

CCSM PINE TREE

Vol. 70, #6 | 2021 • Online / mini-edition

Dec. 19 Holy Patience - Jorge Bautista
Music: Joyful Noise
Intergenerational Choir

Dec. 24 CHRISTMAS EVE - more info on page 8
5 PM FAMILY SERVICE (in-person & online)
11 PM CANDLELIGHT SERVICE (in-person & online)

Dec. 26 Sunday After Christmas

➡ **ONLINE ONLY** ⬅



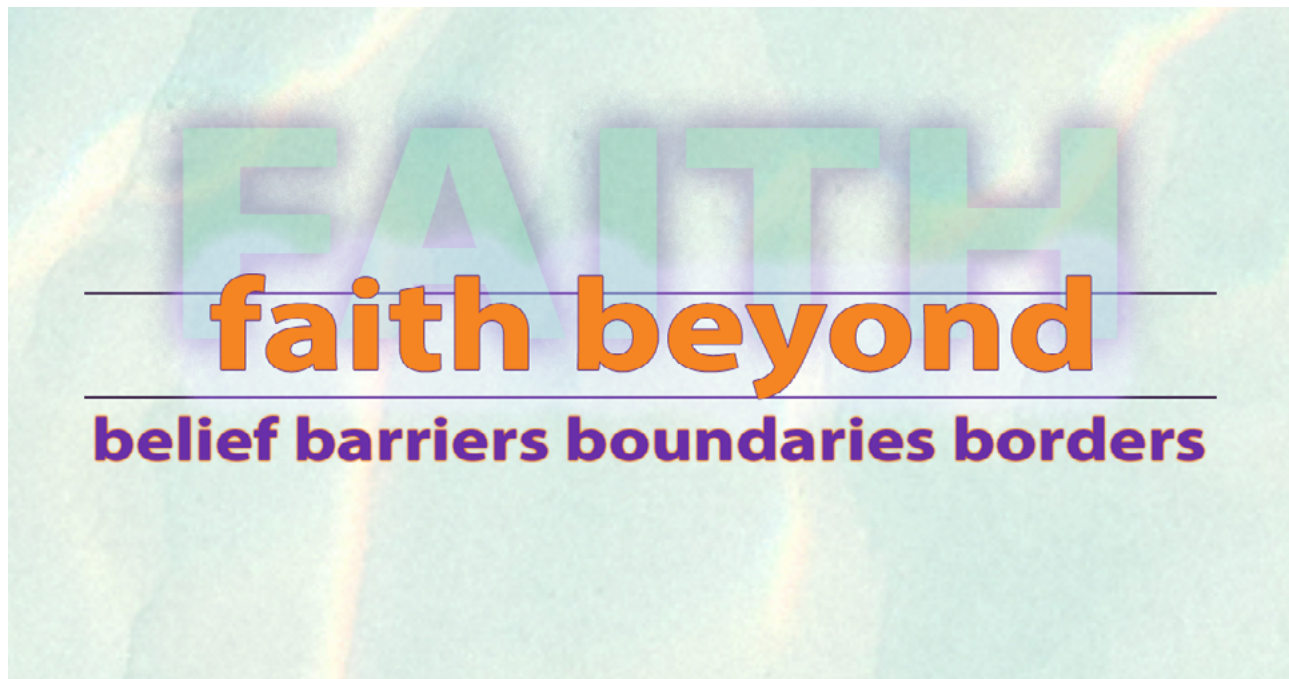
Faith beyond...

a word from Penny

I love the subtitle of Brian McLaren's latest book, Faith after Doubt: Why Your Beliefs stopped working and what to do about it. Many of you have heard me say over the years, "I believe less than I have ever believed but I have more faith than I've ever had." I know many of you can relate to that. As we grow and mature, and life happens to us, what we've been

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

UPCOMING: EPIPHANY



Congregational
Church of san mateo

225 Tilton Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94401
650 343-3694 | ccsm-ucc.org | facebook.com/ccsm.ucc

A letter from your Moderator



Hello CCSM,

Can you believe that I've been "moderator" for CCSM for over 3 years now? Time flies when you're having fun!

