



September 2026

THE MESSENGER

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF THE PENINSULA

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College Heights invites us to picnic under their oaks

The lovely grounds of College Heights UCC in San Mateo was the perfect setting for the summer picnic Aug. 2 for the four UCC churches in the mid-Peninsula. A food vendor provided great Mexican tacos, fajitas, carnitas and sides, and root beer floats (along with lots of goodies from the phenomenal bakers of all four congregations) finished off a lovely summer afternoon. And, of course, the weather was perfect!



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 to receive honor from PSR

By Rev. Jim Mitulski

Return again, return again, return to the home of your soul.

Return to who you are, return to what you are

Return to where you born and reborn again

— Hymn 1011 in Singing the Journey

Dear friends, As summer draws to a close, I want to express my appreciation to all of you who participated throughout the summer to ensure that we had as robust a summer as have during the year, with no slump in attendance.

We had great worship services, engaging speakers, new lay leadership emerging, worship and education programs. The energy feels vibrant, and we have more people planning to take the new members and inquirers class than have joined the church in recent years.

We're ready to keep growing and changing and renewing.

At the August Board meeting, I shared my own commitment to continue working full time as pastor for at least two more years, possibly longer, as we start to look at how to maintain continuity in succession.

All three of your clergy are committed through the next year. I think we all feel we're on a roll, and I hope you feel it too.

If you'd like to make an appointment with me to discuss anything, please contact me at Jim@CCPeninsula.org. You can sign up for some appointments electronically, or we can identify a time not on the calendar link that you'll receive in my email signature.

I hope you'll make a special effort to join us on Homecoming Sunday, Sept. 11, when we will receive new members, share in Holy Communion and re-gather from wherever



Rev. Miak Siew

we've been this summer.

The choir will perform and this is a good time to join our expanding program if you've been considering it. Join us

The Pacific School of Religion will recognize me with a special Herald of Welcome award at the upcoming Earl Lectures, Sept. 25-26 in Berkeley for my work in LGBT inclusion over the last 45 years.

The other honorees are Bishop Yvette Flunder, Rev. Rhina Ramos and Rev. Miak Siew.

Miak, one of my former students, is pastor of [Free Community Church](#) in Singapore, one of the first and perhaps foremost LGBT inclusive churches in Southeast Asia. He will be our guest preacher on Sept. 27.

Come home this month to CC Peninsula,

where you are always welcome!

With love, Pastor Jim

Upcoming worship themes and preachers

September – Homecoming, Renewal

Sept. 6 (Labor Day weekend): Joint service with San Carlos Community Church, 1336 Arroyo Ave, San Carlos

Sept. 13: Homecoming Sunday, kick off fall programming and Holy Communion, Rev. Jim Mitulski

Sept 20: The Days of Awe, Rev. Jim Mitulski

Sept 27: Rev. Miak Siew, Free Community Church, Singapore

October

Oct. 4: World Communion Sunday, St. Francis of Assisi, Rev. Elizabeth Atkinson

Oct. 11: National Coming Out Day, Rev. Jim Mitulski

Oct. 18: A Celebration of Banned Books, with authors Sarah and Ian Hoffman

Oct. 25: Reformation Day, Dr. Carmaron Anderson, UCC National Office, Minister for Congregational Leadership

November – Stewardship, Generosity and Gratitude

Nov. 1: All Saints and All Souls Day. Holy Communion Rev. Jim Mitulski

Nov. 8: Stewardship Sunday, Rev. Jim Mitulski

Nov. 15: Religious Education Sunday, Rev Lauren Jewett, Danville Congregational Church, Our Whole Lives program

Nov. 22: Thanksgiving and Stewardship Sunday, Rev. Jim Mitulski

Nov. 29: First Sunday of Advent

**Are you willing to serve as a liturgist or usher?
Could you help prepare communion? Worship
helpers are needed so please sign up [here](#).**

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

Warren's Wonderings

When tech teases us, prayer leads us

By Rev. Warren Dale

As I begin my wonderings, I am challenged by what is going on in the other room.

