



## Willow Glen United Methodist Church

Sunday, February 13, 2011

Dear Friends,

With open hearts, open minds and open doors we warmly welcome Rev. Rebecca Irelan to Willow Glen United Methodist Church as our new Senior Pastor. Pastor Rebecca will begin her appointment to our church on July 1, 2011 as Pastor Nancy retires after serving as our Senior Pastor for twelve years.

Kristie Olah, our District Superintendent, led an introductory meeting last Wednesday night with Pastor Rebecca and all members of the SPRC. The meeting was the first opportunity for Pastor Rebecca and the SPRC to get to know one another, following the UMC itinerant system whereby pastors are appointed to their charges by the bishops — a system dating back to American frontier days when circuit riding Methodist preachers traveled on horseback from town to town. For those new to the appointment process, it's important to understand how it works. Pastor Rebecca described the appointment process as “a little bit like speed dating.”

Our Bishop, Bishop Warner Brown of the California-Nevada Conference is responsible for assigning pastors to churches in our Conference. Kristie Olah assisted Bishop Brown in prayerfully determining which pastor's gifts and graces are a good match for the specific needs of WGUMC. Kristie and Bishop Brown used our church profile and consulted with the Vision Team and the SPRC to guide them in the process. As United Methodists, we need to understand that Bishop Brown appointed Pastor Rebecca to our church, it was not an interview process—rather it is a time-tested process centered in God and faith. As Pastor Nancy said in her latest Willow Word column, “while there is no perfect system, this one has worked very well.” Indeed it has for us. This year, there are many pastoral movements in our Conference. WGUMC was top of the list of appointments because we are viewed as a church that holds great potential. The process moved exceptionally fast for this reason, and afforded us the true blessing of Pastor Rebecca Irelan. Here's a little bit about Pastor Rebecca and her family—just enough to get you started.

Pastor Rebecca is Pastor at Novato United Methodist Church where she has served since July of 2003. She and her husband Hank, their fifth-grade daughter Kristen and their cocker spaniel/golden retriever Jess are excited to make Willow Glen their new home in the coming months. Pastor Rebecca earned a PH.D. in Systematic and Philosophical Theology, Graduate Theological Union, at Berkeley in 2008. She

received her Elder's Orders at the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference in 1991, and a Master of Divinity from Duke Divinity School in 1989. Before Novato UMC, she was pastor at Grace UMC in Santa Cruz, Christian Education Director at Twin Towers UMC in Alameda, Interim Pastor at Ebbert Memorial UMC in Springfield Oregon, Associate Pastor at Wesley UMC in Eugene, Oregon and Pastor at Filer UMC in Filer, Idaho.

Pastor Rebecca loves the outdoors (hiking and camping), trail running, and likes to talk about theology (the BIG questions) with anyone, any time. Her husband Hank is a practicing Roman Catholic, worked as a tribal linguist in Oregon helping to preserve native languages for 20 years, writes poetry and novels, and likes to read, hike, run and check out local restaurants. Their daughter Kristen loves her gymnastics team in Novato, is a fast reader, doesn't like movies or TV, but is on the Internet all the time, and she's writing a novel.

As we open our hearts, doors and minds to Pastor Rebecca, we thank God for Pastor Nancy Danson and her service to us in His name. Pastor Nancy has touched many lives and led this congregation through good and tough times. We will miss her come July, and in retirement she will continue to be in our hearts and a member of our Willow Glen community.

Each of us has a responsibility to help Pastor Rebecca and her family get to know us as a congregation, and personally. In the coming weeks and months, the SPRC and church leadership will look to you and your families to help us plan this important transition for our church. Little things will help a lot when Rebecca arrives—like wearing name tags, sitting in the same place during service, and making a concerted effort to help Rebecca and her family swiftly become part of our church and our community.

God is good, all the time!

WGUMC Staff-Parish Relations Committee

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