

Everything Under the Sun....



Dear Friends,

In December we had a torrential rainstorm that flooded the parking lot, nearby intersection, and courtyard. It was so wet that I almost cancelled the Homework Club for the safety of the tutors trying to drive and bike in. When we got into the Oak Room we were surprised to find that the church had been invaded! No fewer than four worms had wiggled under the doors to seek higher ground. There was much hullabalooing amongst the children as we discovered these wriggling creatures stranded in the middle of the floor. They were temporarily dry and safe, but very far from home.

Epiphany is the season when we celebrate Christ being revealed to the world outside of Israel. Twelve days after Christmas, the Wise Men came to pay Jesus homage and acknowledge him as king of the Jews. (Matthew 2:1-12) In this story, we are reminded that the whole world is in need of healing, and the whole world is seeking solutions, community,

and hope for a brighter future. God's promise is available to all.

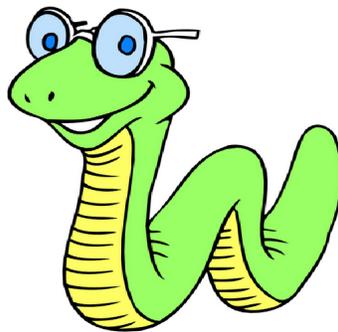
At Christmas, I preached about the importance of being witnesses to Christ. We hear the story of Jesus coming into the world through so many witnesses: shepherds, angels, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph, Mary, and of course the Wise Men. We don't know what kind of turmoil was happening that led them to place their trust in a star and then their faith in a tiny baby who promised peace.

We don't get to know what happened once they returned. But as magi, these would have been the scientists of the day, the learned, the mathematicians, the international diplomats well-versed in history and international politics. I assume they went back to using their skills and influence to try and make the world a better place, now recognizing that the social dilemmas in their communities needed as much a spiritual solution as a political one. As witnesses to Christ, they now had a message of hope to share and a path to follow.

That soggy afternoon we gently escorted the worms outside to the planters where they would be safe from the flood. We knew that when the rain stopped, they would go back to doing what they know how to do: making the earth healthier by transforming decaying matter into life-giving, fertile soil filled with nutrients and healthy microorganisms, even though we could no longer see them.

Like the Wise Men, they were good examples of how when we seek we can be saved and transformed even during the most tumultuous times.

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However, after transformation we must then go back into the world to continue doing the important work that transforms society from decaying into life-giving.

As we move through Epiphany, I invite you to pray with me that our stories of transformation, our witness to Christ in the world might inspire us not only in our work in the world, but also in our sharing the Good News with others.

Blessings, *Pastor Tracy*



ANNUAL MEETING, SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

Sunday, January 29th, is one of the most important days of the year for the church. On this day, immediately after church, the congregation will review the accomplishments and future goals of our ministry together. The meeting will begin immediately after worship.

During the meeting, boards and committees will briefly present their goals for the coming year, the council will offer to the congregation a proposed budget to accomplish these goals, and the nominating committee will propose a slate of officers and committee members. All are welcome, and members may vote.

And to make the day even better, there will be a potluck after church to celebrate the new year for our community!



REPORTS NEEDED

Church Officers and Board/Committee Chairs need to get their reports for our Annual Report in to Gwendolyn by January 10.

PRAYER PARTNERS

Please remember the following members of our church family in prayer. Pray for their welfare and growth in faith and discipleship.



January 1 - 7

Jackie Dema

January 8 - 14

T.J. and Saba Dempsey, Samuel, Jakob, and Benjamin

January 15 - 21

Mary Lou Doodokyan

January 22 - 28

Julie Dowling

January 29 - February 4

Mary and Oak Dowling

Come and Worship with us!



January 1

A New Year

Jeremiah 29:11-14 and Isaiah 42:1-9

January 8

The Wise Men come to Jesus.

Matthew 2:1-22 Epiphany Sunday

January 15

Simeon and Anna recognize Jesus

Luke 2:21-40

January 22

Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt. Refugee Sunday. Michael's video

Matthew 2:13-23

January 29

Jesus gets lost in the temple.