For a couple of years now, I have been trying to help Georgi navigate through her “wonderful” new computer. It is easy to get lost in it.

She often calls me to help find an article for the Daily Journal she is working on.

Lately, she has been beset with malware notifications which I have tried to rid from her computer. And when we try to use keys to copy, paste or print, we have to use a different control/command key from my computer.

Every time we try to find a document, we have to rediscover the pathway that leads us to its unique place. We no longer have any resident 12-year-olds in our house who can help us. Woe is me. Woe is Georgi.

Finally, I said, “Georgi, we need to get a simple computer that matches mine, and together we can learn how to communicate, create and launch new possibilities.”

I am so glad that prayer is so much easier. I have it on good authority that we can access God through many different portals and pathways.

Matthew 6: 6- 8 says:

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to God, who is unseen. Then the Holy One, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

“And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for God knows what you need before you ask.”

So, we can pray in private. We can utter a word, a phrase. We can choose words

from the Good Book. We can write a letter to Jesus, God or the Holy Spirit.

Well, we bought Georgi’s new computer. Oh, my, now we have to somehow extract from the old and implant it into the new. So, we asked our 12-year-old consultant, Paul Michel, to help us.

Guess what? It’s the same with prayer. We have our 10:30 Sunday service for helping us navigate through prayerful needs. We can join with others and pray at 11 a.m. on Wednesday morning. We can join with others on Thursday night, and we can join with others on Sunday nights. All the links are on the website.

And, of course, we can just say, “God listen to my heart. I need to be reminded of your presence.”

Blessings, the Rev... Warren

From Pastor Sheryl

Gearing up for Christian Ed this fall

By Rev. Sheryl Johnson

This summer has been a wonderful time for kids’ programming at CCPeninsula! Kids’ faith formation sessions are going strong with about four participants (and two leaders) most of the time.

So far, our general structure has included check-ins, spiritual reflections on our week, embodied prayer time, acting out Scripture stories, and then engaging with these stories through various media, such as clay.

We’ve explored open-ended “wondering” questions like which part of the Bible story was most important, and even which part you wish had been left out.

We also created our own modern retellings of various stories through scriptwriting and drama. It has been a special experience, and I am so grateful to the kids (and youth!) who have participated and the many adults who have said Yes! to assisting in various ways.

I look forward to how the program will continue to evolve, based on the interests, needs and desires of the kids and families.

Another highlight this summer was the Aug. 2 picnic at College Heights UCC! It was wonderful to eat delicious food and connect with kids, youth and adults from various churches.

Highlights included bubbles (turns out bubbles are especially strong if you forget to dilute the bubble solution!), croquet and face-painting. We look forward to more collaborations.

Coming up this fall, we will restart our monthly youth and young adult social outings beginning on Sept. 27. We’ll have lunch together, decorate pillowcases for kids staying in LifeMoves shelters, play games and brainstorm ideas for activities we might want to do in the new program year.

All are welcome (especially those aged 14-40ish)!

I am delighted to announce that Rev. Lauren Jewett will be coming on Nov. 15 to preach and share a learning session about Our Whole Lives, a human sexuality education program with sessions for various age groups, ranging from elementary-aged kids

to youth to adults to older adults rooted in progressive values and spirituality. The program was developed by the Unitarian Universalist church as well as the UCC.

She will share information and answer questions so we can explore whether there might be interest in offering any age level of the program in the future, potentially jointly with other churches. Please save the date!

Finally, thank you all so much for the very special installation service on Aug. 9! While I have been at CCPeninsula for over a year and a half, it is wonderful to celebrate that my position is now “settled.”

I feel very settled here and so grateful for the many ways you all have welcomed Andie and me (and my wife Kelly!) into your community. Thank you so much for the beautiful card, flowers and forthcoming stole! I was very moved by the service and your prayers.

Thanks to the whole church for continuing to be a flexible, creative, welcoming, fun and spiritually rich community. It’s a blessing!

