

Co-Pastor Page for Feb. 2022 Newsletter

The territory through which we must travel to make a life for ourselves is always more difficult than we could first imagine; it takes us to the cliff edges of life.

–David Whyte, Crossing the Unknown Sea: Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity

After nearly two full years of pandemic existence, when the uncertainty and constant adaptation of these days is wearing on us all, La Grande First Presbyterian Church is entering a new year of ministry in our community and our world. The quote above resonates in a time when previous patterns for making our church's life no longer seem to be accurate maps for this territory. Like never before, the pandemic has pushed us into a pilgrimage in which we must look out over the cliff edges of our present reality and allow ourselves to see clearly their threats and opportunities. From there, we can imagine and decide together how we might offer Christ's love in the ministries God now calls us to engage.

To that end, your co-pastors and Session have invited **Rev. Stephen Kliewer** to come on **Sunday, February 6, 2022**. Steve, one of our former pastors, presently serves as the Eastern Oregon Presbytery Executive and Stated Clerk as well as pastor at Lostine Presbyterian Church. After preaching during the worship service, Steve will facilitate a Congregational Planning Forum at which we will collectively discern our congregation's ministry goals and priorities for this year. For several years, Steve has led this process with the Lostine church, such that a very small, rural church congregation has had a great impact on their local community.

The Forum will begin with a S.W.O.T. analysis. The acronym stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The first two areas focus on the inner life of our congregation; the second two areas focus on the outer world we encounter, our local community and the world. After we work through this analysis, we will decide together what specific events, activities, or other offerings our church wants to engage in. From there, you as an individual can decide which team efforts you want to give your time and energy.

After two years of pandemic survival mode, the Congregational Planning Forum will be a wonderful opportunity to reactivate our collective imagination about what God is doing and wants to offer the world through our church. It appears that we will be living with Covid for the foreseeable future, so how does God want us to move beyond merely surviving to thriving? We know God not only wants our congregation to thrive, but God's Spirit will also renew and energize us so that we can help others in Union County and beyond to thrive, even in unprecedented times.

Friends, crossing the unknown seas of this time, we need all hands on deck! Put Feb. 6 on your calendar and plan to show up either in-person or online. In person, we will be masking and maintaining Covid precautions. Online, you can worship

via our Facebook Livestream and participate in the Congregational Planning Forum via Zoom. We will ask you to RSVP with your preferred mode of attendance.

Here are some reflection questions to start thinking about to prepare for this event:

- What are three strengths you recognize in the FPC congregation?
- What are three challenges the FPC congregation faces in 2022?
- What external problems in Union County and the world might impede our ministry efforts?
- What opportunities for ministry do you perceive in Union County and the world? What problem could we work at solving, what need might we work at meeting?

Friends, these are challenging times, but they are full of opportunities for us to serve God's purposes, trusting in Christ's presence, and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. We can't wait to discover how God is going to work in and through our congregation as we follow the Spirit's leading to serve with hope, peace, joy, and love in 2022.