

Greetings to all at First Church - March 1, 2018

As you all know, it has been 20 months since Rev. Dr. Mark Fowler joined us as our Lead Pastor. These have been busy months characterized by getting acquainted, meeting in small groups to share our hopes and visions for First Church, balancing the budget and re-evaluating our staffing, governance and program structures.

As a result of these efforts, many changes have taken place. Our governance structure has been changed to a Church Council model and we have established the Program Council to focus on ministry. We have brought our building mortgage into the budget, as well as balanced the operating budget going forward to be sustainable. The staff and leadership structure has been re-evaluated and re-aligned in order to put First Church in a position to be effective in its witness and ministry.

We will now be able to concentrate on the critical areas of ministry to which we have been called - to be "Downtown for Good" and good for downtown. Initiatives are underway that will sustain focus on racial equity, ministry with children, youth and young adults, and a continued emphasis on spiritual formation within the congregation.

First Church is a strong and vibrant community! There are many key positives to celebrate, such as the overwhelming response to the "*Thanks, and Yes*" campaign and increased participation in both services of worship & in mission. There is still much work to be done, as we strive to live into our calling to BE Christ's presence in Madison and around the world.

May this Lenten season increase our connections to one another and our commitment to be engaged in Christ's mission of healing and transformation, both in ourselves and in the larger community.

With Gratitude and Blessing,

Ann Herrold-Peterson, SPRC Chair

Paul Nagel, Church Council Chair