



# First Congregational Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Rev. Jeffrey Hubers, Senior Minister

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Grace and peace:

As we enter the Lenten Season, I wanted to write you all as both a means of blessing *and* of checking in. Though the days are growing longer and the nights shorter, we may feel stuck in the “death” that winter brings; we may long, in more ways than one, for spring’s “rebirth.” Ash Wednesday teaches us to *know* our mortality, so that we may fully embrace God’s gift of life. Thus, I begin with praying that wherever you are on this journey, you would know *you are loved*.

The second portion of this message, and its wider intent, is to ask the question: *In this Lenten moment, what will you discover about God, about discipleship, about yourself and the world?* Lent is an intentional wilderness, a purposeful exile as the church follows Christ on his journey, experiencing temptation and trial, and yet all the while holding fast to God’s commitment to love us into wholeness. Instead of guilt, Lent guides us to *grace* – Lent brings us face to face with life’s precious sanctity so that we may truly see just how deeply we are loved by God in Christ.

I present this to you, not solely as a reminder and preview of what’s to come, but as an invitation: *How are you doing?* Perhaps you’re aware and perhaps not, but the heart of my role here as your pastor is to be present to you in this journey of life and faith. I seek to practice this presence by preaching, teaching, and leading, but ultimately, I want to *listen*. So, I offer this invitation, if you did not realize already, that I am here for you, or at least, will try my best to be.

None of us must journey alone, and so I offer myself as a companion on this road, but also point you back to this family of faith, this community and congregation. All of our work is grounded in this shared responsibility of journeying *together*. Trust that you belong here. You are needed.

May this Lenten Season be filled with wonder, as well as the gift of God who journeys *with us* in wilderness. Take care of yourselves, but also, take care of each other. Easter is coming.

Together in Christ,

Rev. Jeffrey Hubers