

Dear Friends,

In these days of confusion as we ready for new leaders of our country, some have despaired over the continued deepening of divisions that were stirred during the campaigns. In the gatherings, calls, and visits I have had with members and friends I see that we are all dealing with change differently. Some are content with the changes while others are busy with their own big-deal private struggles. Some are experiencing grief and depression as their well-loved president leaves office, while others are angry over public and private exchanges.

It is not surprising then, that this past Sunday would be a big one for attendance in general, and for first-time visitors. We begin every worship service with the words, “No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here” and end with “We need each other to survive. We need each other to thrive.” On Sundays, we put down our own agendas and gather into **Be-ing the Church**: Protect the environment. Care for the poor. Forgive often. Reject racism. Fight for the powerless. Share earthly and spiritual resources. Embrace diversity. Enjoy this life.

This past Sunday we had twenty more people at our first service, and while second service showed a slight increase in numbers, we had ten visitors, most of whom had come either to support our church for its bold and brave witness or came because they were looking for a church where they would be welcome. One man, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said he had passed our church on the bus for months, and always noticed the **Be the Church** banner. He said he had been visiting other churches on his route and had not felt welcome, but he did at Rincon. He has sent me a note saying he would be back in worship next week. One visiting couple came up after the service and said they wanted to join. Another visitor said that although she isn’t a member, she and her partner want to pledge. A man with whom I had become acquainted where I grocery shop has been talking with me for a couple of years about how he wanted to go back to church, but hadn’t ever made it – until this past Sunday when he attended second service. As he gave me a big hug after church he said he would be back.

Last night, we held the church open for another time for those who needed extra support to come to church, “in between things.” We were only five, but those who came really need it. “Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them.” (MT 18:20) This coming Wednesday is the day before Thanksgiving, so we won’t gather as a group. But if anyone needs or wants to talk, I am in all day until 3pm when I go to South West Key to worship with the children there.

Meanwhile, this Sunday we gather to give thanks for the witness of the United Church of Christ, for Rincon Congregational UCC, for friendship and family, for God’s steady presence in, through and around us. I hope to see you at our one 10am service, and for the Thanksgiving feast in recognition of all who give so much to **Be the Church** here at Rincon. Please continue to pray and discern how you will “spend” your time, talents, and money in the upcoming year. And bring your pledge cards with you as we make a day of giving back to God who so generously blesses us.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving. See you on the way to Christmas!

Pastor Delle