[Welcome and Chalice lighting]

Good Afternoon, thank you for being here today. It is only by all of us working together, doing what we reasonably can, that we then can make true change in our community and beyond. Your being here to participate and give your vote helps with that work.

We are Unitarian Universalists, and we honor that faith in a variety of ways: We are now a Covenanted Congregation. Let’s read our Covenant that we adopted at the last Congregational meeting.

[Read covenant] [Light chalice]

[State of the Congregation Address]

These past two years, the Marquette UU Congregation was deep in the waters of change. We saw this with a drop in our numbers, and subsequently, committees disbanded. However, I’m seeing a shift within the congregation. We’ve worked within that change by trying to focus on where the energy is, and having you participate in our “Conversation over Coffee” surveys helped us know where to look. To know that the main reason the bulk of us are here on a Sunday morning, is for each other: For Fellowship and belonging. That is at the heart of why we are here. Everything else is extra. On a Sunday morning we are mostly here for connection. This is why the chairs have been re-arranged, and why we’ve tried out having the service led here, closer to all of you, to really bring a sense of togetherness. We’ve become more personal with other: Daring greatly to act or share when maybe we’d normally be quiet; Becoming more aware of how we interact with each other, so that we are coming from a place of curiosity and connection, rather than knee-jerk judgement. All of you opened your hearts to each other at the January meeting when you were invited to share. And not everything shared was sunshine and daisies, and that is good. We cannot afford to be “too nice” when we risk mincing the truth. To keep moving forward we need to be able to be truthful with each other. The last meeting showed that we can do this successfully and with integrity. We did it!

For a small congregation we accomplish a lot more than we may realize: We have a wonderful religious education program lead by Jamie Kuehnl, we offer the Our Whole Lives program biannually, we host the Room at the Inn program for the homeless every year, there was a UU Women's Group Winter to Spring retreat this year, we give support to our local LGBTQ community with our participation in Pride Fest, we gave support for the Dakota Access Pipeline protestors, there was our  presence we had at the Women's March in Washington, D.C., hosting The Babbas musical concert, the work of our Social Action Committee whether it be for Justice in the Middle East for Palestinians, supporting the Reverend Edward Pinkney during his incarceration, or coordinating our monthly Share the Plate donation program, we offered a workshop that was led by Gregory with Living The 7 Principles, and I’m sure I’m missing some. We may be small, but are active and dedicated.

This new and positive way of whole-heartedly connecting with each other, obviously is making a difference. We have quite a few new members now, and those of you who were feeling burn-out (at the least), I understand, that you are starting to feel better about the Mqt UU. I’m seeing more engagement and a willingness to give again. I’ve been deeply impressed at how often we have had congregation participation at board meetings now! I actually had to silence the floor at the April Board of Trustees meeting! [laughs] That’s wonderful! We’re all becoming invested in our group. This is exciting!

I think one reason our group has managed this change is that we have moved from being a "beaurocratic-stalling church" (a technical term from Emmy Lou Belcher) to being a "Permission-giving church" --- the legacy of taking initiative, rather than passing what we want done to others, or pushing each other.

Our group has taken the opportunity that flux and change gives us, and we’ve used it to make ourselves more focused and healthier. We’ve place ourselves on that path, we just need to keep walking it.

Does everyone have an agenda? Wonderful. Let’s get started.