

## Exploring Asylum Hill: Rev. Kari Nicewander

Now that Rev. Nicewander's installation ceremony is behind us and she is officially the permanent Senior Pastor at Immanuel Congregational Church, it seemed a good time to sit down and have a talk with her so all of us can get to know her a little bit better.

As you may know, she came to Hartford from Zambia in south central Africa, where she served a 3-year term for the Presbyterian Churches USA Global Ministries. She and her husband and family arrived here in February and began to settle in while completing the last few months of that commitment. She began as Senior Minister on Palm Sunday, but the search for this position both by Kari and the committee at Immanuel began months before that. From the very beginning Immanuel was at the top of her list of desirable Churches and Communities, and I believe the feeling was mutual as both the Nicewander's and ICC went through the process.



Immanuel's commitment to being an open and affirming congregation with a passion for social justice in a very diverse community was exactly what the Nicewander's were looking for. "a lot of the first six months is just getting to know the people and the projects" Kari said, "it's fun to come in and walk with people who are already doing the work..."

Before going to Zambia she had been a minister in Lansing Michigan, near where she is originally from and where she also worked very hard on issues of racial justice and schools. Both of these experiences helped shape her commitment to social justice work "without doing more harm than good". Two books that she recommends on this subject are "When Helping Hurts" and "Toxic Charity" They warn against "mission tourism" where people go to poor countries to build a house, get pictures of themselves and then leave without knowing if what they did actually helped. Going to help without building a relationship with the people can often cause unintended consequences, like donated second hand clothes causing the local fabric mills to close because there was so much free clothing no one would buy the native cloth.

Kari also feels very excited to work with all of the partners in the neighborhood such as AHNA, the Stowe & Twain Centers, and of course the other churches in Asylum Hill. We all have a lot to be thankful for this season, add Rev. Kari Nicewander and the community at Immanuel Congregational Church to that list.