

CCSM PINE TREE

VOL. 69, #7 | ADVENT 2020 • ONLINE / FOURTH SHELTER-IN-PLACE EDITION



ADVENT WORSHIP

I BELIEVE EVEN WHEN... FILL THE NIGHT WITH MUSIC AND LIGHT

November 29 Advent 1 • *I Believe in the Sun: Hope for Tomorrow*
Reflection: Sheryl Johnson

December 6 Advent 2 • *I Believe in Love* • Reflection: Alan Roby

December 13 Advent 3 • *I Believe in God: Ode to Joy*
Reflection: Jorge Bautista

December 20 Advent 4 • *I Believe in the Light: Illuminating Peace*
Reflection: Laura Keating-Clevidence

A WORD FROM PENNY

ADVENT 2020

I BELIEVE EVEN WHEN... FILL THE NIGHT WITH MUSIC AND LIGHT

It probably seems early to start talking about Advent—but we want you to know that we are working hard to make this Advent meaningful in new ways because we are in a time like no other. As the days grow darker, and the coronavirus

[click to continue to p. 3](#)



Click [here](#) or on the video to hear Penny give a short reflection on our current moment—nine months into this pandemic.

[\[tinyurl.com/Penny-PT7\]](https://tinyurl.com/Penny-PT7)



Congregational
Church of san mateo

225 TILTON AVENUE, SAN MATEO, CA 94401
650 343-3694 | CCSM-UCC.ORG | FACEBOOK.COM/CCSM.UCC

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

youth news...

While 2020 continues to be a strange and stressful year for children, youth, and family programming, I am so grateful to CCSM for its creativity and faithful commitment to responding to the many needs and possibilities that this season is presenting to us.

This fall, we have re-started our monthly kids' music sessions with Julie Berk on Zoom! We are finding that it actually works quite well to have kids sing, dance, and keep the beat at home. Introducing spiritually-rooted music to kids is important on so many levels—one being that music sticks with us much better than spoken or written words do. It is wonderful to introduce kids to songs like “This Little Light of Mine” that they will have and know throughout their lives and can turn to in difficult times.

Shannon McEntee continues to offer a weekly Godly Play session on Zoom. It is so wonderful to see the Biblical stories told and to hear the kids' questions and wonderings about what they mean to them—and to see the art they create in response! Libby Barnard and I are working hard to re-vision our older-kid-oriented Resilience and Justice program—one piece of feedback we received is that kids this age are pretty Zoomed-out with school, etc. So we are working on a program that will involve less screen-time and more do-at-your-own pace engagement. Ideas include helping kids create things they can use at home on their own time like finger labyrinths, prayer flags, stress balls, and prayer beads—so that they can be rooted and grounded and then ready to learn about important social issues and serve and help as they can.

I am grateful to Tara Abrams who hosted a first gathering for parents to connect and support. We hope to host another gathering soon, particularly to talk about the recent election and how to support our kids and youth.

For youth, our Sunday gatherings have included a variety of fun seasonal parties including the ever-popular scavenger hunt game where we each find an item at home that matches a description (i.e. something spooky, something scary) and then points are awarded for fastest and most creative. We have also baked cupcakes “together” on Zoom, played a lot of games like Pictionary, discussed current events, made social justice-focused posters for our windows, and more. Also, we have

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

continued to hear the faith and vocational stories of our young adults. This has been a wonderful time to build connections and learn more about those who are just a decade or two older—asking questions like how they chose what to study, why they have chosen to live in California, who they turn to when they need help or support, and more. It has been a really lovely time of mentoring and sharing, helping to start to “demystify” adulthood. We have also heard a lot of different faith journeys and various responses to why young adults have chosen to be part of a church generally, and CCSM specifically.

A really wonderful youth program has been our participation in the Confirmation Class that we are hosting along with two other UCC churches. We have nearly 20 youth from CCSM in the class which is just awesome! The youth have been so thoughtful, reflective, and willing to share openly and honestly. So far we have talked about the Bible and God—no small topics to begin! - and upcoming topics include Faith and Politics, Jesus, other faith traditions, the United Church of Christ, and more. We will continue to meet every two weeks all year. Our gatherings include a mix of videos, discussions, small group conversations, collaborative art and brainstorming on the Zoom “whiteboard,” spiritual practices, community building activities, and more. The program also includes requirements for youth to attend CCSM services and other programs and to meet monthly with a CCSM adult mentor. I am so grateful especially to our mentors for their support of the youth and helping to make sure they feel personally known, valued, and connected.



High school “Sixty Minutes” discussion group on Nov. 8

A WORD FROM PENNY cont. from p. 1

spreads, we want to bring as much light as possible into your lives. Even though we cannot be together and sing our favorite carols, instead of turning away from music, we turn towards it. We are finding ways to make our advent moments special, even if virtual. This Advent, we will have an increased understanding of what it means to wait in the dark for the light to appear. We wait for the One whose entrance into our lives we welcome once again.

We are still planning some things that we will be able to do outside, and preparing ways for you to make a pilgrimage, in a safe way, to your church and reconnect with this beloved place. All our services will be online still but there will be opportunities for you to make this a deeply personal and spiritual Advent journey.

The history of humanity is fraught with pain—especially the pain that comes accompanied by fear and leads to oppression and violence of one people against another. This is the world into which Jesus was born and through which his teachings would challenge and call for transformation. The opening words of an anonymous Jewish poet, “I believe in the sun, even when the sun is not shining,” were scrawled on a wall during the Holocaust. This theme song for our season calls us to examine our penchant for annihilating fear by annihilating each other. The power of narrative and music will call us to a different response—transformation and reconciliation through hope, love, joy, and peace. This Advent and Christmas, let us fill the night with music and light and affirm and act on the reasons why we can still “believe, even when” we are discouraged.