You graciously elected me to serve as your moderator way back in September of 2018. Doesn't that seem like ages ago with all that we've been through since? Next month, my tenure as your moderator ends and I hand the reigns over to Julie Lenden, who I know will do a wonderful job.

It has been quite a ride for all of us. We have been through so much together over these past 3+ years. Together, we have:

- Experienced operational oversight with a new governance structure
- Augmented our worship experience with new technology that deepens and broadens our goal to be the voice of progressive Christianity
- Pledged to accept the responsibility of becoming a "climate church"
- Risen to the challenge of being a sanctuary church
- Welcomed new staff and said goodbye to others
- Embraced new members and said goodbye to others, and
- Mourned the loss of long-standing pillars of our community.

These are just a fraction of the many projects and activities that your Board (and Committees) discussed, reviewed, managed, provided oversight for, and/or approved. Amazingly, we all managed to complete these accomplishments (mine as moderator, the Board's, Penny's, each staff member, plus yours and those of your fellow congregants) while weathering multiple and overlapping storms (e.g., a global pandemic with numerous variants, nationwide civil unrest, a deeply divided body politic, and massive fires that ravaged and threatened the homes we live in and the air we breathe). Despite the enormity of these storms, do not forget that we are a stronger wind for the greater good. We are a voice for those whose voices are unheard or ignored. We are a sanctuary for the outcast and oppressed. We strive to live by our guiding principles in order to be a climate-conscious church. We are progressive Christians and it seems that we've been progressive for many, many years now.

CCSM is 157+ years young! We survived the pandemic 100 years ago and we'll most certainly survive this one. In fact, we won't just survive, we will thrive! Why do I sound so optimistic? Why do I sound so confident? Two reasons:

1. Our highly competent staff (led by our senior minister, Penny) and
2. Our members' unwavering support.

Regarding our staff, each demonstrated impressive courage, deep commitment, and curious ingenuity as they leaned into online/hybrid worship and made sure that each member of our congregation felt connected to one another with a sense of belonging even when some of us did not feel comfortable leaving our own

homes for long periods of time. Of course, I want to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of our senior minister, Penny. We leaned on each other and helped each other during the dark, early days of this pandemic when doubt kept creeping into our outlook. I'm grateful for Penny's strong leadership, commitment to excellence, and collaborative approach to problem solving.

Regarding your unwavering support. Yes, I'm talking to you. Whoever has read this far, I'm talking to you. Thank you! Thank you for keeping the faith. Thank you for your support and encouragement. Thank you for your stewardship. Thank you for trusting in our vision to expand our reach far beyond the walls of the sanctuary. Thank you for your patience as CCSM learned to leverage new technologies. Thank you for being part of the chorus of progressive Christianity. And thank you for your part in helping CCSM achieve success.

I'm very optimistic about the successes that lie ahead for CCSM. My optimism is fueled by you and all that each of you does (individually and collectively) to keep CCSM relevant and changing lives by amplifying the message of progressive Christianity far and wide. And I don't use "amplify" as if to suggest that we develop an evangelical approach or mindset. I use "amplify" in order to remind us all that our message is not only meaningful, but also so urgently needed. There is an urgent need to deepen, broaden, and extend our progressive message so that ALL our brothers and sisters on the Christianity spectrum realize that ours is a message of original blessing and represents a healing, loving, and inclusive alternative to the loud, painful, and judgmental voices that dominate the Christian landscape. And furthermore, I use the term "amplify" to go beyond the Christianity spectrum to those who have been deeply wounded and who have abandoned their faith journey because of harmful, condemnatory theology. I'm optimistic that CCSM is poised to amplify our progressive message far and wide with the simple click of a mouse.

