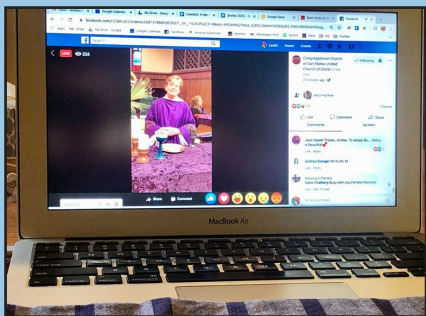


# CCSM PINE TREE

VOL. 69, #5 | SUMMER 2020 • ONLINE

This is our second online-only edition of the Pine Tree as the Bay Area continues to shelter in place as of March 16, 2020 due to the Coronavirus pandemic; the printing, folding, and mailing team is not able to gather. CCSM continues to operate remotely; to quote Moderator Dave Chandler from the previous issue: "The church is not empty, just deployed." This issue contains an abundance of evidence of that deployment and continues to try and capture a sense of this unprecedented time for the sake of posterity.



## SUNDAY WORSHIP

July 19 was CCSM's 19th online worship service since sheltering in place. Though we cannot be physically present,

beloved community is here! Services are broadcast live on [Facebook](#) and [Youtube](#). You do not need a Facebook account to access CCSM's Facebook page. If you can't join at 10:30, you can watch later; the services are archived on our [Sermons](#) page, as well as posted on Facebook.



[Click](#) to hear Rev. Penny Nixon's response to the murder of George Floyd in a message to the CCSM congregation on May 31, 2020

## BLACK LIVES MATTER

## THE YEAR WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

We are nearly 5 months into a pandemic that has altered our world in unimaginable ways. We are growing and changing in ways we might have previously thought impossible. But here we are. Still meeting online, still finding ways to love and serve each other, still cultivating, expanding and deepening beloved community. We are blessed to be growing in numbers as people join in our virtual congregation from around the country.



Earlier this month, our national administration deemed churches and other houses of worship "essential" services and demanded that they be opened "right now". However, we at CCSM are not returning to in-person worship anytime soon. It remains too risky, and the health and well-being of our congregation is my number one priority. We will continue to abide by the expertise of the scientists and medical professionals and our own collective wisdom. As I write this, the number of Covid-19 cases in San Mateo County continue to rise, and the state of California (as of July 13) has the second highest number of cases in the country at almost 325,000.

In the midst of all of this, we will continue to "be church"—drawing on our faith, supporting one another, and finding meaning and hope wherever we are able. We are a resilient people and this "sheltering-in-place" has allowed us time for self-reflection. This has been especially true for white people as many have experienced our eyes being opened to the pandemic of racism in our country and its persistent and insidious daily (and generational) impact on the lives of black people. Later in this newsletter you will read how many people at CCSM are being trans-

*continued on p. 2*



Congregational  
Church of san mateo

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650 343-3694 | CCSM-UCC.ORG | FACEBOOK.COM/CCSM.UCC

## THE YEAR WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

(cont. from p. 1)

formed into anti-racists by our eyes being opened through education and the awareness of our own complicity in an unjust system.

At the beginning of the year I wrote that 2020 was "going to be a good year." Looking back, seven months later, I see I chose the wrong adjective. I am not sure what adjective now describes our reality, but the one that keeps coming to mind is transformational. We have been pressed into a crucible and we do not yet know how we will change—but be assured, we will not be the same.

What if 2020 isn't cancelled?

What if 2020 is the year we've been waiting for?

A year so uncomfortable, so painful, so scary, so raw — that it finally forces us to grow.

A year that screams so loud, finally awakening us from our ignorant slumber.

A year we finally accept the need for change.

Declare change. Work for change. Become the change.

A year we finally band together, instead of pushing each other further apart.

2020 isn't cancelled, but rather the most important year of them all.

—leslie dwight  
June 3, 2020

Yes, our 2020 reality is overwhelming. But we will get through it, together.

As this lovely Facebook post put it:

*Sometimes I just want it to stop. Talk of COVID, protests, looting, brutality. I lose my way. I become convinced that this "new normal" is real life. Then I meet an 87-year-old who talks of living through polio, diphtheria, Vietnam protests and yet is still enchanted with life. He seemed surprised when I said that 2020 must be especially challenging for him. "No," he said slowly, looking me straight in the eyes. "I learned a long time ago to not see the world through the printed headlines, I see the world through the people that surround me. I see the world with the realization that we love big. Therefore, I just choose to write my own headlines. **"HUSBAND LOVES WIFE TODAY."** **"FAMILY DROPS EVERYTHING TO COME TO GRANDMA'S BEDSIDE."** He patted my hand. **"OLD MAN MAKES NEW FRIEND."** His words collide with my worries, freeing them from the tether I had been holding tight. They float away. I am left with a renewed spirit. My headline now reads **"WOMAN OVERWHELMED BY THE SPIRIT OF KINDNESS AND THE REMINDER THAT OUR CAPACITY TO LOVE IS NEVER-ENDING."***

May it be so.

Love,  
Penny

## STREAMLINING CCSM'S STREAMING

Chuck Rosenthal and Conrad are in the sanctuary practicing with the new cameras and monitors in preparation for the upgraded recording which will begin sometime in August or September. Once all the settings and operational details are worked out, the system will be more streamlined and polished. But this is a view from ground zero of all the exciting, new production work that is going on at CCSM. Stay tuned for updates!



CCSM has been blessed to have been provided resources to upgrade our video and audio systems to make the best of this forced remoteness. A COVID upside has been all the people who have been able to worship and participate with us from afar. Incorporating some new technology seems to be a good investment for our ability to continue to be a spiritual hub for many over the long haul.

# CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

## youth news...

by Sheryl Johnson

These past months have been busy for children, youth, and families—though in some ways, less busy as many extracurricular activities have been canceled and some kids found school to take less time than before. That has helped us have quite consistent participation from a number of our kids and youth.

June 2020 marked **graduation** for a number of our kids and youth—it was wonderful to celebrate them all in worship and to give **scholarships** to Christopher Martin and Angelo LaCommarre-Soto, two graduating high school seniors. We were also pleased to offer a graduate scholarship to Sara Graves, a continuing medical school student. 2020 is certainly a strange year to graduate, but we are so proud of all in our CCSM community. Thank you to all teachers, educators, child care providers, parents, students, bus drivers, administrators, babysitters—this has been an unprecedented year and your work in service of education and young people is such a blessing!

Our **main weekly programs** for kids and youth have been Godly Play, Kids' Liturgical Arts, Youth Group Social Time (Friday Nights), and Youth Group Discussion (Sundays after the service). For **youth social time**, we have had trivia nights, game nights, paint nights, watched and discussed movies, completed escape rooms, done scavenger hunts, and more! Our **discussion** has focused on connecting liturgical season (Lent, Easter, Pentecost) and the scripture for each Sunday to contemporary issues in the news and our lives.

We have also continued **60 Minutes**, our high school discussion group, every month. Discussion topics have included the pandemic and our political situation—very timely topics! Our programs have all migrated to Zoom very smoothly. Thank you SO much to our dedicated staff and volunteer teachers and leaders: Lily Gonzalez, Shannon McEntee, Libby Barnard, Colleen Castillo, Bill Dunbar, Sarah Block, Dave Olson, Mike Mullery, and Laura Keating—plus so many others! Thank you all SO much for your wonderful support of our children and youth in this strange season. We wish you rest and renewal over the summer and thank you for what you do on behalf of all of CCSM!

We have also been having fun staying connected through **postal mail!** We have sent out mail and cards to our kids and youth and have loved receiving some responses back. We have also particularly had fun sending out crafts and activity packs to our Wednesday service kids and youth—we have so much creativity in our community.

Over the summer, we continue with a **variety of programs**. The United Church of Christ's National Youth Event is offered in part online in July, youth group continues, and our youth discussion focuses on interviewing and getting to know young adults in the CCSM community, asking them about their faith journey, their upbringing, how they are involved in church now, what their faith means to them, how they chose their vocation/volunteer/social justice commitments, and much more. This is also be a great opportunity

Click here for our **RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES** page to find lots of activities and ideas!

to develop relationships between our youth and young adults—thank you to our guest speakers!

Our **summer kids' program** this year is focused on Noah's Ark, climate change, species extinction, caring for the natural world, and reflecting on the ways that the earth cares for us as humans. This is a wonderful chance to continue to develop relationships and deepen our theme of caring for the earth. It is offered every Sunday at 9:45am on Zoom and all are welcome!

This will be a very different summer for a lot of our families, but a lot has migrated online. Several summer camps offer online or "camp in a box" programs that are done at home at your own pace. I know a lot of kids and youth are excited for a break from school and from so much screen time as well. It has also been wonderful to have several kids record videos or send in photos that have been included in worship. They have shared words of welcome, scripture, artwork, poetry, and music so far! We'd love to have more youth and kids offering leadership in this way so please be in touch with Sheryl if you would be willing or interested.

— Sheryl

## HELLO CCSM!

It's hard to believe I've had the privilege of being a part of this church for almost 5 months. I feel lucky to have stumbled into this beautiful community, though perhaps "serendipity" is a more appropriate word. Sheryl and I met when we just happened to paired up for an independent study my first semester at the Graduate Theological Union. Since then, it has been a privilege to learn from her, and to watch this church move forward with grace and determination during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the things I regret most about this pandemic is that it has stolen away my own ability to deepen my in-person relationships with our middle and highschoolers. I'm an extremely relational person— "hanging out" is what I do best! However, under Sheryl's leadership, I've created an alternative way to continue being a part of the lives of our youth. Every fourth Sunday of the month, I'll be leading a Zoom group specifically for highschoolers called "Contenders," based on the story in Genesis where Jacob wrestles with the angel. In the story, Jacob's name is changed to "Israel," which translates to "Contends with God." This group will be a place where we can wrestle together with things we've heard in church or the Bible that intrigue, confuse, or even upset us. It's a place to ask questions. Our first topic, chosen by our own youth, will be "If Jesus was a Christian, how could he have also been a Jew?" I'm so excited to kick off Contenders and see what God does in that space. And if you have a highschooler in your household, I hope they can join us so we can wrestle with this stuff together! I can't wait to meet more of you in person when that day finally comes.

