

January 2024 CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF THE PENINSULA ESSENCER

751 Alameda de las Pulgas, Belmont CA 94002 • 650-593-4547 • office@ccpeninsula.org • www.ccpeninsula.org



Two dozen carolers from CCP brought Christmas cheer to the residents of Ivy Park (pictured here), Carlmont Gardens and Lesley Terrace on the evening of Dec. 17. The caroling ended with a pizza party at the home of Bob Donovan where we sang carols to Pastor Kristi Denham and longtime member Belinda Sims, via FaceTime. Lisa, the resident services coordinator at Lesley Terrace, sent the following message: "I wanted to thank you for scheduling your carolers to sing at our facility. Your carolers brought joy and lifted our residents' spirits. We've had a few tough years here, and their presence made a huge difference." More caroling photos appear on Page 11.

CCP's first Annual Meeting set for Jan. 28

By Micki Carter

For the first time ever, as the Congregational Church of the Peninsula, members and friends will gather for the church's Annual Meeting after worship Sunday, Jan. 28, in the Dining Room.

After a potluck lunch, Moderator Danielle Chamberlin will call the meeting to order. By that time, all members will have received copies of the agenda, proposed budget and annual reports for the past year and will be prepared to act on the business of the church.

The meeting will be hybrid, which will allow members to join on Zoom if they are unable to attend in person.

The agenda is still a work in progress, but our bylaws require that every voting member have it in hand one week before the meeting. Please take the time to read the reports and look over the agenda and proposed budget ahead of time.

The major work of the Annual Meeting will be the first proposed budget of CCP. Since the merger at the end of June, the church has been operating with the 2023 budget of the Congregational Church of Belmont. This year the Trustees will propose a budget for the merged church, and it's likely to be quite different from previous CCB budgets. The Trustees will bring the proposed budget to the Jan. 3 Church Council meeting for approval for moving it to the Annual Meeting for consideration.

We will not be voting on an entire set of new bylaws at this time. We hope to form a committee to take on this task at the meeting. But we will be voting on an amendment to the church's Articles of Incorporation. This will require a two-thirds vote of the members

See ANNUAL MEETING, Page 4

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

Wonderings from Pastor Warren

By Rev. Warren Dale

This was the first Christmas Day that we did not have family over for our usual Christmas Brunch. I imagine there are many

of you who know that feeling. Our family or our friends have created a new tradition: Some have people working (yes, working Christmas day!); some who moved away whereby the travel distance is just too great, and others have passed to the next chapter of eternity.

Well, I wondered what thoughts occurred for you as you got closer to Christmas. Georgi and had a con-

versation. We wanted to still make it special for ourselves. So, I made omelets, and we planned to bake our traditional croissants, have a special afternoon meal celebrating Christmas, and finish up with watching *Mr. Krueger's Christmas*.



Rev. Warren Dale

At our afternoon meal consisting of my world-famous macaroni salad, grilled lemon asparagus, and Greek grilled chicken, we lit a candle for our son sharing heaven with

> his animal friends. And we prayed for our community, our nation, and our world, asking for joy in this weary time.

> This all reminded us of others whose community are the single rooms of their apartments, the now emptier homes that they used to share with loved ones, or

the tents now scattered from their previous spot in our community. I also thought of my gratefulness for those places that offer community meals for all. This includes the bags of groceries for those who will share the holiday with family and friends. It also includes those kitchens who will serve to others in their community spaces (the Salvation Army, St. Anthony's Kitchen, and yes, the Cask Restaurant in San Carlos).

I also thought of those noticing the empty plate setting at their tables. A place where their spouse, partner, friend, or family member used to sit, but for the first time this year is not there in person. It reminds me of how special our church community is in providing ways of celebrating: The Good Hope Luncheon, The Harvest/Thanksgiving Dinner, the Christmas pageant, and the Christmas Eve Service.

So, my friends, as I wander through my wonderings, I wish that your memories of friends and loved ones renew your faith in the blessings of God that change as we change, but are ever renewing in their gifts.

