

# CCSM PINE TREE

VOL. 70, #1 | LENT 2021 • ONLINE / FIFTH SHELTER-IN-PLACE EDITION



Feb. 21	LENT 1	Sheryl Johnson - Exodus 16 (excerpts)
Feb. 28	LENT 2	Water from a Rock? Penny Nixon Exodus 17:1-17
March 7	LENT 3	The Wisdom of Weariness - Penny Nixon - Exodus 17:8-15
March 14	LENT 4	Post-Plague Idols - Penny Nixon Exodus 32 (excerpts)
March 21	LENT 5	Moses and his Holy Mask - Penny Nixon - Exodus 34:29-35
March 28		PALM SUNDAY 2021
April 4		RESURRECTION 2021

## LOOKING TOWARD LENT WISDOM FROM THE WILDERNESS

There are so many varied metaphors that we can apply to the past year, but the notion of a wilderness experience is particularly fitting. Wilderness is also a profound component of the Christian season of Lent as we remember the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness prior to his death, which echoes the 40 years that the Israelites spent wandering in the wilderness centuries before.

This Lent, we are both very much still in the “wilderness,” but also perhaps at a point where we can look back to the past year and ask what wisdom we have gained personally, as a church, as a nation, and as a world. The past year has been profoundly grief-filled and unsettling, and has also unmasked many of the deep inequities in our society and our world. Some have even spoken of this year as apocalyptic in part in the most ancient sense of the term: meaning uncovering or revealing. Those of us with various forms of privilege (access to health care, white privilege, economic means, etc) have been confronted by



New moms April Hawkins and Crystal Vaught enjoy the Advent Pilgrimage on December 13 with their daughter Chloe.

Photo - Chris Yeh

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



Congregational  
Church of san mateo

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# CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

The past months have been busy for the Children, Youth, and Family ministry programs at CCSM—although of course quite differently so! We are so grateful for technology (and the postal system!) which allows us to continue to meet, share, connect, pray, sing, and even play together. I am so blessed to have wonderful colleagues and collaborators: Lily Gonzales, Shannon McEntee, Libby Barnard, Laura Keating-Clevidence, Julie Berk, Tara Abrams, Dave Olson, Bill Dunbar, Mike Mullery, SO many Confirmation mentors, parent supporters, and of course the kids and youth themselves!

For our youngest kids, Lily continues with a **wonderful mail ministry** where she writes letters to each of the kids. I can't tell you how special it is for our kids to receive things addressed to them! Shannon has been so creative in expanding our **Godly Play** (Montessori-based curriculum) to a Zoom format. Favorite memories for me have included having the kids "play baptize" favorite stuffed animals and explore the sign of the cross by arranging toys in their homes.

Libby continues to adapt her programming to our largely Zoomed-out primary school aged kids by shifting to less-frequent Zoom gatherings and special mailed "**do at your own pace**" **activity packs** that she had delivered personally (or mailed, in the case of our non-local participants!). Mailed packages also continue to be an important way to connect with our Wednesday gathering kids and youth. I have also continued to send periodic mail (including **seasonally-related treats, activities, cards, etc.**) to all of our kids and youth—over 150 on my mailing list! If you are not on the list and would like to be—please let me know.

We also continue to have amazing **monthly all-ages music sessions with Julie**—which work surprisingly well on Zoom and have had periodic support and fellowship gatherings for parents hosted by Tara. Thank you SO much!

For our youth, we have launched a brand new Sunday mid-day program on **faith and the media**. We figured that since we are looking at screens regardless, we might as well explore some things made for that format! We have brainstormed a large list of faith, religion, and meaning-related questions that we will be considering in relationship to movies, TV shows, video games, poems, books, memes -- whatever our youth suggest and want to explore. I am excited to delve more deeply into learning what they are enjoying and what it means to them. So far we have had a wonderful session discussing the new Disney+ movie "Soul." Lots of religious fodder there such as questions of what happens before/after one dies, where personality and identity come from, etc. I highly recommend it.

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

For our high school aged youth, our main focus has been **Confirmation**, although there are also **social activities, game nights, service opportunities**, etc taking place as well. I am so blown away by the nearly 20 youth from CCSM who are participating in our multi-church Confirmation Class. It is also amazing to work with talented and passionate ministers from around the Bay Area! Because it is such a large class, opportunities for the youth to have adult mentors from CCSM to process and connect with has been especially important and meaningful. I am so very grateful to each of them. Recent confirmation class topics have included the Bible (including a focus on historical-critical, feminist, and liberation approaches to scripture) and Radical Christian History (exploring, for example, the Catholic Worker Movement, Civil Rights Movement, and Liberation Theology).

Many of our youth participated in the **Peninsula Multi-Faith Day of Service** on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. There were both in-person (distanced) and online service projects ranging from community clean-ups to discussions of Letter from a Birmingham Jail to making cards for seniors to knitting/sewing blankets. The day began with powerful speeches from local politicians and community faith leaders - which, unlike normal years when everyone is spread out at different projects - could be done altogether via Zoom!

Although many of our kids and youth are tired of online school, others also report that there are some silver linings, like not having to commute to school, having more flexible schedules, being able to do school (and church!) from anywhere (including fun locales like Lake Tahoe!) and having more time to connect with family. So while it isn't ideal, I am so moved by the perseverance of our families as well as the many leaders, volunteers, and supporters of the CYF ministry.