Wishing peace and good health to all,

Laura Keating

# WHAT CAN WE DO?

On four Monday evenings in June, over 104 people from CCSM joined in a ZOOM class entitled, *What Can We Do?* The objectives of the class were to educate us on the **ROOTS AND REALITIES OF RACISM** and how our whiteness protected us from those realities, and how uninformed most of us were about residential segregation, mass incarceration and our own white privilege. Here are some quotes from a number of people responding to the question, **HOW HAS THIS CLASS CHANGED YOU?**

The class has made me stop viewing news stories of treatment of African-Americans as discrete events, and move toward seeing racism as infecting every aspect of society and everyone who lives in this society. It's not a matter of outrage today and life as usual tomorrow; these injustices continue and poison each of us whether or not we pay attention.

This class has helped me see that America has reacted to the emancipation of blacks from slavery by trying to systemically relegate them to an inferior caste, a permanent underclass. Our nation has twice crushed reconstruction efforts through civil discrimination, criminal injustice, economic repression, mass incarceration. How has White American Christianity countenanced this? We have been blinded by "the vaccine of spirituality," and hypnotized by the myths of capitalism. We have deceived ourselves that there can be humanity without agency; civil rights without human rights.

For me personally, the Monday night series has served as a crowbar to consciousness. While there are things I previously had a glimmer of, the readings and conversations have pried open my understanding and left me shaken. [I now understand] that it is the ideology of racial superiority that underlies and enables the evils of racism. We tend to think of white supremacy in terms of the egregious bad actors carrying torches in Charlottesville, but the truth is that it is a spectrum, and we all fall somewhere on this spectrum. As Robin DiAngelo said, "We are socialized in a racial culture in which white supremacy is the bedrock." While none in our group would engage in overt violence toward people of color, our sense of racial superiority inevitably gives rise to an insensitivity to the many and numerous ways in which this plays itself out in our society.

I did not fully realize the **unintended racism** that all of us white folks, myself included, practice unwittingly every day. I think of myself as a "nice" person who very rarely, if ever, would want to harm another. But I realize my privilege shields me from really facing the suffering of people of color.

A key thing for me has been formulating a difference between "being a racist," and "being racist." While I don't consider myself "a racist," I certainly now understand how some words and actions over my lifetime can clearly be categorized a "racist," regardless of my intentions. Sadly, in some cases, it's actually not my "actions," but my inactions, that have allowed systemic racism to continue to flourish.

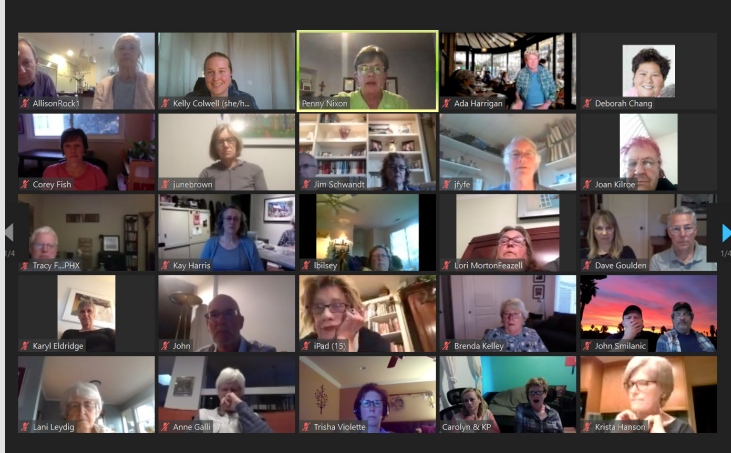
These sessions have changed me and challenged me to examine my life patterns, past and present. I have discovered a humility I hadn't realized I needed to access about the current turmoil in our world and its origins and my part in it all. I was raised to be racially illiterate. I unknowingly internalized my racial superiority, its habits attitudes, and behaviors-both on the surface and going deeper. Now my "change" is to admit to being racist and see it for what it is and how to move with it onward. My change is to get to the hard personal work of being uncomfortable while I pursue being more informed and educated about our shared black and white history.

I came into this class in pain, wanting to do something to eliminate this 400-year blight in our society, and I still feel that way, but I am much better equipped to take at least baby steps than I was before the class. If anything, the pain has been sharpened, and I am taking personally both the responsibility I bear in my toleration of the blight and the responsibility I bear to ameliorate it.

My eyes have been opened to the role government has played and continues to play to underwrite "white privilege" and facilitate the caste system in America. The consequences can be seen in housing, mass incarceration, voting laws, schools, jobs, health, wealth. It makes me angry. Before this class started, I might have asked, "How did we get here and how did we allow this to happen?" I now have partial answers to those questions. Hopefully, that allows me to move forward. Now my questions might start with looking inward.

# REFLECTIONS ON THE CLASS “WHAT CAN WE DO?”

Penny Nixon, Instructor, June 2020  
by Veril Phillips



Sessions 2, 3, and 4 have been important step in developing my understanding of racism in the United States and recognition of my role to be an anti-racist. In Session 2, Richard Rothstein's video about his book, *The Color of Law*, helped me learn that the impact on Blacks from the Federal Housing Administration's support for developers to establish segregated housing did not end with the Civil Rights Act of 1968<sup>1</sup>. Instead the subsequent history shows that there was a huge lack of transfer of generational wealth for Blacks as compared with Whites. At the end of the video, I was ready to support his recommendation for a highly focused remedy to provide subsidies to African Americans to buy homes that would otherwise be unavailable.

In Session 3, Michelle Alexander, in the video about her book, *The New Jim Crow*, taught me that mass incarceration is not the result of higher crime rates, especially involving drug use and sales<sup>2</sup>, but rather a redesigned caste system that serves the same function as the Jim Crow laws – namely, to disenfranchise and remove political and economic gains made by Blacks during the Reconstruction Period.

In Session 4, Robin DiAngelo, in her video about her book, *White Fragility*, I learned that as a highly privileged, well-educated white male, I must take care not to fall into a pattern of fragile defensiveness in discussions about race – one that serves to promote white racial control by bullying the “other.” Regardless whatever else I might do I will try to use the guidance from her chart, “White Fragility and Receiving Feedback: A Guide”<sup>3</sup>.

Taking these sessions together, I see in more specific ways how complex, extensive, and institutionalized is racism in the United States. Taking to heart Michelle Alexander's admonition that we must be willing to tell the truth (because there are no physical signs of the new Jim Crow), I will begin to follow carefully various efforts to begin a national truth and reconciliation commission. For a local example, Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-Oakland) has drafted legislation for such a commission.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Dr. Larry Schooler, an expert in conflict resolution, wrote an opinion piece in USA Today, “After Floyd Killing, we need a truth and reconciliation commission on race and policing”<sup>5</sup> I will watch for his forthcoming book on truth and reconciliation commissions.

1 This act expanded the scope of the prohibition of discrimination, as provided in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to include a prohibition of discrimination in housing sales, rentals, and financing.

2 See the report of the Hamilton Project, a project of the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC: [https://www.hamiltonproject.org/charts/rates\\_of\\_drug\\_use\\_and\\_sales\\_by\\_race\\_rates\\_of\\_drug\\_related\\_criminal\\_justice](https://www.hamiltonproject.org/charts/rates_of_drug_use_and_sales_by_race_rates_of_drug_related_criminal_justice)

3 See <https://robindiangelo.com/resources/> under the heading, Handouts.

4 See “How a Truth and Reconciliation Commission could work in the US,” Opinion: Adam Kochanski, San Francisco Chronicle, June 15, 2020.

5 USA Today, June 7, 2020. The author, Larry Schooler, whose doctorate is in conflict resolution, works with agencies around the world to resolve disputes, build consensus and involve the public and stakeholders in decisions that will affect them. (From his LinkedIn site.)

## THE TIDE IS RISING... Black Lives Matter Montage

click to play



# KENERIN'S STORY

Sisters and brothers,

Rates of coronavirus infection among the Latinx community have risen rapidly across the United States. It was a variation on what has become a grim demographic theme, and not just in California. Infections among the Latinx community have far outpaced the rest of the nation, a testament to the makeup of the nation's essential work force as the American epidemic has surged yet again. This means that many of our members from the Wednesday Gatherings are constantly compromised, and there have been a few members who have tested positive for COVID-19. Good news—they have recovered from the virus.

The Latinx are hardly a cultural monolith, and there is no evidence that any ethnic group is inherently more vulnerable to the virus than others are. But recently counties across the country where at least a quarter of the population is Latino have recorded an increase of 32 percent in new cases, compared to a 15 percent increase for all other counties, a Times analysis shows. So, please keep our members at CCSM from the Wednesday Gatherings in your prayers as they continue to struggle in more than one way in life.

And, while I could keep going on about the struggles of the Latinx community that make up our Wednesday Gatherings, I want to take this time to honor Kenerin Lopez who is one of the youth from the Wednesday Gatherings. She graduated this year from San Mateo High School. She migrated from Guatemala at the age of 5 with her parents, Manuel and Cruz, and has lived in San Mateo ever since. As many of us know, being a migrant in the US is not easy, especially when you are considered "undocumented" — a word I hate to use.

I am so proud of Kenerin. I want to highlight her here because too often individuals like her get overlooked. We don't really get to hear their stories. Therefore, we don't get to realize how amazing it is that she graduated from high school, and that she will be attending College of San Mateo in the fall.

Kenerin's life has been a precarious balancing act of long school days, homework done on the fly, helping raise her three younger sisters, and helping her mom work as a house cleaner to bring money to the family. Unlike many high schoolers, Kenerin did not have time for internships, after-school enrichment classes, or the ability to apply to college outside of the community college system because she is not a citizen, even though she has lived here most of her life.

Kenerin almost didn't attend college because of finances. So few of these young people go to college. The steep and rising costs, exacerbated by the fact that most states require undocumented immigrants to pay out-of-state tuition at public universities, even if they have lived and

paid taxes in the state for years, is just one of the obstacles teens like Kenerin face. Kenerin also had to help support her family.

Each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday after school and soccer practice, she helped her mom clean an apartment building. By midnight, she collapsed, exhausted, into her bed, waking up early the next morning at a 7 a.m. start time at her high school. On Saturdays, she worked for \$13 an hour with her mom cleaning apartments.

"It was terrible," Kenerin said. "I would not be able to finish my homework on time so I would have to do it in the car or on lunch break. Sometimes I'd do homework in class while my teacher was giving a lecture. I was so tired that sometimes I didn't even eat."

The combination of her family's financial struggles, her undocumented status, and the impossibility of taking out loans to pay for college kept Kenerin on the bench when her high school peers began discussing college applications. "People would ask me: 'Are you applying for college?' And I would just say no," she recalled. "I didn't want to tell them why."

She lacked mentors to help her prepare for college, even though she is first in her family to go. She routinely

—continued on next page—



## KENERIN'S STORY

cont. from previous page



Kenerin's graduation cap

faced unsupportive higher education administrators and policies that discouraged her from going to college. On top of all that, she is always facing her own considerable fear and anxiety about deportation.