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

Mildred Pitts Walter, an angel unaware

The children of CCB had the chance to listen to her stories

By Micki Carter

Several years ago, Bob and Ella Mae Donovan met a lovely woman at their exercise class who, they learned, was an author of children's books with black children as principal characters.

Her name was Mildred Pitts Walter, a retired kindergarten teacher from South Central Los Angeles who then lived on the Peninsula.

The Donovans approached Pastor Kristi Denham and asked if they could invite Mrs. Walter to come to church (then the Congregational Church of Belmont) to do the Time With the Children one Sunday. Kristi, who was the mother of two bi-racial boys, was thrilled with the idea.

Mrs. Walter came to CCB a number of times over the years, often during Black History Month, and she always brought her books to share with the children who gathered on the steps of the chancel to listen to her before heading off to Sunday School. The kids were enchanted with this soft-spoken woman and the stories she shared.

We learned this summer that Mildred Pitts Walter died May 19 at an assisted living facility in Redwood City at the age of 103. In death, she received the highest of honors — the New York Times published an obituary on her remarkable life!

"Teaching kindergarten in South Central Los Angeles in the 1950s and '60s, Mildred Pitts Walter realized that her students were not represented in the books they read. So she wrote her own," The Times obit by Richard Sandomir said.

"Over three decades, she wrote more than 20 books that 'changed the course of children's literature,'" said Lin Oliver, a



Mildred Pitts Walter

founder of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

The article said that Mrs. Walter had searched for books that had black characters that her students, most of them black like her, could connect with. They were far and few between.

Then she heard that, in 1968 under the Johnson Administration, the federal government had set aside funds "to encourage publishers to create more books for students like hers. Ms. Walter eventually challenged an executive at a local publishing company, Ward Ritchie Press, to fill that need."

According her autobiography, *Something Inside So Strong: Life in Pursuit of Choice*,

Courage and Change (2019), he responded, "Well, write them!"

So she did.

Over the next 30 years, she wrote more than 20 books, including *Lillie of Watts: A Birthday Discovery*, which came just four years after the Watts riots; *Ty's One-Man Band*; and *Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World*, which won the Coretta Scott King Award from the American Library Association.

Born on Sept. 9, 1922, at a logging camp in Sweetville, La., Mildred Pitts earned her bachelor's degree from Southern University in Baton Rouge and then moved to Los Angeles where she found a job as a clerk for the Los Angeles Unified School District, the same employer that had refused her a job as a teacher.

In 1947," according to The Times, "she married Earl Walter, a social worker who would become the chairman of the Los Angeles chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, or CORE.

She was also active in CORE, and she and her husband were part of an integrated CORE team that tested compliance with the Unruh Civil Rights Act, which the California legislature had enacted in 1959 to ban racial discrimination by businesses, including hotels and motels."

Her husband died in 1965, and she retired from teaching in 1970. She lived in Denver for nearly 30 years and then moved to the Peninsula to be near her son Craig, who announced her death in July.

The children of CCB no doubt were unaware that they were in the presence of royalty when Mildred Pitts Walter came to share her life with them.

The Good Hope Luncheon will be at noon Tuesday, Sept. 1, at Gin Mon Chinese Restaurant in the Carlmont Shopping Center. All friends and members of CCPeninsula are invited.

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



Installing Pastor Sheryl at CCPeninsula

The Rev. Dr. Sheryl Johnson was officially installed as Associate Pastor for Religious Education for the Congregational Church of the Peninsula during the worship service Aug. 9. The installation was conducted by Yolanda Anderson, the moderator of the Golden Gate Association of the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ. Board President Maura Whitmore joined Pastor Jim in the

ceremony. After the installation, members of the congregation gathered to lay hands on Pastor Sheryl as a blessing. Sheryl's daughter Andie joined her mom as part of the ritual, and Henry Altorfer caught the great photo (below) of Andie kissing her mom's hand as her own sort of blessing. The congregation presented Pastor Sheryl with flowers and the promise of a stole to come as well as many thanks for emphasizing the importance of youth to CCPeninsula.



