



Volume 36 Issue 8

August 2017

Rev. Dr. Curran Reichert, Minister

Notes from the Pastor

“And God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy, compassion and peace: yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice, justice and joy!”

Hymn excerpt: *For Everyone Born* by Shirley Erena Murray

Of the five interns I worked with in the past decade, three are currently in the UCC’s Search and Call process. I am a reference for each of them and as the committees of these progressive, forward thinking, justice-based churches call me to ask what I think about their potential candidate, I get so excited. I get excited because all of these people are still considered young adults, they are all queer, they are all brilliant, and they all have such a deep and abiding commitment to see the church live into its next incarnation.

As I speak about the various gifts these candidates possess, and there are many, I am reminded of my own hopes for the church, for the churches they will serve, and for our church which just one year ago called me to serve.

I knew it was a “Call” because of one answer: When I asked in my first face-to-face conversation with the committee why on earth I should walk away from a comfortable position serving a church I loved, where my gifts were deeply valued, uproot my family, and walk into the unknown, the answer was, “Because we’re ready!”

I believe we are ready. Together we have been through the refiner’s fire this year and emerged clearer than ever before. We are clear that there is a unique role in this valley for First Congregational Church, Sonoma, United Church of Christ. We are called to offer something here that isn’t being found anywhere else: a polyvalence of the Sacred which we will communicate by all means necessary. This church is a place for people to experience the reality that there is no division between everyday life and a life in God. We are in a powerful position to model what it looks like to live into hard questions with love, transparency, and integrity. And in every aspect of our lives together we must be vigilant not to slip into complacency, but to stay ever mindful of our goals: to make God manifest in the world through radical inclusion, to fight against injustice, and to live joyfully.

We want our congregation to be filled with song and laughter and joy for the road ahead. Because justice work is hard work and the road is long, we have to dig in deep and help one another draw on all our resources. Nothing about what is offered on Sundays or throughout the week ought to be understood as a spectator sport. Being the church in this moment in time is about full engagement of **all** the people.

Let this church be known as the Justice and Joy church, as the intersection of God and what’s-happening-now church, and as the church where all are welcome and seen and heard.

Rev. Curran

COMMITTEES AND LAY MINISTRIES

Message from the Moderator

Discussion of the Report *Hidden in Plain Sight* Notes from the 7/8/2017 FCCS Leadership Retreat

The FCCS Council members and committee chairs who gathered on July 8 for our biannual Leadership Retreat are grateful to FCCS member Katherine Fulton and her colleague Nancy Ramsey for joining us to discuss their excellent report, *Hidden in Plain Sight*. Sponsored by the Community Foundation and Sonoma Valley Fund, the report reviews the data that detail Sonoma Valley's needs as well as its charitable resources.

The good news is that the philanthropic sector in the Valley is large and growing. The issues exposed in the report, however, reveal that charitable giving is focused on a few limited areas like youth education and healthcare. Other areas, especially those impacted by the Valley's rapid growth in population and deepening poverty, are in dire need of both private and government support. Pressing needs include services to low income seniors and especially, what the report and retreat participants agreed to be the #1 area of need: low income, affordable housing.

The reports value lies in the actionable data that will help local government, donors, and nonprofits strategize more effectively to address Sonoma Valley needs. Retreat participants discussed how the extended nonprofit community, including FCCS, has to come together with each other and with local government to build solutions for greater impact. We also acknowledged the importance of developing more effective ways to lobby state and federal government for better solutions to address the deepening poverty gap.

An excellent written response to the report from John Donnelly was shared and discussed at the retreat. John urges further consideration of underlying structural-systemic factors contributing to the challenges of Sonoma Valley. He calls out the "neoliberal ideology that has dominated government policy-making over the past several decades, privatizing many public functions while further eroding the public sector's capacities." He suggests policies and actions that might address problem areas identified in the report. For example, a few of his recommendations to address affordable housing include lobbying to:

- Eliminate federal tax deductions for second homes' mortgage interest rates
- Reform Proposition 13 to increase the property tax rate on second homes
- Re-allocate more of the Tourist Occupancy Tax away from tourist promotions to provide affordable housing
- Increase the minimum wage and adopt living wage rates

Other ideas discussed at the retreat that Committees and Council will consider over the next months:

1. Continuing to strengthen the FCCS partnership with the North Bay Organizing Project
2. Connecting the Earth Care Advocates and Sonoma Valley Climate Coalition with other action groups for impact throughout the Valley
3. Sponsoring issue-oriented shared meals for local government workers, service providers, non-profit leaders, and funders.
4. Patronizing Latino-owned stores in the Springs.
5. Asking each of our FCCS committees to examine their priorities and work to make sure that our interests, projects, and plans represent multicultural perspectives and voices.
6. Continuing classes and workshops on white privilege and appreciation for diversity

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8. Continuing classes and workshops on white privilege and appreciation for diversity
9. Consider offering a Spanish language acquisition course at FCCS.
10. Continuing focus on social justice through book and article discussion groups.
11. Offer free canned food donations at the Thrift Shop for some of our regular customers.
12. Continue to look for opportunities to share common interests and priorities with our expanded neighborhood community.

