



The Pine Tree

The Congregational Church of San Mateo
United Church of Christ

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Vol. 59

Issue #15 • December 20–January 16, 2011

Worship Celebrations

Advent: A Highway for Our God

Dec. 19 Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Christmas Pageant: Following the GPS to Bethlehem
After worship: Congregational Forum, Christmas Caroling

Friday, Dec. 24, Christmas Eve Services

Family Worship 5 p.m., Rev. Nixon preaching
Candlelight Service 11 p.m., Rev. Nixon preaching



NEW! Christmas Eve Blessing and Communion

This year we are offering an opportunity to come as an individual, couple, or family for a Christmas blessing and communion.

Ministers will be in the Fireplace room for 30 minutes after the 5 p.m. Family Service, and 30 minutes before and after the 11 p.m. Candlelight service.

Christmas Eve is a wonderful time to share a moment with your family receiving a blessing. Just come to the Fireplace room and pastors and interns will serve communion and offer a blessing. We are praying that this Christmas season will be a meaningful one for you and yours. We look forward to seeing you there.

December 26th College Student Sunday!

This annual service celebrating the return of our journeying college students is a great way for all you college students or recent college graduates to reconnect with your church family and friends by sharing in worship what you've experienced in college from a spiritual perspective.

We have three preachers lined up, **Shannon McEntee, Grant Adams, and Kim Held.**

If you are interested or know of anyone you would like to be involved through music, prayers, children's moment, leading responsive reading, please contact Steve Naylor, snaylor@ccsm-ucc.org.

Our theme: *A Highway to Our Progressive Christian God.*

"Progressive Christianity takes the Bible seriously because it does not take it literally. Progressive Christianity embraces the social witness of the gospel every bit as much as the personal moral witness, and it recognizes that other religions may be as good for others as ours is for us." — Jim Burklo

Notes From Penny

Lauri Floresca told me a cute holiday story about her family. They started decorating the tree and before they were finished, it was time for dinner. They were enjoying a meal together when their little one, Zachary, got up from the table and went over to the tree, searching for more ornaments. "He returned to the table, beaming, with a bible-shaped ornament that opens up to reveal a nativity scene. He lifts the lid and exclaimed for all to hear, "Look, I found God!"

No wonder our scriptures tell us, "A little child shall lead them."

I wish it were that easy—to find God, that is. Yet there are so many opportunities all around us if we would just see with a child's eyes. This Advent season has been a wonderful reminder of all the ways God "shows up" in our lives and in our community.

From the holiday party, to the adopt-a-family Christmas tree, to the beautiful Christmas concert, to the upcoming pageant—these are all opportunities we have to open to the spirit's presence among us.

This is my fourth Christmas here at CCSM. One thing I love about being a part of church community is that you travel the liturgical cycles over and over again. And the beauty is that each time they are new. We share traditional rituals, but each year they are different and meaningful. It is a joy to celebrate these seasons with you especially now that I know you better, and you have made your way into my heart.

I could not be more excited about where we are in our church life and where we are headed. In the next issue of *The Pine Tree* I will be sharing lots of exciting news with you. We have just completed our most successful stewardship

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Youth & Family News

Children's Pageant

Sunday, December 19 is the Children's Christmas Pageant and Family Worship. This year's pageant, **Follow the GPS to Bethlehem**, will add a modern framework to the traditional story. You will see our first and second grade youth as the nativity characters while our older students search for this baby using their GPS and I phones. It will be a service filled with children as our children and youth choirs sing and several of our youth offer special music. Please keep your children with you for the worship service, as there are no Church School classes. Plan to sit up close to the front so you can enjoy the pageant. **We will have two rehearsals this week:**

Wed, Dec. 15, 5:00-6:00 p.m. Pageant rehearsal in the sanctuary: Pageant characters and narrators will run through the pageant and block out scenes.

Saturday, Dec. 18: 9:30-11:30 a.m. Dress rehearsal in the sanctuary! The children and youth choirs, pageant characters and narrators need to be present. There will be treats to sustain the energy!

