



# THE MESSENGER

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BELMONT

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## Trains of thought: Christmas gifts as packages of our love

## December 2019 Liturgy Themes

By Pastor Sally

We hear a lot of talk about how commercial Christmas has become. It is certainly true. However, there is a spiritual dimension to all the shopping that is worth celebrating.

I like to think of gifts as little packages of love. We wrap up our love in the most beautiful way we can in hopes that it will be pleasing to the eye and the heart. Our goal is to bring a little happiness or joy into another's life. There are few activities more worthwhile than this.

As we shop for our gifts, we spend time thinking about the person we are shopping for. We think about what she might need, what she cares about, and what might bring a smile to her face. We take the time to notice his circumstances and his interests. In other words, we take the time to really look at the people in our lives and put ourselves in their shoes, if

only for a moment. There are few activities more worthwhile than this.

Shopping for gifts requires an open-handed generosity that cares more about the other's happiness than our own. We learn the art of letting go and the joy of giving. There are few activities more worthwhile than this.

While we can certainly go overboard with holiday shopping, if we approach it in a balanced and caring way, it can be a spiritual discipline that helps us grow. When we truly shop with care and love, it shows in the gift and the way we give it. It communicates at a deeper level. The gift becomes a package of love and blesses both the giver and the receiver.

I wish you a beautiful Christmas season filled with the gifts of the spirit: inner peace, joy, love, hope, kindness, generosity, and tranquility. Shalom!



Rev. Sally Train

## Bring warm socks for Open Cathedral-goers

By Danielle Chamberlin

Open Cathedral is a service of the San Francisco Night Ministry, led by our friend, former intern and Director of Christian Education Valerie McEntee.

Open Cathedral gathers each Sunday at 2 p.m. on public space near San Francisco City Hall. This worship service includes praying and preaching, readings, singing and a celebration of Communion.

This is followed by a lunch donated by a congregation or civic organization, and time for the same pastoral care, counseling and crisis intervention that is offered each night.

As is our custom on the fifth Sundays of

the year, CCB will pack 120 lunches for Open Cathedral before worship at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 29.

As we learned from our youth during "Socktober," warm socks are one of the most needed items for homeless people during the winter months.

This December we'd like to donate 120 (or more!) pairs of adult-sized socks to go with our 120 lunches for Dec. 29. We've collected 25 pairs so far.



Please bring in new, warm adult socks and put them in the collection box in the Narthex. We'll make sure they go to Valerie along with our lunches.

And please don't forget to also stop by the Blessings Box in our front yard to help our local neighbors in need.

In addition to sharing non-perishable food items, non-food household items like socks and toiletries are also welcome donations and seem to be quite popular.

**We are an Open and Affirming Congregation valuing everyone's race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, physical and mental abilities.**

## Parish Personals . . .

**Barbara Todd** celebrated her 65th birthday in November. She reports that she's feeling very good. Her hair is growing back and she sang in the choir for the John Rutter Chorale on Thanksgiving Sunday. Her brother is staying with her for awhile.

**Maureen Gallaty** is recovering from her recent surgery and some other health issues but is eager to get back to church so she can rejoin the choir in time for the Christmas music she loves.

**Henry Altorfer** reports that his mother **Maria** is back in her own home after three months of hospitalization and rehab for heart and lung problems. By all accounts, she has defied the doctors and proved more resilient than ever.

**Doris Brown's** brother recently underwent heart surgery that was required before he could have his hip replaced. The heart surgery was successful but now he must wait six months for the hip surgery.

**Barbara Todd** celebrated her 65th birthday in November. She reports that she's feeling very good. Her hair is growing back and she sang in the choir for the John Rutter Chorale on Thanksgiving Sunday. Her brother is staying with her for awhile.

Kudos to **Sarah Brown** for her featured role of Darcy in the production of Newsies at the Carlmont Performing Arts Center.

