



Imitating Christ's Humility  
Conversation with Bethel Community Church  
January 17, 2021

LETTERS TO THE CHURCH

The New Testament contains many letters written to the early church. What might a letter to the modern church say? In our January sermon series Letters to the Church, the Rev. Dr. Charlene Han Powell explores this question alongside fellow pastors from Presbyterian churches in the Bay Area and across the country. Join us in worship to hear and learn from their stories of struggle, joy, and transformation. Then, gather in your Community Group ready to listen for how God is speaking to and working in and through the church today.

WELCOME

Read "[Our Story](#)," exploring the history and future of Bethel Community. What themes do you hear emerge in their story? Are there any themes that significantly resonate with or diverge from our own story at First Pres Berkeley?

LISTEN, CONVERSE, IMAGINE

Philippians 2:1–11 (NRSV)

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, <sup>2</sup>make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was\* in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,

<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name  
that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

1. As you revisit Philippians 2:1–11 and our conversation with Bethel Community, what did you hear in the call to “be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (v. 2)? What are/aren’t qualities of this kind of unity?
2. In light of Philippians 2:1–11, read “[Our Values](#)” from Bethel Community. Where do you hear resonance? Now read “[Our Mission](#)” and “[Our Core Values](#)” from First Pres Berkeley. Where do you hear resonance with Philippians 2:1–11? With Bethel Community? Any significant difference in tone or tenor?
3. Listen to “[Make Us Dreamers Again](#)” (5:19), an original song based on Psalm 126 by Bethel Community Co-Minister Michael Kim-Eubanks. As we make space for remembrance and grief, sorrow and love in this particular time in our lives, church, nation, what dreams are emerging in you—for yourself, for the church? How do those dreams inform your next steps and our next collective steps in our journey with Jesus?

## PRACTICE

Write down one dream you have for First Pres Berkeley. In your closing prayer and throughout the week, listen for how the Spirit may want to realize that dream...through you. Perhaps in simple ways: through a conversation, a renewed perspective, ongoing prayer. Perhaps in more pronounced ways: through convening with other dreamers to listen and learn, proposing an initiative, re-committing your time, gifts, or finances. Let your spirit explore that dream and what it might look like realized. Listen for the Spirit’s guidance.



Radical Generosity  
Conversation with First Presbyterian Church of Hayward  
January 10, 2021

LETTERS TO THE CHURCH

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WELCOME

Watch "Belong. Believe. Become" (3:57), a welcome video from our siblings at First Presbyterian Church of Hayward. What strikes you?

LISTEN, CONVERSE, IMAGINE

2 Corinthians 9:1-15 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>Now it is not necessary for me to write to you about the ministry to the saints, <sup>2</sup>for I know your eagerness, which is the subject of my boasting about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. <sup>3</sup>But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you may not prove to have been empty in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; <sup>4</sup>otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—in this undertaking. <sup>5</sup>So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you, and arrange in advance for this bountiful gift that you have promised, so that it may be ready as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion.

<sup>6</sup>The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. <sup>9</sup>As it is written, 'He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.'

<sup>10</sup>He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup>You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; <sup>12</sup>for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. <sup>13</sup>Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, <sup>14</sup>while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. <sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

1. Hayward, what of the following topics discussed most moved, excited, or confounded you?
  - What are the challenges facing the church?
  - Where do you see God at work?
  - If you were to write a letter to the church, what would it be?
  - How did this conversation speak to your experience of/at First Pres Berkeley?
2. Watch "Dear Church" (5:30), a spoken word piece by First Pres Hayward community member Bailey Fan. What do you hear in her letter to the church?
3. Watch "Building a Home" (20:30), which shares the motivation, process, and hopes undergirding First Pres Hayward's homeless services and creative housing solutions. What strikes you?
4. What is a key takeaway for you from our dialogue with First Pres Hayward?

### PRACTICE

Pray for the life and ministry of the Church--at First Pres Hayward and First Pres Berkeley--and for the challenges, graces, and opportunities before us. Spend some time this week getting to know First Presbyterian Church of Hayward better. Ask the Spirit to reveal and inspire ways that we might learn with and from these beloved siblings in Christ.