

Dear Friends,

“Faith and Hope”

The book of Hebrews 11:1-3 in the Bible, we read a powerful definition of faith:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

As a congregation we all hope to find new life for this congregation, that was called into being over 180 years ago. A journey from downtown to our current location marked the powerful hopes that filled the congregation as it moved from strength to strength. The church grew and activities and great expectations filled the air. The call was clear, and the energy was there to fill all those hopes. Faith was strong and hope's wings were lifted high as the azure sky.

As time continued the wind has ebbed and hope has run slim. But like an ember in the ashes, it still glows. We wonder if we can get that ember to come back alive, and we wonder how its beauty might once again shine the light of faith to the community around us.

When I was in high school, I learned the theory of “Self-Fulfilling Prophecy,” which tells us that what we expect will be what we get. Can we imagine an exciting future for this congregation that has been in Newark so long? Or do we simply believe that there is nothing coming next?

If we combine our Hebrews passage,

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen

with “self-fulfilling prophecy”

we can either choose to simply let the ember of faith slowly lose its glow,

or we can, with God's breath, bring that ember come back to life!

Letting it blaze within us lighting our faith to glow brightly in Newark.

If we choose to believe that we can bring that ember back to a flame, we need to hold tight to *faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

What are we hoping for?

60 years ago, people of faith moved from the location in downtown Newark, to our new place on West Main. 3 years ago, a dedicated group of members began a second journey to renew our sanctuary. With Vital Congregations we have all joined the journey to the new place that God is calling us.

The journey that started over 180 years, with the founding of this church, took a people of deep faith, strong commitment, and hard work, who believed in *assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* Those who worked hard on the new church renovation have done the same. Can we, too, join in the Vital Congregations in the same way? We all need deep faith, strong commitment, and hard work for the journey as those have done in the past.

Please join us for the next part of the journey as we work with Rev. Dr. Leonard Hedges-Geotle on reconciliation and coming to terms with history, as we journey to rekindle the flame of God's love in our midst.

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Eric