



October 2022

THE MESSENGER

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BELMONT

751 Alameda de las Pulgas, Belmont CA 94002 • 650-593-4547 • CCB@ccbelfont.org • www.CCBelfont.org



CCB has surpassed its fundraising goal for RIP Medical Debt! Thanks to generous donations from the CCB community and a very successful yard sale in August, \$500,000 of medical debt will be erased. More on Page 4.

Trains of Thought

Exciting things in store for October

By Pastor Sally Train

Change is in the air!
Change of weather patterns.
Change of foliage color.
Change in the church.

While change can be exciting, it is good to know that some things never change: the love, acceptance, and welcome we find at CCB. It is a priceless gift. One worth sharing.

Our worship plans for October include a number of unique opportunities to deepen our faith, act on our convictions, and learn something new. They are also unique opportunities to invite your friends and neighbors.

Oct. 2: We will break bread with Chris-



Rev. Sally Train

Neighbors in Need.

Oct. 9: **Blessing of the Animals!** Invite your friends with pets! We will bless all the animals who come in person or via a photograph. We will remember with gratitude

tians all over the earth as we celebrate **World Communion Sunday**. We will acknowledge that our welfare is bound up with the welfare of all others. We will put that knowledge into practice through our Special Offering to

our animal saints who entered eternal life in the last year. (Bring a picture if you like.)

I will share some charming stories about St. Francis and his special ability to communicate with animals.

Oct. 16: **The Attitude is Gratitude!** We have so much to be grateful for, starting with our church family. When we stop to notice all the blessings in our life, our hearts fill with joy and we are changed. Gratitude is transformative.

Oct. 23: Guest Speaker: **Pascal Kaplan** of Sufism Reoriented. You have heard me say that, in the future, there may not be churches, temples, or synagogues. Instead, **See Trains of Thought, Page 3**

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

Leader of Sufism Reoriented will speak at CCB on Oct. 23

By Pastor Sally Train

Pascal Kaplan will join us as a guest speaker on Sunday, Oct. 23. He is a member of the senior staff of Sufism Reoriented, a non-sectarian spiritual school specifically designed for Americans who find themselves preoccupied by an inner yearning to deepen their connection with and love for God.

His wide-ranging path in this life has included earning a doctorate in Christian Theology from Harvard University, co-founding the country's first accredited undergraduate and graduate programs in the Study of Consciousness, and developing pioneering software for online learning and virtual conferences — all the while balancing family life, serving on the boards of several non-profit organizations, and actively participating in Meher Baba's American Sufism Reoriented for 50 years.

In joining us, Pascal will share what he deems to be of value in what he has learned — and begun to unlearn — through all these varied experiences.

Sufism Reoriented is a non-denominational American school of spirituality, whose prayer for creation is summarized in these words:

May the light of His silence break in every heart.

Let there be peace and love among all beings in the universe.

Its central activity is ceaseless selfless service to all in the one human family.

Founded in 1952 by Avatar Meher Baba of India, Sufism Reoriented is not affiliated with any particular Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu religious community. Its members respect, study, and honor all faiths and seek to live the eternal truth that enlivens humanity's most elevated spiritual traditions, east and west, ancient and modern: that all are One.

“Guided by a spiritual Teacher whom we call Murshida when she is a woman or Murshid when he is a man, the current murshida is Dr. Carol Weyland Conner. Her role is to guide her students, individually and as members of a spiritual community, to recognize and unfold the deepest knowing

within themselves to enable them to serve others selflessly.”



Pascal Kaplan

Trains of Thought Continued from Page One

there may be Spiritual Centers where the eternal truths of all the great religions are studied and practiced. *Sufism Reoriented* is such a center. This is a unique opportunity to learn about their approach for nurturing spiritual growth in the 21st century.

Oct. 30: **All Saints Sunday.** We will celebrate the saints — those who are still living and those who have passed on — who nurtured or influenced our faith. If you wish, bring a picture or memento of someone who was an important teacher or guide for you on your spiritual journey. You will have an opportunity to share something you learned from that person and honor their contribution.

Please send Lea (our office administrator) pictures of loved ones who entered eternal life in the last 12 months. We will project the pictures, with names under them, onto the screen and observe a moment of silence. You may also light a candle in memory of a loved one and share a few words about them.