Take time and read through this Pine Tree newsletter and mark your calendar now for all the ways you can participate and make your Advent journey especially meaningful this year.

Penny



Stewardship 2021: Keeping Faith

We started our stewardship campaign early this year because in 2021, we are going to face an incredibly challenging financial year. We are doing our best to trim expenses everywhere we can and also keep up everything we are doing currently to bring you hope, comfort, and inspiration during this time, as well as continuing to reach beyond our community and be a steady voice of justice and a well of generosity in these difficult times.

So we are asking, from the bottom of our hearts, if you have resources, and still have employment, and you consider CCSM your spiritual home, *would you make a pledge?* We can only do this if we ALL do this. If everyone gives according to their means, we will have enough. This is a spiritual principle I have lived by for many years and I know it to be true.

To pledge online or to find further info, go to ccsm-ucc.org/stewardship-2021

Thank you for your love and faithfulness.

Penny

There's a Doctor in the house!

Congratulations to Rev. Sheryl Johnson, soon to be Rev. Dr. Sheryl Johnson, PhD! Sheryl defended her PhD dissertation at Graduate Theological Union on Friday, November 6 in ethics and she passed with no revisions.



Her dissertation title was “All the believers had everything in common” (Acts 2:44): Ecclesial Economic Ethics in North American Mainline Protestant Churches.

CCSM is proud of you, Sheryl!

The Mask Brigade has made over 2500 masks and continues to give masks to local organizations including Samaritan House (Pantry and Clinic), Puente and Safe Sleeping. They took a short break from sewing last month to work on a fun project, a video parody based on the Brady Bunch. If you haven't seen it yet it is available on our Facebook page and YouTube channel.

tinyurl.com/CCSM-Mask-Brigade



SHARE YOUR LOVE CCSM'S VIRTUAL AUCTION EVENT JANUARY 29 - FEBRUARY 5

Due to concerns about transmission of COVID-19, Pick-a-Party is postponed until it is safe to come together again. However, Sandy McNabb and Julie Lenden have another idea! You're invited to participate in "Share Your Love," CCSM's virtual silent auction from January 29 to February 5. You can create something using your special skills—artwork, quilts, stationery, pottery—or you can offer community-building virtual classes—cooking, dance, special interest talks—or you can donate a special treasure—vacation home getaways, wine baskets... With all of the talent in the congregation, the opportunities are truly endless!

All of these treasures will be posted on a website for members to view and bid on. To get started go to [CCSM's online form](#); we'll let you know when the auction website is available for viewing. (You can also download a pdf of the form [here](#).) **Please fill out the donation form by January 11.**

The auction will be live from January 29 - February 5, just in time to bid on items to share with the loves in your life on Valentine's Day. What a great opportunity not only to fundraise, but to also virtually meet up with folks you may not have seen since this all started. We hope you participate by donating now, and bidding on the items lovingly donated by the congregation!

If you have any questions about how this will work, you can contact Sandy at 650 594-0742 or sandra.j.mcnaab@gmail.com, or Julie at 650 454-0461 or julielenden@hotmail.com. Thank you for Sharing Your Love with CCSM!



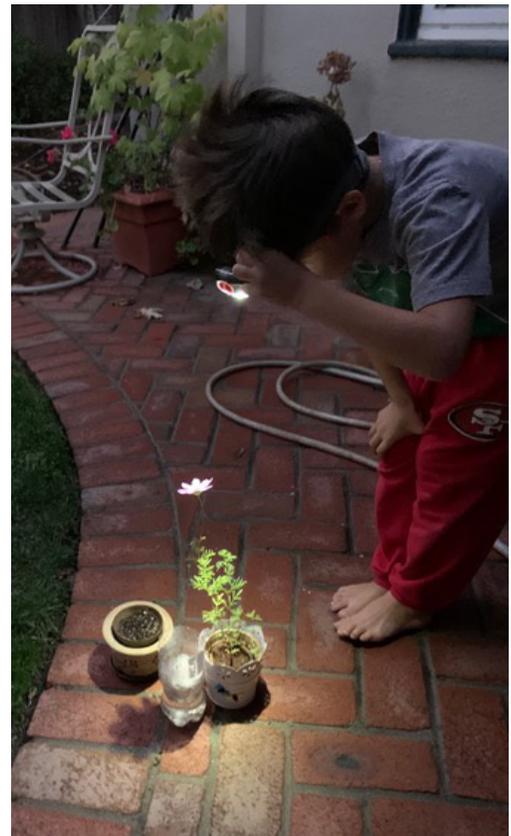
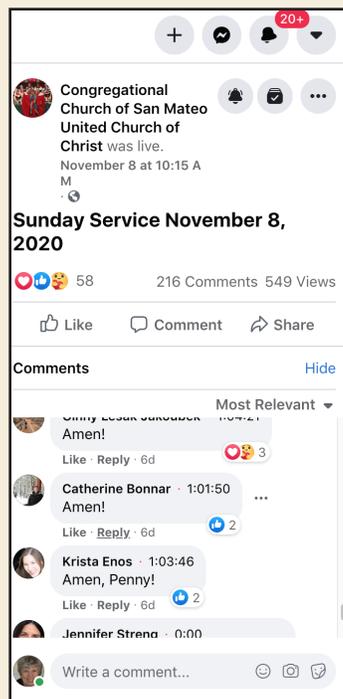
CCSM'S VIRTUAL CONGREGATION

First online gathering DECEMBER 6 at 11:30AM

By Laura Keating-Clevidence

Dear CCSM community: Sheryl and I are excited to announce that we'll be leading the outreach to CCSM's "Virtual Congregation" — an online community for folks who have been tuning into CCSM remotely and want to stick with us during and even after the pandemic. If you are interested in becoming a member of the Virtual Congregation (or you have a friend or family member who has been tuning in), **please join us for our first online gathering after church on Dec. 6 at 11:30 am so we can get to know you.**

This pandemic has been tricky, but we are so grateful for the ways it's opened our eyes to how we can bring even more folks into our beloved community! If you have any questions about the Virtual Congregation, please reach out to either Sheryl (sjohnson@ccsm-ucc.org) or myself (lkeating@ses.psr.edu).



