

Dear Members and Friends of United Church of Cloverdale,
Many of you are aware that United Church has faced challenging times over the past decade, as have many churches within our state and country. We have been able to continue our ministries, including weekly worship, only by spending down our church's endowment funds. In recent years, we predicted that at the current level of staffing and with fading membership, our endowment funds would be depleted within 2 to 3 years. With this in mind, our Moderators, Council members, and Pastor Jen began prayerfully studying our options, with assistance and guidance provided in part by our UCC Northern California-Nevada Conference minister.

Unfortunately, we have reached the point where we have determined that we cannot sustain the church as it is now and at our recent congregational meeting held on August 25, we voted to release Rev. Jen Collins from her call as pastor of United Church, effective December 31, 2024, and we do not plan on hiring another pastor. Jilloni Hopkins will continue to be our Church Administrator as we continue into 2025. At the same time, we continue to seek ways in which our church's legacy and missions can be preserved into the future, even if we cease being a viable congregation.

To aid in this endeavor, a "United Church Preservation Advisory Committee" composed of United Church members and Cloverdale Historical Society directors began meeting monthly in Fall 2023 to explore options and opportunities. In our congregational meeting held in early 2024, we reported that in meetings with staff of the Historical Society, we found partners in pursuing solutions in which United Church's property could be an asset for the entire community, and in particular that our sanctuary would be preserved for future uses. In June 2024, this Advisory Committee informed Cloverdale's mayor and City Council of our situation, asking for their advice and assistance.

Concurrently, Good Shepherd Episcopal Church held an event ("A Joyful Noise") in May 2024 to discuss the hopes and needs of the people of Cloverdale, as represented by churches and other organizations within the city. In that initial meeting, we shared that United Church was likely to have to close before the end of 2025, but we wanted to contribute our remaining resources to continue to assist those in need within our community. Also concurrently, La Familia Sana (<https://www.lafamiliasana.org>), founded in 2021, has been growing in staffing and outreach to support their mission of assisting underserved people in the wider community, and specifically "to co-create equitable and culturally cognizant solutions...to address long-term needs for healthcare, jobs, food, and education." La Familia Sana has been seeking additional space to house their growing staff and at the present time, we are in discussion with them about ways in which United Church's property and facilities could aid in their mission. In many ways, this opportunity matches our desire to continue our legacy of outreach to our community and also compliments the conversations that have emerged from 'A Joyful Noise.' In part, this includes that La Familia Sana has staff and expertise to pursue grants and financial resources at both the local, regional, and state level that could allow United Church's property to become a "community resource center" for those in the Cloverdale community.

Our purpose in writing this letter is to both provide an update and to announce a congregational Meeting and Question & Answer session on Sunday, November 17, immediately following morning worship. At that time, we will also be voting on the severance packages in addition, Jade Weymouth, the Director of La Familia Sana will be here to answer questions. During that meeting, we look forward to sharing an update about unfolding developments and how we have been seeing God at work in the midst of all of these conversations and the unexpected opportunities to extend our legacy of service and care for the community of Cloverdale. Additionally, on November 17, we seek your input about ways in which we can continue to care for each other and for our community. This includes how and when we will meet for worship beginning in January 2025 (e.g. perhaps on a monthly schedule).

There will be additional items the congregation will have to vote on at later meetings, the future of the church campus, where we will designate any remaining funds, etc. We will notify you as these important meetings will be planned in 2025.

For any questions and/or concerns you might have in the meantime, please direct them to a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on Church Closure (listed below).

In Service,

Ad Hoc Committee on Church Closure:

John Phillips, Co-Moderator

Marilyn Michelin, Co-Moderator

Bob Timm, Council Member At-Large

Bob Price

Richard Werner

Pastor Jen Collins