

October 31, 2022

Dear Church,

The stewardship theme of 2022 was “***Putting the Pieces Back Together: Being the Church in a Post Covid World.***” In 2022 we indeed started the long and brave task of piecing together a new normal. We started easing back into in-person worship in 2021 every-other-week until April when we resumed full time weekly worship in our building. Now, we are comfortably back in our building doing what we do best: offering extravagant welcome to all through worship that is intellectually fulfilling, spiritually uplifting, and unashamedly progressive. Central to our worship is a music program that is well-curated, researched, and artfully executed. I am beyond excited that as of today, choir has resumed practice after its Covid hiatus and its first performance will be in the books before year’s end. God is good.

2022 was also the year that we became a **fully** hybrid community—with almost **half** of our membership joining us online or through other forms of contact outside of in-person worship. To bridge the gap, we’ve created Lent and Advent boxes that bring church to your doorstep and level the playing field so that the blessings of this community are received by everyone no matter whether they worship with us physically or virtually. The blessings of technology have also allowed our book study groups to go fully virtual. This year, there was an out-of-state participant in every one of our book studies. It continues to amaze me the number of people who are in regular contact with us and who consider us their primary spiritual community who reside outside of California.

Whenever we are asked to put the pieces back together of something it offers an opportunity for creativity, for decision making, and reflection on what purpose each piece serves. It allows us the chance to create something new and to dream new dreams for the future. It allows us to hold each piece in our hands and to reaffirm our commitment to the pieces that are critical while allowing us the freedom and permission to discard the ones no longer necessary. In a sense, this creative project is a blessing. We have the opportunity to reimagine church entirely. That is why our 2023 church year theme will be: Re(Imagining) Church: Building Something New, Together.

As we put the pieces back together we get to reimagine what it is they build. With the spirit, the heart, and the love of this church we have a future—a future ministering to this community as its **only** Open and Affirming progressive congregation. This congregation has a promising future not only because of its witness but because of its people. People exactly like you: scholars, students, community leaders, community members, engineers, scientists, oceanographers, health care professionals, educators, and volunteers. This church has, for over a century, had full hearted, generous people pass through its doors. Every week in my pastoral prayer you may notice that I always pray for “*All of those who support the ministry of this church—those who are here today as well as those who have gone on before us who have called this church home.*” We have a future here precisely because of the generosity of those who have gone before us.

We are at a stage in American church life where over two-thirds of progressive mainline congregations are not able to sustain themselves with member giving alone. We are one such congregation. It is for such a time as this that our forebears wisely stewarded money that would allow us the time and space to reimagine our future, serve our community, and see what the next chapter has to bring forth. However, just because we are blessed with these well cared for gifts from the past does not mean that we get to neglect our call to faithful stewardship. In fact, it ought to inspire us walk in their footsteps of generosity and faith.

That is why this year, your pledge is more critical than ever before. In this post-Covid age, it is almost impossible for churches like ours to anticipate the fullness of its income. With new renters coming and going, a membership disbursed across the country, and uncertain economic challenges facing many of us, stewardship is an act of faith. This year, our ministry will be funded by your generous pledges and the generosity of those who came before us—making my prayer for “*those who are here today as well as*

those who have gone on before us” evermore relevant. That is why the theme of this year’s stewardship campaign is: ***Those Who Are Here Today, Those Who Have Gone Before Us...*** We cannot and we must not forget either. Both are needed. Both are critical. The pledges of you who are here today and fruits of those who have gone before us are what will allow us to continue to provide La Jolla with a church that proclaims God’s love for all.

I hope you’ll join us for the journey...

With grace,

Tim Seery

Rev. Tim Seery



“

*Those Who Are Here
Today, Those Who
Have Gone Before Us... ”*

*I/We _____ covenant with
the Congregational Church of La Jolla to pledge
\$ _____ for fiscal year 2023.*

*You can email this information to office@lajollaucc.org or send to
1216 Cave St. La Jolla, CA 92037*