Church School Teacher Meeting

Saturday, January 8: 9:30-11:30 a.m., Fireplace Room. We will soon beginning two new curricula: UCC **Faith Practices** and Progressive Christianity's **A Joyful Path**. Both are newly written with a progressive theology lens. As we use the curriculum, we are asked to also critique it. We will explore the new curricula: set themes and dates for the spring. We will also spend some time discussing how to incorporate so many new children into our Church School program. Please bring your ideas, concerns and calendars! It is so much easier to set dates together so I hope you all can come!

Families January Jamboree

Saturday, January 22: 4:00-6:00 p.m. in Kloss Hall. An afternoon of fun and frolic for Church School families. Twister, kids charades and more in Kloss Hall. Movie and popcorn in the Youth Room for older kids. Bring your favorite board game or family game and also some healthy finger food to share. Please RSVP to Renato Floresca at RenatoFloresca@gmail.com

Mid-High and Senior High Caroling:

After church on the Dec. 19th we will embark on our annual Christmas Caroling to CCSM members and friends who are home bound, sick, or have lost someone this past year. Meet in Kloss Hall after church and we'll carpool from there. The caroling is usually 1.5 hrs. There will be a soup lunch served before we go caroling.

Christian Education Kitchen

Our renovated kitchen needs all types of **supplies**—silverware, plates, serving items, baking and cooking supplies. Basically, we need it all, so please bring any new or gently used kitchen supplies into the church office.

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CCSM Caring Kids Corner

Month of January: Bring small toiletries for creating Valentine's Day toiletry bags for Shelter Network.

Sunday, January 2: Bring your favorite canned foods or cereal to church to assist our neighbors who are in need.

Christmas Caroling on Sunday, December 19

Come join our merry band of carolers as we visit CCSM seniors and friends who could use an extra bit of cheer this season. Meet in the Kloss Hall immediately after church for CFE's famous minestrone (plus mac and cheese for the kids). After a quick but hearty lunch, we'll divide into groups and head out for caroling. After the fun, we'll meet back at church for cookies, cocoa, and sharing. Last year we had more than 50 people join us-the more, the merrier! Song books provided-singing talent not required!

SPECIAL!

Screening of *Race to Nowhere* on January 25 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

A concerned mother turned filmmaker aims her camera at the high-stakes, high-pressure culture that has invaded our schools.

Featuring the heartbreaking stories of young people in all types of communities who have been pushed to the brink, educators who are burned out and worried that students aren't developing the skills they need, and parents who are trying to do what's best for their kids, **Race to Nowhere** points to the silent epidemic in our schools.

Race to Nowhere is a call to mobilize families, educators, and policy makers. Tickets can be purchased online for \$10/\$15 at the door. More information to follow, so mark your calendars and save the date.

Church Office Holiday Schedule

The office will be closed on:

Fri., Dec. 24 at 12 noon

Mon., Dec. 27

Thur., Dec. 30 at 12 noon

Fri., Dec. 31



A Successful Christmas Party

By Lauri Floresca, chair CFE

More than 80 people came out for the Christmas Party & Silent Auction on December 4 and had a great time while raising money for important local causes. The evening started with festive Christmas music, delicious snacks, and an ice-breaker that kept people guessing well into the night. Then Steve Naylor took charge of the music, and the dance floor stayed full until the last cup was picked up. Meanwhile, MSJ organized a fabulous silent auction with an amazing variety of gift baskets to support local organizations in need. All in all, a wonderful way to kick off the Christmas season!

Christmas Fund Offering on December 19

For 108 years, the UCC Christmas Fund Offering is a ministry of compassion and care for those who serve the churches of the UCC. In 2009, the **Ministerial Assistance Program** provided over \$1.5 million to individuals and families in need. Low-income retirees feel the financial stress most keenly in this economic climate. Reflect on a retired minister you touched your life or a church secretary or minister of music. Your special offering will honor his/her memory and help the many in need. The offering will be received on **Sunday, Dec. 19**. Please use the fund envelopes in the bulletins or simply mention *Christmas Fund* on your check.

A pastor who received assistance wrote: "Words cannot express how much this means to us. The financial help is so crucial to our being able to meet our obligations and we are grateful for it!"



