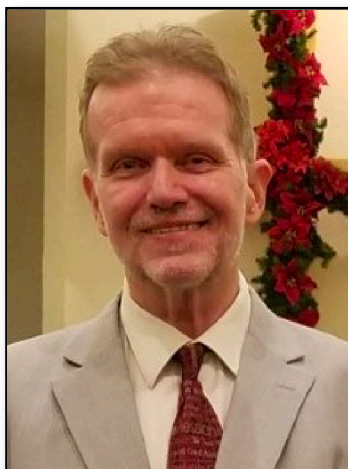


January 2021

First Congregational Church of  
San Rafael

# The TIE

## PASTORAL REFLECTIONS REV. JEFFREY COCHRAN-CARNEY



### What Gifts Are You Taking into the New Year/

Christmas is over. Gifts have been given and received. By now you have probably taken down your Christmas tree if you put one up this year. Here we are in the New Year, and ready to leave 2020 behind. Good riddance to an incredibly heart wrenching year! Yet, there are some positive things we have learned and can take with us into the New Year. Think of them as gifts – things we might not have thought of during normal times.

This time has offered the opportunity for patience and perseverance. We did not really have a choice, but how we respond makes all the difference. We can take time to slow down and think about the fullness of each moment. Can you say a prayer while standing in line to get a Covid test? What about remembering a favorite verse of scripture and meditating on it while waiting to enter a store that requires social distancing? Patience is a choice.

This time of sheltering in place has also made us a more compassionate people. Do you find yourself connecting more with the cashier or deli worker at your favorite market? How is their day doing? Are they going to get some time off over the holidays? In the past, I might have kept looking at my watch, or responded to emails on my phone. These days provide many opportunities to be more compassionate and caring towards others. The very act of wearing a mask can also be a way of showing care for other people.

Another gift that often gets pushed to the background is appreciation. The pandemic has brought to the forefront the many people who risk their health and lives to care for others. These days we think about doctors, nurses and all first responders in a different way. We owe them a debt of gratitude for all they do. They have been pushed beyond the limits of physical and mental endurance, and yet they work tirelessly so that our loved ones will be well cared for if they get sick.

The past ten months have also made us all appreciate our church even more. It has always been important to us, but the simple act of going to church and seeing our friends or gathering for coffee afterwards is something we will never take for granted again.

*Gifts of the pandemic*

(continued on the next page)

I am betting that when we are able to return to church, we will be even more grateful, and eager to get involved once again. The music and choir will return, and our hearts will rejoice.

During the pandemic, many people have found themselves filled with hope, and this has been perhaps the greatest gift of all. Really? During the darkest night of despair? With the tragedy of over 300,000 deaths? With ICU beds full to capacity? Yes. Even then. People have hoped for a vaccine. People have hoped and longed for the chance to be with family again. People have hoped for the time to gather with friends without constantly worrying about getting sick, or attend a concert or play. Someone once defined a human being as someone who hopes. Hope does not offer a timeline or even solutions, but it does offer the possibility of a brighter future and a time when things will be better. That is what keeps us going. As the author of Hebrews puts it, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Finally, the most important gift we can take with us into the New Year is the gift of love. Paul says, “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13) The pandemic has taught us that love is both fragile and strong--fragile in that we see how quickly a friend or loved one can become ill and suffer, but strong enough to move mountains and let them know how much they are loved. I have heard more people say, “I love you” while there is still time.

What are your hopes for the year ahead? Now might be a good time to reflect. As terrible as the past year has been, we will be immeasurably better if we take with us the lessons learned and the gifts we have been given – gifts that even the pandemic cannot take away.

## *New Year's Blessings, Pastor Jeffrey*

### **JANUARY AGAPE TEAM**

Agape - Providing compassionate connection to our church community through words of encouragement, cards, calls, and visits. Our Agape leader for January is Charles Little (415-342-2720) with the Agape team member Amy Kaufman.



