



PASTORAL REFLECTIONS REV. JEFFREY COCHRAN-CARNEY



Christmas during a Time of COVID

Christmas is going to be different this year. For some, there will likely be less gift giving. Less travel, smaller family gatherings. No Christmas caroling with friends. No gathering in the sanctuary to worship together and greet one another. You have watched the news, and you know the drill about staying safe. This will be no ordinary Christmas. This will be Christmas during a time of covid.

Yet it would be a mistake to minimize Christmas or write it off. There are lessons to be learned and gifts to be had if we are patient and observant. Perhaps as you read the Christmas story, a word or verse will jump off the page and hit you in a new way. The angels' song could be a clarion call to a weary spirit. You could find yourself among the shepherds, or even kneeling at the manger. If I have learned anything, it's that the past is a prologue to the present. It's not just history. It's the Word come alive. A revelation. The Word is made

flesh for you and in you. This Christmas is not one to be missed. It won't come again. An epiphany might be right around the corner.

How will you observe Christmas this year? In W.H. Auden's "For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio," the three wise men utter these words, and they seem to fit times like these:

The weather has been awful,
The countryside is dreary,
Marsh, jungle, rock; and echoes mock,
Calling our hope unlawful;
But a silly song can help along
Yours ever and sincerely:

At least we know for certain that we are
three old sinners,
that this journey is much too long, that
we want our dinners,
and miss our wives, our books, our dogs,
but have only the vaguest idea why we are
what we are.

To discover how to be human now
is the reason we follow this star.



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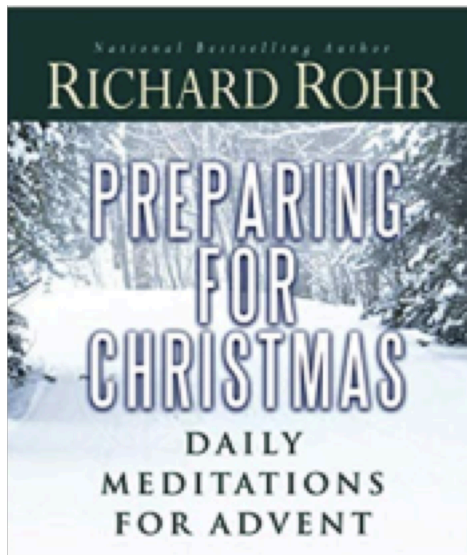
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As Auden reminds, this is the season to follow the star. It is a time to discover how to be more human and compassionate during a pandemic. It is not the Christmas we want, but never has the world needed it more. I will pray that during a time when so many things have been taken away, the one true gift will be given.

Christmas Blessings,

Pastor Jeffrey

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS ADVENT DEVOTIONS & REFLECTIONS



Wednesdays at 11 AM – 12 Noon Dec. 2, 9, 16, 23

Join us on Zoom for Advent devotions and reflections based on the book *Preparing For Christmas* by Richard Rohr. It is helpful to have a copy of the book as each person is encouraged to read the daily offering prior to the group reflection. The group will provide the opportunity to share from the book as well as their own Advent experience. “Advent is not about a sentimental waiting for the Baby Jesus,” Richard Rohr asserts. Advent is a time to focus our expectations and anticipation on “the adult Christ, the Cosmic Christ,” who challenges us to empty ourselves, to lose ourselves, to surrender. Those who do not have a copy of the book are also welcome to attend. For more information contact Pastor Jeffrey.

DECEMBER AGAPE TEAM

Agape - Providing compassionate connection to our church community through words of encouragement, cards, calls, and visits. Our Agape leader for November is Anice Flesh (415-306-7920) with the Agape team members David Knopf and Caran Cuneo.



PRAYER PARTNERS

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



November 29 - December 5

Marion Long

December 6 - 12

Randall and Susan MacKenzie

December 13 - 19

Ekhard Mahl

December 20 - 26

Helen MacLam

December 27 - January 2

Michael Meehan and Jamie Cline

Taylor, Jacob, Michael, and Tristan

COME and



Worship

with us!



