



# Celebrating the new life all around us

By Pastor Liz

We are emerging from Covid lockdown and have enjoyed in-person worship in the sanctuary again for the first time in a year. We have shouted, “Hosanna!” with the Worship Team from Catedral da Familia which helped lead our worship, and Pastor Darley Machado said a blessing over us on Palm Sunday. Spring has sprung, and there are signs of new life everywhere. We



**Pastor Liz Clement**

have good reason to be grateful. Thanks be to God!

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been reviewing the recorded visioning conversations and storying we’ve done over the last year. I want to take stock of where we are now for purposes of clarifying what comes next.

Although the congregation has been far-flung, we have come a long way toward identifying what’s at the heart of the shared ministry of the Congregational Church of Belmont.

A major breakthrough came when we drew an identifying, generative image of CCB out of our story-catching — “the church on the hill reaching its branches out

See **NEW LIFE**, Page 5



**Becky Chamberlin** poses with the three pet chickens that figure prominently in the (sort of) Easter story that her dad, Steve, tells on Page 4.

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

# Michael Medwid will bring us a jazzy Easter!



A CCB favorite, Michael Medwid, will bring his group of jazz musicians to lead us in a jazz celebration of Easter on April 4. Michael's group is a mainstay of Chocolate Fest every year. We've also tried to schedule a Jazz Sunday each year. Last summer, in the middle of the pandemic, he and his musicians gave a concert on the veranda for a group gathered on the lawn below or in the parking lot. Neighbors showed up to enjoy the show. This will be an Easter celebration of the season and our return to in-person worship in the Sanctuary (masked and socially distanced, of course!) There will be seating on the East Veranda for those who aren't yet comfortable inside the Sanctuary.

## Egg hunt and flower cross adjusted for a Covid Easter

A staple of Easter at CCB has always been our Easter egg hunt. On Palm Sunday the kids decorated hard-boiled eggs, which the older youth hid on the front lawn for younger children to find.

We had Easter baskets ready for the big event!

Well, we've had to adapt the Easter egg hunt a bit for pandemic protocols. We weren't able to dye eggs on Palm Sunday since that activity is a little too close for social distancing. So we're asking adults to bring hard-boiled and DYED eggs to church on Easter Sunday.

Then the older youth will don their Easter bunny personas and hide the eggs in their favorite spots out in front of the church. The younger ones will be able to do the hunting with their own Easter baskets

in hand, spread out all over the front lawn, with only their parents or siblings to lend assistance if needed.

Another Easter tradition is the flower cross for the altar. We ask each of you to scour your gardens for blooms that you can bring to church at 9:45 a.m. Sunday and tuck them into the wire on the body of the cross. Then we'll carry the cross into the Sanctuary and place it on the altar during the Easter procession.

For communion on Easter, we will have individually packaged communion elements ready for our pandemic-adjusted worship. It's not quite a "normal" Easter but it's still Easter, one of the most joyous observances of the church year. We hope you'll want to be with us to celebrate in our Sanctuary once again.



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

# A resurrection — an Easter story — of sorts

By Steve Chamberlin

Last October our family adopted three chickens, and we've been amazed how quickly these charismatic cluckers have found their way into our hearts. Our backyard flock of feathered pets is curious, busy and affectionate. Chicken cuddling is the new pastime.

But suburban backyards can be a dangerous place at night, with tenacious raccoons and other predators that will tear through wire or dig under fences in their search for a chicken dinner. Our responsibility as chicken parents is to ensure the birds are always locked away safely at night, inside an extra-sturdy coop. Otherwise they're sitting ducks, or sitting chickens, at high risk from every hunter.

A few weeks ago was a painful lesson in what happens when you forget to close the chicken coop at dusk. We were awakened at 2:30 a.m. by frantic clamorous squawking outside — thrashing sounds of deadly violent struggle from the backyard. Immediately I realized something had gotten inside the coop, and a chicken was in a fight for its life — a fight it would lose. We yelled impotently from the window, but the invisible melee continued in the dark.