The year's Advent Workshop was filled with holiday warmth: good soup, great fellowship and wonderful crafts. Families worked together to creating Advent wreaths, silver bells for caroling friends and little beaded candy canes. Thanks to the CYF Ministry for bringing us into the Advent season.



Blanketeer Quilt sale. Details on page 6.

Target 2030: Next Generation Leadership Initiative

By Steve Naylor

I've been accepted! It is with great joy that we as a congregation are able to embark on the journey of creating a vibrant and sustainable United Church of Christ for the future. I have been accepted into the inaugural class of the *Target 2030: Next Generation Leadership Initiative* in the United Church of Christ. My graduating year will be 2021! Which means I will have completed a 10 year leadership development including intense self reflection, congregational leadership systems training, and complete my Doctorate of Ministry. I am embarking on this journey with 13 colleagues accepted into this class, the support of the Board of Ministry, and this congregation. The program is designed to give young pastors incentive to stay in parish ministry and equip them with the tools to create vibrant congregations. I am grateful and humbled to be involved in this program and eager for the diverse ways this program will enable me to serve this congregation in the future. The journey starts this January with a week long intensive training through the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center.



Please don't hesitate to ask me questions about the program, the benefits for CCSM, and what I'm learning along the way.

Winter Taizé Back By Popular Demand

We had a great response from people saying they could really use this special Taize service to connect with God's spirit in the mystery of shared contemplation through singing, prayer, and reflection.

We will provide **free powerbars** to hold people over until dinner if you have to come straight from work. We are starting at 6:30 p.m. to make room for our loyal choir members who wish to attend. We will meet every other Wednesday in the sanctuary chancel **starting January 5 and ending on Ash Wednesday, March 6.**

January 5, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

January 19, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

February 2, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

February 16, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

March 2, 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Ash Wednesday: March 9, 2011 from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

What is Taizé Prayer?

The prayer is flexible and has no real beginning or end. Songs are repeated over and over again to help us enter into the presence of God. The simple phrases are easily memorized so books are not necessary.

Notes From Penny

Continued from page 1

drive ever; we are getting ready to unveil the plans for our outreach ministry which will begin in February; and a number of us are working on taking our Mission, Service and Justice ministry to the next level. (And, I'll have a whole new list of my favorite reads for you literary bugs out there.)

I look forward to sharing Christmas Eve with you and in the new year, as Epiphany arrives, we will be exploring the extraordinary relationships that we are called to live as people of faith.



Epiphany Sunday Celebrations

Epiphany 2011: Extraordinary Relationships

The most important thing in our lives is our relationships. During this Epiphany season, we will invite more *Light* into our relationships. We are called to extraordinary relationships in the realm of God, and we need a robust spirituality that takes seriously values like integrity, staying power, honesty, generosity and gratitude that extend to our most intimate and familial relationships, as well as our relationships to power, to community and to the state.

Jan. 2: Epiphany Sunday

Sermon: *The search for real relationships*

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12, Preacher: Penny Nixon

Jan. 9: Baptism of Jesus

Sermon: *Do The Right Thing*

Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17, Preacher: Greg Davis

Jan. 16: Martin Luther King Jr

Sermon: *"I pledge allegiance to..."*

Scripture: Romans 13:1-7; 8-10, Preacher: Penny Nixon

Jan. 23

Sermon: *Thank You. You're Welcome.*

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-21, Guest Preacher: Cynthia Riggins

Jan. 30: Congregational Meeting

Sermon: *A Different Kind Of Social Networking*

Scripture: Romans 12:1-13, Preacher: Penny Nixon

Feb. 6

Sermon: *To Give is To Live*

Scripture: Acts 4:32-35, Preacher: Bonnie Rambob

Feb. 13: Valentine's Day

Sermon: *Staying Power*

Scripture: Hebrews 6:13-15, Preacher: Jerri Handy

Feb. 20: Presidents Day

Sermon: *"The Whole Truth, And Nothing But The Truth"*

Scripture: I Cor 13:8-13, Preacher: Penny Nixon

Feb. 27: Invite a Friend Day

Sermon: *The Rarest Of Treasures*

Scripture: I Cor 13:1-7, Preacher: Penny Nixon

Mar. 6: Guest Preacher: Riess Potterveld, PSR President

Brown bag lunch following the service.