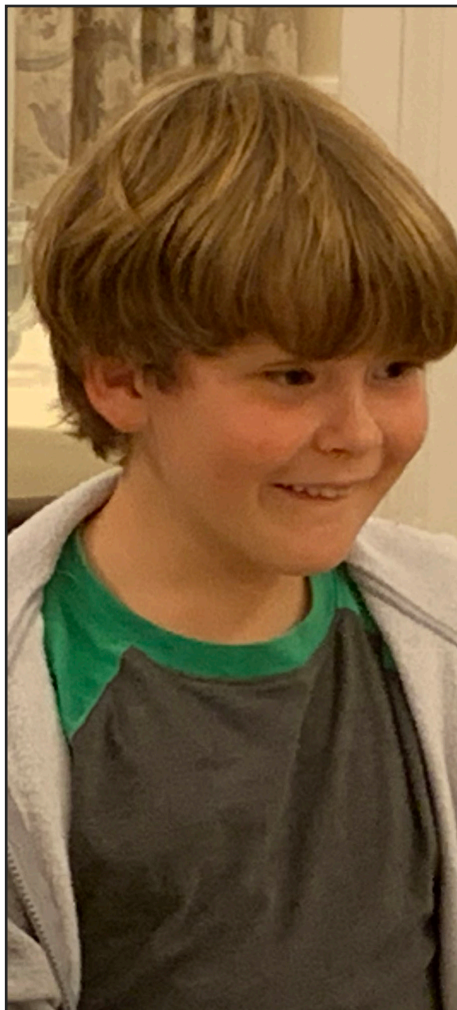
**Brenda Garner** continues to thrive at Carlmont Gardens Skilled Nursing in Belmont. Prayers and visits sustain her.

**Barbara White** took a fall while visiting the young men housed at Hillcrest Juvenile Hall in San Mateo with **Henry Altorfer**. She suffered a cut on her head and just discovered that she also broke her collarbone. Barbara and Henry represent CCB in meeting with the incarcerated young men on a regular basis, and we are saddened that Barbara was injured during that visitation. We send prayers for a speedy recovery so that the holidays won't be compromised for Barbara.

It's so nice to see **Nancy Chambers** back from a couple of months at her home on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington. She's staying with family just down the street from the church.



## Socializing at Harvest Dinner



Harvest Dinner mixed great food (thank you, Leslie, for the roast turkey!) and conversation with no agenda other than to have fun, play board games and enjoy the blessed community of the Congregational Church of Belmont. We also reinforced the long-held notion that the cooks of CCB are tops. We had three quite different dressings to go with the turkey along with all the other side dishes and desserts.

## December Birthdays

Dec. 2	Micki Carter
Dec. 5	Dusty Cox
Dec. 7	Steven Ramos
Dec. 9	Ursula Jorgensen
Dec. 12	David Shouse
Dec. 14	Irene Hall
Dec. 17	Antonio Saucedo
Dec. 20	Linda Howard
Dec. 27	Jane Dolan
Dec. 29	Steve Chamberlin

If we don't have your birthday listed, please email the church office with the date so we can add it to our list.

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont web site, click on [CCB](#).



# New focus for Christian Ed programs at CCB

By Danielle Chamberlin

The children's programs have been active this fall with a very successful Children's Sabbath Sock and Food drive in October.

In November the youth in fifth grade and up started planning for the Christmas Pageant in December and a Mission Trip in August while also exploring themes like resilience with Elizabeth Mye.

The elementary-aged children have been enjoying lessons from our Rock Solid curriculum with activities and crafts themed around Bible stories from the Old Testament led by Susan Linares, Leslie Marx and me. In December, Garrett House and Elizabeth Mye will lead the kids in learning to tell the Christmas story through narrative and song, culminating in our Christmas Pageant during worship on Dec. 22.

The Board of Christian Education, meanwhile, has been reflecting on how the needs of our children may be changing as we

go through this time of transition as a church.

Just as we asked the congregation at Harvest Dinner the three questions "What brings you to CCB?" "What should we focus on?" and "What have we enjoyed in the past but we should let go of now?" we have been evaluating these aspects for the children's programs as well.

We've noted one significant change. While for many years we had mostly elementary-aged children in our congregation, we now have quite a few middle and high schoolers and a large number of fifth graders who are about to enter middle school.

This has led us to evaluate what we can do to focus on our older youth. Micki Carter has volunteered to organize a Mission Trip for our middle and high schoolers this year during the first week of August. The kids (and non-parent chaperones) will go to San Diego to build and repair houses for low-income families. The trip will be offered at no charge to our families. Our youth will work on FUNdraising activities throughout the winter and spring, which we hope will further bond this group of kids.

We have also been looking at what has been going well and what we can reshape as we recognize the needs of our changing youth.

While we have really enjoyed running our Vacation Day Camp for the past five

years, we have decided to let VDC go for 2020. This is a tough thing to do because we know we run a very successful Vacation Day Camp which is well liked by all of our campers and families!

However, in light of our changing demographics and youth growing up, we find that we are now mostly serving families external to our church community at a high volunteer hour "tax" on our own congregation.

In order to preserve the focus on growing the programs for our children and to invest in future growth, we have also been working on re-envisioning the role and responsibilities of the DCE.