Blessings to you, The Rev. Warren

Upcoming worship themes

January – Epiphany: Season of Light

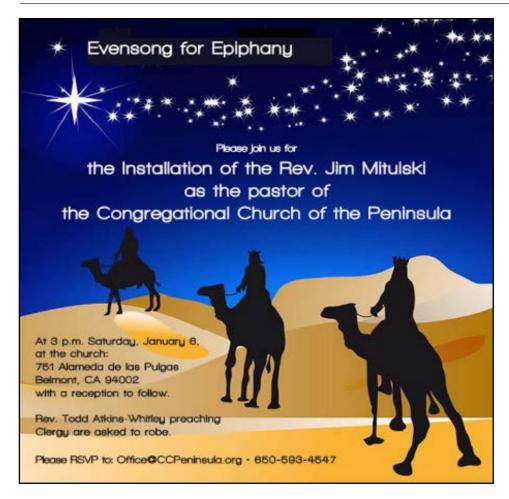
- Jan. 6, 2024: Evensong for Epiphany and the installation of Rev. Jim Mitulksi as pastor. Rev. Todd Atkins-Whitley from Danville Congregational Church UCC, preacher, and Rev. Barbara Peronteau of the NCNC UCC Golden Gate Association, presiding
- Jan. 7: Feast of the Epiphany; Pastor Jim preaching
- Jan. 14: Baptism of Jesus and baptismal renewal with the rite of sprinkling; and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King Commemoration; Pastor Jim preaching
- Jan. 21: Pastor Warren preaching
- Jan. 28: Celebration of Congregational Church Identity followed by Annual Meeting with election of officers and adoption of the budget.

February – Black History Month: Focus on Reparations

- Feb. 4: Installation of new lay leaders; afternoon ecumenical and interfaith service Inaugurating Black History Month and public reading of MLK's Letter from Birmingham Jail
- Feb. 11: Scouting Sunday celebration of Troop 27
- Feb. 14: Ash Wednesday with Imposition of Ashes
- Feb. 21: Lent begins



Pastor Jim and Pastor Warren pose together after worship on Dec. 10.



Rev. Jim Mitulski to be be officially installed Jan. 6

By Micki Carter

The Rev. Jim Mitulski took his place as pastor of the (then) Congregational Church of Belmont last February, but he hasn't yet been installed. That official installation by the Golden Gate Association of the Northern California Nevada Conference will take place at 3 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 6, in our Sanctuary.

Pastor Jim has asked his friend, the Rev. Todd Atkins-Whitley, to preach, and the CCP Sanctuary Choir will sing. A catered reception in the Dining Room will follow the installation.

Why did it take so long?

Pastor Jim needed to re-establish his standing within the conference and the United Church of Christ, and then he had to catch up on some required training. The Deacons requested the scheduling of the Installation early this fall, but the Jan. 6 date

was the first date available.

And why on a Saturday?

The Deacons really worked for a Sunday afternoon time slot. Both Pastor John Brooke and Pastor Kristi Denham were installed on Sundays. However, the association chose the Saturday date because the clergy from throughout the conference is invited to participate (in their clerical robes!), and it's hard for them to manage when they all have Sunday roles of their own.

The congregation of CCP has a role to play in the ceremony, and you all are encouraged to attend. Please email Lea at Office@CCPeninsula.org to let her know you will be there.

Maura Whitmore and Jane Fernald are handling the reception after the installation, and they could use lots of volunteer help. Please step up to lend a hand.

Don't miss the Annual **Meeting on** Sunday, Jan. 28, after worship!

Annual Meeting

Continued from Page One present.

Because we are corporation of the State of California, we are required to have Bylaws and to operate according to them and the principles of the Constitution. If vou would like to serve on the Bylaws committee, contact Micki Carter, the CCP parliamentarian. It will be fun!

Vice Moderator Maura Whitmore is working right now on the nominating report which will fill leadership positions for CCP. Anyone interested in what positions are open and what is required to fill those positions, please talk to Maura right away.

All Annual Reports are due to Lea by Jan. 1. (If you aren't sure if you have to write one, ask Lea.) Remember that missing that deadline can put the entire Annual Meeting structure in jeopardy — and gives Lea heartburn!

Good Hope Luncheon takes place on Jan. 2

Please join us at the first Good Hope Luncheon of 2024 on Jan. 2 at 12:30 p.m. The luncheon falls on the first Tuesday of each month.

This month, the group will gather at Breaker's Cafe in Woodside Plaza, 270 Woodside Road, Redwood City.

There is nothing on the agenda except socializing and catching up. Everyone pays for his or her own meal and joins a table of CCP friends.

RSVP to Gabriela Simon at gsbaja@ yahoo.com.