Learn More And Take Action

Did you know that you have to **re-register to vote if you have moved?**

WHY YOU NEED TO ACT

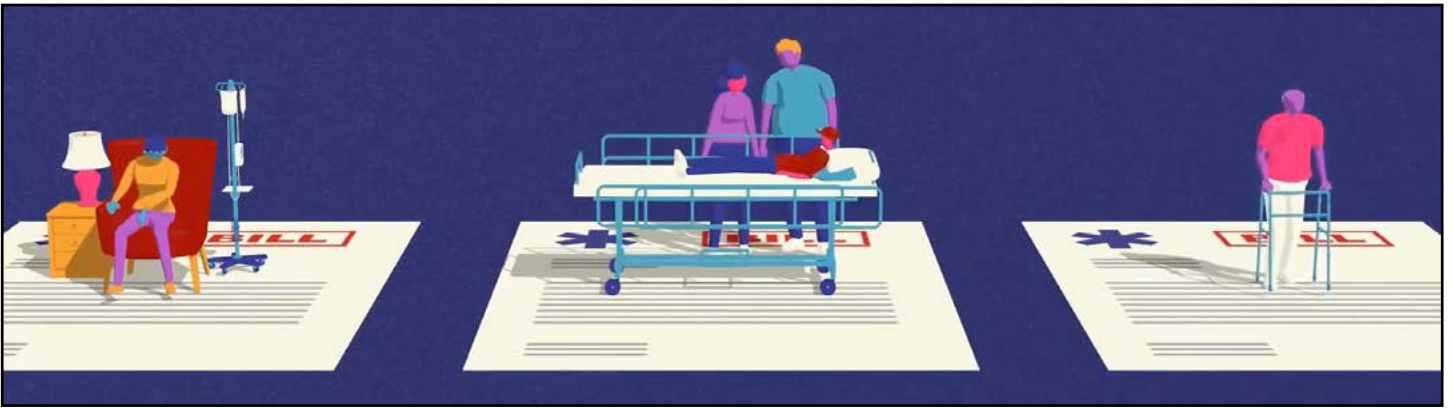
This is an important election. Every single congressional district in California will be on the ballot. Voter turnout matters.

TAKE ACTION!
Register or Re-Register by **Monday, October 24th.**

GOTV
Get Out The Vote

AAUW
of California

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



CCB exceeds its \$5,000 fundraising goal toward erasing medical debt

By Micki Carter

We did it! CCB has met — and exceeded — its goal of \$5,000 for our Medical Debt Relief Fund!

Thanks to the Yard Sale in August, donations in memory of Barbara Todd, member donations and an anonymous gift that matched what we raised at the Yard Sale, our MDR Fund now stands at \$6,800.

By means of the account we are opening with RIP Medical Debt Relief, a national non-profit that buys and then erases medical debt, our \$6,800 will eliminate \$680,000 of medical debt for people burdened by medical debt they cannot pay.

Our denomination, the United Church of Christ, has teamed up with RIP Medical Debt Relief for dozens of different campaigns to abolish medical debt — for pennies on the dollar — for tens of thousands of

people who were overwhelmed with medical debt since the 2019 General Synod.

In each case, the buys met specific criteria: qualifying debtors were those earning less than two times the federal poverty level; in financial hardship, with out-of-pocket expenses that are 5 percent or more of their annual income; or facing insolvency, with debts greater than assets.

Each person whose debt is erased with our donation gets a letter from RIP explaining that they are now free of their medical debts, thanks to a gift from the Congregational Church of Belmont.

Here's a [link](#) to a video which explains how RIP Medical Debt Relief works.

So what happens next?

As soon as our check for \$6,800 is received by RIP, our account will be opened, and our funds will begin to be distributed.

We have asked to receive copies of some of the letters to people who are cleared of their debt by our donations just for the thrill of reading them.

But we don't have to stop at \$6,800! Our RIP account will remain open, and we can send additional donations

at any time. For every dollar we send, \$100 in medical debt will be eliminated.

Personally, I like the sound of CCB erasing \$1 million in medical debt! We can do that by boosting our contribution to \$10,000. That's just another \$3,200!

I'm in! Are you?

