



The Pine Tree

The Congregational Church of San Mateo
United Church of Christ

225 Tilton Avenue • San Mateo, California 94401

650 343-3694 • email: info@ccsm-ucc.org • website: www.ccsm-ucc.org

Vol. 58

Issue #12 • July 27-Aug. 30, 2009

Sensational Summer

Sunday, July 26 Sermon: *Let the Club Do the Work*,
Golf Group leading worship

AUGUST: SERMON SERIES: FOUR MORE AGREEMENTS

Sunday, Aug. 2 The Fifth Agreement: Penny Nixon

Sunday, Aug. 9 The Sixth Agreement: Penny Nixon

Weekdays, Aug. 10-14, Vacation Bible School

Sunday, Aug. 16 The Seventh Agreement: Rev. Roland
Stringfellow (see page 4)

Saturday, Aug. 22 **Rummage Sale, Teachers Mtg.**

Sunday, Aug. 23 Eighth Agreement: Penny Nixon
Leadership Meeting

Saturday, Aug. 29 **Church Retreat**, Rabbi Jhos Singer

Sunday, Aug. 30 The Potential for Intimacy, Part 1,
Steve Naylor

Sunday, Sept. 6 The Potential for Intimacy, Part 2,
Steve Naylor

Summer Speaker Series

Sunday Mornings, 9:30-10:15 a.m.

Yellow flyers in the Narthex (the entrance room to the sanctuary) have the details about the speaker and topic.

Margeth Barrett *World Intellectual Property Wars*, July 26

Lauren Speeth *Poverty, Inequality and Faith*, Aug. 2

Rebecca Ruedy *Sustainable Healthcare*, Aug. 9

Phil Holderbien *From Fundy to Fun! A Journey*, Aug. 16



CCSM's July 19th SUMMER PICNIC at Coyote Point Park.

Notes from Penny

Summer is such a great time for renewal. We're about mid-way through the summer, and I look back with gratitude and forward with joy. Yesterday was the church picnic, and over 90 people came and enjoyed the wonderful weather, good food and fun activities. I loved the water balloon throwing contest. Later on, I realized that water balloons are an apt metaphor for life. You never know when something gets thrown at you what the result will be. The water balloon can break and get you soaking wet, or it can just bounce off and roll around on the ground. Some people loved getting wet and splashed; others did their very best to avoid it. And in it all, there was lot of laughter.

I've read some interesting books this summer, and most of them I would recommend—depending on your particular likes: there's *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein. The narrator is a dog and everything is seen through his eyes. It has some wonderful life lessons and truths in it. Then there's *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, a post-apocalyptic sci-fi setting that is all about power and control (I couldn't put it down). Then Geraldine Brooks' *People of The Book*, which is inspired by the true story of a mysterious codex known as the Sarajevo Haggadah through five centuries of history. And my favorite summer read thus far, Abraham Veghese's epic novel, *Cutting for Stone* which is a beautifully written and wonderfully crafted story set in Ethiopia and traces the lives of twins born of a secret union and their intertwined journey of love, medicine and redemption.

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An Introductory Letter From Our Rabbi-In-Residence

Shalom chaverim-Hello friends,

I will be beginning a five-month stint with CCSM as your rabbi-in-residence in August, thanks to the efforts of Reverend Nixon and your Worship & Spiritual Life Ministry and with the approval and support of your Board of Ministry. While I am delighted, honored and excited about beginning this relationship, I cannot begin to tell you how utterly improbable it is. I have spent a good deal of time sitting with an ear-to-ear grin on my face while contemplatively scratching my head.

First of all, that CCSM is dedicated enough to interfaith dialogue to implement this program is trailblazing and mindblowing, to say the least. Secondly, that I should be the first cleric-in-residence

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Youth & Family News

Church School News

Summer Church School continues all summer! Each Sunday we are focusing on another aspect of God's Creation. Come see our creation posters in Kloss Hall.

All children attending church are welcome to come to Summer Church School. Each Sunday after the Children's Moment, we meet on the rug in Kloss Hall for stories and song. As the activities begin older children stay in Kloss Hall and the younger children 3 years old through 2nd grade come to the 1-2 grade classroom for crafts. It's all fun and creative, so please join us!

- July 26 *God created living plants!*
Aug 2 *God made the ocean and sea creatures!*
Aug 9 *God created the birds of the air!*
Aug 16 *God created the animals living on the land!*
Aug 23 *God created food! Make lunches for SF Urban Ministry*
Aug 30 *God created a wonderful diversity of People!*
Sept 7 *God created rainbows!*

We still need a few teachers for August. Talk to Betsy Woodward or Shirley McKinnie if you can volunteer to teach one this summer.

