



March 2022 THE MESSENGER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BELMONT

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Worker bees buzzing at CCB!

Cleaning up clutter was a major part of the all-church work day plan, and that included removing the two huge whiteboards that were occupying space in the kitchen hall. They are free to anyone who can take them away. More photos appear on Page 3.



We'll be celebrating our stories during Lent

By Pastor Sally Train

The Book of Deuteronomy instructs the people of Israel to remember their history — not just what happened — but rather to notice how God was present in their stories. To notice how God's hand was there to guide them, lead them, protect them and inspire them. They were instructed to notice what God had done for them and to be grateful.

It is good advice.

When we review our own stories with an eye for the invisible presence of the Divine, we find that presence becomes a little more visible.



Rev. Sally Train

We see traces everywhere – the unexpected blessing, the help when we really needed it, the inspired idea, or the quiet knowing that led us in a certain direction.

In retrospect, we can see more clearly the path that led us to this moment. We realize that God was always beside us, and we trust that God will continue by our side. Remembering strengthens our faith.

The Season of Lent begins on March 6. It is the 40 days leading up to Holy week and Easter.

Many Christians use Lent as a time to engage in some sort of focused

spiritual practice or exercise. This year, as a spiritual practice, I invite you to meditate on your own story. Write it down, if you like. Go through old photo albums and take note of the people who have blessed you, the opportunities that “magically” appeared for you, the challenges you have “somehow” overcome perhaps with strength you did not know you had.

Pay attention to what led you to this church and how you have been fed spiritually. Celebrate your story and your walk with God. Say “thank you” to the Divine.

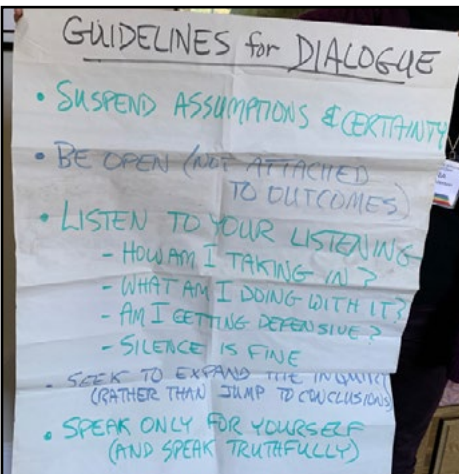
Our theme for Lent is Celebrate Your Story! It will begin with a retelling of our **See STORIES, Page 7**

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



The all-church workday Feb. 26 saw dozens of projects get much needed attention. The pole for the Black Lives Matter flag was reattached and a new Rainbow flag was hung. Two trees (a persimmon and a gingkho) were planted, LED lights and a new dimmer switch in the Sanctuary were installed and lots of e-waste was carted away. Of course, more projects await the next work day, but our worker bees can rest for awhile now.

Looking for a way to Love the Church?



We were cleaning up the hallway between the Dining Room and the Parlor and Maura pulled down a rolled up sheet of paper. It was Paul Anderson's Guidelines for Dialogue written many years ago. The advice still rings true!

Pastor Sally hung large hearts all around the Dining Room for Annual Meeting Feb. 13 for a very specific purpose.

The hearts were labeled with a variety of projects that people had been talking about for the past few months — installing solar panels on the church roof, eliminating medical debt, building a Prayer Box and setting it up next to the Blessings Box outside.

Now everyone at Annual Meeting was invited to write their name on the projects they were moved to work on. By the end of the meeting we had specific goals for the ways that we would Love the Church.

Those projects that didn't get enough names (enough "love") were set aside so CCB could focus its energy on those goals with the most appeal.

Here are the winning Love the Church projects and the team members who signed up to get it moving:

- **Solar Panels:** Mike, Micki, Linda, Andrew, Keith, Danielle, Leslie, Elizabeth N., Steve C.
 - **Prayer Box:** Emma, Garrett, Steve, Linda, Mary Beth, Danielle, Sarah T., Leslie, Elizabeth N.
 - **Sanctuary Master Plan:** Maura, Garrett, Danielle, Andrew, Elizabeth N., Emma, Jane, Leslie
 - **Sport Court in the parking lot:** Steve, Emma, Keith, Linda, Leslie, Maura, Doris
 - **Multicultural Music Festival:** Danielle, Linda, Garrett, Elizabeth M., Andrew, Jane
 - **Diversity Speaker Series:** Garrett, Emma, Jane, Leslie
 - **Eliminating Medical Debt:** Mike, Linda, Micki, Greg, Mary Beth
- Speak to any team member if you'd like to join.