Luke 2:41-52

MEMBERSHIP CLASS SUNDAY FEBRUARY 12

A Membership Class will be held on Sunday, February 12, from 11:30 AM – 3:00 PM in the Pastor's Office.

Please come if you are interested in joining the church. We will explore such topics as the history of the church and the denomination, faith, social justice and our work in the community, stewardship, and polity. All are welcome to learn more, ask questions big and small, and explore what it means to be a member at First Congregational Church of San Rafael.



We will gather immediately following worship, have lunch, and should be done by 3:00 PM if not before. Please let Pastor Tracy know if you plan to attend no later than Thursday, February 9 so that food and materials can be arranged: revtracybarnowe@gmail.com
We will look forward to seeing you there!



PLEDGE UPDATE 2017

Pledges for supporting the church financially are up among those who have pledged, **but** several members have still not turned in their pledge forms. As a result, the total actually pledged still falls short of the church's needs.

So far, \$66,024 has been pledged by 21 members. Last year \$84,564 was pledged by 30 regular contributors. Since several have said they will still be pledging, we expect the final total to go up significantly.

The church will face some increased expenses in 2017. Health insurance, utilities, and building repair costs have increased and the church can no longer depend on the surplus left over from the time we had interim pastors. Furthermore, we need to invest in some ways to simplify our financial management. This is all in addition to the usual expenses such as salaries, curriculum, music, building maintenance, and mission support.

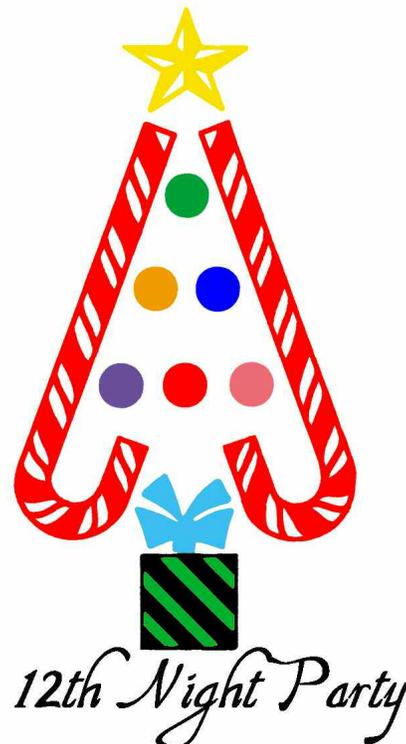
On January 10th, the Board of Trustees will decide on a budget to propose to the congregation in the Annual Meeting on January 29. I urge those who have not completed their green "Rhythm of Abundance" pledge form to do so promptly and generously.

David Knopf, Chair, Board of Trustees

DON'T MISS THE 12TH NIGHT PARTY January 7

You are invited to join us as we celebrate Epiphany – the revelation of Christ to the world. We will be celebrating with games, a potluck dinner, music, and a king cake. Please bring a dish to share. Revelers of all ages are welcome. It is going to be a beautiful evening!

In the Courtyard and Community Room from 4:00-6:30 PM



News For and About Kids



CONFIRMATION CLASSES BEGIN SUNDAY, JAN. 8

Please join us for a Confirmation class that digs deeply into Christian Theology, History, and Tradition. Over eight sessions, we will cover the basic concepts of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, Church History, Salvation, Eternal Life, and the promise of God in the progressive church. While Confirmation classes have historically been a coming-of-age ritual, we invite all who want to gain a better understanding of the basic tenets of progressive Christianity to join us. Confirmation is a re-affirmation of baptismal vows, so is open to all ages. Confirmation Sunday will be on Pentecost, June 4, 2017.

Classes will be held **every other Sunday immediately following worship until 3 PM**. Lunch will be served. There will also be multiple field trips to learn about other faith traditions and Confirmands will complete a social-service project.

Parents are encouraged to join us for lunch at the first session on January 8 to get an orientation, ask questions, and share their desires for the program.

If you are interested in joining the class, please let Pastor Tracy know as soon as possible so that books can be ordered. We will look forward to seeing you there!