Pastor Jeffrey is providing a complete worship service via email every Sunday. It's a video including music, prayers, scripture and sermon. Check your email on Sunday morning.

Dec. 6 Second Sunday in Advent

Preparing the Way of the Lord

Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

Chances are your preparations for Christmas will be different this year. You will probably do less Christmas shopping in the stores; no Christmas caroling in homes or large family gatherings. But one way of preparing is the same, and may come into sharper focus this year. John the Baptist comes to us as a wild man in the desert, calling us to “prepare the way of the Lord.” Perhaps without the usual trappings of Christmas, our inner landscape could feel like a desert at times. John calls us to prepare for the coming of the Lord at a time when it matters the most.

Dec. 13 Third Sunday in Advent

Joseph: Father of Faith and Courage

Isaiah 7:14-17; Matthew 1:18-25

It probably wouldn't be much fun to play Joseph in the church pageant. Joseph appears at times to be an insignificant character in the Christmas drama. He emerges from the shadow of Mary and the baby Jesus. All the attention is on Mary while Joseph hangs around with the shepherds and animals off to the side. And yet, Joseph plays an amazing supportive role for Mary, and later on as the father of Jesus. Joseph is a shining example of what it means to be a man of God, and a vital figure in the divine drama.

Dec. 20 Fourth Sunday in Advent

The Gift of Christmas Presence

James 1:17-18; Luke 1:26-38

There probably won't be as many presents under the tree this year, and fewer gathered around the table. There will be less travel, and fewer family gatherings. But Christmas will come, and with it, gifts that are to be claimed by those who have the eyes to see, and the mind to imagine. Perhaps this year is the time to focus on a different kind of gift – the gift of Christmas presence. In today's message, we will remember all of those we love, past and present, who surround us in this season with what matters most -- the gift of Christmas presence.

COME and



Worship

with us!



December 24 Christmas Eve Service

7 PM — We will join together on Christmas Eve through media and technology that will enable us to be together in spirit on this holy night. A Family-Friendly worship service with candles, Christmas Carols, Bible readings, poetry and a short reflection by Pastor Jeffrey.

8 PM — Christmas Eve Zoom Christmas Party



Dec. 27 Guest Preacher

All sermons are posted on the website in PDF format.

ZOOM MEETINGS LET US GATHER TOGETHER SAFELY on **Sundays at 10 AM**

We are holding weekly Zoom meetings on Sunday mornings, so members of the congregation can gather together for “Coffee Hour” via a video meeting tool called Zoom. We can see one another, talk to each other, and share our experiences of the past several weeks. It is like being in a room together, but safely. Most people find it easy to do. Give it a try! You can use either your computer, your cell phone, your tablet, or even just call in from your land line.

Link to join all church Zoom meetings:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/813993981>

Meeting ID: 813 993 981

Password: 594741

Call in number 1-669-900-6833



MEETINGS, MEETINGS, MEETINGS -- VIA ZOOM

DECEMBER 8: The Board of Ministry meeting will be on Tuesday, December 8, at 11:00 AM.

DECEMBER 13: The Board of Mission will meet in Sunday, December 13, immediately following the Sunday Zoom meeting.

DECEMBER 15: The Board of Trustees meeting will be on Tuesday, December 15, at 7 PM.

DECEMBER 23: The Church Council meeting will be Wednesday, December 23, at 5 PM.



COMING SOON! CHRISTMAS EVE CELEBRATIONS

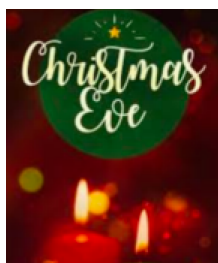
YOU are invited to participate in a special Christmas Eve service. This will be a carols and story service, with readings and music provided by various members and friends, followed by a Christmas party. You say “how is that possible with covid going around,” and I say we will of course be using the magic of the Internet.

We are looking for people who would like to participate by reading or singing. All that’s required of you is to send an email to office@fccsanrafael.org by December 3rd.