Geoff Davis drawing a song during a music session with Julie



## LOOKING TOWARD LENT from p. 1

the reality that has existed long before this year in a new and perhaps clearer way.

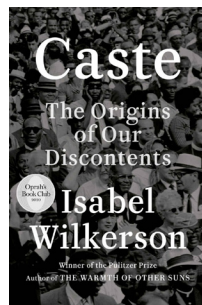
We might have gained wisdom about what really matters and what does not. How many of our patterns of living are unsustainable and unjust. The relationships and communities of care that are meaningful and nurturing to us - and the ways we may be isolated and disconnected. How our faith sustains us - and the ways that God may feel absent. Or, we may be gaining wisdom that cannot be expressed in words but we know that we are being reshaped in body, mind, heart, and spirit.

Our own experiences of wilderness and the wilderness of the Lenten season will be brought into particular conversation with the stories of the Israelites and the Exodus experience this year. Each week, we will explore a different sacred story from this book, looking for the wisdom that it might offer to us in the present moment as we look to and anticipate a future beyond the present wilderness.

I hope you will join us on the journey, and share your own wisdom from the wilderness.

Sheryl

## SECOND HOUR/ LENT 2021 • NOON



You are invited to join Penny in an eye-opening journey through the book [CASTE](#) by [Isabel Wilkerson](#) during CCSM's Second Hour conversations **at noon after the worship service during Lent** (you'll find the ZOOM link in Connections or the bulletin). She describes *Caste* as the most influential book of the past decade saying, "I cannot imagine reading this book and remaining unchanged by it." Wilkerson says, "As we go about our daily lives, caste is the wordless usher in a darkened theater, flashlight cast down in the aisles, guiding us to our assigned seats for a performance. The hierarchy of caste is not about feelings or morality. It is about power—which groups have it and which do not." *Caste* examines the unspoken caste system that has shaped America and shows how our lives today are still defined by a hierarchy of human divisions.

- Feb. 28** CASTE: Session One: *Understanding the Construction of Human Divisions*
- March 7** San Mateo County Juvenile Justice Presentation (see article below)
- March 14** CASTE: Session Two: *The Pillars of Caste*
- March 21** CASTE Session Three: *The Tentacles of Caste*
- March 28** CASTE Session Four: *The Consequences, The Backlash and The Awakening*



## SAN MATEO COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE & DELINQUENCY PREVENTION COMMISSION: SECOND HOUR ON MARCH 7

San Mateo County is one of the wealthiest counties in the state and in the country and ranks high on equity measures according to the Social Progress Index. However, in the equity sub-categories of residential isolation and residential segregation, our county significantly underperforms the rest of the state. And in those isolated, segregated and underserved neighborhoods in San Mateo County, we see the highest incidence of juvenile justice involved youth.

The San Mateo County Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission (JJJPC) is a group of volunteers appointed by the Superior Court and Board of Supervisors to be a public conscience in the best interest of juveniles. The Commission advocates for programs and services that prevent youth entry into the juvenile justice system and promotes respect for the human dignity of all minors who do enter the system.

**Commissioners Paul Bocanegra and Monroe Labouisse will join us at SECOND HOUR on MARCH 7 to talk about the current state of juvenile justice in San Mateo County and what the JJJPC would like to do about it.**

**Paul Bocanegra** is the co-founder of Reevolution Group, a Human Rights Watch Officer for the Children's Division of Human Rights Watch, and a certified drug and alcohol counselor. Paul was sentenced to life without parole (LWOP) when he was 16 years old and served more than 25 years in adult prison. He describes himself as a survivor of Juvenile LWOP and the California prison system. Today, Paul works to reform the juvenile criminal justice system by sharing his experiences and struggles within the juvenile and adult systems and institutions.

**Monroe Labouisse** is a former Silicon Valley executive who is now dedicated to civic and political projects. His tech company jobs included running Customer Service and Trust & Safety for Airbnb, and Consumer Protection for eBay and PayPal. He is a mentor to young men on probation through CASA of San Mateo, where he is also a Peer Supervisor, and he is also a mentor through Peninsula Bridge, which supports teens from low-income families aspiring to go to and complete college.





**Mark your calendar!**

**Tuesday, February 16  
5-6pm**

**Special  
Mardi Gras Party  
with games and crafts on  
Zoom for all ages: kids,  
youth, and adults!**

**Please consider making  
pancakes or a special meal  
at home that night to add to  
the festive mood.**

## “CREATING THE CLIMATE CHURCH” RECAP

When asked what level of hope he has in substantial climate progress being made during the Biden era, Rev. Jim Antal provided a unique response. “Hope does not come from optimism, but rather from the amount of effort you put into solving the problem.” This exchange characterized the depth of wisdom shared by our two guest panelists Rev. Antal and Ms. Karena Gore during our recent online “Creating the Climate Church” program. The program was presented by the Energy & Environmental Justice ministry at CCSM, moderated by member Gary H. White and assisted by leader Warren Long. Invitations were sent out to numerous activists of the climate movement and a wide range of religious leaders and members from a variety of faith traditions.

