



January 2023

THE MESSENGER

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BELMONT

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Pastor Sally served as Angel-in-Chief, corraling her angels in the loft during the Pickup Pageant on Dec. 18. See Pages 6 and 7 for more photos.

Trains of Thought

Pastor Sally offers CCB a blessed farewell

By Pastor Sally Train

I truly believe 2023 will be a happy new year for CCB. You have so much to celebrate! A new minister, new ministries, new partnerships, new people, new children, and a new coffee machine! All of this supported by the faithful love and diligence of the folks who show up every week and do what needs to be done. The friendships run deep.



Rev. Sally Train

A caring presence enfolds all who walk through the door. Some people come for a reason, some for a season, some for a life-

time. But all receive the grace of a warm welcome and a place at the table.

I once read that small churches are the right size to do God's work. I believe it is true. It is in a small church that true community is built. It is in a small church that people come to know each other in a real way and experience the miracle of being loved as they are.

It is in a small church that people can experience acceptance and forgiveness as they bump against each other, make mistakes, and show up the next Sunday ready to praise God together and begin again. It is in environments such as this that people can change and grow into their best selves.

I have said many times that as an Interim Minister I am like Mary Poppins. I come when I am needed, and I leave when

CCB to sponsor Scouting troop after Council vote

By Elizabeth Nordt

CCB starts another new chapter by taking over the role of Charter Organization for BSA (Boy Scouts of America) Scout Pack, Crew, and Troops 27/4027.

Sitting in my usual pew on Nov. 13, I heard Pastor Jim preach and Inkang Kim's Peninsula Senior Band play. New energy and possibilities filled the sanctuary, and I felt a call.

A month or two before, I'd heard that my son's troop needed a new home and brought the opportunity to a PMC liaison meeting thinking perhaps one of the 30 other faith houses represented might help.

I didn't even consider CCB. We seemed small and Cathedral da Familia was renting the space on Tuesdays when the troop met.

See SCOUTS, Page 4

my work is done. The work we have done together for the last 17 months has been delightful, productive, and sometimes profound.

We have touched each other's souls and all of us are forever changed – perhaps a little or perhaps a lot. I feel blessed to have spent this time getting to know you and learning to love you all. Thank you for letting me into your lives, and into your hearts.

I bid you farewell with a bit of sadness but a lot of joy, knowing that your future is bright. CCB is indeed a safe place for spiritual growth – a place where the song of the soul rings out in harmony – with each voice bringing its unique sound.

I will miss you. But I will forever cherish the memories and friendships. May God bless you all.

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

Moderator's Report

Taking a human look at where CCB is headed

As we say goodbye to another year and welcome in a new one, we at our progressive Christian church are filled with hope and excitement for all that is to come.

Over the past year, we have seen firsthand the power of coming together as a community to support one another; to lift each other up, and to work towards a more just and loving world. We have also seen the challenges that come with living out our faith in a world that is often divided and divisive.

As we enter into the new year, we remain committed to living out our faith in a way that is inclusive, compassionate, and justice-seeking....

By Danielle Chamberlin

The New Year's note above could be written for any new year for any progressive Christian church like our own. However, it is really a product of December 2022, as it was written by an artificial intelligence (AI) called ChatGPT which can write a response to just about any prompt – in this case “write a new year’s newsletter article for a progressive Christian church.” (In a moment of irony, to use ChatGPT I had to prove to it that I personally was “not a bot” by clicking on pictures of fire hydrants).

ChatGPT is based on something called “supervised machine learning” which basically means that when I tell it to write my Messenger article, it scours the internet for other new year’s newsletters from progressive Christian churches and then writes something that looks similar. In other words, if the letter above is accurate, we would just be doing what all the other churches are doing.

As we move into our next phase of growth, CCB wants to fulfill our community’s spiritual needs in unique ways that tap unmet needs. So let me tell you a little bit about what’s coming that might be outside the generic text of the note above.

Starting again...

As we say goodbye to another year and welcome in a new one, we at CCB are filled with hope and excitement for all that is to come, along with some goodbyes which are the inevitable part of change. As you



Pastor Sally cuts her goodbye cake.

probably know, New Year’s Day was Pastor Sally Train’s last day serving as bridge interim minister at CCB. She has given us many blessings over the past year and a half of ministry. (See my December Messenger article for more details!) We wish her good luck in retirement and thank her profusely for all she has given us.

