



First Presbyterian Church

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THE REV. DR. SANDRA R. TICE, PASTOR

January 4, 2016

Dear Friends,

Today the Inland Regional Center re-opens for the first time since the shootings of 12/2/15. A special private service of remembrance will take place this afternoon for all county workers and especially those who will be re-entering the buildings for the first time since tragedy and terror visited them there. It seems time to write.

I want you to know how deeply we have appreciated your love and support and expressions of care. Our congregation has been astonished to receive word of your prayers by hand-written cards and electronic love notes and flowers and financial help from all over. They have come from friends and acquaintances, and from Presbyterian brothers and sisters, and from strangers. Several of you have journeyed in order to offer physical Presence and to remind us of God's care for us in these days. Many of you have offered to assist us, especially if we find ourselves called to new experiments in ministry and mission.

It is difficult for me to express how deeply we have been touched by this. Perhaps it is because we often feel 'invisible', serving as we do in an impoverished and suffering city. Southern California has a reputation for being glamorous, but our city is home to more sorrow than sparkle. This is not a vacation 'destination'. Still, the beauty that IS here is a resilient, faithful, hopeful beauty that conveys that God is full of surprises. At any rate, your love and support have been expressed in worship, and I have looked out on the tears of gratitude and tenderness that they have evoked, and been deeply blessed. Thank you for being a channel of Grace to us, helping us to feel God's presence keenly. (Here is an LA Times video. It begins and ends with people from First Pres- our former mayor, kids we support at the HS across the street, me- <http://graphics.latimes.com/san-bernardino-video/>)

So what's next? It is a new year, and we are in Epiphany. I am particularly touched by the season's deep message of the Light being for all people (some unexpected!), and the way that we are called to journey together- following the star that guides us. It seems to me we are also called to give- to share the Light and the Grace that we ourselves have experienced, by offering our gifts to Christ, not counting the cost. What does this in practical terms? How can we live some of these truths of Epiphany in ways that help to heal our city (and our world, and our own hearts)?

We are not yet sure, but we are certain that we are changed, and certain that God is calling us. We are in a time of discernment and wondering. We are considering our gifts, our place, our relationships- what Eric Law would call Holy Currencies. And we are wondering how to offer and give those gifts in response to the present moment, believing that blessings will continue to flow. (Step one: We are offering this class starting Sunday <https://vimeo.com/107876290>)

This Saturday, Jan 9, all of our officers will gather for a retreat which was scheduled to plan the year. I think we will find ourselves reflecting on the events of the last month, and the questions you have helped us hear. We will be listening together for where the Holy Spirit is leading us. I would welcome your prayers for us as we do so.

I promise to keep you posted as we make tentative discernments and begin to put them into practice- and as we experience God's grace, (which is certain!). I will be sure to let you know if there are opportunities for partnership.

Thank you for reaching out in love- it has made our experience of this time dramatically different. It has grounded us in the hope 'that does not disappoint us' as we look to the future.

In love and gratitude,

Sandy Tice & the Congregation at First Pres San Bernardino