With nearly 200 participants patching in for the stimulating 90-minute program, our audience was treated to an insightful and stimulating exploration of the intersection of climate change and religion. Ms. Gore offered a detailed description of the work of the Center for Earth Ethics where she is founder and director. She described an eco-minister training program for ministers in mid-career. Later in the conversation, Rev. Antal outlined the many ways he believed a church can build a climate culture. They included the need for the minister to preach regularly about the climate emergency at least once a month, the importance of greening the operations of the church, and the idea of partnering with a secular climate organization to resist the fossil fuel industry’s attempt to prevent a transition to a renewable energy economy. Feedback on the program was universally positive.

Gary H. White  
Climate Reality Leader, Bay Area  
Chapter  
Founder, Extinction Rebellion San  
Mateo

The event may be viewed here:  
[ccsm-ucc.org/#climate](https://ccsm-ucc.org/#climate)





# THANKS FROM YOUR TREASURER

On behalf of the Finance Committee and the Board of Directors, I **want to express deep appreciation for your generosity to CCSM during this difficult pandemic.** You may have heard me say it at the Congregational meeting in January: Donations to the General Fund in 2020 were more than \$60,000 over budget! Also, I had not expected we would receive pledge donations in a single month exceeding the all-time high of \$88,000 in December 2019, but we did so in December 2020, when we received just over \$96,000! Total revenue for the year was \$50,000 less than budget owing to the necessary cancellation of the Pick-a-Party fundraiser and from less revenue from long-term tenants and one-time rentals. But total expenses were also about \$50,000 less than budget, so we ended the year close to our \$25,000 budgeted shortfall, which we covered with reserve funds before closing the books for the year.

The Finance Committee has monitored our revenue each week since March 2020. Because of your generosity, we were able to continue full compensation for all our clergy and staff – avoiding furloughs, layoffs, and across-the-board reductions in compensation. We were able to reduce our rental income expectations from our very good

tenants. We have laid the groundwork to livestream our in-person services, once they resume, to continue to include a wider beloved community who have joined us during shelter-in-place. We have supported our partners working for social justice at nearly triple the rate of former years from your plate offerings. All of this, and more, thanks to your generosity.

We are still a little short of our pledge goal of \$620,000. If you haven't pledged for 2021 yet, please consider doing so at [ccsm-ucc.org/stewardship-2021](https://ccsm-ucc.org/stewardship-2021).

Remember that your donations to CCSM fund our vision to be a strong voice for Progressive Christianity on the San Francisco Peninsula, to build a beloved community, and to lead in championing social justice for all. Our heartfelt "thank you" to all who contribute to this vision.

Veril Phillips  
CCSM Treasurer



## LATINX MINISTRY UPDATE

by Julien Phillips

Our Latinx congregation within CCSM continues strong, but its participants have faced special challenges during the pandemic. Encouragingly, in some cases other CCSM members are responding in very helpful ways. For example, two of our 'Sunday congregation' members are providing online tutoring for Latino boys for whom distance learning has compounded the difficulties of studying in a new school system. A third is mentoring a Latino boy who is participating in the confirmation class.

Concerned about Latinx families' loss of income during this time, the Band of Brothers surveyed its members to see if any needed help with the kind of domestic work that some of our Latinx congregants do. So far that small survey has led to two new jobs for housekeepers that will begin as soon as the employing families are vaccinated, one yardwork job, and two job opportunities in a business owned by one of our Sunday congregants.

Our Wednesday people are getting direct benefits from these relationships, and so are the Sunday people who are involved. Furthermore, each of these relationships has a chance to develop into the kind of personal friendship and caring for each other that enrich the lives of all of us in CCSM and help our congregation grow toward the 'kingdom of God.'

The Latinx Ministry is beginning to consider ways to broaden opportunities for such personal relationships between Wednesday and Sunday congregation members, especially when greater personal interaction becomes possible. We welcome volunteers who would like to tutor or who have work that Latinx (and other) congregants could do, and we also welcome additional ideas for building cross-congregational relationships.

## REFLECTIONS ON A LIFE LOST DURING A PANDEMIC

by Chase Montara

My Mom, Ellie, passed away on January 4, 2021 on Cape Cod. I am finding her loss especially challenging due to the restrictions of the pandemic. First, I had to come to terms with the fact that I could not be at her bedside at the time of her passing. Although I was able to spend hours on the phone with her, singing to her, reading her scripture, and telling her our family stories. But it was very hard, especially being a nurse, not to be there to hold her hand and stroke her forehead. And now, the memorial service will need to be postponed indefinitely, which leaves a gap in the process of grief and closure.



I am very grateful that near the end, I was able to sing her favorite song to her: "Goodnight, My Someone" and I told her at the end of our call, as I always did, that I was giving her a kiss on her forehead. The Hospice nurse told me that when I said that, Mom held the phone up to her forehead to receive my kiss. I will forever cherish that memory as I now walk the path without her. Grief is never easy. But those of us who have the added challenge of pandemic restrictions layered onto the process of grief have a new set of difficulties added. My heart goes out to all of you who share this double burden with me.

## FIRST TUESDAY BOOK GROUP

ALL ARE WELCOME!