In conclusion, I would be remiss if I did not thank my fellow Board members (past and present) for their tireless dedication and thoughtful leadership. I'm so fortunate to have served in this capacity with such a fine group of Board members. As I step away from this role, I'm very much excited about the prospects of our mighty congregation. We've been inspired throughout the pandemic to rethink how we can:

- Adhere to our guiding principles
- Serve our communities
- Carry forward the lessons we learned
- Balance congregational safety with the desire to gather, and
- Create space for everyone to experience the Divine whether they are "live at 225" or tuning in from another city, state, or even country.

Thank you for having faith in me as your Moderator. I'm humbled and grateful for the experience.

Dave Chandler
Your Moderator

taught comes into question and we find our beliefs changing. People are leaving religion in droves—and I think that is because their beliefs have changed, but they still have faith, although they might not know how to articulate that. During the month of January, I want to explore faith beyond belief—and look at the stages McLaren outlines to help us understand the journey many of us are on. There is a reason that many of us are drawn to progressive Christianity—we've let go of creeds and doctrinal statements and have focused instead on belonging and belovedness. But we are all at different places and my hope is that this series will help each one of us, at whatever place we find ourselves on our spiritual path, deepen our faith and spirituality.

In February we will be blessed to have four amazing guests. At CCSM, we celebrate a faith that is critically engaged and that expands beyond limitations and divides. In this series of services, we will explore the idea of faith beyond boundaries, barriers, and borders. Our preachers come from a variety of faith traditions both within and beyond Christianity and have diverse connections that span the world. In this series, you will be invited into new ways of understanding your own faith and spiritual practices. You will experience a powerful connection with people, stories, and struggles for justice from all corners of the world, rooted in deep engagement with faith and spirituality. Please join us!

With hope, peace, joy and love,
Penny



Epiphany 2022 - Sunday Celebrations

FAITH faith beyond belief barriers boundaries borders

Faith Beyond Belief (series by Penny)

Jan 2	The Simplicity of Faith
Jan 9	The Complexity of Faith
Jan 16	The Perplexity of Faith
Jan 23	The Harmony of Faith - (1/23 - ONLINE ONLY)

Faith Beyond Barriers, Boundaries, Borders

Jan 30	Rabbi Jhos Singer
Feb 6	Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala
Feb 13	Rev. Keyona Saquile Lazenby
Feb 20	Rev. Dr. Sheryl Johnson

SPECIAL GUESTS FOR EPIPHANY

Rabbi Jhos Singer is long-time friend of CCSM. He has been the spiritual leader of Chomat Havel in Berkeley and now is on to new journeys! We are THIRLLED to have Jhos back with us as our very own "rabbi!"

Dr. Mahjabeen Dhala is Assistant Professor of Islamic Studies and Director of the Madrasa-Midrasha Program at Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. She has experience in global leadership, advancing interreligious and intercultural education and dialogue within academia and the larger public sphere, and has made tireless efforts in advocating for equity, inclusion, and justice.

Rev. Keyona Saquile Lazenby is the founder of Divine She: an interfaith women's ministry that provides services and offerings to help women achieve self-actualization. Currently, she serves in leadership at an agency for women involved in the criminal justice system. As an avid traveler, she believes that cultural exploration is the world's greatest teacher. She is an ordained Interfaith Minister and a graduate of One Spirit Interfaith Seminary.

Rev. Dr. David Vásquez-Levy serves as President of Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. A committed pastor, a nationally recognized higher education and immigration leader, and a sought-after speaker, Vásquez-Levy leads at the intersection of faith, higher education, and social change.

Money!

How to talk about it? Why talk about it? In both my personal finances and in my service to CCSM as Treasurer, I like to ask, "What are the goals?" and "How can we accomplish them?" It is my privilege to frequently engage the Finance Committee and the Board of Directors in discussing our goals for funding the work of this beloved community.

Let me start with a current short-term goal – meeting our donation target for the General Fund this year. At the end of November, which was 92% of the year, our donations had reached only 81% of the year's goal. We need about \$126,000 in December to reach the target. Now, frequently we receive increased donations near the end of the year, so here's how you can help reach that goal: Take stock of your own finances now, during Advent, as we approach the end of the usual tax year. Please consider meeting or exceeding your pledge (if you made one) or provide additional year-end financial support to the General Fund.