Ismael Boigues checking on a flower he received in a CCSM activity box. He puts on his headlamp and checks on it each night before going to bed.

ANOTHER LOOK AT CCSM'S FINANCES

A word from Veril Phillips, Treasurer

We are nearly nine months into a nationwide, indeed worldwide, pandemic that limits our ability to be together – not only in worship and other gatherings at the church, but also with family and friends in other venues. Family plans for Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations will be very different this year as compared to prior years. (I have often hosted a Thanksgiving table for 15, but not this year.) It is and has been a difficult time for all of us, but we at CCSM are Keeping the Faith.

I last wrote about our financial position in July and thought it was time to provide you another, possibly closer, look. Giving remains very strong and we are so grateful. Giving to the General Fund helps to keep our clergy and other staff compensated fully for their work in our behalf – often well beyond their usual commitments – as well as fund church operating expenses and ministry programs. Giving to the Plate, which is given away for a different purpose each week, is stronger than ever before. Thank you so much for your generosity.

There is a “but” in this message. As you may know, we have three wonderful schools that use our facilities – the Music School, Little Wonders, and the Muslim Garden School. These schools have not been as fortunate because their inability to meet students has reduced their revenues, rather severely in some cases. The Board of Directors has forgiven some of the rent, which normally provides about \$64,000 per year in revenue to CCSM. In addition, we normally anticipate about \$28,000 in one-time use of our facilities and nearly \$20,000 in fund-raising from Pick-a-Party. Because of reductions in these three sources of revenue, we anticipate that 2020 revenue will fall short of our expenses by about \$65,000. Furthermore, a shortfall is likely to continue for several months into next year. Although we don't know for how long, our best planning efforts project a shortfall in 2021 of about \$80,000.

I must hasten to add that CCSM is in a very strong cash position without even touching the endowment funds. The shortfalls are clearly based on a highly unusual one-time event – the pandemic -- and there is no long-term, ongoing cause. We do not have a cash flow crisis. Although all our reserve funds are “allocated” or “earmarked” for particular purposes, two such funds are specifically intended to meet shortfalls; together they are enough to meet the anticipated 2020 shortfall. Not so for 2021. Next year we expect to draw from funds intended to be “overflow” for ministry teams and specific programs instead of drawing all our expenses from

the General Fund.

We know that some of our community have been hit hard financially by the pandemic; **please know that we are NOT asking you to give beyond your means.**

We also know that some of us are able to go beyond our usual giving. This brings me to two special appeals.

At the time of this writing, our pledge drive for 2021 has reached 80% of our goal, which is \$620,000. Please help us reach that goal and perhaps exceed it. **If you have not already pledged your support for 2021, please do so now.** Just point your browser to ccsm-ucc.org, scroll down and click on the orange button, “[Pledge Now.](#)”

Secondly, **if you are able to make a one-time gift, over and above your normal giving level, please do so.** 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, 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 \$___” 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 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, in spite of the pandemic. 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 or 650-579-4627.



Community Thanksgiving Service Still Happening This Year!

A SERVICE OF SHARING, SONGS AND REFLECTION— YOU WILL BE UPLIFTED!

NOVEMBER 26, 2020 • 10AM • ZOOM

No matter what is going on, we are still grateful, and we will gather with our sister church, St. James AME Zion, and be joined as well by Island United Church of Christ, and Trinity Baptist Church.



[Join Zoom Meeting by clicking here](#)



Penny on the spirituality of voting

"At CCSM, we surround ourselves, we center, we gather around the teachings of Jesus, and I want to suggest to you that the teachings of Jesus tell us who to vote for! ...As you fill out your ballot in whatever way you are going to, I invite you to vote for the least of these that Jesus talked about: the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, the unsheltered, those in prison, the widows, the lonely. ...More than anything, I invite you to vote driven by love."

Early this year I applied to be a San Mateo County poll worker for the March presidential primary elections. In addition to wanting to participate, I was curious to learn about the technology and the overall process of running an election. San Mateo County runs quite an operation! They have around 40 or so four day vote centers (depending on the election) that not only need to be staffed but also supplied with machines, printers and supplies. I was assigned to Colma in March, which was both an exhausting and rewarding experience. I guess I liked it because I signed up again to work the presidential election. I was so happy to be assigned to the poll center at CCSM. It was a great and memorable experience.

—Jennifer Jacoby-Yeh

SUPPORT LITTLE EAGLE

A note from the former Executive Director of Puente, and friend of CCSM, Kerry Lobel:

Dear friends,



I'm writing you with hopes that you will support my effort to supply gift cards to purchase holiday gifts and food for 150 families, children and youth in Little Eagle, a community on the south end of Standing Rock Sioux lands in South Dakota.

The community is isolated — the unemployment rate is currently 90% — nearly 80% of residents live below the poverty level. The temperature in the winter is from 30 below zero to 17 above zero. Covid-19 is on the rise in their county, an increase of 16.5% since last week.

The campaign total is \$15,000 to purchase a gift card for each family as well as a gift card for each child or youth. I know that many of you know Standing Rock and have been very active in efforts to stop the pipeline. Now we must protect the people.

Are you able to help?