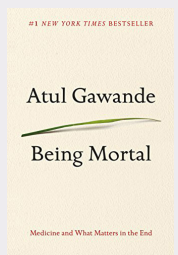
March 2 and April 6, 7:30pm - 9:00pm

March and April books are ready for you to find and read! Hope you will join us for a lively discussion. Use [PLSinfo.org](http://PLSinfo.org) (through your local library) to reserve the book from there.

A Zoom invitation is sent the day before the meeting. Send your name and email address if you'd like to be added to our group email: [s\\_stoehr@hotmail.com](mailto:s_stoehr@hotmail.com)

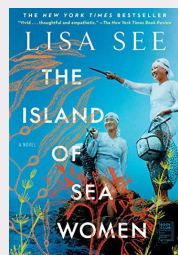
**March 2**

*Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*  
by Atul Gawande



**April 6**

*The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See



## MEET CHUCK!



Hello! My name is Chuck Rosenthal (aka Cheryl) and it is my honor to be part of the CCSM live streaming services.

Born Jewish, I have never been drawn to traditional religion, I've leaned towards eastern and earth based traditions. Rev. Penny was the first religious person that made sense to me. I like to refer to how Rev. Penny preaches as "practical" Jesus, not "pedestal" Jesus.

I have been in film and video production in the Bay Area for over 30 years. I came to SF State in 1980 to study Broadcast Communication Arts which included live TV. (For those of you who know Diane Kalliam, she was my college softball coach.) My career in the Bay Area included national commercials and high-end corporate videos. Many years ago I told Penny that I'd love to see her church get a wider audience—like a mega church, without the mega attached. I've always felt our country could use a dose of practical Jesus. So when she asked me to work at CCSM to help livestream, I felt like I have come full circle... Finally doing Live TV, at a church my college softball coach attends, with Penny whom I met in 1996. Honestly, working here feels like a dream come true. I am even enjoying learning about Christianity because I've never believed God was a person, place or thing, but that we are on earth to do the work of God, which I call LOVE.

Over the months that I have been part of the staff, I have had the opportunity to get to know many of you through the online projects I've recorded and edited. Y'all have been so warm and welcoming and made me feel at home. This community walks their talk and I'm proud to be part of you now. I also want to acknowledge the staff because they are an amazing group of caring individuals who walk their talk and are a wonderful team.

Blessed be, CCSM, and thanks Rev. Penny for inviting me to be part of your team.

## ENJOY A BEETHOVEN STRING QUARTET!

Z QUARTET

CELLO – Amy Brooks  
VIOLA – Marty Lee  
VIOLIN – Kim Williams  
and Chris Yeh

[Click HERE](#)





# CCSM MUSIC NOTES

## Chancel Choir is singing again!

The Chancel Choir began online rehearsals the end of January and have completed 2 thus far. We so miss making music together, and though online is not perfect we are blessed to be together in community again. Our rehearsals happen on Zoom with Music Director Lynnelle Bilsey and pianist Angela Kraft Cross and are thoroughly enjoying making music as well as our fellowship and prayer time. Music is a healing gift for the mind, body, heart and soul and whether you've been a regular choir member, or brand new to singing, all are welcome to join us.

We meet Wednesday nights from 7 - 8 pm on Zoom and upcoming rehearsals will be **February 24, March 4, and March 24**. If you have any questions about how the rehearsals happen or would like to be added to the zoom invitation and receive the music for the next rehearsal – please contact Lynnelle Bilsey at [ltbmusings@gmail.com](mailto:ltbmusings@gmail.com).

## Carillon Bell Choir

Unfortunately, with the current COVID-19 restrictions we can't rehearse together in person yet but look forward to when we will be able to ring again (socially distant).

In the meantime, please save the date – we will be having a "Ding-a-Ling" Social Thurs, 2/25 from 7:30 – 8:30 pm.

## Children's Music

Children's Music Director Julie Berk will be resuming online music for children and youth of all ages soon. Dates and times are being set up as you read this notice, so please watch the Connections mid-week e-news and your Sunday Bulletins for more information in the coming weeks.



Purple Bell Ringer Dog by Chase Montara

## From the Organ Bench by Angela Kraft Cross

### A great honor!

Angela Kraft Cross is not only our organist but also a composer, and her piece entitled "Healing" — the final movement of her "Journey to Wholeness" — was played by Thomas Sheehan, the organist of Washington National Cathedral, for the postlude of the National Prayer Service for the 59th Presidential Inaugural!

It was live at 7am Thursday morning, January 21 and can now be viewed at

[tinyurl.com/Angela-Healing](https://tinyurl.com/Angela-Healing)

at the very end of the program.

What a tremendous honor!

THE NATIONAL  
PRAYER SERVICE

for the

59<sup>TH</sup> PRESIDENTIAL  
INAUGURAL



The National Prayer Service was held the morning after the Inauguration of President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris at Washington National Cathedral. The theme of the service was focused on inclusivity and healing for our nation. Bishop William J. Barber, II DMin. gave the homily for the service which included prayers in numerous faiths from around the country. We were stunned to learn shortly before the service that National Cathedral organist, Thomas Sheehan had selected

Angela Kraft Cross's "Healing" from her composition "Journey to Wholeness" for the postlude of the service which was televised internationally. CCSM is proud to celebrate with Angela this very special honor.

