

**Peace United Church of Christ
Coordinating Council Meeting
March 15, 2022 — 6:30 pm via Zoom**

Present: Moderator, Tom Hystead; Vice-Moderator, Joan Peterson; Secretary, Diane Swanoski, Spiritual Life Representative, Susan Larson Kidd, Education Representative, Penny Cragun; Stewardship Representative: Dave Courtright, Acting for Justice Representative, Monica Liddle; At Large members; Jessica Olson, Mary Adams, Bud Trnka, and Matt Ryan, Interim Minister, Rev. Jim Mitulski; Faith Formation Minister, Nathan Holst; Interim Pastoral Associate, Charlotte Frantz

Absent: Treasurer, Dick Goese

Guest: Rev. Tom Liddle

Call to Order at 6:39 p.m. by Tom Hystead

Opening Meditation: Tom Hystead shares the March 9th UCC Daily Devotion. ([Sign up for future devotion](#))

Agenda Additions and Approval - Rev. Tom Liddle is available for discussion regarding his Covenant Renewal. Jessica Olson makes a motion to discuss this covenant first on the agenda. The motion is seconded by Mary Adams. It is unanimous to accept the agenda as updated.

Approval of Consent Agenda (including financial reports, written committee representative reports, and Faith Formation Minister and Interim Pastoral Associate reports). It is moved by Jessica Olson, and seconded by Bud Trnka to approve the Consent Agenda as emailed. The motion is unanimously passed.

New Business:

Rev. Tom Liddle Covenant Renewal - Attachment #1.

- Rev. Tom Liddle gives an overview of the four-way covenant and process:
 - In the UCC, a pastor cannot be ordained without a church relationship in mission.
 - The four-way Covenant states that an ordained minister is representing Peace Church in a mission outside of the church setting.
 - The four-way Covenant is between Peace Church, the UCC Conference, the ordained minister, and their place of employment.
- Tom began a three-way Covenant with Peace Church in 1994 as a mission co-worker in East Timor.
- Peace members Sara Olson Dean and Jan Murphy also have current four-way Covenants with Essentia Health.
- The four-way Covenant suggests that the church make a financial donation to the institution at which ordained clergy are employed. There is not a specific dollar amount suggested - it is more symbolic support. In the past, the church has contributed to Essentia Health indirectly through support of some of their programming. Rev. Liddle asks us to consider, if the church were to make a financial contribution, what would we want it to go towards? For this year, we will earmark the \$1,000 contribution to Bob

Tavoni house (under Acting for Justice budget) to support the covenants of our three covenanted clergy working at Essentia Health. Going forward, the budget will indicate that these funds are being used as a financial contribution for these covenants.

- A motion to adopt the four-way Covenant for Rev. Tom Liddle is made by Susan Larson Kidd and seconded by Joan Peterson. The motion passes unanimously.

Reports of Standing Committees

Finance Committee: Financial Reports submitted by Rose Feriancek. Additional notes by Tom Hystead:

- Pledged income is running close to budget.
- Non-pledged is a bit down.
- The trend of having high income in January and February is not the case this year.
- There is a small net income loss, which will continue to be monitored.
- The Gabriel Fund has an approximately \$5,000 balance.
- The Finance Committee is looking to recruit more members.
- Monthly financial reports will be posted outside the office. It is being discussed whether to put them on our website.
- There is a question as to how budgeted money under Acting for Justice is distributed to outside sources. It appears that no money has come out for CHUM or other charities for January and February. Traditionally, amounts have been distributed 1/12 each month. Tom Hystead will check into this and reminds the Council that the budget was just approved at the February 20th Congregational meeting.

Human Resources Committee: Attachment #2.

- Employee Manual updates will be discussed in the Executive Session.

