

December 2021
First Congregational Church of
San Rafael

The TIE



PASTORAL REFLECTIONS REV. JEFFREY COCHRAN-CARNEY



The Word Became Flesh

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from God, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

As I’m writing this article near Thanksgiving, Christmas is just around the corner. Are you ready? What kind of Christmas will it be for you this year? Perhaps it will be extra special after Covid sheltering last year. Christmas has changed for me over the years, though the essence of it remains the same. As the angel said to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Lk 2:10-11

Our circumstances and the context of Christmas are constantly changing. Gone are the days of toys and the excitement of eagerly

waiting for Santa. Perhaps there are not as many family members gathered around the tree and the table anymore as they have gone home to experience Christmas in the Kingdom. Christmas becomes difficult for many people because it is not what it used to be. But as people of faith, we can believe that Christmas can still be rich and inspiring. The reason is quite simple. As John writes, “The Word dwelt among us . . . and we have seen His glory.”

Such wisdom was likely hidden from our eyes when we were young. It takes a season of living with the Spirit before we can see on our horizon the same star the shepherds saw. For many years we may have dwelled alone in the realm of Christmas Past until finally deciding to travel today with the Wise Men. This year may be the time when we step away from the busyness of the season, while calming our hearts and minds in order to hear the words of the angel whispered to us ... ‘Behold I bring you Good News ...’

Growing older can mean growing wiser in ways we never imagined, as Richard Rohr points out. Even if our eyesight grows dim, the dazzling glory of the Lord lights the way. For me, it also means that the poignancy of Christmases past flow into the present

moment, and we behold the mystery that even those who are gone from our sight are with us at this very moment. We all fall to our knees together and worship the One who came, yet comes again.

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This can be the year when we experience God in new ways as we worship in spirit and in truth. The veil between heaven and earth is thinner than we think. As Gerard Manley Hopkins writes, “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.” Never is this truer than at Christmas.

Like Mary, we can “treasure up all these things” and ponder them in our hearts. This Christmas the Word will come again and dwell with you. Heaven and earth will join together, and the glory of the Lord will shine in you brighter than ever. Let your light shine!

Christmas Blessings, Pastor Jeffrey

MEMORIAL POINSETTIAS FOR CHRISTMAS

Help fill the sanctuary during Christmas with brilliant color in honor or memory of a loved one. You may purchase a poinsettia by filling out the order form and a check for \$10.00 (made out to FCCSR). Order forms will be available in the December Sunday bulletins or write “for poinsettia” in the memo area of your check.



ADVENT REFLECTION GROUP

December 6, 13, 20

7:00 – 8:00 PM on Zoom

The theme this year is Night Watch. “The metaphor of darkness runs throughout the Bible — but darkness does not mean the absence of God.” In the darkness of December, Advent points us to the light that is around us and within us, and prepares us for “the light that shines in the darkness” at Christmas. Reflections will be based on a PDF. Please let the pastor know if you are interested and the PDF will be emailed to you.



PRAYER PARTNERS

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



November 28 - December 4
Caryl Hodges

December 5 - 11
Lorene Jackson

December 12 - 18
Ann Jolly

December 19 - 25
Amy Kaufman, Sean and Alison

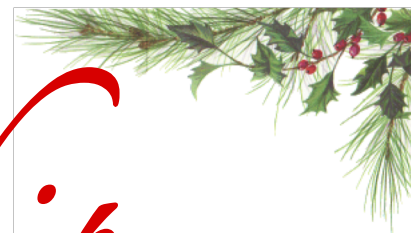
December 26 - January 1
David Knopf and Cathi Fuller,
Rachael and Rebecca

COME and



Worship

with us!



***Worship is now being held in the sanctuary every Sunday,
with masking and social distancing.***

Dec. 5 Second Sunday in Advent

Moving From Darkness Into Light Isaiah 9:2, 6-7 John 1:1-9; 3:19-21

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.” - Isaiah 9:2

We are in the darkest month of the year. The days are shorter and the nights are longer. You go home in the dark . . . go to work in the dark, and probably spend many of your waking hours in the dark. The ancients feared this time of the year. They were afraid the sun might sink on the horizon, and never return again. In some ways we have remnants of that primordial fear. We know something about that darkness as well. There are those who are worried, anxious and depressed, or experiencing self-doubt. Advent is a time face the darkness. We can hold fast to the hope expressed by Isaiah and John the Baptist.

