

# CCSM PINE TREE

VOL. 72, #4 | ONLINE | SUMMER 2023

## BE THE CHURCH

*Protect the environment. Care for the poor.  
Forgive often. **Reject Racism.**  
**Fight for the powerless.**  
*Share earthly and spiritual resources.  
Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life.**



Dear Beloved Community at CCSM,

This banner says so much about who we are and who we are striving to become. I love each line, but I also love the implications of the first phrase, “Be the Church.” It does not say go to church, as if the church were just a place that exists on its own without us (although going to church is a great thing!). It reminds us that all of us are church. When we do the work of love and

justice, we are bringing the church to every place we go. And, wherever the environment is protected, forgiveness is practiced, sharing across difference is taking place (and so forth!) —the church is there too, even if other names and language are used.

Summer is sometimes a season where our lives look a bit dif-

ferent—we may travel or have other activities that prevent us from coming to “church.” But that does not mean that the church cannot be present in whatever we are doing. And what a powerful testimony it can be when we share with others that we understand that works of mercy and taking stands for equality are the ultimate expressions of faith.

Unfortunately, when many people think of church they think of things that are the opposite of what is on this banner. That the church is a place of disregard for the planet, because our “real home” is in heaven, or that inequality doesn’t really matter or is perhaps just what God has allotted. The last line counters all of that—in “enjoy this life” I see a message that says that this life matters, this world matters. We need not “wait for all to be made right” in the next life—spirituality is, in large part, about bringing forth flourishing life for all on Earth. Right now. In and through us, as co-creators with God.

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## A BEAUTIFUL REMINDER OF WHO WE ARE

[This video](#) was created for CCSM’s 150th anniversary in 2014. It’s a commitment... 18 minutes long, but it’s such a rich reminder of what is great about CCSM. It starts with a little history lesson, then goes to testimonials, and finishes with a look to the future. (Click on the image to watch the video.)



Congregational  
Church of san mateo

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# CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

by Rev. Sheryl Johnson

This school year wrapped up well for our children, youth, and family programs! Some special events included the church picnic on June 11, a fun family hike in the Presidio, an interfaith youth barbecue and park clean up (through the Peninsula Multifaith Center), and much more.

This spring we said farewell to Elijah Barnard who faithfully served our children and youth programs on both Sunday and Wednesday for the past four years.

We are so grateful for his creativity, enthusiasm, commitment to social justice, passion for interfaith learning, and warm relationships with the kids. He is a dynamic leader and will be greatly missed, but we wish him well as he takes on some new responsibilities at work.



This summer, our Godly Play class for kids will go on hold until fall and we will shift into summer nature-based learning in the Memorial Garden on Sundays. I am so grateful to Elaine Kauffman and Lily Gonzales for their leadership. This summer's

programming on both Sundays (and indoors on Wednesdays) will include making connections with kids who attend on the other day and exploring self, community, and world. Kids will create books that introduce themselves, go on scavenger hunts, and learn more about our church community and local community here in San Mateo. We will also explore spirituality and themes like serving others, knowing oneself, connecting across different cultures and generations, and much more. Kids are welcomed

for programming each Wednesday at 7:15 and each Sunday at 10:45. Please contact Sheryl for more information! Kids whose parents attend both Sunday and Wednesday worship services are most welcome to attend programs on both Sundays and Wednesdays, regardless of whether or not their parents are attending the service.

For our youth, we will continue to have some special events throughout the summer months as well as our monthly 60 Minutes conversation times for highschoolers. Recent discussion topics have included mental health, healthy relationships, and the future of the church.

Thank

you so much to Mike Mulery and Michele Cinq Mars for their excellent leadership of this program!

Thank you also to our youth who offered powerful faith statements on our Confirmation Sunday as well as during our Pride service on June 25. We are so grateful for these insightful, moving reflections.

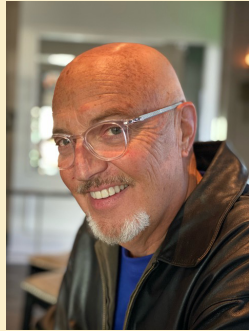
As we move into summer, we also prepare to send youth off to the UCC's Camp Tamarack. More information is available online. Please let Sheryl know if you are interested in attending, scholarships are available.

Thank you so much to our children, youth, and families ministry and to Kim Held and Troy Grabow for their leadership. We are church together!



## NEW EJ MINISTRY LEAD

We are pleased to report that the Board of Directors has selected Gary H. White as the new leader of the Environmental Justice ministry. A founding member of the ministry, Gary takes over for Warren Long who has successfully led the ministry since its inception. Under Warren's leadership, the ministry drove the lengthy process recently completed of installing a solar canopy in the CCSM parking lot. Warren has decided to step down as leader of the ministry and will continue on as a member.



Gary has extensive experience as a climate activist in the Bay Area. He is an active Climate Reality Leader who gives presentations on the climate crisis to groups of adults and youth. He formerly led the San Mateo chapter of the Citizens' Climate Lobby. During his career in Silicon Valley, he ran the corporate social responsibility functions at a number of the companies he worked in. Please join us in congratulating Gary on his new role at CCSM.

