

Mark Schloneger,

October 14, 2018

In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the Alpha and Omega, the Bread of Life, the fount of Living Water, the Christ who lived among us, died among us, and was raised back to life among us, and the one who by God's spirit breathes upon us, I bring you greetings.

We're sitting right over here, and I remember when our family sat somewhere in this section, it must have been before age six, I remember looking up at "God is love." And in my child's mind I could not figure out how in the world people could get up there to put that up. In my mind, I remember thinking that perhaps people rappelling out of the rafters is how that got painted up there. I know a little. Even today, it remains a mystery to me. So for those people who may know how that happened, don't tell me. I prefer it to remain a mystery.

It's a reminder to me that we have all these things on this timeline and how even some of those things that you have seen or have done, so often we take them for granted. Some of those things can have an impact on us that is really a part of God's mystery.

It's been over a year now that my Aunt Kathy—Kathy Smucker—called me on behalf of the Bicentennial Committee and asked me if I would be willing to share the message this morning. I couldn't really say no—it was my Aunt Kathy calling, after all. But the truth of it was that I was humbled and honored to be asked. But as this day kept coming closer on my calendar I found my anxiety increasing. It's been a year of slowly building anxiety. It's been rough! Do you know why that is? Let's be real—given this special Sunday and all that has gone into preparing for this special day, and even though I haven't been an active part of this congregation since I was a child. Given all that this congregation has meant to me, my immediate family, my extended family, past and present, and of course friends, and given all that this congregation has meant to the broader denomination, your community, and the world. Given all of this I realize that I have the capacity, the opportunity, to disappoint a whole lot of people. And I know that I am not anything special. And as this day got even closer I was comforted by a strange thought, no, I'm not anything special, but then again, neither are you.

Now you might think that's a strange thing to say, on a day like today when we're celebrating our anniversary. And I don't think that's something you want to say in an anniversary card. But I think remembering that fact helps us to properly locate ourselves in the history of this congregation.