Nominating Committee –

- Transition Team - Mary Adams
 - A motion is made by Mary Adams, on behalf of the Transition Team, to appoint Kelly Grgas to the Transition Team. The motion is seconded and unanimously passed.
- Nomination Committee - Tom Hystead
 - Nominating Committee members were emailed the names of people who have previously served on the Council and current Council members whose terms are coming to an end. Dave Courtright is at the end of his second two-year term as Stewardship Representative. Matt Ryan is also at the end of his second two-year term as Member-at-Large. Joan Peterson will be moved to Moderator. Elected officers can serve up to two two-year terms. Dick Goese is at the end of his second two year term, but can serve up to four two-year terms. The list of names will be emailed to all Council members.
 - Council members are asked to send names of potential nominees to Pastor Jim, Tom Hystead, Joan Peterson, Mary Adams, or Jessica Olson.
 - We are reminded that current Council members can change their positions within the Council and extend their terms. Often At-Large members are recruited to fill other positions.

Written Committee Representative Reports

Christian Education: No written report submitted. Comments by Penny Cragun:

- Merging off Adult Education and Faith Formation seems to be working well.
- Adult Education is also meeting with Children's Ministry on a monthly basis.

Christian Spiritual Life: Attachment #3.

Acting for Justice Hub: Attachment #4.

Christian Stewardship: Attachment #5. Dave Courtright reports:

- There is a motion from the Property Committee: To authorize the property committee to solicit design work, seek grants or other community partnerships, and solicit bids for replacement of boilers and water heaters with high efficiency options with project costs to be paid from the designated building fund. The motion is seconded by Susan Larson Kidd. Jessica Olson asks to amend the motion to expand research to include other high efficiency heating options. The motion is amended and passes unanimously, understanding that we may need to consider additional funding if necessary. Jessica Olson and Tom Hystead offer to help Dave Courtright research options.
- Dave Courtright will also research new tent options to bring back to the Council. Susan Larson Kidd and Diane Swanoski offer to assist. There are some funds already budgeted for a new tent. It is agreed that a plea to the congregation for additional funding should be initiated to help pay for the tent. "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes." Isaiah 54:2 NIV

Minister's Reports

Rev. Mitulski - Interim Minister. Rev. Jim shares:

- Pastor Jim has been with us for six months.
- The Congregational Meeting was well attended with good participation.
- We completed Black History Month in February.
- Lent has begun with Ash Wednesday. There are many ways to connect with people and explore personal spirituality during Lent and Easter. A number of Lenten Journey Devotional groups have been inaugurated. There will also be Sunday evening prayer during Lent, in addition to the ongoing bible studies and online Connects groups.
- The online Connects groups are a great opportunity for Pastor Jim to meet and connect with people.
- Lent will coincide with Women's History Month in March.
- March 12th we had the largest attendance since Christmas.
- There is reinvigorated attendance and offerings for Adult Forums, including bringing in exciting inspirational speakers.
- There will be special CHUM offering requests during worship the first two Sundays in May.
- At the end of month there will be an opportunity for members to join NAACP.
- We are hoping to bring back "Wednesday Night Live" during June, July, and August, including food and bible study.
- Sunday worship service at 8:30 attendance is growing.
- A Taize service will be held on Sunday afternoons, the first Sunday of each month.
- Pastor Jim is considering one Sunday service in July and August at 9:00 a.m.
- The Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) is functioning well.
- The Transition Team is being formed and will gather soon to begin the work of helping the church clarify who we are and who we want to be going forward.

- A retreat for Council members and members of Council standing committees members is being planned.

Nathan Holst-Faith Formation Minister Attachment #6. Highlights by Nathan include:

- Focus group feedback sessions have produced ideas:
 - There will be a Children's Church on the first Sunday of the month.
 - Monthly parent sessions are being planned:
 - First Sunday of the month with Nathan.
 - Once a month over Zoom with the Children's Ministry Team.
 - Puppeting volunteers are going to participate once a month.
 - It is hoped to have the nursery restaffed by Easter.

Charlotte Frantz - Interim Pastoral Associate Minister. Attachment #7. Charlotte shares:

- Afghan resettlement news -
 - Four young women refugees from Afghanistan have arrived in Duluth.
 - The support across the community has been phenomenal. They had 24-hour accompaniment for the first month while being housed at McCabe Renewal Center. Last Saturday they moved into an apartment, which was renovated by Peace members and headed by Jim McLean. The house is filled with household goods that have all been donated.
 - The four women have been orientated to work in culinary jobs at Benedictine Health Center.
 - A day was spent at CSS to allow them access to the Fitness Center and open doors for educational opportunities, as well as at Lake Superior College.