We have opened a position for a Children's Program Coordinator to be focused on our Sunday School programs. This will provide the focus and consistent leadership that our younger children need in Sunday School instead of relying on different Sunday School volunteers each week.

This person will also oversee the other childcare positions, maintain compliance with CCB's Safe Church Policy and supervise annual children's programs like Children's Sabbath and the Christmas Pageant.

The job posting is now listed on the church's website as well as Craigslist and Indeed, and we are already receiving applications.

## Search panel to interview candidate for Interim Pastor

By Steve Chamberlin

The Pastoral Search Committee is pleased to welcome Rev. Sally Train as a part-time pastor for the leadership of Sunday worship services, pastoral care, other vital church needs.

Meanwhile the committee remains engaged in the hunt for an Interim Pastor who will guide CCB through a comprehensive process of re-visioning and renewal.

Although qualified candidates remain in short supply, the committee has recently interviewed one especially promising candidate who may be a good fit. After discussion with the Church Council, the committee has arranged for an in-person meeting between the candidate and the Council in early December.

We hope to have more news to share about this soon. If you are interested in learning more, the search committee meetings are open to all church members and everyone is welcome to attend.

## Youth Mission Trip is planned for first week in August in San Diego

By Micki Carter

The effort to send middle and high schoolers on a Mission Trip in 2020 is now focused on a trip to San Diego Aug. 2-9.

Under the auspices of Sierra Service Project, a Methodist-based organization, the trip will bring youth entering sixth through 12th grades (and chaperones) to work on building and rehabbing houses in low-income, mostly Hispanic neighborhoods near the Mexican border.

CCB needs to send a deposit for each of our participating youth in early December so I need commitments from as many church youth as possible. I realize nailing down a

week this early is difficult for many families, but we can't proceed in the process without that certainty.

The San Diego trip will be the same week usually reserved for Vacation Day Camp so that may help in solidifying calendars.

Please let me know as early as possible if your child can participate (or can't, and I will stop bugging you about this).

We want to start planning fundraising and perhaps a snow trip as part of this experience.

Details about the trip are available at [SierraServiceProject.org](http://SierraServiceProject.org).

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont web site, click on [CCB](#).



## AT THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BELMONT, CHRISTMAS IS A FAMILY AFFAIR!

BRING YOUR CHILDREN AND JOIN US:

**Sundays, Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22** — Advent Sermon Series, 10:30 a.m. worship with the Sanctuary Choir.

**Sunday, Dec. 15** — We will carpool to the Menlo Park Veterans Hospital, 795 Willow Road, Menlo Park, Building 322, to share a carol-singing service for hospitalized veterans. We'll leave CCB at 2 p.m. and return around 4:30 p.m.

**Sunday, Dec. 22** — A children's Christmas Pageant with music, costumes and a retelling of the familiar story of Christ's birth in a new way during worship at 10:30 a.m. Both our Youth and Sanctuary Choirs will sing.

**Sunday, Dec. 22** — Family caroling, with visits to the home-bound and a pizza party at the home of Bob and Ella Mae Donovan after. Gather at the church to carpool and pick up song books at 5 p.m. Bring your bells!

**Tuesday, Dec. 24** — Family Christmas Eve service at 5:30 p.m. Children will take part in the telling of the Christmas story with lots of carols. Then at 10 p.m., the candle-light communion service with the Sanctuary Choir is a magnificent and glorious celebration. The music by our amazing choir will overwhelm you with the joy of the season.

# Two services are planned for Christmas Eve

This year, Pastor Sally will be leading us at both our Christmas Eve services.

At our 5:30 p.m. Family Service, we tell the story of the first Christmas with sound effects and laughter and lots of our favorite carols. The children help us build a creche scene at the front of the church which we gather around for a final prayer and sing Silent Night before heading home to an early night in anticipation of Christmas Day's festivities.

Then at 10 p.m. we share the profound and transformational magic of the season with carols, anthems, hymns and story. We share communion and circle the sanctuary with candlelight.

We are reminded that the Christ who came into the world some 2,000 years ago has poured out the Christ Spirit into each one of us so that we might become the light of the world for others.

This Sanctuary Choir will offer a Christmas Chorale with John Rutter's Silent Night, Sure on This Shining Night, Spotless Rose, What Sweeter Music, On This Holy Night and more.

A very special night.

## Caroling is set for VA and for house-bound — with a techno twist!

Caroling has always been a big part of Christmas at CCB, and this year we will add a layer of tech to make it better.