To go to the Congregational Church of the Peninsula website, click here.

Family Sharing Program helps two special families

By Linda Howard

The term Good Samaritan is synonymous with someone who shows mercy. Many organizations use the name to show how they care for people. The Samaritan House in San Mateo is one such organization providing medical, food and rental assistance for those in need.

Once basic needs are met, however, there is a desire for something extra this time of year, especially for families with children. A special toy, warm clothing, or a nice meal are important at Christmas time. For this reason, the Congregational Church of the Peninsula continues the tradition of participating in the program known as Family Sharing sponsored by Samaritan House.

Samaritan House's Family Sharing Program is one part of Samaritan House's Holiday Programs. With the help of volunteers, Samaritan House contributes food and gifts to approximately 200 families and seniors. Since Covid restrictions have eased, the number of people receiving support this year has steadily increased.

Inflation hits the Samaritan House's clients harder than most. Many of their jobs are in the service sectors of the economy such as restaurants, hotels, housecleaning, etc. The salaries in these service areas have not kept up with inflation.

The Social Action Board began organizing Christmas gifts for two families after Thanksgiving. Volunteers from CCP contacted the families to determine their requests and needs, and other volunteers delivered the gifts in time for Christmas morning. Altogether, our church provided two families with warm clothing, toys for younger children and food gift cards.

In addition to Family Sharing, the Social Action Board received two requests in December for programs aimed at supporting our community. The Peace Pantry, a food distribution center run on the property of Hillsdale High School, provides food for families in need. The program has expanded to include a community garden, and a clothes

The second request involved money to augment funds to buy building materials going toward improvements on the community garden. This is part of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service in January.

How fortunate our church is to have both financial resources and individuals willing to donate their time and efforts to contribute to these programs.

Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, vou did for me. Matthew 25:40



The Madrigal Singers of Mountain View High School performed at CCP on Dec. 3, arranged by Rev. Warren Dale.

UCC president signs a joint letter on Gaza

by Maic D'Agostino From ucc.org

While many around the world prepare to celebrate Christmas, the United Church of Christ's General Minister and President is reminding the church that some do not have that luxury this year — particularly those in Gaza, Palestine.

"In this season of Advent, of hope and preparation, we recognize that not all is well in the world," said the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson in a video message. "There is war and strife among us."

Thompson, along her leadership counterparts with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Canada — the Rev. Terri Hord Owens and the Rev. Carmen Lansdowne, respectively — signed a letter delivered Dec. 18 to President Biden, urging the U.S. government to "show moral courage" and help bring an immediate end to the crisis.

As violence in Gaza continues, despite increasing calls for a ceasefire, Thompson explained that the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem have asked their churches to forego any "unnecessary festive activities" during the holidays.

"Churches in the Middle East will commemorate — not celebrate — Christmas this year," she said.

In solidarity, Thompson is asking those within and across the UCC to remember the plight of the people of Gaza as they tell the story of Christmas once again.

"As we approach the manger and Christmas this year, let us remember our Palestinian siblings and all who live with war and violence, and consider how we welcome the prince of Peace into our homes and hearts with hope and anticipation," Thompson said. "And remember the humble and harsh circumstances into which Jesus was born."

Watch the full video here.

Seeing the serendipitous signs

By Sarah Thornhill

I have to admit the Christmas spirit was late to reach me this year. I had not yet opened my heart to it or slowed down enough to see any signs.

A few weeks back I drove up to Sebastopol to Jerry Coleman's memorial service. On my way into the church, that had the same welcoming feel as ours, I admired the table with a large plaque recognizing Jerry as a recipient of the Helen Keller Award, for his work with those in need of eyeglasses through the Lions Club.

I recalled the day that Mary, Jerry, myself and my mom (an ophthalmology nurse) screened all three classes of preschoolers at CPNS. It was an exhausting but fulfilling day, and we did discover one child who needed glasses.

Come to learn, through the many stories shared about Jerry's meaningful life at the memorial, he was instrumental in bringing vision screenings to the preschool level nationally.

Later, at the reception, I spoke to two people in Lions Club vests and asked about the process to get a collection box. We had not had one in church since Mary and Jerry had moved away 9-10 years ago. I put it on my mental "to-do" list to explore it further and drove home.