Far more important are the longer-term fiscal goals established by the Board. Several goals that had been set for 2021 are being carried over, leading to the following goals for 2022:

- ❖ Accept the uncertainties arising from a pandemic that continues into 2022 because of the variants in the virus.
- ❖ Continue the practice, adopted for 2021, for the Finance Committee and the Board to use the 2022 budget primarily as a reference tool, but relax its use as a financial performance measure.
- ❖ Continue to provide current compensation to all employees without regard to any reduced workload during the pandemic.
- ❖ Budget the first-year costs to implement goals for employee compensation adopted by the Board.
- ❖ Continue the live stream of our in-person services in order to include a wider beloved community.
- ❖ Budget for a greater media presence – engage a media/communications person.
- ❖ Budget optimistically for rent from our very good, regular tenants but be prepared for a shortfall if their revenue suffers during a prolonged pandemic.
- ❖ Continue a flat budget for the various ministries and programs.
- ❖ Include plans for our Senior Pastor to take a sabbatical during 2022.

Taken together, these are ambitious goals that are intended to invest in the future of CCSM. But it cannot be fully funded by our usual sources of revenue. We are so fortunate to have about \$650,000 in cash and, although most of it is "allocated" for certain purposes in so-called reserve accounts, we plan to use about \$220,000 of those reserves in 2022. These are not endowment funds, but operating funds that are earmarked for particular purposes. Those who attended one of the budget forums in November have seen a preview of the budget that the Board will recommend to the Congregation in January for adoption. In the forums, one of which was recorded, we explain this plan in greater detail. If you wish to see the recording, it is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1legvnDCt4ccHFN3C1QwpdNGujyLlu851/view?usp=sharing>. We are delighted to have you engage with CCSM around the message of Progressive Christianity so needed in our nation today!



Please feel free to contact me with any questions at veril.phillips@gmail.com or 650.579.4627.

¡Las Posadas!

Join us: December 22 @ 7:15p



Every year, we have observed the Mexican and Latin American tradition of **LAS POSADAS** on or around Christmas Eve. Last year in 2020 and in the midst of one of the worst Covid spikes, we sadly had to cancel and it was the first time we had missed it since we started back in 2013. So I'm so happy to report that **LAS POSADAS** will be returning in person this year!

Mark your calendars for December 22 at 7:15 pm and come hungry! We'll be ending the night as we do every year, with my mom's famous (and spicy!) tamales, champurrado (a cinnamon hot cocoa drink thickened with masa), and most likely some other treats that the community may want to share.

This event will be outdoors and masked, so it's a great opportunity for all ages to celebrate safely. Everyone, especially kids, are encouraged to wear a costume! This will be our "Christmas pageant" for the year as many people are not yet ready for indoor events - plus this is a wonderful opportunity for our whole community to come together and to engage in this well-loved and meaningful Mexican tradition.

If you're not familiar with the tradition, **LAS POSADAS** (literally translated: "The Inns") is a reenactment of the story of Mary and Joseph's journey to find lodging in Bethlehem. All in attendance will make our way together around the block with Mary and Joseph leading us, as they knock at the doors asking for a place to stay. It's a profound communal experience in which we all have the opportunity to embody for a moment the refugee's or migrant's journey and reflect on their experiences. This tradition continues to speak to us today in our current context, as many of us have been on pilgrim journeys-whether as migrants, as people displaced by our local housing crisis, or for a variety of other reasons. Many of us know what it's like to be in search of shelter or a place to call home.

We are expecting a great turnout, and hope you'll be a part of it! This is one of the few opportunities we have for the Wednesday and Sunday congregations to join together and show up for one another. Don't be the one who misses out! Come be a part of this special night. Look for further announcements as the Dec. 22 event approaches.



WE'RE BACK!