We will caravan to the Menlo Park Veterans Hospital on Sunday, Dec. 15, where Rev. Thomas Crosby serves as chaplain.

We'll leave CCB at 2 p.m. and return around 4:30 p.m.

We will sing the carols that are favorites of the veterans who worship with Thomas and enjoy cookies and punch with the veterans.

Then on Dec. 22 we will gather at the church at 5:30 p.m. to visit our home-bound members and sing carols with Mike Venturino providing the guitar accompaniment. Then we'll head to Bob and Ella Mae Donovan's house for a pizza party.

At the Donovan's, we plan to use FaceTime to sing carols to former members who are now some distance away. We want to connect with Belinda Sims, John Brooke and Margaret and Peter Cross, at least.

Anyone who would like to be included in our "techno-caroling," please email Micki Carter at [mickicarter@gmail.com](mailto:mickicarter@gmail.com) so we can make it work. All you need is an iPhone!

## Family-to-Family giving begins on Dec. 1 with distribution of tags

By Irene Hall

For more than 20 years we have been sponsoring several local, low-income families through Samaritan House's Family and Senior Sharing Program. Based on their needs, we provide each family with food, grocery store gift cards and Christmas presents.

If you would like to be primary contact for one of the families, let me know. We already have the ages of the sponsored chil-

dren and their wish lists. Gift tags for each member of the families will be available for pick up, starting Dec. 1.

You select whatever gift(s) you want to purchase, buy them and bring them to church. With your donation to the Family-to-Family Special Offering in December, we buy the groceries and gift cards.

Delivering the food and gifts the week before Christmas is a true joy for the families in our church who volunteer to do it. All of us can make Christmas better for others.

'Tis the reason for the season!

## Help decorate for the holiday season Dec. 1

A soup luncheon is planned after worship on Dec. 1 to welcome Pastor Sally and to decorate the church for Advent and Christmas.

Join us in the Dining Rom for soups prepared by our fabulous CCB cooks and then spread out in the Narthex and Sanctuary to decorate this sacred space for the season.

If you have holly branches and other appropriate greenery, bring them along.

Soon the poinsettias will arrive, and we invite you to sign up to purchase one in memory or honor of loved ones. Their names will be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletin.

Meanwhile, the children will be making ornaments to decorate the tree in the Narthex, and Irene Hall will be overseeing the distribution of the Family-to-Family gift tags.

It's going to be lively and you won't want to miss it!

# Pledges are lagging; Trustees need yours ASAP

By Greg Thornhill  
Chair, Board of Trustees

Pledge numbers for 2020 are lagging.

In 2019, we had 31 families pledging a total of \$68,710. We're now deep in the heart the budgeting season, and the current numbers we're working with for 2020 are 18 pledges for a total of \$56,980. That's almost a \$12,000 gap which will be extremely difficult to factor into the budget.

Individual giving accounts for almost 30

percent of our total income. Building income has continued to grow proportionately but your giving remains a crucial piece of our continued success and viability.

During this time of transition, we want to strive to put together a healthy budget that allows us to continue to do all the good work of the church that we all appreciate.

Please consider getting your pledge into our Financial Secretary, Mike Venturino, as soon as possible. This will allow trustees to

draft a budget with the best income information possible.

If you're unsure of what to pledge, Mike can provide figures of a median pledge as well as an average pledge, but the most important thing is to give us an idea of what we can expect.

Also, be assured that your pledge is completely confidential. No one but the financial secretary knows that figure, and he doesn't share it with anyone.

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont web site, click on [CCB](#).



# SAVE THE DATE!

## Monday, January 20, 2020

### MLK Jr. Multifaith Day of Service

*Bringing together our diverse community to build bridges of understanding and respect*

Please plan to join us for this unique opportunity to work side by side with those of other faiths and cultures to benefit our local community. The day begins with an inspiring welcome from faith leaders at a volunteer breakfast. After breakfast, groups of volunteers work together on 20+ family friendly projects. Registration opens in early December.



Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Silicon Valley • Baha'i Faith of the Mid-Peninsula • Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints • Congregation Beth Jacob • Congregational Church of Belmont • Congregational Church of San Mateo • Episcopal Church of St. Matthew • First Presbyterian Church of Burlingame • Holy Trinity Lutheran Church of San Carlos • Island United Church of Foster City • Jewish Community Relations Council • Pacifica Institute • Peninsula Sinai Congregation • Peninsula Temple Beth El • Peninsula Temple Sholom • St. Andrew's Lutheran Church of San Mateo • Saint Bartholomew Parish • St. Matthias Catholic Church of Redwood City • Saint Paul's Episcopal Church • Sanatan Mandir • Shinnyo-en USA • Sikh Gurdwara SSF • Sisters of Mercy, Burlingame • Trinity Baptist Church • Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Redwood City

[www.peninsulamultifaith.org](http://www.peninsulamultifaith.org)

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont web site, click on [CCB](#).

