

CCSM PINE TREE

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special photo issue!

HAPPY NEW YEAR, CHURCH!

As we embark on a new year of life and ministry together, we wanted to put out this special edition of the Pine Tree to celebrate the Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas Seasons we have shared. Several of you expressed how much you appreciated our Advent series “How does a weary world rejoice?” I think we’ve discovered (or have been reminded) that we rejoice, together.

And it’s together that we will continue to explore what it means to answer Jesus’ call to love; to be God’s hands, feet, and face in this world. That is certainly a charge for the new year.

I also want to share with you two changes in our CCSM staff. We are excited to officially welcome **Rev. Álvaro Durán** to the team!

As you know, Álvaro has been serving as a volunteer chaplain with our Latino Ministry for the past several months. At the end of December, just in time for Christmas Eve, he joined the staff as the **Transitional Minister for Latino Ministry**. His role is to provide pastoral leadership to our Spanish-speaking community and to build a strong and sustainable Latino/a Ministry, focusing on these three areas:

- ♦ The highly engaged and growing Spanish-speaking community within CCSM;
- ♦ Aligning CCSM on the mission and goals of Latino/a Ministry, and a broadening and deepening relationship between Spanish- and English-speaking communities of CCSM;
- ♦ Renewing relationship between CCSM and the North Central/San Mateo Latino/a community.

Another staff change is the shift in **Rev. Dr. Sheryl Johnson’s** role. This month, she moves from Associate Minister to **Minister to Children, Youth and Families (CYF)**. As you know, Sheryl has faithfully served in a variety of roles over the past several years, navigating different ministries, time

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



Revs. Jessica, Álvaro, Sheryl



Congregational
Church of san mateo

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CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

SOME PHOTOS FROM ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SEASON!



Intergenerational cookie decorating



Christmas pageant prep!



Gathering with youth from other churches



Alicia and kids at Latino Ministry Thanksgiving Celebration



Some youthful Christmas carolers



SHERYL JOHNSON AND KELLY COLWELL ARE EXCITED TO SHARE THAT KELLY IS PREGNANT AND THEY ARE EXPECTING A CHILD IN MAY!

We are so grateful for all of the expressions of love and support from the CCSM community. We can't think of a better church(es!) for our child to be loved, nurtured, inspired, and challenged by. Thank you for walking with us as we embark on this new adventure. —Sheryl and Kelly



HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM REV. JESSICA (CONT. FROM P. 1)

commitments, staff supervision, pastoral care, administration, and worship coordination. If you haven't already, please join me in thanking her for her dedication and adaptability in serving CCSM! While Sheryl is shifting from 24hrs/week to 20hrs/week, her sole focus will be on CYF Ministries: Loving and accompanying CCSM's younger individuals and families on their faith journeys, while also working with me and our lay leaders to develop and implement a comprehensive vision and plan for children, youth, and families that align with the church's mission and vision. The Board is confident that this focused role will contribute greatly to the health and growth of our congregation.

This is an exciting chapter in the life of CCSM, one that will require hard work, discernment, trust, and creativity. Not only am I grateful to be your pastor in this season of CCSM's rich history, but I'm also eager to see where God is leading us and what we can do together.

With gratitude
and love,

Jessica



Warren Long presented a CCSM scholarship to Emelin Perez during the Wednesday and Sunday services in early January. Emelin is a well qualified student from the Latina community within CCSM and currently a freshman at Cal State Fresno.

The scholarship funding is available thanks to the continuing generosity of Sue Bullis. Congratulations to Emelin, now majoring in Nursing at Fresno State!



November 19, 2023 • Recognition and gratitude for Kibbie's service to the church as Transitional Minister in preparation for Rev. Jessica's arrival.



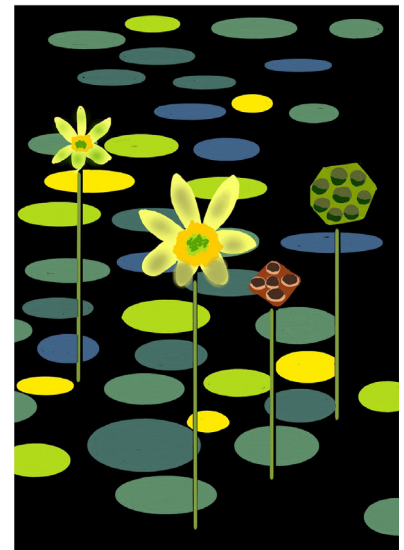
TWO THANKSGIVING SERVICES!

