believe that famous verse from Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." A Matthew 18 church is one where welcome is practiced, conflict is named, grace is extended, and God is present. I will continue to try my best to make Scripture relevant to the present time.

We seek out the Matthew 18 way; where ones of discord sit in the middle of voices of joy, as God's voice breaks down the thin walls that might be in between. It is difficult walking the balance of in-between, the purple way. The "Red" America is more conservative and "Blue" America more liberal. We are thinkers and don't want politics from the pulpit.

This past week I experienced the far left and the far right and personally, neither the far left or far right are very Christian. Let us keep striving to be a Matthew 18 church where all are included and welcomed. Keep informed, pray often, invite others as you share who we are and by all means keep hope alive as we re-plant. A handful have decided to no longer be part of our local church but four times that have died which is why we are in a re-planting mode.

I'm looking forward to Robin signing on with us and encouraged that she will introduce contemporary music but NOT toss out favorite hymns. A balance in music will be just fine.

Respectfully submitted,
Pastor Katie Dailey