

For the Future

Oh hi, friend! I almost didn't see you there because of the gorgeous, autumnal ambience happening all around us. Isn't Fall glorious? The colors! The cooler temperatures! The migratory murmuration of birds! The squirrels having raucous territorial disputes regarding my roof and the mulberry tree growing beside it! Fat Bear Week (one of the best things about the internet: Katmai National Park offers before and after pictures of its resident brown bears, and the public gets to vote on which bear did the most impressive job gaining weight for hibernation)! Is there anything more perfect than the clear blue sky of a sunny Fall day? To quote a favorite song of mine from the Indigo Girls, *World Falls*, "This world falls on me / with dreams of immortality / everywhere I turn / all the beauty just keeps shaking me." There's just no place like home, is there?

And yet, along with all of the generations before us, we are reminded by this beautiful season that we are not immortal in this world. What comes to be in one season, fades away in another, making room for the coming to be of whatever follows. And so Fall becomes a season of remembrance, of gratitude, and of hunkering down to prepare for what the next season will bring. By the way, get a bag of sidewalk salt *before* you need it. Preparation, gratitude, remembrance – woven into the very fabric of our lives in this very good Creation, and certainly defining characteristics of the rhythm of life in the church.

Here at FCUCC we are currently preparing for our next year – pledging what we can of our abilities, time, and resources in support of the life of our congregation. It is my hope for you that this kind of preparing involves gratitude and remembrance. Remembering and giving thanks for the earlier generations of our First Congregational family, and the opportunity to provide for the future of our congregation and ministry to our neighbors. Thank God we have received this faith community from the ones who've come before us; thank God we have the chance to nurture it, to plant new seeds and bear new fruits together in our time; and, with joy and trust in the grace of God, to leave the harvest in the care of ones who are yet to be.

While writing this, my mind wandered to a beautiful poem by the liberation theologian Rubem Alves, usually titled “What Is Hope?” I will share just a stanza from it, but encourage you to find it online and enjoy it in its entirety.

Let us plant dates
even though those who plant them will never eat them.
We must live by the love of what we will never see.
This is the secret discipline.
It is a refusal to let the creative act be dissolved
in immediate sense experience
and a stubborn commitment to the future of our grandchildren.
Such disciplined love is what has given
prophets, revolutionaries and saints
the courage to die for the future they envisaged.
They make their own bodies the seed of their highest hope.

Grateful to be with you in this work for the future,
Pastor January