

NORTHFIELD



STAFF PHOTO/PAUL FRANZ

The Rev. Rosemary Dawson at the Trinitarian Congregational Church in Northfield.

New pastor gets to know congregation, promotes passion for service

By ZACK DeLUCA
Staff Writer

NORTHFIELD — As the new designated pastor of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, the Rev. Rosemary Dawson is getting to know community members and using her own “spitfire” energy to promote a passion for service to others.

Dawson, 63, was appointed to Northfield’s Trinitarian Congregational Church in mid-August, and is expected to hold the position for the next three years. Dawson said she has worked as an interim pastor for more than 15 years, and often comes into positions for a short period of time after a church has lost a pastor. She helps fill the church’s needs, as well as the needs of the broader community, while helping in the search process for a succeeding minister.

“I love Northfield, it’s a great little town,” Dawson said. “This whole area is home to me.”

Dawson is familiar with the Pioneer Valley, having grown up in South Windsor, Conn. Her husband of more than 30 years, Greg, is a pastor in Agawam where the two have lived with their dog for five years, though they are currently looking for a home in Northfield.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it harder for Dawson to meet each member of the congregation in person, as some services have been held via Zoom. The church had been holding outdoor services since September but, now that the weather is cooling down and COVID-19 cases are rising in the county, they will be shifting back to more virtual services. Dawson said she has also been making introductory phone calls or meeting members of the congregation individually to get to know them and learn their interests.

“Sometimes people will have a question about the church and they come talk to me, or they’ll want to get together and do some brainstorming on different projects,” she said.

Dawson said she started working as an interim pastor when her husband took a position in Norfolk, Conn. In look-



STAFF PHOTO/ZACK DELUCA

As the new designated pastor of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, the Rev. Rosemary Dawson is getting to know community members and using her own “spitfire” energy to promote a passion for service.

ing for a position herself, she learned there were over 30 churches in the area without a minister, and she was asked to consider being “an interim.”

“I asked, ‘What’s that?’” Dawson recalled. “The first church I had was in Norfolk, Connecticut. I fell in love with them and I fell in love with the ministry. I’ve been doing it ever since.”

As an interim pastor, she gets to know the church community and works through an evaluation process with leadership members. She said an interim pastor evaluates the community, including everything from social dynamics to economic needs, and then works to find way to meet community members’ needs.

For some churches, Dawson said, the intentions to address needs can lead to the establishment of food banks, clothing drives or low-income housing initiatives. Dawson said the members of the Trinitarian Congregational Church board, for example, will use this information when interviewing and selecting a succeeding minister who will best suit the intentions of the church and community.

“The joy of the life of the church can be such a gift to people,” Dawson said. “That’s where I found my passion anyway.”

After more than a decade in interim roles, Dawson said she still loves the self-evaluation and discovery of what the future can hold for the congregations she has gotten to know. Dawson described herself as a “spitfire,” and said she enjoys seeing a revived passion in members for things the church has done before, or seeing people get passionate about a new initiative. She shared a mantra that speaks to “finding your call or vocation in the world.”

“Do what you love. Do it well. Do it with passion. Do it for the world. Make a living,” she recited. “I have used that so often. You can break down ‘Are we doing what we love? Do we do it well? Do we need to learn something more?’ You can use any of those to just stop for a minute, look at your life and say, ‘Is this going where I want it to go?’”

Zack DeLuca can be reached at zdeluca@recorder.com or 413-930-4579.