



*United Methodist Church of Vista*

490 South Melrose Drive—Vista, CA 92081—Phone: (760) 726-0442

---

Issue 41

May 2016

Grace Notes

### **From Rev. Dr. Leigh Ann Shaw**

Vision noun vi·sion \ˈvi-zhən\: the ability to see: sight or eyesight: something that you see or dream especially as part of a religious or supernatural experience

I have a vision problem. I was born blind in my right eye. There are a variety of health issues with my eye and optic nerve, but the result is that I'm half-blind. As a child, I didn't know I was different than other children. I never felt like I lost something. The biggest negative of my sight problem was the annual examination while I was growing up.

My Mom took me to see the ophthalmologist every single year around September. We went to Balboa Naval Hospital to see the revolving ophthalmologist who was always new to me. There were always eye drops which stung and multiple people to 'help me' hold my eyes open to put them in. Sometimes the doctor of the year would call in various residents and medical students to look at my eye(s). Some years it was a bad experience; some years it was bad with a side of miserable. The only good thing was the ice cream cone my mother always bought me after the appointment!

When I began to learn about Jesus and grow in faith, I prayed that God would heal my eye. 'Dear Lord, help me to see and never have to go to the evil ophthalmologist.' Seriously, that was my prayer! I've read passages like Matthew 20:32-34 about Jesus restoring sight to the blind and wondered how that worked. I trust that God can do miraculous things, but I've come to experience these scriptures as faith statements in my life. The gift and healing of vision has more to do with how I see God and neighbor and less about my eyeballs or physical capacity.

Many people of faith have a vision problem. Many churches have a vision problem. This vision problem isn't about how our eyes work, it's about our half-sightedness in faith. We look at the people coming in the door on Sunday morning and lament those who are missing or have quit coming. We walk through the designated children's areas and see the children who aren't there and the parents that are too busy to attend worship. We look at our staff and complain about what they aren't doing or what they cost to keep. We look at our congregation and complain that more people don't step up to leadership. I believe this is a half-vision driven by anxiety or fear about the future. There is truth in these assessments but it only gets us a half-understanding of our church.

The vision that drives this church must be FAITH. It can't be fear of what we don't have or fear of who isn't here. If you focus on who's not here, you are going to fail to see all the great people who are here. If you focus on how much money we don't have in the budget, you are going to fail to see the profound opportunities and resources we do have! The author of Hebrews says, 'Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.' (Hebrews 11:1) Can we as a congregation develop a vision driven by faith rather than fear? Are we convicted even when we do not see the exact path where we are headed?

Our church vision must start with FAITH. Faith that we are resilient and capable. Faith that the people here can do the work and share in fellowship the way God intends. Faith that those who come will find spiritually mature Christians who are doing important ministry and discipleship. Faith that we are growing in spirit and heart! Let us start with faith.... As we are looking into the future and discerning God's call for our church. Amen.

Pastor Leigh Ann