Old Business

COVID Task Force Update - Tom Hystead

- The Task force meets tomorrow afternoon.

2022/2023 Council Recruitment - See under Nominating Committee.

SSC Update and Report to MN Conference - Tom Hystead

- The SCC Report and the Path Forward have been emailed to the Council.
- We are moving towards meeting many of the objectives.
- We are accountable to the UCC Conference and are due to give a report as to how we are doing. Tom Hystead, Diane Swanoski, and Mary Adams will work on creating a draft response to the UCC Conference and report back to the Council.
- It is suggested to revisit our interim objectives and check-in with Pastor Jim as to where we are and determine if they are still pertinent. The objectives will be reviewed at either the upcoming retreat, or in small groups with Pastor Jim. We also need to consider our pastoral needs. With our current structure, we have needed Pastor Jim, Pastor Charlotte, and Pastor Nathan to accomplish what we have accomplished and what we hope to continue to accomplish on the interim objectives list.

New Business:

Rev. Tom Liddle Covenant Renewal (See notes at the beginning of the meeting).

Money Management Strategy(ies) - Tom Hystead

- It is suggested by the Finance Committee that the Council, along with the Finance Committee, listen to a presentation by the UCC fund. A date for the presentation is to be determined.

Future meeting Agenda Items - none

Adjourn - It is moved, seconded and unanimously agreed to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.

A motion is made, seconded, and unanimously agreed to move to Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted: Diane Swanoski, Secretary

Next meetings: Congregational "Retreat," April 9 - McCabe Center
Coordinating Council Meeting, April 19, 2022
To be determined - Leadership Retreat

Attachment #1

Rev. Thomas Liddle
1129 E 7th St.
Duluth, MN 55805

Dear Church Council:

2/14/2022

Greetings of grace and peace to you. As background to my proposed 4-way Covenant for Ministry I share the following background information on my call to ministry.

I joined Peace UCC in 2003 with Monica. Over about six years we were quite active in the church and Pastor Kathy provided me with many opportunities for leadership and development of my ministry skills. I served as MN Conference delegate to the UCC Board of Wider Church Ministries from 2005-2009. Through that service we found our opportunity to serve with Global Ministries of the UCC, which we did for seven years. Along the way we lived in St. Paul for few years, and I attended Luther Seminary. I finished an MDiv degree in 2014. I was ordained at Peace in March of 2015. At that time, I was ordained under a 3-way covenant and called by Peace as an itinerant pastor of sorts. Under that Covenant I served on your behalf as an interim minister in Cannon Falls before going back to East Timor where I served as a local church pastor and Synod advisor for another four years.

I am now serving as a hospital chaplain at Essentia Health, St. Mary's Medical Center. Over the

years I have valued my connection with Peace UCC. I have felt valued, supported, and empowered to respond to God's call in my life through the UCC. In turn, I have served the local church and the denomination in various ways including service on local church, Conference, and denominational boards as well as years of service overseas as well as preaching and teaching in the local church when opportunities have arisen. I welcome the opportunity to continue my connection with Peace through this Covenant for Ministry.

Four Way Covenant For Ministry

The Parties:

1. Rev. Thomas Liddle, Authorized Minister of Word and Sacrament
2. Peace United Church of Christ, the Local Church
3. The Minnesota Conference UCC (acting also as an Association)
4. Essentia Health, St. Mary's Medical Center, calling body/employer

1. Rev. Thomas Liddle, as an Authorized Minister of the United Church of Christ covenants:

To Peace United Church of Christ in Duluth Minnesota:

- Membership in good standing with Peace Church, including financial support for the general ministries of this church, participation in the worshiping life of the church whenever possible, and a commitment to earnest prayer for the well-being of this congregation and its ministry;
- Submission of articles for the newsletter or other publications regarding his ministry;
- An annual meeting with the Church Council or other representative to support one another in mutual ministry;
- A commitment to preach annually at the request of the pastor;
- Public recognition of membership in this Body of Christ in duties related to his ministry.