In addition, Angela is serving as a piano judge for the Junior Bach Festival which is a Berkeley-headquartered music festival since 1953 featuring regional young musicians playing the music of J.S. Bach on many different instruments, ranging from piano to violin, from marimba to organ. With the Covid 19 pandemic, the festival has continued but virtually, enabling musicians across the country and even in Japan to apply. As well, a few of the judges this year are in Holland. Amazingly enough, the last few years, the Junior Bach Festival has attracted record numbers of

—continued on next page—

participants and the 2021 festival has 557 applicants! Angela is currently serving her 4th year as the President of the Junior Bach Festival as well. At the end of the event, all those accepted into the festival will have their videos available online in March. When the videos are available, we will post the link in Connections for anyone who would like to view them.

Special guests at the organ who are sharing their musical gifts during the prelude and postludes in February include Chase Olson, Organ Scholar at CCSM and Nataly Pak. They just completed their musical auditions for Oberlin (Angela's alma mater). As part of their audition for Oberlin, both students included a composition by Angela Kraft Cross as their contemporary composer selection. Chase chose "Tree of Life" (2013) and Nataly selected "Fantasie on Arirang" (2017). CCSM is very blessed to have a talented composer in residence with Angela as well as her gifted students who regularly contribute to our services.

### Songs of the Day Blog

Can you believe it's almost a year since the Songs of the Day posts began? Music is a healing balm, especially during the extraordinary circumstances we've all experienced this past year. Music Director Lynnelle Bilsey began sending out a "Songs of the Day" email in March, 2020 just as the pandemic started. The posts began for everyone at CCSM to be uplifted by music. Lynnelle worked to mix these up; some days are about comfort, relaxation and release, others are more spiritual in nature. Some are joyful, and on occasion, some will make you smile. There is a little something for every taste from classical to contemporary and everything in-between.

If you've missed any emails or haven't had a chance to view them, you can check out the previous selections online at: [tinyurl.com/Songs-of-the-Day](https://tinyurl.com/Songs-of-the-Day). If you have any questions or would like to be added to the email distribution list please contact Lynnelle at [ltbmusings@gmail.com](mailto:ltbmusings@gmail.com).



## PANDEMIC PUTS CONCERT OF PICCOLO AND FLUTE ON HOLD

by Melanie Dresbach, Liturgical Music Minister

At the height of December 2020 music activity, we had hoped to bring to the community of CCSM a concert of music celebrating the numerous cultures of the winter: Diwali, one of the major festivals celebrated by Hindus, Jains and Sikhs; Hanukkah, the Jewish festival commemorating the recovery of Jerusalem and rededication of the Second Temple; and Christmas. Sudden changes to the recording schedule due to the pandemic caused us to put a halt to the production of the Flute Concert and, by the time we were able to return to filming the concert, both Diwali and Hanukkah had passed. But, we have been able to present many of the pieces during the Sunday service and will continue to cameo pieces throughout the year.

We are so fortunate to have been blessed with the talent of a flautist and good friend of mine, Marian Concus, who planned, created, and recorded these pieces for us.

Marian Concus is a versatile flutist in the Bay Area. She currently is a member of Fremont Symphony/Opera/Ballet and Santa Cruz Symphony. Her impressive biography and experience can be viewed at [mconcusflutist.com](http://mconcusflutist.com).

One of the themes we incorporated into the concert was flute and piccolo music from Philadelphia, PA. The Declaration of Independence was signed there, and Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, a financier of the Revolutionary War, also happened to be a flautist. His court flutist was Quantz, and Marian performed for us one of his pieces. Philadelphia has been one of the cen-

ters of music for more than 100 years and the great xylophonist, Jacob Hoffmann,

composed two pieces that have been aired on Sundays during the CCSM Sunday service, a Doina and "Eateleh." We also recorded pieces by Philadelphia composer Daniel Dorff.

**Here is the program that we filmed and will present to the CCSM community in entirety in 2021!**

### CCSM FLUTE CONCERT 2020: MARIAN CONCUS & MELANIE DRESBACH

*The First Noel/Pachelbel Canon in D • Nocturne on "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" • Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly! • The Holly and the Ivy • He is Born, the Divine Christ Child • Nocturne on "Silent Night" • Air on the G String by JS Bach • Mi y' matel: Who can retell • Ma 'oz Tzur: Rock of Ages • Y'me Hachanuka: This Little Heart of Mine • I have a little Dreydl • The Quantz Adagio • Hoffmann Doina • Hoffmann Eateleh • Frosty the Snowman • Let it Snow! • Dil Hai Chota Sa (ROJA) • Greensleeves to a Ground • All Brothers: Ale Brider • Shalom Chave'n rim: Goodbye my Friends*





# FAITH IN FILM

**A bi-weekly movie discussion group is starting this month, hosted by Lynnelle Bilsey.** She's selected a few films to begin with which a number of folks had shared that they hadn't seen yet during a recent coffee hour. The films are spiritual in nature, but not heavy-handed; they are smaller films that didn't get a wide release, but are guaranteed to touch your hearts and inspire some interesting conversations.