Research shows that depression and anxiety disorders are prevalent among Latinx young people. Many live with the burden of discrimination, uncertain documentation status, and potential deportation of herself and her family, and often have limited access to support and mentoring. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that Latinx youth are more likely to feel sad or hopeless and to seriously consider or attempt suicide than white and African-American youth. At the same time, while nonwhite students may regularly experience more stress than their white peers, they are often less likely to seek psychological help.

It is hard to articulate the psychological impact the near constant specter of persecution has on people. Kenerin—who works so hard to not only contribute to her family but to our economy—is afraid to go to work. And she and others like her are afraid to go to school. They are living with this fear, every single day, just for being themselves.

Although earning a degree now seems further off than ever before, Kenerin has not given up on her college dreams. "I knew at an early age that life is more than just a bad job," she said. "I wanted to make sure I left a mark. I don't want to just work until I die. I want to study and make a difference in the world, such as law, maybe become a paralegal, possibly go to law school, study political science, start my own nonprofit. If we all had the same opportunities, the things we as human beings could achieve by working together could be amazing."

Knowing Kenerin personally, I can say for sure that she is uniquely brilliant. But the many hours she has had to work and help her parents make money impacted her grades, her achievement test scores, and ultimately, her ability to compete for top tier schools. It is sad that there are things that make her less competitive because she doesn't have the time to participate in the activities her peers can. I know she will do great in community college. She will thrive and as a faith community we will walk with her and support her in any way we can.

Peace and blessings!

Jorge

P.S. I miss seeing all of you at church, but I know we are doing the right thing to keep sheltering in place to keep each other safe. Looking forward to the many hugs one day.

## ZOOM IS NOT THE SAME. BUT IT IS GOOD!

BAND OF BROTHERS - "MODERN  
MEN" AFFINITY GROUP

Sure, we miss the short drive & fresh air, the greeting at the door with the special Held pinky shake. Sure, we said our starting affirmation paragraph of secrecy (what is said in the group stays in the group) and prayer that God guide our meeting to be fruitful and meaningful. Sure, we miss the hot coffee waiting for us and the occasional treats from Louisa or Marc and others. Some things just can't make up for the extra love and friendship when we all gather together face to face to share and experience together.

The pandemic has forced us to change and adapt. In the past, we met every two weeks or so. We read a spiritual book chapter or two and discussed the impact it had on our lives. When shelter in place took effect, we changed our routine. We decided to meet more frequently and forego the book and just check in with each other to share our concerns, and what is happening with our families, our lives.

The initial Zoom meeting was a mess. Twelve of us were talking at the same time, bad lighting made our faces completely dark by having bright lights behind us, or we shared views of our neck or balding heads by placing our cameras in less than ideal angles. We laughed, we adjusted, and shared videos on Zoom protocols and best practices which made the experience a whole lot better. But we also bonded. We spoke from the heart. We consoled each other as we shared different ways that shelter in place affected us. Some really heavy-duty stuff was shared.

This communication method may be the way for us for a long time. We discussed having a broader attendance at the meetings by having partners join us, but initially, we decided to have our meeting attendance remain smaller and men only. But we are open minded, and this may change in the future.

We have recently re-added the reading of a book to go beyond our grasp and reach for deeper meaning and experience. We also discuss the virtual sermons, pictures, stories, and "share the love" we have been enjoying for so many years. It has been deeply satisfying, and although we have not solved all of the world's problems yet, we sure are making a good dent.



Missing: Len Flaherty & Fred Tileston

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

### A WORD FROM VERIL PHILLIPS, TREASURER

We are four months into the pandemic and have no idea how much longer it will continue. It's time to give you a financial update following my message in April -- about one month after Shelter in Place began.

First of all, I'm happy to report that CCSM continues to be able to compensate all our employees with their regular pay. This applies to those who are working more hours than usual (from home, our building, or elsewhere) as well as to those who have little or no work while the building facility is closed (except for staff). CCSM is able to do this because of your generosity. Thank you so much.

Plate offerings, which go to specific causes that vary from week to week, continue to be quite strong. Gifts to the General Fund come from donations that are not designated and from payment of pledges. General Fund revenue is used to meet our payroll, other expenses, and achieve our vision. In fact, many new individuals, both local and far away, have joined our online services during the pandemic. Some of these folks are former members who moved away; others are family and friends of current members; still others simply discovered us online. They are fast becoming an important part of our community. We hope to continue an online presence in order to serve them in 2021 and beyond. CCSM is gearing up for that with support from special donations that have been received and from the General Fund.

We reported in mid-April that donations to the General Fund were falling behind the same period last year. They rebounded during May and the first part of June but are beginning to decline again. The point is, we are still in a healthy financial condition, but we continue to face an uncertain financial future.

You should know that we are able to continue meeting our expenses even after returning \$117,000 in a low interest loan from the Payroll Protection Program — part of the \$2.2 trillion stimulus package (the CARES Act) offered to religious organizations and other small businesses. These loans, which would likely have become grants, required certification that the funds were essential for payroll, rent, and utility payments for the eight-week period following their receipt. Although the Board believed that CCSM could do much good work with the funds, it could not, in good conscience, make that certification knowing

that so many businesses are in dire straits. Therefore, the Board decided to pay off the loan during the "safe harbor" period so that the funds could be lent to a small business in greater need.

**To sum up:** If you anticipate any challenges in meeting your pledge commitment, we understand that, and you are invited to contact the Bookkeeper, Cheryle Mateo, for a confidential consultation. You may reach her at [cmateo@ccsm-ucc.org](mailto:cmateo@ccsm-ucc.org) or by calling the church office. But if you are one of the fortunate ones who can, please keep up your contributions toward your pledge or make non-pledge contributions to the General Fund. That can be accomplished in any of the following ways:

**WRITE A CHECK:** Put "Pledge" or "General Fund" in the memo line and mail it to the church at 225 Tilton Ave., San Mateo, CA 94401.

**ONLINE:** Direct your web browser to the church website, [ccsm-ucc.org](http://ccsm-ucc.org), click on the word, "Donate," in the upper right corner, scroll down and click on "Give Now," and select "General Budget" as the fund. If you have an account at myCCSM, you will be invited to sign in, but you may continue as guest if you prefer. You will receive an email confirming the gift.

**SEND A TEXT MESSAGE:** Send a message to the "phone number" 73256. The message should say, "CCSM General \$AMOUNT" using whatever amount you wish to give. The first time you give by text you will receive a response to click on, where you provide the information for your bank account or credit card, as well as the amount to contribute. The second time you give to CCSM by text, you will not need to enter this information unless you want to use a different account for the contribution. In all cases, you will receive a text message confirming the gift.

CCSM's beloved community is fortunate in so many ways, including our strong financial position. With your help, we can continue to fund our progressive Christian vision through our General Fund. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [veril.phillips@gmail.com](mailto:veril.phillips@gmail.com) or 650-579-4627.



## BACKPACKS NEEDED BY PUENTE BY JULY 31!

Puente's annual school supplies drive is underway, and you can help over 250 students on the South Coast have equitable access to education! This time around, many families for the first time are finding themselves in need of supplies, as many are just beginning to return to work after several weeks of sheltering in place. If you would like to donate, visit our website at [mypuente.org](http://mypuente.org) or mail a check to PO Box 554, Pescadero CA 94060. You can also purchase items directly from our Target registry by clicking [HERE](#).

To donate masks or in-kind school supplies, please call us at 650-879-1691.

**Target wish list:** Backpacks • Water bottles • Composition notebooks  
White board markers • Folders • Index cards (ruled)





## NOW LET US PRAISE...

Now let us praise down-to-earth angels. My personal shopper, Maggie Alegria, a member of CCSM, buys my husband and me groceries and other supplies about twice a week and delivers them to our home. We wouldn't have the food necessary for survival if it were not for her generosity of time, effort, consideration, and commitment. Thank you is inadequate to express my gratitude, so I've offered her tips, but she won't accept them; instead she says "Give what you'd give me to the church."



Maggie's gift of time and effort is illustrated by her pursuit of baking powder. She tried Safeway, Trader Joe's, and Draeger's. No luck. Finally, she located three cans at Dean's Produce, and gave me one. I didn't ask her to go to this much trouble, but she did anyway.

Not only does Maggie follow my lists, she also lets me make last minute additions and calls me from stores to clarify my unclear requests and to okay substitutions. To protect others and herself, Maggie wears a mask and gloves and practices social distancing. Going the extra mile.

Going beyond the practical help and thoughtfulness, this everyday saint gave me a spiritual insight. I confess that I hate to be dependent, but the pandemic has forced me to acknowledge and accept the fact that I'm old; I need help because I'm in the "vulnerable group." I'm not supposed to shop or go outside except for walks or to work in my garden or go the doctor's. My false pride or egoism has taken a hit. I've learned to be grateful to the heroes of compassion who are self-sacrificing, who contribute to the common good by helping us vulnerable people. Interdependence is no longer an abstraction but a concrete reality.

If you're looking for silver linings in this time of fear, separation, heartache, and hopelessness, look around you at all the people who embody the Spirit's virtues: goodness, loving kindness, wisdom, humility, and truth. As Ignatius of Loyola taught, God is in all things, even baking powder.

—Dorothy Kogl  
May 7, 2020

## I HATE CORONAVIRUS

I hate coronavirus  
because it makes sure  
it doesn't let me go to my other  
house

And  
it's killing a lot of people.  
it's a **big** word  
And I don't like big words  
like that one!

It interferes with the internet  
And doesn't let me play my games.

The coronavirus makes sure that  
it doesn't let me see my friends  
And that makes me feel kind of  
Lonely

because  
I'm  
an  
only  
child.



by Richie Luna Castillo  
9 yr. old, Wednesday Gathering at CCSM

## O God, Why Are You Silent

Lyrics by Marty Haugen (GIA), melody by JS Bach.  
Melanie Dresbach recorded this piece specifically to share in the Pine Tree during this time. It was recorded at Cristo Rey Misión in Watsonville where Padre Michael, Melanie's brother, is pastor.

