



Volume 34 Issue 7

July 2015

Alan Claassen, Interim Minister

From the Pastor's Study

On Saturday June 20, sixty people from Congregation Shir Shalom and First Congregational Church gathered to sing songs of peace and share in a common feast prepared by everyone present. The idea began as a seed during my first month here. Then through a lot of tender care, the selecting and practicing of songs, the help of members of both congregations who helped with logistics, and the extra musical talent of Taras Lumiere and Kyle St. John, we enjoyed the power of music to build a community of peace.

In the shadow of the recent tragedy just two days before our event, in which nine African-American people were killed in the historic Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, our Songs of Peace program could not have come at a more appropriate time. We sang several songs that we are a part of the civil rights movement 60 years ago. "When will we ever learn?" May our prayers and our commitment to social justice remain as deep and strong as a tree planted by the waters.

It was a lot of fun for me to play music with the guitar-and-harmonica-playing Rabbi Steve, who ended the event by singing us all into a circle dance. We will do this again, perhaps by the light of a campfire.



I want to share with you a quote from one of Rabbi Steve's newsletter columns; "May the community continue to be strengthened by virtue of the spiritual lives of the individuals that assemble together to make things happen."

In times like these, we need congregations that provide resources that enable and empower individuals on their faith journey so that we, as a vital and faithful community, can help heal this broken world.

We need to find ways to assemble together; learning and worshipping, serving and playing. We need to make things happen so that we have a sense of meaning and purpose as we embody the faith practices of the progressive Christian Community.

One of the things I have observed is that it is difficult to know who is in charge here at FCC Sonoma. That doesn't mean that good things are not happening here, because I have seen them. I have also seen a bit of wandering in the wilderness with folks not knowing how decisions are made and who has the authority to make them.

As much as I believe that music builds community, I also believe that clear job descriptions, and a good organizational design, help to build strong, vital, and exuberant communities. As Congregationalists we find both the job descriptions and the design in our Bylaws. (The Bible also helps, but we didn't write that).

I want to share with you a question that I have about one particular design aspect of the Bylaws. This is the only church I have ever served where the Chairs of each Committee do not serve as members of the Council. It is easy to imagine that at some point the Chairs of all the Committees grew weary of attending two meetings a month. So it was decided that the Officers and the At-Large Members of the Council would serve as a liaisons and thereby attend, -- two meetings a month.

It is my observation, so far, is that this design is not serving you well. Not only is the communication between the Committees and the Council not flowing well, you also do not have the benefit of the active leaders of the congregation sharing their knowledge and understanding of the needs of the church as a whole. I will remain curious and see if we are simply not following the directions, or if in fact we need a new design.

Fortunately the Bylaws also include our Church's Covenant, which close with the following words, "The Members of this Church, with all the faith our Christian growth makes possible, do covenant together in the presence of God:...to love and support one another, to listen and learn from one another, to forgive and trust one another, to pray for and with one another, to answer God's call to be the body of Christ."

May we all keep practicing our virtues and make things happen for a just peace church.

- Alan Claassen

Committee News and Updates

Earth Care

Rev. Alan Claassen, John Donnelly and Helen Rowntree joined California Interfaith Power & Light (CIPL) at the State Capitol on June 17 to lobby for more Earth-friendly legislation. CIPL is a statewide network of 650 member congregations of all major faith traditions working together for climate action. Thirty-one CIPL lobbyist were organized into seven small groups to meet with 47 State Assembly Members and Senators urging them to pass climate action bills. Special focus was given to bills that would accelerate California's global leadership to reduce further greenhouse gases (SB 32 and SB 350), and to bills that would assist disadvantaged communities disproportionately impacted by climate change (AB 156, AB 1062).

In the photo, CIPL lobbyists are meeting with Assemblyman Tony Thurmond who represents much of the East Bay along the I-80 corridor; he served earlier on the Richmond City Council. From left to right, Alan Claassen, JoAnn Anderson, Earl Koteen, AM Thurmond, John Donnelly, Susan Stephenson (CIPL Executive Director), and Francis Aubrey. Helen Rowntree was lobbying elsewhere with another CIPL group.



-- John Donnelly

Youth Committee

Sunday School will not be in session for the summer months. There will be Child Care, which is now being held in a corner room off the east wing of Old Adobe School. Activity bags with simple books and coloring utensils will be set out for those youngsters that want to stay in the sanctuary.