11/22: LATINO MINISTRY CELEBRATION

11/23: JOINT SERVICE WITH ST. JAMES AME ZION



CHRISTMAS WISH LIST TREE



digital art by Gary White

EVERYTHING ANGELA! DECEMBER 3, 2023

CCSM CELEBRATED ANGELA KRAFT CROSS' 30TH ANNIVERSARY WITH GRATITUDE



To see a collage of Angela photos, go to tinyurl.com/AKC-30th-Anniv



WORDS OF GRATITUDE FOR ANGELA

by Susan Bell, Music Ministry Lead, from the 12/3/24 worship service

It is my pleasure this morning to share a few thoughts and express deep appreciation to our Organist Extraordinaire, Angela Kraft Cross.

It is a rare thing in today's world of constant change that any organization—but especially a church—has the advantage of having staff members with the skill, dedication, loyalty and longevity of Angela. The fact that she grew up at CCSM and has been our organist for the past thirty years means in part that we have, in her, deep institutional knowledge that can be drawn upon despite senior pastors coming and going. I am told that Angela's currently on her fourth senior pastor!

And as most of us know, Angela is not “just” our organist, but actually curates a musical portfolio that includes her roles of Composer, Teacher, and what some of us are calling “International Organ Evangelist.”

To fully share Angela's multitude of accomplishments means we would be here until the second Sunday of Advent. So to share just a few examples, did you know that Angela:

- ◆ is a prolific composer of works for the organ, piano, bells and vocal ensembles, and many of these pieces have been published both individually and in compilations
- ◆ has taught at least 60 students to play the organ, through her 1:1 teaching as well as her annual organ camps. She has inspired numerous students to pursue the organ professionally.
- ◆ is, in this way, playing a significant role in keeping organ music—including church organ music—alive and well.
- ◆ travels internationally on a regular basis to continue learning herself, as well as to perform in churches and cathedrals across Europe, Korea and Russia.

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WORDS OF GRATITUDE FOR ANGELA, CONT.

And this is just a very abbreviated list of Angela's ongoing and—in my view—unparalleled accomplishments. We are so very, very fortunate to be Angela's spiritual and musical home, and so on behalf of the Music Ministry and this congregation, I want to say to you, Angela, how profoundly grateful we are that you are among us. We're thankful for your hands and your feet, for your eyes and ears, for your page-turning husband, and for all things which combine to make everything that is Angela. We respect you, we honor you, and we love you.

You have been and continue to be a profound inspiration for this congregation and contribute immensely to the musical and spiritual life of the congregation. The organ in particular plays such a seminal role in our community for our most important life events, such as baptisms,

confirmations, weddings, anniversaries and memorials.

And while we will have more goodies for you at the reception following this service, we want to at this time present you with this certificate as one way of recognizing your profound contributions. It reads:

In recognition of 30 years of faithful service to the Congregational Church of San Mateo, marked by dedication to excellence and deep service to our community, this plaque is given with profound appreciation and enduring love.

Presented this 3rd day of December 2023.

Be sure to stay and enjoy [today's postlude*](#), which is one of Angela's signature performance pieces. And then join us following the service in Kloss Hall to continue our celebration of EVERYTHING ANGELA!

* Final from Symphonie No 1 by Louis Vierne

49ERS / EAGLES VIEWING PICK-A-PARTY, 12/3/23



This party worked just as Pick-A-Parties are intended: a diverse group that doesn't normally hang together having fun while raising money for CCSM. We had a pool where we gave people (like Doug Henton and Bev Knowles) money for winning their square, then they donated it to CCSM.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING, DECEMBER 3, 2023



SENIOR CHRISTMAS TEA • DECEMBER 4, 2023



POINSETTIAS DELIVER LOVE 2023!