Poinsettias are coming!

CCSM will deliver **Christmas poinsettias** to members of our church family at their home. It is a blessing to **both** the recipient and the ones making the delivery. Poinsettias are available for pick up after church service, **December 19.**

Thanks for helping this wonderful project continue.

Contact Diane Kalliam (dkalliam@gmail.com)

They can also be picked up Thurs., **Dec. 16** between 12:00-3:30 or next Sun., **Dec. 19** after service.



Special Music is BACK!

"Songs of the Day" Returning for the Holiday Season

Thank you to so many CCSM members and friends who have shared how much they appreciated my "Songs of the Day" posts during the pandemic. After a brief absence, I will be bringing back the "Songs of the Day" posts for the November and December Holidays. If you are already on the list – you will receive the posts, if you would like to be added to the group – please send your email address go ltbmusings@gmail.com

If you would like to go back and review any of the "Songs of the Day" posts between March 2020 – July 2021, please email me and I will share the google link to the posts.

A Caroling, A Caroling, A Caroling We Go...

Caroling is a beloved December tradition and CCSM is bringing back a Carol Fest on Sunday, **Dec. 19 after service.** Please plan to stay for a light lunch and joining us as we sing some of our favorite carols. Watch the bulletins in December for more information, and if you have any questions – please contact Lynnelle Bilsey, Director of Music at ltbmusings@gmail.com

A Christmas Garland

One of my favorite Advent Meditations happens on Christmas Eve; The Christmas Garland features many of CCSM's Musicians and friends who share the beautiful music of Christmas woven together in a musical garland. CCSM's music team will be putting together another gorgeous Christmas Garland you won't want to miss which will be available online. More details with the links will be shared in the Advent Communications & bulletins.

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Wednesday, Dec 15 - 5-6:30pm - **All youth** are invited to go **skating** at San Mateo Central Park! This is a **free skate day**, rentals included. This will be a joint event with youth who attend on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Wednesday, Dec 22 - 7:15pm **Las Posadas/Christmas pageant!** Kids, youth, and adults of all ages are invited to come and participate in this meaningful event that recalls Mary and Joseph looking for a room at the Inn. There will be costumes for everyone (or feel free to bring your own - shepherds and animals are especially welcome!). This is an **outdoor, masked, and bilingual event.** And, dinner will be served (cooked by Jorge's mom - a real treat!).

RSVP to Susan Duty:
susanjd52@gmail.com
phone 650-533-6830

Lisa Mallette who will offer a dramatic Christmas reading

Linda Mallette and Mary Ann Notz performing duet piano versions of carols

We will gather at **noon** on the 17th at 225 in KLOSS HALL

We will gather at noon in KLOSS HALL this time for our **BYOL (lunch)**, beverages and dessert are provided. Enjoy the time of fellowship followed by a brief business meeting and devotion. Our wonderful program will be by CCSM's own **Lisa Mallette** who will offer a dramatic Christmas reading followed by **Linda Mallette and Mary Ann Notz** performing duet piano versions of carols and ending with group singing of carols. Guests are welcome.

Anyone interested is invited to join us, but be sure to **RSVP** to Susan Duty @: susanjd52@gmail.com phone 650-533-6830.

This enables Oscar to set up the correct number of tables and chairs.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17
music
Garland

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 for **Alice Morison**, whose spouse **Oakley Hewitt** passed away on November 6th after a lengthy illness. Cards welcomed.

Prayers for **Len Flaherty's** brother, **Philip Flaherty**, who had major spinal surgery on 11/17. Philip is now home and recovering well!

Krystal Burndon's sister, **Janelle Sharp**, whose test results showed stage 4 colon cancer. The doctors think there is a good chance of successful treatment, but it will be difficult.

Susan Lake asks for prayers for **Sanjana**, a college freshman who became severely ill over Thanksgiving. Please pray for her recovery.

Prayers for **Stan Higgs** who took a fall. He is home now and on the mend.

Prayers for **Alice Morison's** son, **Ames Morison**, who has contracted covid.

