



# January 2020 THE MESSENGER

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BELMONT

751 Alameda de las Pulgas, Belmont CA 94002 • 650-593-4547 • BelmontUCC@comcast.net • www.UCCBelmont.org



Bob and Ella Mae Donovan opened their family room the evening of Dec. 22 so the carolers of CCB could try their hand at using Facebook to reach former members who have moved away from us. To hear more about the long-distance caroling (and check out a link), go to Parish Personals on Page 2.

## Trains of Thought: Doing the work of Christmas

By Rev. Sally Train

Happy New Year! Happy New Year! Happy New Year! Happy New Year!

“When the song of the angels is stilled.

When the star in the sky is gone.

When the kings and the shepherds have found their way home,

The work of Christmas is begun!” — Rev. Gary Davis

I hope you had a joyful Christmas. It was wonderful to see so many of you on Christmas Eve. What a spirit-filled day it was!

As you know, this was my first experience of your Christmas Pageant. I could not have been more delighted! It was joyful, fun, colorful, insightful, and included so many people — young and old. As always



Rev. Sally Train

in this church, the music was inspiring. What a wonderful way to celebrate the birth of Christ!

The evening services were beautiful. I want to thank everyone who helped set up, prepare, decorate, read scripture, light advent candles, sing, play music, greet, manage the sound system, provide refreshments, clean up, and contribute with their presence and love. It was a heart-warming experience of true community.

I hope you are looking forward to the coming year with anticipation and optimism. You have every reason to. Your full-time interim minister should be in place by early March and you can begin the transformative work of discerning the purpose of this church and what God’s Spirit is calling you to do and be in the coming era.

This is not “church business” to be assigned to a committee. This is profound spiritual work that should engage everyone at CCB. In the process, you will grow closer to God and closer to each other. This is church work in the best sense of the work. This is the true work of Christmas.

An observation: The first interim minister you called, who failed to follow through with his commitment, did you a great disservice. However, I believe there was a hidden gift in that experience. When I arrived in late November, I found a group of leaders who were undeniably tired, but quite capable, efficient, dedicated and comfortable working with each other. I believe this last year has called forth many gifts for ministry from among the congregation which will continue to guide and serve you in the years to come. Sometimes God works in mysterious ways!

As 2020 unfolds with all its promise and challenge, I believe you will face it together, See TRAINS OF THOUGHT, Page 2

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

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## Trains of Thought

Continued from Page One

supporting and encouraging one another. Together you will learn, grow, work, and celebrate the victories. Together you will hold the Christ light in our hearts and do the work of Christmas.

One of the gifts that only a faith community can offer is Spirituality. Now, more than ever, there is a spiritual hunger in our country. Now, more than ever, there is a need for us to be spiritually grounded, so we can face the challenges that are before us.

With that in mind, I plan to offer a series of sermons on spiritual disciplines with an emphasis on prayer. This series will start Jan. 5 and continue through February. The hope is to guide and encourage our members in deepening and expanding their prayer lives and their relationship with the mystery we call God. Prayer is powerful.

I hope you will make an effort to attend worship as often as you can. Every Sunday is important for spiritual growth. Every person is important to the spiritual community. Your presence and love make a difference to the members of your church family. We miss you when you are not here.

As we begin this new year, let us give thanks for our church community and every member in it. We are indeed blessed! Let us begin the work of Christmas!

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

### Worship and Sermon Themes Winter 2019

**Jan. 5 Communion Sunday** — Introduction to the six elements of classic prayer and the Prayer of Praise. Psalms 100, 145 and 150

**Jan. 12 The Gift of Gratitude (Giving Thanks);** Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Reading from *Gracias* by Henri Nouwen

**Jan. 19 Prayer of Confession and acceptance of forgiveness;** Psalms 32, 51 and 103

**Jan. 26 A Day to Forgive;** We will explore the what, why, and how of forgiving others; Ephesians 4: 31-32 and Matthew 18: 21-22

**Feb. 2 Communion Sunday — Prayer of Petition** – Praying for ourselves and asking God for what we need; Romans 8: 26-28 and Matthew 7: 7-11. **Special treat:** I will tell the story of how I met my husband who was/is indeed an answer to my prayer.

