

*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. [...] And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ Then he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.’”* –Revelation 21:1-2, 5-7

Greetings Members and Friends of Bainbridge Community UCC,

I pray this message finds you well.

I want to share this message with everyone who calls this church “home” in one way or another. I am so, tremendously proud of you all and humbled to serve this incredible faith community. It has been just over four years since I first became your pastor and the physical, emotional, and spiritual work I have seen everyone put in during that time has been as remarkable to witness as the myriad ways I see the Spirit moving through this community and the transformation(s) occurring as a result of that work.

None of this work has been easy. We have spent these years looking closely at how we communicate with one another, assessing our financial priorities, examining how we make decisions and do the work of the church, and we even took a long look how we live into our vision statement’s declaration that we welcome people regardless of any category this world might want to put them in. That was (and is) difficult work. It is not fun, personally or institutionally, to look in the mirror and do an honest appraisal of whether all the things that had become “second nature” are still working, still beneficial. That work requires an incredible amount of faith, dedication, and courage. That is what this church has shown.

And the results of that work are visible all around us. They can be seen in the tone and quality of our meetings, in the growth of our weekly Bible Study, in the new missions and ministries being supported and started by this church, in the new ways people are volunteering to care for the church and minister to one another, and, the results are especially vibrant, in our overwhelming approval to live into our Vision Statement by voting as an entire congregation to become an Open and Affirming church. I hope that you are taking this time to reflect on what is happening, where this church has been, and how far we have come. I know many of you are, based on all of the comments I have been receiving. Thank you all for all your attentiveness, your care, your patience and your perseverance.

Because, you see, transformation does not come without pain and struggle. Revelation, if you dig below all the 2,000 year old symbolism that has so captured (and inflamed) people’s imaginations over the years, is really about the process of transformation. In order for the “new heaven and new earth” to be birthed, first the scroll must be opened. What is written on the scroll is written. It can’t be changed but it must be faithfully confronted for transformation to occur. The world might want to avoid or delay opening the scroll because of all the terrible things that Revelation says will happen when it is read, but avoidance doesn’t bring us to the new day we all want. Only by dealing honestly with what was written on the scroll and faithfully moving through the difficult times does transformation for the world happen. That same pattern is played out in our own lives, relationships, jobs, church, nation, and everything else.

So I take this space, this time, and this occasion to say, “Thank you.” Thank you for all your work. Thank you for allowing me to be your faith leader through this incredible and transformational time. Thank you for your faithfulness and dedication to one another and to this church. Thank you for questioning me and helping me to learn, grow, and do some honest pastoral self-assessment. Thank you for all the countless ways you support me. I continue to feel so blessed to be a small part of this community and the amazing, faith-filled work you are doing.

God’s grace and peace be with you all,



Pastor Shaun