



Pastor's Report to the Congregation



Pastor Bob Zoba

As we look back at another year at 2UC, I remember that warm and wonderful month of January when I first arrived in Puerto Rico as your pastor over 18 years ago. It has been a long pastorate for a typical Union Church pastor since the average length is usually only 3 years, and up until my arrival, the average tenure at 2UC was just 18 months. I give great credit to the pastoral retention committee, i.e., Christie, as she has been my greatest partner in ministry, as well as in life. Indeed, I could not have achieved even half of what I have done without her love and support and ministry beside me.

As I review the last two decades, I can attest to many ups and downs, many challenges and setbacks, and many times when we were not sure which way was forward. But I also recall dozens and dozens of incredibly special people who joined our 2UC family and did absolutely amazing things for the kingdom of God here. Indeed, God has always been faithful to us no matter what the circumstances, including hurricanes, earthquakes, and the plague of Covid. And this last year has been no exception as even though we have experienced declining attendance due to Covid and other demographic factors, God has continued to bless us and sustain us. In fact, we have just finished a year with the largest budgetary surplus that I can remember in my 18 years of ministry.

I am also glad to note that despite two years of shutdowns and Covid restrictions, we never once missed holding a worship service at 2UC. Of course, for several weeks, we were only allowed to admit a skeletal crew of people to carry out our worship service. But thanks to Gabriel Cortez (& Natalie) we were able to change to Livestream broadcasts, which has continued to be a blessing to those still shut in here in PR and to many of our alumnae abroad. And yet, despite all those many Sundays of meetings, when many other churches were completely shut down, we never once suffered an outbreak of Covid that was traceable to our gatherings. I give glory to God for that.

I am also grateful for our initiation of Outreach Saturday, every third Saturday of the month, as this has allowed us to put together Love Bags for the indigent at the traffic lights, lunches for the hungry in Barrio Obrero, and an opportunity to do a lot of fix-it projects around our building. I am also grateful for the uninterrupted ministry of our Backpack program through these Covid months as well as the outreach efforts of Embrace Grace. All these ministries carry on the legacy of 2UC as it has consistently been a church that faithfully preaches the Word and lives the Word in service and witness. May this tradition continue in the years ahead as well as that is very much a part of our cultural/spiritual DNA.

As you all know by now, after 18 years of ministry, I have decided to retire from my pastoral position and leave these enchanted shores. This has not

**MARCH
2022**

Sunday Services
10:00 a.m.

Adult Sunday School
9:00am

Sunday School
PK-12
10:30am

Choir Practice
9am & 11:30am

Weekly Activities

Ladies Bible Study
Tuesdays 12-2

Small Group
@ the Rivera's
Tuesday 7pm

Men's Breakfast
Wednesday 7am

Women's Study
Wednesday 7pm

Prayer Service
Thursday 7pm

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Rev. Robert Zoba

been an easy decision, but it has been largely prompted by the medical needs of Christie's mom in Florida. However, I am very confident that God will continue to provide 2UC with fresh leadership and an even greater future. In that regard, I am very glad that Mr. David Roman has agreed to chair the newly formed Search Committee as they seek to call both an interim pastor and a full-time pastor. David is a professional attorney, has attended 2UC for many years, and has even served as our Council President. Thus, he has expertise, institutional memory, and a servant's heart. So too, he will be aided by a fine group of members on the Search Committee. It is my hope to be of as much assistance as possible during this transition process; however, in the end, it will be the responsibility of the committee (and the rest of the congregation) to make the hard decisions as to how you will follow God's lead into the future.

I will be praying that you will continue to be faithful to God and His Word for as long as you are faithful to His Ways, He will continue to be faithful to this body of believers to bless and provide for this congregation in every way.

Christie and I both take solace that southern Florida is only two hours away, thus, the Island of Enchantment and 2UC will always be near as well, but not only in geographical proximity, but even more so in our heart of hearts. We will always love you, remember you with great fondness, and remain connected to you in Christ and the powerful bond of His Holy Spirit.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Bob Zoba

A note from Christie Zoba

Your prayers and your encouragement during these past three weeks have given me such a sense of God's love and peace. I want to thank each and everyone of you who have reached out to me with words of comfort and solace following the death of my mom, Jane, earlier this month. I am so grateful to each one of you. For the last 30 years, Second Union has been my family in Puerto Rico, and for that I am so very blessed.



God has blessed me in such an amazing way through the unconditional love of my mom. I am so grateful for the gift that she has been to me. She and I have been through a lot, and I have given her great reason to throw up her hands in despair, but she never did. She stood by my side through thick and thin as a shining example of resilience and strength. I admire her more than I could ever, ever describe.

Her death has left such a huge absence in my life, and I know it is an emptiness that only God can fill with such wonderful memories and gratitude. I really cannot imagine my life without her, but I truly rejoice knowing that she is in Heaven. And I will be forever grateful to God who chose me to be her daughter.

