

Everything Under the Sun....



Dear Friends,

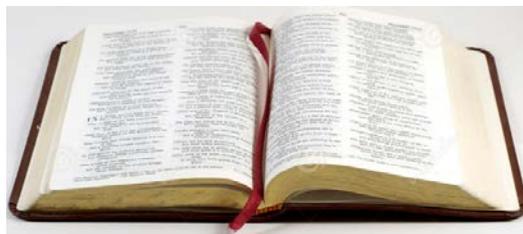
Allow me to tell you the sad tale of Zedekiah.

The second book of Kings tells us that around 587 BCE, in the middle of the night, the last remaining king of Israel took all of his soldiers, breached the besieged wall, and fled the city. The Babylonian army pursued and captured Zedekiah, sacked Jerusalem, executed its leadership and exiled the population, leaving only the poorest to tend the crops so it could continue to feed its massive army. The nation of Israel was no more.

It's so easy to blame Zedekiah, and in fact he was a coward, a traitor, a puppet king for Babylon, selfish, and may have been rumored to have had strangely small hands. But the reality was that it wasn't Zedekiah that caused the destruction of Israel, it was over 500 years of decisions that led to that point. Without checks and balances, the system of judges that Moses set up before he died became corrupt.

This led to a collapse in the judicial system, church and state merged, and a theocracy was born. Corruption in the temple during the rule of the priest Eli caused a scandal that transitioned the government from theocracy to monarchy. Solomon built temples for his many wives' gods, ones who demanded child sacrifice like Molech and Ba-al.

The great nation of Israel split shortly after. The north fought the south, and neither acknowledged the legitimacy of the others' leaders. When the Assyrians came looking for their next conquest, Northern Israel was easy pickings. It took barely 10 years of deportations, threats, extracting tributes, sowing discord, and hand-picking leaders with conflicts of interest to take every bit of wealth from the country and liquidate its assets. 134 years later when Zedekiah decided to rebel against the Babylonians who were using the same strategy, the people were too weak, disillusioned, and divided to mount a proper defense. Zedekiah knew his number was up and took the army and fled, leaving a weakened population defenseless.



The book of Ecclesiastes tells us "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun." (1:9)

I ask that you pray with me that we not repeat the past. I urge you to find the common ground with the people you think you most disagree with—we are a united nation, not two sides. Remember that the real threat is those who are worshipping the false gods of power and money, those who are willing to sacrifice the next generation, the most vulnerable, to enrich and empower themselves.

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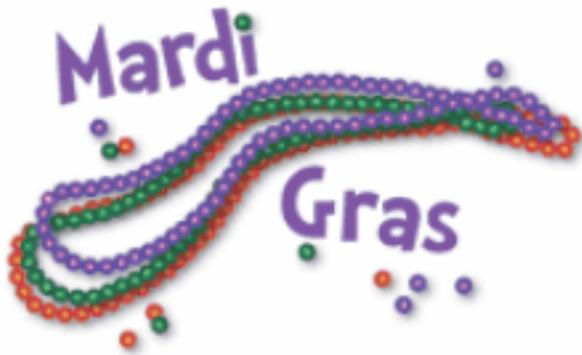
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Remember that while the Babylonians were creating a flurry of scandal by arguing loudly and publicly about what purpose treaties with Israel's allies really served, demanding loyalty in return for prosperity, and arguing about which religion in which nation was more real, they simultaneously and quietly were moving in troops, appointing leaders with conflicts of interest, and removing checks and balances in order to concentrate power and then extract wealth without accountability—their real goals.

Always follow the money. Speak the truth and use your voice where it most counts: in our system of checks of balances and with leadership that represents the people. Do not let weariness or despair or the urge to flee creep in. God is working through those willing to be the hands and feet of Christ.

God is working through the prophets and the peacemakers, those who are speaking their truth with great fear and trembling. Let us listen to them, and then become one.

Amen, *Pastor Tracy*



CELEBRATE FAT TUESDAY ON SUNDAY FEB. 26

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday on March 1, so much of the world has a little party on the preceding Tuesday.

Some call it Fat Tuesday, and some get fancy and use the French name, Mardi Gras. We will have our own little Fat Tuesday celebra-

tion on Sunday, Feb. 26th, immediately after church with special sweet and also savory crepes. There will be Mardi Gras /Dixieland music, beads, and hats, and voila! We have festivity! Don't miss this great opportunity for a party with friends!!