POINSETTIAS (CONT. FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)



*Jackie Payne and her son
Robbie*



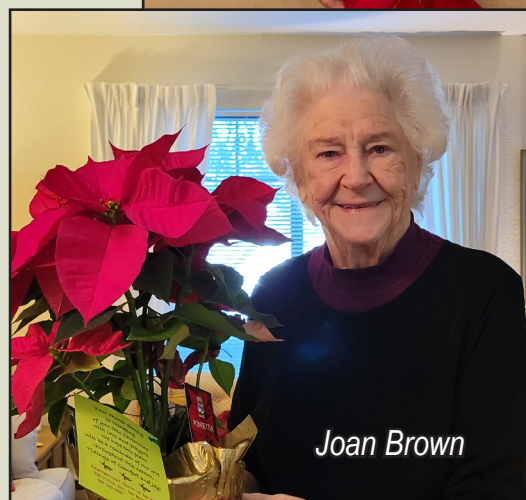
*Michele Merfeld Hale receives
a poinsettia in Missouri from
Jessica's mentor*



Dorothy Skanderup



Clare Naegle (age 105)



Joan Brown



Nancy Jalonen



Anne and Steve Galli



*Warren Long and Carol Henton,
ready for deliveries!*

LATINO MINISTRY'S BILINGUAL WORSHIP SERVICE / SERVICIO DE ADORACIÓN BILINGÜE DEL MINISTERIO LATINO



*Rev. Álvaro and Rev. Jessica bless baby Adrian
Rev. Álvaro y Rev. Jessica bendicen al bebé Adrian*



LAS POSADAS - DECEMBER 20, 2023



LAS POSADAS



Iglesia Congregacional
de San Mateo
Ministerio Latino

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LAS POSADAS

CONT. FROM PREVIOUS PAGE



CHRISTMAS EVE - SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2023





SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS ON 2023

by Chris Wuthmann, Spiritual Life Ministries

We gathered together in the spring of this year to share and listen to each other to learn from the difficult financial and budget challenges we were going through. We discerned together that we needed to become much more open, transparent, collaborative, and inclusive in our decision making about our affairs as a church. We realized that we have work to do—a “sound bite” way of putting it was that **WE NEED TO BECOME MORE CONGREGATIONAL!**

As we took steps to embody this in our meetings and ministries and governance and relations, we were confronted unavoidably by strong differences in opinions that we hold. Realizing and addressing this is precisely a point of congregationalism, but it is disconcerting! How can we embrace and deal with this as an opportunity for growth rather than as a threat?

From the well of my experiences with Spiritual Life Ministries, I suggested the following spiritual principles for decision making at our all-church finances and budget meeting on Nov. 19th. My prayer is, as I share these, that they may remind us of the growth in spirituality and faith we can experience as we sustain and build our church community with the choices and commitments that always lie ahead, always in so doing with a perspective of gratitude.

FIVE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES FOR DEMOCRATIC DECISION MAKING:

ABOUT DIVERSITY: We are better off with a diversity of gifts and views rather than uniformity in thinking. Otherwise, we see only part of an issue and possibilities.

ABOUT DISAGREEMENT: We cannot disagree effectively unless we have a foundation of respectful connection. Otherwise, disagreement will not lead to inclusive progress.

ABOUT DECISIONS: Hard decisions in the short term--whether to risk, to sacrifice, or to stand pat--are what make long-term growth possible. Hard decisions require commitment and follow-through, which can transform fear into hope.

ABOUT THE GOAL OF OUR DECISIONS: We cannot be the Body of Christ unless we see one another as a child of God and unless we temper how we see ourselves. Otherwise, we are not really making room for the love of God to forge community and imbue all that we do in service and for justice and peace.

ABOUT OUR GUIDANCE: Decision-making in a faith community is implemented with reasoning, but it finds its course through discernment of the leading of the Spirit, because only the Spirit gives the love and courage necessary to reveal and sustain the path of faith.



art by Carol Aust

IN THIS ISSUE

CLICK TO NAVIGATE
TO PAGE

Happy New Year, Church! from Rev. Jessica	1
Children, Youth and Family photos	2
Baby Announcement!	3
Scholarship Announcement photo	4
Kibbie Recognition photos	4
Thanksgiving Services photos	5
Christmas Wish List photo	5
Everything Angela! Text and photos	6
49ers / Eagles Viewing Pick-a-Party photos	7
Christmas Caroling photos	8
Senior Christmas Tea and Poinsettia photos	9
Latino Ministry photos	11
Las Posadas photos	12
Christmas Eve Services photos	15
Spiritual Reflections on 2023 by Chris Wuthmann	17

ANNUAL MEETING!
SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2024
IN PERSON AND ON ZOOM
12:00 NOON



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