**Feb. 9 Prayer of Intercession** – Praying for others; Mark 9: 14-29 and Romans 8: 26-27

**Feb. 16 Prayer of Surrender – Surrendering to God's will;** Luke 1: 26-38

**Feb. 23 Meditation – Listening to God;** Psalm 1: 1-6

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

# CCB calls Elizabeth Clement as its interim

By Greg Thornhill

The Pastoral Search Committee and Council are excited to announce the selection of our interim minister, Elizabeth Mitchell Clement.

The Search Committee reconvened several months ago and looked closely at several candidates — Elizabeth shone through the others. Our decision was finalized when she was out visiting family in early December and the Search Committee and Council were able to meet with her face-to-face.

We had a great conversation and both the Council and Elizabeth felt strongly about our opportunity to work together. The answer was clear, and we began discussing the particulars of the call agreement which was finalized a few days ago. She will start with us on Monday, March 9.

What stood out for so many of us in our discussions with Elizabeth is her distinct passion for interim ministry. She feels called to this specific work and has a passion for helping congregations discover what they are called to do. The thrust of her ministry with us will be in helping us through this discovery process. This is not a process that she does for us, but with us.

Up until a couple of weeks ago, Elizabeth lived in Atlanta with her husband Arthur. They just downsized and moved to the South Carolina coast. Her husband Arthur does not move with her on these interim ministry positions, but they find ways to visit each other throughout the interim engagements.

Elizabeth is originally from Berkeley but moved out of state during high school. After some time in Alabama and upstate New York, she settled in the Atlanta area.

Elizabeth has decided to live in our apartment. We have worked with the current tenants to get the apartment vacated. They have found alternative housing and will be leaving at the end of January. (You may notice a POD in the parking lot that will be there for two to three weeks as they pack up).

In speaking to a couple of Elizabeth's recent congregations that she worked with, it's safe to say that she's has raving fans. One church's moderator during Elizabeth's tenure stated that she was the best community ambassador — that their church had been inward looking for a long time and that they



Rev. Elizabeth Mitchell Clement

now have strong relationships in the community because of Elizabeth. Further that her sermons were incredible. When there were things that Elizabeth thought needed to be brought to light for the congregation as part of the interim discovery process, she occasionally did so in sermons and in a way that was not offending. Often times the sermons brought tears to the moderator's eyes.

In another congregation, Elizabeth had come in for just under a year with a congregation that had an interim minister for an extensive period of time. The moderator told us that Elizabeth did an incredible job of helping the church heal through its grieving process. They said that she has a strong commitment to leaving a congregation ready for

its next settled pastor and that she is highly educated, a wonderful speaker, and delivers engaging sermons.

We are so lucky to have found Elizabeth and can't wait for her to help us write our next chapter.

A deep thank you goes out to the Pastoral Search Committee. This committee showed true grit in jumping back into the process of searching for the right candidate for us, persevering through multiple challenges. These folks are an incredible asset to the process and to our church, and I am so grateful to have worked with such a strong team: Ursula, Elizabeth N, Steve C, Garrett, and Gary.

## Busy December for our young people

By Danielle Chamberlin  
Board of Christian Education

This December our youth worked hard throughout the Advent season to practice and prepare music for our annual Christmas pageant on Dec. 22. They remembered that Christmas is about giving and showing love.

In Sunday School, they prepared presents for loved ones (including yummy soup mixes) and practiced sharing their gifts of music and storytelling with the congregation. A small group practiced playing handbells and were blessed to have the loan of "real" handbells from UCC Antioch.

In January, we will be back to regular weekly classes, with the older youth leading a weekly discussion group. Our elementary

aged children will try out the Joyful Path curriculum that we enjoyed several years ago with Valerie McEntee.

Both groups are in need of teachers, and we welcome all volunteers. If you haven't taught Sunday School before but are interested to help with our kids, we welcome you with open arms!

In December, we welcomed Kendall House as our newest addition to the child-care team.

We are still looking for a Part-time Children's Program Coordinator. The job listing is posted on the CCB website as well as on Indeed. If you know of anyone who is great with Children and might be looking to add some hours, we welcome referrals.

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



## Christmas Pageant 2019

Oh, the story  
they told!



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



**Messenger photos  
by Mike Venturino**

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](#).