To go to the Congregational Church of Peninsula website, click on [CCPen.](https://www.ccpeninsula.org/)

Major work on our building is outlined

By Greg Thornhill

With Philip Broadus's departure, the Facilities Committee has taken on more coordination of projects recently. Even so, we continue to make steady progress on several important priorities.

Waterproofing

The largest update to share with the congregation is our ongoing work on the multifaceted waterproofing project for the deck adjacent to the east and south sides of the Sanctuary.

We are currently working with contractors to define the scope of the project and obtain work estimates.

The waterproofing initiative has four core components:

1) Remediating rotting doorsills between the Sanctuary and the deck so they are structurally sound and integrated into the waterproofing system.

2) Addressing a significant structural issue above an OT4Kids window. This is not a window original to the building, and it may not be structurally sound — a likely culprit of our water leak issues.

3) Removing the organ annex room.

4) Waterproofing the entire deck.

On Aug. 26, the Board discussed the project at length and approved a motion to move forward with removal of the organ annex and related project components, provided the work remains within a \$400,000 scope and an informational meeting is held with the congregation.

There are still many details to work through, and we are mindful that the city may have specific requirements because of our historic building classification.

However, the approval to move forward removes a key barrier to engaging contractors more deeply and beginning detailed planning for the work.

You will hear more from the Facilities Committee soon about scheduling an informational meeting and gathering input on design questions. These may include what the exterior south wall of the Sanctuary should look like, whether it should return to the original design despite the challenges created by our elevated chancel, and whether large windows could be incorporated if approved by the city.

Landscaping Project

You may have noticed a large landscaping project underway in the berm near the street. This initiative is an Eagle Scout project led by Erik L. The initial work will take a couple of weekends to complete and has involved a generous team of Scouts, parents, nursery employees from Highway 92 Succulents, and our two project coordinators, Jill Visor and Maura Whitmore.

A complete refresh of the berm is larger than any one Scout project can accomplish, so we anticipate that additional work may be completed as other Scouts approach us

with project ideas.

Fireplace Room

Another change you may have noticed downstairs is that the waiting room previously erected by Bay Area Art Therapy has been dismantled.

The Facilities Committee had been discussing this for quite some time. While the removal has created some challenges for Bay Area Art Therapy, the committee determined that removing the structure was necessary to open up the Fireplace Room and reduce limitations on its broader use.

PENINSULA MULTIFAITH COALITION

PEACE DAY

2026

Join us for a day of unity, reflection and community.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7TH, 2026 | **TIME: 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM** | **LOCATION: TWIN PINES PARK, BELMONT**

Join us for an interfaith prayer service for peace including music and art.

- Interfaith Prayer Service for Peace
- Music & Artistic Expressions
- All Ages Welcome

COMMUNITY POTLUCK LUNCH

- Bring a dish to share
- Bring your water bottle

Coming together across traditions to celebrate peace, understanding, and harmony.

QUESTIONS? Contact Diane Fahrner | **fahrner2@c.mcast.net**

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

Ready for Chocolate Fest in February?

By Dana Floro
San Mateo County
Health Foundation

As many of you know, after 42 years of hosting Chocolate Fest, the Congregational Church of the Peninsula has passed the event to the San Mateo County Health Foundation (SMCHF), ensuring this beloved community tradition continues while supporting an important local cause.

We're happy to share that planning for the inaugural Foundation-led Chocolate Fest on Saturday, Feb. 6, 2027, is off to a great start.

SMCHF has already secured nine artisan chocolate vendors:

- 1.2.3 Chocolat LLC,
- Blue Canary Sweets,
- COBA,
- CocoTutti Chocolates,
- Kate's Single Batch Toffee,
- Kindred Caramels,
- Preston's Candy and Ice Cream,
- Sugar Butter Love, and
- Yabai Bar, LLC.

Two additional chocolatiers, Vanny's Chocolates and VB Fine Choc-



olates, have also confirmed their participation and are expected to complete their vendor paperwork soon. They are working on sourcing another four to six vendors.