## UPCOMING SERVICES

### JULY 9

Baptism celebration and Sheryl Johnson preaching on Reckless Abundance

### JULY 16

Rev. Álvaro Durán preaching - "pastor in residence" for Wednesday services this summer, and the only openly gay pastor in El Salvador

### JULY 23

Baptism celebration and Dr. Sharon Jacob preaching (professor of New Testament, Claremont School of Theology)

### JULY 30

Sheryl Johnson preaching on Becoming Good Soil

### AUGUST 6

Rev. Davena Jones, Conference Minister for Northern California and Nevada Conference, UCC preaching



## BE THE CHURCH cont. from p. 1

I am so grateful to Rev. Kibbie Ruth for offering a wonderful series this summer on many aspects of the church's life and living out our faith in and through our daily practices. There is so much we can do to strengthen our church by "being the church" in how we interact with one another and how each of us can take on our own roles as leaders. If each of us is "the church" then the church is present in each place we go and people do not need to necessarily enter our doors in order to experience the church (although it's great if they do—here's hoping they find "the church" being practiced here too!).

As we continue in this liminal season awaiting our new settled Senior Minister, I invite us all to think about the church not as something that is on pause for the time being. We are the church right now. We are all (myself included!) excited for what is coming next, but that does not mean that we should miss out on all of the blessings and gifts in what is going on here and now.

In worship this summer we will continue to welcome some guests who can help us to explore many ways of being the church. Variety of

perspective can bring us new insight and see different ways of being church through their stories and experiences. We will also have worship leaders and preachers from our own congregation (myself included!) focusing on stories of being "the church" in many different shapes and forms.

If you are traveling, I encourage you to join us in worship online—and also to visit other churches in person as well. If you aren't traveling, perhaps visit other churches with online services in addition to attending CCSM. There is so much we can learn from one another and so many expressions of church that can enrich our own faith, even when perhaps some aspects do not resonate. Let's be church beyond our walls, with our neighbors, and as, always, guided by the Spirit.

Wishing you many blessings in this season of coming and of going. May you be the church for others, and find many others being church for you.

Peace and blessings,

Sheryl



I have received these two questions from a couple of people in the congregation and thought you might be asking (or at least, thinking) them also.

### 1. "Why so many guest preachers?"

Let me start with: It was not so long ago that we had three Ministers sharing the load of preaching, pastoral care, children and youth programs, outreach and social justice work, and operational and staff management; in addition to many, many other pieces of the puzzle. The personnel committee worked with Sheryl to set expectations for preaching frequency and shared the decision to bring in some guests as a way to help, as well as to expose the congregation to some excellent people with unique perspectives.

As we all know, our church is currently experiencing a major budget shortfall. This has forced us to make some difficult decisions about how we allocate our resources and where we focus our efforts. Most guests do receive an honorarium, but some have agreed to preach without one. We will continue to evaluate the arrangements as time goes on, but I know that we can all appreciate that this is a challenging moment for CCSM and everyone is doing their best to provide the most meaningful worship experiences, be good stewards of our resources, and be realistic and sustainable as well.

There are a couple of reasons this is a sound decision. First, by inviting preachers from outside our immediate community, we can provide our congregation with a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. This can help us deepen our understanding of our faith and explore new ideas about what it means to live out that faith in a modern world.

Second, using guest preachers is a cost-effective way to ensure that we are still able to offer high-quality worship services without stretching our budgets too thin. Rather than hiring more staff, we can simply invite people to come and share their gifts with us.

Of course, we understand that some members of our congregation may be disappointed that we are not relying solely on Sheryl to lead our worship

services. However, we believe that the benefits of incorporating guest preachers far outweigh any drawbacks, and we hope that you will continue welcoming these individuals into our community with open arms.

### 2. "What about the Wednesday Gathering?"

The following answer to this question comes from me, Austin; yes, as your Moderator, but it is solely my opinion. This is an ongoing discussion with the Board, staff, and, of course, all of you in the whole congregation (Sunday and Wednesday Gatherings). As a church committed to social justice and the principles of "All are welcome," it is important for us to recognize the value of our Latino/a community and the vital role they play in our broader congregation. While we are currently facing a budget shortfall, we must not lose sight of our commitment to equity and inclusion.

Our Latino/a group is a vital part of our church. They bring a unique perspective and rich cultural heritage to our congregation, enhancing our understanding of what it means to follow Christ and live out our faith today. Supporting this group is not only a matter of social justice, but also an opportunity for us to learn and grow as a community.

While it is true that the cost of supporting this group represents a small financial obligation on our church's resources, we must not lose sight of the broader mission we have all committed ourselves to. This is a moment when we must reach deep into our values of social justice, equity, and inclusion. Our Latino community is an important part of our church family, and their presence enriches us all. Let's work together to find creative solutions that allow us to continue supporting this group while also addressing our budget shortfall.

It is also true that the participants in the Wednesday Gathering tend to earn less (due to systemic marginalization) than the Sunday Gathering participants, but they have begun to take up an offering, and are also offering their time and talents through various forms of leadership—within the Wednesday Gathering, Latino Ministry Planning Team, and also sandwich making, scrip-

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## FROM YOUR MODERATOR (CONT.)

ture reading on Sunday, etc. They want to be fully a part of the entire CCSM congregation.

A few pragmatic thoughts: First, as we hope to grow CCSM, the members of the Wednesday Gathering tend to be younger than the average age of our Sunday Gathering, and they have more children. Second, CCSM's Latino/a Ministry is an area that is a draw for charitable grants. It could be partially, or even entirely, supported by outside funds. Finally, CCSM's commitment to social justice as demonstrated by our Wednesday Gathering is a major draw to the top talent that we hope will fill our Senior Minister role.

I know there are those who want to withhold their pledge because they do not want to support this program, but there are others who give because we have made this commitment to our neighbors. It is hard to balance limited resources and live our values. We are a community of passionate

people, who care deeply about our areas of ministry, justice, and community. Hopefully, we can grow CCSM through our Guiding Principles and create enough for everyone.

