



April 2025 THE MESSENGER

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



A new banner that includes transgendered folk in its message of inclusiveness has replaced our rainbow banner on the front porch. Council approved the new banner, Micki Carter designed it and Mike Venturino put it up. However, there was a small snag. The new banner, although ordered to the identical specs, was too short to fit the hardware that Greg Thornhill installed three years ago. So Mike made a temporary fix until a replacement banner comes in the next few weeks.

Chocolate Fest 2025 is on for Oct. 18

By Micki Carter

It's official!

Chocolate Fest will be back for its 42nd edition on Oct. 18 with a slightly new format and a new beneficiary/partner.

Greg Thornhill chaired a meeting after church on March 23 to determine if there was sufficient will and leadership to do Chocolate Fest once again. And, once again, people stepped forward to take on one of the

important roles that are necessary to produce such an amazing and, for CCP, iconic event again this fall.

Jill Visor will continue to lead the effort as chair, and she will handle contacts with the vendors and liaise with the San Mateo County Health Department, a significant player in putting on an event like Chocolate Fest.

Greg will once again handle opera-

tions and put on his Willy Wonka gear for announcing the prizes. Jane Fernald will oversee volunteer staffing, and Maura will take on the responsibility of decorations — this year with a Centennial theme that will celebrate the 100 years of our building.

Micki Carter will do marketing and publicity with a huge assist from Calyx Liu who already has updated the Chocolate Fest

See CHOCOLATE FEST, Page 3

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

From Pastor Jim

Pastor Jim is back after his surgery

By Rev. Jim Mitulski

Dear Friends: I'm writing on the first day I return to the office to work after my medical leave.

My surgery was successful though I'm still in a recovery phase. (Is it wrong to go to sleep at 8 p.m.? Only when it causes me to miss my favorite show, *The Rookie*.)

I'm grateful to all of you for your prayers. And I so appreciate Pastors Sheryl, Thomas and Warren who preached wonderful Lenten sermons this month.

I appreciate Kayvon and the Ministry Team who make high-quality broadcasts and video recordings available to people who can't be with us in person. It meant the world to me to still feel part of the community during this period.

And I'm so happy that we have hired Rebecca to be our permanent office administrator. Her work is at the heart of all we do at CCP.

I look forward to seeing you again as we prepare for Easter.

In anticipation of Resurrection Day, Pastor Jim

Lent: Everything in Between — Meeting God in the midst of extremes

April

April 6, Fifth Sunday in Lent; Holy Communion; Rev. Jim Mitulski; Special Guest: Veronica Rodriguez from ALAS on the Coastside.

April 13, Palm Sunday with outdoor procession and reading of the Passion

April 17, Maundy Thursday, 7 p.m., with several congregations at CCP

April 18, Good Friday, 7 p.m., with several congregations at Congregational Church of San Mateo

April 19, Holy Saturday, 7 p.m., the Great Vigil of Easter at College Heights UCC in San Mateo

April 20, Easter Sunday, 6:30 a.m. Outdoor Sunrise Service in Redwood City, Rev. Warren Dale; Holy Communion at 10:30 a.m. at CCP in Belmont, Rev. Jim Mitulski

April 27, Guest Artist and preacher



Share Holy Week with us! See how a progressive church does Easter.

Palm Sunday — April 13 at 10:30 a.m. here
Outdoor processional and reading of the Passion

Maundy Thursday — April 17 at 7 p.m. here
Music from Godspell and Holy Communion

Good Friday — April 18 at 7 p.m.
At Congregational Church of San Mateo

Great Vigil of Easter — April 19 at 7 p.m.
At College Heights UCC in San Mateo

Easter Sunday — April 20
Sunrise Service in Redwood City at 6:30 a.m.
Easter Service of celebration at 10:30 a.m. here

Congregational Church of the Peninsula

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[Rev. Dan Damon](#), acclaimed Bay Area jazz musician and United Methodist minister www.dandamon-music.com

May — Asian American History Month

May 4, Third Sunday of Easter, Holy Communion

May 11, Fourth Sunday of Easter, Mother's Day

May 18, Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 26, Sixth Sunday of Easter, joint worship at San Carlos Community Church

June — LGBTQ Pride Month

June 1, Ascension Sunday and Holy Communion

June 8, Pentecost Sunday and Holy Communion

June 15, Trinity Sunday and Solemn Commemorations

June 22, Juneteenth

Chocolate Fest

Continued from Page One

website and vendor information and forms. She will also take on setting up our ticketing app on Eventbrite.

