



Volume 36 Issue 11

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Rev. Dr. Curran Reichert, Minister

## Notes from the Pastor

Beloved Community,

My, what a time we have had! I am writing this on Monday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, two weeks to the day this whole horrible nightmare began. Today I went to the Disaster Relief Center at Hanna Boys Center with our new Navigator/Community organizer, Mario Castillo. My goal was to register for FEMA, with Mario Castillo as my shadow, to understand how the whole process worked and to get some questions answered about what is and what isn't available to undocumented citizens.

Here is what we found out: right now, all information collected from FEMA is potentially shared with ICE, hence, even if there is a citizen in the family, therefore an ability to register for help, there is also great risk involved for our undocumented brothers and sisters. The gal who was helping us register told us to call the ACLU and our Congressional Liaisons to tell them that people are afraid to register with FEMA for exactly this reason. She encouraged us to say, *"This is a humanitarian issue not a political one, and financial assistance should be available regardless of legal status and without fear of discrimination."*

As we were waiting in line to register, Mario was intercepted by a group of very agitated women. They had just come from a local hotel in Glen Ellen where they are employed as housekeepers. They had walked off the job because the management was insisting they clean up an unsafe area in record time. They knew they could not do this nor should they have been asked to do so. Thank God Mario was there. He immediately gave them a number for free legal assistance. FEMA was certainly not able to help.

What is clear is that our church has a unique role to play in the recovery from this fire. It is first and foremost to support our own members who are struggling with loss and trauma. It is also our role to do our part to stand up for those who are without voice and are very much in need of healing and safeguarding.

I appreciate each one of you. I pray for you daily and hope you feel my love. More than anything I hope you feel held by the spirit of Oneness that unites us all as we make our way through each day and back to a sense of wholeness.

Rev. Curran



## Message from the Moderator

What a time this has been, right? Since the last *Grapevine*, the houses of loved, long-term members – Barbara Naslund and Linda and Randy States – have burned. All of their possessions and lifetimes of many memories are gone. Forty-two persons are dead, more than 111,000 acres torched, and over 7,000 houses and other structures destroyed requiring \$1.5 billion needed to rebuild. Over 100,000 people have been displaced. For several days, many of us lived with: fear for our friends, neighbors, and our own homes; our uncertainties; our joy; and also our guilt for our house and possessions surviving intact when others have lost so much.

While treating fire victims, a person told me this story. One woman had packed her bags and was ready to go when the fire neared, but she said:

*“I realized that I have no one I could call.”*

And then, worse:

*“I could not think of one person who would call ME.”*

Being a member of FCCS makes me appreciate the importance of our community. We both called and were called – countless times. In these last two weeks, Nancy and Bill Ladd organized our community dinner, some of us took friends into our own homes, Kathy Randles and Tom Edwards organized and tended to those in the high school shelter, many of us volunteered in shelters, some of us *stayed* in shelters, one of us felt she was so well taken care of that she joked that she could have been on a cruise while at the shelter, the Social Action Team and Curran conceived the Navigator/Organizer position to address our most overlooked population in the Springs and found funding for the position. We saw grit and grace and sorrow and love and most important, connection and support expressed in so many ways. These examples of what it means to be in community make me sorrow for the woman in the story above who is living out her days without it. I can't imagine it.

Throughout the Valley, we have witnessed an incredible outpouring of volunteerism and work, donations, shared food, clothing, shared homes. At virtually every block there are signs thanking first responders with slogans that will forever be burned in our memories: “Sonoma Strong,” and especially, “The Love Is Thicker Than the Smoke.” Friendships have been strengthened and new friendships have been forged amid our common bond of caring and watchfulness for one another. We move forward, and we do so connected to one another because we know that the only way to get over this tragedy is to go through it. Together.

We are surely witnessing examples of how God intends for us to live and care for one another. And we know it. We see the possibilities when boundaries are broken down and hands extended. What if our entire country could come together like this? I am reflecting today as I write this Message on how very lucky we are at FCCS to have one other.

Which leads me to end on this: This is STEWARDSHIP MONTH. Your financial pledge for 2018 is more important than ever. As we strengthen our church internally and as we find ways to reach out to our neighborhoods, we will need everyone's support, whether you are a church member or frequent attender. We make an impact for good when we together support the goals of FCCS. Your 2018 pledge card is due on November 5. You can mail in your card, bring it by the office, or bring it to church on Sunday the 5<sup>th</sup> to join the ritual of submitting our cards into the little model church. Please be generous so we together can do those things that God is leading us to do. In community. With connection. In love.

*-Elizabeth Griego*

## Earth Care Committee

- The Earth Care Committee's October 10 meeting was cancelled owing to the fires. It will meet again October 31 to discern priorities for moving forward with earth care and justice.
- The November Earth Care Nature Walk will be Monday, November 13, 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. at a location to be announced later; suggestions welcome.
- A recently completed Lancet Medical Journal study finds environmental pollution— from filthy air to contaminated water — is killing more people every year than all war and violence in the world. More than smoking, hunger, or natural disasters. More than AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria combined!

