



Volume 36 Issue 1

January 2017

Curran Reichert, Minister

## Notes from the Pastor

Isaiah 9:2 (NRSV)

**The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.**

Happy New Year!

I have exactly one resolution this year: simply to get to know people whose life circumstances are different than my own and to approach those relationships with curiosity and courage.

Friends, as people of faith and followers of Jesus, we are called to be a people who **shine light in the darkness**, who speak truth to power, and who resist collapsing with despair - choosing instead to organize and take action for the good of all.

Instead of focusing on what causes us distress, we must insist on turning our attention to what gives us hope. What gives me the most hope is the power of people to forge new relationships and our ability to learn from one another.

In my first four months of ministry with you in this beautiful valley, several opportunities to build new relationships have arisen. I would like to share a bit about those here.

For many years Congregation Shir Shalom and FCCS have happily and peacefully shared sacred space at 252 West Spain Street. This serves as a powerful witness to love in our community and that witness is more important now than ever. It has been my great pleasure to get to know Rabbi Steve and members of Shir Shalom through shared worship experiences this past fall and intentional weekly conversations.

We are excited about partnering to sponsor a workshop on “mindfulness” with Eve Decker (Jewish cantorial soloist and Buddhist spiritualist) on Saturday afternoon, February 11. **Solidarity with other communities of faith is a meaningful way to shine light in the darkness.**

In partnership with Women’s Fellowship, Social Action Team, and with the guidance of Ellen LaBruce we are in the early stages of exploring what it might look like for our congregation to engage in an intentional partnership with El Verano Elementary School and their Family Resource Center. I look forward to sharing more about this possibility as details emerge.

**Supporting school age children and families who live on the margins of our community is a powerful way to be a part of shining light in the darkness.**

A few FCCS members and I have also met several times with the lead organizers of the North Bay Organizing Project to plan a listening campaign for members of FCCS and Congregation Shir Shalom to come together on the afternoon of February 12 with leaders from La Luz, El Verano Elementary School, and the Family Resource Center for a conversation about the issues that concern us most in the wake of the presidential election.

**Listening to one another, sharing our concerns and problem solving together is the essence of shining light in the darkness.**

Lastly, I have been invited to serve on a short-term valley-wide task force for equity and inclusion in education. This is a research based group that will ultimately make recommendations to the school board. I trust that having access to those conversations will grow my awareness and expand my vision for ministry in wonderful ways.

- continued

**Taking on responsibilities that stretch our personal understanding is a tangible way to shine the light in the darkness.**

My prayer for all of us is that we find the strength to be the people we mean to be in the world. May kindness be our North Star and compassion our compass.

Deep peace in uncertain times,

*Rev. Curran Reichert*

## COMMITTEE AND LAY MINISTRIES

### Church Council

Your new Council welcomes you to this new year with love and hope.

We are overseeing our Sanctuary Renovation Committee as they continue their excellent work and move into the next phase - project management. We hope to finish our updating of the church's Bylaws this month, with a vote for approval at our January 22 Congregational Meeting. You will receive a copy of the revised Bylaws with all the changes highlighted so you will be informed of our work.

In this new year we will be seeing some new work, objectives, and progress on two of our continuing themes: Earth Care, and Peace and Justice.

We still have openings and need help on a few of our committees. These include the Council, Worship, Social Action, Hospitality, Nominating, Stewardship, and Endowment. Please consider if you might be willing to help out and serve in some way. Let me or Linda States know if you can.

Thank you, and blessings for the new year.

### Annual Meeting and Potluck Lunch Sunday, Jan. 22, 2017

We will have a potluck luncheon in Burlingame Hall after worship service, followed by a Congregational Meeting. At the meeting we will vote on updates to our bylaws and receive a progress update from our Sanctuary Renovation Committee. More information on what to bring will follow. Please plan to attend.

### Sanctuary Renovation Committee

#### **Pews:**

Our last Sunday in the sanctuary (as it is) is Sunday, Jan 8. Immediately after that, the pews will be available free to any member of FCC or CSS. Put a pew on your back patio, use it instead of 2 dining room chairs, or anchor your reading/serenity room. Let your imagination be your guide. You need to move it yourself, so find a friend with a pick-up truck. The exact time-frame is not set yet, but the pews will need to be gone before the end of the month. Please contact me to reserve one. Pews will be available to non-members at \$50. All untaken pews will head to a new life at Muriel Robbin's barn (CSS's alternate sacred space, aka Rabbi Steve's home). It's all good. The pews will carry the hopes and prayers of generations of faithful folks, from both congregations, including you and me.

#### **Sanctuary Renovation Committee Update:**

We went to the Sonoma City Design Review Committee on Tuesday, Dec 20. Their purview is exterior features. They accepted our proposal with a change to the east/west windows. We weren't happy about the change, but I think we have found a window design that will satisfy both of our desires. This week we will apply for a building permit.