Carol Chivers will oversee the collection of door prizes with help from Rebecca in the church office who will take on the clerical tasks.

This year, our Chocolate Fest partner will be the San Mateo County Health Foundation, which supports San Mateo Medical Center and its outreach clinics across the county, the health care provider of last resort,

regardless of the ability to pay.

The foundation will receive half the funds raised.

John Jurow, the executive director of the foundation, and Dana Floro, its event coordinator, are all in to help us produce Chocolate Fest 2025. They will "own" the Silent Auction and work with Carol on door prizes and Jane in collecting volunteers for the day of the event.

One format change will be splitting the day of Chocolate Fest into two sessions, 1-4 p.m. and 5-8 p.m. Tickets will be sold for each session, starting July 1.

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

Rebecca hired to permanent post as office administrator

By Steve Chamberlin

The Personnel Committee has been busy making sure our church remains a great place for our employees to work.

In the last month, three committee members attended a human resources seminar to stay informed about legal compliance issues that impact churches.

We're excited to share some updates on our recent efforts.

After conducting an external search and interviewing many candidates, we're thrilled to officially welcome Rebecca Perry as our full-time Office Administrator.

Rebecca has been a dedicated part of our team in a temporary role, and we look forward to having her contributions in this expanded position.

She will work 32 hours per week, maintaining the same hours she has been working (Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday). However, that is considered full-time and will provide her with some health insurance benefits.

We're also working on transitioning some church contractors to regular employee status to comply with state labor laws.

Another important step we're taking is organizing a required workplace harassment prevention training for all staff. This training underscores our commitment to be a respectful and supportive workplace.

Looking ahead, we're rolling out a goal-setting program for all employees and their supervisors. This will help ensure every employee has clarity around their job definition and align individual and church-wide goals.

Finally, as our church grows, we anticipate assisting with the hiring of a building manager and possibly additional administrative staff in the coming months.

Thank you for your continued support!



Doris Brown, who turned 97 on March 22, had her daughters, nieces and daughter-in-law in church with her the Sunday after to celebrate her birthday. Daughter Helen said they needed the whole group as they sort through a lifetime of "treasures" that Doris has accumulated in her Belmont home.

CCP partners with Church HR Network to offer AB506 training

One of the hats that Elizabeth Nordt wears is Custodian of Record for the church's AB506 (or Safe Church Policy as it is called at CCP) compliance.

So, if you have taken the training required by AB506 to protect children and other vulnerable people, you probably got an email from Elizabeth telling you that you need to do it again.

"The state now requires that training be repeated every two years," Elizabeth wrote.

"We have now partnered with Church HR Network to offer the necessary training online.

"You can expect to receive a welcome email soon inviting you to visit

churchHRnetwork.com to complete the training.

"Volunteers will be assigned Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training which will take about 60 minutes.

"As a reminder, screening and training of all church employees as well as leadership and volunteers who may have contact with vulnerable people such as children is required by state law.

"We encourage everyone at CCP to consider taking these steps to keep everyone safe."

If you haven't heard from Elizabeth but would like to be enrolled for the training, send her an email.

We're updating the church directory. Please send new addresses and phone numbers to Rebecca at Office@CCPeninsula.org.

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

Social Action board OKs donations to Faith in Action and local NAACP

By Linda Howard

Since January, the Social Action Board has been meeting once a month prioritizing past recipients, discussing policy, carrying out the mandate of delivering financial support with compassion and fairness, and exploring new avenues of financial giving.

So far, the Congregational Church of the Peninsula has supported cultural heritage of underrepresented groups, scholarships, people affected by catastrophic fires, and immigrants and their families. The names and details of these organizations can be found in the February Messenger.

How are decisions made on what organizations receive support? A request can be made to any member of the SAB. The individual asking for an organization to be considered will be asked to either fill out a Google Form or fill out a document giving pertinent information.

If neither of these options is feasible, a member of SAB can assist in channeling the request to the SAB. Social Action meets once a month and discusses the request. At that time the organization is vetted by either Charity Navigator or personal knowledge of the group.

After discussing and exploring the organization, the SAB votes on whether to donate funds or not. Each recipient's purpose must align with the mission of the church.

Recently SAB approved donations to Faith in Action and the NAACP.

Faith in Action Bay Area maintains an emergency fund that supports the family members who remain behind after a family member is arrested by ICE.