Feb. 6 will be Rev. Jim Mitulski’s first Sunday with us as settled pastor. He is really looking forward to escaping the Duluth winter and becoming part of our church family, and we are excited to have him join us to lead us in our next phase. As he told me, “We’re going to have some fun!” His experience in church transformation, church growth, real estate management, fundraising, along with his fantastic preaching and strongly progressive theology make him a fantastic fit for our church. And he sings and loves all types of music!

In the interim, we will have some guest preachers in January. On Jan. 8 and 29, Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg, a close colleague of Rev. Jim, will guest preach. On Jan. 15 Rev. Thomas Crosby will offer the sermon, and on Jan. 22, Garrett House will preach. January will bring us a nice variety of voices and perspectives.

Even in this time of change, the ministries of CCB are still working hard and finding new ways to serve our community. In December our Council approved a move to “adopt” BSA Pack 27 and provide a home for this Scout troop. In exchange for giving a place on Tuesday nights for pack meetings, the troop will be “an extension of our mission” and be available to collaborate

on mission/social action projects as well as general upkeep of our aging building. They are already planning a work day in April! This is a godsend to us as it allows us to keep our building in good shape for our own ministries and others. Please see Elizabeth Nordt’s article for more details.

Lea’s article on the Narathon events over the holidays shows some of the other important mission work our building does to provide safe spaces for people in our community.

Within our community, we have been restarting and re-energizing our children’s program. We have been blessed to have a Sunday School program through December and are excited to have younger children back as a regular part of our congregation. This does come with a requirement to have teachers and volunteers to support the Sunday School program. If you would be willing to volunteer occasionally as a Sunday School teacher or assistant, please let me know so we can sustain this important part of our mission to support children and families.

We do have many other exciting events and activities planned for the new year, including retreats, mission trips, and community service projects. In particular, we will once again be supporting the Peninsula Multifaith Coalition’s Martin Luther King Day of Service on Jan. 16. The day starts with a big multifaith breakfast followed by splitting up into service projects. We typically finish before lunch. You are invited to sign up for a project here – don’t forget to [register](#) before Jan. 8. We are also collecting new and gently used children’s books to donate to local schools or the Children’s Book Project.

There is an old children’s rhyme that goes:

*Here is the church; here is the steeple
open the doors and see all the people!*

This verse reminds us that the humans are really what make a church, not generic programs and rituals which can be generated by a “bot.” As we move into the new AI-powered year of 2023, let us remember that our church is a space for humans to explore what it means to be human and in connection with one another. Even if we sometimes let robots do the vacuuming.

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



The Scouts of the troop that will be joining the CCB family as the church serves as their official sponsor.

Scouts

Continued from Page One

But within a month, CDF found a new home, we called a new pastor, and the Scouts still needed help. A path had emerged.

Founded in 1951 by the Hillsdale United Methodist Church (HUMC), this family of Scout units needed a new sponsor. The national United Methodist Church ended its relationship with BSA in 2022, as part of a settlement regarding decades-old — yet forever devastating — abuse that occurred across the country. It left local Methodist churches, like HUMC, no choice to continue.

I'd spent four years as a Den leader in Cub Pack 27 and knew firsthand how the relationship between HUMC and Scouts was mutually beneficial. Although shorter than Bob and Ella Mae's marriage, 71 years is still a long relationship and neither side had wanted it to end."

A call can lead to a whirlwind. After many quick conversations and a discussion with Trustees, I brought Alan Northrup, the Committee Chair in charge of the units, to

speak to Council. After doing homework and verifying details like insurance, Council voted for CCB to become their new Charter Organization.

The charter must be renewed each year, so we have the opportunity to make sure the relationship is working. By stepping up, CCB continues the positive legacy of the Troop 27 units and inherits a well-organized group with established leadership, including former CPNS board members who know us and appreciate our building.

BSA has evolved in many ways and now stands at the forefront of Youth Protection and inclusion. As of 2019, there are girls, boys and transgender youth in the programs. (This troop had girls in the inaugural class earn the rank of Eagle!)

