First Presbyterian Church of Petaluma

Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you...and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. - Jeremiah 29:7

October 28, 2026

Dear FPCP friends and family,

What does it mean to be a good neighbor? For us at First Presbyterian Church, that question has become an increasingly important part of our life together.

The prophet Jeremiah once wrote to God's people who were living in a place they had not expected to call home. He told them to put down roots, build homes, plant gardens, seek the welfare of the city, and pray for the community around them (Jeremiah 29:4-7). We believe those words have something to say to us today. First Presbyterian Church has been rooted in Petaluma for generations. We have worshiped here, raised families here, celebrated weddings and baptisms here, grieved with one another here, and served our neighbors here. But being rooted in Petaluma means more than having a long history here. It means asking what our community needs from us today.

Last year, we launched our **Community Green Initiative** as one way of answering that question. We built a labyrinth where people can come to walk, pray, reflect, and find a moment of peace. We invited our neighbors to two block parties, fostering connection and community. We welcomed visitors and their pets to our Blessing of the Animals Sunday celebration. We're getting closer to building our neighborhood farm stand, and have already set up a community refrigerator where people can take what they need and leave what they can. For Halloween, we will open our parking lot and bathrooms, hand out treats and refreshments, and welcome young and old to our first "Great Pumpkin Rest Stop."

Along the way, we have continued to seek the welfare of the city through our food drives, clothing drives, community garden, Community Carol Sing, sewing pillowcases for kids being treated for cancer, and other ministries of service. And if that's not enough, a crack-team of volunteers remodeled the office back into a cozy residential house. The "Bethel House" now provides revenue for the congregation, and housing for a grateful tenant.

Being a good neighbor also includes caring for our campus and for the people who faithfully serve our congregation. Our ministries depend on the dedication, skills, creativity, and hard work of our pastor and staff. If we want to sustain a healthy congregation and expand our ministry in Petaluma, we need to provide our staff with compensation that allows them to live with dignity and security. Livable wages are not separate from ministry. They are part of our ministry. Stewardship means recognizing the value of the people who make our ministry possible and committing the resources necessary to support them well.

None of these things happen by accident. They happen because people give. They happen because people volunteer. They happen because people believe that a church should be more than a building where people gather on Sunday morning. They happen because we believe that Christ's love is meant to be shared with the community around us. It is your generosity that supports the people and ministries that make First Presbyterian Church a faithful presence in Petaluma. Thank you!

As we look toward 2027, our stewardship theme is **Rooted in Petaluma: Growing a Church that is a Good Neighbor.**

We are asking you to consider how your financial generosity can help First Presbyterian Church continue to grow—not simply in size, but in faithfulness, hospitality, service, and presence in our community.

- Your giving supports a fair and livable compensation for our staff.
- Your giving makes worship possible.
- Your giving supports pastoral care and Christian formation.
- Your giving maintains a place where people can gather.
- Your giving supports ministries of compassion and service.
- Your giving allows us to open our doors and our property to our neighbors.
- Your giving helps us plant seeds whose fruit we may not see for years.

Each fall, when our Session works on the budget for the next year, we ask everyone in our community to fill out a "pledge" card. That card is an *estimate* of what your giving to God's ministry through FPCP will be for 2027. And it's important to us that you participate with a pledge that is meaningful and manageable *in your current financial situation*.

We anticipate that the **2027 general fund budget** will be in the neighborhood of $320,000. To fund our budget, history shows we will need about $198,000 in pledges. In addition to the general fund, pledges can also be made toward the **Ray Swain Building Fund**. Our building fund pledge goal for 2027 is $40,000. These funds are used to pay for needed capital improvements, and to repay loans from the Presbytery for capital projects.

On Sunday, November 8, we are celebrating Stewardship Sunday, a time when we bring forth our pledges for 2027. This ritual of faith reminds us of God's generosity, and the generosity that we are called to practice as followers of Jesus. Please take some time to prayerfully consider your financial commitment to First Presbyterian Church for 2027.

May God continue to grow us into a church that knows its neighbors, loves its neighbors, welcomes its neighbors, and seeks the welfare of the place where God has planted us.

With love and deep gratitude,

Your 2026 Stewardship Team
Pastor John Chase, Susan Pearce (Budget & Finance Elder), Shawn Dooley (Treasurer, Personnel Elder), Roger Johnson (Bookkeeper)