Vacation Bible School Is Nearly Full Register Your Child Now!

Registration is closed August 3! We have the wonderful theme of *God's Green Earth*. Each day we will focus on becoming more ecological in our lives—composting, recycling, sharing food and clothing and finally understanding that there is enough for all.

We need a few items for Vacation Bible School!

First, tree limbs/logs at least three inches in diameter to make "wood cookie" name tags, green tarps, large cardboard pieces and small clay pots. If anyone has a portable composter that they are not using, could we borrow it for the week of August 10-14th? Just call Betsy Woodward, 343-3694 if you have a question or supplies.

Our Vacation Bible School is filled with wonderful Bible stories, fun songs, great art, inventive science and just being God's people. It is a don't miss occasion! For more information, please contact Betsy Woodward, bwoodward@ccsm-ucc.org. Here are the details:

Time: 9:00-12:30 p.m., Age: 3 –11 years.

Cost: \$75 with scholarships available.

Applications in CE hallway and Church office.

CCSM's July 19th SUMMER PICNIC Coyote Point Park



Church School Teachers' Meeting

Join us **Saturday, August 22, 9:30-11:30 a.m. in the Fireplace Room**. Autumn is just around the corner and we have oodles of children who wish to come to Church School. So let's get together to plan and strategize the best way to teach our multi-faith curriculum—*One Tree, Many Roots!* Brunch goodies and childcare will be provided. Please bring your calendar and old notebooks! There are still a few spaces for teachers. Just find Betsy Woodward and talk it over with her.

Are you looking for a way to be involved? Become a Church School teacher! We have a wonderful Church School program here—lively kids, a good curriculum, fun teams and a flexible teaching schedule. WE NEED YOUR HELP! Our Church School classes are an opportunity for weekly Bible study, interacting with great kids and enjoying creative activities. The curriculum is prepared for you, and each classroom is stocked with supplies. Each class becomes a little community as they read and pray, discuss and create, enjoy and play. We are looking for a few new teachers at every level to join the veterans. Each teacher teaches about one third of the Sundays...and you can choose your Sundays! It is a wonderful way to give back to your church and get to meet some awesome kids who will run up to you and say "Hello!" If you are interested, please talk to Jennifer Jacoby-Yeh or Betsy Woodward.

Congratulations Graduates!

Senior High Graduates

Continuing Further Education:

Lauren Foster: From San Mateo High, to University of Pennsylvania

Nick Garcia: From Aragon High, to Sonoma State.

Kathleen Kane: Home School High, to Cañada College.

Stephanie Litz: From Aragon High, to College of San Mateo.

Alexandra Schratte: From Aragon High, to College of San Mateo.

Ryan Schwandt: From Aragon High, to Miami of Ohio

College Graduates:

Anthony Berk, BA from Chapman College

Andy Fyfe, BA from University of Colorado

Andy Kane, BA from UC Santa Barbara

Lily Hanson, BA from San Francisco State

Martin Hanson, BA from UC Santa Cruz

Marie Nightingale, BA from UC Santa Barbara

Kara Ortega, BS from UC Davis

Post Graduate

Ensign John Hayashi graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) in Monterey last month, and received his Masters degree in mechanical engineering. Next he'll be attending nuclear school in Charleston, South Carolina, in preparation for his career as a submariner. Congratulations, John!

Wanted! Mid High Volunteer Leader

CCSM is looking for spirited volunteer youth leaders to help organize and meet with the Mid High youth group. Mid High meets twice a month (usually on Sunday evenings) to grow in spirit, work on social justice projects, and spend time in community and friendship. Getting involved with the youth is a fantastic way to get involved in the church community and help our young people to become active and engaged in church and the community. Our young people bring so much to our congregation; getting to better know some of the vibrant young personalities at CCSM deepens everyone's connections and grows us all! If you're interested in helping to lead Mid High, please contact Joliene Wade at joliene.wade@gmail.com.



Senior High Fresno Mission Trip

By Steve Naylor

The Senior High Outreach Trip to work at the Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministry was a transformational success. During our week we learned about the struggle Laotian and Hmong people faced during the Laotian Civil War, more commonly known as the *Secret War*, from 1953-75. We learned the challenges of learning and teaching the English language to adults. We experienced the joy of working with children through a Vacation

General Synod 2009 in Grand Rapids

By Steve Naylor

From June 25 to 30, I was in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with four thousand other UCCers at the United Church of Christ General Synod, our bi-annual national conference where our church gathers to celebrate our larger family and attend to the business end of our direction and governance. I have to say that I am super excited that we are a United Church of Christ congregation! Synod is an event every person in the UCC should experience at least once in your life.