As we move forward, let us hold fast to our Guiding Principle of, "We are God's Hands, Feet and Face," remembering that all are welcome in our church. CCSM will not look the same as it did pre-pandemic, and if we are able to be flexible and mobile, I believe we will build something even more beautiful and rich.

We can navigate this challenging time for our church if we remain united in finding new and innovative ways to maintain our commitment to our values and to each other. Thank you for your support and your understanding, and I look forward to continuing to grow and thrive as a community of progressive faith in action in the years to come.

## SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPERIENCE CCSM

Want to know what goes on behind the scenes, like how decisions are made or the church budget is put together? Want to learn how to have crucial conversations? Want to avoid toxic theology and live into our Guiding Principles? Then, don't go on vacation—come to church!

Gatherings, classes and meetings will be before and after church in the Buckham Room (both live and Zoom). Everyone is invited to participate.

### **July 2, 9:30AM**      **EXPLORING MEMBERSHIP**

Munch on bagels before church and find out what it takes to officially become a CCSMer.

### **July 9, 9:30AM**      **HEALTHY COMMUNICATIONS**

Hate rumors and gossip? Should there be a conduct code for behavior at church? Kibbie Ruth will share some techniques from her book, *Healthy Disclosure*.

### **July 9, Noon**      **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Participate as our top elected leaders make decisions affecting the church.

### **July 16, 9:30AM**      **CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS**

Wonder how to talk about difficult issues? Learn from two experts, Margie Mader-Clark and Dorothy Kogl.

### **July 23, Noon**      **COUNCIL OF MINISTRIES**

Learn how teams of volunteers help the church thrive. Maybe you could join in!

### **August 6, Noon**      **CCSM FINANCE**

Step into the realm of church budgets and fiscal planning. Voice your opinion about various ways to increase revenue and rein in our spending.

### **August 13, Noon**      **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Join the policy discussions of the leaders you elected to serve the church.

### **August 20, 9:30AM**      **TOXIC THEOLOGY, WITH KIBBIE RUTH**

Ever wonder if the Bible really said what you were told it did, like "suffer in silence"?

### **August 27, 9:30AM**      **LIVING INTO THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Analyze CCSM's Guiding Principles. Do we mean what we say?



# HEALING AND RECONCILIATION AT CCSM

by Dorothy Kogl

Healing and Reconciliation are happening at CCSM. Based on the responses of the fifty or so people who attended the May 7 meeting of Healing and Reconciliation, I found an impressive uniformity of needs, questions, and recommendations. Congregants identified major areas of concern and desired improvement: accountability and transparency, participation and collaboration, trust and mutual respect, and communication and connection.

One area deserves highlighting—community building—since it is the source of strength, meaning, and belonging. Many participants believe that all-church meetings give members an opportunity to receive information, discuss issues related to decision-making, exchange opinions and experiences, and suggest improvements or changes. Dividing into small groups promotes fellowship by helping people get to know each other and by sharing ideas.

In my view, CCSM is in transition—we are moving from lockdown to disarray, to recognizing our problems, to a partially liberated, loving community ready to move forward as what Rev. Nichola Torbett calls “Spirit-Powered People in the Wilderness.”

Here is a summary of representative responses:

## DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

(Statements from groups)

### WE NEED:

**...education about the governance structure of CCSM:** roles of board members, Pastoral Relations Committee, and the clergy; their responsibilities, decision-making process. (These concerns may be addressed in the Governance Manual, pages 14-16.)

**...a vehicle for expressing our concerns and feelings, giving feedback, and making recommendations.** How can we respond to ethical violations and tragedies? (G.M., p. 22; Appendix G. Complaint and Inquiry Policy, page 27.)

**...a summary of or highlights from the Governance Manual and by-laws.**

**...identification of issues that the congregation**



Healing and Reconciliation gathering, May 7, 2023

**needs to study and discuss** before decisions are made and votes taken.

**...more options about spending cuts.**

**...rejection of the business model of governance** that we have had the last 15 years.

### QUESTIONS:

*Can we work toward consensus regarding decision-making?*

*What governing changes led to a lack of transparency, accountability, distrust, exclusion?*

*Who appoints people to the Boards and committees? Decides qualifications?*

*What specific steps has the finance committee taken to reduce expenses and find alternate sources of revenue? Does the finance committee have the right to make policy or is its role to report facts, the basis for decisions? (G. M. p.21)*

*Do we have a policy regarding a balanced budget?*

*Who hires the staff? What role does the senior minister play in hiring and firing, deciding budget allocations? (G.M., p 23-4) Who oversees the staff and clergy? (G.M., p. (St 21)*

*What has or has not been implemented that the congregation has voted on?*

*Does the funding of the Latino Ministry come out of the CCSM budget? Clarify the purpose and identity of the outreach – a community project? Is there a pathway to membership for the participants? For integration?*

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# HEALING AND RECONCILIATION (CONT.)

## LEADERSHIP *(Statements from groups)*

### WE WOULD LIKE LEADERS WHO:

- ...model self-knowledge, wisdom, respect, and loving-kindness.
- ...value the collaboration and participation of many people.
- ...follow democratic principles; adhere to Governance Manual and by-laws and do not micromanage or show favoritism.
- ...are aware of community fears, problems, conflicts and addresses them.
- ...find and use talent within the congregation.
- ...give support to lay leaders in the form of listening and mentoring.
- ...demonstrate careful listening, give empathy, accept constructive criticism, and facilitate healing and reconciliation.

