

The First Congregational Church in Bristol



Daniel B. Randall, Senior Pastor and Teacher

December 17, 2014

Dear Members and Friends of the First Congregational Church in Bristol,

It is with **Greatest of Love** for you that I write to you at this time. My family; Anita, Molly, Claire and Gabe have shared a wonderful spiritual journey with you for 12 years. You are dear to us all. You are a community of faith that has been on a remarkable and historic path in the last 12 years along with me. **This is why my decision is so challenging at this time**, but also is flavored with a hopeful and peaceful feeling.

I have decided, after much prayer and thought, to seek a new direction and call. Therefore, I will be resigning as pastor of the First Congregational Church in Bristol, effective on January 26, 2015.

First Congregational Church is a bright and unique spiritual beacon in Bristol. We have a rich storied history as Founders of our beloved 4th of July parade and as the original church in Bristol in 1680. Bristol is here now because of our congregation's beginnings. **We have a wonderful and dedicated staff. Helen, Othniel, Barb and Joe (and honoring Manny) are a true treasure and it has been my distinct pleasure and honor to serve with them.** Two of our children, **Molly and Claire**, were confirmed here and learned how to make their faith (in their own way) live in everyday life. **Gabriel** remembers no other faith community, (his first experience at FCC was in diapers!) Many teachers have formed his faith here. He has a very special appreciation for the church and its heritage, and climbing all the way up to the Bell Tower roof! **All of our children have found friendship, community, and support here.** Anita has served in a variety of roles. But, most of all, **she has been the steady and strong supporter and vibrant energy for our family** during our time here. I know how much you all love her. My love for her is endless, as is my gratitude.

I think of the words of Paul, writing in Acts, as he was making a transition in his ministry from Ephesus to Jerusalem:

*But there is another urgency before me now. I feel compelled to go to Jerusalem. I'm completely in the dark about what will happen when I get there. But that matters little. **What matters most to me is to finish what God started: the job the Master Jesus gave me of letting everyone I meet know all about this incredibly extravagant generosity of God. In everything I've done, I have demonstrated to you how necessary it is to work on behalf of the weak and not exploit them. You'll not likely go wrong here if you keep remembering that our Master said, 'You're far happier giving than getting.'***"

In these 12 years, we have been about giving. Making a difference in our community and world. In big ways, we have become **Open and Affirming**, and we founded the **East Bay Food Pantry**. Where there was once a “quiet church on the corner” now FCC lives out “*the extravagant generosity of God*” in so many ways, big and little. All of it, all of it, is about following Jesus. You can’t go wrong when you do that! I am proud of all you have done to work with me to make this a “*No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here*” kind of church! And, “*Tommy the Church Mouse™*” is proud of you, also! I have a hunch he will want to go with me since I have the best (Cabot) cheese. (Green Bay Packers reference) ☺

What is next? **My last Sunday with you is on January 25**. There will be a celebration of my ministry with you after the service on the 25th! After that there will be a time of transition. There will be certain boundaries that I will need to keep when I depart. I know this may sting, but professional boundaries are important for the congregation to move on. ***In the meantime, know that I love you, I really, really do, and I always will.*** I am happy to talk with you in person before I depart, if you wish. Please do reach out.

Yes, it is a time to be sad and everything else we may feel, but also a time to celebrate our 12 years together! We have followed our Rabbi Jesus with first century hope. **We have literally changed Bristol with our work together. We have impacted thousands of lives for the better.** We have helped the poor, the oppressed and the heavy laden with keen intention and hope. What else is there in life, but to love God, our neighbors and ourselves? This work will live on.....for this work comes from God.

Be strong and of good courage. Carry on. We will miss you and pray for you always.

The blessing of God - the Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, be with you now, all those you pray for, and all those you remember.

With the Greatest of Hope,

Pastor Dan