[Click here to listen.](#)



Wasn't it wonderful to see and hear the choir, bells and especially the voices of the children in our worship services over the past several weeks? Our lives have certainly changed during the past season. I was thinking recently (something a dear friend likes to tell me is a dangerous thing) that we entered into SIP (shelter in place) prior to the beginning of Spring and have been continuing now as we crossed over into Summer facing an uncertain Fall. The remarkable thing is that in so many ways we've moved to a new understanding and appreciation for the things we were so accustomed to. For me, making music in community, whether it is singing with other voices, playing instruments with a myriad of ensembles or being around musicians warming-up and practicing, making music in community is something that I've never been without for more than a week, perhaps a month at most. Some of my earliest memories are singing with my family to records, around the piano or in the car on Sunday afternoon drives. I know that I'm not alone in this, music is woven into the fabric of our lives when you think about it. Singing in the shower, listening to your favorite tunes on the radio in the car, or coming to church on Sundays. Music is an integral part of our day to day living and a very present part of the celebration and milestones of our lives.

Each of us has come to new understandings of what we miss in our lives, and I think collectively at CCSM music as part of our church experience is something we cherish, perhaps now even more than before. During March and April, the sound of silence at times was almost deafening and yet, new sounds came into focus. We have been experiencing that at CCSM over

**MUSIC HAS HELPED  
HOLD US TOGETHER,  
SHARE OUR EMOTIONS  
AND BRING US PEACE.**

the past several months and each time I see and hear a musician sharing their gifts during the service I'm touched by the responses of the streaming hearts, comments and correspondence following a service with congregation members about the music that was shared. We miss the singing of hymns together, but I've talked with folks who are singing louder than ever at home they tell me during the service. We love seeing Angela's feet and hands at work on the organ which we never get to during service and we've come know and love Melanie's gifts at the piano and her voice singing for us both at our Sunday services as well as our Wednesday night Gatherings. Music has helped hold us together, share our emotions and

bring us peace. Our special musical guests have touched our hearts and lifted our souls with their gifts and though different during these uncharted waters we are sailing through, is still a meaningful and very present part of our lives at CCSM.

I know there are more of you in our blessed community who have beautiful musical gifts and I encourage you to consider sharing them with us. To recap briefly, we've had traditional, classical, jazz, Broadway, pop and folk music in our online services. We've loved hearing instrumental, vocal and small ensembles and our hearts are longing for more. If you are interested in sharing, please contact me at [lbtmusings@gmail.com](mailto:lbtmusings@gmail.com), I'd love to talk with you about creating an opportunity to share.

I found this poem this week during my research for the 'Songs of the Day' posts (click [here](#) to find the archive of all of them) and it resonated with me and I hope it may with you as well. I encourage you to open the door to your musical gifts and let the Spirit take flight in you.

### Typewriter Series - #2518

by Tyler Knott Gregson

To be there to see it,  
The wings of geese in the lightlessness,  
The blur of hummingbirds roaring  
Softly on summer porches,  
The earthquake of thunder  
On evenings when you swear dusk  
Will never fade out.  
Be for this  
Keep being, for there is music  
In all of this,  
Quietly it plays, almost inaudible,  
But the melody remains.  
Be for this,  
And lend yourself to the  
Perfect cacophony.



### THE MUSIC OF LIFE

Lynnelle made a video calling us to listen to the music of nature—the music of life. She made it for Earth Day, but it's a message worth listening to any time—maybe especially now.

Click [here](#) or on the image to play. [tinyurl.com/Lynnelle-Music](https://tinyurl.com/Lynnelle-Music)

## VIRTUAL ORGAN ACADEMY

One of the surprising gifts of the pandemic was Oberlin Conservatory's going virtual with its annual Organ Academy. Four CCSM young organists participated in this week long camp run at the end of June by the Oberlin organ professors Jonathan Moyer and Christa Rakich as well as Oberlin organ curator David Kazimir. Oberlin boasts the best collection of pipe organs in the country with authentic organs representing the Renaissance, German baroque, Spanish baroque and French romantic eras.

CCSM participants included organ scholar, Chase Olson, as well as Isaiah Rassbach, Edward Lee and Ikenna Okpukpara. They took private lessons over Zoom with each of the professors and attended classes about organ history and organ building. It was an exciting week of learning for all of us, and we eagerly await the final student recital of submitted recordings!

—Angela Kraft Cross



## BEETHOVEN'S 250TH BIRTHDAY FESTIVAL

Ludwig van Beethoven turns 250 this December 16 and we at CCSM will be celebrating his illustrious life all fall long! **We are looking for instrumentalists and vocalists!**

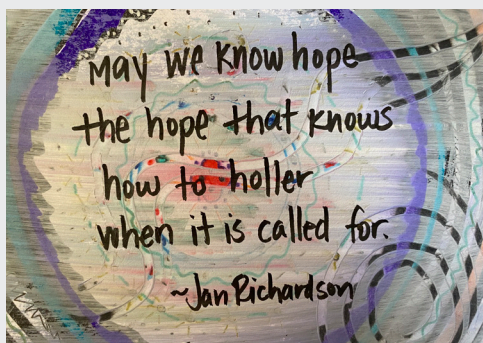


We will be collecting video performances of friends and families of CCSM featuring Beethoven's amazing works. For instance, if you are a pianist, perhaps you would like to record one or all movements of one of his 32 piano sonatas or variations or bagatelles!

Chamber music such as a string quartet would be a lovely addition! Even in our hymnal, *Joyful Joyful We Adore You* is from Beethoven's 9th Symphony! The videos will be organized into concerts as well as possibly incorporated into our worship services! Feel free to invite friends to participate. This celebration is for all who love Beethoven! If you would like to join in, feel free to contact Angela Kraft Cross (krftcrss@yahoo.com) or Lynelle Bilsley (lbilsley@lifemoves.org) !

## IN THE SPIRIT OF SHARING

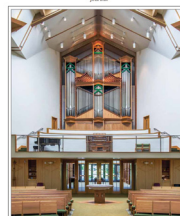
A new ZOOM group, entitled "In the Spirit of Sharing" is forming on **Thursday evenings from 7:00-8:30** with Chase Montara. This 8-week group is an opportunity for people to deepen their spiritual experience and enjoy a sense of belonging and community during this time that the church building is closed. Chase is a certified Spiritual Director through the Mercy Center in Burlingame. She has led groups on Spirituality as part of her position as Chair of the Spirituality Initiative for The County of San Mateo, and the City of Berkeley for five years. Facilitating groups for seniors on spiritual topics was a part of her previous role at the Coastside Adult Day Health Center. Chase has trained social work professionals in having discussions about spirituality with their clients.



The content will include selected readings from a variety of spiritual seekers, such as Rumi, Thomas Merton, Richard Rohr, Anne Lamott, Hafiz, Hermann Hesse, Fr. Greg Boyle, Marv Hiles, and others. Each attendee will also be paired up with a partner so that people can contact each other during the week to pray with and for each other, and develop connections. Group members will be invited to suggest content, as well. If folks are game, we may listen to some music together or even do a little guided art to share. All in a supportive and loving environment. **The group will begin on August 6th and run through September.**

If you would like to register or have any questions, please contact Chase Montara at [cmontara@ccsm-ucc.org](mailto:cmontara@ccsm-ucc.org).

### THE DIAPASON



### THE DIAPASON

Our own Angela Kraft Cross was featured in the current issue of *The Diapason* (a national journal for organists). [Take a look!](#)

# THE FACE MASK BRIGADE

by Chase Montara • June 23, 2020

The Face Mask Brigade continues as a powerful ministry of seamstresses with hearts for creating face masks for church members, community members, health care workers, construction workers and nursing home residents. The Brigade meets each week on ZOOM to share new techniques and tricks, and to support each other in this valuable mission.

One of our members, Linda Brockett, recently passed along information about "Masks for Humanity." This organization serves as a clearinghouse, of sorts, gathering organization names from across the country who are in need of masks and how many masks they are asking for. The Brigade agreed they wanted to broaden their reach and join them. Toward that end, we have thus far supplied 80 masks to South Central Los Angeles' Health Center and another 150 masks to the Navajo Nation Health Center in Arizona. If you would like to take a look at the need list, go to <https://masks4humanity.org/>. There is tremendous need for masks across the country. If you know of an organization who is in need of masks, please let me know at [cmontara@ccsm-ucc.org](mailto:cmontara@ccsm-ucc.org).



Natalia Tsoi's daughter cutting a mask pattern

Christine Grabow has gifted CCSM with a small quilt, made from the remnants left over from the mask making. Christine is one of our most prolific seamstresses, and has sewn over 600 masks so far. This in addition to homeschooling her children, and taking care of her own health. A big thank you to Christine for all of her efforts. The quilt is now on display in the case on the Loggia. Take a look if you stop by the church and see if you notice your mask fabric in this beautiful quilt.

I would also like to acknowledge in particular Genel Morgan, Diane Musgrave, Tina Atherton, Linda Brockett, Christine Grabow, Susan Campo, Jane Hazlett, Jennifer Jacoby-Yeh, Natalia Tsoi (and her daughter, Raphaela), Rosemarie Pero, Jan Cavagnero, and Mary Ann McKay. And there are many others who offer supplies and support to the group, like Carole Melis and Barb Karlin. Thanks to everyone who has supported this wonderful group. You are all truly making a difference and saving lives with your loving hands and hard work!

Find out more at [ccsm-ucc.org/masks](https://ccsm-ucc.org/masks).



Quilt made from mask-making remnants by Christine Grabow



## CCSM SCHOLARS

The CCSM Scholarship committee is pleased to announce that CCSM scholarships have been awarded to two senior high young men, **Angelo LaComarre-Soto** (San Mateo HS) and **Chris Martin** (The Nueva School) and one graduate student, **Sara Graves** (the University of Colorado Medical School). These scholarships are awarded thanks to the generosity and dedication to education by Sue Bullis, a member of our congregation.

Angelo plans to attend California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo this fall with an interest in environmental science. Angelo was active as a board member of his HS Green Team, was a varsity baseball player and has served as an intern at the California Academy of Sciences. He also enjoys playing Andean songs on his transverse flute reflecting his South American heritage. Angelo has been active in CCSM since a young boy, attended Camp Caz both as a camper and as a counselor-in-training, attended a UCC conference in Hawaii and now serves as an usher at church.

Chris plans to attend Cornell University in the fall with an interest in math and engineering. At Nueva, Chris was a leader on the cross country and track teams and excelled academically. He has been active in CCSM since childhood and is currently taking flying lessons to become a pilot.

Chris is a volunteer delivering food to families with children in hospitals for the organization There With Care.

Sara is completing her 3rd year of medical school at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and plans to become a primary care physician upon completion of medical school and residency in family medicine. She was the founding president of the Latino Medical Student Association and is a leader in community service opportunities and learning for medical students. Earlier, Sara served in the San Francisco Night Ministry, attended and volunteered at a UCC church while in college and helped chaperone our senior high youth at the UCC conference in Hawaii. She is deeply committed to community service and involvement.