2 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir rehearsal/Dining Room
5 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship
	2:00PM - 4:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Walking Group
6 Mon		<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Annual Reports Due
	7:00PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Extra Church Council Meeting/Parlor
9 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir rehearsal/Dining Room
12 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship
16 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir rehearsal/Dining Room
19 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship
20 Mon	8AM - 3PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	PMC Seventh Annual Martin Luther King Day of Service
21 Tue	7PM - 9PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Church Council
23 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir rehearsal/Dining Room
26 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship
28 Tue	7:00PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	CCB Book Group
30 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir rehearsal/Dining Room

# Why I wear a rainbow lanyard at the VA

By Rev. Thomas Crosby

For years I have worn an Oakland A's lanyard to hold my VA identification card. (Remember we are an Open & Affirming church—A's fans are welcomed at CCB!)

This bright green strap with yellow letters made a wonderful conversation starter. I would hear "You're an A's fan?" or "I don't like baseball." No matter the comment, it would help me start a conversation especially with someone who was not comfortable speaking to a chaplain.

The Men's and Women's Trauma Recovery Program staff, where I work, met to discuss the veterans who had returned to their addiction to drugs and alcohol. This included veterans who starting drinking or drug use while in the program or just after they completed the program. Though it does not happen often, it can be a difficult time for the staff.

During the meeting we discussed each veteran and reviewed his chart notes, including mine, to see if there were any

patterns.

Spiritually, there weren't any. Most were not active in a church congregation or religious organization. Most considered themselves "spiritual, not religious." Many had spiritual injuries of anger, guilt and/or fear. Many had the spiritual strength of hope. So, nothing unusual from what I deal with daily.

During the meeting, someone commented that almost half of the veterans we discussed struggled with their sexual orientation or gender identity in some form. This was a shock for me.

After the meeting, I returned to my office and gazed at my computer screen for a while feeling helpless. How can an openly gay chaplain offer spiritual care to a veteran struggling with sexual orientation or gender identity? Mother Teresa reminds us that, "Small things done with great love will change the world."

After some prayer I realized that I had rainbow lanyard somewhere in my office.

Starting that day, I would wear my rainbow lanyard as a reminder that this chaplain is open to all veterans, no matter who they are. As a chaplain, I want to ensure LG-BTQ veterans see my office as a safe place to discuss spiritual struggles about sexual orientation or gender identity.

My first experience with a veteran was not positive. He is a very religious person who could not understand why a chaplain "could wear such a thing." Have to admit I did not expect this type of open comment. A gentle reminder that we are all children of God was my response to his homophobic statement.

Another veteran told he had something important to tell me. He believes he is bisexual and feels judged by his religious family. Through his tears he asked, "Can I still come to the chapel on Sundays?" My soul melted. I reassured him he was more than welcome. I like to think of wearing a rainbow lanyard as a way to show CCB's Open & Affirming efforts at the V.A.

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

# Plenty on the plate for the Church Council

**By Steve Chamberlin,  
Moderator**

The Church Council has begun meeting twice per month in an effort to catch up with a backlog of business.

In recent weeks, the church has conducted four separate recruiting efforts for new or newly redefined church job positions. Hiring a new employee into a key position is something the church normally does very rarely, so doing it four times in a short period has been difficult.

Each of these required extra council time to craft a job description, advertise the job, interview candidates and negotiate a job offer. To better manage these staffing challenges, the council has formed an ad hoc personnel committee with Micki Carter, Greg Thornhill, Mike Venturino and me as its members.

The Pastoral Search Committee has worked closely with the Council for two of the hires — our new pastors Sally Train and Elizabeth Clement. The third hiring effort is for the Sunday School Coordinator, a new role created by the Board of Christian Education to replace the former Director of

Christian Ed position. The Council has approved the SSC job description, and BCE has conducted some interviews, but the right candidate hasn't been found yet.

The fourth effort was for a redefined and expanded office administrator. Last month the Council approved a new job description that combined the existing roles of office admin and Building Use Coordinator and also added some new responsibilities. After an external search and much internal discussion, the church's current office administrator, Ron Evans, has agreed to take on this newly expanded admin role.

The new church logo and street sign were reviewed and approved at two recent Council meetings.

The Council also discussed the upstairs apartment and agreed to give the current tenants notice to vacate so the apartment could be cleaned and readied for new occupants in early spring. The tenants have already found new housing and are expected to move out in January. Our incoming interim pastor, Elizabeth Clement, plans to live in the apartment when she arrives.

The Council has been preparing for

the interim transition process and the re-visioning effort that will accompany it. This work has included brainstorming every option that we might possibly want to consider, even when some options may seem scary or drastic, like selling the church property or pursuing a merger with another church.

