



Now the real work of Christmas must begin

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with
their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

— Howard Thurman

By Rev. Elizabeth Clement

Christmas Day has come and gone. The New Year is here. The COVID-19 vaccine has rolled out. Thanks be to God! And the work of Christmas begins.

Many of us have begun to make plans for coming out of forced hibernation, looking forward to when we can gather again as family, as friends, as a congregation, to eat out, go to the movies or a concert or a museum, or to GO anywhere. And the work of Christmas begins.



Pastor Liz Clement

For some of us, these months of limited movement and life at a much slower pace have made time available for reflection, for looking within to what matters most to us, the bedrock values and purpose for our lives. And the work of Christmas begins.

The work of Christmas begins, and it begins in us, the congregation of God's people;



King Herod (Andrew Altorfer) gets the news about an upstart king who's been born in Bethlehem in the Perfect Pandemic Pageant. More on Page 3.

we who believe in the newness that we have waited and prepared for in Advent; we who hear and answer the call to join in making Good News for the world God so loved that we have welcomed the Christ Child.

What part are we to take in the work of Christmas, CCB? How do we plan to see those who are lost, broken, hungry and imprisoned, and respond with what Good News looks like to them in ways that are real?

What role can CCB take in rebuilding after the devastations of this year? How do we intend to be peacemakers? As for making music in the heart, well, with the gifts

accumulated here, how will we decide? (So many choices!)

The new year is coming with all its promise and hope (easy to do after 2020), and CCB has commitments to make for the next 12 months and well beyond. I look forward to this journey toward the future God calls this congregation to co-create and to learning and growing with you.

Here's to new hope, new peace, new joy and new love, and to new, surprising possibilities to do the work of Christmas.

In the meantime, I wish you grace upon grace and Happy New Year!

Annual Meeting on Feb. 6 via Zoom!

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



The Magi decide to
“follow that star!”
These three are
Robin Linares, Kend-
all House and Emma
Naomi Mye!



Perfect Pandemic Pageant is a smash hit!

By Linda Howard

The story of the birth of baby Jesus took place over Zoom on Dec. 20 at CCB.

Who would have thought that a Zoom presentation could be so magical and meaningful as well as a lot of fun?

Joseph, Mary, Elizabeth, Caesar Augustus, Herod, the Angel Gabriel, the Magi, shepherds, little angels, assorted chickens, cats, one dog disguised as a sheep, a sleepy child and an earnest mother all presented the ancient story that never gets old — on Zoom!

The Christmas Story has been told countless times and re-enacted in countless ways in churches across the centuries. but this telling was truly unique.

The script, *Be Not Afraid*, a Pandemic Pageant, had distinctly modern phrases and humor. (Caesar declared that he would make “Rome great again” by building a golf course), but the significance of Jesus Christ’s birth remained true to the original story.

At the end of the play, Mary gets the last word. All the cast members recited words from the Magnificat.

Love, patience, kindness, creativity and dedication made the miracle of the Pandemic Pageant happen. Maybe that is one of the messages of the true spirit of Christmas.



Pastor Liz took a turn on the stage as Caesar Augustus!

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



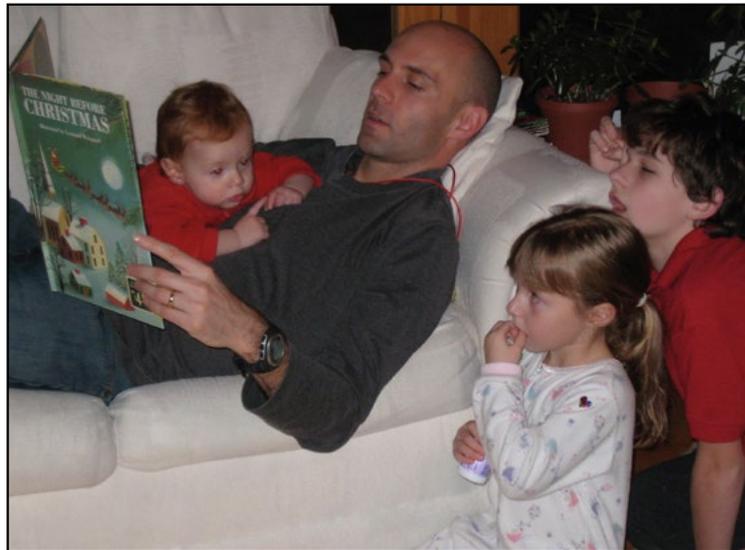
Christmas morning for Linda and Keith Howard and Dusty and Crystal — and the family cats.