*- Mary Evelyn Arnold*

## West Spain Thrift Shop

**Emptied, cleaned, and completely restocked over the holidays, the West Spain Thrift Shop will start its new year by re-opening at 10 a.m. on Thursday, January 12, 2017.**

Start the new year off by sorting through your things and donating unwanted high quality, usable items of all kinds – clothing, accessories, house wares, linens, jewelry, tools, artwork, and collectibles. **Starting Monday, Jan. 2, donations will be accepted** from 9 to 11 a.m. on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday, and when the shop is open (10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Thursday and Friday starting Jan. 12).

We never know what donations we will get, or what they will be worth. This fall, Nancy and Stephen Denkin were sorting through a donation of small demitasse cups when Stephen realized that one cup and saucer bore the name of the White Star Line, the company that owned the Titanic. The woman who sells things on eBay for the Thrift Shop posted that cup and saucer on eBay, and they sold for \$447! Sometimes, the Shop is pretty exciting.

As always, many thanks to everyone who makes the Thrift Shop function, including our donors, our volunteers, and our customers. We can always use more help - please let me know if you want to get involved.

- Patricia Serota, Thrift Shop manager

## Caring Friends

### Open Invitation to the Congregation

On Wednesday, Jan. 11, Caring Friends is hosting eldercare expert, Eloise Tweeten, who specializes in assisting people to navigate the complex maze of eldercare choices with emphasis on options in Sonoma County. She will include needs, policies, resources, costs, and the many differences among facilities. This is a "no strings" presentation gifted to our congregation by Ms. Tweeten. The meeting will convene at 12:30 p.m. and will last approximately an hour with Q and A opportunities. If you have questions, please contact Jan Edwards ([janbedwards@gmail.com](mailto:janbedwards@gmail.com)), Chair Pro-tem.

- Jan Edwards

## Education Committee

### Women's Retreat 2017 "Touch Stones"

The Education Team is excited to invite FCCS gals to join together at the Santa Sabina Retreat Center in beautiful Marin County for a weekend of inspiration and depth on **March 3-5. March 3 registration is at 4 p.m. with program beginning at 5:00 p.m.** Each evening will end with a Compline service and the retreat will culminate with a service of celebration on Sunday morning.

Pastor Curran will lead the weekend through music, meditation, and reflection based on Parker Palmer's "Circles of Trust."

In addition to gathering with a sage group of women, which in and of itself is a miracle, we will learn to practice circles of trust. This approach offers participants an opportunity to engage with poetry, journaling, and reflection to discover their own inner wisdom. The intention is to create a safe and nurturing environment to coax out our innate teacher, the voice of the soul, or the still small voice within.

Teacher, author, and poet, Parker Palmer has built a body of work through the center for Courage and Renewal (<http://www.couragerenewal.org/>) based on the idea that we all need to engage in courageous conversations with ourselves.

There are group guidelines and poetry that will support our exploration and hopefully, after some practice, participants will find this an effective tool for plumbing the depths of their own faith.

Registration is **limited to 20**. Please contact **Kathleen Gray** for registration forms. Payment will confirm your place. Make check out to *First Congregational Church* with *Santa Sabina Retreat* in the notation line.

\$260 for double occupancy, including all meals.  
Please name your roommate if you have a preference.

\$300 for single occupancy, including all meals.  
These rooms are limited.

- Kathy Jewell

## Earth Care Committee

### Why the Earth Care Committee Wants \$250 in FCC's Annual Budgets

During our December 18 Annual Meeting, the FCC's 2017 budget was amended to replace the zero amount proposed for Earth Care (line #6107) with \$250. This was to renew our yearly FCC membership in California Interfaith Power & Light (CIPL).

Our Committee believes it is important for our Church's annual budgets to reflect that "our" membership in CIPL is representative of our *entire* church's congregational commitment to Earth Care, and not solely that of the Earth Care Committee. A zero dollar allocation in FCC's annual budgets calls into question the integrity of our collective FCC commitment to Earth Care!

- John Donnelly

### "Writing to Remember"

*A new monthly workshop hosted by  
Garen Patterson*

This monthly workshop begins  
Monday, January 16, 7 p.m., Community Room  
and every third Monday thereafter

This will be the first meeting of a new workshop for those of us wishing to record, remember, and recreate our own stories, our own experiences...*our lives!* Emphasis will be on sharing, communicating, and connecting with others, and finding new meaning through that process.

Garen Patterson will host. The group is open to the public. Bring a friend! Bring anything you can! (That could even be an open mind and empty page!) Please consider this as a means to better know ourselves and each other!

- Garen Patterson

## Practicing Presence

This free support group will continue to meet in 2017 on the first and third Sunday of each month from 9-9:45 a.m. in the Community Room. The room is open from 8:45-9 a.m. for silent meditation.

We will do sitting exercises in the tradition of mindfulness, spiritual inquiry, and nonduality. This is followed by personal sharing - being HERE NOW in the fullness of Spirit.

Please join us!