## COMMUNICATION *(Statements from groups)*

### WE RECOMMEND THAT:

- ...Boards, staff, clergy share information about finances, policies, and decisions in accessible ways; post minutes in timely way.
- ...new members be oriented re governance, vision, and mission.
- ...people leaving church be interviewed.
- ...guidelines for communication be written to

educate people on how to express feelings and needs in respectful, honest ways and avoid hurtful speech, behavior, ensuring emotional safety.

...encourage different viewpoints, confront tensions, work toward consensus.

...revisit Guiding Principles and their application.

...balance needed between confidentiality and transparency. (Why did Melissa and Julie leave?)

...specific mistakes and maladaptive culture patterns be publicly identified to prevent future errors and restore trust. (What have we learned from our mistakes?)

### ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS:

...find ways to attract young families, offer them inducements that meet their needs.

...encourage on-line viewers to return to church. (Offer rides?)

...discuss ways to move forward. Recognize our commonalities.

... support ministers, lay leaders, and congregants.

...nurture a healthy relationship between leadership and congregants.

*Any omissions or errors in reporting the results of the meeting are mine and are unintentional. If you wish, you may contact me at [kogl@att.net](mailto:kogl@att.net).*

# REFLECTIONS ON RECONCILIATION TALKS

by Lin Fenn



Here are a few insights I gained from the talks:

Over the past few years, during day-to-day interactions, people feel more unsettled than usual.

With that problem, emotions tend to stir more suddenly and are more painful than usual.

When that happens, it helps to remember that emotions are usually more from past hurts not quite all healed up than present transgressions.

It's a universal reaction from time to time.

It helps to offer prompt apologies and forgiveness.

Here are some "apology Haikus" to have at the ready:

I upset you so!  
I should have dropped the subject,  
Let it rest awhile.

Would you help me see?  
It's time to settle back down.  
Revisit later.

Tenacious and fierce!  
I forgot to hold lightly.  
I realize my fault.

I find most people need very few words to repair hurt feelings and are quick to forgive!

We had a great discussion at our reconciliation table!

You were right last time,  
I got too intense with you.  
I'll work on calmness.

I'm shy to admit.  
So easily I get riled.  
Should get quiet, think!

## SUMMER MUSIC AT CCSM

CCSM launched its **2023 Music Concert series** sponsored by the Music Ministry with Angela's **30th annual Spring Organ Concert** May 7 and a chamber music concert June 11, **Folie à Trois**, featuring oboist Claire Tremblay, soprano Kate Juliana and Angela Kraft Cross on piano and organ. We look forward to more concerts in the fall!

We have enjoyed having **Joyful Noise singing in our services this Spring** for Earth Day, Mother's Day and in June. It is always such a joy to hear their young voices in church and what a great song in June when the whole congregation joined in singing "when the Spirit says sing!" **The Joyful Noise Youth Choir and Sunday morning children's music program will be taking a short break the rest of June and July**, but stay tuned for some fun music activities in August! Joyful Noise Director Julie Berk will be leading the children in songs, movement, and a variety of percussion instruments before church. Some tasty treats will also be served. All ages are welcome. Please watch for more info to come soon in the bulletins and "Connections." If you are interested in learning more or your family added on Julie's children's music update emails, please reach out to her at: [teacherjulie7@gmail.com](mailto:teacherjulie7@gmail.com).



CCSM's composer-in-residence **Angela Kraft Cross has been busy working on new creations**, a few of which the congregation has enjoyed hearing this Spring. Angela is in the process of compiling these new pieces into a book for publication later this year.

**CCSM's Organ Scholar Chase Olson will be joining us for several weeks this summer** while Angela enjoys some travel time away. We look forward to hearing him at the Cassavant in July and early August.

This summer, CCSM will enjoy the talents of a number of guest musicians as part of our Summer Music Program including **Juan Castro, Tenor, Scott & Stephen Bell, trumpets, Chris Yeh, violin, Jason Deshan, guitar and Claire Tremblay, oboe**—and more. In addition, we will be holding special opportunities in the form of **Drop-In Choir** and **Drop-in Bell Ringing** in July and August. If you are interested in participating in one or both of these, please contact Lynnelle Bilsey at [lbtmusings@gmail.com](mailto:lbtmusings@gmail.com) for dates/times when these will be scheduled.

## DID YOU KNOW?



*Did you know?*

Chase Montara, our Director of Operations, is the point person for so much that goes on at our church. And much of what she does happens behind the scenes but is so integral to our church operating well. In this month's Pine Tree, we highlight just a few aspects

of what she does so everyone can better understand her role and the many balls she juggles so skillfully!

Did you know that Chase serves as the **CCSM's Custodian of Records for the Department of Justice**? In this role, Chase is responsible for ensuring that CCSM has policies and procedures in place to ensure the security and confidentiality of criminal offender record information. She also obtains and tracks fingerprints and records from all employees and volunteers who work with children and youth.

She also participates in DOJ audits to ensure CCSM is compliant.

Did you know that Chase is responsible for the **permanent archiving of all Sunday and Wednesday bulletins and PINE TREES**, which she sends out for binding yearly. Many of these archived volumes can be found in the Library. The most recent volumes are in Chase's office for easy access for the pastors. If anyone is a history buff, there are also older volumes in the Tower Room, if you would like to take a stroll down memory lane.

Did you know that Chase is the person to speak with if you are interested in purchasing a **niche in our Columbarium**? Chase maintains all the records of niches and the engravings on the Wall of Remembrance in the Memorial Garden. She walks the family through the process of purchasing space, and works with American Monumental Company in Colma to get the plates accurately engraved. If you would like more information about planning for a niche, please make an appointment with Chase and she will be happy to assist you.



