

March 17, 2021

Beloved of First Congregational,

Again and again, you have revealed the compassionate care of God in this last year. You have reached out to one another and reached out to the Divine, both to receive support and to offer it. You have shared your gifts in new ways, and you have said a grace-filled “no” when you felt that was the best answer. You have diligently prayed for your church and for your staff. Thank you.

I also give thanks to God and to you for your continuing care as Rev. Davi slowly returns to their ministries following medical leave. They and I are working closely with leadership to pay attention to health and ministry.

For many of us, it’s a new experience to be given the gift of trust Davi is sharing with us by claiming their name and pronouns as the child of God they are. As Davi writes in their letter, you are welcome to ask them questions if you wish to; you may also visit with me if you’d like to talk a little about gender identity—we are all learning together.

We know this has been a challenging time for many, and with Rev. Davi’s return, vaccinations increasing, and spring sunlight—and let’s not forget Easter on the horizon!—many of us are breathing deep sighs of expectation. It’s also important to acknowledge that these hopeful notes allow many of us to let go a little more. We have all been carrying so much, whether we are pastors, teachers, living-solo, teens...all of us! This means that we might be seeking a little extra support, just as there seems to be less energy to provide it.

For all of these reasons and more, the Personnel Committee, with the approval of Church Council, has sought a **Short-Term Congregational Chaplain** to join our staff team. Church Council will review information about the search committee’s chosen candidate on Monday—*stay tuned to the church emails in which we will share Council’s decision next week.*

This temporary position’s charge is predominantly to make check-in phone calls to members. Should you receive a phone call, I hope you will greet this person warmly and share how you are faring in this time. Rev. Davi, Sharry, and I are still also making visits by phone and Zoom, too—as are Parish Visitors, Stephen Ministers, and other Called to Care folk—but this chaplain



will expand our ability to know how more of you are doing after these very hard weeks, months, year.

Finally, the COVID Advisory Team is meeting to discern next steps in gathering. As we've said before, our faith calls us to act justly and with compassion the best we are able, so we will take our time to do the best we can for our worshiping and broader communities. Any decisions about gathering in person also take a lot of behind-the-scenes preparation. Thank you for your patience as we do that work!

Once again, I give thanks to God for each of you, and I look forward to the day when we will see one another face to face.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon".