



*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. ~ Ecclesiastes 3:1*

May 2, 2021

Dear Beloved Congregation of First Congregational Church of Bellingham,

Together we have experienced many seasons in the life of this faith community; there have been tears and laughter, we've welcomed new babies and members, grieved the loss of loved ones, celebrated a new sanctuary, baptisms, confirmation, weddings, pageants, retreats, mission trips, labyrinth walks, service weeks, staff transitions, and so much more. We have worshipped, broken bread, questioned and explored our faith, birthed new ministries, and prayerfully discerned who Spirit is calling this congregation to be embodying and living out our faith. During the pandemic we have learned new ways to connect and be community. There have been so many beautiful moments of *sacrednicity*.

After 21 years of serving this congregation, currently as the Minister of Christian Formation, it has become clear in this season of my life God is calling me to step aside, and I will be retiring at the end of June.

Over the years my role has grown and evolved holding many titles: Christian Education Coordinator, Program Coordinator, Membership Coordinator, and for a time even Wedding Coordinator. I am filled with gratitude for all who I have worked with over the years, including our current amazing staff who challenge, care, and support each other. It has been an honor and privilege and I am so grateful for the journey with each of you! Those who are reading this letter and those who are still too young to read.

You are an amazing congregation who continues to be BOLD in living your faith, sharing your love, and letting your light shine in this community and the world. In this next season, as the church looks at where the Holy Spirit is leading, I know you will welcome with an open heart those who join you on this journey of faith bringing new skills and gifts as you continue to live into what it means to be *Welcoming All, Growing in Faith, Living God's Love, Justice, Compassion...*

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In the coming weeks I will continue working with the boards, staff, and others and I look forward to connecting with you as we are able through zoom, phone calls, and in person if it becomes safe to do so before I retire.

In retirement, I will honor the ethics of pastors leaving this community to give space for the next staff person to join you and become settled. I will limit my communication and connections on social media, and I will not provide pastoral care or be leading rituals for those in this faith community including memorials, weddings, baptisms (other than those already scheduled).

I look forward to spending time with my family, traveling, and continuing my ministry part-time as a Labyrinth Facilitator, Soul Collage Facilitator, and Retreat Leader.

With much love and deep gratitude,

*Sharry*