Two days later my friend Laura Peters, whom consequently I met at CPNS 20 years ago, texted that she was "collecting for the Lions Club" at our upcoming Bunko night and asked us to donate our old glasses and packaged contact lenses. I mentioned the coincidental timing to her and a week later, Laura showed up on my porch with a Lions Club box.

And last Sunday, I stood up to announce that the collection box would live in the CCP parlor in Jerry Coleman's honor. Please fill it with no-longer-used eyeglasses and contact lens (still in their packaging).

This morning, as I sit in the window listening to the rain in the house we bought from Micki Carter 20 years ago (subsequently, the reason we chose CPNS as our preschool), I write this article she requested on the Lions Club Box.

And just as the recipients of donated glasses will be able to see, I too now see the signs that led me to a heart full of Christmas spirit and a reminder of my strong belief that the simple meaning of this life is in the joy of helping others.



Linda and Keith Howard light the Advent Candle of Peace and read the accompanying prayer on Dec. 10.

Baptism offered on Sunday, Jan. 14

By Rev. Jim Mitulski

Are you interested in having the church celebrate your spiritual life with you through Baptism? We will offer Baptism on Sunday, Jan. 14. There will be conversation and learning opportunities about Baptism, its history and significance after church on Sunday, Jan. 7. Let Pastor Jim know if you are interested.

Baptism is the ritual by which we celebrate affirming our commitment to our faith tradition. It can also signal new life or a significant change in a person's spiritual journey. It is one of two sacraments in the United Church of Christ, the other being Communion. These are the ceremonies that signify our covenant to journey together in community. We baptize infants and adults. For children and babies, Godparents make the commitment on behalf of the youth, and they affirm this through Confirmation. Adults make their own commitment vows.



The CCP altar is decorated for Advent with the creche figures that longtime members Mary and Don Hughes brought back from the Holy Land and donated to the church years ago.

Consider volunteering for the church in 2024

By Maura Whitmore, Moderator-elect for 2024

Hello all, and welcome to our new year as the Congregational Church of the Peninsula. As a merged entity, I encourage us all to consider how we can make our little church on the hill a force of good in our community.

Scripture Micah 6:8 requires us to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. I ask that you all look in your hearts, and answer as Isaiah did (in HIS 6:8!) by responding to God, "Here I am, send me!"

Our list of volunteer jobs is long, but wide. We can help and know each other through service, camaraderie, love and faith. Each person is asked to do what they can, sometimes stretching a little, sometimes being supported by us, sometimes just showing up.

I am reaching out you all to ask what you like to do, are willing to do, or can do. Many of you have already replied, and we thank you for your precious donation of your time and talents.

Please consider helping us ALL to do the work of the church.

We have spaces to be filled on Boards:

Trustees

- Buildings & Grounds
- Deacons
- Christian Education
- Communications
- Social Action

And spaces to be filled on Committees:

- Personnel
- In Discernment Support (for seminarian Garrett House)
- Pastoral Relations (for Rev. Jim Mituslski)
- Four Way Covenant Support (for Rev. Thomas Crosby)

And spaces to be filled in our Ministries of Care (Managed by the Board of Deacons)

- The Writing Team
- The Transportation Team
- The Food Team
- Home/Hospital Visitor Team
- Altar Guild
- Prayer Chain

Please don't hesitate to email or call me to help us fill these spaces: whitmore 92@ sbcglobal.net. If you prefer to call, please ask Lea in the church office for my phone number



Deacon Henry Altorfer tends to the CCP Chrismas tree.

Chat 'n Chew Book Group starts the year with new title

The January selection is *The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store* by James McBride, which is a mystery taking place in a community of African Americans and Jewish immigrants in the early 20th century. Copies are available in the Sanctuary.

The February Selection will be *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. The group is dovetailing off of the Christmas release of a new musical film version of the book. They are planning a group outing related to the book in the new year as well.

The group meets via Zoom on Tuesdays from 1:30-2:30 p.m. Join the Zoom at the following link: https://bit.ly/Book-Group751.

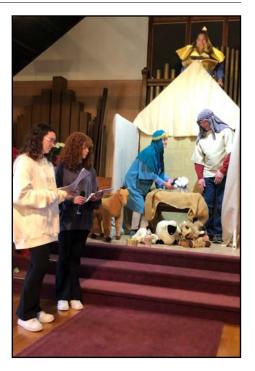
Don't forget!
Annual Reports
are due Jan. 1.
Please submit
them to Lea
before then!