What are our 'favorite things' for the holidays?

Admin Lea gathered photos of our Christmas traditions and put together a slide show for the Dec. 27 service.



Grandchildren making salt ornaments is a tradition for Leslie Marx.



Reading 'Twas the Night Before Christmas is a part of the Christmas Eve routine at the Chamberlin house with Steve reading (here in 2007) to daughters Becky and Alice and nephew Tim.



Mary and Jerry Coleman sent a photo of their neon holiday signs that were on their Cipriani house for years.

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

Annual Meeting set for Feb. 6 via Zoom; We need you there!

By Micki Carter

In true pandemic fashion, we will be gathering for our Annual Meeting via Zoom at 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6 — and we really need every member to be there so we will have a quorum required to conduct business.

Covid-19 has tossed a monkey wrench into nearly every aspect of CCB life so we will be making some tough choices and we need to know how you feel about those choices.

We'll be:

- Adopting a budget for 2021 with a lot of unknowns that will require acts of faith for the future.

- Electing a slate of officers and board members that have plenty of open slots right now. Please be receptive when the Nominating Committee reps call.

- Voting on amending the Bylaws to reflect our new way of handling money coming into the church. We don't really have a collection that needs counting the way we used to so a different approach has presented itself.

- Getting an update on where we stand with our pastoral search process.

- Listening to each other as we navigate these uncharted waters.

Look for the Annual Report as a PDF via email. You can pick up a hard copy at church.



Magazines are being collected for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service in January. You are invited to leave your magazines (with your address label removed) in the plastic bin on the front porch of the church. The Peninsula Multifaith Coalition will deliver them to nursing homes.

Pledges continue to come in

By Mike Venturino
Acting Financial Secretary

I'm humbled by the support shown for CCB's future by the pledges received through the end of December.

As of last Sunday, the church had received 22 pledges totaling \$62,130. That compares to 34 pledges last year for a total of \$68,600.

If you haven't pledged, we hope that you'll still consider doing so. As the Board of Trustees constantly reminds us, every

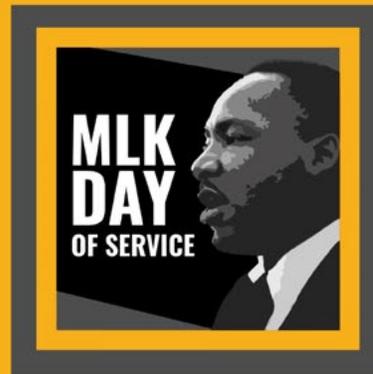
bit of expected income makes developing an operating budget that much easier. Of course, the church will accept a pledge any time in any amount.

One more thing: The Financial Secretary position will be open at the Annual Meeting in February. It's an important position in the church and doesn't require a great deal of one's time. Oh, and did I mention that there are no meetings to attend?

Please contact me if you'd like to know more about it.

MLK DAY OF SERVICE 2021 BOOK DRIVE COLLECT AND DONATE NEW AND GENTLY USED BOOKS

January 5 through MLK Day (January 18)



We are collecting new and gently used books to promote literacy in our community. Any children's books we collect for ages 0-18 will be donated to [The Children's Book Project](#), which distributes thousands of free books every month to children in the Bay Area who need them.