# THE FINAL PICK-A-PARTIES REPORT!

Last year's Pick-A-Party season is wrapping up, with the final event being Jim Berthlesen's and Kurt Neubert's always popular **Champagne Open House** on June 25.

In April, Susan Phillips shared one of her favorite **Peninsula Open Space hikes** with a group of intrepid hikers. (Julien had to bow out as the result of a skiing accident, but his daughter, Lindsay, filled in admirably.) The group enjoyed wildflowers and spectacular views, followed by a hearty lunch at Pescadero's Arcangeli deli.



High Tea

Melanie Dresbach and her daughter, Colleen Castillo, treated guests to an authentic **High Tea**, with a delicious tea blend and tasty goodies from sandwiches to decadent cupcakes. Melanie explained that when she was growing up, her mom served tea every day (maybe not quite as "high", but certainly a step up from peanut butter and jelly!)

May started off with guests enjoying **lasagna**

and the mandolin and guitar of **Heartstrings Music** at Sue Bullis' new home. The evening was capped off with the ever-popular canoli races!

Phil Lind and Betsy Woodward entertained and educated young rockhounds at their party, **cutting and polishing geodes**.

Our virtual Missouri member, Michele Merfeld Hale, led a **Zoom discussion with a group of CCSM foodies**, exploring favorite recipes, cooking techniques, and personal cooking/baking challenges. With a collection of over 500 cookbooks to draw from, Michele was well-qualified to moderate this lively discussion.

Pearly Masters and Bob Gutierrez took guests on a **culinary tour of South America** this year. As usual, they were great hosts and the food was ample and flavorful. Plus Bob has an extensive collection of wine and liqueurs which he is more than willing to share!

On May 20, a diverse and dedicated group of readers gathered in Sandy McNabb's garden to **share recent favorite reads** in an event hosted by Sandy and Carole Melis. Recommendations ranged from an analysis of poverty in America to reimagined Greek mythology to beach reads. Everyone enjoyed a light lunch and went away with a great list of new books.

To cap off the parties in May, Diane Kalliam led a group on a tour of the **Carolands Chateau**. As Diane will tell you, getting such a private tour lined up is not an easy task, but Diane is not one to take no for an answer.



South American Cuisine with Pearly



Lasagna & Music

This privileged group enjoyed both a video presentation about the property and a walk though curated by knowledgeable docents.

Take a look at the photos of some of these events to get an idea of the many different ways CCSM members celebrate and connect. They may give you an idea for a party offering in next year's Pick-A-Party season, which will kick off this fall.

Questions? Comments? Want to volunteer to help with Pick-A-Party? Contact Sandy McNabb, [sandra.j.mcnebb@gmail.com](mailto:sandra.j.mcnebb@gmail.com), 650-678-5650, or Mike Harris, [mypirocks@me.com](mailto:mypirocks@me.com), 650-572-8378.



On May 25 a group from CCSM traveled to the Carolands. We met at the church for a lunch and viewing of the documentary *The Heiress and Her Chateau*...the history of the home and its various owners. At the chateau we divided into two groups for our docent-led tours. We learned a lot about the architecture and other unique parts of this fabulous building. Thankfully it was saved from several close calls with the wrecking ball and is now secure in her example of an architectural masterpiece of great beauty. Our docents were wonderful and we are grateful that this fun and informative day was able to come to fruition.

—Diane Kalliam



## PICNIC SUCCESS



Henton, Kathy Gallo, Charlie and Cindy Dreschler, Chase Montara, Jerry and Nancy Nugent, Alicia Santamaria, and

CCSM's "comeback picnic" – the first since 2019 – was a huge success. The weather largely cooperated with sunny skies after a chilly start. Head grill chef Tony Gallo, ably supported by Gene Summerville and Doug Henton, produced tasty hamburgers, hot dogs, and plant burgers. Members brought an amazing array of side dishes, from bar-becue beans to apple pie. And there was connection and celebration for nearly 3 hours. (Get it? We're the Connect & Celebrate Ministry!)

We tried to count the number of guests, but people were mixing and mingling too much for an accurate count. We know we brought 85 plates and 70 forks, and ran out of both. There were kids, visiting relatives, Wednesday night folks, and people who've mostly been online recently. Thanks to all who made this event a success — our grill chefs, as well as Carol



Mike Harris.



If you missed this event, make sure you calendar **September 11 for our Homecoming event**. And look for the Summer Events brochure, which gives you ideas of attractions, hikes and events you could organize a group of your CCSM friends to attend this summer.

Questions? Comments? Want to volunteer to help at one (or more) Connect & Celebrate event? Contact Sandy McNabb, [sandra.j.mcnabb@gmail.com](mailto:sandra.j.mcnabb@gmail.com) 650-678-5650, or Mike Harris, [mypirocks@me.com](mailto:mypirocks@me.com) 650-572-8378.



## LATINO / A MINISTRY UPDATE

by Julien Phillips

Our Spanish-speaking congregants are continuing regular worship services and communion, dinner and fellowship **each Wednesday evening, beginning at 7:15pm in the Fireplace Room.** All are welcome. Worship leaders have incorporated some English into the services so that non-Spanish speakers can feel more fully engaged. The singing, led by Melanie Dresbach and her son, Richie, is vigorous and inspiring for all.