Much more was discussed in what turned out to be an all too brief period of time for the Retreat. In the afternoon, council members and committee chairs discussed how to connect better with our new FCCS members; what we might do more and differently to assure a successful Stewardship campaign, and how to move forward on becoming a Creation Justice Church. In the months to come, Committees and Council will consider these and other ideas raised in the discussion.

Copies of *Hidden in Plain Sight*, the Executive Summary, and the supporting data and other materials are available at www.hiddeninplainsightsonoma.org. Hard copies of the Executive Summary of the report and John Donnelly's 4-page response are available in the church office.

-Elizabeth Griego

West Spain Thrift Shop

Re-opening at 10 a.m., Thursday, Aug. 3, 2017

While it was closed for the month of July, the West Spain Thrift Shop was emptied, scrubbed, painted, and restocked with all-new-to-us inventory. We will reopen at **10 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 3.**

And this a great time to clean unwanted items out of your closets, cabinets, garage, and other storage areas. We need clean, useable, and sale-able donations of clothing, jewelry, linens, kitchenware, housewares, décor, collectibles, and other desirable items (nothing too large, please).

Volunteers are always needed too, either to help at the cash register on Thursday or Saturday; sorting and pricing in the workroom; or other occasional errands such as driving items we can't sell to donate them to other organizations. Please contact me (707-815-2759, patriciads@comcast.net) if you want to join our team.

Thanks to all who support our store, whether it's by shopping, donating, or working in the shop and workroom.

-Patricia Serota, shop manager

Treasurer's Report

We have made a procedural change in our accounting practices and have engaged the services of Bob Withrow, CPA, to get and keep our financial books in order. The Withrows have served the church in the past and have welcomed us back. We will benefit greatly from their expertise.

To all who donate to our church's operating fund, we are grateful. To all of you who have given or pledged so generously to the Let It Shine campaign, we thank you. Your generosity makes the work of our church possible. FCC abounds in energy and excitement these days. Curran, our new pastor, is challenging and encouraging us to grow in spirit, in service, and in numbers. Our newly renovated sanctuary is fresh and welcoming. Your gifts undergird it all.

You need to know that we have some urgent financial challenges right in front of us. We are faced with a major (about \$20,000) water project to replace our aging and crumbling water pipes, and our sanctuary renovation fund is about \$12,000 short of our goal plus the renovation revealed major heating duct replacement work that cost an additional \$11,600. Your extra contributions to meet these needs and to support our church would be most welcome.

-Susan Kelchner, Treasurer

Earth Care Committee

4th of July: Thank You Wonderful Volunteers!

All of us are indebted to the FCCS volunteers who spent the day and into the night parking cars in the church parking lot on the 4th of July. This year's efforts yielded over \$3,000, a new church record!

Thank you to Alan Kelchner and Bob Griego, our hard working organizers, and to Tom Edwards, Kathy Randles, Mary Evelyn Arnold, David McFarland, Kirsten Mickelwait, Keith Ridenhour, Patricia Hensley, Lori Anderson, Pat Noel, Gitte Cochrane, Diane Lumiere, Taras Lumiere, Susan Kelchner, and Elizabeth Griego.



Monthly Hint from the Earth Care Committee

Keep your refrigerator cool...but not too cool!

Set the temperature of your refrigerator between 1 - 4 °C and your freezer at -18°C. For every degree lower, you increase energy consumption by around 5% - without making any difference as to how well the food is preserved. Also, remember to dust the coils of your refrigerator to keep it running efficiently. Dusty coils can waste as much as 30% extra electricity. Your freezer runs most efficiently if it is full, so consider adding bottles filled with water if it is not full.

-Elizabeth Griego and John Donnelly

Worship Committee

- Education Committee submitted a report (via Mary Beth Halsey) concerning incorporating children in worship the best possible way for both children and adults and proposing to use the curriculum *God in Play*.
- Second service, at 8 a.m. is ongoing from now until August 13 as a six-week trial.

-Janet Volkman

Education Committee

The Education Committee has been busy researching and discussing Christian Education programs for our children in the congregation. As a result, we have decided on a program called "Godly Play."

This program has been very successful in other UCC churches and can be used for all ages: toddlers to school-age children. It consists of Bible-based stories along with hands-on play figures and props that will engage the children in interpreting the stories and encourage them to share their own ideas about the theme.

Currently, FCC has enough story books to get started and has voted to purchase the related materials, along with arts and crafts materials to enhance the participation of the children.

We look forward to sharing these wonderful gifts with all of you when we are ready to begin the programs.

-Kathleen Gray

Speaking of our 4th of July Volunteers...

Who knew that dusty patch of dirt in front of our Sanctuary could be so fertile? With great direction from the Kelchner's, Griego's, and assorted volunteers, we planted rows of big trucks and vans in the field that reaped **\$3095** in parking fees from the July 4th celebrations this year. It is a new record!

