



Volume 37 Issue 1

January 2018

Rev. Dr. Curran Reichert, Minister

Notes from the Pastor

Today is December 21, still in 2017. There is no doubt this has been one of the most difficult years on record for our country and for our county. The good news is this has also been a year that has brought our church family closer together.

We have wept, prayed, and celebrated together.

We have welcomed new people and said loving goodbyes to others.

We have memorialized, baptized, renewed vows, and broken bread.

This has been a year of change and yet somehow, together, we have found our footing. I find myself feeling particularly grateful to be among you these days. You are brave, faithful, hardworking, and loving, and that is the only answer to all that is challenging around us.

Today as we prepare for our winter solstice labyrinth walk, and the Sanctuary is being decorated for Christmas Eve services, I imagine those who will walk through these doors for the first time. I hope that what is so readily apparent to me will be easily felt by them as well. I pray they will be able to take a deep breath, to feel safe for a time, and to rest into the loving embrace they receive here.

In the new year we will continue to walk in the ways of Jesus. We will contribute our time and talents to building a strong congregation, and share our gifts with the community. We will seek to build bridges, to build up those who are in need of support, and to reach out in the name of love.

There is something very refreshing about putting all the holiday decorations away and giving the floor a good vacuuming. It signifies another year well-lived and a fresh beginning. I hope the holidays were good to you, but even if they weren't, let's set off together on a new day, a new year with fresh hope and a renewed spirit.

May God be with each one of us in powerful ways.

Happy New Year,

Curran



Message from the Moderator

We are welcoming in a New Year. If like me, you are weary of this year's political direction, the frequent disregard for the truth, the selfishness of some of the most wealthy in our country, the ignorance and hatred that have found common expression, and the political affiliations that have overridden ethical and just decisions – you know that there is much that our country needs to do to right itself. We begin 2018 knowing that America needs a course correction, a reversal of the upside down, inside out backwardness that has left us sick at heart. Despite these negatives, many of us find ourselves grateful to live in our corner of the world, even given the October fires and the devastation they left in the lives of so many whom we care about. But we can't hide here in the Sonoma Valley. We must find ways to contribute to the justice, equality, and future-orientation that Jesus modelled and taught.

What I hope for and pledge myself to helping create:

In 2018, I hope for a year when our daughters, granddaughters, sisters, mothers, and female friends can work in an environment that acknowledges their equality, **protects their dignity and independence**, and frees them from harassment. I hope that all politicians, executives, supervisors, and persons of power are held to moral standards that promote an open and supportive work environment.

In 2018, I hope for a peace that seeks to recognize the values, strengths, and priorities of all cultures and that shares a commitment to justice, health care, and equal opportunity for all in this country and throughout the world.

In 2018, I hope that we can turn the tide of environmental degradation toward fossil-free energy. I hope that the kids' climate change lawsuit is successful. I hope the country and especially our lawmakers come to realize that energy powered by wind, water, and sunlight will bring jobs, save money, and most importantly—protect the environment for our children and grandchildren.

In 2018, I hope that safety laws are enacted for gun control that will mitigate the mass violence that continues to plague us and that those who are contemplating violent acts find peace from their inner demons.

In 2018, I hope to see our teachers and pastors valued as much as our celebrities, and that all persons from the undocumented, to the undereducated, to the unemployed, and the incarcerated are given their best chance to live an open, accepting, joyful, and abundant life.

In 2018, I hope that America's addiction to personal and national indebtedness is changed through discipline, generosity, commitment to the common good, and a rejection of the goal to further fill the pockets of the most wealthy.

In 2018, I hope that the government will revisit the alarming decision to prohibit vocabulary from such venues as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) where language should be used to convey important conditions and reality—words like diversity, transgender, fetus, vulnerable, entitlement, science-based, and evidence-based.

In 2018, I hope that all church communities take leadership in becoming known for their acceptance of all and for leading discussion and action that insists powerfully on caring, compassion, and love and that rejects the use of the Bible as a weapon to exclude and denigrate others.

I long for the day when our national discourse is characterized by praying for and trusting one another, listening and learning from one another, and seeking to serve our community and the world rather than trying to profit from it. Most of all, I hope that empathy governs the interactions of all of us, from the way we treat others to the way global leaders shape our world. I long for *The Golden Rule* to prevail.