If you are able to purchase new books to donate, [here is a wish list](#). Especially appreciated are books that feature Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) heroes, and books in Spanish and Chinese. *Please DO NOT donate textbooks, encyclopedias, library discards, moldy, torn, smelly, or obsolete books.*

Any books we receive for adults will be donated to local libraries or Goodwill.

Please bring books in a plastic bag (in case of damp weather) to one of these drop-off locations beginning January 5 through 11:00 am on MLK Day (January 18)

- Congregation Beth Jacob, 1550 Alameda de las Pulgas, Redwood City (leave books during weekday business hours on cart on the patio; call 650-366-8481 first to make sure gate to parking lot is open; gates close early on Fridays)
- Leeb residence, 17 Waterside Circle, Redwood Shores (drop off books any day, 8:00 am-10:00 pm, and ring the doorbell)



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

CCB shows lots of heart this holiday season

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. — Margaret Mead

**By Linda Howard
Board of Social Action**

This quote describes the Board of Social Action of the Congregational Church of Belmont.

The end of the year is an especially hard time for communities. Covid has increased the difficulties faced by people. The holidays with emphasis on gift giving, family celebrations and warm homes are not available for everyone. For that reason, the Board of So-

cial Action continues to be involved in supporting our neighbors as much as possible. The Congregational Church of Belmont has supported Puente de la Costa Sur, Samaritan House and the Crop Hunger Walk in the past three months.

The Crop Hunger Walk raised \$32,678.26. The Ecumenical Hunger Program received 25 percent of this amount. On Oct. 18, members of our church and several others gathered in front of CCB and caravanned to East Palo Alto. The group donated canned food and money to support this effort.

In November, \$1,265 was donated to Samaritan House and a nearly equal sum

to Puente de la Costa Sur to purchase gift cards for the holidays. Additionally, our church members donated 32 new jackets for children and seniors to Samaritan House.

In the future, the Board of Social Action is designating an amount of money to the youth of the church. They are brainstorming ways they can spend this money to support those in need. Imagine their delight in finding out they would be given money to spend in a worthy cause.

No matter how small the group, the world can be changed and made better. That is the mission of the Board of Social Action with the support of our church.





**Peninsula
Multifaith Coalition**

**MLK JR
DAY OF SERVICE
REIMAGINED**
**Monday,
January 18, 2021**

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

**REGISTRATION IS
NOW OPEN!**
**REGISTER BY SUNDAY,
JANUARY 10**
PMCMMLK2021.EVENTBRITE.COM

**Opening Ceremony Celebrating
Dr. King (On Zoom)**
**Congresswoman Jackie Speier
Rev. Lorrie Owens, President of
San Mateo NAACP**

Due to COVID-19, this year's Day of
Service is being thoughtfully
reimagined to be meaningful for all.

Projects have been developed that
participants can prepare at home, in
addition to those that can be safely
done in person.

Participating Faith Houses

- 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
- Episcopal Church of the Epiphany
- First Church of Redwood City, UCC
- 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
- St. James A.M.E Zion Church
- St. Matthias Catholic Church of Redwood City
- Saint Bartholomew Parish
- 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

To register, click on the image.

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

Virtual Chocolate Fest nets \$1,814 for CCB

As well as plenty of good will from eight chocolatiers and fans of the in-person event

By Micki Carter

The pandemic forced us to cancel Chocolate Fest this October, but it also provided us with an opportunity to show our Chocolate Fest partners — the local chocolatiers who offer their confections for sampling — some holiday love.

We launched the Boosting Our Chocolate Fest Partners program on Oct. 15, the very day we would have been welcoming our chocolate-loving guests to the 38th edition of Chocolate Fest.

Instead of greeting them in person, we invited them to buy their holiday chocolate from one of our Chocolate Fest partners and give them a much-needed “boost” in sales, we hoped, that would keep them alive and well through this difficult year.

And, we admit, it was also an opportunity to keep Chocolate Fest alive for our dedicated chocolate-loving friends and family.