# December 2019

<b>1</b> Sun	10:30AM - 1:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Welcome Sally Sunday! First Sunday of Advent
	1:30PM - 3PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Walking Group
<b>2</b> Mon	7:00PM - 9PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Book Discussion Group
<b>4</b> Wed	7PM - 9PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Special Church Council meeting
<b>5</b> Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir rehearsal
<b>6</b> Fri	10AM - 12PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Organ Tuning and Piano Tuning
<b>8</b> Sun	9AM - 10AM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Trustees in the parlor
	10:30AM - 12:30PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship/Second Sunday of Advent
<b>12</b> Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir rehearsal
<b>13</b> Fri	10AM - 12PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Organ Tuning and Piano Tuning
<b>15</b> Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday Worship/Advent
	2PM - 4PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Caroling at the VA
<b>16</b> Mon	7PM - 9PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Church Council
<b>19</b> Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir rehearsal
<b>20</b> Fri	10AM - 12PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Organ Tuning and Piano Tuning
<b>22</b> Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday Worship/Christmas Pageant
	5PM - 7PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Caroling
<b>24</b> Tue	5:30PM - 6:15PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Family Christmas Eve Service
	10PM - 11PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Christmas Eve Service
<b>27</b> Fri	10AM - 12PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Organ Tuning and Piano Tuning
<b>29</b> Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Lunches for Open Cathedral
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont web site, click on [CCB](#).



# Is this how you remember Christmas?



**Give your children that gift this year  
at the Congregational Church of Belmont!**

If you'd like your children (or grandchildren or any other children in your life) to celebrate Christmas with a Progressive Christian church, bring them to church at 10:30 a.m. on any Advent Sunday (Dec. 1, 8, 15 and 22). We have costumes to fit children of any age and any size. We can't wait to meet your children — and you too, of course!

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont web site, click on [CCB](#).



# Walking Group to stroll along Belmont Slough

CCB's walking group meets on the first Sunday of every month to explore scenic mid-peninsula trails.

The location for December will be Redwood Shores, where we'll enjoy a refreshing walk beside the waters of Belmont Slough. This is a gentle path along a paved trail and a dog-friendly route.

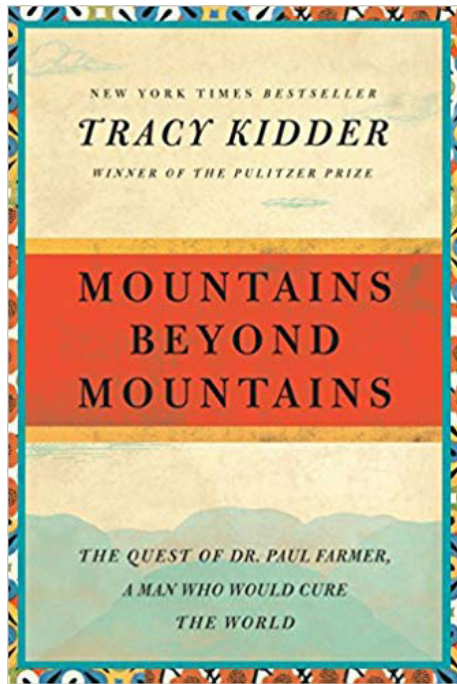
We'll gather for the walk at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 1 at the Redwood Shores Library, 399 Marine Parkway.

Talk to Steve Chamberlin if you have any questions.

## Book Group will discuss 'Mountains' on Monday

The church's book discussion group is now reading *Mountains Beyond Mountains* by Tracy Kidder.

This profound and powerful book fol-



lows the adventures of an infectious disease doctor from Harvard to Haiti, Peru, Cuba, and Russia. Along the way the reader learns how one person can make a difference in solving global health problems through an understanding of the interaction of politics, wealth, social systems, and disease.

The group will meet at church on Dec. 2 at 7 p.m. to discuss the book.

## Christmas requests

Keep an eye out for your Christmas letter from Pastor Sally inviting your to participate in the Christmas Fund, which supports United Church of Christ clergy in their retirement.

This year we also be asking you to donate to our Scholarship Fund so no member of the congregation is deprived of the chance to attend camps like Monte Toyon during the summer..

**January Messenger deadline will be Monday, Dec. 30**



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