

May 3, 2021

PLEASE READ SHARRY'S LETTER FIRST

Beloved of God, Beloved of First Congregational,

First let's give thanks to God—that Sharry and Joe will be able to enjoy retirement together! We also have profound gratitude for all that Sharry has been in the life of our congregation and in our individual lives; the gifts she has shared and the ways she has served the Divine through ministries here; the ways she has taught us about *sacrednicity* and listening to the Spirit through our hearts; the hands she has held and the sacred space she has held for all of us. For more than 20 years Sharry's gentle and consistent welcome has been a "first greeting" to visitors and long-timers alike. These and so much more are exactly what we cherish about her.

Which is also exactly what we will miss. We will be sad that Sharry is leaving our congregation to begin a next part of her journey even as we honor that she's now called to retirement. We will respect her boundaries of stepping away from each of us as she discovers what life beyond ministry at First Congregational looks like; this includes her being away from First Congregational until a while after a new, permanent minister is settled with us. We will celebrate the relationships she has built and celebrate that she has helped our church build a little more of God's Kin-dom in this place. These next eight weeks will be hard and blessed.

Pandemic is a challenging time for leave-taking, but we will make opportunities to do that well. Just last week Church Council approved the COVID Advisory Committee's recommendation to have gatherings of up to 10 people outdoors, and through June Sharry will schedule Office Hours that you may sign up for. She will also schedule several Zoom Office Hours to visit with you. *Please keep an eye on the Friday Announcements email to sign up for those times*—if you're not currently receiving the Friday Announcements, please contact Cydne to get on the list: office@fccb.net or 360-303-6806. Finally, don't miss our online worship service on Sunday, June 27, when we will celebrate her ministry and liturgically "release" Sharry from her covenant with First Congregational Church.

You are likely also wondering what comes next, as Faith Formation is such a vital aspect of life at First Congregational. Personnel Committee will work closely with the Faith Formation Board to seek an interim person to support adult and children's ministries. Experience tells us that, after a tenure of 20+ years, we need someone who can serve with our Faith Formation program while our congregation discerns what may best support our vision for the future.

The Spirit has blessed us with Sharry's presence at First Congregational, and I know Spirit will continue to guide us in years to come. As Dag Hammarskjöld said so well, "For all that has been, Thanks. For all that is to come, Yes!"

In faith,
Sharon and the Personnel Committee