Several key pieces are already in place behind the scenes. The familiar Ralston Avenue banner has been reserved, the Chocolate Fest website is live, shuttle service has been secured.

We're pleased to hear that the Michael Medwid Jazz Quartet will once again provide live music for the event.

Marketing plans will be finalized in September, with teaser promotions beginning at the end of the month and broader outreach launching in mid-October.

One logistical item still being finalized is parking. Because Holy Cross Church traditionally hosts its annual Diocese Folk Dance Festival in February, its parking lot will likely not be available for Chocolate Fest.

Alternative parking arrangements are being explored to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience for attendees.

It's exciting to see the momentum building as Chocolate Fest enters this new chapter. We are grateful that a tradition your congregation nurtured for more than four decades will continue to bring people together while supporting the important work of the San Mateo County Health Foundation.

We hope many of the church family will attend on Feb. 6 and help make this first Foundation-led Chocolate Fest a wonderful success.

Social Action

43 care kits assembled for SF State students and unhoused

By Lisa Lucett

The Social Action Committee asked, and the congregation answered the call.

For a few weeks, the Narthex was a collection point for all things care kits! Gift cards, snacks, toiletries, socks and school supplies were collected and sorted.

Special collection donations were also accepted.

On Aug. 23, the Social Action Committee welcomed several members from the congregation to assemble care kits for the unhoused into gallon-sized bags.

The Dining Room was a-buzz as folks stuffed items into each bag. It was especially wonderful to watch the kids help with the project as their parents explained what we were doing. Oh, how I wish I had thought to take a picture!

In the end, 43 care kits were assembled, and three big bags of supplies were gathered up for the San Francisco State Guardian Scholar program which supports students



raised in foster care at SF State as they navigate college on their own.

In the next weeks, funds from the church's special collection will be combined with a donation from the Social Action Committee to purchase McDonalds gift cards to be added to the care kits.

Once completed, care kits will be available at the church for congregants to pick up and share with the unhoused.



Mary Beth Gray lends cake slicing advice to her twins, Christopher and Cassie, as they cut the August birthday cake. They turned 18 on Aug. 22.

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

CCPeninsula's September Calendar

1 Tue	12:00PM - 1:00PM	☐ Off-site events	Good Hope Luncheon
	1:30PM - 2:30PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Book Group
2 Wed	11:00AM - 12:00PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Pastor Jim and Pastor Warren
3 Thu	6PM - 7PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Rev. Jim Mitulski and Rev. Michael Cronin
6 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	☐ Worship	Sunday worship
	11:45AM - 12:30PM	☐ Church Events	Coffee Hour
8 Tue	1:30PM - 2:30PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Book Group
9 Wed	11:00AM - 12:00PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Pastor Jim and Pastor Warren
10 Thu	6PM - 7PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Rev. Jim Mitulski and Rev. Michael Cronin
	7:00PM - 9:00PM	☐ Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
13 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	☐ Worship	Sunday worship
	11:45AM - 12:30PM	☐ Church Events	Coffee Hour
	12:30PM - 2PM	☐ Church Events	Death Cafe
15 Tue	1:30PM - 2:30PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Book Group
16 Wed	11:00AM - 12:00PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Pastor Jim and Pastor Warren
	2PM - 3:30PM	☐ Church Events	Facilities Committee Meeting
17 Thu	6PM - 7PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Rev. Jim Mitulski and Rev. Michael Cronin
	7:00PM - 9:00PM	☐ Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
20 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	☐ Worship	Sunday worship
	11:45AM - 12:30PM	☐ Church Events	Coffee Hour
22 Tue	1:30PM - 2:30PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Book Group
23 Wed	11:00AM - 12:00PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Pastor Jim and Pastor Warren
	7:00PM - 9:00PM 📧	☐ Church Events	Church Board Meeting
24 Thu	6PM - 7PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Prayer Time with Rev. Jim Mitulski and Rev. Michael Cronin
	7:00PM - 9:00PM	☐ Church Events	Choir Rehearsal
27 Sun	10:30AM - 12:00PM	☐ Worship	Sunday worship
	11:45AM - 12:30PM	☐ Church Events	Coffee Hour
	12PM - 1:30PM	☐ Church Events	Youth Group
	12PM - 1PM	☐ Church Events	Social Action Meeting/Fireplace Room
29 Tue	1:30PM - 2:30PM	☐ Off-site events	Online Book Group

You can access the entire CCPen September calendar [here](#).