One of the speakers I heard was Barbara Brown Taylor and she asked us, "What narrative are you writing with the way you live your life and is it enough to save someone's life or even your own?" This is a powerful, searching, and profound question that still has me probing the depths of my thoughts. As I reach into my life and try to find an answer to the question, I am drawn back to the prophetic sermon Rev. Otis Moss III, Senior Pastor at Trinity UCC in Chicago, gave at our opening worship. Rev. Moss spoke about how God is still speaking in the lives and history of our faith, country, and personal lives. Only God can place a period! He passionately and poetically talked about how throughout history human beings have tried to place a period where God wants to place a comma. When Moses arrived at the Red Sea, God placed a comma and parted that Sea. God placed a comma when Jesus rose from dead, when Gandhi stood up against non-violence, when Rosa Parks didn't sit in the back of the bus, when MLK Jr. had a dream, when Barack Obama became the first black president, when the UCC ordained the first woman, African-American, and a gay man.

When I look forward with faith, knowing God has not placed a period on my life, I know God is still speaking through me to write a narrative that will save someone's life and even my own. Praise God!

Bible School. We bonded as a group during evening discussions about refugees, immigration, and our Gospel message of love. We finished our week with a spectacular rafting trip down the Kings River and a pool party hosted by the Fresno Congregational Church, and we participated in their Sunday worship. God is good, all the time! Thank you for your generous prayers and support. The kingdom is alive through us!



CCSM Rummage Sale Aug. 22

By Rosemarie Pero

Yes, we are having a rummage sale on **Saturday, August 22, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Kloss Hall**

Tell your neighbors and friends that we are **accepting donations, starting August 2 until August 16**, of adult and children's clothing, especially the latter, new or used, clean and in good condition; also, house wares, small appliances, linens, school supplies, small furniture, lamps, etc. All must be in good working order. Please, no books. Proceeds will benefit the Ministry of Mission and Social Justice. Downsize, de-clutter and get ready for the fall season. Save the date and spread the word!

Volunteers are needed with many aspects of the sale: pricing, advertising, sorting, set up, selling, and clean up. For questions or to sign up, contact Rosemarie Pero, rsmrpero@yahoo.com or call 343-4219.

An Update on Church Finances

by Pearly Masters

We thank you all for your continued financial support, and your generosity with time and talent in the smooth functioning of the ministries and events of the church. With the economic downturn and the concurrent hardships endured by many families, we think it is timely for members and friends to understand the financial picture of CCSM. With God's grace, CCSM is financially stable and on a firm footing.

The summer months are always a bit challenging when it comes to cash flow. The church's operating expenses are dependent on the timely payment of pledges and donations by friends and members, and they support 75% of the monthly operating expenses of the budget. About 20% of people who pledged have contributed less than 25% of their annual pledge, thus skewing the monthly finances. People pay their pledges in different ways. The quarterly pledge and donations reports are being mailed this week, so please take a look at your statement and if you are able to "catch up," it would greatly help our cash flow. Circumstances change, so if you need to adjust your pledge you can speak confidentially to Rev. Nixon, Mark Meyers, treasurer, or Pearly Masters, administrator. We will keep you informed about the church finances based on any additional information we receive.

Again, thank you for making all the ministries and outreach of CCSM possible.

Volunteers Needed for IHN Shelter

CCSM will serve a turn in the IHN (Interfaith Hospitality Network) rotating homeless shelter for families from **Sunday, Aug. 30 through Sunday, Sept. 6**. We will need about 75 volunteers to set up tents and beds on August 30, take them down on September 6, take away bedding to be laundered on 9/6, and provide dinner, hosting, children's homework/activities, and stay overnight throughout the week. There are many opportunities to be the hands, feet, and face of Christ to these families. Contact Linda Kilby (299-1531, kilbyl@sutterhealth.org) or Joan Kilroe (346-7230, joroe42@yahoo.com) for further information or to sign up.

SAVE THE DATE For Upcoming Events

Church Retreat: *Divine Paradox-Judaism 101*

Join **Jhos Singer**, our *rabbi-in-residence*, on **Saturday, August 29, at 9:00-1:00 p.m.**, for a half-day immersion into the Jewish mind and culture. Explore the essence of Judaism, which is a holy paradox. We'll also learn about the upcoming High Holidays. Childcare provided. Cost: \$20 includes lunch.

Homecoming Sunday is September 13!

On that day our regular church school classes will begin again, and our Homecoming picnic will welcome all of back from our journeys. Please put it on your calendar!