If a parent or caretaker is taken from the home, volunteers from Faith in Action intervene to ensure that children are not left alone and that families don't get evicted while a parent is detained. Faith in Action also provides legal aid which is critically important in these situations.

A detailed article on Faith in Action can be found in the [March Messenger](#). The article outlines four areas where volunteers are needed. They are verifiers, escorts, witnesses and recorders.



Lorena Melgarejo talks to Faith in Action volunteers about accompanying undocumented immigrants to ICE hearings and court appearances in San Francisco (where those arrested in San Mateo County are adjudicated). She noted that ICE has not been conducting mass raids in San Mateo County, but it is seeking specific individuals in targeted operations. She said the first three arrests of the current crackdown occurred last week in the county. Three CCP members are getting trained as companions.

At its March meeting, the Church Council approved a donation of \$5,000 to Faith in Action's San Mateo County emergency fund.

Although the NAACP is a national organization, the local chapter provides financial and mentoring support in the San Mateo community by:

- Providing scholarships and educational resources for local high school and college students

- Empowering underserved youth with leadership training and mentorship opportunities

- Advocating for racial justice, equality, and opportunity within San Mateo County.

The Social Action Board has a responsibility to promote social justice whenever possible. In supporting these two organizations, Faith in Action and the NAACP, the church displays a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

**Faith in Action Hotline
(for information on local ICE actions)
is 203-666-4472.
— Spread the word!**

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

Warren's Wonderings

Pastor Warren 'follows the drinking gourd' on Mississippi River travels

By Rev. Warren Dale

Traveling through places filled with stories often activates my own memories that connect to the present places.

In 1962 two of my school friends and I were traveling from San Francisco State to Dallas, New Orleans and then on to one of the friends parents' home in Florida.

I remember driving the back roads of Mississippi and Louisiana and noticing the shacks... shacks that belonged to the African American locals. Two weeks ago, I remembered that journey as I traveled the Mississippi River while reading *Night Flyer*, the story of Harriet Tubman.

African slavery began in Natchez with the French (1716 to 1763). The French viewed slavery as an economic necessity. Unlike in later years, the enslaved had certain legal privileges.

"Masters were obligated to provide basic sustenance," author Bobby Dennis writes in *Untold Stories of African Americans*. "Marriage was allowed, and while it was

frequently ignored... there was some understanding of keeping the enslaved family together."

From 1763 to 1779, after the French and Indian War, the British took over. The British idea of colonization brought increased regimentation and harsh treatment to those enslaved. The enslaved were frequently separated from families and resistance was met with brutal punishment.

From 1779-1795 in Natchez, the Spanish ruled for a while, bringing some level of easier treatment.

The American Period (1795 to 1865) brought a new and oppressive period of treatment. Cotton brought "economic justification" for utilizing those enslaved.

We visited the Forks in the Road monument in Natchez, a marketplace of the enslaved. A thousand people a year were sold from this spot.

In July 1863, an all-black Union Army unit captured the Forks in the Road and upon the same ground, built Fort McPherson... a



The Forks in the Road monument

symbol of freedom.

The Natchez Trace was a pathway used first by the Native Americans, then by the Mississippi River workers to return to Nashville, Tenn., and then by escaping enslaved people. The enslaved followed the guidance of the songs, *Follow the Drinking Gourd* (the Big Dipper constellation) and *Wade in the Water* to restrict the slave catchers' dogs from following the scent of the run to freedom people.)

Follow the Drinking Gourd offered pathways to freedom. What songs do we need to sing today that open the pathways to freedom.?

Blessings, the Rev... Warren

Pastor Warren offers foolish thoughts for April Fools Day

"It is human nature to think wisely and act foolishly." — Anatole France

"Better a witty fool than a foolish wit." — William Shakespeare

"If it thunders on All Fool's Day, expect good crops of corn and hay." — Anonymous

"The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other 364 days of the year." — Mark Twain

"The greatest lesson in life is to know

that even fools are right sometimes." — Sir Winston Churchill

"A fool flatters himself, a wise man flatters the fool." — Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton, English writer

"Mix a little foolishness with your prudence: It's good to be silly at the right moment." — Horace

"We're fools whether we dance or not, so we might as well dance." — Japanese proverb

**Good Hope lunch
will be at
Harry's Hofbrau,
1909 El Camino
Real, Redwood City,
at noon Tuesday,
April 1.
Please
RSVP to Office@
CCPeninsula.**

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

From Pastor Sheryl Meet our changemaker Keegan Pham

By Rev. Sheryl Johnson

A few months ago, CCP was selected by an organization called Change the Story to be matched with a young adult changemaker in the community and support them in a project for social justice.