To the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ:

- Participation in clergy support gatherings, Conference Annual Meetings and other events whenever possible;
- Adherence to Oversight by the Conference Committee on Ministry, including the annual Information Review and the triennial Periodic Review.

To Essentia Health, St. Mary's Medical Center:

- Faithfulness in the preaching and teaching of the Gospel, the exercise of pastoral functions, the administration of rites and sacraments of the Church, and in adherence to the Minister Codes of the Manual on Ministry;
- Fidelity to the terms of his ministry and fidelity to the tasks of his employment, as given in his job description from the Essentia Health, so long as Thomas serves as a Staff Chaplain with Essentia Health. Obligations of compensation and employment exist exclusively between Authorized Minister and Essentia Health.

2. Peace United Church of Christ, as the Local Church of Membership covenants:

To Rev. Thomas Liddle:

- Prayers for his work with Essentia Health, St. Mary’s Medical Center;
- Inclusion of materials written by Rev. Liddle in the congregation’s newsletter and Annual Report;
- Public recognition of Rev. Liddle as a Minister sent into the world on behalf of the congregation;
- An annual meeting with the Church Council or other representative to support one another in mutual ministry.

To the MN Conference UCC

- To provide appropriate documentation of Rev. Liddle’s membership in Peace UCC.
- Annual contributions to Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) in recognition of the role of the wider church in the formation and oversight of authorized ministers in the United Church of Christ.

To Essentia Health, St. Mary’s Medical Center

- An annual contribution to Essentia Health supporting??????????

3. The MN Conference of the United Church of Christ covenants:

To Rev. Thomas Liddle:

- All of the rights and responsibilities of an ordained minister in this Association.
- Clear communication of this Association’s/Conference’s requirements for good ministerial standing (including but not limited to boundary training and continuing education) and of any policies supplemental to the Manual on Ministry that have been established by this Association/Conference; current requirements are:

- Boundary Training
- Anti-racism training

To Peace United Church of Christ:

- Appropriate support and oversight of Rev. Liddle’s standing as an authorized minister.

To Essentia Health, St. Mary’s Medical Center:

- Inclusion of written updates from Rev. Liddle regarding his work for Essentia Health in the annual meeting of the Conference.

4. Essentia Health covenants:

To Rev. Thomas Liddle:

- Belief in God’s call that has led you to this particular place of ministry;
- Adherence to remuneration as set forth in the call agreement, common personnel policies and current job description.

To Peace United Church of Christ:

- Belief in the local church as the locus for all ministry in the United Church of Christ and thankfulness for your support of Rev. Liddle.

To the Minnesota Conference UCC

- Fidelity to the covenants of mutual accountability as articulated in this document.

We trust in God’s presence with us as we seek to be faithful to this covenant:

_____	Authorized Minister, Rev. Thomas Liddle	Date:_____
_____	Representative Essentia Health	Date:_____
_____	Moderator of the Council, Peace UCC	Date:_____
_____	Conference Representative	Date:_____

Attachment #2

HR Committee Report to Coordinating Council
March 2022

The HR Committee met on March 1, 2022:

Employee Leave Balances

- Employee leave balances have been corrected in QuickBooks and each employee met with to discuss any changes to their balances.

Employee Handbook

- The review is complete and ready for submission to Council.

Staff Training

- Continuing education for staff is being planned.

Request for Council Discussion/Action:

- Approval of changes/update to the Employee Handbook.

Respectfully submitted,
Leanne Ventrella
HR Committee Chair

Attachment #3

Council Report for Christian Spiritual Life
March 2022

Food and Fellowship

Due to COVID restrictions, this committee called off their normal support for Cabaret and other events. They are working on a plan for Earth Day.

Health and Wellness

This new team is growing and has added a few members. The Lenten pilgrimage is in process and going well. Planning for Earth Day is also in process for April.