PRAYER PARTNERS

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



January 29 - February 4
Mary and Oak Dowling

February 5 - 11
Elaine and Andrea Farwell

February 12 - 18
Anice Flesh

February 19 - 25
Louis and Kamala Frost,
Melanie Sakskul

February 26 - March 4
Megan Fuller, Elizabeth and
William

Come and

Worship

with us!



February 5

John 1:6-28

John the Baptist appears, preparing the way for Jesus.

February 12

John 1:29-34

John the Baptist baptizes Jesus.

February 19

Corinthians 2:1-16

Speaking with the Spirit of God.

February 26

Matthew 2:13-23

Transfiguration Sunday.

Ash Wednesday Service March 1, 6-8 pm

The service will be held in the Sanctuary, followed immediately by Soup Supper in the Community Room. Please join us for a reflective Ash Wednesday service with imposition of ashes on Wednesday, March 1 After the worship service, we will gather in the Community Room for a soup supper.



MEMBERSHIP CLASS - 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 CHALLENGE GRANT UPDATE IS **GOOD NEWS**

The Congregation responded generously to the Challenge Grant. We now have \$8400 in new or increased pledges which will be matched by an anonymous donor. This donor will match up to \$10,000, so let's not leave the last \$1600 unmatched. Fill out the Gold pledge sheet, or let any trustee know if you want to pledge or increase your pledge so we can claim the matching income.

NEWS FROM THE ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of San Rafael was held on Sunday, January 29, right after worship. We heard reports from the various Boards and Committees, discussed the budget and the results of the Challenge Grant (see above), and then **voted on the balanced budget** presented at the January 29 meeting. We recognized the many years of service of retiring church officers Bob Spofford, Jim Girard, and Val Sherer.

We also elected officers and chairs of Boards and Committees for 2017.

Moderator: Louis Frost

Vice Moderator: Michael Meehan

Treasurer: Caryl Hodges

Financial/Pledge Secretary: Michael Chan

Clerk/Recorder: Catherine Hills

Board of Ministry: Hilary Spaulding

Board of Trustees: David Knopf

Board of Mission: Lucinda Ray

Golden Gate Rep.: Lynn Grant

And of course, we enjoyed a delicious pot luck lunch

NEWS FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

New water heater

Special thanks to the Golden Gals, who are sponsoring the purchase and installation of a small tank electric water heater in the Community Room kitchenette. The existing spot hot water facet is dangerously hot and difficult to operate, so this will be a welcome addition for small clean-up jobs. The water heater has been ordered and expected to arrive the first week of February.

Sink Hole

During the December and early January storms the drain near the entrance to the church got blocked and water flooded down the street. The resulting lake at the intersection of Merrydale and North San Pedro even made the KCBS TV news.

The sinkhole and blockage was on property in the SMART right of way. Since then, temporary work was done to correct the problem, and the late January storms did not result in flooding. The first week of February, SMART is arranging for more permanent solutions to be constructed. Thanks to Louis Frost for keeping on top of the situation and meeting several times with SMART officials to clarify the problem and discuss solutions

News For and About Kids



VALENTINE-MAKING PARTY FEB. 13

On Monday, February 13 we will have a Valentine making party after school. The kids have been asking about making valentines at the Homework Club, so we are setting aside the afternoon before Valentine's Day to make them.

If you have items for decorating that you would like to contribute (stickers, lacy stuff, doilies, ribbons, etc. - **NO GLITTER, PLEASE**) you can give them to Pastor Tracy or leave them in the FRACP San Rafael office.

All youth are welcome to attend. Please RSVP no later than Friday, February 10 so that we can have enough materials ready. If you are free on that day and want to help supervise, we would love to have you!

CREATIVE WRITING CLASS BEGINS AGAIN FEB. 9

After a break over the holidays, the Creative Writing class will begin a new session on Feb. 9 at 4 PM. This popular class meets during the same time as the Homework Club. You can read some of the writing they produced during the class last fall on the church web site.



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

YOUTH TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR R.E.S.T. DINNER MARCH 6

The youth will be providing the R.E.S.T. dinner on Monday evening, March 6. See **page 6** of this issue for more information.