The Council also requested an appraisal valuation of the church property from a commercial realtor. This information may be helpful during the coming year's re-visioning exercises. One of the interim pastor's most important tasks will be leading the congregation through a full examination of these and other possibilities.

The upcoming Council meetings hold promise of further interesting work. We'll be taking up some technology improvement proposals and continuing to debate what ought to be the church's "main thing." Council meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the third Monday of every month, and everyone is welcome to attend.

Please mark your calendars for the 2020 Annual Meeting, which will be held after worship on Sunday, Feb. 9. We'll review the church's priorities and budget for the coming year. There will surely be important decisions to make.

I hope to see you there.

## Adding our light to the work of the church in coming year

**By Garrett House  
Vice Moderator**

As the year ends, and I reflect upon 2019, I am amazed by all the love, and all the hard work that you, the wonderful people of this beloved community have accomplished.

It has been a challenging year to say the least, but the members of this church rose to the occasion, and I see a bright future with a plethora of opportunities.

The impact of the Christmas Eve service, for me, cannot be overstated. The music, the children, the scripture readings, and a perfect sermon by Pastor Sally Train, wove a perfect tapestry of love and kindness.

The evening ended in a large circle of loving human beings, each holding a candle representing the light that burns

brightly within each of us. As we sang our favorite carols, I was suddenly transported to "Whoville."

As we embrace the new year, we enter a visioning process that will shape the church for years to come. I invite you to be a part of that process. I invite you to add your light in shaping our future. Whatever your gift is, I invite you to bring that gift to whichever area of the church that interests you.

Whether it be Social Action, Communications, Christian Education, Deacons, Music, or serving on any of our other committees, your voice is important to us. Please let me know how you want to serve this church in 2020.

It's God's house, but it's our church. Let's build it together.

## Veterans at the Menlo Park V.A. send thanks

Rev. Thomas Crosby reports that the veterans who took part in our Carol Sing-along on Dec. 15 were most grateful

"Thanks to the support of CCB, we had our annual Christmas Carol Sing-A-Long at the VA Chapel in Menlo Park.

"The flu outbreak on some units limited the number of veterans who could attend this year. However, those who were there talked about it for days.

"Those are such nice people. . . They are so friendly! . . . They sing so good! Can they come back?"

"CCB made a difference in their lives. Thank you!"

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# Book Group's next choice is 'The Line Becomes a River'

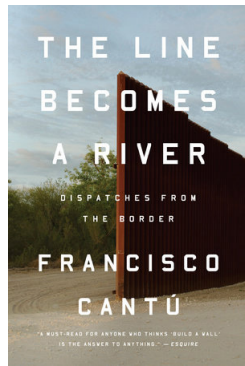
By Steve Chamberlin

CCB's Book Group meetings provide a fantastic opportunity for thoughtful discussion with fellow church members.

As we sip tea and nibble cookies, we share our reactions to the books' themes and how they intersect our lives. We've discussed the human mind, the nature of happiness, poverty, service and spirit.

Everyone is welcome, even if we don't all finish reading the entire text.

Our next book is *The Line Becomes a River* by Francisco Cantú. If you have any questions,



*River* by Francisco Cantú. It follows the story of a border patrol agent on the U.S.-Mexico border and explores the human cost and violence on both sides of the line.

The author is plagued by a growing uneasiness with what he comes to view as a dehumanizing enterprise and abandons the patrol for civilian life. But he finds it difficult to dismiss the border from his life.

Please join us for discussion on Tuesday Jan. 28 at 7 p.m in the church parlor. Talk to me if

# CCB Walkers plan to hike along San Francisco Bay

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

The location for January will be Foster City, where we'll enjoy a refreshing walk beside the waters of the San Francisco Bay. This is a gentle path along a paved trail, and it's a dog-friendly route.

We'll gather for the walk at 2 p.m. Jan. 5 at Shorebird Bark, at the intersection of Beach Park Boulevard and Halibut Street in Foster City.

Talk to Steve Chamberlin if you have any questions or if you have a walk you would like to suggest for a future outing.

**February Messenger deadline will be Monday, Jan. 27**



**THE MESSENGER**  
 CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BELMONT  
 751 ALAMEDA DE LAS PULGAS  
 BELMONT CA 94002

**We will gather for Annual Meeting after worship on Sunday Feb. 9. We need your voice!**