You will then be contacted to work out the details of recording. Pastor Jeffery will coordinate the readings, and Jeff Paul will coordinate the music.

The process will be simple. We will assist you in preparing your work, which will then be forwarded to the church. Note: for those of you who are not confident with technology, we will have people available to help. We aim to have all recording done by December 13. Then, Bob Spofford will do his magic in putting things together.

Anybody, any age, anywhere can participate. We would like to hear from everyone that thinks that they might want to participate.



In the meantime, mark your calendar for a Christmas Eve, December 24, 7 o'clock service, 8 o'clock party. The 7 o'clock service will be broadcast on YouTube at 7 PM, and then we switch over to zoom at 8 for a Christmas party get together.

Let us know right away how you'd like to participate by responding to this email sent from the church office: office@fccsanrafael.org



MEMBER MEDITATIONS

At the Church Council meeting recently, it was suggested that it might be nice to invite our members and friends to submit brief meditations or devotions to be shared with other members of the congregation. They would be sent out on a weekly basis. It could be a prayer, a poem, or reflection that you write, or something you have read that is meaningful to you. Perhaps during this time of the year you could reflect on Advent, Christmas, or the New Year. What are your hopes? What would you like to convey to your friends?

Please submit your reflection to the church office with “Meditation” in the subject line. This can be another way to stay connected and share your thoughts with members and friends.

Pastor Jeffrey

YE OLDE FASHIONED ZOOM HOME MADE CANDY PARTY

SUNDAY DEC. 6, 3:00 PM

Sunday, December 6, from 3 - 4 PM on Zoom, we will be making our famous Toffee Nut Crunch candy. You can simply watch and encourage others of us making the candy or make your own batch. Use the usual church Zoom log in, found on page 3 of this TIE.

Ingredients you need:

One pound of butter
One package of chocolate chips
1/2 cup chopped pecans
2 cups sugar
1/4 cup light corn syrup



Equipment you need:

One cookie sheet (with edges) lined with aluminum foil, one heavy 3-quart pot, candy thermometer, heat resistant rubber spatula

1. Line the cookie sheet with foil first.
2. Chop the pecans into small pieces before you start making the candy.
3. Put butter, sugar, corn syrup, and water into the pot and heat on high heat.
4. Stir constantly to prevent burning.
5. Stir until the candy thermometer reaches 300 degrees. The toffee will look light brown.
6. Immediately pour onto the foil-lined cookie sheet. Spread with spatula to fill the corners.
7. Sprinkle the chocolate chips over the hot candy.
8. Use a fork to spread the melting chocolate over the toffee.
9. Sprinkle the chopped pecans evenly over the melted chocolate.

Cool the candy completely (probably wait until the next day).

On a cutting board, use a clean hammer or a heavy knife to break the candy up into pieces. Save the crumbs! They are good on ice cream or in cookies!!



UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES

As you know from receiving a letter from the church last week, the Board of Trustees is working on our annual stewardship campaign to help them plan next year's church budget. Here are some ideas to think about prayerfully as you return your pledge form:



Gratitude exercise 1:

How does your cup runneth over this day?

Spill a little toward the church.

Send in your pledge today!

Gratitude exercise 2:

"Where your treasure is, there your heart is also."

Gratitude exercise 3:

Help us build toward a new, fresh year. Share a little time, talent, and treasure with this church.

Please return your pledge form by Dec. 14 to help with budget planning.

Dec. 15: Next Board of Trustees zoom meeting.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF OUR CHURCH THROUGH YOUR PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS



Thanks to all our members and friends who have continued to keep up with their pledges. We especially want to thank the members who have sent their complete 2020 pledge. Our expenses do continue so this helps us keep on track.

You have 2 options:

Option 1

Use PayPal. Go to fccsanrafael.org. On the home page, you will see the words GIVING ONLINE. Click on this and you will end up on a screen with a PayPal logo. Click on it and you'll see a place to enter your pledge or offering amount. You can use a credit card or your PayPal account. You have the option to do a monthly donation this way as well. For your first time donating this way, Val Sherer will be happy to email you confirmation that she received your donation.