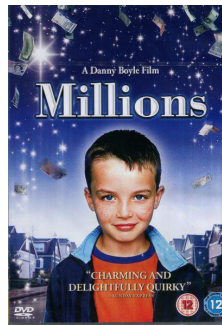
**Here's how it will work:**

- a. Sometime prior to the discussion date watch the movie from your own home.
- b. On the date and time listed, join with Lynnelle and others on a Zoom meeting for a conversation about the film. (Note – Zoom is a free online video conferencing platform, or you can also call into the meeting if you are not comfortable on the computer. No Zoom account is necessary to participate.)

**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21ST • 3:00 PM**

**MILLIONS** (2004) Available on YouTube, Amazon Prime, Google Play, Disney+ and others

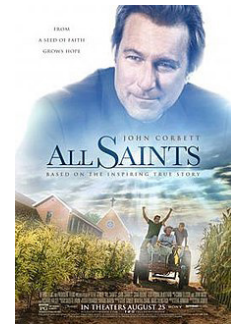
Summary of the film: When 9-year-old Damian (Alex Etel) finds a bag of money in his back yard, he and his brother Anthony (Lewis Owen McGibbon) decide to try to spend it without telling their father (James Nesbitt). Seeking advice from the imaginary saints with whom he converses, Damian struggles with his own morality, and attempts to spend the money in a more altruistic way. News of the mysterious loot inevitably attracts attention, however, and Damian is faced with an increasingly hairy situation.



**SUNDAY, MARCH 7 • 3:00 PM**

**ALL SAINTS** (2017) Available on YouTube, Amazon Prime & Google Play

Summary: Michael Spurlock (John Corbett) decides to trade in his corporate sales career to become a pastor. Unfortunately, his first assignment is to close a country church and sell the prime piece of land where it sits. He soon has a change of heart when the church starts to welcome refugees from Burma. Spurlock now finds himself working with the refugees to turn the land into a working farm to pay the church's bills. Based on a true story and filmed on location at the church where this took place.



**Zoom links for the discussions will be sent on the weekly Connections eblast, or receive them directly by contacting Lynnelle at [ltbmusings@gmail.com](mailto:ltbmusings@gmail.com)**

## Learning Ministry in a Global Pandemic

by Laura Keating-Clevidence

For most of my life, I never thought I'd go into ministry. But God surprises us: Not only am I here, but I'm doing it 100 percent virtually. And I have to admit it's been hard. When I started seminary in 2018, I was full of energy and ideas about the future of church: how it could change, grow, and ultimately be reborn. But none of these ideas involved being online. In fact, during my time at CCSM, I've realized a lot of things about virtual church are counter to my own theology. Coronavirus has stretch me to think about connection in ways I'd never considered.

Being a pastoral intern in this moment has also made me infinitely more aware of the real issues people are facing right now: crippling wealth inequality, a rising mental health crisis – especially among our youth – political polarization, and unprecedented loneliness. Jesus said he came that we "may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). What, then, is the purpose of ministry other than to help address the demons that keep us from experiencing that full life? I'm often troubled by the ways I feel so inadequate in attending to these urgent needs.

Over and over, I have to remember that grace abounds.

I've been at CCSM almost a year, and still haven't met the vast majority of our members in person. As someone who sees ministry through the lens of relationship, this breaks my heart. But I believe God is still at work even through a cell phone or a computer screen.

Maybe my time at CCSM is less about learning to minister the conventional way, and more about harnessing the energy it will take to radically re-imagine ministry during and after COVID. After all, that's what being a spiritual leader is all about: Not "running the show as circus directors," as Henri Nouwen said, but being courageous enough to listen to the deep and significant movements of the spirit. She is always speaking to us, even when she isn't saying what we thought we wanted to hear.



# MUSIC AND ART FEATURES OUR OWN ANGELA KRAFT CROSS!

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18 • NOON

# music art

Music and Art is changing its February Zoom meeting date to **THURSDAY, February 18**, to accommodate the schedule of the guest presenter—CCSM’s own Angela Kraft Cross. Angela recently composed a work entitled “Journey to Wholeness” from which a movement called “Healing” was performed as the postlude by the organist at the Washington National Cathedral for the Inaugural Prayer Service the morning following the inauguration of President Biden and Vice-Pres. Harris. The interfaith service included prayers from Judaism, Islam, Native American, Christianity and many more religious faiths. I’m sure we are all waiting to learn how this transpired, what was the inspiration behind the entire work, how did one movement end up being chosen for the postlude for the Prayer Service, etc. Angela will have the answers for us at the next Music and Art meeting.



Screenshot from the National Prayer Service: Angela’s piece “Healing” played by Thomas Sheehan

Guests are always welcome, so if you’d like to receive the Zoom connecting information, please contact Susan Duty at: [susanjd52@gmail.com](mailto:susanjd52@gmail.com) or by phone @ 650-533-6830. As usual, prepare your own lunch to enjoy while we have our regular monthly gathering with a devotional moment, a brief business meeting and the presentation by our esteemed organist/composer, perhaps with pre-recorded excerpts included.

—Mary Ann Notz, Publicity chair

## AN AMERICAN LAMENT

A couple of years ago, an organization called “The Repentance Project” created a Lenten devotional that is “a journey through America’s history of slavery, segregation, and racism. At times, it may feel like a voyage into the shadow of death. But even in that deep darkness, God is with us and his light is the hope that guides us.” If you’re interesting in looking using it this Lent, you can find it [here](#).