Qualities considered by the scholarship committee include being an active member of CCSM and demonstrating interest and involvement in school and community activities. Their accomplishments and involvement well match our mission - they have acted as the Face, Hands, Feet and Heart of God in the world. Congratulations to these scholars!



## A CALL: JOIN THE NEW CCSM GREEN TEAM!

Consistent with our Christian values of Social Justice through Environmental Justice, the Ministry of Energy and Environmental Justice (EEJ) is initiating a Green Team to develop and implement strategies and actions so that CCSM can become a more sustainable congregation. This task force will first meet to discern a mission and then will pursue the passions of the members. This could be short or longer term service to all of us.

The team may be interested in working within CCSM across generations and existing ministries to reduce water usage, to more effectively recycle and compost, to promote environmental education, or consider signing the Paris Pledge for combating climate change... and more.

Please contact Anne Galli 650-853-1328 [annegalli316@gmail.com](mailto:annegalli316@gmail.com) or Warren Long 650-341-7809 [longlake15@sbcglibobal.net](mailto:longlake15@sbcglibobal.net) or if you are interested in joining or learning more about this new important team.

## CCSM SUNDAY SERVICE FACE BOOK 2.0 TASK FORCE HEADED BY STEVE DAVIS

The CCSM ministers, staff, and volunteers made a heroic effort to move the church to an online platform in just a couple of weeks' time. While we all appreciate these efforts, I have concerns about using Facebook as that platform. As you may know, while Facebook is quite popular and provides useful services, like Facebook Live which we are currently using for our services, the company also sells your personal information and has been willfully aggravating the divisions in our country leading to the boycott called Stop Hate For Profit which you can read about here: <https://www.stophateforprofit.org> - led by the Anti-Defamation League and the NAACP among others.

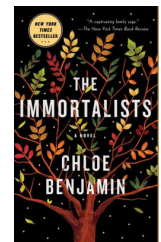
If you are interested in discussing moving the church services away from Facebook, I am forming a task force to look at alternatives to Facebook to be presented to the Board in August with the goal of being on a new platform promptly.

If you would like to join the task force or simply have comments or suggestions, please email Steve Davis - [steve@sbdavis.com](mailto:steve@sbdavis.com) or call or text: 650-278-7416.

## FIRST TUESDAY BOOK GROUP TUESDAY, AUGUST 4, 7:30-9:00PM ON ZOOM

Zoom has made our meetings easy and enjoyable...so log on and join in. The next book is *The Immortalists* by Chloe Benjamin. "Magical... Benjamin [slips] into each of the characters' heads and lets us live there for a while, writing in a delicate third-person voice that knows everyone's secrets. There are moments as taut as a thriller, where time disappears as you turn pages; and passages of quiet compassion, as the characters reflect on the bonds of siblinghood, on the idea of home, on how those we have lost can still manage—miraculously and mysteriously—to stay with us, in ways that we can't always explain." —The Seattle Times

Questions or comments... Contact Susan Stoehr at [s\\_stoehr@hotmail.com](mailto:s_stoehr@hotmail.com).



## ENERGY, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MINISTRY UPDATE

The Ministry of Energy and Environmental Justice (EEJ) continues executing steps in its mission during the Covid pandemic. Over the past months of the shutdown, we have met as a group via Zoom, are developing a relationship with the non-profit California Interfaith Power and Light (CIPL), are beginning an affiliation with the Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action (PICA) group based in Palo Alto and have participated in educational programs with local environmental groups.

Our major focus has been continuing to research installation of solar panels, charging stations and energy storage batteries in coordination with the consultant American Microgrid Solutions (funded by a grant from The Clean Energy Group). These efforts are led by Gene Summerville and Jim Schwandt from our ministry. Once the research is completed, we will draft a proposal and present it to the Board of Directors for review and hopefully authorization to proceed. Once this is secured, we will present our plan for implementation and funding to the members of our congregation. We will also host information / feedback sessions with the congregation to provide details about the solar plan, including scenarios for funding.

Additionally, EEJ supports an agreement that was presented to us by PGE for CCSM to provide space in our parking lot that would serve as a CRC (customer resource center) for our neighbors in the event of a planned power outage. This experience should give us a preview of what it would be like for CCSM to become a Resilience hub for the community in case of emergency such as an earthquake once our solar project is completed.

Lastly, EEJ proposes the formation of a volunteer Green Team at CCSM, following the lead of many other local churches. Creating a green team would enable CCSM become a more sustainable campus and congregation (see separate article in this Pine Tree issue for detail).

Respectfully submitted,  
Warren Long



# POSY POSSE DELIVERS LOVE

In the long tradition of CCSM outreach to members and particularly in response to isolation due to the Pandemic, the Liturgical Arts Ministry has launched the Posy Posse.

The concept is to bring the beauty of garden flowers to those who particularly need a "pick me up" as guided by CCSM staff.

The Posy Posse team comprises gardeners, bouquet design, and delivery volunteers. Launched in May, approximately five dozen bouquets have been delivered so far with flowers from the gardens of June & Tony Brown, Deb & Len Flaherty, Megan & Dave Goulden, Kay & Mike Harris, Carol & Doug Henton, Susan & Warren Long, Laura & John Pierce-McKenzie, Alice Morison, Pat Pepper, Pam Ridlehuber, Louisa & Jim Shaul, Betsy Woodward & Phil Lind, and Chris Yeh and Jennifer Jacoby Yeh.

The Posse's current designer team includes Megan Goulden, Kay Harris, Susan Long, Laura McKenzie, Alice Morison, Pam Ridlehuber, and Kirsten Smith.

Invariably some combination of hydrangea, alstroemeria, roses, sweet peas, lavender, agapanthus and other garden flowers brings a big smile to the faces of recipients. Keeping social distance, it has also been possible to have short catch-up visits.

If you have a cutting garden and/or love to arrange flowers, please join Posy Posse! We welcome more blossoms and volunteers to selectively cut, design and deliver. Email Kay Harris at [communi\\_ks@me.com](mailto:communi_ks@me.com) for more information.



Diane Kalliam makes a delivery



Elise & Robert Leung



To inspire you, we share a note from one enthusiastic recipient:

"It was a pleasure to meet you today and to receive that lovely bouquet. I love it, the bouquet, your delivery of it, hearing of "the Posy Group"—all of it was thrilling and being included was a huge wonderful surprise!"

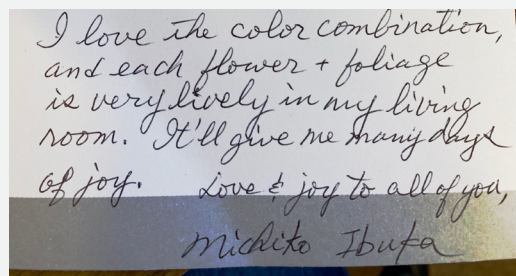
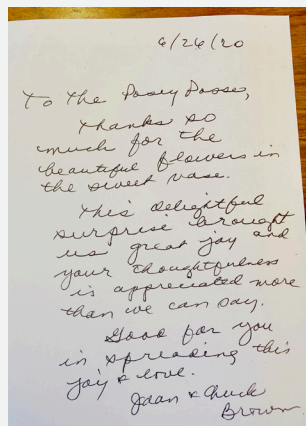


Jack Daniels



Megan Goulden in garden

*"Open my eyes to the moments of resurrection that surround me every day. There is always something rising, opening to new life, budding and blossoming, forgiving and transforming. Teach me to live awake that I may recognize the renaissance being celebrated in my midst at every moment. Make me a disciple of joy."  
—Macrina Wiederkehr in "The Flowing Grace of Now"*



# GRATITUDE

## DURING QUEDATE EN CASA: SHELTER IN PLACE

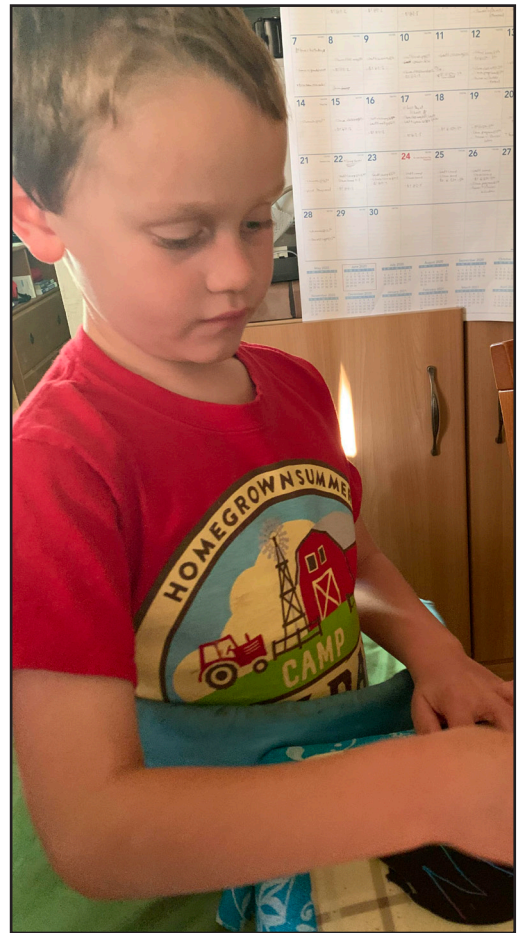
by Colleen Dresbach and Melanie Dresbach

We are thankful for the blessing of working with the Spanish language dominant members of the CCSM community during SIP, Quedate en Casa. The gratitude they have shown for the support by other members of the CCSM community is so heart-warming and touching as both Penny and Jorge have witnessed during the times they have been honored to deliver grocery gift cards and Colleen's care packages.

Colleen has developed a way for the little ones and youth to express themselves through art, especially during this time. Check out the pictures that parents have sent showing their beautiful children displaying the activities that they created from supplies sent in the care packages. The supplies and projects in the care packages also afforded the youth a way to produce seasonal art at Easter, and Mother's Day and Father's Day gifts. The children were commissioned by Colleen to make congratulations cards for Kenerin, who graduated from high school last month. We've also discovered, based on photos sent, that moms of the youth enjoy expressing themselves through the art projects too, so she is adding special embroidery projects for the moms in the next care package. Thank you to Sheryl Johnson for sending Colleen additional supplies.

The focus for the next self expression project for the youth is to prepare for the creation of a mural that we are hoping to display at CCSM. Activities will allow for the youth to practice lettering, and color and pattern blending. The youth have expert street art teachers in some of us who displayed their art in the city of San Jose dating as far back as 50 years ago for me!