Option 2

You can mail a check to the church. Deposits will be made less frequently until we resume Sunday services, so don't panic if your check is not cashed as quickly as usual.



Feel free to email Val with any questions.

Val Sherer, Financial Secretary valpub@yahoo.com



BOARD OF MISSION MISSION MATTERS



RITTER CENTER FAMILY-TO-FAMILY GIVING OPPORTUNITY

This holiday is like no other. Our congregation has volunteered in past years to shop for items from Ritter Center's Family to Family wish lists or bought food for the meal programs which were then taken to Ritter Center.

This year is different. In order to keep you, Ritter staff and clients safe and prevent the spread of COVID, Ritter and FCC San Rafael will not be collecting or distributing toys, gifts, or food items from individuals for their holiday programs.



Instead, Ritter Center is asking for contributions which can be made online. Please use the link to donate online, and Ritter staff will purchase and distribute food, personal care items, and gift cards to families and individuals in need. This alternative ensures we can still meet the needs of the most vulnerable members in our community: Ritter Center online donations
<https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/WebLink.aspx?name=E10141&id=2>

Many are struggling this year, so please give generously as your gift means even more to those most in need. For more ways to help, please visit <https://rittercenter.org/you-can-help/hope-for-the-holidays/>

DON'T FORGET THE FOOD BANK DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON



Since we are not bringing food items with us to worship and depositing them in our Food Bank barrel, please contribute instead here:

<https://donate.sfmfoodbank.org/page/5009/donate/2>

Or, send a check to:

SF-Marin Food Bank
2550 Kerner Boulevard
San Rafael, CA 94901



BOARD OF MINISTRY NEWS

Tuesday, December 8th at 11 AM will be our next Board of Ministry meeting: We welcome any and all to attend our meetings. Feel free to offer ideas that could enrich our services, outreach to one another more widely and grow deeper spiritually.

Worship

On December 29th, we will have an opportunity to hear a “guest preacher” while Pastor Jeffrey takes some well-deserved holiday leave. For more information, check the weekly What’s Happening updates and look for the Sunday service link sent from FCC Office on Sat., Dec. 28th.

December 24th at 7:00 pm, Join our Christmas Eve Service!

We have been planning and anticipate a very special on-line service for Christmas Eve.

Your participation will make it all the more meaningful. Please tell us how you would like to participate by email to our Office Manager, Amy Powers, (at office@fccsanrafael.org). **See page 5 of this TIE for more details.**

Dec. 24th at 8 PM: After the service, we will have a ZOOM party. Dress up in your holiday finest or come in your coziest PJs. **See page 5.**



Joys and Concerns

If you have prayer concerns or joys to share, please contact Pastor Jeffrey (fccsrpastor@gmail.com) or Julie Dowling for the Prayer Chain. If you have need of support or just want to chat, you can contact one of the Agape Team for this month: Anice Flesh, Caran Cuneo or David Knopf.

Book Study on Wednesdays at 11 am (Dec. 2, 9, 16 and 23),

Pastor Jeffrey will lead an Advent Book study on ZOOM, inspired by readings from Richard Rohr’s Book of advent devotions, *Preparing for Christmas*. **See page 2 for details.**

The Advent Wreath



Join us during Sunday services and light an advent candle. Traditionally, the advent wreath is made of a circle of evergreens to symbolize that God’s love has no end. The four candles in the circle each represent one of the four Sundays of Advent, and an additional candle is lit each week. The lit candles symbolize the Light of God coming into the world bringing Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. In the centre of the circle is a fifth candle, the Christ Candle, which is lit on Christmas Eve representing the birth of Christ, “The Light of the World.”

