

Greetings, First Church Community!

As we watch the seasons change and looking toward Advent, Christmas, and beyond, we enter this Thanksgiving season with our new series; **Generosity**. In this season when we are filled with gratitude for all we have dreamed, accomplished, and experienced together this year, it is the perfect time to encourage you to make your 2023 pledge to First Church.

Over these months, we have shared so many beautiful moments, both in person and online. As we focus on our pledge campaign, we want to remind you of the incredible things happening at First Church. We believe that serving our community is a worthy investment of our time, talents, and financial resources!

We experience the joys of community through Worship each Sunday, Coffee Hours in the Courtyard, Tuesday Night Book Club, Young Adults Gatherings, Commonwealth Community Children's choir, First Kids and Youth programs, and our annual Fall Festival, which returned us to our roots with the Chili Cookoff for the first time in 3 years! Our **Community Collaborative** is exploring new avenues through which our congregation might nurture relationships together.

Our Justice work grew to include another Sunday for Food at First beginning in June. Since October 2021, 35 First Church volunteers have shared fresh groceries, to-go meals, and hygiene kits with our unhoused neighbors, as well as \$15,000 worth of grocery gift cards with our community. Outreach giving continues to support our partners at Immanuel Presbyterian and, since July, has supported the work of housing justice by sharing resources with LA Family Housing, Covenant House, and Rev. Cinthia Morris's work with college students experiencing homelessness. In December, our **Justice Collaborative** will host our annual Alternative Gift Fair in partnership with Fair Trade LA and on Christmas Eve, we will designate our entire offering to housing justice.

As our Spiritual life expands, our **Spirituality Collaborative** is looking forward to learning new and ancient spiritual practices with the coming of our Labyrinth early next year, and the Pilgrimage to the Island of Iona in the Spring. Our first Confirmation Class in 3 years is happening right now as our Youth explore their own faith and futures. We have made spirituality a priority at each one of our leadership meetings this year – beginning with meditations, prayers, and check-ins to allow us to deepen our relationships with God, and with each other.

The Arts have been interwoven into every aspect of our shared life and we begin each week with beautiful Organ Prelude-Concerts and the Music of Worship with Laude and the Cathedral Choir on Sundays. Monthly concerts have become part of our offerings on Sunday mornings and have brought gifts of major works for our community. Music of living composers and underrepresented communities are featured regularly in our services as we celebrate the diversity of our congregation. *The Mass* by Patrick Cassidy was presented in a special event this year, after being performed online and during Advent, the choir will perform David Saldaña's *Canciones de Nochebuena*, a collection of Latin American Christmas classics in new settings by the composer, who grew up with the songs.

We invite you to click the button below to see how we have used your gifts throughout year. We are delighted to share some of these experiences through photos and music to celebrate all that makes First Church so remarkable.

You will also find an Estimate of Giving button below, where you can fill out an online form OR a paper form. There, you may share your own estimates and plans to invest in our community in 2023, both with financial gifts and the gift of your time and talents. You may also share any other information you'd like us to know- further hopes and dreams for our congregation, contact information, or anything else in between! We look forward to celebrating these commitments on the last Sunday of Advent, December 18<sup>th</sup>.

As we move forward in these changing times, we value the strengths, the wisdom, the creativeness, and the support of the people who call First Church home. The impact we have on the world around us is strengthened by our collaborative efforts. We greatly appreciate your contributions to all that we do, as we work to open our doors even wider to ensure the inclusive and amazing love of God is made known in this, our time and place.

Deeply grateful,

Rev. Laura Vail Fregin, Senior Minister  
Mr. Jason Lambert, Moderator  
Mr. Bill Macomber, Chair Board of Trustees  
Mr. Raul Rojas, Chair Board of Deacons