Lecture/Discussion: *Trends in American Religion*

Join an Affinity Group

Music & Art Circle

We will celebrate the holidays on **Friday, Dec. 17 at noon** at Pat Pepper's home, 325 W. Bellevue Ave., San Mateo. The festive program features talent from the Circle, including piano ensembles, vocal solos, a Christmas reading and caroling. Bring a sandwich; drinks and dessert are provided. Guests are welcome, and should call Zelta Adams, 341-1644.

2030s

Sunday, Dec. 19th Caroling: After church on the 19th we will embark on our annual Christmas Caroling to CCSM members and friends who are home bound, sick, or have lost someone this past year. Meet in Kloss Hall after church and we'll carpool from there. The caroling is usually 1.5 hrs. There will be a soup lunch served before we go caroling.

Sunday, Dec. 26th O'Neills: After worship we will have our annual *Christmas Theology on Tap* at O'Neills Irish Pub on B St. in downtown San Mateo. We arrive at O'Neills around 12 p.m. This will be a time to check in on everything that has happened this past year and look at what is coming up in the next year!

For more information contact Steve at snaylor@ccsm-ucc.org.

Kaleidoscope Women's Group

We will meet **Monday, January 3rd from 7:00-9:30 p.m. in the Buckham Room**. For the potluck, make a favorite winter recipe and bring 15 copies of your recipe to share. Also for our program, bring one great organizing idea that you use. We will also discuss our programs for 2011. Please invite a new friend from church. If you wish to know more about Kaleidoscope Women's Group, please call Shirley McKinnie, 349-3663.

Sign-up Now For e-Pine Tree

Receive *The Pine Tree* hot off the press at our church website, ccsm-ucc.org! **You will also be included in any web-based surveys by CCSM.** Send Kay Harris (kay@communi-ks.com) your request for the *e-Pine Tree update notice* via email. She'll put you on the list and you can download at your leisure!

Joys & Concerns

Prayers of Joy and Gratitude

Two nonagenarians celebrated birthdays in December! **Sam Owens** turned 90 on Sunday, December 5 and **George Kromhout** celebrated 93 on December 16.

Dave and Anne (McKinnie) Higginbotham have adopted a little boy, **Kody Curtis Higginbotham**, born November 26. **Grandma Shirley McKinnie** ecstatically shares in their joy.

George Vail is doing well after his knee replacement surgery.

Phil Lind's brother, Geoff, is recovering well after his surgery.

We continue to keep **Lynn Marie Coye** in our prayers as she continues to heal. It's been great to see her back at church!

Melissa Glasmann got the great news that her cancer had NOT returned.

Prayers of Comfort

Tony Gallo's father, Enzo Gallo, passed away on December 6, 2010 after a battle with lymphoma. Our love surrounds Tony and Kathy as they grieve his loss and celebrate his life.

Ann Fyfe's stepfather, Bill Cutler, passed away unexpectedly on Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 2010. Our hearts and prayers go out to Ann and her family.

Barbara Lincoln Ashbaugh, Roger Ashbaugh's mother, passed away December 7 in

Redding, California, at age 97. A charter member of Pilgrim Congregational U.C.C., Shasta County, she is survived by her three sons, their wives, and nine grandchildren. Our prayers surround, Roger, Carla and the Ashbaugh families. Condolence cards may be sent to 2060 Lexington Ave, San Mateo, CA 94402.

Donna Lindsay and her family celebrated the life of her father, **Orville Coats**, last week. He is a retired UMC pastor, who passed away on July 6, 2010.

Former longtime member **Guy Heimsoth** passed away on Thursday, November 18, 2010. Our prayers are with **Betty** and the family.

Our prayers surround **Caroline and Bob Reinke** as they support their high school friend, **Mary Jo Van Derveer**, whose daughter, **Linda**, passed away on November 23, 2010.

Prayers of Healing and Support

Prayers for healing for **Diane Griffith** who is recovering at home from an infection. Prayers for **Bob McCune's** continued comfort.

Prayers of love and support for **Doris and Veril Godinez-Phillips, Margi Stone, and Zee and Cliff Larrew** as they travel their different journeys with cancer.