Then before I could even gather my wits, the sounds of struggle ended abruptly with an awful screeching wail of death. It was a

terrible, gut-wrenching sound, punctuated with ominous silence.

The whole family rushed outside, but it was too late. Whatever predator had squeezed inside the coop had already disappeared and carried off Daffodil, the smallest of our three chickens. Huge snowdrifts of feathers were scattered everywhere, and the other two chickens were nearly catatonic with fear or injury, we couldn't tell. They huddled together sadly, but Daffodil was gone.

As we stood in the cold darkness, in shock and tears, there was little we could do but close the survivors safely inside and mourn the lost bird.

We went back to bed, but nobody could really sleep. I kept thinking about poor Daffodil, horribly torn apart by some raccoon. It was like losing a family member. She was small and sweet and soft. If you sat quietly in the run, often she'd jump into your lap and settle in. She was just 4 months old; born in the fall, she never even lived to see summer. I'd never imagined I could get so attached to a chicken, but her violent death was deeply upsetting. I think we were all grieving and heartbroken.

At first light, I returned outside to survey the damage, check on the other birds, and see if I could find the spot where the predator got in. And rather gruesomely, I looked

around for a chicken head or other scattered body parts. I gathered up a few rocks with thoughts of later building some kind of marker memorial. All was quiet and somber in the gray fog before dawn.

I could hear quiet noises from the two chickens in the coop. But then I heard another faint noise, from across the yard. I went to investigate, peered over the neighbor's fence... and there was Daffodil, looking at me expectantly, completely unharmed.

In that moment I was dumbfounded with such tremendous relief and joy, I felt like a 6-year-old on Christmas morning, but better! I coaxed Daffodil back over the fence to rejoin her friends, all who seemed uninjured. With trembling elation, I raced back to share the good news with my still sleeping family, and soon we were all outside in our pajamas cuddling chickens at 6:45 in the morning.

It's not often that something terrible happens, and then you're granted a complete and total do-over. It's a miraculous feeling of deliverance.

I don't understand what happened that night. I don't know what made that terrible wail of death, or how there could be enough scattered feathers to stuff a pillow and yet all chickens seemed unharmed.

Maybe it's better not to ask too many questions and just be grateful when life hands you something good.

# We can love the Earth by creating a garden

By Danielle Chamberlin

To care for our earth and its people, our youth are building a pizza garden!

On March 6 the youth met with Micki Carter over Zoom, who taught them how to grow tomato plants from seeds, including San Marzano, Cherry and Money Maker varieties.

On April 6 Greg Thornhill, along with Wesley Thornhill and Garrett House, will lead the youth in building planter boxes, which we will install on the southeast corner of the veranda that wraps around the church (close to the south steps off our front parking lot) — an area which is underutilized, close to water, with all-day sun and a wind-break. It should also be relatively deer-proof.

Then, on April 20, the youth will plant

their tomatoes and other pizza-related vegetables and herbs in their new planter beds, just in time for Earth day. Through the summer they will water, weed and harvest their veggies. They plan to have a pizza party from the bounty of their garden, hopefully with enough to share!

Throughout this project, the youth are learning about the many ways growing gardens are beneficial. Together we watched a segment of the documentary "Kiss the Ground" and learned how regenerative agriculture is transforming the way food is grown in balance with our earth's ecosystem.

This garden will help our community in many ways — first, by drawing carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and sequestering it into healthy soil.

Eating locally grown food also avoids greenhouse gases generated during transportation. Last, but definitely not least, growing food feeds people — and there is lots of need for food in our community, as shown by how popular our Blessings Box has become recently. We hope to supplement some of the Blessings Box food with extra fresh veggies from our pizza garden as well.

We are excited to spread love and nourishment in our community with this project, and especially thank Micki, Greg, Garrett, and Wesley for helping us kick off this fun project.

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# A few visions of CCB that have been proposed

By Elizabeth Nordt

The call for visions went out during CCB Annual Meeting, in services and emails. Imagine it is five years from now: Where are you? Where is CCB? What is happening at 751 Alameda de las Pulgas in Belmont, Calif.?