Shared Ministry

This group continues to meet. They are still moving forward with new a members class and ways to increase membership. Additionally, they report progress is being made on the new directory.

Worship and Arts

Worship and arts did not meet this month.

Tech Team updates

The Tech Team has stepped up streaming in March with the cabaret, Wednesday evening services, and the usual Sunday 10:30 streaming. Additionally, there was a streamed event in the evening on March 10th. More training is scheduled for early April.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Larson Kidd 3/10/22 Susan Larson Kidd

Attachment #4

Acting for Justice Report
March 13, 2022 Meeting

1. Report—Events and Activities
 - a. Angie Miller, Sue Munns and Monica Liddle attended the Chum Winter quarterly meeting on 2/24/22. Chum has goal of raising \$200k in March for 2nd Harvest/MN Food Share. Pastor Jim has made request for donations in worship in March.
 - b. Alvaro Duran spoke at Peace on 3/10/22 on human rights, LGBTIQ+ and Latin America. Technical difficulties were an issue with the online delivery and recording of his talk. Pastor Jim would like to bring him back to Peace for future speaking engagements on human rights. Many Duluth churches sponsored this event. \$200 honorarium from general Christian Service fund was provided to the speaker.
 - c. Pastor Jim is a panelist for the May 14 Duluth Interfaith Dialogue circle, and Nathan Holst has been asked to be a panelist for the April event.
 - d. Peace/Dismantling Racism Team will be a sponsor for the White Privilege Symposium May 13-14 at the Decc. \$250 will come out of the Christian Service general fund.
 - e. Afghan Resettlement: 4 women are moved into a house on E 9th St, close to Peace Church, as of March 12. Peace people continue to provide comprehensive support for the women since they arrived in Duluth Feb 14th.
2. Discussion needed by the Council: Questions, concerns, future plans, etc.: NA
3. Action needed by the Council: Motion from the Committee: NA

Attachment #5

Stewardship Committee Report: March 2022

Property Team: The team met to prioritize projects for the coming year and decide where our priorities are. With a budget of \$10,000 for projects, we are trying to be strategic on what gets paid out of the special building fund to best serve the long-term health of the building. Below are the larger projects expected this year.

- Dove on front of church / lighting of bell tower. The Dove is constructed of wood, and has significant rot. This is a cosmetic issue but also a safety concern, as it could fall if allowed to deteriorate too far. Bud will look into replacing the dove, and Dave will work on new lighting fixtures for both the Tower and Dove, with led lighting adjustable for both color and intensity. This will culminate in a lighting ceremony being planned by the 125th anniversary committee. Property is hoping to have this project at least partially funded out of anniversary funds.

- Parking lot - crack repair and sealing will be done on lower lot, as well as possible repaving of the lower entrance and the drive between the lots. These two sections are in very poor shape. Estimate at least \$5000 for this work, from the maintenance/projects budget.
- Kitchen floor - the overall condition is poor, and several areas have tiles with cracks and failed adhesive, making it very difficult to clean. Needs to be replaced this year. This is a job to contract out - not sure on costs yet but should expect it to be around \$3000 from maintenance/projects budget.
- The usual repairs to plumbing and other systems around the church will easily consume the remaining \$2000 in the regular property budget.
- The tent needs to be replaced, and spring is on the way. The garage sale fund has about \$2500 dedicated to it, we are open to suggestions for funding the other 1/2 of the costs. Would like to order a new tent soon regardless, paying out of the general fund if needed.
- Roof - leak repairs as well as some sealing to prolong the life of the existing membrane. It should have 5-10 years remaining before full replacement. Estimate \$5k for this years work, to come from special building fund in conjunction with boiler project below.
- Boiler/Heating System. **Council action requested.**

In recent years, many projects have worked on the heat delivery to various parts of the church, and it has functioned well this year. The main boilers that fuel this system have however reached their expected service life of 25 years old. Some components even remain from 1959. The water heater, which shares a chimney, is even older. These systems are based on much older technology, and are very inefficient, sending approximately 20% of the heat produced straight out the chimney. With the age of these systems, failures will become more frequent. If we have a failure during the heating season, we have no choice but to replace with the same old technology, because upgrading will require the system to be down for weeks. Replacing the boilers and water heater this summer with modern high efficiency units is one of the biggest things Peace can do to reduce our fossil fuel consumption and meet our pledge of environmental stewardship. As an added bonus, a well designed system should pay back it's cost in fuel savings over the life of the system. With Duluth releasing a community climate plan this year, the timing is good to leverage city and community resources to maximize the efficiency of this upgrade.

