

CRIBBS NOTES

“Thank you so much” are words expressed with the greatest sincerity to everyone who helped launch our new ministry at San Marino Congregational Church, United Church of Christ. The installation service in our sanctuary and the Bertrand R. Crist Fellowship Hall was beyond belief. Three hours of worship and celebration never felt so short. In response to the question, “Are you planning to have more three hour services here?” the answer is an unqualified, non-guaranteed, conditional NO! At least, I don’t think so.

Every spoken word, every musical note, every laughter, every reflective tone, each message, every song, and all the voices assembled into an eternal refrain of joy and gladness. We experienced together the divine gift of the Holy Spirit. For all the things we do together, the installation service reminded us again of God’s greatest gift, that of being present with and for each other. The gift of presence was embraced and received as everyone in attendance witnessed the incredible crescendo of the glorious manifestation of wholeness and peace.

I am so grateful to every person who shared a word of history and relationships; moving us back to times now locked in the vaults of history, yet reminding us of the foundation upon which our mission is based. Others helped us peer the vision of our community dedicated to advocating social justice and healing strained human ties. Together, we have been called to stand boldly in public square as witnesses of God love as an alternative presence in a society lingering under the bondage of popular culture.

It is with great appreciation and admiration that we begin this ministry as a congregation within the body of the United Church of Christ. During this 50th Anniversary of our beloved denomination, we are given an opportunity to renew our commitment to be an inclusive church where everybody is extended an extravagant welcome and nobody is rejected. We stand in the shadows of magnificent sisters and brothers who took Jesus’ Great Commission seriously and personally. Now, it is our time to go into the world and proclaim the Good News of God’s love and the liberation of all people.

“Thank you” does not adequately convey the depths of gratitude felt within the reservoir of my soul. I am so grateful for the numerous expressions of solidarity and oneness to press onward as a viable, relevant presence in San Marino, West San Gabriel Valley, and Southern California.

The service of installation did not simply signal the commencement of one pastor’s ministry, rather it observed the united front of our congregation to forge a path to Christ. We stand together under a “great cloud of witnesses” who journeyed before us buoyed by truth and faith. Our congregation under Christ’s guidance is uniquely placed to make unimaginable changes and serve as a refuge for the weary and broken-hearted.

Here we offer a celebration of God’s love. With every regard for the variance and diversity that reflects the creative genius of God’s pre-Edenic intention, we invite others to come and join the celebration. We affirm God’s desire for this to be a safe space and we confirm God’s design for all human being’s validity just as they are formed from birth and through life experiences.

We at San Marino Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, are duly installed to love, care, and share in whatever God has placed in front of us. We accept the call and challenge to go wherever we must in response to God’s call and the cries of God’s people. In faith and prayer, we humbly and faithfully obey God’s Spirit that leads us.