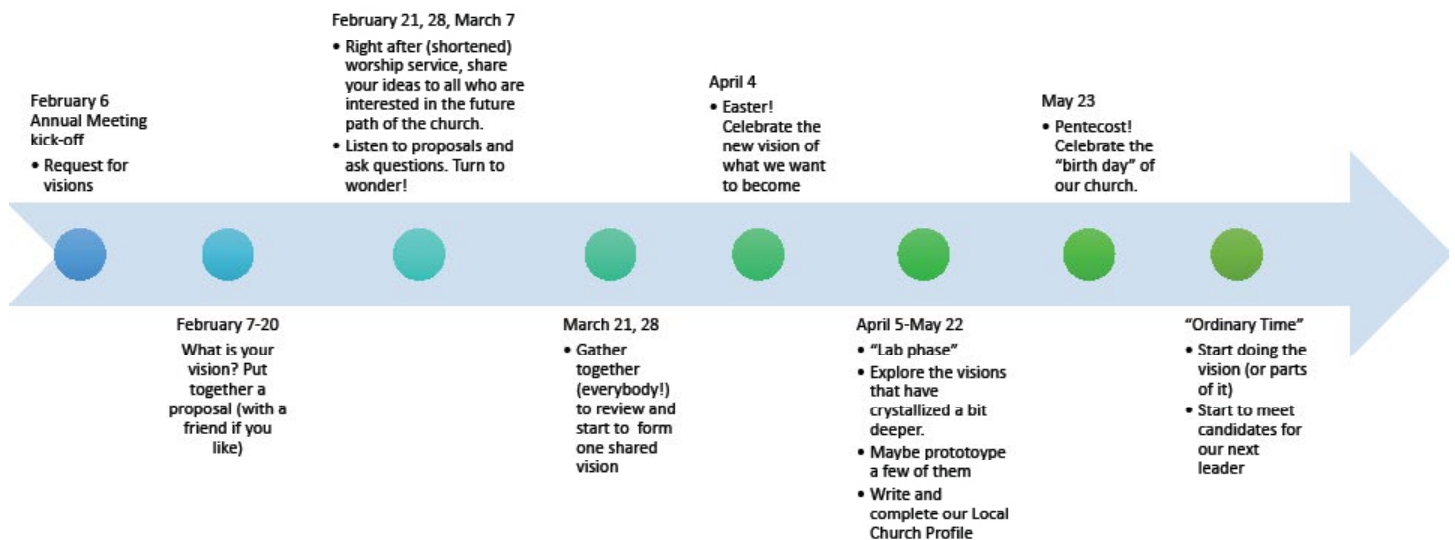
We've gathered at least a dozen visions and have been discussing them over Zoom after church. Some themes emerged as we envision our roots and branches spreading love, healing and hope into the community.

Among the possibilities:

- Merging or partnering with other local UCC or progressive congregations
- Calling a part-time minister and/or one who can focus on our youth
- Hiring a full-time administrator
- Sharing or selling our space

- Becoming a multi-faith center
- Forming a non-profit as a co-op with other stake-holders in the building
- A place to call home: rezoning and designing to provide affordable housing
- A place to create: music, dance, theater, visual arts
- A place to learn: especially for children
- A place to grow, especially for children, and healthy food to share
- A place to meet: worship, discuss, explore the meaning of life
- A place to think, pray, meditate on a bench, under a tree, in hammock, and/or walking a labyrinth.
- Keeping it "green" with climate and sustainability always in mind
- Where can you put your energy that will make more energy for you?

## What's Next? – Our Visioning Journey from Lent through Pentecost



### New life

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into the community"— only then to realize this was our logo now re-imagined.

Where are we now? We are harvesting the visions that members have shared, and they are going up on the wall in the Dining Room. Everyone is invited to come by to take part in this interactive harvesting to discover where there is the most interest and energy — where CCB is going next.