Thank you again for your phone calls, texts, cards, flowers and love! Dennis, Amarilis, Brian, Patty, Susan and Hector, and of course my family . . . there are no words to express how much it meant to have you there!

Second Union Church will be the venue for a Prophecy conference to be held the last Saturday of March from 8:30am to 4pm.

Second Union Member, Mayra Chipi, sensed the Lord leading her to share this vision of the end time events and the rapture with others.

Mayra answered these questions to share this burden the Lord has placed on her heart to inform others about the imminent return of Christ and the eschatological events that will accompany or precede this world and life-changing moment. In simple terms, eschatology is "the study of what Scripture teaches about the end time." I believe we are living in that "end time", witnessing the stage being set for the entrance of the Antichrist, a Mr. Fix It who will come with all the answers to the world's problems.

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1. What prompted you personally to desire to have this conference?

As I saw things unfolding before our very eyes at such great speed since the start of the pandemic, I felt an urgency for people to have a clear understanding of all the signs of the end-time, all converging at the same time, through the lens of prophecy. God gives us Scripture, specially the Book of Revelation, so that we will know His perfect plan for humanity, and not fear all that is going on around us.

2. What specific themes, biblical books, etc., will be discussed?

The two primary books of the Bible that speak about the end times are the Book of Daniel, and the Book of Revelation. Pastor Jason Dennett will be using the Book of Revelation primarily, but he will also use other Scripture from both the Old and New Testament.

There are five themes he will touch on: the Rapture; the Tribulation Period; the Second Coming of Christ; the Millennium (1,000 year reign of Christ on earth); and the New Heavens and the New Earth.

3. What should people expect to get out of this conference?

I believe a better understanding of the Book of Revelation, and the glorious future that awaits all who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Also, what awaits those who have not accepted Christ as their Savior after the Church is raptured.

4. Why should this matter to them?

We are eternal beings, and we will spend eternity in the place of our choosing. We will either be with Christ for all eternity if we are a born-again Christian, or we will spend eternity separated from Him if we reject Him. Eternity is a long time. The Bible says, "I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation" in 2 Cor 6:2. In other words, today is the day of salvation. Not tomorrow or some time in the future, but today. There is a sense of urgency in that.

He also says in Psalm 95:7-8; "Today, if only you would hear his voice, Do not harden your hearts."

If you do not know Christ as Lord and Savior, you need to repent and ask Him into your heart today.

Also, I believe that the more we understand end time prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled, we will have peace in our lives regardless of the chaos around us. It's a great time to be alive, and a wonderful opportunity to reach the lost for Christ. Amen.

Note: Pastor Dennett will be presenting his view of a pre-tribulation rapture. There are other interpretations of Biblical passages that would support other perspectives.

The Tuesday lunchtime Women's Study Group is revisiting "The Seven Realities of Experiencing God." This is a more concise version of Henry Blackaby's 'Experiencing God' study.

There is no pre-requisite to attend with the exception of an open heart and a desire to grow in your knowledge and love of Jesus. Several copies of the study guide are also available free of charge!

Feel free to bring a lunch - we always have a pot of coffee brewing!



Youth Group



What better way for the youth of our church to spend a Friday evening? If you are a student in 7th through 12th grade and would like to join in the fun and opportunities for growth, contact Youth Leader, Gustavo Gonzalez!

Fridays at 7pm
Fellowship Hall
Second Union Church

Imagine if you could reach every person in your community with the Gospel! Here are the first steps to making that a reality.

By Gustavo Gonzalez, 2UC Youth Leader

In Puerto Rico, we have a saying that goes like this: “That is like plowing the water.” It’s not “plowing in water,” which is a very good strategy because it makes the soil easier to cut. No, it refers to trying to plow the actual water instead of the ground. Picture a man shins-deep in a river, frantically trying to make a groove on the surface of the water with his hoe. How long until he gives up? It’s a futile endeavor!

In the same way, doing ministry without a set goal or clear vision is like plowing the water. I know it felt that way for me when I first started in youth ministry. I was both excited and scared. I had a lot of energy and a lot of ideas of activities to do with my students. But after a while, I was sore from all the movement and no progress. That’s when I learned in my skin what cricket umpire Bill Copeland meant when he said: “The trouble with not having a goal is that you can spend your life running up and down the field and never score.”

Every Believer’s Goal

As Christians we have it easy and hard at the same time. Easy, because our boss, Jesus, laid out our goal very clearly for us: “make disciples of all nations.” And hard because it’s the greatest, boldest mission statement ever. It’s so huge we often don’t know how to even start. A trick to make this daunting task fit our brains a little easier is to chop it into bite sizes. For example, at Impact 2UC Youth (Second Union’s youth ministry), we’ve determined what portion of Jesus’s vision to make our responsibility. It goes like this:

“Every student hearing the Gospel. Every believer a Disciplemaker.”

Granted, that still represents thousands of souls in their schools that we need to reach, but that is our lane, and it focuses our prayers, our plans, and our resources.