All leaders and adults who work with youth are required to be trained, fingerprinted and background checked, meeting and exceeding the requirements of California's new AB506.

The United Church of Christ signed a Memorandum of Understanding with BSA in 2015, and now more than 1,000 units are chartered to UCC congregations. We are

joining together mission-aligned groups who respect all the banners we display.

Our little church on the hill used to be the Charter Organization for a Sea Scout Crew, so this is not completely new to those of you who have been at CCB longer than I. We are tiptoeing forward, learning how we can best serve each other's needs — where we bring new energy and make more energy. (They have plenty of energy!)

For now, Scouts will meet on Tuesday nights and other occasional times arranged with Lea and Trustees when the church is not otherwise used/rented. Scouts will have a Church Work Day for us in April doing service projects to take care of our building and property. Church members are more than welcome to join and get to know our Scouts.

I've heard stories of the positive influence of Scouting from many of our members.

I've volunteered to be the Charter Organization Representative for the coming year as we navigate this new relationship. Please let me know if you have questions or would like to get involved!



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Ministries of Care offer each of us chances to be God's church

By Micki Carter

Each year CCB invites us all to join a Ministry of Care team that dedicates itself to sharing some of the responsibilities of caring for the members of our congregation.

Here are the six Ministries of Care (with a brief description of each).

Writing team — Sending cards and writing letters to express our concerns, our joys, our prayers and our support for members of our community. Carol Patterson and Ella Mae Donovan have been serving on this team for years and years.

Transportation team — Some of us need rides to church, to doctors appointments, or to the store. Henry Altorfer has been carrying this load primarily alone. He could use some teammates.

Food team — Sometimes an individual or family is going through a crisis that makes handling the basics of cooking for oneself or one's family very hard. We have several regular team members that we can tap when the need arises, but we can always use more to share the load. We could also use one member to serve as the captain to organize the team when needed.

Home/Hospital Visitor — All of us will at one time or another be drawn to connect with our members and friends in time of need through home or hospital visits.

Altar Guild — Provide altar flowers one Sunday a month, help decorate the altar for special Sundays, change paraments (altar cloths) and banners.

Prayer Chain — Anyone can send an email to Prayer.Chain@CCBelmont.org requesting prayers and it will go to members of the Prayer Chain who pray. We can't have too many.

Please drop a note in the collection plate or email mickicatr@gmail.com or office@ccbmont.org or catch us at church to tell us what team you would like to be part of. These teams are the glue that holds our caring community together.



Bob holds up his phone so Ella Mae could hear the carolers.

Carolers cheer the homebound

Perhaps the biggest group of carolers in a very long time spent the evening of Dec. 18 singing Christmas carols to Gary Brandenburg, Bob and Ella Mae Donovan and Maureen Gallaty. They also made a stop at The Elms Assisted Living in San Carlos (where they didn't want us to leave!) and a ward at San Mateo Medical Center, where Sarah Thornhill works as an occupational therapist and Carol Patterson was a nurse for years. The evening ended with pizza and cookies back at CCB!



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**Pickup Pageant
enthalls us all!**



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Adults and children alike donned costumes, sang songs, and used props to tell the story of the birth of Jesus.



Family Sharing program delivers Christmas

By Linda Howard

For two families in San Mateo, Christmas was a little merrier thanks to the generous gift giving of Congregational Church of Belmont.

A variety of toys, warm clothes and Safeway gift cards delivered before Christmas added to the celebration in these families' homes. Altogether our congregation shopped, wrapped and delivered approximately 20-25 presents.

The Family Sharing program for donors begins at the end of October by registering with the Samaritan House. In mid-November the names of the families are received. Volunteers contact the families and interview one of the parents to determine each family member's wishes for Christmas.

Parents often ask for things they need such as warm clothing. Presents of clothing and gift cards along with toys for the children were part of the bounty of presents.

Yes, the families are fortunate to live in a community where there is an organization such as the Samaritan House whose volunteers organize gift giving for hundreds of families. At the same time, our church is fortunate to be able to support our neighbors in need by volunteering to sponsor families.

On the day of delivery, as the parents and children greet the car, the expression on the children's faces are priceless as the gifts are lifted out of the car and presented to the family.



