

Santa Cruz Fellowship  
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Fall 2022

Friends,

There is a popular Country song from early 2000 by Lee Ann Womack entitled, I Hope You Dance. One line in the first stanza shares a hope, *"I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean, whenever one door closes, I hope one more opens."* Those lyrics came to mind as I was thinking about how to describe this season in the life of Santa Cruz Fellowship. It has most definitely been a season of closing and opening doors.

This is the first Fall season in more than 36 years that Rich has not been involved in football in some way. The past few years were limited to game day support but this season, even that has ended. It was a gift to be able to share life with players and coaches for all those years, but it felt very much that it was time to allow that door to come to a close.

Shortly after Rich made that decision, he was approached by the person who has headed up the ministry to Soledad Prison to see if he would be willing to be on the point. At the same time Rich was asked to be part of the team who leads the ecumenical Contemplative prayer group which meets at Resurrection Church in Aptos on Saturday mornings (the group where the ministry to Soledad started). Within a few more weeks the individual who had been providing leadership for the Santa Cruz County Jail ministry stepped down and Rich was asked to take on the leadership of that ministry.

Because Rich was already a part of each of these groups in significant ways, it felt very natural for him to step into these roles. In his case when one door closed, three opened.

Part of the role for both the prison and jail ministries is recruiting volunteers and helping them through the clearance process. There is a tab on the [santacruzfellowship.com](http://santacruzfellowship.com) website which explains some of the process to get involved if this is something that you feel led to explore.

The ministry at Santa Cruz County Jail involves going each Wednesday evening to meet with a group of men waiting for trial, sentencing or time served. During the session a notepad goes around where the men can share their prayer requests. The rest of the time is centered around the gospel passage for the week from the lectionary through the process called *Lectio Divina* (a description of the process is on our website under Resources). The men each have an opportunity to share what they have seen and heard from the passage. We finish the evening offering communion to all who are present. Very rarely does someone refuse to receive Christ.

The group at Soledad is more consistent. The men who come have been in the system for lengthy sentences and have earned the right to be in a medium security facility. The men come ready to grow and become a better person. Last week 25 showed up. The pattern for this group is to begin with a meditation (this season we are exploring our breath) followed by 20 minutes for silent prayer (described under Resources on the website). Prayer is then followed by the same study of the gospel passage using *Lectio Divina*. A few years ago, the group expressed interest in developing some leadership within the core group of men who had been attending for several years. That process was well underway when Covid hit and all outside programming was closed. The men were grateful to have been given the tools to continue the practices in our absence. It is a joy to return and witness that leadership grow even stronger.

If reading about these groups is stirring something in you, there is more information on the website or give Rich a call (831) 252-4580. We will share about the closing and opening doors in Jayne's work in our next letter.

Finally, on the backside are the rest of the lyrics of the song. There is much here to sit with. We hope you dance.

Rich & Jayne

*I hope you never lose your sense of wonder,  
You get your fill to eat but always keep that hunger,  
May you never take one single breath for granted,  
God forbid love ever leave you empty handed,  
I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean,  
Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens,  
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance,  
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance.  
I hope you dance... I hope you dance...  
I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance,  
Never settle for the path of least resistance,  
Livin' might mean takin' chances, but they're worth takin',  
Lovin' might be a mistake, but it's worth makin',  
Don't let some Hell bent heart leave you bitter,  
When you come close to sellin' out reconsider,  
Give the heavens above more than just a passing glance,  
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance.  
I hope you dance... I hope you dance.  
I hope you dance... I hope you dance.  
(Time is a wheel in constant motion always rolling us along,  
Tell me who wants to look back on their years  
And wonder where those years have gone.)  
I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean,  
Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens,  
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance,  
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance.  
Dance... I hope you dance.  
I hope you dance... I hope you dance.  
I hope you dance... I hope you dance.  
(Time is a wheel in constant motion always rolling us along,  
Tell me who wants to look back on their years  
And wonder where those years have gone.)*

Lee Ann Womack and Sons of the Desert  
2000