Members asked Reyna if there were more opportunities for safely connecting to one another and we started Zoom en espanol meetings that take place each Wednesday after the Spanish language service and Sunday in the evening. Please join us! Send your email address to Melanie at: [mdresbach@ccsm-ucc.org](mailto:mdresbach@ccsm-ucc.org) to be invited to our 8:15 P.M. meetings. All are welcome!



# WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON AT 225 TILTON AVENUE?

by Chase Montara • June 9, 2020

Although the church is perhaps even more "open" than usual, the church building itself has been closed now for almost three months. I have only been a part of the CCSM family since December, but when I came back to the office after 6-weeks away, tears of joy came to my eyes. I can only imagine how the members of the church, some of whom have been a part of CCSM for many decades, are feeling without being able to walk through these familiar doors. I know you all miss your church home. For that reason, I thought I would provide a little update on what's been going on here at 225 Tilton Avenue in your absence.

The Sanctuary pews are filled with photos of church members. These were posted so that Penny does not feel as though she is preaching to an empty church. I got a little creative with whose photos I put up. Along with about 60 church members, Flash the Sloth from Zootopia is there, occupying a seat in the front row, along with Anne Lamott and Mary Oliver. As you walk up the aisle, you might see Penny's dog Sheba and my dog Mavis sitting next to each other. Joan Chittister is there, so is Gavin Newsom. The Dalai Lama and Bishop Tutu. Since I am sort of new, I didn't know where all of you usually sit. So, you most likely are not in your usual spot. My apologies!

The Chancel now looks just a little bit like a TV studio, with cameras and lighting and wires here and there. The piano is moved toward the front, and draped with cloths courtesy of the Liturgical Arts Ministry. The organ has also been repositioned for better camera angles. All this so that the service can be filmed and produced for Sunday's Face Book Premier Service.

In some of the most exciting news since you have been gone, the Buckham Room has gotten a face lift! The carpet was pulled up and the gorgeous wood floors underneath were sanded down and then coated with multiple coats of varnish. The walls were painted (the same color) along with all the doors and trim. There are new blinds, also. Many thanks to Oscar for all of his hard work! Buckham looks beautiful and we can't wait for you all to see it. I personally think we should have some sort of grand ball once we all return. I see you all waltzing happily together. In addition, the floors in the back hallway from Kloss to the parking lot got the same treatment. And Oscar prepped and painted the floor in Kloss Kitchen.

Outside, Oscar has been busy pressure washing the walls, alcoves and stairs. Once cleaned, he touched up the painted edging on the brick stairs. He has also planted some flowering plants here and there. There is a gorgeous white Easter Lily blooming out front just now, perhaps a remnant from Easter's past.

The one thing missing, though, is you! We are all (im)patiently waiting for the glorious day when we will all be together again. We look forward to sharing ginger cookies and coffee in

Kloss Hall after service, and sharing the sign of peace with each other in the sanctuary. What a great day that will be when we can all tell each other "Welcome Home!"



**THIS JUST IN!** Kloss Hall is also getting a makeover! Oscar worked with the contractor who did the Buckham floors and the floors in Kloss have also been stripped and coated. The results are outstanding. A bit of touch up on the paint and other details and the facelift will be complete! What a fabulous venue this will be for weddings, meetings and parties in the future, as well as, of course, coffee hour!



After Chase heard Penny mention how difficult it was to preach to an empty church, Chase had the idea of filling the pews with photos to remind Penny of all the people still present, if not technically in the room...



**One aim of this particular issue of the Pine Tree is to try and capture some of the feeling of this strange, unprecedented time in the world and in the life of the church. Penny's "Connections" midweek mailings have been a place where some of that has been expressed, so some of that content has been selected to reprint here.**

## May 24, 2020 • Message from Penny

Our national administration has deemed churches and other houses of worship "essential" services and demanded that they be opened "right now". As you heard me say a week ago, we are not returning to in-person worship anytime soon. It remains too risky, and the health and well-being of our congregation is my number one priority. The banner outside the church says, "because we love each other, we are social distancing"...Most of us have found a way to be connected through our online services and each week we have enjoyed a rich experience together. We do NOT need to be "in-person" to pray. We will continue to abide by the expertise of the scientists and medical professionals and our own collective wisdom. What we need to pray for is the many "people of faith" who may be exposed to the virus this weekend because they insisted on going to church, or to their house of worship.

**Because we love one another, we are practicing social distancing — but we are remaining spiritually connected.**

**Join our livestream on Sundays at 10:30 am.**

**[Facebook.com/CCSM.UCC](https://www.facebook.com/CCSM.UCC)**

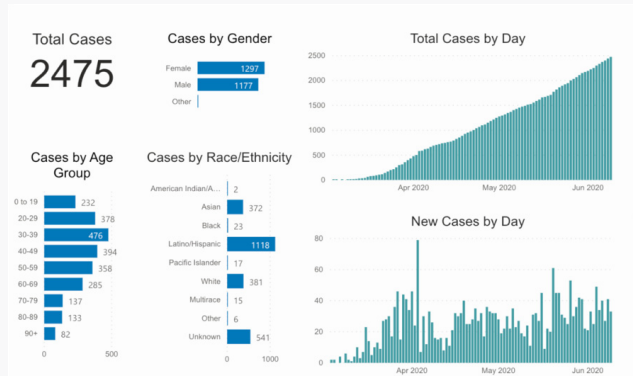


## June 10, 2020 • from CONNECTIONS

### A Message from Penny

Dear friends,

I pray you are staying healthy. I want to lovingly remind us all to do our best to follow the guidelines of social distancing, hand washing and mask wearing. It is so easy to become lax now that we are in our 4th month of sheltering-in-place. Though San Mateo County has done a good job keeping us informed and making good decisions on our behalf, we are still not flattening the curve. Here is the data from the Health Office as of yesterday.



Of course more cases are being identified because there is more available testing, nevertheless, the coronavirus continues to spread in our county. Please be careful and safe.

There is still so much going on in our nation in addition to the Covid-19. All the more reason to take time for the online services on Sunday morning. It is an opportunity to ground, to pray, to be inspired, and to connect with your beloved community. We need each other! If you missed this past Sunday, it is worth your time to watch the service.

I offer you a poem about breaking open our hearts:

Here is a story  
to break your heart.  
Are you willing?  
This winter  
the loons came to our harbor  
and died, one by one,  
of nothing we could see.  
A friend told me  
of one on the shore  
that lifted its head and opened  
the elegant beak and cried out  
in the long, sweet savoring of its life  
which, if you have heard it,  
you know is a sacred thing,  
and for which, if you have not heard it,  
you had better hurry to where  
they still sing.  
And, believe me, tell no one  
just where that is.  
The next morning  
this loon, speckled  
and iridescent and with a plan  
to fly home  
to some hidden lake,  
was dead on the shore.  
I tell you this  
to break your heart,  
by which I mean only  
that it break open and never close again  
to the rest of the world.

~ Mary Oliver ~

**A Message from Penny**

Dear friends,

Each Sunday it fills me up to see many of you online, connecting with your beloved community and hopefully finding strength and inspiration from the service. We will continue to find creative ways to engage spiritually-remember, virtual doesn't mean "not real" it simply means "not physical." I was sharing in our Monday class last night that yesterday when I was coming to church and saw the building, i got teary because I miss seeing you so much.

However, because we care deeply for each other, we must do our utmost to keep each other safe. The lead article in the New York Times this morning reported that, "houses of worship, which were once shut down under governors' orders in many states, are now emerging as sources of major clusters. Outbreaks at churches have been reported in states including Alabama, Kansas and West Virginia."

We want to remain a sanctuary, a safe place, in every way. So for the foreseeable future, we all need to do our very best to stay connected in love and faith through our online services, classes and in every safe way possible.

It would be easy to be afraid these days, and easier still to be discouraged and lonely. So reach out, and do your best to keep your heart open and to receive all that life does offer each day.

Here is one of my "go-to" poems:

I will not die an unlived life  
I will not live in fear  
of falling or catching fire.  
I choose to inhabit my days,  
to allow my living to open me,  
to make me less afraid,  
more accessible,  
to loosen my heart  
until it becomes a wing,  
a torch, a promise.  
I choose to risk my significance;  
to live so that which came to me as seed  
goes to the next as blossom  
and that which came to me as blossom,  
goes on as fruit.

~Dawna Markova~

Love,  
Penny



**NOTES FROM MUSIC & ART**

We've been active while sheltering in place. In addition to being Treasurer, Rosemarie Pero is our new Corresponding Secretary and has been sending birthday cards to our celebrants during this shutdown when we can't extend congratulations in person at our meetings. The same is true for several of the officers. We have reached out via email, cards and phone calls to our members to check on their well-being during this difficult and stressful time.

We truly missed our final monthly meetings of the season when we join in fellowship for lunch, spiritual meditations and always an enlightening and educational musical or artistic program.

How soon we'll be able to resume our meetings and in what possible modified form will of course depend on when, due to COVID 19, it is safe to do so. Meanwhile, we'll continue to hold each other in our thoughts and prayers and hope that

each of us, as well as the wider church community is coping with these extended and challenging circumstances in the best manner possible. We cherish this most long-standing Affinity group at CCSM and look forward to resuming activity ASAP this Fall. We welcome new members, women and men, when we reopen again the third Fridays at noon in the Buckham Room.

—Mary Ann Notz



*This is what Coffee Hour looks like on Zoom...*

# Joys and Concerns

## CCSM Pastoral Care Team

Please share your prayers with the pastoral care team: Rev. Dr. Penny Nixon, Rev. Jorge Bautista, and Rev. Sheryl Johnson. You are invited to share your prayers, your hopes, and your lives. You may connect in the following ways: by **filling out a [ccsm-ucc.org/prayer](https://ccsm-ucc.org/prayer) online prayer request**, by **contacting us via staff emails** listed in your bulletin or on the website, [ccsm-ucc.org](https://ccsm-ucc.org). You may also contact the church office at [cmontara@ccsm-ucc.org](mailto:cmontara@ccsm-ucc.org) or call 650-343-3694, and Chase will make sure one of the pastors contacts you as soon as possible.

### PRAYERS OF GRATITUDE

**George Vail** offers prayers of thanks for his brother's successful operation.

Prayers of joy for **Rolf and Robin Hansen's** grandbaby, **Tobias**, born May 13 to new parents **Jacob and Katrina**. Welcome to the world, Tobias!

Prayers of gratitude that **Sue Bullis** is doing so much better. She reports that all the cards and calls have helped a lot.

Prayers of gratitude for **Jim Schwandt's** recovery from kidney surgery in May.