Venmo: @Kerry-Lobel

Email: kerrylobel@gmail.com

Tax-deductible contributions:

CCSM • 225 Tilton Ave, San Mateo, CA 94401

To give online: tinyurl.com/CCSM-online-giving

Select **Miscellaneous Fund** • Memo: **Standing Rock**

Please make all gifts by **December 2, 2020**. No gift is too large or too small.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE THIS SEASON

Puente Holiday Drive for Families and Farmworkers: Click [HERE](#) to donate

Samaritan House Holiday Program: visit roonga.com/samhouseholiday.



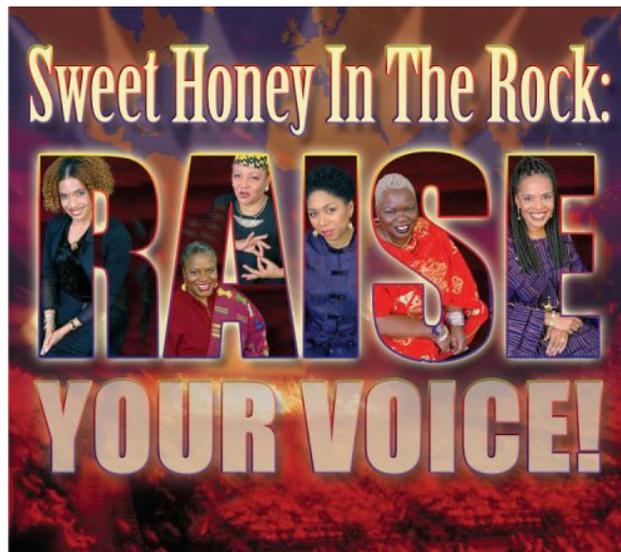
Raise Your Voice! Screening

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5 AT 6PM

One of our Advent themes this year is to “fill the night with music and light” in this strange Advent season. One event we will have to connect is an **all-ages Zoom screening** of this documentary which is itself filled with music! We will be able to text-chat during the movie (if you would like to!) so we can truly “watch” together and share our impressions. Also, this film lifts up the theme of racial justice which has been a particularly important focus this year at CCSM. Here is a description:

The 1.5 hour film chronicles the history, music, and cultural impact of Sweet Honey in the Rock, a Grammy Award-winning African American female a cappella group with musical roots combining jazz, blues and sacred songs of the black church such as spirituals, hymns, and gospel. The documentary uses concert footage and rehearsals, archival stills, and reflections by ensemble members, as well as interviews with scholars and cultural commentators. It is intended to introduce the viewer to the group’s performance style and activism, and “the organization’s significance as a national institution.”

For more information, please contact Sheryl Johnson.



How do you light a candle with a video?

CCSM is planning to do a beautiful candle-lighting video for our Christmas Eve online services. What would make this



video special is if you would be willing to participate! This would entail getting on a simple video call with Chuck Rosenthal and she will ask you to light a candle and pass the light onto the next participant. It will be very easy. It will be recorded and edited with music. I’m sure you have questions on how that will happen, what should you wear, what type of candle... and that information will be sent after we have a group ready to go!

Are you willing to participate? If yes, send Chuck an email at instachuck@icloud.com!

The cut off to RSVP is on November 19th.

If you know someone else who goes to church or watches from afar, please feel free to pass this along to them. Tis the season, and the more the MERRIER!

Who says we can’t do our traditional candle-lighting? We just have to be creative!

CCSM COVID-19 Policy



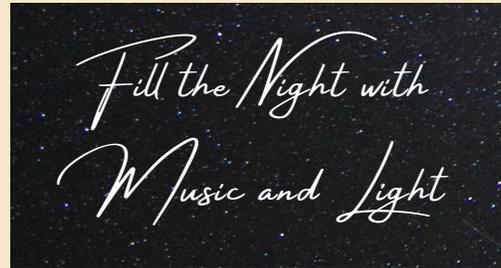
As CCSM continues to do our best to be responsible, caring, and safe through this pandemic, we have made some guidelines for those who are visiting or regularly coming to the church campus for various reasons. Those who are coming to help record/participate in Sunday services will need to obtain a negative COVID test as close as possible to the date of arrival. Those who participate regularly will be tested weekly. Visitors are asked to do a temperature check (scanners are available at the door to the reception office), to wash hands upon arrival, to wear a mask at all times, to complete a sign-in affidavit in case of the need for contact tracing, to clean surfaces touched such as doorknobs and handrails, and to maintain social distance. Anyone with any symptoms of illness is asked to please stay home; similarly, anyone who has had contact with someone who tests positive for COVID is asked to stay home, self-quarantine and get tested.

Thank you for caring for the CCSM staff and community by abiding by these guidelines. If you have further questions, please contact Chase at cmontara@ccsm-ucc.org.

CCSM'S MUSIC HELPS US THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

CCSM MUSICIANS ARE BUSY AT WORK CREATING SOME SPECIAL MUSIC VIDEOS for the Advent season as well as a few special live musical offerings. We are working to include as many musicians as possible including Julie Berk and the children, the Bells and other folks you may not have seen for a while. Here is a list of some of the musical highlights that will be happening in addition to the Sunday services.

We hope these musical gatherings and videos help ring in the holidays creating opportunities for the light to sparkle throughout the season.



CCSM COMMUNITY CAROL SING • FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11 • 7:00PM

The music staff at CCSM will be leading a live Carol Sing on Zoom for the CCSM Community. Be sure to add December 11th at 7PM to your calendar and plan to join us as we come together in song this holiday season. In preparation for the event please share your favorite carol (email Lynnelle Bilesey at ltbmusings@gmail.com) as we would love to include as many requests as possible. We'll send the link out when the time comes.

ADVENT SEASON MUSICAL MOMENTS: ADVENT SUNDAYS AT 4:00PM

The CCSM musicians are putting together a series of Advent videos to help celebrate the season. These videos will be available each Sunday of Advent at 4 pm on the CCSM Facebook & YouTube links, but you can click in anytime to the once they are made available. We hope you enjoy these special "musical moments." Please watch the Sunday bulletins for the different links and specifics for each week.