- Taras Lumiere

### Friends, your website is under-utilized

Get with the 21st century and check out [sonomaucc.org](http://sonomaucc.org). Many people have asked how to access the videos of Sunday services:

Look for this graphic on the home page and click "Learn More."



For other church videos and songs, look for this graphic and click "Learn More."



Questions? Please contact [Kathy Aanestad](mailto:kathy@sonomaucc.org).

*KSVY Radio is a supporter of the Sonoma Valley Ministerial Association. Please consider this as you read their request below.*

Over the years, we have appreciated the support of our local radio station, KSVY, along with the ability to share our nonprofit information on the air. As a community radio station, KSVY receives no federal funding. They rely solely on sponsorships and donations. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to this valuable nonprofit. Thank you!  
<http://ksvy.org/2016-year-end-fund-drive/>

# JANUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>9:00 am CR Practicing Presence</p> <p><b>10:30 am Worship, Communion, and F.I.S.H Sunday. Veda Lewis preaching.</b></p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9:30 am CR Social Action Team</p> <p>7:00 pm S Choir</p>	<p>5</p> <p>5:15 pm CR Bell Choir</p> <p>7:00 pm CR Church Council</p>	<p>6</p> <p>8:00 am CR Meditation</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>8</p> <p><b>10:30 am Worship</b></p>	<p>9</p> <p>4:00 pm CR Earth Care Committee</p> <p>7:00 pm CR Seekers</p>	<p>10</p> <p>11:00 am S Stone Soup</p> <p>12 pm CR Women's Fellowship</p>	<p>11</p> <p>10:30 am CR Seven Sacred Pauses</p> <p>7:00 pm S Choir</p>	<p>12</p> <p>5:15 pm CR Bell Choir</p> <p>7:00 pm CR Worship Comm.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>8:00 am CR Meditation</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15</p> <p>9:00 am CR Practicing Presence</p> <p><b>10:30 am Worship</b></p>	<p>16</p> <p>7 pm CR Writing to Remember</p>	<p>17</p> <p>11:00 am CR Stone Soup</p> <p>6 pm Choir BH</p>	<p>18</p> <p>10:30 am CR Seven Sacred Pauses</p>	<p>19</p> <p>10 am CR Property and Finance</p> <p>5:15 pm S(?) Bell Choir</p>	<p>20</p> <p>8:00 am CR Meditation</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22</p> <p><b>10:30 am Worship</b> Followed by potluck and Annual Meeting in Burlingame Hall</p>	<p>23</p> <p>7:00 pm CR Seekers</p>	<p>24</p> <p>11:00 am CR Stone Soup</p> <p>6 pm Choir BH</p>	<p>25</p> <p>10:30 am CR Seven Sacred Pauses</p>	<p>26</p> <p>5:15 pm CR Bell Choir</p>	<p>27</p> <p>8:00 am CR Meditation</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29</p> <p><b>10:30 am Worship</b></p>	<p>30</p> <p>7:00 pm CR Seekers</p>	<p>31</p> <p>11:00 am CR Stone Soup</p> <p>6 pm Equity and Inclusion - BH</p>				

	Liturgist	Deacon	Ushers	Flowers	Coffee Hour
Jan 1	Joan Brady	Tim Boeve	Bev Pearson	Dotty Abbott	Women's Fellow.
Jan 8	Joan Howarth	Elizabeth Palmer	Sara and John Donnelly		Earth Care
Jan 15	Lori Barron	Joan Howarth	David McFarland and Mary Evelyn Arnold	-	
Jan 22	Nancy Denkin	-	Janet Engelbrecht and Bev Pearson	-	Hospitality
Jan 29	Kathleen Carter	-	Bob and Elizabeth Griego	-	Social Action

## Happy January Birthday!



1 – Kayla Seyms  
 2 – Cozette Shenks  
 5 – Cathy Webber  
 10 – George Webber  
 12 – Susan Heffelfinger  
 14 – Tom Mitchell  
 14 – Gwen Schafer  
 21 – Jeanne Campbell  
 26 – Bev Pearson  
 29 – Rudy Doorman  
 30 – Ben Garcia  
 31 – Eric Webber  
 31 – Janice Mattison

### First Congregational Church of Sonoma

252 West Spain St., Sonoma, CA 95476

707-996-1328 · [contact@sonomaucc.org](mailto:contact@sonomaucc.org) · [www.sonomaucc.org](http://www.sonomaucc.org)

**Office Hours:** Tuesday - Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

**Worship Service and Sunday School - 10:30 a.m., Sunday**

We are an Open and Affirming Earth Care Church

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**Music Director:** Terry Lezama-Jensen

**Pianist:** Stephanie Ozer

**Office & Event Manager:** Angela Ljung

**Facilities Manager:** John Shinnick

**Pastor Emeritus:** David McCracken

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**West Spain Thrift Shop (Reopens Jan 12, 2017)**

**Store Hours:**

Thursday and Saturday from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Donation drop-off hours:**

Regular store hours, and Monday, Tuesday, and Friday  
from 9 a.m.-11 a.m.