Worship Workshop Live! with Marcia McFee

Saturday, September 19, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. here at CCSM

CCSM is hosting this lively and informative workshop to deepen and broaden our understanding of worship. The day will include some historical and theological background, as well as demonstrating a variety of models and experiences for worship in diverse styles, from traditional to contemporary.

Marcia McFee is a nationally recognized dynamic worship leader and workshop coach who was the keynote speaker for our UCC Asilomar conference in 2006. Members of our worship team attended her workshop last summer. Go to www.marciamcfee.com to learn more about Marcia and her work.

Workshop is free for CCSM members. Non-members registration is \$35 and includes lunch. Contact Pam Larsen at plarsen@ccsm-ucc.org to reserve your spot. Come to learn, experience and be energized for worship on September 19!

Membership Exploration Class At CCSM

This is an exciting time in the life of CCSM, and many new people are becoming part of this growing spiritual community.

A number of people have indicated that they are interested in joining the church. We are planning to have a membership class following worship on **Sunday, August 16th, from 12-2:00 p.m.** Lunch will be provided. Come and get to know others who are new to this community and find out what CCSM is all about. Penny, Steve and Jerri will be leading the class. Please RSVP to Pam Larsen at plarsen@ccsm-ucc.org if you plan to attend so we can prepare the right amount of food. Please indicate if childcare is needed, and we will happily provide it.

Summer Time Activities Continue

New Faith in Film Group

Do you enjoy talking about films—looking for inspiration and finding your heart touched, moved, and yes, at times becoming connected to your faith through the images and story of film? Then this is a group for you facilitated by Jerri Handy and Lynnelle Bilsey. Join the group for the first movie **Driving Lessons** on **Sunday, July 26 at 1:00 p.m. in the Buckham room**. Bring your lunch or something to share with the group and plan to stay for a discussion following the film. If you have questions, please contact Jerri at the church office (343-3694) or Lynnelle at (342-1795).

Driving Lessons : All Ben wanted was a job...all Evie needed was a friend: Leonard Maltin writes “this film is funny, poignant, and completely original.” Winner at the 2006 Moscow International Film Festival, *Driving Lessons* is “one of the year’s most entertaining and unexpected delights,” writes Pete Hammond, *MAXIM*.

The Monday Night Book Group

We will not meet again until September, but we have chosen a good book. It is *Shakespeare’s Wife* by Germaine Greer and it should be in paperback the first week of August, Find the book and read it so you can add your thoughts to our lively discussion on **Monday, Sept 28, 7:30-9:00 p.m., Fireplace Room**.

Blanketeers Quilters

Join us at our meeting on **Aug. 1, Saturday in the Buckham Room from 1-4:00 p.m.** Please bring your Churn Dash squares and we will put our quilt together. All are welcome! Call Linda Skromme for details 578-8655.

August Music at CCSM

Special music continues this summer at CCSM with a **drop-in Gospel Choir**. Join us on Sunday morning for rehearsal at 9:15 am and sing for the service at 10:30 a.m. during the month of August. You don’t have to be a committed or regular choir member...just a desire to lift your voice and praise the Lord in song!

In addition to making a joyful noise—if singing isn’t your cup-of-tea, but you have music in your heart, give Beginning Bells a try. **Rehearsals are Thursday evenings at 7 -7:45 p.m.** upstairs in the library/bell room.

Definitely a stress reliever, ringing bells or singing on Sunday morning will bring a smile to you face and joy in your heart. If you have any questions, please call Lynnelle at (342-1795).

Staff Office Schedule:

Betsy on vacation from July 22 to 28, Aug. 14 to 18

Jerri on vacation July 27 to August 5

Steve on retreat July 29 to 31

Pearly on vacation August 3 to 7

NOTE: Jerri Handy will coordinate congregational care in July while Lani is on vacation. Contact Jerri at intern@ccsm-ucc.org or call her at 503 421-5439.

Joys & Concerns

Congratulations...

Carl and Evelyn Loschenkohl celebrated their 68th wedding anniversary this week. Cards are welcome at 1899 Edinburgh Street, San Mateo, 94403.

Congratulations to **Erin Leydig** and **Chris Stallings** on their wedding on July 12, 2009!

Prayers of Comfort...

Lani Leydig’s brother-in-law Mike Packard died Saturday, June 30, in an accident. Our prayers are with the entire family: Mike was married to Cathy and had three children Stacy, Bret, and Tyler.

Prayers of Healing...

We surround **Lynnelle Bilsey** with prayers for healing as she continues her treatments.

Jon Karesh is finally home from the hospital. Healing is slow. Please keep Jon in your prayers.