CCP's new inclusive nativity set found a home in the Sanctuary beside the Advent candle wreath.









Pick-up Pageant puts everyone in the mood for Christmas





To go to the Congregational Church of the Peninsula website, click here.

















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Rev. Polly Moore of College Heights UCC speaks on the hard work of peace

Editor's note: Last month, Pastor Polly Moore of College Heights UCC preached about peace. She didn't choose the topic, and she wasn't sure she had anything new to say. Gwen Jeong read the sermon online and wanted to share it (lightly edited) with us.

By Rev. Polly Moore

Peace? In the world today? With wars in Ukraine and Gaza and Sudan, with random gun violence in the U.S. at any moment, what can I possibly say about Peace, other than that we don't have it, and we seem further away from it than ever?

I mean, more eloquent people than I have been praying for and preaching about peace for millennia and nothing seems to change.

The problem is that peace is hard work. Peace between nations, for example, requires the willingness to find a way, to come to the table, to be willing to meet in the middle for the sake of no more killing. A lasting peace requires a just solution; otherwise, it's just a lull in the fighting.

Then there's peace in the heart, inner peace. Surely, we can do that. It's all on us. We're working on ourselves. But I hate to disappoint you, peace in the heart takes effort too. Whatever your spiritual practice is, you have to do it, you have to be consistent and persistent, and find the time and give it priority and do the work. And keep doing it. It's not a journey to a destination, and then you're done. It's a way of life.

With that in mind, I want to share with you a story of one person and one idea (that I got from Facebook. You may have seen it too.)

Every Friday afternoon Chase's teacher asks her students to take out a piece of paper and write down the names of four children with whom they'd like to sit the following week. The children know that these requests may or may not be honored. She also asks the students to nominate one student whom they believe has been an exceptional classroom citizen that week. All ballots are privately submitted to her.

And every single Friday afternoon, after the students go home, Chase's teacher



Rev. Polly Moore

takes out those slips of paper, places them in front of her and studies them. She looks for patterns.

- Who is not getting requested by anyone else?
- · Who doesn't even know whom to request?
- · Who never gets noticed enough to be nominated?
- · Who had a million friends last week and none this week?

You see, Chase's teacher is not looking for a new seating chart or "exceptional citizens." Chase's teacher is looking for lonely children. She's looking for children who are struggling to connect with other children. She's identifying the little ones who are falling through the cracks of the class's social life. She is discovering whose gifts are going unnoticed by their peers. And she's pinning down - right away - who's being bullied and who is doing the bullying.

As a teacher, parent, and lover of all children – I think that this is the most brilliant Love Ninja strategy I have ever encountered. It's like taking an X-ray of a classroom to see beneath the surface of things and into the hearts of students. It is like mining for gold – the gold being those little ones who need a little help – who need adults to step in and teach them how to make friends, how to ask others to play, how to join a group, or how to share their gifts with others.

And it's a bully deterrent because every teacher knows that bullying usually happens outside of her eyeshot - and that often kids being bullied are too intimidated to share. But as she said the truth comes out on those safe, private, little sheets of paper.

As Chase's teacher explained this simple, ingenious idea - I stared at her with my mouth hanging open. "How long have you been using this system?" I said.

"Ever since Columbine," she said. Every single Friday afternoon since Columbine. Good Lord.

And so she decided to start fighting violence early and often, and with the world within her reach. What Chase's teacher is doing when she sits in her empty classroom studying those lists written with shaky 11-year-old hands - is saving lives. I am convinced of it. She is saving lives.

All violence begins with disconnection. All outward violence begins as inner loneliness. Did you know that people are starting to label "loneliness" as a national epidemic in America? If so, then perhaps we shouldn't be surprised at the random gun violence after all.

Can we do something to combat loneliness? You bet. Building a community like this - open, inclusive, welcoming - is a terrific antidote to loneliness. We think we're just going to church, but it's a lot more than that.

Peace is hard work, at every level. But so worth the effort. Every candle you light, every connection you make, matters. It's cumulative. Don't let yourself be daunted. You don't have to do it all. Just your part.

More photos from CCP Christmas caroling











To go to the Congregational Church of the Peninsula website, click here.

MLK Day of Service is Jan. 15

By Elizabeth Nordt

Sign up now for the 12th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service hosted by Peninsula Multifaith Coalition (PMC) on Jan. 15, 2024. Registration closes on Jan. 9. Visit this <u>link</u> to sign up.