THE SAMARITAN HOUSE MAIN EVENT

**JOIN US!**  
March 25, 2021 • 6pm

*A Virtual Gala*

Join us online as we celebrate the resilience of the San Mateo County community, and rally in support of our neighbors living in poverty at our annual fundraiser.

**Click HERE to register.**

We still have the caterer  
We still have the band  
We can't be together  
But together we can...  
**FIGHT POVERTY. LIFT LIVES.**

Login for the best virtual gala of the year!



# THE POINSETTIA PROJECT REPORT



by Diane Kalliam

In past years, during Advent, members of our church community have delivered poinsettias to the homes of many of our older members or those who may have had a difficult year. Covid altered our usual distribution method this year, but the Poinsettia Project still occurred. A stellar group of volunteers picked up the plants and delivered them to our recipients. As is usually the case, the experience is a joy to both the person receiving the plant and the person who delivers it. We received messages from so many involved in the project that found it to be a wonderful experience. Special thanks to those who generously gave their time to continue this special CCSM tradition.



Bob and Kristi Spence



Bonny Armacost



Connie Harris



Nancy Jalonen



Pat Barr



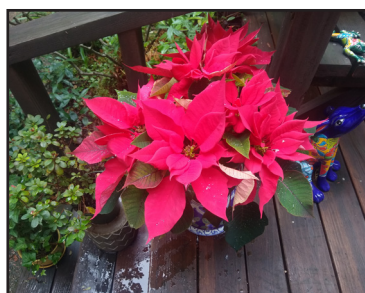
Sue Hill



Stan Higgs



The Smiths



Carole Melis sent this recent photo to show how well her poinsettia is doing!



Valerie Leung



# CCSM Celebrates New Members!

by Sheryl Johnson

On Sunday, January 10th, CCSM welcomed its first group of new church members since going online due to the pandemic. It is wonderful to see how CCSM is reaching out to folks within the Peninsula, the broader United States, and around the world! While some folks will join us in person once it is possible to do so, other members will be part of our “virtual community” that we will continue to nurture long into the future. What a blessing to be enriched by the presence and wisdom of these new members!

In December, we offered a “CCSM 101” gathering for those wanting to learn more about the CCSM community. Then, those who decided they wanted to join met on Zoom just prior to January 10th to give each person a chance to share why they wanted to join CCSM and what our community has already meant to them and contributed to their life. I was truly moved by these powerful testimonies. We then recorded their intentions and desires to be CCSM members - which many of you will have seen in worship! Click [HERE](#) or on the image above to hear the words of these new members as they shared what this community has come to mean to them in our January 10 worship service.

We will continue to offer opportunities for people to learn about CCSM and join as members every few months. Please let us know if you might be interested!

Finally, a special welcome again to our newest members:



Michele Merfeld Hale • Lori Morton-Fezell • Boon and Siew Kang  
 Mary Ann McKay and Ed Pease • Justin and Andrea McMahan  
 Rose Kerwin • Kim Osborn • Mary Aguirre

## MASK BRIGADE

Eleven months into the pandemic, The Mask Brigade is still going strong! We are a group of about 10 ladies, members and non-members of CCSM. We are making 500 masks a month and delivering them to local organizations including Samaritan House (Pantry and Clinic), LifeMoves, Puente, Faith in Action, Safe Sleeping, Redwood City Catholic House, and Abundant Grace. Some of us sew masks, and others procure materials and make deliveries. We hold weekly Zoom meetings where we not only conduct business, but also share personal stories and build community. We'd love to have you join us! All of the sewing materials — even a spare sewing machine and sewing support — are provided! Please reach out to Genel Morgan or Jennifer Jacoby-Yeh.



Christine Grabow, one of our most prolific mask makers, is now hand painting some masks, as she says, to “kill the monotony of sewing.”





# 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

We celebrate with **Jelle Zijlstra** and **Jennifer Hu** who were married on November 19 in a beautiful outdoor setting. Congratulations! And may your life together be long and good.

With great joy, **Barb Karlin** shares the news of the birth of her grandson, **Connell Glass Karlin**, born November 18 to **Jesse and Sedona Karlin**.

**Allison and Jim Schwandt** are happy to share the joyous news that their son **Ryan Schwandt** was married to **Ashley Wicklund** on November 14 in a small family ceremony in Louisville, KY. They were blessed to have their whole family with them.

### PRAYERS OF LOVE AND STRENGTH

**Sharon Tobin** asks for prayers for **Sean Donovan** and his 3-year-old daughter **Lillian** as Sean lost his mother **Hannah** to brain cancer on Feb. 1, and his wife **Lindsay** (**Sharon's** friend) to pancreatic cancer on Feb. 3. Sustaining prayers for them as they grieve this inconceivable double tragedy.

Prayers for the family and friends of **Ken Leung**, who died peacefully on January 24 in San Francisco, surrounded by his wife **Elise** and their sons, **Robert and Johann**. Ken sang in the CCSM choir for many years with Elise.