-- Dotty Abbott

Hospitality

FOOD FOR THOUGHT - Many of us have put aside "emergency food" to be prepared for the next earthquake. Sometimes overlooked is "emergency water storage". The MINIMUM water supply is 1 gallon per person per day, and common sense suggests storing enough for 3-5 days (5 gallons for each person). CDC recommends changing stored water every 6 months. If you do not have enough water stored, there are safe sources in your home that may provide clean water for drinking. Sources include: water drained from the water heater faucet, water dipped from the TANK of the toilet (water from the bowl can be used for pets), melted ice cubes, and liquids from canned goods.

We appreciate the many food contributions you have made to after church "hospitality" time. If you haven't done so for a while, please sign the board which will be in the community room during hospitality time. Ideally, it's nice to have three people bring treats....perhaps, sweet, savory and fruit or vegetables from our abundant local farms.

-- Jan Edwards

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee consists of: Patricia Serota, Chairperson, Kit Conforti, Kay Hand, Pat Larson, Carolyn Osburn, and Louise Parnell.

The Nominating Committee will be meeting at the end of July and twice in August to begin the process of finding individuals for each committee for 2016. We are currently seeking to fill the positions of Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer for 2016.

If you are interested in either if these positions please call Patricia Serota at (707)815-2759 or speak with any of the Nominating Committee members for further information.

Together we make this a vibrant loving community of Faith and Service. The Nominating Committee appreciates all the work done by our wonderful committees and thanks all who are serving in 2015.

- Patricia Serota

Worship Committee

In the Committee's ongoing considerations of the Sanctuary renovation project several suggestions were put forth for the Ad Hoc committee to consider, including the idea of using photo shop to help the congregation envision different possibilities of how the best to transform that space. The Sanctuary Renovation Committee will be meeting in July.

Rev. Alan brought forward the dates when he will be away on vacation. The following individuals will fill the pulpit in his absence: July 12 - **Brian Smucker**, July 19 - **Laura Barnes**, August 2 - **Bill Hutchinson**
Rev. Alan created a template for helping the WC assign roles for worship leaders and liturgists especially when we have guest preachers from outside the congregation.

It was noted that there has been no negative feedback regarding the way announcements are now being done. The Worship Committee takes this as a positive affirmation of the recent shift.

Additionally, the Worship Committee approved the purchase of the documentary on Hildegard of Bingen entitled, The Unruly Mystic.

-- Tim Boeve

Pastoral Search Committee

The Pastoral Search Committee (PSC) has begun our journey toward calling our church's next pastor. We are honored by the role you have entrusted to us, and are committed to serving you well. The committee has asked me to serve as chair. I have humbly accepted, knowing that the other eight members of this talented and faith-filled team are dedicated to our mission.

As we begin, the task before us is to create our church profile which is a reflection of who we are, where we have come from, and where we hope to go together. It will outline our goals and describe the leadership characteristics we are looking for in our new pastor.

The Pastoral Search Committee will be soliciting input from all of our members as we create our profile. We will build on feedback from the Appreciative Inquiry groups that Pastor Alan has led, as well as the all-church retreat that is scheduled for Saturday, August 22. Please plan to participate to share your hopes and dreams for our church. Every member of the Search Committee welcomes your input.

While the work of the PSC must remain confidential, we will provide regular updates on our progress. As you have questions or thoughts to share, please talk with any of the committee members: Tim Boeve, Nancy Denkin, Jan Edwards, Elizabeth Griego, Susan Kelchner, Ellen LaBruce, Veda Lewis, Ray Snipes, Emily Webber.

- Susan Kelchner

Church Council

We are pleased to welcome Bob Rowntree as a new Council member-at-large. He will be serving the remainder of Rick Love's 2015 term. Due to a very busy personal schedule Rick Love was unfortunately unable to attend most council meetings and he offered to step down in order to be replaced by a more active member. Thank you Rick and Bob for graciously making this mid-year transition possible.

- Margie Mitchell

At Our June 7 Congregational Meeting

Members present unanimously passed the Amendment to the Bylaws for Taking a Public Stand presented by Ellen LaBruce and Garen Patterson. In the introduction to the Amendment Ellen and Garen wrote,

"In following our mission, there are times when we feel called to take a public stand on issues of Peace and Justice. Discerning whether to do this helps to test our values in practical, worldly terms. And having the church as a whole take a public stand can send a powerful message and define who we are as a community of faith.

