

2022 Pastor's Report

Ride the wave of the Holy Spirit!

Pastor Rick Warren, author of Purpose Driven Church, would say that ministry is like surfing, just like a surfer can't create the wave but must wait for it, you have to wait for the Holy Spirit to move and then ride that wave. The Holy Spirit seems to be creating a beautiful wave for us to ride here at Westview. The wave started forming as we dipped our toes into the water in caring for those without homes, when under the leadership of Margo Loehr we started the SonRise Kitchen. The wave started to build more strength in December as we started renting half of Westview's 2nd floor to Community Action Board of SC County (CAB), an agency whose mission is advocacy and essential service to those without homes. CAB's programs include: Youth Homeless Response Team, Transitional Age Youth Housing Navigation, Watsonville Works providing wraparound services for homeless seeking to transition off the streets, & Santa Cruz County Immigration Project. The wave seems to be large, beautiful and ready to ride as we have this project before us for 34 tiny houses for transitional housing for those without homes, approved unanimously by our Elders and Deacons at our January Leadership Retreat, and embraced by our congregation at our congregational meeting in February. It appears this is a wave created by God and building over the last few years. Cowabunga!

I know this housing project may sound scary to those who are first hearing about it. I was terrified of a dirty homeless encampment with tents, trash, defecation on the sidewalk, and people using drugs in public. We have all seen things like this in Santa Cruz. But as I, and the leadership team, came to see the vision for this project it is DIFFERENT. Imagine a scene of 34 little rooms, a bathroom and shower unit, a shared kitchen, and a common area to eat and congregate outside. Imagine it with flowerpots and trees, all walled in with a Spanish-style decorative wall. Imagine being greeted by a 24/7 security guard as you enter, who makes sure you are supposed to be there, and several staff on site 24/7. And as you walk around you don't see any "homeless people" because all the people there now have a home, are showered and shaven, and not stressed out trying to survive in the stress and danger of the streets - women safe and protected, people with disabilities getting the services they need, counselors helping people get their papers/documentation that were stolen or lost, helping people look for jobs or get new training, people being helped with their substance abuse issues, people getting signed up to move on to more permanent housing, people reuniting with family or friends long lost, etc. Now imagine some of these people who have felt like outsiders and the lepers of society now being welcomed and embraced by a kind, caring church family and beginning to feel like they belong again and are loved.

This sounds much like the vision Jesus had in Luke 4 when he quoted the prophet Isaiah chapter 61: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." For, Jesus so identifies with the poor that when we care for them we are

actually caring for Jesus! Jesus said in Matthew 25, ³⁴“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ . . . ⁴⁰ ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Housing Project Highlights:

1. What: River Levee rebuilding starts in 2023 and over 50 people without homes will be displaced around Fall of 2023.

Monterey County is applying for a grant to fund for 2 year a pilot housing project including clean up if it doesn't continue. However, Santa Cruz County will apply for more funding to continue for many years. The grant deadline is February and we'll know if funded by April 2023. The hope is to have houses ready to move into by Oct/Nov 2023. The entire project will be built and managed by Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties utilizing several local non-profits. All Westview does is lease the land, and kindly love our new neighbors.

2. Where: WPC lease gravel lot and back part of lot adjacent to, and width of gravel (taking only 5-7 parking spaces) to Monterey County in joint project with Santa Cruz County. Project will also utilize part of the parking area in front on the manse rental.

3. How: Marc Sabin of Dignity Moves is building project manager

4. Roxanne Wilson, Monterey County Homeless Services Director, is social services coordinator

5. Several Nonprofits will provide services to clients managed by Roxanne:

- HomeFirst - for 40 years a leading provider of housing services; prevention, outreach, shelter, interim, and permanent housing programming for individuals who are housing insecure or un-housed in the Bay Area of California

- Community Health Engagement-work with chronically homeless and will be central in overseeing social services and care

- Central Coast Center for Independent Living-specialize with those with physical disabilities

- Bay. Area Community Services (possibly) - specialize in housing the more chronically homeless

-Community Action Board (possibly)-immigration and papers services

-INTERIM - works with those with severe mental illness

6. The project will pay to repave our entire parking lot.

7. The site will have 24/7 on site manager, and security in the budget.

8. Our manse tenant if choose to move out: Monterey County will rent out the house for social services.

9. The contract will include a “good neighbor policy” which includes the security guard assisting with keeping the church grounds free of tents and unauthorized guests, said Roxanne. (So, we will actually have better security at the church! - hopefully no more people sleeping on our steps or throwing rocks at our windows.)