Celebrate St Nicholas' Day: December 6th

The legendary figure of St. Nicholas is derived from Nicholas of Myra who was a bishop in 4th century Greece and later was imprisoned and suffered under Roman persecution. He was known for his kindness to children and his generosity. There were many tales of his gift-giving that involved his putting coins into other people's shoes, which accounts for many Christmas traditions around the world that involve leaving gifts in shoes or boots. In the spirit of St. Nicholas, if you would like to donate sandals or shoes for victims of Hurricane Eta in Guatemala or peanut butter, rice or beans for the Free Food Pantry in the Canal, Cathi Fuller will pick up and deliver.



New Year Prayer retreat on Saturday, January 9th

Spiritual Director Ruah Bull will lead us in “retreat” on ZOOM to “advance” our understanding of the role of prayer in enriching the relationships in our lives. **See page 10 for more details.**

JANUARY 9 - RETREAT

An Invitation to Love: The Path of Christian Prayer

A retreat with Spiritual Director Ruah Bull

January 9, 2021 10 AM – 12

Join us for a time of exploring the unfolding path of prayer, a journey into increasing intimacy with God. We'll have the chance to learn about a contemporary relationship model of prayer developed by Trappist monk, Thomas Keating, as well as take time to reflect upon our own experience of the life of prayer. We'll discuss how we were taught about prayer—and what prayer over the years has taught us about God and ourselves.

Remembering Thomas Merton's wise and warm dictum, 'pray as you can and not as you can't,' we welcome folks who pray in all sorts of ways, and look forward to learning about prayer from one another.

If you'd like, Ruah invites you to bring an image of some sort to share with the group that represents how you understand/experience prayer now in your life.

Ruah Bull, M.A., M.Ed. has been in private practice as a spiritual director since 2001, working with people in a variety of traditions. After 40 years away from Christianity, during which time she studied and practiced several spiritual paths, she was brought back to Christ through the mystics, contemplative prayer, and the Native American teachings. Ruah teaches centering prayer through Contemplative Outreach, works as adjunct faculty at Mercy Center in Burlingame, and facilitates retreats in prayer, eldering and Incarnational spirituality. She finds her church community in ecumenical circles.



PILGRIM PARK UPDATE



Christmas at Pilgrim Park -- The Community Center is decorated both inside and out. Unfortunately, this will be the last Christmas that Nancy Smith will be managing Pilgrim Park. Nancy retires at the end of the year and will soon thereafter move to Georgia. Nancy will have managed Pilgrim Park for over 27 years. During her first few years, she was the important on-site person to rid the complex of the drug culture. Because of her experience in managing housing in New York and her bravery, we were successful. We all will miss her. We wish her and her husband, Charles, all the best. As Nancy leaves her two adult children and two grand daughters, we look forward to her frequent visits.

New site manager -- Anna Chun, John Stewart's executive in charge of Pilgrim Park, has offered the site manager position to an experienced person who is scheduled to begin work in late December. I don't yet know whether this person has accepted the job.

Move ins and out -- Francisco Galindo and our normal contractors have once again performed miracles to renew an apartment for a planned move in on November 30.

Food Deliveries -- Last Wednesday, a huge delivery from a Nugget market coincided with the regular Food Bank delivery. Amazing. The Nuggets food was dispersed in a few hours. And, the Pilgrim Park ladies then distributed the Food Bank food into about 60 bags that were to be picked up at 6:00 p.m. by residents.

Bob De Haan

MOVIE NIGHT - TWO OFFBEAT COMEDY SERIES TRUTH SEEKERS and TED LASSO

TRUTH SEEKERS

British actors Simon Pegg and Nick Frost have a particular talent for absurdist takes on familiar movie genres. Their best-known are probably “Shaun of the Dead” (zombies) and “Hot Fuzz” (cops.) In their new series, “Truth Seekers,” they turn their cracked lens on paranormal investigators a la “The X Files.”