As important as a position may be, the process by which we come to that decision is also important, one in which all are truly heard and the decision is based on mutual respect and trust.

The framework for deciding when and how to take a stand on important social issues in a way that brings our church community together even when discussing controversial issues."

And, from our Treasurer...

Through the end of May the church's income is under budget and expenses are also under budget.

Income budgeted \$96,930
Income received \$94,684

Expenses budgeted \$98,270
Expenses actual \$92,393

The church's budgeted income is as follows:
60% comes from pledges/offerings including the Thrift Store pledge of 50% of sales.
25% comes from leased space which includes Congregation Shir Shalom, Old Adobe School, and the Thrift Store.
15% comes from rented space and other.

Financial statements are on file in the church office. Electronic versions are available on request, let Candi Horton know if you would like to receive these via email.

-- Candi Horton

This Month

Thrift Shop closed in July

Mark your calendars for the reopening on Thursday, August 6th.

ALAN AND BETSY'S VACATION

July 6 THROUGH July 22

Betsy and I will be on a Pacific Northwest tour from July 6-22. We are heading for the Vancouver Island Music Festival and stopping in Bellingham and Portland/Vancouver on the way up and down. While I am away I have three retired ministers in our church who will be on call in case any pastoral emergencies arise. You will also be well loved by our Caring Friends. Please see the Calendar page for the worship schedule.

-Alan Claassen

FCC PARKING LOT RESEALED

Tuesday, July 21

The parking lot will be inaccessible the entire day.

FLORENCE PORTER'S 90TH BIRTHDAY

You are invited to an Open House in celebration of Florence's 90th birthday.

Sunday, July 19 from 2 pm - 4 pm

at the home of Candi Horton and Brian Smucker
45 Cuernavaca Drive, Sonoma

Looking Ahead

VISIONING RETREAT

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

This all-church retreat will be facilitated by Revs. Carol Barriger and Alan Claassen. The purpose of this retreat is share with the Pastoral Search Committee what we love about our church and what we see as our next right step.

-Alan Claassen

CAMP CAZ

OCTOBER 2-4

Camp Caz weekend will be here before you know it. Fun for family, friends, singles, couples, and all ages. Swimming, hiking, bring-your-own-games, touch football, girls vs. boys basketball, arts and crafts, talent-no-talent Saturday night show, Secret Buddy, Bad Hair morning contest, Sunday service under the redwoods at Vesper Point, and so much more. Food prepared by the camp staff including their famous Turtle Bread. Cabins with bunk beds, and bathrooms with showers are provided. For more information contact Kathy Aanestad at (707) 935-6690.

- Kathy Aanestad

REV. LAURA BARNES

FCC SONOMA GUEST PREACHER ON JULY 19



The Rev. Dr. Laura Barnes has been involved in the Northern California Nevada Conference (NCNC) of the United Church of Christ (UCC) since 2001. She has served both the Congregational Church of San Mateo and the Danville Congregational Church as their minister for children, youth and families. While her ministry passion centers on children and youth, she has a special passion for outreach ministries and social justice projects. She brings with her a wealth of ministry experience from a variety of settings.

In addition to her background in commercial banking, Laura has served several other Bay Area churches in the areas of youth ministry, music, worship and development. Laura received a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree from the University of Creation Spirituality (now The Wisdom School of Graduate Studies) in Oakland, CA. where her studies focused on the engagement of youth in worship and empowerment models of Christian Education. Her Masters of Divinity (MDiv) was completed at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley.

She enjoys involving people in all aspects of church ministry, mission, and congregational life. She believes we are called to remember our deep connection to Creation and to honor the mystic cultures of not only our Christian heritage but also other interfaith traditions.

Have you Ever Wanted to Play an Instrument?



I give lessons on saxophone, flute, clarinet and Jazz Improvisation and I can get a spare instrument and mouthpiece if anyone would like to give it a try. Also, I'll give lessons at adjusted rates if money is an issue. So, if someone wants to play, I'd like to make it happen.

I also do Skype lessons if someone has grandkids far away that have instruments and want to learn.