— ANTICIPATION OF ADVENT

NOVEMBER 29: The first Sunday of Advent will begin with Angela Kraft Cross and a wonderful selection of organ music to welcome the season.

— SEASONS GREETINGS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

DECEMBER 6: Organ Holiday program - Hosted by Melanie Dresbach with a flourish of flute music featuring Marian Concus. Marian is a professional flutist and will be sharing holiday music on a variety of flute instruments.

— ADVENT: THE HOPE OF CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 13: Compositions by Angela Kraft Cross and others will be featured in a second collection of holiday music for the organ.

— CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

DECEMBER 20: We have gathered some special voices to bring you holiday cheer. Some familiar faces and some special surprises. We promise you don't want to miss this concert! Warm up your voice and sing along or sit back and soak up the amazing vocals.



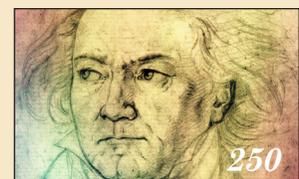
🌿 CHRISTMAS EVE MUSICAL GARLAND 🌿

DECEMBER 24: Musicians and friends of CCSM will provide wonderful holiday music in preparation for the Christmas Eve Services at 4:00PM (family service) and 9:00PM (candlelight service). This video will be available on the CCSM Facebook and YouTube links **starting at noon on Christmas Eve** so you may tune in any time prior to the service.

BEETHOVEN'S 250TH BIRTHDAY CONCERTS

Air Dates: Part I: Tuesday, December 15, 7:00pm
Part 2: Wednesday, December 16, noon

The concerts will include wonderful videos of the music of Beethoven featuring Linda Mallette, MaryAnn Notz, Don Harper, Melanie Dresbach, Nataly Pak, Chase Olson, Ryan and Nathan Chi, Angela Kraft Cross, Karen Hutchinson and more... (These concerts will also be available for viewing anytime after the air date as well.)



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SOME SPECIAL MUSICAL TIDBITS

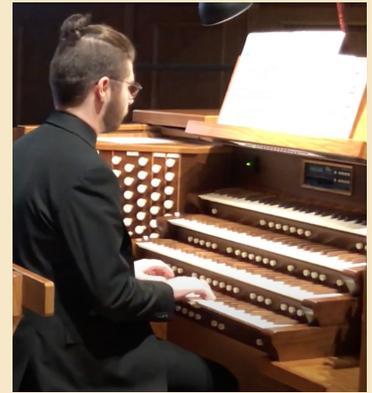
CCSM ORGAN SCHOLAR CHASE OLSON performed [an organ concert](#) at Mission Dolores Basilica on Nov. 8.

RYAN DRESBACH IS BEING FILMED ALL AROUND CCSM CREATING DANCE VIGNETTES for the musical moments videos. Don't be surprised if you happen past a taping of this talented dancer—who, by the way, is the son of CCSM musician Melanie Dresbach.

CCSM'S TALENTED ANGELA KRAFT CROSS PERFORMED SEVERAL SPECIAL CONCERTS AT ST. MARY'S CATHEDRAL the last couple months.

In addition, Angela, along with several of her students, held an informative **LECTURE RECITAL ON THE 150TH BIRTHDAY OF LOUIS VIERNE**. The concert is still available online, featuring a lecture by Angela Kraft Cross and performances by Angela herself, Chase Olson, Edward Lee, Isaiah Rassbach, Nataly Pak, Jin Kyung Lim and Duane Soubirous!! Sponsored by the Palo Alto/ Peninsula AGO. tinyurl.com/CCSM-Vierne

In addition, if you missed the **7TH ANNUAL HALLOWEEN ORGAN CONCERT**, it was delightful and the video of the concert is still available for viewing [HERE](#).



Chase Olson at Mission Dolores Basilica

ADOPT-A-FAMILY: PANDEMIC VERSION

NO LITTLE BRIGHTLY LIT TREE, NO PAPER ORNAMENTS, NO SHOPPING FOR THE PERFECT GIFT... HOWEVER, ADOPT A FAMILY NEEDS YOUR HELP EVEN MORE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Each year CCSM adopts several families living in LifeMoves transitional housing. In a normal year our tree would be set up on the loggia decorated with paper ornaments, each of which identified a need or wish of one of our adopted family members. CCSM members would select one of the ornaments, purchase the gift and return it to CCSM. The gifts would be taken to First Step for Families located just blocks for our church where our adopted families live. We have provided about 90 gifts each holiday season for the past 13 years.

This year many more families have asked LifeMoves for help, almost doubling the need. **WE ARE ASKING THE CCSM CONGREGATION TO DIG DEEP TO MEET THE INCREASED NEEDS OF THOSE MOST VULNERABLE IN OUR COMMUNITY.** Instead of the \$30 - \$35 amount we normally recommend, please consider a donation of \$40 or more which will help us meet our goal of providing two \$20 gift cards to each family member. **You can help CCSM meet our goal by contributing to the plate collection on November 29.** Although this is the preferred way to donate, there are two other ways you can help.

- You can purchase a \$20 gift card(s) (Amazon or Target only) on the Internet and have it sent directly to LifeMoves, c/o Donna Hope, 181 Constitution Dr., Menlo Park, CA 94025. (Do not send gift cards in the mail yourself as they may get stolen.)



- You may also drop off a \$20 gift card(s) before Dec. 7 at CCSM by placing them in the mail slot located in the door to the office accessed from the loggia. Please place the cards in an envelope labeled "Adopt a Family" or "LifeMoves."

If everyone contributes what they can, we will be able to make a difference in the lives of these struggling families. Thank you for caring and making the effort to help during these stressful and difficult times.