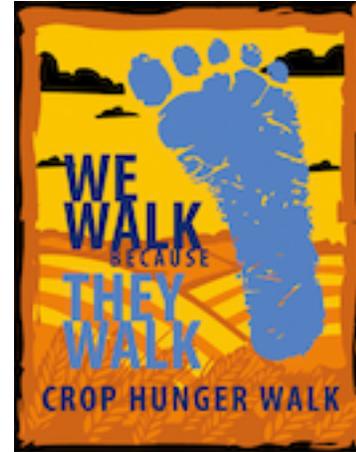
BOARD OF MISSION MISSION MATTERS



MARIN CROP HUNGER WALK MARCH 12

CROP Hunger Walks are community-wide events where folks from different faiths, cultures, and school groups work together to help address the horrors of hunger in our world – even for those battling hunger in our own city of San Rafael.

Everyone who wants to participate is asked to seek donations from neighbors, family, and friends. Then on the afternoon of Sunday, March 12, all who sign up to walk the 3K route in downtown San Rafael will be carrying banners and hoping to gather additional support from merchants along the way. The steps we take, and the funds we raise, will make a real difference! Step Up! We need you.



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 feed 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 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. Please sign up to help at:

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



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 definite-

ly 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.

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.

Come and enjoy beautiful music in our beautiful sanctuary!



BOOK DISCUSSIONS RESUME WEDNESDAY MARCH 8

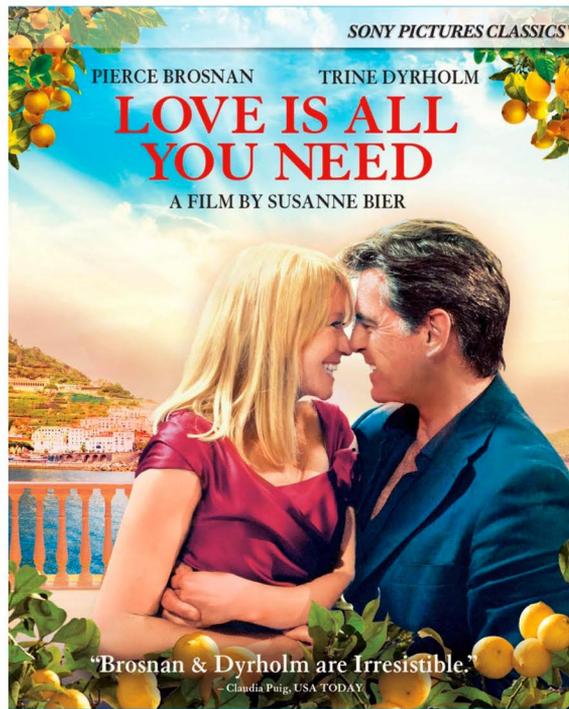
12 Wednesdays from 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Please join us for A BOWL OF SOUP a book study of the book *Holy Conversations* by Richard Peace. We will cover one chapter each week. At the home of Hilary Spaulding and Bruce Weir, 168 Esmeyer Drive in San Rafael.

MOVIE NIGHT - FEBRUARY 24 - LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED

Our February movie is a romantic comedy with a difference. The difference is that it was made by Oscar-winning Danish filmmaker Susanne Bier (*Brothers*, *In a Better World*) not the usual suspects from Hollywood or the U.K. The result is a Rom-Com for grownups. Think Nora Ephron meets Ingmar Bergman.

The setting is a wedding in a beautiful village on the Italian seaside, and the focus is on the parents more than the happy couple. The mother of the bride, played by Danish actress Trine Dyrholm, is a hairdresser from Copenhagen, leading a quiet life of desperation in a failed marriage. The father of the groom (Pierce Brosnan) is a wealthy English businessman, whose pose as a carefree playboy is wearing thin. They meet for the first time on the way to the wedding, and complications ensue.



Instead of laugh-out-loud moments, expect a lot of quiet smiles and nods. Instead of soaring strings and a rush into each others' arms, expect a prickly, slow-motion mating dance that feels much more like real life.

And, if this sounds a little slow-moving, you can just relax and enjoy the fabulous scenic Italian eye-candy.

Friday February 24 in the DeHaan Center in Pilgrim Park

*There are few surprises in Love Is All You Need, other than the understated way Bier treats moment that in mainstream cinema would be overplayed and underlined (and italicized in case you missed the point.) Like the lemons that appear throughout the film as a visual and thematic motif, **Love Is All You Need** embraces the bitter with the sweet. Its idea of escapist romantic fantasy is to recognize the most sour of life's circumstances and simply make lemonade.*

Anne Hornaday, *Washington Post*

You can view the trailer for *Love Is All You Need* on the FCCSR website

A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE continued

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.