Catch the Vision

You are part of this mission too! Maybe you end up phrasing it a little differently, but let me encourage you to include all of the elements of the statement, starting with “every student.” Maybe your calling is with ladies, then say “every woman” or maybe you engage with young married couples, then say “every couple”, you get the point. Chances are, the people connected with your ministry represent a very small percentage of all the people in your area. Catching this bold vision starts with believing that every person is worthy to hear the message of the Gospel—that Christ died for their sins every bit as much as He did for ours. That He loves them deeply and wants to spend eternity with them. That He does not want “anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Put It in Writing

When you think about the hell people in your community are going through right now and the Hell they’re heading to without Jesus, it should drive you to your knees in prayer. Start by committing to pray consistently and passionately that the Lord will help you reach them for His Kingdom. Recruit other leaders to pray as well. Pray that God will break your heart for these people, and ask Him to reveal to you how to own your portion of His vision. As He provides direction, put it in writing. It might take several drafts, but you need that goal front and center to guide your efforts. And make it BOLD:

Beyond your personal capacity to achieve
Outcome (not activity) driven
Leverages others to lead the way
Driven by addition and multiplication

God will receive all the glory when you begin to reach every person in your area of influence—your “cause turf.”

Second Union Church

Many hands make light work! That's certainly true for our backpack ministry. Each week we pack 20-25 backpacks with food and deliver them to La Urbana Elementary School in 'downtown' Guaynabo.

But the Backpack Ministry is a lot more than just packing the backpacks. At least once a month we pick up several pallets of food at the Food Bank which needs to be transported back to the church, unloaded and stored on the pantry shelves. It is truly back-breaking work, and Ramón Chinaea has volunteered to assist in this area which has been a true blessing. We are always grateful for Julio Rivera's help, and Pastor Bob is always there to assist as well!

We also need help delivering the backpacks to the school on Fridays. We are also looking for volunteers to give informative talks to the parents of the students. And of course - donations of healthy food! Next time you are at the grocery store, pick up a few cans of soup, spaghetti & meatballs, applesauce, peanut butter, Vienna sausages, etc. All donations are welcome!!

We want to re-initiate a critical aspect of this ministry during the coming months- the Backpack Prayer Pals. The prayer pals will pray for these students and their families throughout the year. This is most definitely the most important part of the ministry!!

Thanks to all who help. It is truly a blessing and brings honor to God when we bless others!

If you would consider helping out, please speak to Loraine Rivera or Christie Zoba. We really need lots of hands (and a few strong backs!).



the Backpack



In Memoriam: Caleb Strong

In response to this untimely loss, of Mike Strong's oldest son, a memorial service for Caleb at 2UC on Saturday, January 15th at 2:15pm.

Friends of Mike attended this service as Mike, himself, was at 2UC for the first time in over two years. He was greatly encouraged by your presence, as was Christopher, and Mike's surviving children, Crystal and Chad and Caleb's mom, Marisol.

After the reception, an acerola tree was planted on the front lawn of the church in memory of Caleb. The family spread Caleb's ashes in the soil surrounding the tree.



Don't Doubt Your Faith

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus heals a boy possessed by a demon who the disciples had unsuccessfully tried to heal. They asked Jesus why they were unable to heal him, and Jesus replies:

Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

If you are like me, there are times when I feel like my faith is smaller than a mustard seed. When I'm praying for something that seems to be God's will, but I do not see the answers I'm hoping for, I question my faith. So I identify with the disciples, and I'm sure they felt like failures. But I need to remind myself of Isaiah 55:8-9

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Rather than question my faith, I need to trust and obey. I need to recognize my place - and when I get frustrated because my faith feels small, I need to pray for Jesus to increase my faith and then I need to recognize that God's will and God's ways are perfect, and I do not need to be anxious - just to trust.

I think about everyone who is praying for Ukraine to not fall to the Russian invasion. Why aren't our prayers working? What about our prayers during the Covid19 pandemic, why did our prayers seem to be so ineffective? I'm dealing with a very distressing situation in my life, and I am also feeling like my faith is just too tiny. But I realize this is the enemy battling against me. I need to put on the full armor of God and rebuke the devil.

I need to thank God for His mercy, His love, His grace - for all He has provided and for the many, many answered prayers.

I need to present my requests to Him and to trust Him and believe in His purposes.

And, finally, I'm going to ask Jesus to increase my faith so I can bring Him honor and glory!

Eyes on Jesus!

"and looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 1:2-3

The Mariners' Ministry Celebrates 20 Years



Second Union Church was the venue for celebrating 20 years of ministry to the Mariners. These men spend the great majority of their lives on ships bringing goods between San Juan and the Virgin Islands.



Mariners' chaplain, Christopher Strong, was on hand along with the Lutheran pastors who, alongside Second Union Church, are strong supporters of this ministry.

Edwin Perez was honored at this event for the many contributions he has made to this cause. He was the recipient of a beautiful watercolor painting done by our very own, Irma Torres!