**Annual Meeting is coming up in February.
Annual reports from CCB officers
and board chairs are due on Jan. 21.
Send reports to Office@CCBelmont.org.**

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

We're collecting new and gently used CHILDREN'S BOOKS



The books (for children from 0-18) will be distributed to local schools or the Children's Book Project.

Please leave books you wish to donate in the cupboard in the Parlor near the door to the kitchen or in the Fireplace Room in the marked boxes. Or on the front porch if they are protected from the rain.

Please don't leave textbooks, encyclopedias, magazines, religious books or books that are moldy, smelly, dirty or torn.

This is part of a Martin Luther King Jr. service project of the Peninsula Multifaith Coalition. We will deliver them on Jan. 16.

THANK YOU!



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CCB opens doors to Narathon again this year

By Lea Mavroudis

During the 2022 holiday season, CCB once again opened its doors to the Peninsula branch of Narcotics Anonymous to host their annual Narathon events surrounding each holiday.

As many of you know, CCB has provided a venue for weekly NA meetings for many years now, and we were happy to once again offer some extra support during the holidays.

For those who struggle with addiction, the holiday season can be an extremely difficult time. NA's Narathon events provide a safe, warm and welcoming place for those with nowhere else to go, or for those who just need extra support and companionship.

This year, the Narathon committee was able to provide open doors and 'round the clock support for the 48 hours surrounding the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years holidays.

They reported that they are proud to host the largest and longest Narathons in the Bay Area and are very grateful to CCB for providing a venue. This year, they hosted more than 100 people for each event.

Besides offering support and camaraderie, the events also boasted full Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners and for New Years, a dance party! NA's many dedicated volunteers put their all into these events to create a fun and fulfilling place for people to spend their holidays.

Meetings with speakers on various topics were also held around the clock during each event. "Topics included recovery, hope, loss, grief, relationships, gratitude, and sharing everything that makes us equal no matter where we come from," reported one of the committee leaders.

They spoke about "our feelings (good and bad), the holidays, family, and gratitude for each other."

CCB values our relationship with NA and hopes to keep providing support for many years to come. Helping those in need is a very important part of our ministries, and we hope that we can continue finding new ways to provide aid to people (and organizations) that need it.

Here are some other quotes from people that attended NA's holiday events this year:

"This was exactly what I needed."

"I'm so grateful to have a safe warm



place to spend the holidays."

"I look forward to these Narathons every year."

"The building felt safe and clean and

was very comfortable with a lot of people. People from all over California came by to show support and have fun."

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Peninsula
Multifaith
Coalition's
11th Annual

MLK Jr. Multifaith Day of Service



Monday
January 16,
2023



Register by January 8
<https://pmcmlk2023.eventbrite.com>

Please join us for this unique opportunity to work side by side with people of other faiths and cultures to benefit our local community.

BOOK DRIVE AND CARE KITS — We are collecting children's books and toiletries, please see registration page for details.

Bringing together our diverse faith communities to build bridges of understanding and respect.

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Silicon Valley • Baha'i Faith of 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 • Good Shepherd Lutheran Church • Hillsdale United Methodist Church • Holy Trinity Lutheran Church • Island United Church • Jewish Community Relations Council • Pacifica Institute • Peninsula Jewish Community Center • Peninsula Sinai Congregation • Peninsula Temple Beth El • Peninsula Temple Shalom • St. Andrews Lutheran Church • St. Matthias Catholic Church • Saint Bartholomew Parish • Saint Paul's Episcopal Church • Sanatan Mandir • Shinnyo-en USA • Sikh Gurdwara, SSF • Sisters of Mercy • St. James A.M.E. Zion Church • Trinity Baptist Church • Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Redwood City

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CCB Calendar for January 2023

Date	Time	Church Function	
January 2023			
1 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	Pastor Sally's last Sunday with CCB
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour
5 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
8 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	Sunday worship with Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour
12 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
15 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	Sunday worship With Rev. Thomas Crosby
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour
19 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
22 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	Sunday worship with Garrett House preaching
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour
26 Thu	7:30PM - 9:00PM	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
29 Sun	9AM - 10:30AM	Church Events	Worship Preparation
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	Worship	Sunday worship with Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg
	11:30AM - 1:00PM	Church Events	Coffee Hour

February Messenger deadline will be Monday, Jan. 23.



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