Poinsettia Delivery Volunteers Needed

In past years we have delivered poinsettias to many of our members who may be home bound or had a recent loss or illness. These were delivered by members who picked them up at the church after the Sunday service. This year we will be continuing this tradition but on a smaller scale and will require logistical changes also. They will be available to be picked up and delivered the week of Dec. 7-11. We are

looking for folks who would be willing to pick up one or more and deliver to the recipient. We want this to be a safe but still meaningful experience for all involved.

Please let me know if you could help us continue this Advent tradition.

Thanks,
Diane Kalliam (415-469-7750 or dkalliam@gmail.com)





Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It breaks my heart, like many things have during this pandemic, that we won't be celebrating Las Posadas in person together this year. Since 2012 Las Posadas has been celebrated faithfully at CCSM by both the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking members and others in the North Central community. Las Posadas in the past seven years has been the one tradition that not only has brought together people from different cultures and languages from the North Central community, but from members of our two services. Las Posadas is a tradition that helps us be a more welcoming place for all of us who attend CCSM. While we may not celebrate Las Posadas this year as we have before, I want us not to forget that year after year, Las Posadas reminds us to practice hospitality in an atmosphere of celebration. It reminds us that Advent is about a God who reached out radically to all of us in the Incarnation.

And while we can't physically experience Las Posadas this 8th year, I am planning a Las Posadas service for the Wednesday service that will celebrate this tradition online. **I hope many of you can show up to experience Las Posadas online on Wednesday, December 16 at 7:30pm.**

I miss all of you and continue to pray for all us that we may continue to be safe during this time.

Peace and blessings!

Jorge

FIRST TUESDAY BOOK GROUP

DECEMBER 1 & JANUARY 5 • 7:30PM

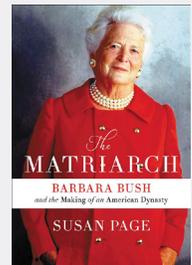
We are meeting through the pandemic, thanks to Zoom. If you are interested in joining us, and you are NOT on the book group mailing list, send me your email address so we can send you the Zoom invitation. Meetings start at 7:30 pm.



December 1: Beneath A Scarlet Sky by Mark Sullivan. "Based on a true story of a forgotten hero, ... (this book) is the triumphant, epic tale of one young man's incredible courage and resilience during one of history's darkest hours."

January 5, 2021: We'll greet the new year with a discussion on *The Matriarch: Barbara Bush And the Making of An American Dynasty* by Susan Page.

Questions? s_stoehr@hotmail.com



CCSM was ready to respond to whatever the election outcome might be with prayer, poetry and music on November 4. Watch it now or watch it again to be immersed in the songs and hope of our faith. tinyurl.com/CCSM-Post-Election

Energy, Environmental Justice Ministry



The EEJ ministry proposed to the Finance Committee and Board of Directors in October that CCSM install an array of solar panels with battery storage and car charging stations. That proposal was accepted in principle by the board with a request for more detail.

The solar task force of EEJ is organizing a specific proposal with the details requested including the size of the solar array in kilowatts, the location of the array which will most likely be a carport structure in the parking lot without loss of any parking spaces, the size of battery storage in kilowatt hours and the number of vehicle electric charging stations. We are also obtaining bids from solar contractors in support of the proposal.

When we have a final design and cost estimates, we will initiate and coordinate information and discussion sessions with the congregation for input and feedback. We continue to be guided by California Interfaith Power and Light, a non-profit whose mission is to educate and support congregations about solar and other environmental impact issues. We hope you "attended" the October 4 service with guest preacher Rev. Jim Antal, author of Climate Church/ Climate World and a noted climate activist. It was great to have him preach again! Stay tuned!

FOSTER AN ANIMAL DURING THE PANDEMIC!

By Tara Abrams

I often feel like I am “wasting” a lot of this time we have with Shelter in Place but I thought back today and realized that since May our family has fostered 10 animals (4 kittens, 5 puppies, and a baby bunny) and personally placed 6 of them with “fur-ever” families. We’ve



socialized the shy ones, bottle fed those without a mother, and are now teaching a dog that came to us with enormous anxiety and attachment struggles to feel safe and comfortable in our home. Feel free to contact me with information on how to get started fostering: taragabrams@gmail.com



ZOOM TO THE NEXT MEETING

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20 • NOON

Enjoy your lunch at home while the meeting is in progress and members and friends are getting electronically connected.

Susan Duty will, as always, send everyone an advance email notice. Guests, whom we always welcome, can call 650-533-6830 or email her at susanjd52@gmail.com. Anne Fuller will follow up a day or two before the meeting with the Zoom link for those attending.

At our October meeting it was learned that many members had done a lot of reading, so it was suggested that an appropriate program would be to share titles, authors and a brief sentence or two of why we liked the book. This should provide quite a reading list. There will be a brief business meeting and a devotional moment.

If you weren't able to join us last month, we hope you will circle the November date on your calendar and join us then. Meanwhile, jot down your book title, the author and a phrase or two of recommendation. We look forward to connecting with you on November 20.

—Mary Ann Notz, Publicity chair

musicart



ADVENT 2020: A CANDLE OF HOPE

by Sandra Soto-Grondona

As we prepare to dress up in purple to await the devices to log in, to expect the arrival of hope, the counting of votes, the production of a vaccine, the end to inequalities, and to celebrate again the birth of Christ, in 2020, we spare time to reflect about the certainty of death and the miracle of life.

As more and more people perish alone in hospital beds, and families desperately arrange funerals online, we realize how difficult it is to plan long-term, but how easy it is to plan our own end of life wishes.

As November 1st brings memories of All Saints, and Día de Los Muertos fills altars with blossoming orange marigolds, aromas of hot chocolate, and glittering sugar skulls, the Fall again is blowing golden leaves, crisp fresh air, shorter days, intense sunsets, but is not yet shining a clear path. While fires paint skies of burning hues, people are raising their voices pleading justice, equity, and reason, but governments are not yet able to hear.