Shaun O’Brien is healing from an infection. Please keep the **O’Brien** family in your prayers.

Pearly Master’s brother, Rayomond, is fighting cancer and related problems, but he is doing better. Please continue to keep the family in your prayers.

Carl and Evelyn Loschenkohl need our prayers. Evelyn struggles with healing her legs, and Carl needs care as well.

Diane Griffith has been in and out of the hospital with several health concerns over the last month. Please keep the whole family in your prayers. It is encouraging to see Diane with high spirits even as there are multiple health concerns.

Joan Kilroe’s daughter-in-law Gina is being put on dialysis and is now eligible to be placed on the kidney transplant list.

Judy Hemmer’s daughter, Robin Vaughn, had surgery. Continue to pray for her in her recovery.

Karen Olsen Stern’s friend, Bill Tarr has made it through the crisis but there is a long recovery ahead. Healing prayers are still needed.

Edith Alvarenga has returned to work after six weeks. She continues on the road to recovery from pneumonia.

Bilsey Recognized at National Conference

Our own CCSM member **Lynelle Bilsey** was an invited guest speaker for two different events during the **2009 National Conference on Volunteers & Service** that was held at San Francisco's Moscone Center this past June. Lynelle was invited to present as part of a panel discussion on *Skills Based Volunteering* hosted by the National Hand's On Network and was also the co-presenter along with Sean Rosas from the Salesforce.com Foundation at the conference's *Corporate Volunteer Council* networking luncheon. Salesforce was the highlight of the luncheon in a discussion focused on "building cross-partner relationships & volunteerism." There was even an entire day devoted to Faith Based Volunteerism.

One of the big take-away's from the conference was the discussion about our country's new-found fire and commitment to service. The challenge given to each attendee at the conference was GET READY NOW! Speaking as a volunteer manager and motivator, Lynelle's message to all is that CCSM is a great place to get connected, get involved and express your faith as a volunteer in our community. Jump in and start making a difference in our community!

Notes from Penny

Continued from page 1

In August, I will be back in the pulpit and building on our last summer series, *The Four Agreements with Four More Agreements*. These agreements will offer practical and spiritual advice for living in joy in the dailiness of life and for showing up fully in all our relationships. I hope you will mark your calendars for our retreat at the end of August with our rabbi-in-residence, Jhos Singer. There's a letter of introduction from him today—with more of his fascinating story to follow.

From Our Rabbi-In-Residence

Continued from page 1

is what, in Jewish, we call "chutzpah-dik," or bold and ever so slightly nuts. I am, shall we say, somewhat unusual, in both my pedigree and my approach to Judaism.

Technically I am a *convert*, that is to say that I entered the covenant through the back door. That said, I would argue that I was born Jewish, just not into a Jewish family. My interest in Judaism started when I was about eight and has never wavered nor waned in the 42 years since. I was a member in good standing of many congregations as a youth and young adult, where I soaked in Jewish praxis, music and spiritual culture. No question about it, Judaism is my home and family. So I'm adopted, not a problem, families happen in all kinds of magical and mysterious ways.

When I tell you more of my story in the next *Pine Tree* you'll see why I am so amazed that I would be invited to act as *rabbi-in-residence* for a Congregational Church such as CCSM. In the meantime, I think we can all look forward to some interesting learning together. Under any circumstance, I am thrilled and greatly looking forward to this spiritual adventure. Here's something I think we already agree on: The Lord surely does work in mysterious ways, and amen to that!

Blessings—Maggid Jhos Singer

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Rev. Roland Stringfellow August 16 Guest Speaker

Rev. Roland Stringfellow earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and a Master of Science degree in Counseling from Indiana University. He later earned a Master of Arts degree in Ministry from Grace Theological Seminary and in 1990 became a licensed



minister in the Baptist Church. In 2005, Roland was ordained with the Metropolitan Community Church and in 2006 he earned his Master of Divinity from the Pacific School of Religion with a certificate in Religion and Sexuality. He has worked as a pastor in Indiana and California. In addition to all his work within church contexts, Roland also worked in the field education in a variety of capacities—teacher, guidance counselor, college advisor, and vice-principal.

Currently Rev. Stringfellow is continuing his work in creating dialogs on the topic of LGBT equality with church congregations and in religious institutions in his role as the Coordinator of the Coalition of Welcoming Congregations in the Bay Area of California with the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Sexuality on the campus of Pacific School of Religion. He has conducted multiple workshops on Marriage Equality concerning the role of people of color and communities of faith play in this local, state and national debate.



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A newsletter for the families & friends of the
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