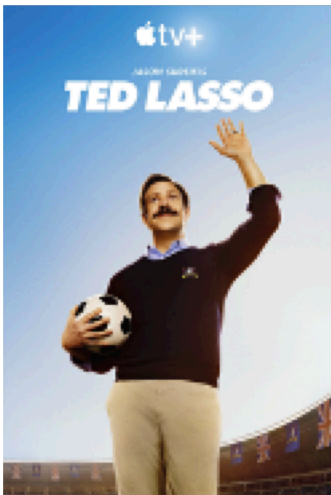
Frost plays Gus Roberts, the head installer for Smyle, Britain’s biggest broadband internet service, and Pegg plays his boss. Gus finds himself dragged deeper and deeper into solving internet problems that involve ghosts from WWII, a supernatural dog, nanobot spies and, of course, lots of secret passages. According to Pegg, “the key with horror comedy is to take the horror completely seriously and allow the comedy to exist adjacent to it.” Streaming on Amazon Prime.



TED LASSO

Ted (played by SNL veteran Jason Sudeikis) is the successful coach of a Division II football team at Wichita State. As the series opens, he has been hired as the Head Coach of a Premier League team in London. This seems an odd choice, since he knows nothing at all about soccer or life in the U.K., but the new owner of the team has her nefarious reasons.

The series, which was just renewed for a third season, offers lots of fish-out-of-water laughs, but it slowly reveals a serious spine, as Ted proves that high-level coaching is much more about people skills and than it is about game plans and tactics. Streaming on Apple+.





DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 — Mim Faraci
 3 — Denise Walker
 3 — Jon Girard
 30 — Sam Faraci
 30 — Ben Faraci
 30 — Elizabeth Godbey
 30 — Gloria Wilcox

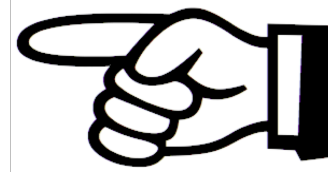
GOLDEN GALS — Meeting postponed

The Golden Gals will not be meeting this month due to the Shelter in Place order but hope to do so some time in the future.



TIE DEADLINE for JANUARY 2021 Issue - Mon. DEC. 28

The deadline for articles and news for the January 2021 issue of The TIE is Monday, Dec.. 28th. Please email your articles to lucindaray@aol.com by Monday, the 28th.



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Both Amy and Jeffrey are working from home.
You can contact them via email

NOTE: Pastor Jeffrey's new email: fccsrpastor@gmail.com

Rev. Jeffrey Cochran-Carney
Pastor

Mondays and Thursdays 8 AM - 4 PM

Please call first for an appointment

Phone (908) 487-8855

fccsrpastor@gmail.com

Amy Powers — *Office Manager*

Tuesday 11 AM- 2 PM























Wednesday 10 AM - 2 PM

Thursday 10 AM - 2 PM

Office Phone: 415-479-2747

office@fccsanrafael.org

FCC Calendar DECEMBER 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29  10 am Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am-11 am ZOOM Meetings, virtual coffee hour	30	December 1	2  11 am - 12 pm ADVENT BOOK STUDY	3	4	5  7 am Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 12
6  10 am Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am-11 am ZOOM Meetings, virtual coffee hour 3 pm - 4 pm  CANDY PARTY on Zoom	7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	8  11 am Board of Ministry Meeting 11:00 AM via ZOOM	9  11 am - 12 pm ADVENT BOOK STUDY	10	11	12  7 am Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 12
13  10 am Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am-11 am ZOOM Meetings, virtual coffee hour 11 am - 12 pm  Board of Mission Meeting via ZOOM	14  PLEDGE FORUM DOLE	15  7 am - 8 pm BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING via ZOOM	16  11 am - 12 pm ADVENT BOOK STUDY	17	18	19  7 am Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 12
20  10 am Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am-11 am ZOOM Meetings, virtual coffee hour 11 am - 12 pm  Board of Mission Meeting via ZOOM	21	22	23  11 am - 12 pm ADVENT BOOK STUDY 5 pm - 6 pm  Church Council Meetings via ZOOM	24  7 am - 8 pm CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 8 pm - 9 pm  CHRISTMAS PARTY on Zoom	25  Christmas	26  7 am Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 12
27  10 am Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am-11 am ZOOM Meetings, virtual coffee hour	28	29	30	31	1 New Year's Day	2

Stay Healthy

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.