### **PRAYER PARTNERS**

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



#### **December 27 - January 2**

Michael Meehan and Jamie Cline; Taylor, Jacob, Michael, and Tristan

#### **January 3 - 9**

Alan and Barbara Miller

#### **January 10 - 16**

Jean Nadell

#### **January 17 - 23**

Ray and Jean O'Leary

#### **January 24 - 30**

Jeffrey Paul and Trista

#### **January 31 - February 6**

Milagro Ramirez

# 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.***

## **Jan. 3 Second Sunday of Christmas**

**It's in the Stars**

**Isaiah 60:1-6; Matthew 2:1-12**

Wise men from the East followed a star to Bethlehem, where they discovered the baby Jesus. When they found him, they were overcome with joy. They knelt down to pay him homage, and offer their gifts. We are ready for a new year, a year that will be filled with joy and relief from the harshness of the pandemic. Follow the journey of the wise men as we search for wisdom and treasures in the year ahead.

## **January 10 First Sunday after Epiphany**

**Fleeing to Egypt**

**Hosea 11:1-9; Matthew 2:13-23**

After the wise men departed, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and Mary in a dream, and warned them to flee to Egypt in order to escape King Herod who wanted to kill the child. How did Mary and Joseph know? What are the signs and dreams we have today? These are some of the questions we will explore.

## **January 17 Second Sunday after Epiphany**

**God Knows Your Name**

**1 Samuel 3:1-11**

When Samuel was a young boy, he was an assistant to the elder priest Eli. Samuel was sleeping in the temple when he was awakened three times. He assumed it was Eli, but soon the priest Eli realized it was the voice of God. He urged Samuel to listen. What is God saying to you today? What are you called to do and be? We explore in today's lesson ways of discerning God's message to us.

## **January 24 Third Sunday after Epiphany**

**Fishing for People**

**Mark 1:14-20**

As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea. He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people," and immediately they left their nets and followed him. A little bit later, Jesus saw James and John, sons of Zebedee, and they also left immediately to follow Jesus. What was it about Jesus that caused these fishermen to drop everything and become the first disciples? What is it about Jesus that makes him compelling 20 centuries later? What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus today?

# Come and Worship with us!



## January 31 Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

### Breaking Down Barriers

Acts 10:1-15

In today's reading, we hear the remarkable story of Cornelius and Peter. Cornelius was a Godly man. He was also a Gentile. Through divine intervention, both men sought out each other. Each one had a similar vision. Peter realized, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." Walls came down that day, and the first Gentile (Greek) became a Christian. God continues today to break down barriers and welcome all people. What does it mean to be a welcoming congregation?

### 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

**JANUARY 12:** The Board of Ministry meeting will be on Tuesday, January 12, at 11:00 AM.

**JANUARY 12:** The Board of Trustees meeting will be on Tuesday, January 12, at 7 PM.

**JANUARY 27:** The Church Council meeting will be Wednesday, January 27th, at 5 PM.

**JANUARY 31: The Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of San Rafael will be Sunday, January 31, at 11 AM.**





# ANNUAL MEETING



**SAVE THE DATE:  
JANUARY 31 AT 11 AM**

Our congregation's **annual meeting** will be the LAST Sunday of January, the st., on Zoom. The meeting will be immediately after church Zoom "coffee hour."

Don't miss this important meeting. It is the time when we briefly reflect on the past year, vote on the 2021 church budget, elect officers and members of boards and committees, and plan for the upcoming year.



## **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.



## UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES

### Budgetary Planning in Uncertain Times

The Trustees have struggled to figure out how to plan the budget for 2021. In the past several years half of our budget has been supported by income from rentals, but this year all renters have reduced their use and payments. So far for 2021 only the Montessori preschool is back to normal. The Ministerios de Dios Latinos is now paying half their previous rent and is using our facility much less than before. We also have a Yoga group using a classroom an hour per week and 4H using the patio for youth events. The th Day Church of God and 12-step groups are only meeting through Zoom. For budgetary planning we have decided to assume most renters will return during the summer and early fall of 2021. This might be optimistic, and this still leaves a hole in our budget.



How can we make up the deficit? The church has been able to reduce some operating expenses. We did receive a Payroll Protection loan in May to cover two months of salary, and may be eligible for another round of forgivable loans under the recently passed legislation. Importantly, members maintained their pledges in spite of hard times, and some have even been able to increase their pledges for 2012. Foresightedly, the church has been able to establish “rainy day” investment accounts which we anticipate tapping during these fiscal rainy days. More details will be available during the annual meeting on January 31, at 11 AM on Zoom.