Prayers for the family of **Patty Grabow**, 76, of Stockton, California, aunt of **Troy Grabow**. She died of pneumonia associated with COVID-19 on January 10.

Prayers for the family of **Martha Grannis**. On January 6th, Martha passed away peacefully under the kind care of the nursing staff at Channing House. Martha was a long time member of CCSM and the church meant a great deal

to her. Cards may be sent to the Church office to be sent to the family.

**Chase Montara's** 93-year-old mom, **Ellie**, transitioned into the loving arms of Jesus early in the morning of January 4. Prayers for Chase, who will miss her terribly. Cards may be sent to the church.

**George Parker** passed away peacefully on December 22, at age 102. He has been a vital, joyful, and caring member of this church for many years. Please keep **Cari, Julie**, and the extended family in your prayers.

Prayers for **Tracy Fallon** on the loss of his father, **Dennis Fallon**, who passed away on December 20th. Prayers for Tracy and for his stepmother, whom he refers to as his mother, who has lost her best friend, partner, husband of 47 years.

Prayers for **David Dobrinen**; his mother **Vera** passed away on Thanksgiving day, November 26, following a long illness. Please hold David, Barbara and their family in your prayers.

Prayers for **Alice Morison's** friend, **Tricia Ryan**, who passed away on November 25. She had just entered hospice care two days prior. Prayers please for Alice in her grief, as well as Tricia's family and friends.

### PRAYERS OF HEALING

Prayers for **Cheryle Matteo's** oldest brother, **Lou**, who is fighting leukemia. Please pray that his bone marrow can continue to regenerate and that he will continue to have faith that he can be healed. Prayers also for Cheryle.

Prayers for **Caroline Reinke**, who fell and fractured her femur on January 10 and is still recovering. Cards are appreciated.

Prayers for **Morgan Anderson**,

niece of **Jim Berthelsen**. Morgan graduated college this summer and was diagnosed with stage two lymphoma in November. Prayers for healing and recovery.

Prayers for **Bill Daniels** who is recovering at home after cancer surgery. Cards welcomed.

**Lori Fezell-Morton's** brother, **Gary Fezell**, was admitted to the hospital with a brain bleed. Prayers for his ongoing recovery, and for Lori, too.

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

Prayers for **Alice's** husband, **Oakley Hewitt**, as his acute Alzheimer's illness is progressing and he is less and less able to comfortably participate in daily life.

Prayers for **Gordon Smith** who had knee surgery on Jan. 11th.

**Michele Merfeld Hale's** nephew's child **Trey**, age 1, is undergoing treatment for leukemia. Prayers also for her college roommate **Catherine** in Fresno, who is receiving treatment for ovarian cancer.

Prayers for **Linda Stoick's** friend **Denise**, who is facing a rare type of cancer. And for **Alexa**, who is also battling cancer. She also asks for prayers for her nephew and his wife.

**Dorie**, a friend of **Genel Morgan** and Sharon Tobin, has been battling cancer for years and it seems to be advancing now. She is undergoing added treatment but her options are dwindling. Genel asks for prayer that God supports her at this time.

Prayers for **David Meissner** as he works with his Parkinson's care team at UCSF and for David and **Gene** as they face this challenge together.

Prayers for **Chuck Ruthroff**, brother of **Don Ruthroff**, deal-

## Joys and Concerns cont.

ing with squamous cell carcinoma, adrenal insufficiency, and encephalopathy. Prayers also for Don and all of Chuck's loved ones in this difficult time.

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

Please pray for **David Riding** who has Lewy body dementia. Prayer too 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 peace and strength to **Ruth Black** and family as Ruth is on hospice at Brookdale Assisted Living with MS and dementia.

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

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

**Alexandra Vinegar** requests prayers for **those who are in prison and their families** who are afraid, especially families who cannot help or who have already lost incarcerated loved ones who were/are being poorly cared for.

Prayers that none of us let our guard down as the pandemic taxes our reserves and endurance, and continues to pose a serious threat. Prayers that everyone can remain healthy and be present when we all come together again.

Heartfelt gratitude to **all the members of CCSM** for the staff "Love Offering." It is so wonderful to be of service to such a generous congregation and to really feel so tangibly your appreciation. Thank you so much!

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



### SHARE YOUR LOVE UPDATE

Thank you for Sharing Your Love with CCSM! We are inspired by the participation and support of this beloved community. Whether you generously donated items, participated in the bidding, or donated on the auction site, we are grateful.

**The auction raised \$11,889 to support our treasured church and its programs. Thank you!**



All Ages Kids Music with Julie and Sheryl



Clara Davis enjoys Sunday music time



This is our fifth Pine Tree during this relentless, seemingly never-ending pandemic. In fact, March 7 will be our 52nd week of online services... an entire year. We continue to seek ways to stay connected. Please reach out if you're feeling isolated. We hope you find something encouraging in these pages.

## Ya Gotta Love Bernie!

Anyone knocking around the internet after the inauguration certainly saw some of the Bernie Sanders memes photoshopped from a picture of Bernie in his mittens. There were literally thousands of memes created within a few days, such as this Star Trek themed one:



Who knew we had our very own mememaker right here at CCSM? Our very talented Chase Montara created this Bernie art while waiting for her dog Mavis at the veterinarian's office:



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