

Sermon: Looking Forward by Looking Back 3 18 18

I am taking the time for a third of a sermon, and here it is.

It is the place where the very insightful thought of a parishioner who said that “My Dreaming the Church Forward sermon, from a couple weeks ago on Pledge Sunday was big on humility and earnestness, but a little short on the dreaming us forward, vision stuff the title promised.

She who shall remain nameless said, “So, I love the humility, but what’s the vision, what’s the dream, just bigger?”

I uncomfortably didn’t have an answer, but after a pause I did know she was absolutely right.

My pledge sermon did lack any real sense of vision of where we as PUC might go, or do, or be.

Over the last two weeks I have lived with it.

The sermon lacked innovative ideas, because I didn’t and don’t really have any innovative ideas. I don’t. Sorry.

While I was writing it, I was also spending time digesting our history.

In reading through Betty Paieda's and Stephen Ferrer’s history what I realized is that in every era when PUC is big enough to do more than tread water, and fight to sustain itself, and it didn’t make the mistake of being too dreamy about what it might be, or self-destructive about what it was doing,

which was most of the time, it did a few really valuable things in always slightly different ways.

Here in summary is what this institution, “Your Place” seems to do when it is strong.

It pushes beyond being a simply beautiful, non-toxic place to come for a Sunday service to in one way or another push forward through the classes and activities it offers the idea of what we as people are and could be as we go forward. It works, essentially to improve us, stretch us.

When we are strong we work in some way to protest and fight what’s wrong out in the world.

When strong we make concrete efforts to build deeper relationships and connection among its people, and PUC, we work on sustaining and making more sustain-able our infrastructure right here.

At our best in every generation when we are strong, we as a people and as an institution push the idea of what we as a people are and could be forward, we challenge injustice, build structures to connect us to one another, and improve our campus.

I think part of why I wasn’t more imaginative is because I don’t feel the need to be. My job, and my style, too, is to lead by listening, lead by following, but championing where there is energy.

I believe in you, this place, and us, and why wouldn’t I?

Across our 60 plus years we have marched in the streets, we have fought for fair public housing, and gone door-to-door in support of racially fair housing.

We have raised money for and sponsored minority families who wished to buy houses in primarily white neighborhoods, we have literally sponsored immigrants from Yugoslavia, Cambodia, and Central America.

We have among other things:

- built support groups;
- counseled unwed pregnant women;
- educated our teens in untraditional church ways about relationships and sex;
- we have held encounter groups, an infinite number of personal improvement gatherings;
- and all the while gathered to swim after dark, hang out in the mountains together, drink wine, hug, cry, and laugh together.

In the first two years of PUC's existence we held Book and Art Fairs, now we of course host an annual our Fair-Trade Fair, and I am hoping an emerging annual week of art on display.

In our early years we had Theatre Parties and of course just a month ago hosted the Vagina Monologues, and Activist Dinner Party. It is fair to say we are on the edge of having an informal theatre troupe.

The founding generation in their second year created the Shuder lecture, and hosted the likes of Jane Fonda, Alan Watts, and Tom Hayden.

We of course just had Ed Begley Jr., and are looking to have regular big-name speakers standing right here.

During Bob and Jane's time at the turn of the millennia, PUC had journaling groups, and we now offer spiritual memoir groups.

All along people have stepped up to improve this campus. From Bill Knipps twenty years ago dedicating resources to the Voyager room in his families name to those even before him who poured concrete and banged nails.

In just the last few years Andy and Marina Kissner built out our meditation trail, Bruce and Tracy transformed the bathrooms, and Noel turned his garage into a canopy production facility.

Our latest vision of working of adding Solar panels, and Electric Car ports is on the horizon. Generation after generation we have improved the place.

Today we got a meditation groups, men's groups, a kick-ass choir and a talented wonderful Music Director. We got a facilities committee that simply works, even when their jokes don't, a membership group that is good and getting better.

We got a great Administrator, a Treasurer coming on board who could run the world if only the oligarchs would let him.

We got the likes of Tara and Nina, and Tordella, and others creating a good inflow of visitors, and greeting them when they arrive.

And with another group of Mavens headed by Tara, inspired by Nicole, and guided by Vivian and Denise, we got more than fledgling new efforts to market ourselves, improve our internal communications, and improve our web-site.

We got a Nursery School that we can totally be proud of, turns a profit, and feeds us families. Right now, you're listening to a new Audio system, and pretty soon likely either a new projector or a television screen will be mounted here behind me, or up there where that irritating radio sound used to come from. Used too.

We got a food ministry poised to actually become more of ministry, and a Social Justice group with, as we know from the news, plenty to work on, and a hunger to make a Bleeping difference for us.

In a heartbeat, or two a new DRE, and a new small group for faithful seekers will begin.

I don't need have to have any unique vision. I just have to keep up with all of you. My job is to help push the river forward without getting in the way.

We're getting stronger, in so many ways, and I feel better already having written this.

It's not "good ideas" that are the missing ingredient in us being truly ALL we can be; ever was or will be. It's our potency that makes the difference.

We simply have to be strong enough and committed enough to rise above the near constant costs of just being here.

The theme of our pledge drive for the 2018-19 church year is, as you can see on the mirrors, "Your Place."

Maybe I'm a little bias having just arrived, and being your Rev., and all, but I feel compelled to walk over there and add to that "Our Time."

This will always be "Your place, but next run of time before us is also "Our Time."

We always know what it is we should do,
even if the way we do it shifts.

We love and laugh and cry with each other,

We improve our own little space here.

We teach ourselves and our kids new tools to be more loving and to grow, and we fight against the injustice in the world in our own unique way.

Let's commit to that open-ended mission and truly become the people we will be proud we were in the future

Amen