CREATIVE WRITING FIELD TRIP A SWASHBUCKLING SUCCESS



Aaargh, hear ye all ye bilge rats! On the 8th of December, five wee pirates ventured forth to 826 Valencia Street in the skeevy port of disrepute: San Francisco. This crew ventured to the Pirate Store, which doubles as a writing lab and publishes the writings of youths quarterly. After six weeks of wearing their fingers to the bone scrawling poems and stories, these learned lassies earned a portside excursion

exploring all things pirate, including eye-patches, sword fighting, a periscope, fishes, gold medallions, scurvy, and especially the craft of writing.

Afterward, they went to the next door coffee tavern and wet their pipes with hot chocolate grog topped with whipped cream. Shiver me timbers, the works of these budding writers can be viewed on the church website under **Outreach -> Homework Club -> Students' blog**. Avail yerselves of the mighty wisdom of these buccaneers if ye dare, otherwise walk the plank!

A special thanks and a tip of the hat go to Cap'n Connie Kronlokken, published author, and her faithful first mate Judith for teaching the class and organizing this shore leave. Special thanks to Pastor Tracy for steering the big red ship 'Queen Salsa's Revenge' safely there and home again during a foul gale, and to the Pilgrim Park Board of Directors for financing this voyage and grog!

A secondary class and voyage will set sail in the spring, so keep your eyes to the horizon so you don't miss it!

BOARD OF MISSION MATTERS



As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me.

DINNERS FOR HOMELESS WOMEN (THE R.E.S.T. PROGRAM)

The First Congregational Church of San Rafael - Mission Board is happy to provide dinners for homeless women during 2016-17 Winter REST Program. We will be feeding 15-20 homeless women, at the Wellness Center in San Rafael. The Mission Board Team prepares and brings everything needed for a hot, nutritional and tasty meal for these women. We also eat and chat together with our guests before we clean up. It all begins at 5:30 PM to set up tables, chairs, and place settings. The guests arrive at the center and are ready to be served by 6:00 PM. We eat with them, and then we clean up the dishes and are usually done by 7:30 PM.

Our REST Dinner dates - All on Monday nights

Jan 9 - Feb 13 - Mar 6 - April 3

We need your help with table set up, food preparation (we can also pick up any dish/item you make/donate prior to 5:30, if needed), food serving, and clean up. Whatever the donation, help or time you can offer is appreciated.

See the various sign up opportunities online at

Sign-up Genius... <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/805044bada829a20-rest>

If you have any questions, ideas to help, suggestions for dinner themes, please call Sher Ripley on her cell at 415-577-6104 or email sher_ripley@comcast.net



HOMework CLUB WEDNESDAYS AND THURSDAYS

Sponsored by the Board of Mission, the Homework Club serves children from Pilgrim Park and provides support and tutoring as they complete their school homework assignments.

About 10-12 children attend each Wednesday and Thursday from 4-5 PM in the Oak Room. We are definitely

in need of more tutors to help staff this vital program. If you are able to volunteer as a homework helper, please contact Mission Board chair Lucinda Ray or Pastor Tracy.

DON'T FORGET THE FOOD BANK

You can leave your contributions for the Food Bank in the narthex. Peanut butter, tuna, canned soup, pasta, rice, and other staples are always needed.



HILARY SPAULDING HOSTS BOOK DISCUSSION BEGINNING WEDNESDAY JAN. 4



**12 Wednesdays from 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM, beginning
January 4th**

Please join us for a book study of the book *Holy Conversations* by Richard Peace. We will cover one chapter each week. Please bring finger foods to share and RSVP to Hilary Spaulding so that she can provide you with a book. Bring a friend and we will look forward to seeing you there!

January 4: Chapter 1: People on a Spiritual Pilgrimage

January 11: Chapter 2: Stories of the Presence of God

January 18: Chapter 3: Really Good News

There will be no study on January 25.

At the home of Hilary Spaulding and Bruce Weir, 168 Esmeyer Drive in San Rafael

CONCERT IN OUR SANCTUARY, SUN., FEB. 19, AT 2 PM

The Georgetown Day School Choir, of Washington, DC, will give a concert of choral music on Sunday, February 19, 2017 at 2 pm at First Congregational Church of San Rafael.

This talented high school ensemble performs throughout the U.S. annually. A suggested donation of \$20 will be collected at the door, with all proceeds benefiting EDFK.