The organization originated at Los Altos United Methodist Church and they received a grant to expand the program beyond their congregation.

The weekend of March 7-9, five congregations and five young changemakers spent the weekend at CCP for our orientation. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the program and to be matched with a young adult!

I am so grateful to Irene Wang who attended along with me, and to Sarah Thornhill and Jill Visor who have agreed to support the program as well.

Our young adult changemaker is Keegan Pham. He grew up in Southern California but came to the Bay Area for college. He stayed in the area to work after graduation (and before he goes off to grad school in the fall at UC Berkeley to get a PhD in biochemistry).

Keegan Pham

Keegan is passionate about native plants, climate change, and helping underserved youth connect to nature. He is one of the founders of an organization called Plantify and has a lot of experience working in the area of nature education.

His project will focus on education — creating educational videos to teach people to identify invasive and native plant species in the Bay Area and leading some nature experiences for youth.

In other news, we are sending care packages to young adults/college students (aged 18-25) connected to our congregation! Please send me any names and addresses by Sunday, April 6.

On Sunday, April 13, we will assemble the packages. Please bring some small items



Pastor Sheryl and her daughter Andie set up shop on the playground to await playmates on the first (non-rainy) Sunday in March. Help spread the word about the Sunday morning play dates on April 6 at 9:30 a.m.

Hey, kids!

**Easter Eggs
by the dozen
will be hidden on
our front lawn
at noon on
Sunday, April 20.**



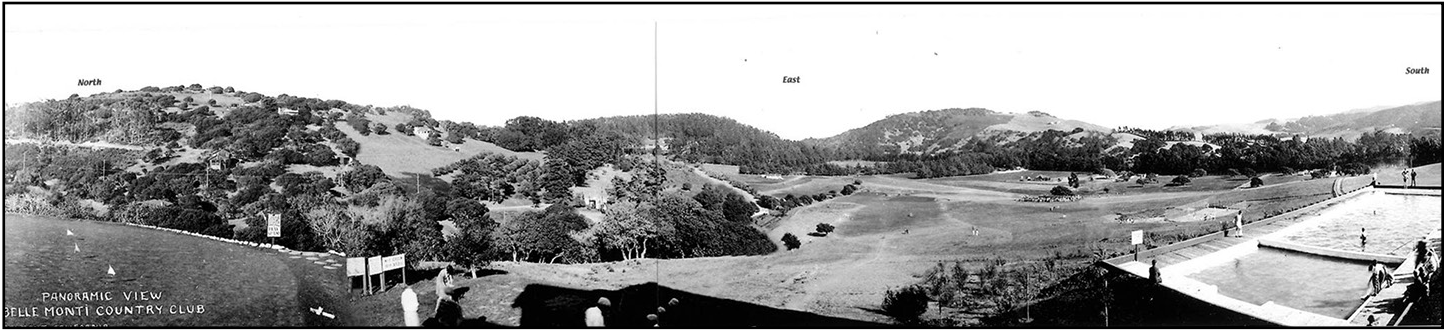
Join us for our Easter Egg hunt!

(i.e. stickers, chocolate, gum, etc) in sets of 10 to church that day if you are able to contribute.

Thank you so much! This will help to send our Easter greetings out widely and help to remind our young adults of our love and care in the Easter (and exam!) season.

Our other children and youth programming is going well! We continue to work to spread the word about our monthly preschool playdates, and we will be inviting local families to our Easter worship (with special crafts/activities for kids) and egg hunt. Please help to spread the word.

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



A panorama view from the Belle Monti Country Club taken in 1925 from the veranda off the CCP Dining Room.

Banners on Ralston Avenue light poles to recognize our building’s centennial

By Micki Carter

You may have noticed the banners hanging from the light poles on Ralston Avenue (from El Camino Real to Alameda de las Pulgas) that celebrated the 30th anniversary of a pre-school over the past year.

They didn’t escape the notice of the Centennial Committee which thought those would provide the perfect opportunity to let the immediate world know that the building that houses the Congregational Church of the Peninsula is 100 years old this year.

The two-sided banners are 30 inches by 60 inches, and there are 30 light poles that can be used along Ralston Avenue.