Some quotes from people helped by RIP Medical Debt

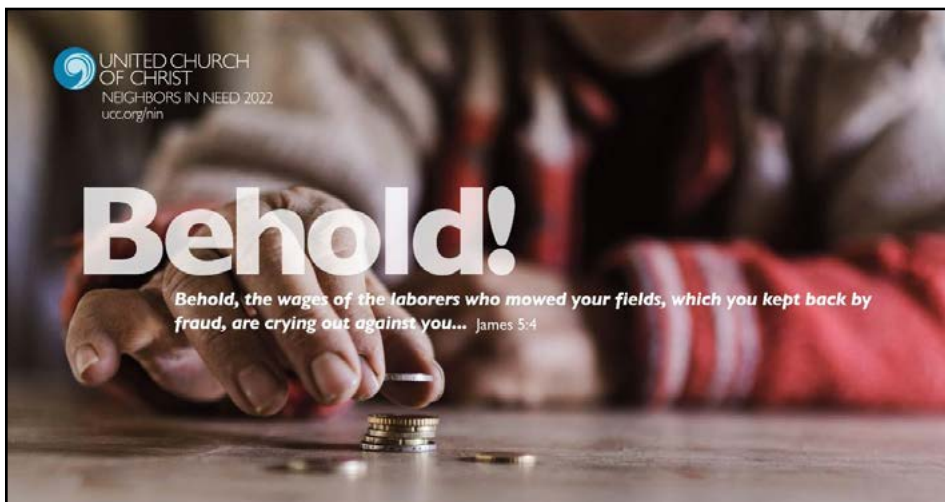
"Is this for real?!!! \$12,140.45 paid off in full?!!! How did you find me? I didn't even know you existed. Things this great do NOT happen for me. ... I never believed that people I don't even know ever do something like this. THANK YOU!"

"Times were pretty tough for me when this medical bill occurred. I was self-employed and all my money went into my business. I was without medical insurance as, at the time, the cost was just too high. ... I want to thank you for the help. Seeing that people are willing to help others they don't even know makes me feel like better days are ahead for everyone."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you, ever so much for abolishing this debt. I'm so very grateful. Many blessings to you."



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



Helping Neighbors in Need

By Linda Howard

Who is our neighbor? Who is our family? These are the questions that we as a church ask as we decide where to place our financial resources. During October, one of our congregation's Special Offerings is dedicated to Neighbors in Need.

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry. Two thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants address systemic injustice by funding projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing.

NIN funds are used to develop social justice resources such as webinars, Bible studies, curriculums and advocacy tools within the areas of environmental, racial, economic, and immigration justice.

An example of some of the projects NIN has supported are: A donation of \$10,000 to Hope Station which is a sanctuary offering immigrants refuge on the Mexican side of the border for people who find themselves deported from the U.S. Hope Station is a place where people who are deported can find a meal, safe lodging and assistance.

Another example of NIN involvement in

social justice causes is the design and construction of tiny houses in South Carolina for individuals in the LGBTQ community who no longer feel welcome at home. A grant of \$10,000 was donated to this cause through NIN.

On average, the NIN offering collects around a million dollars with one third going to the Council for American Indian Ministry. At present NIN uses 100% of the funds raised to fund mission projects and programs. The decision on where the funds go is determined through resolutions that have been passed at General Synod.

So, once again as we ask the question, "Who is our neighbor? It is people we may never meet, but we are connected through our humanity.

Donations for NIN can be made through CCB.

Scan the QR code below or go to [CCBelmont.org](https://www.ucc.org/neighbors-in-need-special-mission-offering/) and click the link in the sidebar to be taken to our Square donation page. Please add Neighbors in Need to the memo for your donation. You can also make a donation directly through the UCC by going to <https://www.ucc.org/neighbors-in-need-special-mission-offering/>



Pastoral search is narrowed down to three candidates

The Pastoral Search Committee has interviewed five candidates and narrowed the search to three, according to a report to the September Church Council meeting.

The committee includes Greg Thornhill, Garrett House, Danielle Chamberlin and Elizabeth Nordt. Steve Chamberlin and Elizabeth Mye have agreed to conduct the next round of interviews.

The committee hopes to have one or at most two candidates to recommend to the Church Council by the end of November.

After a final candidate is determined, that person will meet with various groups of people at CCB and will be invited to preach a candidating sermon on a Sunday at the church. At a congregational meeting after worship, the congregation will vote on issuing a call to the candidate.

The search committee has also had an exploratory meeting with College Heights UCC in San Mateo which has proposed that CCB and College Heights share a full-time pastor between the two congregations. More information on this proposal will be forthcoming.

Save the Date!
Harvest Dinner
is returning
in person on
Nov. 19. We've
invited other
UCC churches
to join us!

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

Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, Oct. 9, at 10:30 a.m.



Congregational Church of Belmont

751 Alameda de las Pulgas, Belmont

Bring the animal companions in your life — furry, feathered or scaly — and join us in the Sanctuary for a lively worship service.

In the spirit of St. Francis, each animal will receive an individual blessing, a prayer for its family, and a treat. If you cannot bring your beloved animal, bring a picture!