The scope of the project would be to replace the boilers and water heater with high efficiency models, and get heat in the fellowship hall functioning again. The boiler replacement will involve changing some roof penetrations, so the other roof repairs would be done at the same time as part of this total project.

Actual costs are unknown at this time, but it is reasonable to assume this will take up most of the special building fund for all the work mentioned.

Motion from committee for the council: To authorize the property committee to solicit design work, seek grants or other community partnerships, and solicit bids for replacement of boilers and water heater, with project costs to be paid from the special building fund.

Stewardship Team

Final results of stewardship drive showed a net gain of \$122,000 after the second appeal with along with non-pledged rent income put us at \$624,640.

Other discussion centered on the future of stewardship - educating the stewardship team and the congregation on the financial standing of Peace Church, and what stewardship can do beyond the pledge drive, including:

“At-a-Glance” guides on our website to educate the congregation. Use Adult Forums as an option for educating

Is there a need to begin a capital campaign for renovations/maintenance of the building

Stewardship may need to focus on planned giving

Means by which we demonstrate generosity by making significant annual gifts in the Duluth area

- Action by Council: Motion to consider under property report above.
- Discussion needed by council: funding source for remaining costs of tent.

Submitted by David Courtright

Attachment #6

Faith Formation Minister Report for March 2022 Nathan Holst

Events/small groups

- We had a great snow tubing event on Saturday, Feb. 26th, with 13 of us there
- We had to cancel a sledding event at Nathan and Veronica’s place last Saturday, but I put together an skating event at Bayfront instead and we had about 10 people show up.
- I’m working with Bud to help plan the Earth Day event, getting youth volunteers to help with kid’s activities
- I’m leading a Lenten Journey Group with Charlotte
- I am currently promoting our summer youth trips

Worship

- I meet with Pastor Jim, music Jim, and Charlotte each week to plan the services
- I continue to lead story for all ages on Sunday morning.
- I continue to provide music for the service as needed.
- Charlotte, Jim, and I have been rotating roles on Sunday mornings in leading the worship

Youth

- We have resumed our in person activities this month and we are getting back in our usual rhythm with middle school youth group
- Confirmation is back as well and we are starting to plan for our confirmation retreat in early May that will lay the ground for our confirmation Sunday later that month.

-I have had 2 parent feedback/vision sessions this month, one with middle school youth, and plan to have one more parent feedback session this Sunday and a high school youth session this Wednesday; there has been good energy and feedback so far, with some good ideas for follow up. I look forward to sharing more next month.

Children

-We moved back to in person Sunday School and are building our numbers (we had 10 kids a couple weeks ago). I suspect numbers to go up and down as kids start to return. I am so grateful to Pat Nelson, Diane Swanoski, and Elaine Schmid for leading Sunday School while I facilitate feedback session with parents of youth.

- We have some great energy that came out of the feedback sessions. Here's some follow up steps I've taken:

1) I'll be trying out "children's church" the first Sunday in April. We'll invite kids to come to the regular church service and then after story for all ages, go off to the fireside room for 20 minutes or so during the sermon and come back at communion. Some of our Children's ministry team will help with leading that.

2) We are starting 2 monthly sessions for parent to connect with each other. Members of our children's ministry team will lead one of the 1st Thursday of the month at 8:00pm on zoom and I'll lead one on the 1st Sunday of the month at 9:30am in person.

3) I've invited 2 interested parents to come check out all our puppets with me here at Peace. We'll meet this week to "play" with puppets and try on personalities. I hope to have one or both of them join me for a story for all ages in the next month and get more parent involvement in the service.