- Keith Ridenhour

Worship in July



July 5: Garen Patterson and Alan Claassen singing the songs of America
July 12: Guest Preacher, Brian Smucker with special music from Taras Lumiere
July 19: Guest Preacher, Rev. Laura Barnes with special music by Margie Mitchell
July 26: Alan Claassen returns with special music by Brian Smucker and Kathleen Carter

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	S = Sanctuary CR = Community Room BH = Burlingame Hall		1	2 7:00 pm CR Church Council	3 8:00 am CR Meditation	4
5 F.I.S.H. Sunday 9:00 am CR Spiritual Inquiry 10:30 am Worship	6	7 7:00 pm CR Seekers	8 12:00 pm CR Caring Friends	9 7:00 pm CR Worship Comm.	10 8:00 am CR Meditation	11 9:00 am CR + S Congregation Shir Shalom Service
12 10:30 am Worship	13	14 11:30 am CR Women's Fellowship 7:00 pm CR Pastoral Search Committee	15 3:00 pm CR Outreach	16	17 8:00 am CR Meditation	18
19 9:00 am CR Spiritual Inquiry 10:30 am Worship	20 10:00 am CR Property and Finance	21 FCC parking lot sealed 7:00 pm CR Seekers	22	23	24 8:00 am CR Meditation 5:00 pm CR + S Congregation Shir Shalom Service	25 10:00 am CR Congregation Shir Shalom Torah Study
26 10:30 am Worship	27	28	29	30	31 8:00 am CR Meditation	

Date	Deacon	Liturgist	Flowers	Ushers	Coffee Hour
July 5	Eugene Campagna	Mary Evelyn Arnold		Alexanne Bassett and Sherrie Conrad	Nancy Denkin and Barbara Naslund
July 12	Nancy Denkin	Veda Lewis	Judy Weiner	Mary Evelyn Arnold and David McFarland	Kathleen Gray and Dianne Lumiere
July 19	Tim Boeve	Elizabeth Palmer	Elizabeth Griego	Bev Pearson and Florence Porter	Patricia Henley and Ellen LaBruce
July 26	Nancy Denkin	Karen Boon		Alexanne Bassett and Sherrie Conrad	

First Congregational Church of Sonoma
252 West Spain St., Sonoma, CA 95476

www.sonomaucc.org

(707) 996-1328

contact@sonomaucc.org

Worship Service and Sunday School:

10:30am Sunday

Office Hours: Wednesday - Friday 8:30 am - 12:30 pm

Interim Minister: Alan Claassen, alan@sonomaucc.org

Music Director: Terry Lezama-Jensen, hj828@sbcglobal.net

Pianist: Sondra Cooper, sonn@vom.com

Sunday School Teacher: Emily Webber

Childcare Providers: Anna DeSmet & Natalie Baker

Office & Event Manager: Angela Ljung

Facilities Manager: Steve Cook

Pastor Emeritus: David McCracken

**We are an Open and Affirming
Earth Care Church**

Leadership Directory

Moderator,

Margie Mitchell, 996-3865, 337-9423,
mmitchell73@sonic.net

Vice Moderator

Ray Snipes, 999-1492, raysnipes@yahoo.com

Secretary

Lori Hutchinson, 935-7654, lori@hutchinsonconsulting.com

Treasurer

Candi Horton, 939-1687, csmucker@vom.com

Property & Finance

Bill Hutchinson, 935-7654, bill@hutchinsonconsulting.com

Worship

Nancy Denkin, 938-0673, ndenkin@vom.com
Brian Smucker, 939-1687, smucker@vom.com

Youth

Dotty Abbott, 996-5026, dotabbott@comcast.net

Outreach

Janice Mattison, 996-5124, janicemattison@gmail.com

Earth Care

John Donnelly, 933-8128, donnelyj63@gmail.com

Hospitality

Karen Boon, 815-7970, karenmarieboon@hotmail.com
Nancy Ladd, (415)608-7843, laddnancy@gmail.com

Caring Friends

Alan Claaasen, 996-1328

Nominating

Patricia Serota, 815-2759, patriciads@comcast.net

Stewardship

Patricia Henley, 938-5226, Bill Hutchinson, 935-7654,
Keith Ridenhour, 939-6949

Women's Fellowship

Judy Weiner, 938-1318, judyweiner@comcast.net

Historian

Patricia Serota, 815-2759, patriciads@comcast.net

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Faith Group

Endowment Committee

Mary Evelyn Arnold, 938-1578, mearnold@vom.com



3 - Barbara Nelson
6 - Sandy Tang
7 - Lucas Updegraff
8 - Garen Patterson
- George Percival
12 - Alan Kelchner
22 - Florence Porter

*If you know of a birthday that isn't
listed, please let the office know!*