This event offers fellowship and service hours that support the community, along with education and appreciation regarding Civil Rights. We gather at different locations depending on the project for breakfast (8 a.m.-9 a.m.) before spending a few hours (9 a.m.-12 p.m.) working together.

This year, CC Peninsula members are

ST. MATTHIAS CATHOLIC CHURCH OF REDWOOD CITY ST

leading three projects. Greg will be building in the Hillsdale Community Garden and Elizabeth Nordt will lead weaving paracord lanyards. Both with breakfast at St. Barts first. Elizabeth Mye's group will have breakfast at the LDS church before she leads singing at Carlmont Gardens.

Many other projects await, offering the chance to get to know others in our PMC family. On the Eventbrite Registration, Click "Get Tickets" to see a detailed description of each project. When signing up, it will ask for your "Faith House." Please choose the Congregational Church of the Peninsula.

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> Last year over 600 volunteers answered Dr. King's question by spending the morning of MLK Day doing for others, and you can too! Register by January 9!







pmcmlk2024.eventbrite.com

Event: 'Palestinian Life Under Israeli Military Occupation'

Saturday Jan. 20, 3 p.m. at First **Congregational Church of Alameda**

By Joy Davis from the NCNC Blog

In collaboration with Friends of Wadi Foquin and the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, FCCA will host a conversation with Adam Manasra, a 26 year old Palestinian from the village of Wadi Foquin growing up under the military occupation of Israel.

Located in the Bethlehem District of the West Bank, his home village of Wadi Foquin has suffered the incremental loss of land and life due to the illegal settlement of Betar Illit. An engineer by training, Adam has organized young adult voices in the village educating audiences about the challenges facing the village.

He came to the U.S. in August on a speaking tour organized by Friends of Wadi Foquin to raise funds for a Guest House that he designed and was to implement upon return. With the ongoing violence in Gaza, he has been unable to return home.

Wadi Foquin is currently on lock down with work stoppages, school closures, intimidation of farmers, and recent demolition of homes and a factory. After cancelling his flight home, and putting the Guest House project on hold, Adam has been speaking to groups about his life under occupation & the urgency of justice for all of Palestine including Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem at this critical juncture in history.

Friends of Wadi Foquin is a partnership initiated in 2009 between United Methodists and the Palestinian Muslim village of Wadi Foquin. We support community development projects in the village, organize annual Holy Land pilgrimages with visits to Wadi Foquin and other Palestinian communities, and engage in advocacy.

Responding to our advocacy, twelve members of Congress wrote a letter to the State Department in July 2023 addressing the issues of land confiscation and property demolitions threatening the future of the village.

Calendar for January 2024

Z Tue	12PM - 2PM	Off-site events	Good Hope Luncheon
	1:30pm - 2:30pm	Off-site events	Online Book Group
3 Wed	11AM - 12PM	Off-site events	Bible Study (Zoom)
	7:00pm - 9:00pm	Off-site events	CCB Council Meeting
4 Thu	6рм - 7рм	Off-site events	Thursday Night Prayer & Check-in
	7:30pm - 9:00pm	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
6 Sat	3рм - 6рм	Church Events	Pastor Jim's installation service
7 Sun	10:30ам - 12:00рм	Worship	Sunday worship
9 Tue	1:30PM - 2:30PM	Off-site events	Online Book Group
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	7:30pm - 9:00pm	Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
28 Sun	10:30am - 12:00pm	Worship	Sunday worship
	12:00PM - 3:00PM	Church Events	Annual Meeting and potluck luncheo
30 Tue	1:30pm - 2:30pm	Off-site events	Online Book Group
31 Wed	11ам - 12рм	Off-site events	Bible Study (Zoom)

DONATIONS NEEDE

TEDDY BEARS

You can help by donating a new teddy bear for The At Risk Youth Foundation:

- Must be a new, 12-16 inch-tall bear
- Huggable, cannot be a sitting bear
- No accessories or clothes
- · And of course, cute!





Bring your teddy bears to your breakfast location on MLK Day. Thank you!

CARE ITEMS

We are collecting items for care bags that will be distributed to families who are living at LifeMoves family shelters. Scan the code below with your phone to see what is needed.





bit.ly/pmccareitems2024

February Messenger deadline will be Jan. 26