OWL

-OWL is back up and running. I continue in my role as administrator, making sure the facilitators have what they need and communicating with parents. We'll have a couple make up sessions for the ones we missed last month, but we're on track to finish in May.

Adults

-All my work around leadership with adults is included in your other reports (Faith Formation Team, Adult Ed, Worship and Arts, etc.)

Administrative/Other

-My meeting about Gabriel with other clergy didn't bring the energy I was hoping. Other clergy were supportive of the work we're doing here at Peace and willing to send money to support the Gabriel Fund, but there wasn't a lot of additional energy there. St. Paul's remains the primary supporter with capacity and I have a meeting with a staff member there next week to talk more details.

-I have started CPE (clinical pastoral education) as a part of my ordination process. I am going down to the Stillwater prison each Thursday for the reflection/process portion of my CPE work and am loving the time there—it's intense but rich. I did also meet with the Committee on Ministry this week and updated them on my ordination process. They will be in touch with me soon about next steps.

-I continue to write birthday cards for youth and children.
-Continuing to meet with staff on a weekly basis.

-Nathan Holst

Attachment #7

Peace United Church of Christ

March 2022

Interim Pastoral Associate Report

I'm not sure I remember a time in my ministry when I have been as grateful, proud, and humbled by the community in which I serve as in the last month. On February 14, Amena Haidari, Sediqa Khalili, Halima Akbari and Halima Amiri arrived in Duluth from Fort Dix, New Jersey.

A Sponsor Circle from Peace Church had been preparing since Thanksgiving to resettle four Afghan newcomers. We requested, if possible, four young women who might be interested in the educational opportunities available in the Twin Ports area. We received this group of four women whose education had been disrupted in Afghanistan. Because they were traveling without family, the four hoped to find a place where they could be resettled together.

Finding initial housing proved a challenge—until we talked with the Benedictine Sisters about McCabe Renewal center. The sisters and sponsor circle partnered to provide a month of housing and accompaniment. Days were filled with English immersion, trips to the grocery store and laundromat, enrollment in English learning classes, filling out innumerable online applications, initial medical appointments, visits to Peace and to the mosque, employment interviews, meals, and tea—lots and lots of tea!

We looked for a suitable three or four bedroom unit with landlords willing to work with us. Peace members put us in touch with Janette and Jake Shaw who were rehabbing a house on 9th Street. They were willing to work with us, but the house would not be ready until April. Peace volunteers, led by Jim McLean, spent three weeks working with the Shaws and the women were able to move in March 12. UUCD invited the women to choose furnishings from their accumulated rummage sale donations; Peace members offered donations as well. Peace members volunteered pickup trucks and vans to accomplish the move.

Peace members and friends have arranged for employment interviews, orientations at the College of St. Scholastica, Lake Superior College, and UMD. Peace musicians donated the proceeds of the Cabaret to the Afghan Resettlement Fund.

In addition to being a member of the worship and program planning staff and preaching on February 27, I spent much this past month coordinating and participating in the resettlement effort. It would not have happened without the congregation's co-operation and financial commitment, the support of the Benedictine sisters, the interest of the wider Duluth community, and the hard work of the support circle: Terrie and Lyle Shannon, Gayle and Jack Kelly, Penny Cragun, Gary Boelhower, Cyndi Brown, Mollie Stapleton, and myself.

In addition to this resettlement effort, I serve as a resource to other communities of faith considering how they might be involved in such ministry. This included facilitating and recording three adult forums which are available on Peace's website.

This latest iteration of Peace's Immigrant Welcoming ministry caught the attention of the New Yorker, and after two phone interviews and with the four women's permission, Eliza Griswold came to Duluth to cover this story. Eliza worked in Afghanistan and was part of a team that evacuated 2000 Afghans last fall. Her summary comment to me was, "There is just so much goodness in this story."

Thank you, Peace, for a month of intense and significant ministry.

Rev. Charlotte Frantz, Interim Pastoral Associate