

## DISCERNING GOD'S VISION FOR PETALUMA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A message from Pastor Schuyler

Dear Friends,

What a crazy time we are travelling through together! Between COVID19, wildfires and chaotic moments in our nation, it can indeed feel overwhelming at times. Can anyone identify with that? I can almost feel some of you nodding your heads as you read this.

One thing I'd like us to recall in this, is that God's Church has been through difficult times before. I am mindful of Martin Luther as he worked to reform the church in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. I recall the "Confessing Church" in Nazi Germany and the Christian Base Communities in Latin America during the wars of the 1980s. In each of these challenging moments, the faithful – with their trust in God – have moved the church through the tough times to healing, change and reformation. God did not desert them and God won't desert us as we seek a way forward for Petaluma United Methodist Church.

The thing we are called to is to keep our "eyes on the prize (Philippians 4:13)" of growing and expanding Christian ministry even – or perhaps especially in these challenging days. And friends, in order to do this, we need to have a **vision** of what ministry will look like in the future.

My Dad was fond of saying that it is our work to plant seeds, whose growth we may not see. So, our question really is "What is our vision of the harvest that will come from the seeds we plant?" In ten years, what does our ministry look like? What is **your** vision of God's hope for this church? Where do you see the church in the year 2030?

Through the season of Advent, I am inviting everyone into a season of prayer as we focus on our Advent theme of "**Promise.**" Together, let us pray, process and discern a vision for this Church.

So that we can organize ourselves around this vision, I want to offer five faces of the vision for PUMC for us to focus upon. They are:

- 1) Discipleship** (What will our discipleship look like and how we will we build this process going forward? How will we train ourselves and invite others to study and follow the Way of Jesus?).
- 2) Mission** (What is your vision of one or two core missional goals of our church? Feeding the hungry, Immigration, Prison Ministry, Homelessness, Other?)
- 3) Community Engagement** (How will PUMC engage the local community? In what ways will we work to build and strengthen our connection to the people in our town?)
- 4). Building Authentic Christian Community:** (What is your vision of how we might go deeper as Christian community? How might we love one another without reservation or judgment? What will that look like?)
- 5) Infrastructure and Administration:** We are blessed with infrastructure that is entrusted to us so that we might use it for the ministry. What is our vision for our buildings? Our administration of the church? Do we require other buildings? A parsonage? What does this look like?

Please fill out the form on the back of this letter. God will speak through as you share! If you would like to speak with me about all this, please feel free to email me or give me a call! (415-412-7231; [schuylerhodes@me.com](mailto:schuylerhodes@me.com)). Thank you for your faith, your commitment and your wonderful joy at being God's Church!

Pastor Schuyler Rhodes

## THE FIVE FACES OF VISION FOR PETALUMA UMC:

(Please use the spaces below to write your sense of vision. Feel free to use additional paper or pages if necessary. Remember that this isn't so much about what you or I want, but about where God is calling us to go...)

- 1) **Discipleship:** What will it look like for us to build intentional ways of training and nourishing people in their faith? Class Meetings? Small Groups? Scripture Study? Other?
  
- 2) **Mission:** No Church can be about everything. It is imperative that we seize upon a core mission for our Church. What is that mission? Serving the Poor? Immigration Ministry? Prison Ministry? Homelessness? Hospitality? Other? What is this and what does it look like in ten years?
  
- 3) **Community Engagement:** How will we serve the wider community in Petaluma and beyond? Collaboration on issues of import? Supporting public Schools? Participating fully in community-based organizations? Interfaith and Ecumenical bodies? What does this look like?
  
- 4) **Building Authentic Christian Community:** What would it look like for us to be more "authentic" in our practice and fellowship? What it would look like to truly welcome all people? Cultures? Gender identities and more? What will it look like for us to truly "have each other's backs?"
  
- 5) **Infrastructure and Administration:** We have been entrusted with significant resources in terms of our buildings. How will we use these as a means to fulfill our vision? Are there other infrastructural resources (eg. A Parsonage) that we should consider? Is there a further vision for administrative structures that will move us toward the fulfillment of our vision?

Would you like to discuss this with Pastor Schuyler? Circle one. YES. / NO.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_ phone \_\_\_\_\_