

Pastor Kelli- 9.1.24

Over the past 60 days, I've focused on getting to know as many of you as possible. A heartfelt *thank you* to the nearly 75 people who met with me at the office, in coffee shops, and in your homes. It's been a sincere joy learning about your stories, experiences, and perspectives on Catalina UMC. I'm grateful for each of you!

In addition to individual connections, I've learned a lot about Catalina UMC as a whole. There are some real treasures and opportunities worth highlighting. First, your Day School brings children and families to campus five days a week. Along with programs like Together Tuesdays, you are already living out a deep commitment to family ministries—a key area for renewed energy and growth. Our longstanding music ministry attracts local musicians and fellow music lovers alike. Feeding people is also central to Catalina's mission, from preparing snack packs to serving meals through community organizations. Another opportunity lies in living more fully into our Reconciling identity and reaching out to the LGBTQIA+ community. Each Sunday, Catalina has welcomed visitors, many of whom are young families seeking an inclusive church where their children can grow in their identities. Additionally, there's potential to expand our ministry to people with physical/intellectual disabilities, starting with support for Club Zeus, Tucson's nightclub for young adults with disabilities that meets monthly at our church. These areas stand out to me as key opportunities for growth and impact.

As I look ahead to the next 60 days, my focus will shift toward understanding our broader community, particularly Central Tucson. Over the past year, your Hub Committee has initiated conversations with at least 13 community leaders, listening to their needs and perspectives. I plan to build on this by meeting with those and other leaders, learning about their work, and exploring potential partnerships. Many of you have deep connections within the community—so if there are people you think I should meet, I'd appreciate an introductory email to help me connect with them. The goal is to continue identifying how Catalina's unique gifts can serve our neighborhood.

As many of you know, Catalina has long desired a second, more modern worship service. While that's part of my role, a second service is likely one outcome of larger vision. My role is really to build a new faith community as part of Catalina's broader ministry. Its more akin to planting a "church within a church" where we blend Catalina's core identity, values, and mission with fresh ideas and vision from new people. To do this, we'll engage with the community by attending cultural events like Pride Fest, where we'll host interactive activities and invite people to our programs. For example, Catalina UMC will have a table at Pride Fest with an activity for youth to make friendship bracelets. We'll invite queer and queer-loving families to Together Tuesdays and our Blessing of the Animals event. To connect further, we'll host "Coffee, Queers, and Questions," a small group discussion on faith and identity in October. Staffing tables at community events will help us literally meet our neighbors, especially in areas where Catalina has a natural affinity—families, feeding projects, music/arts, LGBTQ+ outreach, and disability equity.

I wanted to share this update on the progress we've made so far and outline our next steps. If you're excited about Catalina's future, I invite you to partner with us in three ways: (1) Pray! Growing a church is no small task, so I call on all prayer warriors to lift this emerging ministry in prayer. (2) Help me connect with the community by suggesting people I should meet and assisting with an introduction. (3) Volunteer to staff Catalina tables at community events. Your Hub Committee will announce upcoming events (like Pride Fest!), so when you see them, please sign up to help.

Friends, I'm excited about all that Catalina was, is, and is yet to be. God has good things in store for our future, and I hope you'll join me in these new endeavors. May God continue to bless our work together!