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How did we come to this assault on Ukraine?

The San Mateo Daily Journal asked Micki for an op/ed piece on the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This article was published on March 1.

By Micki Carter

Russian President Vladimir Putin has launched an invasion to pummel Russia's sister republic Ukraine into submission. We are stunned at the depth of Putin's naked aggression — but we shouldn't be surprised.

Putin was plucked from the shadows of the KGB to be president of Russia in 2000 when the Soviet Union wasn't yet cold in its grave. Boris Yeltsin had presided over Russia's first post-Soviet years as an open society and nascent democracy, but his hand-picked successor had other plans for the planet's largest country.

Early on, he described the fall of the Soviet Union as the 20th Century's greatest geopolitical catastrophe. He whipped up a frenzy of hate around Mikhail Gorbachev for surrendering the political and military power of the USSR and boasted that he alone could restore Russia to the heights of power.

Over the past two decades, he's managed to whittle away at everything open and democratic that he inherited and to sculpt a repressive authoritarian Russia in the image of the Soviet Union. The resurrection would be nearly complete — except for the absence of the 14 other Soviet republics which became independent states when the USSR dissolved in 1991. Sovereign states, I might add, most of which don't share Putin's global vision of Russia restored to glory.

So why are those missing republics such a headache to Putin?

Take a close look at a map of the western edge of Russia. All those countries that climb from the Caucasus in the south to the Baltics in the north — Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia — served as a buffer between the USSR and the West (with a capital W). And it was from the West that the greatest political and military threats to Russia have come.

In 1812, it was Napoleon Bonaparte, whose troops actually occupied the city of Moscow. In 1942, it was the Nazis who stormed onto Russian soil only to be stopped at Stalingrad, site of perhaps the bloodiest battle of the Great Patriotic War. (Putin re-



called this moment of Soviet greatness in his invasion speech on Thursday, describing the leaders of Ukraine as “neo-Nazis.”)

The West became the nemesis of every Soviet leader. At the end of World War II, the Iron Curtain cleaved the continent in two and extended the buffer to include the entire Soviet Bloc from Berlin east to Russia itself. Then Gorbachev let it all get away when he let the Berlin Wall fall without a fight. In two short years the USSR was gone as well.

And what of those buffer republics that got away?

Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, the last to be forcibly absorbed into the Soviet Union, scrubbed themselves clean of all the Russification they had had to endure and rushed into the open arms of NATO, the West's military alliance.

Georgia walked a careful path between east and west and still got itself into a bloody encounter with Russia in 2008. Ukraine tapdanced between leaders who did Putin's bidding and those who maintained a strategic distance, but it still suffered the indignity of Russia seizing Crimea eight years ago.

The one outlier has been Belarus with

its thug Alexander Lukashenko wielding a heavy hand in Europe's last autocracy. Lukashenko is snug in bed with Putin, opening Belarus to Russian tanks and missiles for “military exercises.”

At the moment, it seems pretty clear that Putin sees subjugating and swallowing Ukraine, the largest country in Europe, as his path to restoring Soviet glory and re-establishing his buffer to the West. Snatching the Crimea was just to test the waters, to see how much NATO and the U.S. cared. Apparently, not enough.

But this time NATO and the U.S. have forged a remarkably tight coalition to punish Putin for the invasion of Ukraine, but that will offer little solace to the people of Ukraine — most of whom have family members in Russia — who will suffer to satisfy Putin's taste for glory and grandeur.

Those thousands of Russians marching and chanting “No to war!” in Moscow and St. Petersburg testify that Putin may have overplayed his hand this time. Millions more are huddled at home, worrying that they will pay a substantial price in blood and treasure for Putin's folly

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CCB youth support veterans, Guardian Scholars with care kits, Valentine's Day cards

By Linda Howard

This month the youth of our church accomplished two actions in the service of others.

During Covid times, it has been difficult to contribute to social causes other than donating money. Our youth spent time, energy and creativity this month making Valentines and creating Care Kits.

The patients at the Menlo Park Veterans Hospital, where Rev. Thomas Crosby is a chaplain, received the Valentines made by the youth. Splashes of pink, red and white covered the work table as the teens, cut and shaped paper into Valentines.