Despite all, life keeps going and we are prompted to keep living. However, breathing is not always possible, and climate change is unavoidable. The death of our pet, who accompanied our journey for 13 years, makes me cry, makes me remember many times we shared, makes my heart full of gratitude for the crossing of our paths, and makes me ponder in the hazy pollution of the apocalyptic midday when she passed away, but on the other hand, assures me now, under a blue moon silence, that our animal spirits will forever fly in sync.

Her memories, and the colors of the sky, carry mixed feelings and return the year-end season. Gardening and long walks prove once more to be healing; real friends find ways to zoom-hug and stay close, while phony friends find excuses to disappear. However, a candle of hope is lit until we can help our children create a less consumerist and wasteful world, imagine new compassionate ways to govern, visualize peace inside and out, and celebrate again, the birth of Christ, even if it is online.



KEEPING MY HEAD ABOVE WATER DURING THESE DIFFICULT TIMES

by Dorothy Kogl

In these times of fear and anger, loss and grief, hate and gratitude, despair and hope, irritability and helplessness, uncertainty and tension, I can find myself drowning in these emotions, these states of mind. Through trial and error, I've found some practices that help me stay afloat, and even at times to swim.

What I need is to stop obsessing about myself, my life, desires, problems, and relationships. I need to develop a larger perspective and focus on other aspects of life, other people (Book of Joy, pages 315, 329).

To start with, I try to lean into my feelings, not avoid, deny or minimize my gut reactions. I ask "What triggered them? What am I unhappy about?" But sometimes it's okay to yell "to hell with calmness and rationality!" (Pema Chodron, Living Beautifully; Lawrence LeShan, Cancer as a Turning Point).

Another exercise I use is to ask myself "What gives life meaning? What cause directs my life? How can I learn from suffering, and how can I help others who suffer?" (Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning).

Even as a child I noticed that I had an inner voice, an inner watcher who told me what I was feeling, that I was a worthy person; it guided me and gave me grace. You can call this inner resource soul, God, Divine Spark, but whatever it is I draw strength from it when I'm open to it, listen to it and talk to it (meditation, prayer, stillness, and silence). During World War II as a child I saw a movie called God Is My Co-Pilot; I remember nothing about the movie but its title and message.

It helps to remember that "This too shall pass" and that in the midst of everything it's important to keep a sense of humor. We have choices even now and they can enable us to swim across the pool (lessons from my grandmother, dad, husband, and daughter).



BINGING CHINESE SOAP OPERAS WITH NAI NAI

By Chris Yeh

When the pandemic hit in March, we knew we needed to figure out a way to socialize with my mom, Betty, who fortunately had recently moved to downtown San Mateo. Jennifer, Katie (9th grade), and I locked down at our home in San Mateo and were soon joined by Maddy when her college in Boston closed. After quarantining for a couple of weeks, we started inviting Nainai (Mandarin word for paternal grandma) to come over for dinner. Maddy loves to cook and every night she prepared amazing dishes and desserts. Maddy and Katie are big fans of Asian TV shows, especially K-dramas (Korean) and Chinese dramas. On their recommendation, my mom, Jennifer, and I began watching different Asian dramas. The genres we have watched include historical, action, fantasy, and modern. After a few weeks, dinner and Asian drama turned into a routine that we have continued at least 5 or 6 nights every week since. It has been an escape for us during this time, we look forward to our evenings and some of the storylines are so crazy that we wonder throughout the day what tonight's episodes will bring. A few of our favorites (all with English subtitles) are below. (Most are available on Netflix, Youtube, or Viki)

- ◆ Itaewon Class (K-drama, modern)
- ◆ Healer (K-drama, Action, modern)
- ◆ Mr. Sunshine (K-drama, historical late 19th century)
- ◆ The Disguiser (Chinese drama, historical 1937)
- ◆ Story of Yanxi Palace (Chinese drama, 18th Century Beijing)
- ◆ Ashes of Love (Chinese drama, Fantasy)
- ◆ Nirvana in Fire (Chinese drama, 6th Century)



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 online prayer request**, by **contacting us via staff emails** listed in your bulletin or on the website, ccsm-ucc.org. You may also contact the church office at 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

We celebrate the joyful news of the finalized adoption of **Chloe Anna Elaine Hawkins-Vaught**, daughter of **April Hawkins and Crystal Vaught**, on October 16th.

Prayers of gratitude for **Sue Hill**, who completed her last chemotherapy treatment and has received a positive report from her doctors.

Please share in the joy and excitement of **Leslie and Krystal Burndon**. Krystal is pregnant and they are expecting their baby in mid-February!

Melanie Dresbach has good news to share: Padre **Michael Dresbach** reported on Oct. 29 that a CT scan showed the chemotherapy is working and the nodule in his lung has resolved. No new growth and no spread!

Julie Berk sends her love and thanks for all of the beautiful best wishes for **George Parker's** 102nd birthday!

PRAYERS OF LOVE AND STRENGTH

Prayers for **Mauricio Palma** and his family on the passing of his mother, **Esperanza Palma**, on October 12th.

Prayers for **Debbie Chang** and her family. Sadly, her father **Victor** lost his battle with COVID recently. **Lily Chang**, Debbie's mother, is also positive for COVID and is recovering at home in New York.

Jelle Zijlstra's father, **Theun Zijlstra**, passed away on October 7 in Holland. His mother, **Chienie**



Chloe Hawkins-Vaught, daughter of April Hawkins and Crystal Vaught

Zijlstra, just passed on September 11. Prayers of comfort and strength for Jelle losing both his parents in such a short time.