EVERY DOLLAR FEEDS KIDS UPDATE

Every Dollar Feeds Kids, Inc. has once again provided essential meals for the children of Cuernavaca, Mexico. The program is administered by VAMOS!, a Connecticut-based organization providing educational programs for the poorest children in Cuernavaca and the outlying communities, where food and education are scarce.

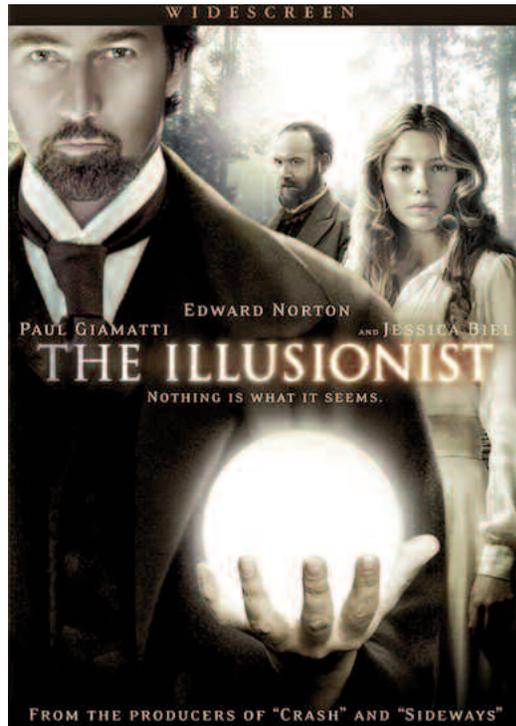
We raised over \$26,000 for this program in 2016, providing about 33,000 meals. EDFK has been providing this essential service for about 15 years. We have made a difference in the lives of many many children and hopefully have helped them avoid the continuing poverty of their birth.



MOVIE NIGHT - JANUARY 20 - THE ILLUSIONIST

Our first Movie Night in 2017 will be pure, classy, mysterious fun. In 2006 two movies about the mysterious doings of a stage magician opened at virtually the same time. Both were serious movies with big-name stars, and both got good reviews. They both flopped miserably (and unfairly) at the box office. On January 20, one of these films (the one with a happy ending) will suddenly re-appear before your very eyes!

The Illusionist tells the story of Eisenheim (no first name,) a fictional conjurer who captivated audiences in Central Europe back around 1900. It includes an evil Crown Prince, a castle, a lovely young lady who is betrothed to the prince, but who loves Eisenheim, and a brilliant police inspector who is trying to find the secret of Eisenheim's jaw-dropping illusions.



And those illusions are another star of the film. Even though we know we are watching images on a screen, where almost anything can be done today with computers, the illusions are so inventive, and they are executed with so much style that we are as wowed as the audience in the theater.

The Illusionist stars Edward Norton, Paul Giamatti, Jessica Biel and Rufus Sewell.

7 PM Friday January 20 in the De Haan Center at Pilgrim Park

This entertaining movie is a pungent period folk tale that teases you until the very end. At that point the film pretends to solve the riddles it has posed. But does it? Or is the ending just a fantasy? Either way, it doesn't much matter.

Stephen Holden, *New York Times*

You can view the trailer for *The Illusionist* on the FCCSR website.

PILGRIM PARK UPDATE

INSPECTIONS, INSPECTIONS AND MORE INSPECTIONS

Pilgrim Park staff inspects each apartment annually and responds promptly to tenants' reports of problems. The mortgagor does a cursory walk around and inspection of the property.



Because Pilgrim Park has 36 Section 8 rent subsidized apartments, a Federal government contractor does a detailed inspection of selected apartments and the premises every three years. Three years ago, we received a grade of 99 out of 100, which is very good. This year, thanks to the efforts of the staff, the grade was 99.78. The John Stewart Company, which manages about 300 properties, said this was the highest grade they knew about.

RESIDENT CHRISTMAS DINNER

About 100 residents and their guests attended this year's dinner. Pastor Tracy gave the blessing. The dozen residents who volunteer time to manage the donated food were recognized.