We have developed a very helpful timeline for what we will be doing between Easter and Pentecost at the end of May. Also, I will ask the Church Council to commit to finalize the local church profile and a job description for the next pastor, both of which are required by the United Church of Christ before a search can begin. I will ask the responsible committees to complete these two tasks in the 50 days of Eastertide.

For some time over the months to come, our work will be to clarify CCB's purpose/

mission and vision. This work will go on as you evaluate new leadership in the coming season of search and until such time as you begin to live into that mission and vision with clear and determined intention.

It's been quite a year for us at CCB. Isn't it wonderful that we start this month with Resurrection Sunday — Easter Sunday — with hearts full of hope.

There is life beyond death. Christ is alive!

Hallelujah!

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## Sharing Palm Sunday with the musicians of CDF

The fantastic musicians of Catedral da Familia, the Brazilian-American church that uses our building on Sunday evenings, brought a new dimension to Palm Sunday this year. The soloists sang outside on the East Veranda (since Covid protocols still don't allow singing indoors) while the guitarists and drummer played in front of the altar. Pastor Darley Machado worked the mixer in the back of the Sanctuary, but Pastor Liz drew him to the front to offer the benediction blessing in Portuguese! What a launch for Holy Week at CCB!



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# Try coloring those Easter eggs with natural dyes

By Linda Howard

What do onion skins, beet juice, turmeric, coffee and blueberries have in common?

Answer: They can all be used as natural dyes to color Easter eggs. This is exactly what happened during the latest youth get-together on a recent Saturday afternoon.

CCB Admin Lea Mavroudis led several children and adults through an interesting afternoon where they learned about the Greek Orthodox Church culture centered around Easter and dyeing eggs using natural materials.

In the Greek tradition, eggs are dyed red for Easter. Hundreds of years ago before synthetic dyes were invented, yellow onion skins were boiled down, resulting in a natural red dye. The red color represents the



blood of Christ, while the eggs themselves represent the tomb from which Christ arose after crucifixion. The cracking of the egg symbolizes the rebirth of Christ.

The youth boiled onion skins, but also branched out and experimented with coloring eggs with other natural food items. They learned that using brown or white eggs also affects the results. For example, a white shelled egg dipped in turmeric becomes a light golden color. A brown egg dipped in turmeric takes on a bronze hue.

Learning how another faith honors the traditions of Easter, and a new way to color eggs was fun, but it doesn't end there. On Easter Sunday morning, secret bunnies will hide eggs on the front lawn. The CCB Easter Egg Hunt lives on!

## Please bring eggs (hard-boiled and DYED) to church on Easter Sunday!

**May Messenger deadline will be Monday, April 26**



### Dedicate your Easter lilies

We will be ordering lilies for Easter. If you would like to dedicate lilies in memory or in honor of someone, send an email to Lea in the church office. The usual donation is \$15 per lily. You are welcome to take your lilies home after worship on Easter Sunday.

### Maundy Thursday ecumenical service

An ecumenical service is planned for 7 p.m. April 1, Maundy Thursday, sponsored by Congregational Church of Belmont, Many Journeys Metropolitan Community Church (San Mateo), St. Peter's Episcopal Church (Redwood City) St. James AME Zion Church (San Mateo), College Heights UCC (San Mateo), Congregational Church of San Mateo and Island United Church UCC of Foster City. The service will be presented via [Zoom](#), and all are welcome.

### Place your pi(e) orders now!

The youth of the church are still taking orders for pies [here](#). They're offering a wide variety of pies that can be ordered for delivery (within 10 miles of Belmont) on the date of your choice! Pie flavors include Apple, Cherry, Key Lime, Meyer Lemon, Razzleberry, St. Paddy's Pistachio, Peach, Pear Custard, Pecan or New York-style Cheesecake as well as a gluten-free berry. The kids have decided that the proceeds of the Pi(e) Sale will go to the Covid-19 relief efforts of Puente de la Costa Sur, which works with farmworkers on the San Mateo County coast. Feel free to share this link with friends and family. Orders will be accepted through May.

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