From **Lynnelle**: Thank you all for your prayers for my friend **James (JT) Tobias** this summer. I'm saddened to share that he passed away after a long battle with cancer on October 17. He was a dear friend and talented musician having served in the U.S. Army Band in Wash., D.C. I was blessed to have known him.

Greg Graves' cousin, **Tim Raffety**, passed away in October after being diagnosed with liver cancer in July. Prayers of comfort for Greg and his aunt.

Prayers of comfort for the loved ones of **Diane Kalliam's** friend **Joanne King**, who died on September 29. Diane met her last year when in England. Joanne leaves behind her children, grandchildren and partner **Sharon Goulding**.

PRAYERS OF HEALING

Prayers for **Bill Daniels** who recently underwent a long surgery for his cancer. He is recovering at home. Cards welcomed.

Renewed prayers of strength and endurance for all the **health care workers** who are overwhelmed and exhausted.

Prayers for **Bill Melis** who continues to face many health challenges. Prayers, too, for **Carole**.

Prayers for comfort and strength for **DJ**, high school friend of **Genel Morgan** and **Rosemarie Pero**, who is battling cancer and running out of options.

Prayers for **Sharon and Kelly Thurman** who both have CO-

VID, and are in critical care. Their daughter **Beth** is a dear friend of **Martha Bronitsky**.

Genel Morgan's daughter **Becky** is having some health challenges and Genel asks for prayers for healing.

Prayers for **David Meissner** as he works with his Parkinson's Disease care team. Prayers for both David and **Gene** as they face this challenge together through the foundation of their love for God and each other.

Prayers for **Chuck Ruthroff**, brother of **Don Ruthroff**, who is in the midst of 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.

Please pray for **David Riding** who has Lewy body dementia, which is Parkinson's with Alzheimer's. Prayer for his recovery and for all who love him, especially his children **Kirsten Smith and Christopher Field**. We also pray for Kirsten's father-in-law, **Paul Smith**, home at his ranch with round-the-clock care.

Prayers of comfort for both **Elise Leung** and her husband **Ken** as they both are struggling with health issues.

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

Good news for **Carolyn Shaw** and her sister **Kathryn Anne**; restrictions at her residence have been lifted slightly and Kathryn is able to have visitors in the courtyard.

Lorna Groundwater asks for continued prayers that **Jim** and all in his facility remain free from COVID-19.

Joys and Concerns cont.

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

Continued prayers of health and healing for **Patty Burns**, dear friend of **Jeanne Back**.

Lynnelle shared that dear friend of CCSM **Karen Hutchinson's** father **Dr. Hutchinson** (whose office is across the street from CCSM) recently had a health scare that had him in the hospital for a few days. Karen asked for prayers of healing and strength for her father.

Prayers for **Marcia McFee's** father and step-mother, as her step-mom has recently received a very difficult cancer diagnosis.

Prayers for **Mary Aguirre**, who is in Afghanistan. Her job is Justice Gender Advisor for the US Embassy in Kabul. The peace process raises many challenges for Afghan women. Mary is the cousin of **Rosemarie Pero**, and she is now a part of our online congregation. Mary says, "I'll see you online on Sundays from Kabul."

Robert and Angela Kraft Cross' dear friend, **Dr. Judy Holcomb**, has had a recurrence of her cancer and would appreciate loving prayer support through upcoming treatment decisions.

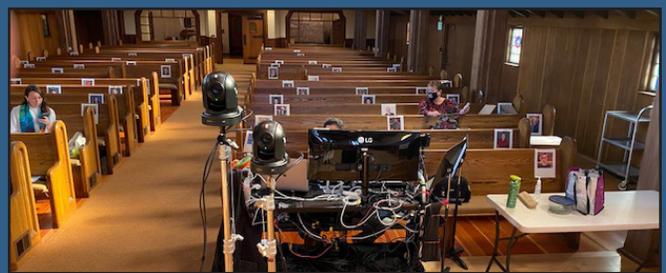
Prayers for **Genel Morgan's** friend's **Pam's** two daughters-in-

law who are going through cancer treatments.

Prayers for **Donna Summers'** 95-year old uncle, who has contracted COVID-19.

Continuing prayers of strength, encouragement, and healing for our beloved brothers and sisters: **Martha Grannis, Marjorie Griffin, Thelma Kromhout, Rev. Travis Woodmansee's** mother **Cathy, Mike and Kay Harris'** friend **Mary Helen McMahan, Cathy Latta, Dottie Scott, Veril Phillips'** granddaughter **Eva**, and others as they walk their unique journeys with cancer and other health challenges.

Every week, our sanctuary becomes tech central as our video producer Chuck Rosenthal (pictured) works with Penny and many others to weave together all the pieces of each Sunday's worship service.



[This news clip](#) about our sanctuary guests, David and Byron, aired in Texas recently in reaction to the news that over 500 Central American children that were separated from their parents at our border by our government have not yet been reunited with their families. David gave permission to share.



This is our fourth Pine Tree during COVID and we hope you find something within to lift your spirits and give you a sense of the warm CCSM community we are part of even when we can't be together in person.

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Christmas Eve 2020

*Fill the night with
music and light!*

Yes, it will be a strange year, and it will take some getting used to. But we will still celebrate!

CHRISTMAS EVE MUSICAL GARLAND

Musicians and friends of CCSM will provide wonderful holiday music in preparation for the Christmas Eve Services. This video will be available on the CCSM Facebook and YouTube links **starting at noon on Christmas Eve.**

FAMILY SERVICE - 4:00 PM

(will be prerecorded with special moments for our children) This beloved service can be watched at any time during the day as a family.

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE: BROADCAST LIVE AT 9 PM

Our traditional candlelight service, a little earlier than usual—come join us online for the live service or stay up and watch it later!



We'll miss our usual pageant this year with its memorable moments!