

October 15, 2024

Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church of Petaluma,

A couple of months ago, I was contacted by a photographer and writer from the Presbyterian Foundation wanting to write an article about a Blessing of the Animals service. She had done a simple online nationwide search and our worship service from last year appeared toward the top. She read about it on our website, looked at the pictures on Facebook, watched it on our YouTube channel and decided this was the church she wanted to visit. If you haven't read the article, it's great! Check it out at the Presbyterian Foundation's website or scan the QR code at the end of this letter.

We've got some incredible things happening here at FPC. It's why we've worked so hard to increase our online presence. We want people to know about our active Presbyterian Women's group, our Bible and book studies, our children's ministry, Ryan's Case for Smiles, our Thanksgiving Luncheon, and that we are hosting this year's Interfaith Thanksgiving service. We want people to know about the Community Christmas Carol Sing we host at Walnut Park, our musical concerts and retreats, our labyrinth, church garden and veggie table, our Sunday worship and special occasions like the Longest Night service. And there is so much more!

We aren't a big congregation, but we sure get a lot done, and your faithful financial giving helps make it possible. Because of your generosity, our ministries change lives, foster community, and embody Jesus' love and compassion in the world. Your generosity enables us to support local organizations like COTS and Petaluma People Services Center, and to give our staff raises and pay them fair and livable wages.

This year especially we need your support. On top of regular campus maintenance and a parking lot that is in desperate need of fixing, much needed repair work on the Agape House was required. The damage was much more extensive than anticipated, and the total cost of the project more than doubled to upwards of \$280,000. We have already started to pay that down, but we have a long way to go.

Currently, 32% of the congregation's revenue is generated through rentals and we hope to increase that in 2025. As part of our efforts to be good stewards of our campus, the Open Arms Playgarden Preschool is thriving, as is the Bethel Fijian Fellowship. The Fijian Pastor and his family are doing well living in the upstairs apartment of the Agape House. Pacific Empire Chorus, Al-Anon, and single-use groups rent and hold their events on our campus, and we love having them!

The remaining 68% is where you come in. Our responsibility is to be good stewards not only of the campus, but of the amazing gifts we have been given—time, talent, and finances—and to share them with humility and grace, giving thanks to God for all we have, all we are, and all that it is possible for us to be.

Each fall, when our elders on Session are working 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 2025. 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 2025 general fund budget will be in the neighborhood of \$311,500. To fund our budget, history shows we will need about \$194,500 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 2025 is \$34,000. These pledge dollars are used to pay for the Agape House repairs, and for needed capital improvements to our facilities.

On Sunday, October 27, we are celebrating Stewardship Sunday, a time when we bring forth our pledges for 2025. This ritual of faith reminds us that everything we have is from God. In this service, we remember that God has placed us in Petaluma and our various communities to be bearers of light and love.

Thank you for your faithfulness to God’s work in and through First Presbyterian Church. Your generosity allows us to live into the possibilities of transformational love for Petaluma and beyond.

With love and deep gratitude,



Your 2025 Stewardship Team

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

P.S. As I was writing this letter, I received this email from Erin Dunigan, the writer/photographer from the Presbyterian Foundation: “*I was at a horse clinic in Arroyo Grande this weekend and met some women from Petaluma - I told them about the service and they’d like to bring their horses next year!*” How wonderful is that?!