10. Santa Cruz County is working with Monterey County and the City of Watsonville to identify the resources necessary to sustain the project long-term after the initial grant period is over. This will likely include a funding and services partnership with the Central California Alliance for Health, the region’s Medi-Cal managed care plan. We’ve also discussed a potential role for Salvation Army providing food services and the Santa Cruz County Homeless Persons’ Health project providing and coordinating health care services for the site. SonRise Kitchen will provide breakfasts Mon-Fri. The Community Action Board and Santa Cruz County Behavioral Health Program known as Healing the Streets would also help with outreach efforts to encourage people to come into the site and would provide follow-up work with individuals as appropriate.

A note from Santa Cruz County:

“I can’t overstate my appreciation for your leadership and that of your congregational membership around this concept. In my career, I’ve seen countless times, how courageous and compassionate decisions around the use of land can really help transform a community and individual lives. Thanks again for your consideration.”

-Robert Ratner, MPH, MD, County of Santa Cruz,
Director, Housing for Health Division, Human Services Department

11. Roxanne will put into the grant bid money to pay to remove it after 2 years if it is not going as desired.

12. In Conclusion, we get a tremendous ministry opportunity. We have come to know and love several of these people through SonRise Kitchen and some might come to church - cleaned up, showered, happy, and housed. We plan to do a Bible study in the little village and have approval to do so.

Please be in prayer that we get the grant and that God will prepare our hearts to love and care for our new neighbors.

God, help us to BE your church, your hands and voice of love to those who are in need. Please give us creativity, wisdom, desire, courage, and compassion--that we might be swept up by the joy of your Spirit as you work through us and even transform us in the process.

As I shared last year, “The building is not the church; YOU are the church, as you are Christ’s hands of love to all you encounter.” And I have seen you be Christ’s love time and again to those around us. I am grateful for you! Amen!

In 2022 you continued to care well for our members who are grieving the loss of loved ones. Thank you for all you did to care for grieving families! This year we celebrated the life of Jacqueline Graham, Dr Masako Miura, & Jane Yoshida as they went on to be with loved ones and our Savior.

It is a joy and an honor to be your pastor. You show me much about the love of Christ!
May you know ever more fully your beloved-ness in God,
Pastor Dan

Thanksgiving to God for 2022 - from our Leadership Retreat January 2023

Here is what individual leaders at Westview shared:

- I'm thankful for church. It gives me hope and I'm learning much.
- I have no family left here in town. This church has become my family especially since life threatening illness.
- My ministry at Sonrise Kitchen and the people I get to serve and how they give me a great deal of joy - Margo. (We are grateful for Margo & her leadership of compassion.)
- Grateful for the many people who help with worship and all those who volunteer to be chairpersons - Jolly.
- I am grateful for Sheri and how she helps with worship and being herself.
- The caring friendships that have developed & bringing me into the 21st century.
- I'm grateful for the Deacons and all the people that helped with the Christmas stocking project for the Women's Shelter. The Shelter is truly grateful for what we are doing for them. - Polly
- We are back in person for church!
- Bible reflection on Wednesdays - how we learn from and support each other.
- Kitchen almost done & for Margo and Marlon & all their hard work!
- Pop up emergency shelter for those without homes that got evacuated in flooding. For the immense response of volunteers and help from the community.
- Support for my school and students - Evelyn.
- For the dedicated and caring service of our leaders, the Deacons and Elders - Dan.
- Opportunity to grow in Jesus - Nancy.
- For Iglesia de Cristo and new our renter, Community Action Board (CAB). Both are wonderful partners in ministry.
- For Leslie Nagata Garcia and all her help behind the scenes.
- For David Kadotani and his excellent work on our finances and his continued good health and example of positivity/hope amidst his health issues.
- For Micky, Maria, Polly, Michael, Shizue, Sheri, Mary Lou, Margo, Dan, Judith, Victor and the many others who helped with SonRise Kitchen.
- For Marlon and all he does to help with worship technology & church maintenance (and Steve).
- For Jolly, Evelyn and Joanne blessing us with beautiful music.
- For Diane and her kindness, leadership, and being our resident nurse/ "Dr."
- For our new member Kathy Banks in 2022, and Maria Gonzalez and Michael Ortiz in early 2023.