**Thelma Kromhout's** daughter **Karen** wants the congregation to know how much Thelma appreciates hearing from everyone (and receiving cards), and that she is content and at peace and not in need of anything at this time. Your continued prayers are appreciated.

### PRAYERS OF LOVE AND STRENGTH

Prayers of comfort for **Mike and Lee Mullery** and the whole family as Mike's sister **Joyce Clark** died early Monday morning, July 13.

Prayers for **Valerie Leung** and her family as her mother, **Mary Alice Graham**, passed away peacefully on July 1st. Prayers of comfort as the family, including her husband, were not able to visit because of Covid-19.

**Ginny Lesak Jakoubek** asks for prayers for the family of her cousin **Debi Smith Simpson** who died recently after a fall and a stroke.

Prayers for **Penny Nixon** and her family as they mourn the loss of her brother, **Craig Nixon**, who suffered a stroke and passed on June 21.

**George Cintel** passed away peacefully at home on June 15. He was surrounded by the love of his wife Marilyn and children, Jeff and Jen. He was very ill and had been on hospice care for two months. George was an active member of our church for over 50 years and served as Moderator and was also involved in many church archi-

tectural projects. Please keep **Marilyn** and family in prayer; in lieu of phone calls at this time, please send cards.

Prayers for **Cheryl Rosenthal's** sister who passed away from cancer on June 13, and for their mother who really needs strength to get through this.

**Pat Staff** died on June 10 following nine years in long term care as the result of a stroke. Her daughter, **Coni Staff**, is **Diane Kalliam's** dear friend and roommate. Thankfully, Coni was allowed to be with her at the end.

Prayers for the family of **Mike Harris**, who lost his cousin **Joanna** and her husband **Ted** to a horrific and violent tragedy in May. Mike asks for continued prayers for the Gormley and Ralston families in Washington and Texas.

Prayers for the family of **Phil Braverman**, friend of **Debbie Chang's** family for over 5 decades, who lost his battle with Covid-19 on May 8. This is the second dear friend of the family they have lost to the virus.

### PRAYERS OF HEALING

**Lauri Floresca's** colleague, **Carolyn Hendon**, passed away recently. Lauri asks for prayers for her family and for the work community.

**Austin Mader-Clark** requests prayers for **Cynthia Mader**, undergoing a second breast cancer surgery.

Prayers of comfort and peace for **Adrienne Mitchell**, nearing the end of her life.

**Cynthia Carley** asks for prayers for **Reg Grady** as he returns to good health.

**Jack Daniel** requests prayers for his friend, **Wayne Robinson**, who tested positive for COVID-19. Jack is waiting on his own test results. Prayers for comfort and clarity for all as we face these days of uncertainty.

**Colleen Connery** asks for prayers for her 82-year-old dad, sheltering in place in Albany NY, and doing his best to stay occupied and healthy.

**Pam McCarthy** also asks for prayers for her mom, sheltering in place alone in Connecticut.

Prayers for **Mary Jane Cooper, Haywood Cooper's** grandmother, as she enters hospice.

**Malcolm Jones** is experiencing health challenges from his ongoing cancer. He will have another surgical procedure soon. His prognosis is good.

**Linda Stoick** asks for prayers for her nephew and his wife.

A NOTE FROM **JULIE BERK** ABOUT HER PARENTS **GEORGE AND CARI PARKER**: *George is now living at his home on Lexington Way in Burlingame and is in hospice care. He would love it if you would like to come by the house and wave through the window! (His bed is situated in the living room in front of the picture window on the ground floor). Morning hours would probably be best as he tends to nap in the afternoon.*

*My mom Cari has been living with my partner Bill and myself in Redwood City since Atria Burlingame went on lockdown in mid-March. She had been doing quite well until she took a fall. No broken bones, but her health and well-being have deteriorated since her fall. UPDATE: Laura Peterhans is coordinating the schedule for visits; please contact her at [lkpeterhans@yahoo.com](mailto:lkpeterhans@yahoo.com) or (650) 637-8783.*

**Lynnelle** requests prayers for **Priscilla Storm's** nephew **John** who suffered a debilitating stroke the end of June. **Carol Sizemore (Priscilla's** sister) and Lynnelle are still in touch and she's devastated.

Prayers for **Rebecca Ruedy-Whelan's** mother, **Nancy**, who is having a difficult time.

Prayers for **Sue Hill**, for a smooth and effective chemotherapy treatment.

Prayers for **June Brown** as she recovers from a nasty fall resulting in a broken shoulder.

**Lorna Groundwater** asks for

## Joys and Concerns cont.

prayers as she is concerned that there is now a case of COVID at **Jim's** facility.

Prayers for **Chuck Ruthroff**, brother of **Don Ruthroff**, receiving immunotherapy for squamous cell carcinoma (head and neck cancer), adrenal insufficiency, and encephalopathy (brain disease). Prayers also for Don and all of Chuck's loved ones in this difficult time.

Prayers for **Lucy & Jim Dahlstrom**, whose nephew **Michael** passed away on June 13 from COVID-19. Lucy & Jim are dear friends of **Lynnelle's** and Lucy has sung with Chancel Choir and with a guest ensemble "Beyond Boundaries" at CCSM many times.

Prayers of strength and healing for **Dave McClure** who had spine surgery on Friday, June 26. The surgery went very well.

Prayers for **Greg Graves'** cousin, **Tim Raffety**, diagnosed with stage 4 liver cancer. He requested to be released from the hospital to spend his last days at home.

**Susan Marcellais** asks for prayers for **Ruby, Victoria, and Brandi**.

**Linda Brockett** asks for prayer for **Patty**, a single mom with Stage 4 cancer, and for her 11-year old daughter.

Prayers for **David Meissner's** uncle **Al**, who is in hospice in a nursing home with end-stage Alzheimers. Prayers especially for his wife, **Arlene**, who is not able to visit.

**Bill Melis** is struggling with a number of health issues so is at home and appreciates prayers for continued healing.

**Lynnelle** asks for prayers for **James Tobias**, a friend from grad school diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer, and for the healing for her cousin **Gayle Walkowiak**, who is losing her eyesight due to a long battle with cancer.

Prayers for healing for **Lisa Nelson** (**Kathy Nelson's** mom and **Lynnelle's** dear friend who has played for CCSM) who was admitted to ICU this week.

Prayers for **David & Barbara Do-**

**brinen** who lost a beloved family friend, musician **Roy Oakley**.

Prayers for **Mary, Robin Hansen's** mother, who has been moved to a group home, in hopes of providing a more stimulating environment.

Prayers of peace and strength to **Ruth Black** and family as Ruth is now on hospice at Brookdale Assisted Living with MS and dementia.

Heartfelt prayers for **Elise Leung** and her family as they endure difficult health challenges.

Continuing prayers for **Alice Morrison's** daughter **Rebecca Schaefer**, who is in need of support over the recent death of her son **Max**.

Prayers of healing and strength for **Gail Evans'** friend **Michelle**, battling Stage 4 cancer.

Prayers for **Debbie Chang's** 81-year-old parents sheltering in place in the national epicenter in New York City. She also asks for prayers for asks for prayers for her aunt **Dorothy**, who lost her husband **Arthur** on New Year's Eve and is struggling on her own.

Prayers for **Gene Chelberg's** 99-year-old grandmother who continues to be isolated in a care center in Texas, and for his mother who normally visits every day.

**Michele Moffitt** asks for prayers for her brother who has cancer.

**John McCann** asks for prayer for his daughter Zoe's grandma, Deborah, who is going through radiation treatment.

**Gene Summerville** asks for prayers for his brother-in-law, **Dave**, suffering from a degenerating spine.

Prayers for strength and healing for **Patty Burns, Jeanne Back's** best friend (of 40+ years), diagnosed with metastasized neuroendocrine cancer.

Prayers for **Chase Montara's** mother, **Ellie Noyes**, who is in a Memory Care Unit in Massachusetts.

**Kirsten Smith's** father, **David Riding**, had major stomach surgery at the

end of May. He also has Lewy body dementia, which is Parkinson's with Alzheimer's. Prayers also for Kirsten's father-in-law, **Paul Smith**, who is home with round-the-clock care.

Prayers of peace and strength for **Martha, Laura Pierce-McKenzie's** mother, who had surgery for breast cancer.

**Angela Lee** asks for prayer for a strong spirit and smooth treatment for her sister **Norither Lee**, diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer.

Please pray for **Anne Galli's** friend **Manjula Waldron** and her loved ones. She recently moved to Ohio to support her son and his family there, and is now suffering a second serious health challenge during this pandemic.

**Sharon Tobin** asks for prayers for her friend **Lindsay Donovan**, who is dealing with stage-4 pancreatic cancer.

**Rick Kenney**, an avid cyclist in our CC Riders bike group now living in DC with his wife **Dakota**, continues to recover from a bike accident on May 23 and subsequent surgery.

Prayers for one of **Penny's** dearest friends, **Fiona**, who continues her road to full recovery from multiple health issues.

**Cristina Summerville** asks for prayers for her brother, **Gabriel**, who is having prostate issues.

Prayers for **Ann Lambertson** for a speedy recovery from knee surgery.

Continuing prayers of strength and healing for our beloved brothers and sisters: **Martha Grannis, Dr. Jim Groundwater** and family, **Bill Daniels, Marjorie Griffin, Genevieve and John Parsons, Fred Petri, Rev. Travis Woodmansee's** mother **Cathy, Mike and Kay Harris'** friend **Mary Helen McMahon, Cathy Latta, Genel Morgan's** friends **Marty and Steve, Dottie Scott, Veril Phillips'** granddaughter **Eva**, and others as they walk their unique journeys with cancer and other health challenges.



## Who are we becoming?

([Click](#) to play video)

On May 11, 2020, Penny posed the question in a pastoral video: "When [will we re-gather] might not be the question. The deeper question might be WHO. Who are we becoming during this time? How are we letting this pandemic shape us? How will we rise to the occasion, rise to the times with our best selves?"

# Just Too Much

May 30, 2020 • by Mercy Jean Moyo

I could not let another day pass without addressing the deep pain and outrage over the murder of George Floyd. I deleted the video I made and the piece I wrote and instead, offer you the words of my daughter Mercy Moyo, who stayed up most of the night and wrote this essay called “Just Too Much.” Her words are much more powerful than mine. I hope you take time to read it. —Penny Nixon, 05-30-2020

**B**ang!! Bang!! Bullets go into another black man’s body. The body lay there, blood flowing out.

The crowds with phones out screaming, yelling at the police officers trying to tell them to stop. Another black man beaten and shot by the police. Another black man dead on the street.