The program ended the day before Thanksgiving although we continued to handle pick-ups of those orders at the church through Dec. 4 and last-minute deliveries through Dec. 23.

The final numbers are impressive. We received 102 orders that totaled \$8,940 in sales for the eight partners, an average of more than \$1,000 in sales for each one.

And because the partners agreed to return the usual Chocolate Fest boutique percentage to the church, we raised \$1,814.60 to be divided up according to CCB’s all-church fundraiser policy.

Perhaps more important than the numbers is the good will for Chocolate Fest that the program engendered. Several of the eight partners (Brehmer’s Candy, Preston’s Candies, 3D Candy, Charlotte’s Truffles, CocoTutti, Jade Chocolates, NeoCocoa and the Chocolate Exchange) have expressed how pleased they have been with the success of the program and, as Elyce Zahn of CocoTutti said, “We’re already looking forward to an

in-person event next year!”

Cindy Brehmer of Brehmer’s Candies was so pleased she refused to accept the refund she had coming, urging us to use it as seed money for Chocolate Fest 2021.

Those who ordered chocolate through the program had a chance to leave a comment. Here are some of them:

“So glad y’all are doing this to support our local artisans!”

“Can’t wait until next year! We’ve been attending for years.”

“Please add me to the mailing list for the Chocolate Fest!”

“Thank you for organizing the Chocolate Fest in the midst of a global pandemic! We all need a little bit more chocolate in our lives.”

Special thanks to Lea Mavroudis for her enormous help and to Christy Brewer, Maura Whitmore and Linda and Keith Howard for lending a hand. And thanks too to the Board of Christian Ed for letting us use the Sunday School room for chocolate storage.

Live-streaming has shifted to hybrid Zoom/Facebook model

By Danielle Chamberlin

As California’s Covid rates have surged, CCB Church Council has decided to cancel in-person outdoor worship services for the time being.

To enable us to continue to bring together multiple locations in one service, we tried a Zoom plus Facebook format during December. This lets folks join the service either live by Zoom (which allows for more interactivity) or to watch as usual on Facebook — either live or afterwards.

To avoid Zoom-bombing, we have a password for the Zoom gathering, and we don’t post the link. (It’s emailed each Friday, and it doesn’t change). You can even dial in

by phone.

One advantage of this method is that as soon as we stop the live-stream to Facebook, “coffee hour” starts directly in the same Zoom meeting, and we can all catch up on what’s going on in each other’s lives.

It also lets more people share announcements or other pieces of the worship service, giving a little bit more “connectedness” in our distanced worship.

So far this system is working okay, but we are (as always) open to feedback and suggestions on ways that might work better. We hope, with the arrival of vaccines, all this streaming tech will be behind us soon!

What makes a gift valuable?

By Linda Howard

Adults joined the youth group meetings from mid-November to mid-December as rehearsals for the Pandemic Pageant filled the 3:30-5 p.m. Saturday slot usually reserved for the youth alone.

Cast members practiced their lines and pieced together the scenes using a variety of virtual backgrounds. And then Danielle Chamberlin went to work stitching everything together into a finished product.

The Saturday before the pageant’s debut, the acting part was done so the youth were able to meet and relax a little. The theme of the meeting was gift-giving. This topic

was relevant since The Magi, who played an important part in the Christmas pageant, brought gifts to the Christ Child.

The meeting started by asking each participant what their favorite or most treasured gift was — and why. Not one gift mentioned had to do with the amount of money spent on the gift. The gifts most treasured were gifts given with thought and care. Many gifts were made by the giver.

Then the story The Gift of the Magi by O. Henry was read. The young woman and man in the story sacrificed what was most valuable to them to give as gifts to each other, proving that the greatest gift of all is love.

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



Throughout Advent, CCB's Virtual Choir (with a revolving cast of singers) provided the carols we so love.

February Messenger deadline will be Monday, Jan. 25.



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