

# A Message from Rev. Erica

*"The question is not whether the church is dying, the question is whether it is giving its life for the world."  
– the (late) Rev Dr Fred Craddock, Jr.*



I have found myself returning to this quote from Fred Craddock again and again as I lead worship at Park Congregational. It is part of his larger teaching and reflections on how churches are engaging their communities as the larger American culture becomes statistically less Christian. Fred, as I knew him, spent his retirement years focused on supporting congregations in this changing landscape – a creative task he took as seriously as anything in his long teaching career. *Giving its life* is the operative wording here. How does the gospel move forward? How does the church give new life to the coming generations? What needs to be discarded? What/who needs to be centered? These are questions Christian faith communities are asking widely.

Park Church has been having substantive conversations with Norwich Free Academy about sharing space, a project which would be mutually beneficial (*giving life*) to both institutions. The Executive Board at its last meeting appointed a committee to bring forward a recommendation which they are working on now. Our members and friends will be hearing more about this in the next months as details are worked through.

After these decisions are made, we will be ready to begin thinking about what our next chapter of Ministry at Park Church will look like. I would like to ask all of you reading this to join us in focused prayer as we enter into a season of discernment.

And while we are discerning, we are preparing to celebrate Easter in a few short weeks. Each of the four gospels give us accounts of Jesus' last days, his betrayal, his trials, and his painful death. Perhaps it is easier for us to remain faithful in the retelling of this story than for his disciples, because we know it ends in Jesus' resurrection. This is a model for faith. The story of our own suffering and hardship also ends in glory. It is the logic of God's love, Jesus' forgiveness, and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. We can be encouraged by this.

Let us hold each other up in prayer, as we are living lives of heartache and glory. It is what Christians do – giving life to the world. Join us!

Yours in Faith,  
Rev Erica

