

February 9, 2022

Dear Tulare United Church,

It is my pleasure to share with you that beginning July 1<sup>st</sup> I will be serving as your pastor. My family and I are looking forward to meeting you and getting to know the congregation. My wife, Danielle (Rathjen), grew up in Hitchcock so coming to Tulare feels like coming home.

This year, I am celebrating 20 years of living in South Dakota. I moved to Huron from Puerto Rico after graduating from high school not knowing much English. I attended Huron University where I played baseball and graduated from Dakota Wesleyan University with a BA in Sports Management. Danielle and I have been married for 16 years and have four children: Diego (13), Ava (11), Mila (5), and Cruz (3). Danielle is a Family Nurse Practitioner at Huron Regional Medical Center (Tschetter & Hohm Clinic). Once we move into the parsonage, Danielle will commute to Huron for work while Diego and Ava continue to attend school in Huron. I enjoy fishing, hunting, and collecting Coleman lanterns. Danielle enjoys scrapbooking and playing bunco. Our kids are involved in a variety of activities including hockey, baseball, softball, piano lessons, and Girl Scouts.



Prior to entering ministry, I worked for the South Dakota Department of Social Services. I have been a member of Huron FUMC since we got married. All of our children were baptized there. Over the years I developed friendships with the pastors, with some of them becoming my mentors. I started volunteering at church with the youth group, eventually joining staff as the youth leader. In 2018, I took the position of associate pastor at Huron FUMC as a local license pastor. This spring, I will be graduating from Sioux Falls Seminary with a Master in Divinity. Also, the Board of Ordained Ministry has recommended me to the Dakotas UMC Conference for commissioning as a Provisional Elder, and in three years I should be ordained as a Full Elder.

One thing that I have learned is to trust in God even when I don't understand His plans for my life. Jeremiah 29:11 says *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future"*. I know that God has plans for the people of TUC and it would be my honor to join you in this journey. I look forward to not only being your pastor, but also being your neighbor. Until then, I plan on coming to Tulare during the upcoming months to get things ready for our move. If you happen to see us, feel free to say hello.

Blessings,

  
Pastor Rey Colón