I can’t even remember how old I was, but I knew from a young age that black people were treated differently than white people. I was 14 years old when I saw on tv another black man killed, and wondered why he got shot—he followed instructions and he knew his rights as a citizen.

My mom is Rev. Dr. Penny Nixon. She is the most powerful person I know. She knows how to speak up and fight with words. She taught me to speak up. That is what I am doing right now. I refuse to believe I am powerless as a young black woman.

I was lucky enough to grow up in a bubble. In this bubble, in this beautiful environment I grew up in, I thought I had the same rights as my parents who are white, and my aunties who are white. I didn’t know people like me were criminals just because of the color of our skin. “I Can’t Breathe, I Can’t Breathe” said Eric Gardner as he was being choked to death by the white police officers which are supposed to protect all citizens. But is protect the right word to use these days? The police are supposed to keep us safe. Is safe the right word? Am I safe as a black person?

I just want to walk down the street without looking over my shoulder every 10 minutes and even if my parents are with me I still look. I was born in Zimbabwe with no fear. Now I live here. I fear walking down the street, going into a store, and going to a mall with my friends.

Even though I live in a “bubble” I have still gotten the message that the color of my skin makes most white people feel in danger. One day as I was spending time with my chosen

sister and we were both in a store. I was near the door and the manager thought I was stealing stuff just because my hands were in my pocket. She asked to see my hands so I showed her my empty hands and she still thought I stole something. She walked away but she never let me go out of her sight. By the way, I was the only black person in the store. I was 13 years old looking for something special to buy for my parents. My sister, who is white, watched me be accused of stealing even though she knew I would never steal anything. I got home and told my parents. I went back to the store with my mom and tried to confront the manager but she wasn’t there. Clearly, the color of my skin made me suspicious, dangerous, a “criminal”.

Why are my people always on the ground? Why are my people always bleeding from gunshots? Why are my people dying almost every day? We need to find different solutions to these situations.

I can’t wake up hearing about another person dead on the street in public. Why don’t the police officers pull out their guns on a white person, why do police officers talk and give opportunity to white people, why do white people survive a police encounter? I am 16 years old, almost 17. I can’t breathe. I can’t, I can’t raise my future child in this environment. I don’t want to teach my son about what he has to do if he gets pulled over. I don’t want to pray every day hoping my son comes home.

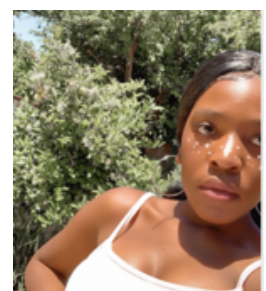
I watch this show called All American. It is about this teen living in an area where there is always a person trying to kill another person. I told myself it’s a tv show, nothing is really real, but this show is based on a true story. Can you imagine your neighborhood covered with pictures of people and not just any people, black people that have died? There is a scene where he is at church and the pastor is reading

all the names that have died. The list was long. Too long. After he reads it he asked everyone “WHOSE NAME DO I HAVE TO READ NEXT? WHOSE BODY IS GOING TO BE LAYING ON THE STREET WITH 4 BULLETS? WHOSE NAME ARE WE GOING TO PRAY FOR NEXT?”

After watching this show I realized it is based on real life. I got scared—not that scared like you just watched a scary movie, but as a black person I felt scared that the color of my skin might get me killed.

“I Can’t Breathe, I Can’t Breathe” in New York, in Minneapolis. “I Can’t Breathe” --4 police officers on one black man. “I Can’t Breathe” one police officer’s knee on the neck of this guy smashed on the pavement, on the street. “I Can’t Breathe” the last words from George Floyd, another black man in the history of police officers killing just because. A day later and one police officer got charged but the others? Well, we will see. I am 16, almost 17, growing up in a society where black people are not respected, treated evenly, receive the same rights as white people when interacting with a police officer, and, where I have a chance to live.

My name is Mercy Moyo and I want this to be a chance for people to stop thinking and do something. Do something to help out black people because clearly our black mouths are never loud enough to save our lives. I am a proud, young black woman, an African-American citizen, saying, PLEASE STOP THIS VIOLENCE. This violence is not going to get us anywhere. This violence is killing black people, and it is just too much.



# Message from Kelly Colwell

Dear friends,

If you caught the service on July 19, you'll have heard this announcement already, but in case you haven't, I want to share the news that I'm making a ministry transition. I've accepted a position as an associate minister at First Congregational Church of Berkeley and will be starting there on August 3.

I'm sorry that it's such a quick transition, but the beginning of the role there is covering a parental leave, and babies won't wait. I want to express my deep gratitude and appreciation for the time I've had at CCSM. You are an incredible community of faith! It's hard to remember back to before the pandemic, but I came on to cover Penny's ill-fated sabbatical! Of course, when the shelter-in-place order came down, Penny returned to offer the congregation much-needed leadership during this unprecedented time. Things shifted a lot, as you all know! We went online, we changed formats, we moved programs, and needs changed. I am so grateful that you kept me along for the ride throughout all those changes!

It's hard to remember, but my contract to cover Penny's sabbatical only went through September, and when an opportunity came up to serve right here in Berkeley where Sheryl and I live, I couldn't pass it up. I'm sorry to be leaving you so quickly, but First Church Berkeley and CCSM are two of the Bay Area's "cathedral churches," and I hope my move there will help reinvigorate some

collaboration between the two communities. Plus, I'm still married to one of your ministers, so I'm sure you haven't seen the last of me!

Let me say that you are an exceptional church doing important, life-changing, world-changing work. Your faithful, challenging attention to climate change; your beautiful, multicultural community; your generous support for children and youth; your meeting of each person exactly as they are and your invitation to grow. I have been blessed by my time with you and I hope to carry forward what I've learned in my ministry in the future.

You'll hear more details about how the various things I've done will get passed on to other folks, but rest assured, we have everything in hand, and nothing will be dropped. You're in great hands with your ministry team and with each other. My prayer for you is that you continue along your path, offering your tremendous blessings to your neighbors close and far.

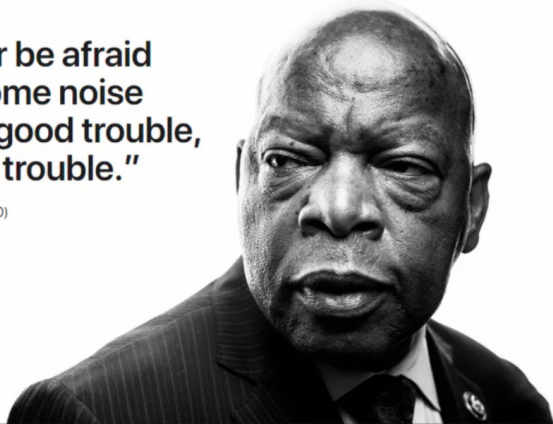
With much love and deep gratitude,

Kelly



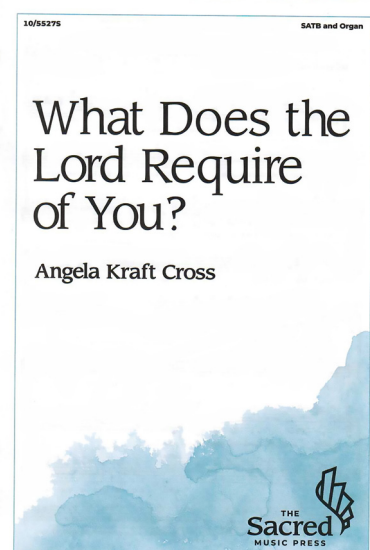
**"Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."**

Rep. John Lewis (1940-2020)



## What Does the Lord Require of You?

Angela Kraft Cross is thrilled that her anthem has now been published by Lorenz Music/Sacred Music Press. «What Does the Lord Require of You?» was written in 2017 to honor Penny's tenth anniversary at CCSM!



As we begin to count the time of this pandemic in months, rather than days or weeks, the life of the church continues, and continues adapting. There is a lot in this second COVID issue to ruminate on and we hope you will find it a fitting reflection of the love and care that continues to be the hallmark of CCSM.

## IN THIS ISSUE

### CLICK TO NAVIGATE TO PAGE

<a href="#">from Penny: The Year We've Been Waiting For</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Black Lives Matter Response</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Streamlining CCSM's Streaming</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Children, Youth &amp; Families News</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">What Can We Do? responses</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">What Can We Do? reflection</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Black Lives Matter montage</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Kenerin's Story</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Zoom is Not the Same.. But It Is Good!</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Financial Information during the Pandemic</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Backpacks Needed by Puente by July 31</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Now Let Us Praise...</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">I Hate Coronavirus poem</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">O God, Why Are You Silent sung by Melanie</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Reflections from Lynnelle</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Virtual Organ Academy</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Beethoven's 250th Birthday</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Angela in The Diapason</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Zoom Gathering: In the Spirit of Sharing</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">The Face Mask Brigade</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">CCSM Scholars</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Join the CCSM Green Team</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">FaceBook 2.0 Task Team</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">First Tuesday Book Group</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Energy, Environmental Justice (EEJ) Update</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Posy Posse Delivers Love</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Gratitude during Quedate en Casa</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">What's Been Going On at 225 Tilton Ave.?</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Recent "Connections"</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Notes from Music &amp; Art</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Joys &amp; Concerns</a>	<a href="#">19-20</a>
<a href="#">Who are we becoming? video</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Just Too Much: Essay by Mercy Moyo</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">A Message from Kelly</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">What Does the Lord Require of You - Angela's</a>	<a href="#">22</a>

*While we aren't able to be in our physical sanctuary, you're invited to sit with Mary Oliver's wonderful poem **Where Does the Temple Begin, Where Does It End?** We can't be in our "temple" together right now, but perhaps we've taken it home with us. Perhaps it's internal, in our own eyes and hands. Perhaps it's all around us.*



There are things you can't reach. But you can reach out to them, and all day long.

The wind, the bird flying away. The idea of God.

And it can keep you busy as anything else, and happier.

The snake slides away; the fish jumps, like a little lily, out of the water and back in; the goldfinches sing from the unreachable top of the tree.

I look; morning to night I am never done with looking.

Looking I mean not just standing around, but standing around as though with your arms open.

And thinking: maybe something will come, some shining coil of wind, or a few leaves from any old tree— they are all in this too.

And now I will tell you the truth. Everything in the world comes.

At least, closer.

And, cordially.

Like the nibbling, tinsel-eyed fish; the unlooping snake.

Like goldfinches, little dolls of gold fluttering around the corner of the sky

of God, the blue air.