### Getting Another Stimulus Check? Help Stimulate the Church!

Many in our church will be receiving an unexpected bonus from the federal government designed to help people through hard times and stimulate the economy. Even people on regular pensions or living on modest investment income may be receiving checks. Consider donating a good part of it to causes that are helping people through these hard times, including your beloved church community. You can send checks to the church at 8 North San Pedro Rd, San Rafael, 94903.



## 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](http://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](mailto:valpub@yahoo.com)

## CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE



It is a privilege to be moderator of FCC! This church community has shown both ingenuity and hard work in keeping our congregation connected during this very difficult time.

Pastor Jeffrey has adapted to preaching to “no audience” as he offers spiritual nurture for us each week.

We have had prayer groups, book studies and gatherings for conversation. We observed Lent, Easter, and just now Christmas as a group of worshipers doing things a little differently.

In all of this our church home is still what inspires us; holds us together as we both mourn and celebrate our Christian life.

As we begin a new year, there is hope that we will be truly together in our sanctuary before too long, and while we will all be thrilled, I won't feel any more connected in Christ than I have this difficult year.

Thank You All,  
Lynn Grant, Moderator



## BOARD OF MISSION MISSION MATTERS



### MISSION UPDATE

As we look back on 2020, our hearts are grateful for the generosity of our church family. Recently, as a result of the modified appeal on behalf of Ritter Center, our congregation generously gave cash donations that will be used to purchase backpacks and school supplies for over 150 at-risk students. Ritter Center's Back-to-School program is an initiative that helps ensure students from low-income families in our community will start the school year with all the tools they need to succeed. Members also made cash donations to Ritter Center's annual Family-to-Family project. This year families were given gift cards that our donations helped to sponsor.

In addition, the Mission Board of the First Congregational Church of San Rafael donated to the following organizations:

- Spahr Center
- Marin Interfaith Street Chaplaincy
- Center for Domestic Peace
- Canal Alliance
- Habitat for Humanity of Sonoma County
- Marin Interfaith Council



Stay safe, stay healthy and Happy New Year 2021!

### DON'T FORGET THE FOOD BANK



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





## PILGRIM PARK UPDATE



Nancy Smith, who has been Pilgrim Park's manager for 28 years is retiring as of 12/31/20. She and her husband, Charles, are moving to their home in Georgia, where they will be closer to their siblings and to Nancy's mother. They leave their two children and two great granddaughters in Marin. So, they'll be back from time to time.

Les Santos, recently hired by the John Stewart Company, will assume the manager's job. Nancy and Margie have been training him for the last several weeks. Les is an experienced property manager. He and his wife live in Vallejo. He joins the experienced team of Margie Rollman, Assistant Site Manager and Francisco Galinda, Maintenance Supervisor.

Several additional residents have either been diagnosed with or exposed to the Covid virus. They are self quarantined in their apartments.

Bob De Haan



### A SPECTACULAR CHRISTMAS EVE!

119 people viewed our Christmas Eve service! We heard saw and heard the voices of many of our members singing and reading scripture, especially our children and young adults. If you missed it, or if you just want to view the video of the service again, it is available on the church website:

<http://fccsanrafael.org/sermons/christmas-eve-2020-a-service-we-all-created-and-share-together/>

Following the service, at least 50 of our members gathered on Zoom to celebrate together!