Here’s the design of the light pole banners that the committee has adopted, and a prototype has been ordered to take to Belmont Public Works to make sure everything fits. If it does, we will order 29 more.

We have reserved the 30 light pole positions for July, August and September of this year. We have asked the city for the month of the June as well but that may not be available.

We think it’s pretty cool that we have a building that’s older than the city of Belmont!

The committee also is planning a Litany of Remembrance for the Sept. 7 morning worship. We will invite former pastors as well as people or groups who have longtime



connections to the building such as Carlmont Parents Nursery School and OT4Kids. If you have suggestions for people to be invited,

please let me know.

We plan to create a slide show of historical photos of the building over its many iterations that will be featured at a luncheon after worship on Sept. 7 and at Chocolate Fest Oct. 18. We plan to use those light pole banners (or those that survive!) again as part of the decorations for Chocolate Fest which will have “Our building is 100 years old” as its theme.

Church Council has approved a budget of \$5,000 for the Centennial Celebration (including banners, city fees, the luncheon and travel expenses for past pastor who may want to attend). Because that’s a bit of a tidy sum, we have made arrangements to receive individual donations to offset those costs.

If you would like to contribute to the Centennial Celebration, please write “Centennial” in the memo line of your check or in the notes of your online donation [here](#).

Special thanks to Bob Donovan who came across prints of the panorama portrait of the Belle Monti Country Club and a great color photo of the front of the church in the early 1970s after the handicap ramp was installed.

The committee is planning gather additional photos as JPEGs from the San Mateo County Historical Society for that slide show. If you have any photos tucked away, we would love to have them!

April is Earth Month! Protecting our planet is a CCP goal. Let’s recycle, reuse and repurpose!

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





All dressed up for observance of Lent



Cuttings of spring blossoms from the grounds of the church created a great altar presentation on the first Sunday of Lent. On the left, Pastor Jim joined Revs. Michael Cronin, Alvaro Duran, Jessica Vacketta and Jorge Bautista after the application of ashes at the Ash Wednesday service at the Congregational Church of San Mateo.

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

CCP's April Calendar

6 Sun	9:30AM - 10:15AM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Preschool Playgroup with Rev. Sheryl
	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship
	11:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Coffee Hour
	5PM - 6PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Zoom worship with Pastor Warren
8 Tue	1:30PM - 2:30PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Online Book Group
9 Wed	11:00AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Pastor Jim and Pastor Warren
10 Thu	6PM - 7PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Thursday Night Prayer & Check-in
	7:30PM - 9PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
13 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Palm Sunday worship
	11:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Coffee Hour
	5PM - 6PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Zoom worship with Pastor Warren
15 Tue	1:30PM - 2:30PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Online Book Group
	6:00PM - 7:00PM 	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Deacons' meeting
16 Wed	11:00AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Pastor Jim and Pastor Warren
17 Thu	6PM - 7PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Thursday Night Prayer & Check-in
	7:00PM - 8:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service
20 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Easter Sunday worship
	11:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Coffee Hour
	5PM - 6PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Zoom worship with Pastor Warren
22 Tue	1:30PM - 2:30PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Online Book Group
23 Wed	11:00AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Pastor Jim and Pastor Warren
	7:00PM - 9:00PM 	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	CCB Council Meeting
24 Thu	6PM - 7PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Thursday Night Prayer & Check-in
	7:30PM - 9PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
27 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship	Sunday worship
	11:30AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Coffee Hour
	12:30PM - 1:30PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Church Events	Youth Confirmation Class
29 Tue	1:30PM - 2:30PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Online Book Group
30 Wed	11:00AM - 12:00PM	<input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Pastor Jim and Pastor Warren

You can access the entire CCP April calendar [here](#).

Pi(e) Sunday raised close to \$400!



The CCP bakers turned out 14 pies for sale on March 16, and the sale table was empty before Coffee Hour was over! Thanks to Danielle Chamberlin, Mary Beth Gray, Christopher and Cassie Gray-Spight, Maura Whitmore and Micki Carter for producing pies in flavors such as berry, pear custard, pecan, Key Lime, apple, cherry and a special season St. Paddy's Day pie! Two pie orders came in after Pi(e) Day, and Micki reports that she still has Key Lime juice and zest if anyone would like to place an order. This year's total of nearly \$400 went to the Social Action Fund of CCP.

May Messenger deadline will be April 21.



United Church of Christ

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