From **June 14 through the end of July**, Rev. Álvaro Durán will lead the Wednesday services. Rev. Durán is visiting from El Salvador where he leads a congregation comprised mainly of marginalized people - poor, LGBTQ, physically or mentally handicapped, or unwelcome in other churches for other reasons. He has already led two services at CCSM, and he brings great energy and an encouraging spirit. During his time here Álvaro will live in CCSM's upstairs apartment.

In our June 14 service we celebrated the life of Hector Robles Moncada, who died the day before. Hector was one of the first two members Rev. Jorge attracted to CCSM, along with Reina Gonzales, and the three of them worked closely in building the group of Spanish-speaking participants. Hector was more broadly known in San Mateo for his work in County mental health services and his LGBTQ advocacy.

In the past month we have received good news about several of our Wednesday congregants. Reina Gonzales was accepted as a student in the one-year Theological Education for Leadership program at Pacific School of Religion. CCSM's Godinez-Phillips



Fund is helping with her tuition. She is already an important lay leader in the Wednesday group and this program will equip her to take on additional responsibility.

After several years with innumerable delays, Rosa E. Hernandez received Immigration approval for permanent residence in the United States. Over time several people from CCSM helped her with the process. Oscar Acuna earned his professional electrician's license from the State of California.

Ashley Lopez graduated from high school and received a CCSM scholarship to help support her college studies, beginning at College of San Mateo. Emmilyn Perez also graduated from high school and is headed to Fresno State. Lesly Delgado Sanchez graduated from middle school, was accepted at several independent high schools, and decided to attend Mercy High. We celebrate all of these accomplishments.

## CCSM MARKETPLACE

by Sofia Floresca and Julien Phillips

**On July 2 we will launch our pilot test of CCSM Marketplace.** We will begin a communications campaign to let everyone know that CCSM Marketplace is "open for business." And Sofia will be available to facilitate connections between donors and recipients, offerers of services and potential customers.

Thanks to all of you who have identified household goods that you are willing to donate to someone else who may need them. Thanks also to the person who is seeking piano lessons for a child and the person seeking Spanish lessons.

There is still time to list additional items you are willing to donate, services you would like to obtain, or services you would like to offer. If you have something you would like to list, please let Julien

know ([41julien@gmail.com](mailto:41julien@gmail.com)) since Sofia will be out of town until July 2. Also, **go the website: [sofiafloresca12.wixsite.com/ccsm-marketplace](https://sofiafloresca12.wixsite.com/ccsm-marketplace), click on "Have a service you'd like to promote or..." and fill out the short form.**

We hope that CCSM Marketplace will enable members of our congregation to help each other out in numerous ways, and establish new acquaintances between members of our congregation, including Spanish-speakers and English-speakers, some of which will blossom into friendships.

Our pilot test in July will help us learn whether our congregation is large enough and whether enough people will use CCSM Marketplace to make it a continuing part of congregational life and to broaden what is requested and what is offered.

# A REFLECTION ON TRIALS, TRIBULATIONS, AND WISDOM

by Will Kautz • shared by Chase Montara

Herbie Hancock, the famous jazz pianist, once shared an experience he had with Miles Davis. Miles was a brilliant jazz trumpeter and band leader. One day the band was performing and Hancock accidentally played a wrong chord. He knew instantly that he had made a mistake and he looked sheepishly at Miles who was playing along on his trumpet. Miles paused, glanced over at Herbie with a smile and immediately improvised—turning that bad chord into a beautiful transition which then took the music to an entirely new place. A genius can do that. A genius can redeem a mistake.

Sometimes I think about where wisdom comes from. Is it born merely through trials, tribulations and embarrassing failures? ...or is something else required? There have been many who experience disasters and loss and have turned only to bitterness, defiance, and rage. In the absence of hope, nothing can ever be redeemed. How we respond to the disappointments of life and our own blunders is determined by our capacity to replace cynicism with awe. Are we able to see the miraculous hidden behind the mundane or even the tragic? Do we choose to feel forsaken or do we choose to believe that even death, abuse and betrayal can transport us to a place of infinite beauty? Sometimes failures and losses can produce yearnings in us that are deeply spiritual and transformational. They can be like musical transitions that take us to an entirely new place.

But we have to look for that miraculous transition. It requires a vision that is cultivated by gratitude and hope. We can't just wait haphazardly for redemption. It doesn't just fall into our laps. When we yearn for the work of an unseen genius who can redeem those bad chords and weave them into a song of redemption, something mysterious happens. "Seek and you will find" can become words that transform our souls.

When I was young, I was attracted to people for the wrong reasons. As a result, a few of my choices brought me a lot of pain. Enough time has passed now so that it's not hard for me to laugh at myself or roll my eyes at my misspent youth. Mistakes don't really matter as long as we learn something from them. Being able to examine ourselves honestly after we make a mistake is key because "an unexamined life isn't worth living." (Socrates)

Another thing I've noticed is that our ability to hope is often tied to how we view ourselves. If we think we are unworthy or that we've made far too many mistakes, hope will be impossible. But our worth has nothing to do with perfection and perfection doesn't have anything to do with how much an unseen genius adores us. Perfection is an irrelevant illusion. We have all messed up and yet there is something so undeniably lovable about a person who says, "I messed up but I am becoming who I was always meant to be."

So these three things turn our mistakes into redemptive transitions: examining ourselves honestly, understanding our immeasurable worth despite our failures, and being filled with the kind of yearning that changes everything. There is a single word for these three things. It is "faith."