## MOVIE NIGHT - THE UNDOING and MY OCTOPUS TEACHER

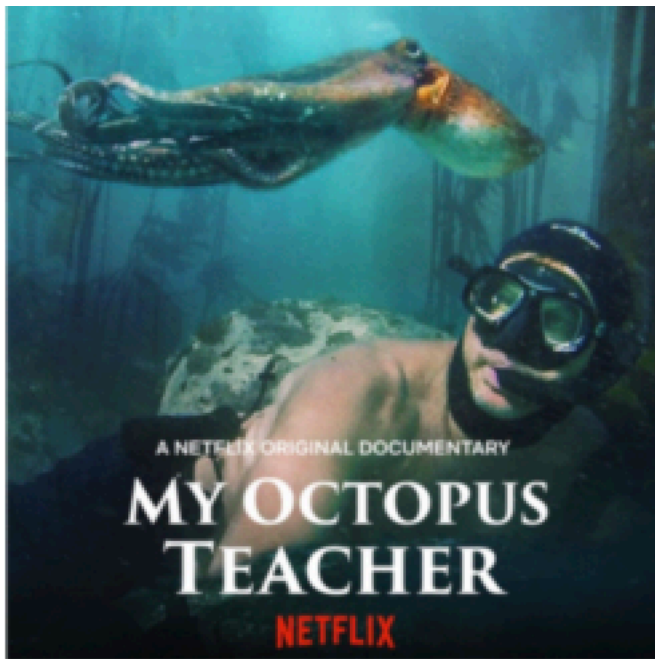
### THE UNDOING (Six streaming episodes on HBO)

Danish director Susanne Bier is a Movie Night favorite. Over the years, we've watched four of her feature films. *The Undoing* is her first venture into a made-for-TV series, and it combines her talent at dissecting human character with an ability to keep us guessing and to surprise us with plot twists that are on a par with Hitchcock's best. Grace Fraser (Nicole Kidman) is a wealthy psychologist and her husband Jonathan (Hugh Grant) is a much-loved pediatric oncologist. There is a sudden, brutal murder, and their charmed life comes crashing down. The series is more about truth and illusion in a marriage than it is a classic whodunit, but to say any more about that would spoil the fun.



### MY OCTOPUS TEACHER (90 minutes. Streaming on Netflix)

Octopuses are a hot subject. The 2016 best-selling book, *The Soul of an Octopus*, gave many of us an in-depth look at this marvelous creature: apparently as clever and creative as our close relatives like chimps and dolphins, but part of an evolutionary branch so distant it might as well be from another planet. The movie follows South African filmmaker Craig Foster during the year he spent free-diving almost daily to follow an octopus he encountered in a nearby kelp forest. The two bonded, and the octopus let Foster film her clever strategies for capturing food and her even smarter ways to avoid becoming food for the local sharks. It all makes riveting, provocative viewing..





## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1 — Chris Siroky  
6 — Oak Dowling  
20 — Doug Shannon  
20 — James True

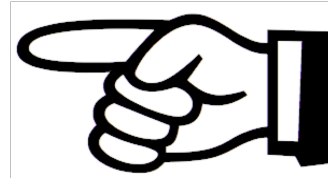
## GOLDEN GALS — Meeting postponed

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 FEBRUARY 2021 Issue - Mon. JAN. 25

The deadline for articles and news for the February 2021 issue of The TIE is Monday, Jan. 25th. Please email your articles to [lucindaray@aol.com](mailto:lucindaray@aol.com) by Monday, the 25th.



## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:office@fccsanrafael.org)

# FCC Calendar JANUARY 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>27</b>  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am ZOOM Meetings, Virtual coffee hour	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>January 1</b> New Year's Day	<b>2</b>  Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 10
<b>3</b>  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am ZOOM Meetings, Virtual coffee hour	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>  Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 10 10 am - 12 am  CHURCH BELIEVERS
<b>10</b>  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am ZOOM Meetings, Virtual coffee hour	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>  Board of Ministry Meeting 10:00 AM via ZOOM 7 am - 8 am  BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING via ZOOM	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>  Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 10
<b>17</b>  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am ZOOM Meetings, Virtual coffee hour	<b>18</b> Martin Luther King Day	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>  Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 10
<b>24</b>  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am ZOOM Meetings, Virtual coffee hour	<b>25</b>  THE CHURCH for February 2021 issue	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> 5 am - 6 am  Church Council Meeting via ZOOM	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>  Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 10
<b>31</b>  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am ZOOM Meetings, Virtual coffee hour 11 am - 12 am  ANNUAL MEETING 11 AM on Zoom	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> Groundhog Day	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>  Movie Night at home. See suggestions on page 10

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](http://www.FccSanRafael.org).