Thank-you note from Rev. Laura

Dear members & friends,

It was a joy to meet so many of you in person during my first visit to Santa Cruz the other day. Thank you all for welcoming me with such kindness and generosity!

A few highlights of the visit:

- On Friday, I got to see your beautiful campus for the first time. I can see all the love and care (and sweat equity!) you put into making it a welcoming place for long-timers and newcomers alike. The Membership Team and I got to chat about all they're doing to welcome new folks, and I gained lots of experience with the curvy mountain roads as I made a few visits to fellowship members who find it difficult to get to the campus in person. Plus, I got to visit the redwoods at Henry Cowell Park—stunning!
- On Saturday, I met with the Caring Connection Team to learn more about how pastoral care works at the fellowship. Then, I got to lead a spiritual practice workshop in the sanctuary, followed by some lively Q&A and conversation about fellowship matters more generally.
- Then on Sunday, I had the honor of leading worship in the sanctuary for the first time, as we celebrated the Water Communion together. And we had a great reception out on the patio, with some very tasty cake and good conversation, as well as some get-out-the-vote letter-writing. Later, the new Leadership Advisory Team had a wide-ranging discussion of how I could be most effective over the next year in my ministry with you all. Afterwards, I visited Rio del Mar beach and was shocked to see wild seals just playing in the waves, along with all the people and dogs! (That is *not* a sight you'd see on the beaches of Virginia.)

All of this was delightful. But what will stay with me even more is the lovely UUFSCC spirit I experienced. You all are kind to each other, I can tell. You *like* each other! And so many people are willing to give of their time and energy so generously to make it all work. You've got a very good thing going here, and I hope you know it, and I hope you're proud!

Warmly,

Rev. Laura