*We had a great turnout from the Latino ministry group for April's Open Cathedral lunch-making. Many in the group expressed interest in volunteering in the future. It was a great afternoon. —Becky Duffy*





We are sad Susan and John Duty have relocated to Rogers, Arkansas, where John was born and raised. They have been faithful worshipers at CCSM for over ten years. Susan has been a beloved volunteer with the Music and Arts group. Over the years, Susan organized the distribution of poinsettias at Christmas and lilies and spring flowers at Easter. She was an active volunteer of "Month of Sundays"—writing and sending cards for birthday greetings, get well, and sympathy to church members & friends. She first became connected with CCSM as a participant with what was known as "Trudy's Teas." In this photo, Susan receives a book of CCSM history at a Music and Art gathering. We wish them all the best in the years to come.

Eric Chaney, Brenda Kelley and Genel Morgan from MSJ and Rebecca Morgan (Genel's daughter) attended the fundraiser at the invitation of Jarlene Choy Northern California VP from Giffords who spoke in church recently for our plate offering. We were honored to hear FLOTUS Dr Jill Biden and Gabby Giffords speak. It was an inspirational and sobering experience. They have done so much but there is still so much to do.



## MUSIC & ART: REV. DR. KIBBIE RUTH, JULY 21

music&art

**MUSIC & ART, FRIDAY, JULY 21 • NOON • BUCKHAM ROOM**

Remember to bring your own lunch and if you desire to have a beverage other than ice water, include that also. Cookies will be provided for dessert.

**Rev. Dr. Kibbie Ruth** will speak to us for our program this month. She came to CCSM in the spring of 1977 and has had five different titles here. This time, she is a Transitional Minister until the new Senior Minister comes. During most of her ministry, however, she has coached denominational leaders and congregations through abuse-related crises as the Founder and Senior Consultant of Kyros Ministry.

CCSM has experienced a lot of change in its long history, but probably none so dramatic as in the past 12 months. If the pace has left you breathless, join Music and Art at our next meeting, Friday, July 21, for a pause to reflect on what has happened. Kibbie will give us a brief update and answer any questions.

Please RSVP to Pat Pepper: [pjpepper31@gmail.com](mailto:pjpepper31@gmail.com) or phone, 650-343-4286.



## VOLUNTEER FESTIVAL ROCKED!

**On Sunday, June 4th, the Council of Ministries hosted its first Ministry Volunteer Festival after church in Kloss Hall.** It included all twelve CCSM Ministries as well as the Board of Director's Governance Committee. Friendly competition was stiff for best snacks and prize offerings. It was a great opportunity for each ministry to share their mission and recruit new volunteers for the planning and activity teams.

Best news is your opportunity to join in the fun is open year-round. Curious? Check the back of every Sunday Bulletin for a list of teams and contact the lead to get signed up. Joining a team helps our community and gets you connected with other CCSMers.

How can you share your ideas and talents? Email [COM@ccsm-ucc.org](mailto:COM@ccsm-ucc.org). We can all help CCSM move forward!





## COUNCIL OF MINISTRIES: FOURTH SUNDAYS

The Council of Ministries, led by Kay Harris, will meet on most 4th Sundays following worship service in the Buckham Room (unless otherwise announced). See weekly bulletin and Connections email for specifics. The COM is a regular gathering of the Ministry Leads to discuss their activities and to learn about their duties. Please contact Kay for more information at [COM@ccsm-ucc.org](mailto:COM@ccsm-ucc.org).

## THE GIFT OF GIVING

Yes, it may seem early to start talking about Stewardship. However, giving to keep our church vibrant is not an autumn activity—it is actually year-round. Many have stepped up to donate their time as we re-energize our volunteering. Others have increased their pledge or simply given directly to the "general fund" for church operations. Have you noticed how much our spirit has revived? And a "think tank" of members will gather to brainstorm the most vibrant and effective way to move into our usual fall pledge campaign.

If you have an opinion or idea, please email [kibbie@ccsm-ucc.org](mailto:kibbie@ccsm-ucc.org) to join the effort.



## UCC RESOLUTION CONDEMNS SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

by Kayla Berkey | published on Jun 12, 2023 [excerpt]

*The 2023 General Synod of the United Church of Christ will consider 17 resolutions and several bylaw changes when it meets June 30-July 4 in Indianapolis. This is one in a series of articles about them. Full texts of each of the proposed resolutions are available at the [General Synod website](#).*

A solitary confinement cell replica has been traveling around Wisconsin, offering people the opportunity to spend time inside the small space for an introduction to what solitary confinement feels like. The replica includes a bed, fake toilet and audio recording that plays sounds representing howling inmates in nearby cells.

Talib Akbar, who created the mobile exhibit, experienced solitary confinement 10 times at lengths up to nearly a year during his 20 years of incarceration. He referred to the practice as "mental torture" and credits the idea for the replica to the Rev. Jerry Hancock, director of the Prison Ministry Project based at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Madison, Wis. A similar experiential exhibit was part of the exhibit hall at the 2015 General Synod.

A proposed Resolution of Witness is now bringing this issue to delegates of the upcoming General Synod of the UCC and calling the body to [condemn prolonged solitary confinement as a form of torture](#). It was submitted by a group of delegates belonging to eight different UCC conferences and writ-

ten in collaboration with staff from the National Religious Campaign Against Torture.

"The stark reality is that, in the U.S., people can be held in conditions of isolation for months, years and even decades," said Laura Markle Downton, NRCAT director of faith and community engagement. "Often that isolation is accompanied with lack of access to natural light or the ability to be outside. We know this is particularly damaging to certain populations including those with certain disabilities, youth, the elderly, pregnant people — and yet in many places the protections to ensure that these individuals don't face these kinds of conditions are just not in place."

