# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Living Worthy of God’s Call”**

**Ephesians 4:1-3**

 **September 10, 2023**

When I was ten years old, my parents gave me the gift of a bicycle. With the gift came responsibility. “Don’t leave your bike out in the rain.” “Be sure to lock it up at school.” “Why is your bike in our neighbor’s driveway?” All were ways of saying, “Take good care of your gift.”

God has given us the gift of this church community. He has given us the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, and it is in his name that we gather. He has also given us the gift of each other, calling us together to be his people in this place. Here we are God’s family, serving him by serving one another and the people of this community. Here we grow to love and care for one another, helping each other in times of need. Here we give of our time, our talents, and our financial resources for the work of this church. Here, God has called pastors to shepherd and teach his people that the people of this congregation may grow in the grace of God and in the knowledge of his Word. Together, we are responsible before God to take good care of the gift of this church. How can we best do that? We do that best by living lives worthy of his gift. I invite you to turn with me to Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 4:1-3

Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

God asks us to live in such a way that the gift of our church continues to flourish. Paul shares what such a life looks like. Be humble, he says. Humility means we talk more about God than we talk about ourselves, praise him more than we praise ourselves, and love him more than we love ourselves. Then, having been humbly focused on God, we can be humbly focused on his children, our sisters and brothers in Christ. We can be gentle with each other, making allowance for faults, because we are not preoccupied with ourselves. We can be patient with each other, because we are not impatiently waiting for the spotlight to be returned to us and our lives. This leads to unity within the church, for people who are humble, gentle, patient and loving with each other, are people who will live at peace with each other.

When the Lord called me to this church as its pastor, I came believing that this was a congregation that sought to live worthy of its call as a church. I came believing that you took seriously your mission statement to Know Christ, to Become Like Christ, and to Share Christ. I came believing that the Lord was leading me here because he had given me spiritual gifts that would see their fruitful use among you. During these past eighteen years, the Lord has confirmed my beliefs about this congregation as together we have sought to live worthy of his call upon us individually and as a family of faith.

I began my ministry working with youth and their families. Then, the Lord called me to the pastoral ministry as an Associate Pastor. Finally, he brought me here to be the pastor of this church. Now, after forty-two years of ministry, he is calling Lauri and me to a new chapter in our lives. Looking back, all his plans for us have been good and for our welfare, and we’re confident that whatever lies ahead he will continue to bless us. Thank you for eighteen wonderful years as your pastor, for your love and support, and for giving me the privilege of sharing my love for God and his Word with you. All I am as a pastor and teacher, I am by the grace of God. To him be the glory!

As I leave you, my challenge to you is to continue on the path we have been on together. Continue with Christ at the center of your life together as a church, with God’s Word as your authoritative text for life and ministry, praying for the Spirit’s strengthening and guidance, and loving one another as God has loved you. Love your new pastor as you have loved me, and give him the room to both minister to you and to grow with you, just as you have done for me. May the grace of God the Father, the love of Christ the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.