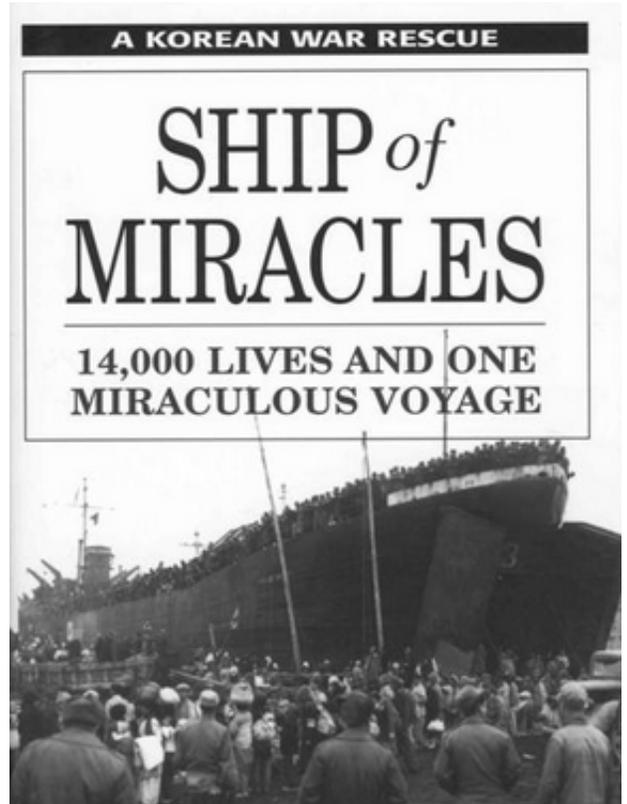
In December 1950 the Chinese and North Korean armies were advancing rapidly south on the Korean peninsula with retreating US and South Korean armies and refugees in front of them. A large group of North Korean refugees had gathered in a port city that was surrounded by the Chinese. The skipper of the *SS Meredith Victory* agreed to try and rescue them.

Under small arms fire the ship loaded about 14,000 souls and all they could carry. There was standing room only on deck and in the five holds of the ship. After two days steaming south, the ship was diverted from overcrowded Pusan to the nearby island of Goe Je on Christmas Eve. The refugees were off loaded by the ships cargo cranes or on rope ladders into LST’s which transported 14005 to the beaches. Yes, five babies had been born during the short voyage. The island was populated by farmers and fishermen.

The *SS Meredith Victory* (built in So. California during the war) is now known as the Miracle Ship among the descendents on the Island, which has now been transformed into a center of large ship building.

Google “Meridith Victory” for more information. **Next month** I’ll tell you how a resident of Pilgrim Park is involved with this wonderful story.

Bob De Haan



MEETINGS, MEETINGS, MEETINGS

FEBRUARY 16: Pastor Parish Relations meeting will be at 12:30 PM, in Pastor Tracy’s office.

FEBRUARY 19: The Board of Mission meeting will be at 11:30 AM, Oak Room.

FEBRUARY 21: The Board of Trustees meeting will be at 7 PM, Plum Room

MARCH 15: The Church Council meeting will at 7 PM in the Plum Room



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 6 — Ralph Sherer
- 11 — Samuel Dempsey
- 15 — Richard Walker
- 18 — Jasmin Morales
- 25 — Rachael Knopf

GOLDEN GALS — FEBRUARY 14

The Golden Gals will meet on Tuesday, February 14, at 10 AM, at the home of Jean Nadell. Bring a bag lunch.



MEN'S GROUP — Sat., Feb. 25

Join us for an hour or so of fellowship and wide-ranging conversation. Our next meeting will be **8:30 AM on Saturday, Feb. 25**, 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 MARCH Issue - Mon., Feb. 27

The deadline for articles and news for the March 2017 issue of The TIE is Monday, February 27. Please have all articles for the February issue at the church office by Sunday, February 26th. Or, email your articles to lucindaray@aol.com by Monday, the 27th.



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 AM – 1:00 PM

Thursday 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Office Phone: 415-479-2747

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