Over a decade ago, the United Nations special rapporteur on torture aligned solitary confinement with torture and said that indefinite or prolonged isolation beyond 15 days should be prohibited due to the mental damage caused after only a few days of isolation. Yet, it remains a widespread practice in the United States with estimations that, at any given time, there are over 75,000 people in solitary confinement in the country's prisons.



click [HERE](#) to read the whole article

# Joys and Concerns

## CCSM Pastoral Care Team

Please share your prayers with the pastoral care team, **Rev. Sheryl Johnson, Chase Montara, and Rev. Kibbie Ruth.** You are invited to share your prayers, your hopes, and your lives. You may connect in the following ways: by **filling out an [online prayer request](#)**, by **contacting us via staff emails** listed in your bulletin, or through the website's Contact Us link, [ccsm-ucc.org/contact](http://ccsm-ucc.org/contact). 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 JOY AND GRATITUDE

**Greg Graves** shares that his **Aunt Roberta's** radiation therapy shrunk the tumor enough that the surgeon was able to remove it. The prognosis is good, and she is back at home and gardening again.

### PRAYERS OF LOVE AND STRENGTH

We pray for the family and friends of **Judy Hermann**, a long-time church member who passed away in April at age 84. We were all saddened to learn about her death, after many years of declining health. Judy was a longtime member of CCSM and a participant in liturgical arts. When CCSM went online during the early days of the pandemic, Judy enthusiastically embraced this form of worship and was a faithful attendee. Judy, you are — and will be — missed. May your spirit be at peace.

**Dave Hood**, who served for several years on CCSM's Endowment Committee, husband of former member **Marleen Mader Hood**, died on April 20. Please keep Marleen and family in your prayers.

**Krystal Burndon's sister Janelle** passed away at the start of June. The family thanks you for your prayers for Janelle, and please continue to pray for her two young children, her husband, and their family.

**Pat Pepper** shares that **Peggy Wemple**, a former CCSM choir member and member of Music and Arts, passed away on June 5. She was close friends with **Margot Struble**. Cards can be sent to her daughter, **Lynn Pierce**, at Peggy's address in Burlingame: 3130 Atwater Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010.

### PRAYERS OF HEALING AND SUPPORT

Please pray for **Gary Steele** and his family and loved ones as he has entered hospice care. May God's love surround him and comfort all who are journeying alongside him.

**Kathleen-Marie Foley** shares: Thank you for the fabulous service and online accessibility! I invited 2 friends and they loved the vibe and long history of social justice. The bilingual service is so cool!! Please let's keep doing those. Prayer request for myself please as I am working through my disability case review with social security. Prayer request for **Edward** getting a better job so he can have better options. Prayer request for **Joe** for undisclosed reasons but praying for a rebirth of sorts.

Please pray for **Carole Melis' sister, Connie Muecke**, in her ongoing cancer journey.

Prayers are requested for **Martha Clements** who has been diagnosed with end stage COPD. She welcomes calls and visits.

Prayers are requested for **David Meissner** (and his partner, **Gene Chelberg**) as David's Parkinsons continues to progress.

Prayers for CCSM, as we work toward **reconciliation and healing**. May the peace and light of Christ be with us as we move through this time.

Please continue to pray for the **Board and the Search Committee** as they work together, and with us, to bring a settled pastor to CCSM.

### CONTINUING PRAYERS

*Continuing prayers of strength, encouragement, and healing for our beloved brothers and sisters:*  
**Sandee Schlickman's friend Kelly, Dawn Graves' sister Sheri, Susan Lake's friend Steve R., Genel Morgan's friend Sandy, Chase Montara's friend Chrissy Burns, Bill Melis, Family of Tatyana in the Ukraine, Mike and Lee Mullery, George Vail, Lorna and Jim Groundwater's granddaughter Yalda, Frank Garritano's friend Alex Carr, Martha Pierce, Angela Kraft-Cross' friend Judy Holcomb, Mike and Sue Hill's granddaughter Maggie, Michele Moffitt, Ann Ritter, Mel Thrash, Dana Scadden, Mary Ann Notz, Cari Parker, Andrew Lind, the Neil/Cinq-Mars family, Jo Buckham, Ruth Black, Dorothy Gorman, Dr. Jim Groundwater, Clare Naegle, Dottie Scott, Don and Jonathan's brother Chuck Ruthroff, Kay & Mike Harris' friend Mary-Helen McMahon.**



**Clare Naegle celebrates 105 with Linda Stoick!**



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## GET YOUR NAME ON THIS NAME TAG!



While the Engagement Ministry is making sure we each have a bright new name tag, some of you might want to have a special name tag—as a new member. Officially joining CCSM is free, only requires about three hours of class and conversation, and results in meeting new people on a more personal level.

Curious? Come before church for an introduction and bagel, **Sunday, July 2, in the Buckham Room at 9:30AM.** Even if you don't plan to join CCSM but are curious, come and learn more about the church and our future together.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



**SAMARITAN  
HOUSE**

**SAMARITAN HOUSE** is a non-profit agency leading the fight against poverty right here in San Mateo County by providing clients with food, housing, clothing, and healthcare —

over 22,000 clients currently.

There are many ways to help give, such as: **donating kids clothing** (gently used or new), volunteering as a **meal delivery driver**, helping in the **kitchen/pantry**, and providing **translation services** (Spanish most needed). Help is most needed with kitchen/pantry support and meal delivery.

Please visit [samaritanhousesanmateo.org](http://samaritanhousesanmateo.org) and email [volunteering@samaritanhousesanmateo.org](mailto:volunteering@samaritanhousesanmateo.org) to learn more about how to help.