To Care Is To Do...

First Sunday Food Collection on January 2

As on the first Sunday of every month, please bring your donations of non-perishable food to church January 2 and place them in the marked container in the narthex. Any non-perishable foods are welcome, but if you are looking for ideas, items in particular demand include: stews, chili and hearty soups; rice and beans; and cracker snack packs (with peanut butter, cheese or tuna).

Thank you for your generous support for First Sunday Food in 2010. Looking forward to continuing our efforts together in 2011!

Volunteer Sign-ups for Homeless Shelter

CCSM is hosting the rotating homeless shelter, Home and Hope, from January 2 through 9. There are still multiple opportunities to volunteer, particularly on Sunday 1/2 and Monday 1/3: provide food for the guests, host and interact with adult guests, provide activities and/or homework help for the children (volunteer families encouraged), spend the night (1/2, 1/5, 1/6, 1/8), launder sheets and pillowcases at the end (1/9), and help with takedown on 1/9. This is a wonderful way to serve as the hands and feet and face of Christ, and accomplish more as a community than we can individually.

Thank You CCSM!

The Blanketeers would like to thank everyone that supported the Quilt Sale and Auction. The sale produced \$2095. We were able to give \$1500 to Mission, Service and Justice and save \$595 for batting and fabric. In addition to the sale, the Blanketeers completed 19 quilts for the Adopt-a-Family program this year. We couldn't manage these accomplishments without your generosity and support.

Generosity Abounds at CCSM

By Anne Fuller, chair MSJ

The members of CCSM have met the challenge of kindness and big heartedness twice this month. First, members contributed to the successful Mission, Service and Justice's (MSJ) Silent Auction on Dec. 4th with their donations of gift baskets. The creative baskets were remarkable. In many cases bidders were spurred to outbid their competitors resulting in receipts above and beyond expectation. The \$2400 raised helped to fund Homework Central in San Mateo and the Mother of Peace orphanage in Zimbabwe.

The generosity continued the next day on the first Sunday of the Adopt-A-Family project. Members are asked to pick an ornament/wish, purchase it and return it to Kloss Hall for local needy families. Ministry members in conjunction with Shelter Network deliver the gifts to the families. In his sermon that morning, Greg Davis challenged the congregation to "strip the tree bare of all of its ornaments." Within 30 minutes of the end of the sermon, all the ornaments had been claimed. Many people who arrived late to select their ornament were disappointed. We were able to locate additional families in need, some within our congregation. Once again on the following Sunday the new ornaments were eagerly selected by members of CCSM. With your help, we will donate more than 90 gifts to needy families this season.

Your generosity is overwhelming. Thank you all for being the hands, face and feet of God.

Wise and Wonderful Seniors

Thursday, January 6: Lunch at O Italia in Half Moon Bay. 11:15-2:00 p.m. Please join us for a fun lunch in Half Moon Bay at Betsy Del Fierro's Restaurant O Italia. Meet in the church parking lot at 11:15 a.m. and we will carpool over the hill in time for lunch and a little browsing on Main St. Please RSVP to the church office and say whether you wish to drive or ride.

Wednesday, January 12: Seniors' Gathering from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Retirement Passions: painters, writers and more. Several of our wise and wonderful seniors will share their interests and bring some of their works. All are welcome. Please call Betsy at church if you would like to be one of the presenters.

Brown Bag Bible Study With Our Ministers!

2nd and 4th Wednesday, 12:00 noon-1:00 p.m., Fireplace Room. Bring your lunch and your Bible and join us for a discussion on the coming week's scripture lesson. Your thoughts and ideas are welcome.

Wednesday, January 12: with Betsy Woodward.
Wednesday, January 26: with Steve Naylor.



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A newsletter for the families & friends of the
Congregational Church Of San Mateo, U.C.C.

The Pine Tree (USPS 433-380) is published in the interest of Christian Fellowship by The Congregational Church of San Mateo, 225 Tilton Ave., San Mateo, California, twice monthly. **Periodical class postage paid** at San Mateo, California. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Pine Tree, 225 Tilton Ave., San Mateo, CA 94401.

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