From early morning to almost midnight, our volunteers, in spiffy red aprons and caps, directed parking for the parade goers and the afternoon/evening crowd. Thousands gathered for picnics and fireworks that surrounded our church property. Best parking in town! Just when we thought we were totally full, the fearless Susan K. found more and more spaces. The last car in was so grateful they gave us a \$10 tip. The great day was topped off with all of us watching the unforgettable fireworks display right in our backyard!

Thanks to all those who volunteered. Some suggested we expand our efforts to include other seasonal events (Vintage Festival, Sonoma City Party, etc.) and perhaps raise our fees for next year. Everyone involved really enjoyed the whole event and appreciate all the planning that went into creating it. Thank you.

-Diane Lumiere

Fellowship Time (aka Coffee Hour) is Changing!

The Hospitality Committee is revising how we coordinate Fellowship Time (also known as Coffee Hour) after the 10:30 a.m. service each Sunday.

We hope you'll work with us as Fellowship Time evolves, and together we can create a warm and welcoming environment for our congregation, guests, and visitors.

On Sunday, Aug. 6, Hospitality will host Fellowship Time after the 10:30 a.m. service with a cake for the August birthdays. Then we will take a break for the rest of August, with **no food or coffee Aug. 13, 20, and 27**, while we work out our new system. Instead, we will have pitchers of water and (recyclable) paper cups at the back of the Sanctuary Aug. 13, 20, and 27.

Starting in September, Hospitality will host Fellowship Time on the first Sunday of each month. The other Sundays, Hospitality will provide light snacks (nuts, trail mix, crackers, etc.). People will be free to bring refreshments for special occasions, but we will not be recruiting folks to provide food every Sunday.

Instead, teams of volunteers (up to six people per team) will be responsible for setup and cleanup. How often a team will do setup and cleanup will depend on how many teams we get. We're hoping to sign up eight or more teams, with up to six members on a team. It only takes two to three people to do setup and cleanup, so a team with six members could take turns, and one team member might only have to be responsible for Fellowship Time a few times a year.

We're contacting folks by email already, and signup sheets will be available starting Sunday, Aug. 5.

Please let us know if you have any questions, or if you want to sign up for a Fellowship team. The members of Hospitality include Kit Conforti, Patricia Henley, Diane Lumiere, Kim Pack, and Linda States.

-Patricia Henley

Mark Your Calendars

Circles of 8 • Starts up again in the fall

It's time to sign up the fall edition of Circles of 8! This is a fun way to widen your circle of relationships, make new friends, and just enjoy good food and good times with the great people of our FCC church family.

Each circle of about eight people meets about four times to share dinner in one another's homes. And even if you aren't able to host at your home, don't let that keep you from signing up! Each group will have multiple people willing and able to host.

Email, text, or call Alan at alan@kelchners.com or 925-899-1219 to sign up, or look for him or Susan at church.

Curran's schedule • Out of the office through August 5

There will be no Stone Soup during this time. Stone Soup resumes August 8.

AUGUST

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2 12:00 pm CR Education Committee	3 10:00 am West Spain Thrift Shop reopens 7:00 pm CR Church Council	4 8:00 am CR Meditation	5
6 F.I.S.H Sunday 8 am Worship S 10:30 am Worship with Communion S Fellowship Time CR <i>Tim Boeve preaching both services</i>	7	8 11:00 am CR Stone Soup 12:00 pm CR Human Resources Comm.	9 12:30 pm CR Caring Friends	10 7:00 pm CR Worship Committee	11 8:00 am CR Meditation	12
13 8 am Worship S 10:30 am Worship S Fellowship Time CR	14 7:00 pm CR Seekers	15 11:00 am CR Stone Soup	16	17 10:00 am CR Property and Finance	18 8:00 am CR Meditation	19
20 9 am CR Practicing Presence 10:30 am Worship S Fellowship Time CR	21 7:00 pm CR Writing to Remember	22 11:00 am CR Stone Soup	23	24 7:00 pm BH Earth Care Committee	25 8:00 am CR Meditation	26
27 10:30 am Worship S Fellowship Time BH	28 7:00 pm CR Seekers	29 9:30 am CR Social Action Team 11:00 am CR Stone Soup	30 7:00 pm S Choir Practice	31 9:00 am S Bell Trio practice	8:00 am CR Meditation	



Happy August Birthday!

- 2 – Kathy Aanestad
- 4 – Qing Chen Steuer
- 6 – Pat Larson
- 10 – Kim Pack
- 13 – Kay Hand
- 14 – Joan Howarth
- 19 - Ellis Jane Reichert-Morrison
- 21 – Sara Donnelly
- 25 – Joanne Gilmour

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

First Congregational Church of Sonoma

252 West Spain St., Sonoma, CA 95476

707-996-1328 · contact@sonomaucc.org · www.sonomaucc.org

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

Sunday Worship Service (through Aug. 13) - 8:00 a.m.

Sunday Worship Service and Children's Activities - 10:30 a.m.

We are an Open and Affirming Earth Care Church

Minister: Rev. Dr. Curran Reichert

Music Director: Terry Lezama-Jensen

Pianist: Stephanie Ozer

Office Manager: Angela Ljung

Facilities Manager: John Shinnick

West Spain Thrift Shop

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.

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Sonoma, CA 95476