- Elizabeth Griego

Earth Care Committee

“Healing the Land” Blessing

Since the fires, our Earth Care Committee has reached out to those groups in our community who care for the land. On Sunday, January 7, at 1:30 p.m., the Committee and Rev. Curran have been invited by the Bouverie Preserve docents and staff to offer a “Healing the Land Blessing.”

Because of the fires, the Bouverie Preserve property is still too fragile to host the blessing so it will be held in the Jack London State Park. Please join the Earth Care Committee in holding our Bouverie friends and the land in your prayers during this time of recovery.

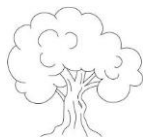
- Kathy Jewell

National Synod of the UCC Adopts New Earth Care Resolution

Last July, responding to President Trump’s withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accord, our national United Church of Christ (UCC) declared the current climate crisis as “an opportunity for which the church was born.” The resolution “The Earth is the Lord’s–Not Ours to Wreck” passed the national synod by 97%. It calls on clergy across the life of the church to preach about the moral obligation to protect God’s creation, and appeals to members to lead efforts to educate and advocate for legislation to reduce the human impact on the environment. It urges UCC congregations “to resist all expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure and demand new sources of renewable energy that are accessible to all communities.”

- John Donnelly

Monthly Hint from the Earth Care Committee



Be the Difference in Caring for Creation!

When shopping, have you ever considered HOW your food choices are PACKAGED? I’m beginning to look at that much more carefully! Organic lettuces in a heavy duty plastic container...hmmm!

Think I’ll go to the Farmer’s Market!

- Kathy Jewell

Hospitality

Our thanks to all of the Fellowship Team members who are creating a warm and welcoming time after the 10:30 a.m. service each Sunday. Here’s the schedule for January and February.

- Jan. 7** Hospitality Committee with a birthday cake
- Jan. 14** Team Six (Janet Engelbrecht, Elizabeth Palmer, Lori Barron, Dotty Abbott, Marge Evans, and Susan Harris)
- Jan. 21** Team Seven (Cozette Shenks, Kit Conforti, Kathy Jewell, Joan Brady, Lori Anderson, and Cheryl Franzini-Pegan)
- Jan. 28** Team Eight (Joan Howarth, Nancy Ladd, Jan Edwards, and Susan and Alan Kelchner)
- Feb. 11** Team One (Ellen LaBruce, Janice Mattison, Garen Patterson, Barbara Naslund, and Janet Volkman)
- Feb. 18** Team Two (Alexanne Bassett, Gitte Cochrane, Linda and Randy States, and Pat Noel)
- Feb. 25** Team Three (Margie Mitchell, Bev Pearson, Bill Hutchinson, Kim Pack, and Elizabeth and Bob Griego)

-Patricia Henley

Social Action Team

SO MANY GIFTS!

Not only did our friends and neighbors receive coats and toys in December, our many volunteers received hugs and thanks, plus the joy of giving! Thank you to all who organized and volunteered and donated items to the coat/toy give-a-way. We had over 600 coats and many more toys donated from you, several Bay Area churches and even Pixar! And we gave away over nine thousand dollars of gift cards to help make the holidays happier for many families! As Curran said, “*The donations were so generous! I was deeply touched by your open hearts and hard work. You treated people with such tenderness and made it a real shopping experience. I pray you will all continue to be blessed by a spirit of abundance- today you made the world a better place.*”

Thank you, thank you.

- Janice Mattison

Education Committee

WOMEN: SAVE THESE DATES!

Our 2nd Annual Women's Retreat at Santa Sabina will be held March 2-4, 2018. Details are still being made, but please watch for further information in the January worship bulletins.

A BIG thank you to outgoing committee members Kathleen Gray and Susan Harris for their many contributions. Welcome Margie Mitchell and Susan Kovalik, eager to join the committee in service to our church community. Yea team!!!!

- Kathy Jewell

Worship Committee

The Worship Committee recommends the following "Sunday Plus" afternoon programs open to the community:

- **breathexperience Breath Workshop, Sunday, January 21, 4-5:30 p.m.** Join Margot Biestman in the Sanctuary for the final breath workshop This is a free event and open to all.
- **Threshold Choir, Sunday, Jan. 28, 4 p.m.** Singing circles in the Sanctuary for all levels of singing ability, even none.
- **Mindfulness Workshop, Sunday, February 4, 4 p.m.** Eve Decker returns with her popular Mindfulness workshop in the Sanctuary.

