

Ely United Methodist Church
Church Conference 2023
December 21, 2023

State of the Church
Pastor Craig Haberman

I offer these thoughts on where our congregation finds itself as my brief time as your pastor draws to a close. I share these perceptions along with my gratitude to our church and my love for each of you.

I'm using the words stability, renewal, and change to summarize this season of our life together.

- Stability: Our church is a remarkably stable expression of the Body of Christ. We are made up of a large number of able and committed individuals, eager to do that which God is placing before us. This includes people in official leadership positions and others carrying out the astonishing number of tasks necessary to bring life to the administrative, educational, worship, and outreach ministries of our church. These individuals and our history of working together brought us through the upheaval of the pandemic in a way where our church "looks pretty much the same" to me as before the pandemic arrived in March of 2020.
- Renewal: We are also in a season of renewal, which in my estimation began sometime during the summer of 2023. We have a healthy turnover in our leadership, with an above-average number of people assuming new positions in significant leadership posts. Past leaders remain part of our leadership team in other positions, bringing important experience and continuity. We've also had Spirit-led spiritual growth in our children's Sunday School and adult study ("*Journeys with the Messiah*" and two women's studies – Lent: "*Bitter and Sweet*" and Advent: "*Shadow and Light*"). We have upcoming Rule of Christ training in January 2024. We've always been a praying congregation; it seems even more evident now.
- Change: The arrival of our new pastor in June of 2024 will be the most visible change in our congregation. He or she will be different from who I am, that's one of two things I know for certain. The other? That our church is well-equipped to work through this transition with him or her in the same manner as when Pastor Dana Thompson retired after 31 years and I arrived in August of 2018. I will be available in every way that is helpful in assisting the new pastor through this transition.

Pastors come and pastors go, but Ely United Methodist Church remains the "Little Church with the Big Heart." And furthermore, the church, is what the Risen Christ chose 2000 years ago to be his body in world, something it will continue to be, as he has promised.

I am grateful to have been one of your pastors. And am grateful that Ely United Methodist Church was the final of nine churches I served over the period of 42 years.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Craig Haberman