It is most often the world's poorest who suffer. The vast majority of pollution-related deaths — 92 percent — occur in low- or middle-income developing countries.

*-John Donnelly*



**Norma Barnett** was highlighted as a new member in October's Grapevine. Now you can put her face to her name!

The FCC Sonoma calendar is online via our website [www.sonomaucc.org](http://www.sonomaucc.org)

For all FCC Sonoma events and happenings, please refer to the online calendar, weekly bulletins, worship service announcements, and the two weekly email blasts.

## Social Action Team

### \*Good news!

Friends, with the approval of FCCS Council, Human Resources, and the Social Action Team we are about to embark on a three-month adventure into formal community organizing in the Sonoma Valley area known as The Springs. FCCS secured a grant to fund the effort, thanks to the Reverends Diane Weible and Melinda V. Mclain. The church will provide fiscal sponsorship and convene a “think tank” team to help plan and execute the most effective path toward healing and recovery from the recent fires. Mario Castillo, our “Navigator,” began Oct.23 with the community lunch at the Sonoma Springs Community Hall.

We are hopeful that this relationship will forge new pathways of relationship between FCC and the communities of people living in The Springs, and help us know how best to apply the generous gifts that have been entrusted to us for relief of vulnerable populations in the wake of these horrific fires. Once we begin to get feedback from this effort, we will better know how to apply your generous gifts toward recovery in the most effective ways.

Thank you all for your prayers and support from Rev. Curran and the Social Action Team.

### \*Want to help kids learn?

El Verano School is looking for volunteers to read with first, second, or third graders, usually in the morning or after school. Other opportunities are to help with writing or art projects. For specifics contact Dotty Abbott at [dotabbott@comcast.net](mailto:dotabbott@comcast.net) or Janice Mattison at [janicemattison@gmail.com](mailto:janicemattison@gmail.com).

*-Janice Mattison*

Happy  
November  
Birthday!



1 – Ev Evhkanian  
2 – Kathy Jewell  
8 – Patricia Henley  
12 – Ruth Hoppe  
13 – Keith Ridenhour  
15 – Kathleen Gray  
25 – Nancy Ladd  
9 – David McFarland  
30 – Jackson Love

*If you know of a birthday that isn't listed, please let Angela know.*

## Continuing our Special Fall Worship Series on JOY!

Through November 26, during both services, we will continue turn our attention to the remaining four pillars of joy as they are laid out in the remarkable publication, “**The Book of Joy; lasting happiness in a changing world.**” This very special book records a week spent together in the mountains of Tibet by two spiritual giants of our times: His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

In 2015, to celebrate the Dalai Lama’s (80<sup>th</sup>) and Archbishop Tutu’s (85<sup>th</sup>) birthdays, they gathered together for a once in a lifetime opportunity to be in fellowship and conversation, focusing on the question, “How do we find joy in the face of life’s inevitable suffering?”

Nov 5, Forgiveness • Nov 12, Gratitude • Nov 19, Compassion • Nov 26, Generosity

## Sharing the Hymns We Love

**Thursday, November 19, 4:00 p.m., Faith Lutheran Church, 19355 Arnold Dr., Sonoma**

ALL are invited to this event that is sponsored by our Lutheran / Roman Catholic Dialogue Committee. It is one more event in our year-long observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It is open to all who love to sing; Roman Catholics, Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, ALL the church families in our Valley and beyond. Come join your neighbors. **This event is free.**

## Community Thanksgiving Service

**Thursday, November 23, 10:00 a.m., location to be determined**

We’ll keep you posted as we know more.

## Community Grief Presentation

**Friday, November 10, 6:30 p.m., Burlingame Hall**

FCC Sonoma and Congregation Shir Shalom have planned a path toward healing from the grief and loss of these fires. On November 10, Curran and Rabbi Steve will co-host, along with the help of Herbert Anderson, an evening of recovery from 6:30-8 p.m. in Burlingame Hall. Mr. Anderson is an internationally known speaker in areas of (not limited to) bereavement, family, and pastoral and practical theology. More information to come.

## Golden Oldies Party for the *Kelchner’s Golden Anniversary*

**Saturday, December 30, 5:30 p.m., Sanctuary, reception to follow in Burlingame Hall**

Our Golden Wedding Anniversary is Saturday, December 30: fifty years to the day we got married in Trotwood, Ohio. We would like to invite family, friends, and our FCC church family to help us celebrate the occasion. Join us at 5:30 p.m. for a Renewal of Vows service in the Sanctuary, then the Golden Oldies party begins at 6 p.m. in Burlingame Hall with 60’s music, dancing, food, and fun. No gifts please. Please let us know you’re coming so we can plan the food: [susan@kelchners.com](mailto:susan@kelchners.com) or 925-890-4345. Mark your calendars and plan to help us celebrate this special day!

*Alan and Susan Kelchner*