A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE

One of Pilgrim Park's residents is currently involved with an event that some call a miracle that happened many years ago in a land across the sea. This event and what's happening now will take many words to fully describe. So, I'll write about it in installments. To set the stage for the next installment, I'll tell you that an important part of the event happened on Christmas Eve.

THE STAFF AND DIRECTORS OF PILGRIM PARK WISH ALL A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

Bob De Haan

Thanks to
Denise Walker
for this poem

A Prayer of Thankfulness

When I feel like grumbling at chores that must be done,
The washing up, the polishing, the jobs that are not fun,
I think of all the other ones in wheelchair or in bed,
How they would love to take my place and do those chores instead.

When I see the trees and flowers, the rainbow in the sky,
The newly hatched out little birds just about to fly,
I think of those who've lost their sight or have been blind from birth,
And thank my God that I can see so well and feel the earth.

When I hear a piano played, a song so sweetly sung,
A howling wind, a rushing stream, a church bell gladly rung,
I think of those who cannot even hear a loved one speak,
As I can hear it makes me feel so grateful and so meek.

All of us from time to time have things that won't go right,
But don't forget that we can work and hear and have our sight.
Be grateful then for blessings we know we've all been given,
And offer up a little prayer of thankfulness to heaven.

Grace Robertson



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 1 — Chris Siroky
- 6 — Oak Dowling
- 20 — Doug Shannon
- 20 — James True
- 30 — Jeffery Russell

GOLDEN GALS — JANUARY 10

The Golden Gals will meet on Tuesday, January 10, at 10 AM, at the home of Jean Nadell. Bring a bag lunch.



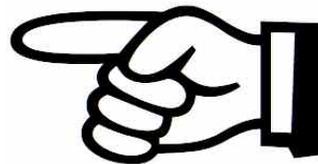
MEN'S GROUP — Sat., Jan. 21



Join us for an hour or so of fellowship and wide-ranging conversation. Our next meeting will be **8:30 AM on Saturday January 21**, in the De Haan Community Center in Pilgrim Park. Please bring a breakfast pastry for yourself and one other person. We'll take care of the coffee.

TIE DEADLINE for the FEBRUARY Issue - Mon., Jan. 30

The deadline for articles and news for the February 2017 issue of The TIE is Monday, January 30. Please have all articles for the February issue at the church office by Sunday, January 29th. Or, email your articles to lucindaray@aol.com by Monday, the 30th.



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Rev. Tracy Barnowe – *Pastor*

Tuesday 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Available by appointment on other days

Cell Phone (510) 703-0108

revtracybarnowe@gmail.com

Gwendolyn Morgan – *Office Manager*

Tuesday 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Wednesday 9:00 PM – 1:00 PM

Thursday 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Office Phone: 415-479-2747

office@fccsanrafael.org

FCC Calendar JANUARY 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1  10 am Worship, Church School & Child Care	2 New Year's Day (observed)	3	4 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club 6 am - 7:30 pm  Book Discussion with Hilary Spaulding	5 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club 7:40 pm  Choir Rehearsal	6	7 4 pm - 6:30 pm  12th Night Party
8 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 11:30 am - 1 pm Confirmation Class	9 5:45 pm  R.E.S.T. Dinner	10 10 am  Golden Gals' monthly meeting	11 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club 6 am - 7:30 pm  Book Discussion with Hilary Spaulding	12 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club 7:40 pm  Choir Rehearsal	13	14
15 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care	16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	17	18 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club 6 am - 7:30 pm  Book Discussion with Hilary Spaulding	19 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club 7:40 pm  Choir Rehearsal	20 7 am  Movie Night: The Illusionist, De Haan Center Pilgrim Park	21 9:30 am  Men's Group
22 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 11:30 am - 1 pm Confirmation Class	23	24	25 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club	26 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club 7:40 pm  Choir Rehearsal	27	28
29 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 11:30 am  Annual Congregation Meeting and Potluck Lunch	30 5 am  THE Deadline for DECEMBER Issue	31	1 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club	2 Grounding Day 4 pm - 5 pm Homework Club 7:40 pm  Choir Rehearsal	3	4

This calendar is also available on the church's website in interactive form. There you can click on any event to see more details. Check it out at www.FccSanRafael.org.