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF THE
PENINSULA



DEATH CAFE

CAKE!

COFFEE &
TEA

TALK ABOUT DEATH
AND END-OF-LIFE ISSUES AMONG FRIENDS.
IT'S NOT AS DARK AS IT SOUNDS -
SOMETIMES WE LAUGH!

SEPT. 13, OCT. 11, NOV. 8

SECOND SUNDAYS
12:30 - 2 PM

DEATHCAFE.COM



751 ALAMEDA DE LAS
PULGAS, BELMONT, CA

CCPENINSULA.ORG

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

Take a closer look at the influencer culture with Online Book Club

The book for the Chat & Chew Online Book Club for September is Caro Claire Burke's debut novel *Yesteryear*.

It's a psychological thriller and social satire that explores the curated world of influencer culture. Natalie Heller Mills, a successful Christian "tradwife" influencer, has built a lucrative brand on a romanticized ideal of domestic, pastoral life.

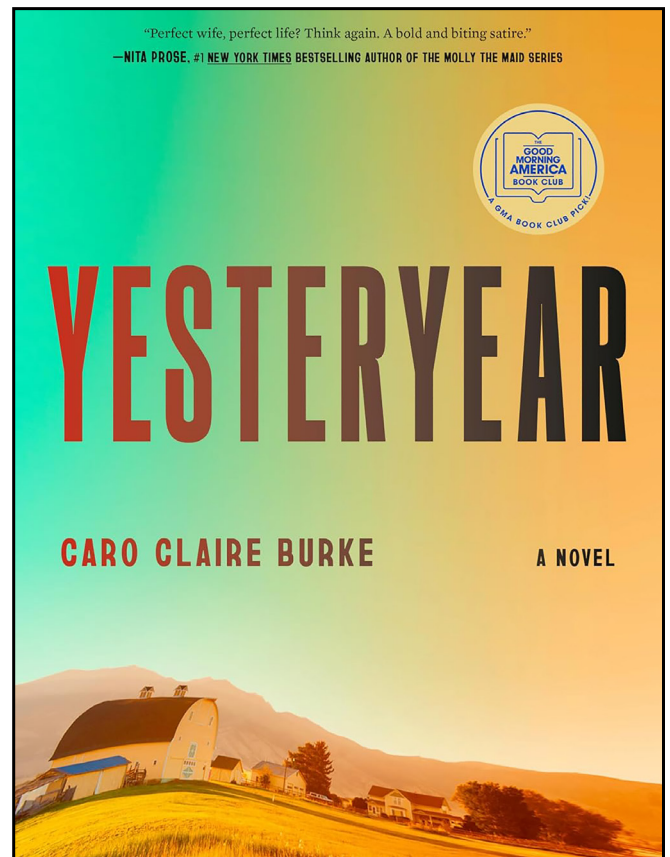
Burke has a surprise in store for Natalie.

The group meets via [Zoom](#) on Tuesdays from 1:30-2:45 p.m. Here is the reading guide for the month: Sept. 1, Chs 1-9, pps. 1-86; Sept. 8, Chs 10-19, pps. 87-141; Sept. 15, Chs 20-39, pps. 142-271; Sept. 22, Chs 40-57, pps. 273-357; and Sept. 29, finish the book.

Come even if you're not caught up on the reading. You'll meet people from across the country — and next door.

For October, a special series on Banned Books is planned. The November book will be *The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans. This schedule is always subject to revision.

Books are generally available at the rear of the Sanctuary, supplied by our partners at Reach and Teach Bookstore in San Carlos. The books are free, but you are welcome to make a donation to cover the cost for yourself or others. Just note "Book Group" on your donation.



October Messenger deadline will be Sept. 24.



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