We extend our love and sympathies to our vice moderator **Julie Lenden** and her family. **Reggie Barnes**, Julie's father, passed away in his sleep on the early morning of Sunday November 28th after a long illness. Cards welcomed.

We surround **Dave Olson** with our love and prayers. Dave's mother **Andrea Olson** passed away on November 24th. Dave just lost his father recently as well; Dave has also been diagnosed with prostate cancer. Prognosis looks good as they detected it early. Cards welcomed.

Please pray for **Joan Kilroe's** son, **Andy Cioci**, who suffered a stroke over the Thanksgiving weekend. He is back East and recovering slowly.

Prayers for **Cari Parker**, mother of **Julie Berk**, who recently fell and sustained a pelvic fracture. She is in a skilled nursing facility for rehabilitation. Prayers also for Julie.

Continuing prayers of strength, encouragement, and healing for our beloved brothers and sisters:

Jim Ingwersen, Janelle Sharp, sister of Krystal Burndon, Judy Holcomb, Malcolm Jones, Dorothy Gorman, Jim Dresbach, padre Michael Dresbach, Bill Melis, Dr. Jim Groundwater and family, Thelma Kromhout, Travis Woodmansee's mother Cathy, Cathy Latta, Dottie Scott, Veril Phillips' granddaughter Eva, George Vail's friends Donna Terry and Melinda Jones, David Meissner and Gene Chelberg, Chuck Ruthroff (Don and Jonathan's brother), Ruth Black, Gail Evans' friend Michelle, Martha Bronitsky's mother Bobbye Gorenberg, Julie Lenden's father Reggie Barnes, Cheryle Matteo's brother, Lou Matteo, Elizabeth Campbell, Michele Moffitt's brother and his daughter.



SAVE THE DATE!

January 23 - The Congregational Meeting

Sunday Service and Congregational Meeting
will be **ONLINE ONLY!**

Come to Sunday service via **Facebook**, **YouTube**
or the **CCSM Website...**

...then join us via **Zoom** for the Congregational
Meeting following Sunday Service.

The board and I are taking this new Omicron variant with seriousness and until we know more, we are asking that if you are unvaccinated, or not fully vaccinated, that you watch the service online. This is for your own protection and for the protection of our entire community.



Click [HERE](#) or on the video above to watch a **5 minute** video of Penny's sermon on Reimaging!

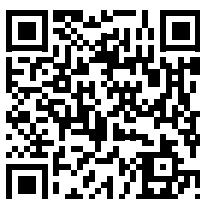
IN THIS ISSUE

CLICK TO NAVIGATE TO PAGE

Sunday Celebrations	1
Faith beyond - Penny Nixon	1
A letter from your Moderator	2
Upcoming Sundays	3
Guest Preachers	3
Your Treasurer's Perspective	4
Las Posadas - Jorge Bautista	5
We're BACK!	6
Joys & Concerns	7

Plate Offering Schedule

12/19	Faith in Action
12/24	CCSM General Fund
12/26	Retired Ministers Fund



[HOLD YOUR CAMERA ON THE CODE](#)
[OR CLICK HERE TO GIVE NOW](#)

Christmas Eve will be a wonderful time to **come back in person** and experience the mystery and beauty of Christmas eve in community. As has been requested earlier, **please come if you have been vaccinated** and if not, please watch online. We want everyone to be **safe**. We will have our traditional services — **5 PM Family service**, and our **11 PM Candlelight Service**.

Please note for the

FAMILY CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE:

Our **special Christmas Message** will be **The Unicorn at the Manger**. All the kids (of any age!) attending are invited to **please bring a stuffed animal** (or doll, action figure, etc) with them to the service. There will be a special moment during the service where those items will be brought forward to surround the baby Jesus in the creche, a reminder that we all have gifts to offer regardless of who we are. This is especially an invitation for kids, but everyone of any age is welcome to bring something to help create the story together! The items will all go back home with the person who brought them that night.



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