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News Release

It was July 1883, when a group of Petalumans signed their names to the church rolls to become the First Presbyterian Church of Petaluma. The church is celebrating its 125th anniversary, Sunday, July 6, with an outdoor service and picnic. The public is invited. The church is also welcoming many pastors, leaders and attendees from past years.

The celebration worship service will begin at 10:00 AM on the church lawn, 939 B St., Petaluma. The Picnic Celebration will begin at 11:15 AM. The picnic will feature horse and carriage rides, games, contests, presentations by the Petaluma Historical Society and by Ken Nugent, on the church's historic stained glass windows. There is no charge for the picnic or the worship service, though donations will be gladly accepted.

Petaluma has had a significant historical impact on the history of California and the United States. It is a story that could not be told without considering the essential role played by the religious community, and an important element of that witness is the story of the First Presbyterian Church and its members. First

Presbyterian Church's long history in Petaluma began when fifty two active supporters signed a petition for a new church. The Presbytery immediately appointed a team of pastors to lead this group in the formation of a church. By Sunday evening, July 22, 1883, in Derby's Hall, located at Main Street and Washington, the congregation assembled to organize the church.

The Reverend J.S. McDonald gave the prophetic sermon, based on Revelation 2:10. And he read: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Since 1883, the church has been active in the Petaluma community. The original church building, located on 4th Street, near the Carnegie Library, was the meeting place for many meetings of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) during the "Roaring 20's." The original building, which survived the earthquake of 1906, was demolished and the church moved to its current building in 1963. The church continued its contributions to the community by forming Happy Day Presbyterian School, in 1976, and Hope Counseling, in 1981.

In the 1970s, members of the church helped form the local FISH organization, which provided short term emergency assistance with lodging, transportation, bus fare, meals, groceries, information, counseling, companionship,

and utility bill payment in cases of special need. FISH was the forerunner of the Committee on the Shelterless (COTS) and Petaluma Kitchen.

In 1978, the pastor, Rev. Hugh Goss, and members of the church helped to found Petaluma Ecumenical Projects (PEP) with the vision to provide housing to the lowest income citizens, seniors and people with disabilities. Members continue to volunteer with community organizations including the Petaluma Kitchen, the Petaluma Pantry, COTS and Tents of Hope Petaluma.

Pastor Dave Weidlich extends an invitation to all in the Petaluma community to come to the celebration worship service and picnic. Contact the church for more information through their website, www.petalumafirst.com/125 or by calling 762-8269.

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