- Janet Volkman

West Spain Thrift Shop

The Thrift Shop closed in mid-December for the holidays. It is being completely emptied, cleaned, and restocked, and will **reopen at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 18.**

The workroom will be open to accept donations from **9:30 and 10:30 a.m. (between the two morning services) on Sunday, Jan. 7.**

Donations will be accepted in the workroom at the usual times (**Monday, Tuesday, and Friday, 9-11 a.m.**) **starting Monday, Jan. 8.**

It literally takes a village to keep the Thrift Shop humming along. We need:

- Help doing touch-up painting while the shop is closed (if interested, contact Patricia Serota, 815-2759, patriciads@comcast.net)
- Help taking unwanted goods to FISH and Goodwill (contact Cozette Shenks, 935-1916, cozshenks@comcast.net)
- A volunteer to be the third person in the shop on reopening day, Jan. 18 (contact Patricia Serota)
- A volunteer to work once a week in the workroom, sorting and pricing donations from 9-11 a.m. on Mondays (contact Patricia Serota)

Several Thrift Shop volunteers helped with the recent Coat Drive in the Springs Community Hall, and our thanks go to them and to everyone who was involved in this wonderful event. We were glad the Thrift Shop was able to contribute to the Coat Drive. Special thanks to Curran, for helping us help those in need in Sonoma Valley.

- Patricia Serota, Thrift Shop manager

ANNUAL MEETING • SUNDAY, JANUARY 21

The Annual Meeting to report on the outcome of the 2017 budget and the projected 2018 budget shall be held after the 10:30 a.m. service on Sunday, January 21. This meeting includes a **potluck and communal meal**. Please bring a dish to share based on the first letter of your last name.

A-G Salad • H-N Main Dish • O-Z Dessert

As an Earth Care church, we encourage using local, organic, and sustainably sourced ingredients, and welcome anything you want to share. (Please label your dish if it is vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, or dairy-free.)

Help is needed with setup and cleanup: please sign up with Lolo Chambers, Kit Conforti, or Linda States

Do we want to
participate in the
2018
SF Pride Parade?



For the past five years, our church has sponsored the Church Ladies & Gents for Gay Rights contingent in the San Francisco Pride Parade, which is always held on the last Sunday in June. It's been an amazing experience, showing our love and support for our LGBTQI brothers and sisters with enthusiasm and humor, and the Church Ladies' "dance routines" have been a crowd favorite. However, the number of people participating in our contingent was down a bit in 2017 compared to 2016. So we're wondering if this is something people still want to do each year.

The 2018 SF Pride Parade is scheduled for Sunday, June 24. Early bird registration (the least expensive fee) is typically due in March or April, and last year it cost us \$130. They have not announced the fees or early registration deadline for 2018, but before we pay the fee we want to be sure we will have enough participants in 2018.

We're looking for at least 20 people who can commit to being there on June 24, 2018. We know plans may change during the year for a lot of different reasons, but we'd like to know that there's a core group of people who think they will be able to march that day.

If you want more details or can commit to be part of our parade contingent on June 24, please contact Patricia Henley (707-227-8203, patriciasonoma@gmail.com). Thanks!

- Patricia Henley

Curran's Schedule

Curran will be out of the office on the following days:

Jan. 8 – Jan. 15 (*Rabbi Steve preaching Sunday, Jan.14*)

Jan. 22 – Jan. 24

Jan. 29 – Jan. 31

Feb. 3 – Feb. 5 (*Alan Kelchner preaching Sunday, Feb. 4*)

Feb. 16 – Feb. 19 (*Veda Lewis preaching Sunday, Feb. 18*)

**For the most current FCC event information
and meeting space availability**

Check out the FCC online calendar



**Access our website www.sonomaucc.org
then select "Calendar" at the top of the page.**



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 Doormann
- 30 – Ben Garcia
- 31 – Violet Webber
- 31 – Janice Mattison

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

First Congregational Church of Sonoma
252 West Spain Street
Sonoma, CA 95476