

## Minister's Musings – February 2022

**It's been quite a start to the new year.** I'm so glad we had the chance to gather together, outdoors, for our Christmas Eve service – we really needed that chance to be together, even if we were at a social distance from each other. I was so thankful the weather cooperated this year, 'cause we needed that little boost. I hope that those of you who were not there in person still felt some of that boost come your way.

**It's been quite a start to the new year.** We exceeded our goal, raising nearly \$35,000 when we were aiming for \$25,000. It came from all sorts of people, in donation sizes large and small. It seemed like it was a chance to be reminded and to show how much we love the congregation and its place in our lives. I continue to be grateful to the anonymous donor who generous gift provided energetic inspiration for all of us.

**It's been quite a start to the new year.** We have been operating without a Music Director since mid-November. Our first search to identify a replacement was not successful. The search team took a brief break, and now is just about to get back on that horse. Since the beginning of the month, our Administrator, Donna, has been out on extended medical leave. While we have been wishing her a robust recovery, we also hope that she will be able to return to work in early February.

**It's been quite a start to the new year.** Many families in the congregation experienced Covid-19 in this latest spike, some beginning just before Christmas and others in the week or weeks just after. From all the reports I have received, all of these cases have been mild or moderate, resulting in no hospitalizations Hallelujah and great gratitude for that. I know that in my family, all four adult children and all three grandchildren ended up with it. And while more and more it seems inevitable that everyone will get it ~ I guess this is the process of becoming endemic ~ I am thankful that so many in our congregation are committed to being fully vaccinated, to minimize the impact of the virus on themselves and those around them.

**It's been quite a start to the new year.** With the mold remediated, we will be able to return to the building to broadcast our Sunday services... once the pandemic spike lessens, as it is projected to do. Soon after that, I hope that we will be opening the building to folks attending in person, first in small groups, then increasingly larger groups. All the while, keeping a virtual component so folks can continue to attend virtually. The Reopening Task Force recently released a revised version of our guidelines for re-opening.

**It's been quite a start to the new year.** To help us get through the winter, there are activities at TUS each week, January through March. Chances to come together in fellowship and connection. In January, all these activities were online. This will be true for at least the start of February. Time will tell when we can eventually bring some of these activities into the building.

**It's been quite a start to the new year.** Be on the lookout for announcements about our new “church data management system.” It's called Breeze. We've had it for over a year, using it to track pledges and donations. Yet, it's got so much more it can do to help us be organized as a congregation. This includes each Member and Friend having an online profile that acts like a *password-protected* online directory. With photos! A 21<sup>st</sup> century version of the photo directory that are so helpful.

On a final note: As you may remember from last year's sabbatical year, I took only three of four months of my earned sabbatical. Last year, the Board approved my request to defer a month, since some of my travel plans seemed too risky because of the pandemic. That deferred time is coming ~ March 21 – April 28. I have been calling a “semi-sabbatical.” I will tell you more about my plans in my March Minister's Musings. Until then, I want to give you a heads-up now:

- The Board will continue to meet and oversee the functioning of the congregation. Be sure to reach out to each of them to thank them for their work serving and stewarding the congregation. It's been yet another strange year to be a leader – pretty stressful. Please let them know that you appreciate all that they do to keep the congregation going.
- During this time, Jessica M Hess, our Director of Religious Education, will have more responsibility ensuring that Sunday services go as smoothly as possible. We already have in place some of our plans for those Sundays, be they guests from outside the congregation, lay voices from within, or visiting other congregations.

It's a blessing to be on this journey with you

~ Rev. Karen