



FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST



Fruitful for the Future

"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples." - John 15:8 NRSV

September 5th, 2023

Dear Church Family,

Fruitful For the Future is the theme for our stewardship campaign this year. In John 15:8, Jesus teaches his disciples that the best way for them to demonstrate their commitment is to "bear much fruit." What does it mean for a church to bear fruit? The twofold purpose of a fruit-bearing tree is to provide nourishing food and to reproduce. As Disciples, that's what we are called to do. We are called to provide spiritual and physical nourishment for those to whom we minister and to scatter the seeds of the gospel so that others may bear fruit as well. As any farmer will tell you, you don't just plant a tree in a random spot and hope that it can survive on its own. For a tree to live up to its full potential, it needs care and nurture. It needs a regular supply of water and fertilizer as well as protection against the elements and harmful pests. Can a fruit tree survive in the wild? Yes. But for a tree to produce the best fruit it needs to be carefully maintained.

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) here in Chico requires maintenance so we can carry out our mission. Our building, for example, is one of our best tools for ministry, but because it is close to 70 years old, we must spend extra time and resources keeping the facilities operational. Every year when we build our budget for the new year, the question isn't *if* there will be a major repair needed, it's when and how much the repair will cost. Maintenance involves staffing and supplies too. In the last four years, we have seen an increased cost of just about everything. Building supplies, office supplies, educational resources, cleaning supplies, food, and utilities are just a few examples. Our solar panels are immensely helpful with our summer-time electric bills, but the cost of natural gas to keep our building heated in the winter has increased. The cost of living continues to increase, and therefore we need to step up to the plate when it comes to our stewardship.

Rev. Dr. Rick Lowery in his book *Sabbath Economics* says that churches shouldn't be afraid to inform people of our needs. Many church leaders are reluctant to talk about the church's financial needs because there is a stereotype that churches are "always after our money." Lowery says that the church is the people, not the building, and people need to understand what it takes to carry out ministry. Throughout the month of October, we will be sharing stories of how we accomplish ministry and what that takes during our stewardship moments. Every year, we ask people to fill out an estimate of giving card which gives our leaders an idea of the kinds of ministry we can accomplish for the following year. This year's estimate of giving cards will be due by our annual business meeting on Sunday, November 12th. We thank you in advance for your careful consideration of what you'll be able to give in time, talent, and resources. We are Disciples of Christ in both name and purpose. May our commitment to the ministry and witness of Jesus Christ in this world be made known in the fruit we bear!

Blessings,

Pastor Jesse Kearns

Moderator Max Erwin

Treasurer Nancy Thompson

Fruitful for the Future

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Pledge cards are due on Stewardship Sunday, November 12th, 2023



I/we covenant my/our intent to give for God's work in the 2024 year through First Christian Church, Chico.

\$ _____ weekly monthly annually, and will support in prayer the leadership, ongoing ministry and outreach of First Christian Church, Chico.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____

Zip code _____ Email address _____

Please return this portion to church in envelope provided.



Fruitful for the Future

For Your Records
Estimate of Giving 2024

I/we covenant my/our intent to give for God's work in the 2024 year through First Christian Church.

\$ _____ weekly
 monthly
 annually