We ask that your pet be on a leash or in a carrier or cage.

We look forward to seeing you and your animal friends.



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

CCB's Safe Church Policy no longer enough under new California laws

By Mike Venturino
and Lea Mavroudis

The State of California has recently taken a big step to address child abuse and neglect in California. The legislature recently passed a bill titled: "Youth service organizations: child abuse and neglect prevention." The shorthand title is Assembly Bill 506, or AB-506. Governor Newsom signed it, and it is now law.

Some background: This law augments laws already on the books that were enacted as early as 1963. In general, the laws define child abuse and identify persons employed by relevant organizations and government agencies who are mandated to report evidence of child abuse.

Depending on which website one checks, there are about 40 positions identified as mandated reporters. A mandated reporter is required by law to report to the authorities if they have any knowledge or suspicion of child abuse or neglect. Clergy are one of the defined positions, as are administrators, employees, and regular volunteers of youth organizations. Since churches often minister to young people, they fall under the definition of "youth organizations."

What's new here? How does this affect the Congregational Church of Belmont? Isn't our Safe Church Policy still valid?

This is what we've learned:

Under the new law, all administrators, employees, and volunteers for a "youth service organization" must undergo a LiveScan background check and take a mandated reporter training course on identifying and reporting child abuse. This must be done even if the individual doesn't work directly with children.

Administrators are defined as "anyone who runs the church or any of its departments, boards or ministries." This means that Council members, Trustees, and other Board members could fall under both the administrative and regular volunteer roles. Therefore, all of CCB's Board members should get the background check and take the training.

Members of our community who volunteer regularly but are not on a Board or Committee should also take the training and get the background check. The church must enforce this in order to comply with state law, keep our insurance, and most importantly, keep our young people safe.

If we are to have a children's program, offer child care or any other youth activity, we must comply with the requirements of the new law. The applicable training is offered online for free. It takes about two hours. CCB will send a message out with the LiveScan form and a link to the online training within the next few days.

The law also specifies that all youth activities must be supervised by two screened and trained adults. Youth under 18 cannot be background checked and can't be reporters of any kind. CCB could still employ them in a child care role but would still need two trained adults with them to be able to legally provide the care. In our current circumstance, this might result in more workers than children. The church's ability to employ youth in other roles has not changed.

We have registered with the California Department of Justice in order to complete the LiveScan background checks. These can be done at a number of locations in the area. A complete list can be found [here](#), but the most convenient for the majority of CCB members would likely be the UPS Store on Old County Road in Belmont. They accept



walk-ins or you can make an appointment to complete your LiveScan.

The process is very quick and should take less than five minutes. CCB will reimburse any fees paid to the store, so remember to keep your receipt! But the majority of fees should be billed directly to CCB using the billing code on the LiveScan paperwork.

If you have any questions or concerns about these new policies, please email Lea at office@ccbelmont.org. She has attended several seminars on this topic on behalf of the church and has been responsible for setting the process in motion to bring CCB into compliance with the new laws.

CCB considers ministry to families and children a core part of its mission. The recent changes to state law add a challenge to the practical accomplishment of that mission. One thing seems clear: the more of us that are trained and background checked, the greater flexibility the church will have in offering programs and activities for children and youth.

Will you help?

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

**13TH ANNUAL NORTH PENINSULA INTERFAITH
CHORAL CONCERT**

*I will Trust
in the Lord*

IN BENEFIT OF LIFEMOVES

**OCTOBER 16, 2022
5:00 PM**

**ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
OF BURLINGAME
415 EL CAMINO REAL, BURLINGAME**

PARTICIPATING CHOIRS FROM:

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SAN MATEO, UCC
THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BURLINGAME
ST PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, BURLINGAME
ST CATHERINE OF SIENA CATHOLIC CHURCH, BURLINGAME

NO ADMISSION FEE / SUGGESTED DONATION AT THE DOOR
RECEPTION TO FOLLOW WITH REFRESHMENTS

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

CCB Calendar for October 2022

2 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	Sunday worship/communion with Pastor Sally Train: Make Yourself at Home
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour
6 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
9 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	Sunday worship with Pastor Sally Train: Blessing of the Animals
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour
13 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
16 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	Children's Sabbath
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour
20 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
23 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	Sunday worship with guest speaker: Pascal Kaplan of Sufism Reoriented
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour
27 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
30 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	All Saints Day worship with Pastor Sally Train: Spiritual Mentors
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour

November Messenger deadline will be Oct. 27.



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