On Feb. 13, Thomas gathered up the Valentines and delivered them to the veterans.

The students who are part of the Guardian Scholar program at San Francisco State University benefitted from the next efforts of the youth of CCB.

They met on a Saturday afternoon and assembled Care Kits for the students.

Guardian Scholars are SFSU students who have spent some part of their childhood in foster care. Attending college presents more challenges for these students. Receiving the Care Kits, which included hygiene products and some treats, are a small gesture of kindness and care for these students.

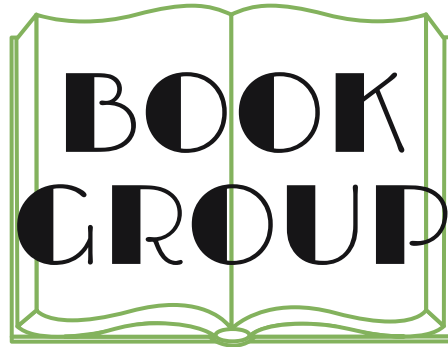
In addition to the Care Kits, the Social Action Board has initiated a Special Offering for the month of February for the Guardian Scholar Program.



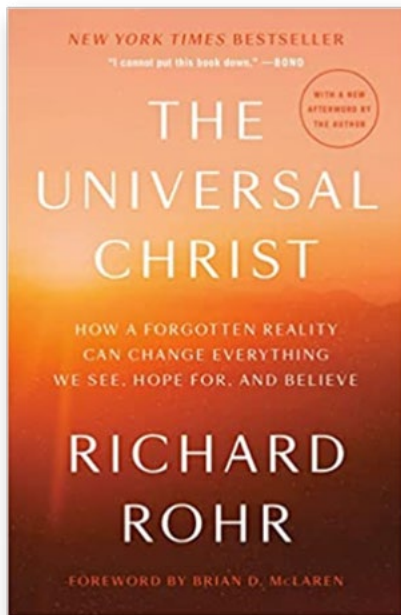
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Peninsula Multifaith Coalition
invites you to our monthly



Tuesday, March 8 • 7-8:30 pm
"The Universal Christ" by Richard Rohr



In March we'll tackle our first officially Christian book with a reading of "The Universal Christ" by Richard Rohr. Christianity has over 800 denominations and many "free" churches with no affiliation so calling a particular book Christian may invite discussion in and of itself. We hope to honor all perspectives as we tackle this particular popular Catholic Franciscan's point of view.

RSVP to revkristi@aol.com
for the Zoom link

CCB Calendar for March 2022

3 Thu	7:30PM - 9PM ☞	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir practice
5 Sat	3:30PM - 5:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	CCB Youth Group on the Veranda
6 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship/Celebrate Your Story
	11:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Coffee Hour
10 Thu	7:30PM - 9PM ☞	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir practice
13 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship/The Inner Sanctuary
	11:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Coffee Hour
	11:30AM - 12PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Pi(e) Day
17 Thu	7:30PM - 9PM ☞	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir practice
19 Sat	3:30PM - 5:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	CCB Youth Group on the Veranda
20 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship/Soul Hunger
	11:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Coffee Hour
24 Thu	7:30PM - 9PM ☞	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir practice
27 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship/Party Invitation
	11:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Coffee Hour
28 Mon	7PM - 9PM ☞	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Council Meeting
31 Thu	7:30PM - 9PM ☞	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir practice

Stories

Continued from Page One

collective story: the Story of the Congregational Church of Belmont with an eye to how God has shaped, led and guided this church through the years and brought us to this moment.

Micki Carter, one of our resident histori-

ans, will relate her understanding of the story and how it prepares us to live into the vision we have clarified for our future.

In the weeks that follow, members of our church will “celebrate their story” by sharing it with us.

Every Sunday during Lent, one person will briefly tell us about their faith journey – their walk with God.

Hearing these stories may help us know our companions at a deeper level and recognize the presence of the Divine in our own lives and in our community.

I predict that it will be a rich and meaningful time in our worship life.

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Do you recognize any of these women who were modeling clothes Koret donated to the Rummage Sale in the late 1980s? They are Bette Anderson, Joan Peceimer, Laurie Carter, Carolyn Brandenburg, Micki Carter, Jessie Lawson, Ella Mae Donovan and Doris Brown. Now that was a fashion show!

April Messenger deadline will be Monday, March 28



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