Dec. 12 Third Sunday in Advent

Miracles Still Happen

Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25

Joseph was engaged to Mary, but before they could be married, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Joseph agonized and wondered if he should go ahead with the wedding. But an angel appeared to him in a dream, and assured him this was part of God’s plan, and he should go ahead with the marriage. This is the time of year when the veil between heaven and earth is particularly thin. What are the dreams God is whispering to you? What is the angel’s clarion call in your life? Advent is a season of mystery and imagination.

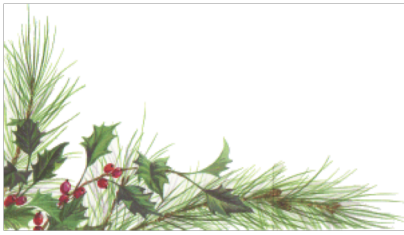
Dec. 19 Fourth Sunday in Advent

What Did the Animals Know: Isaiah 9:2-3, 6-7; Luke 2:8-12

Have you ever paused to think about what life must have been like around the stable on that first Christmas? We have a visible reminder every time we behold a nativity scene. One thing we know - us was surrounded by animals at the time of his birth. In Isaiah 1:3 we read: 3 The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." Did the animals know that something special was taking place at the manger that night? I like to think about what life must have been like around the stable on that first Christmas. It was no accident that the animals were there to greet the baby Jesus.

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COME and



w i t h u s !

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Service

7:00 PM Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols

A family service of "Scripture and Carols" to tell the Christmas story. We will close with our tradition of singing Silent Night, in a circle under the stars, having processed by candle light to the courtyard.

11:00 PM Meditative Christmas Eve

The church will be open at 11 PM for meditation, recorded music and candlelight.



December 26, 2021 (Pulpit Supply)

Kimberly Williams preaching. Pastor Jeffrey will be on vacation.



In addition to worship, **we are also livestreaming our 10 AM worship service on Zoom** for those who can't attend in person. Check your email on Saturday nights for more details!

ZOOM MEETINGS LET US GATHER TOGETHER SAFELY

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

DEC. 2: The Music Director Search Committee will meet on Thurs., Dec. 2, at 5:30 PM.

DEC. 6, 13, 20: The Advent Reflections group will meet on Mondays, at 7 PM.

DEC. 7: The Board of Ministry meeting will be on Tuesday, Dec. 7, at 12:00 noon.

DEC. 21: The Board of Trustees meeting will be on Tuesday, Dec. 21, at 7 PM.





BOARD OF MISSION MISSION MATTERS



SERRV SALE - SHOP ONLINE

Just in time for Christmas!

(But you can use it throughout the year: Easter, birthdays, Valentine's Day...)

When you purchase items from SERRV, a wonderful non-profit that offers handmade items made by poor craftspeople from all over the world, our church Mission Board will receive 20% of your purchase price. You can access the SERRV online catalog using the link below. It's easy to shop! Just copy and paste this link to make sure your purchase is credited to our church fundraiser.

serrv.org?a=FCCserrvsale



FAMILY TO FAMILY GIFT COLLECTION - DECEMBER 12



The Board of Mission will be collecting the Christmas gifts for two small families in our county that members of our congregation have provided. This important project is organized by Ritter Center in San Rafael. Ritter Center interviews needy families throughout the county and finds out what special wishes the children and adults have for the holiday. Then they provide us with that information for two small families, so that we can provide items they really long for. On Sunday, December 12,

we will collect all those gifts after worship, and members of the Board of Mission will deliver them to Ritter Center for distribution to the families.

See Judy Girard to sign up for the needed gifts.

FILLING THE FOOD BANK BARREL

During December please remember to bring your non-perishable food items in plastic jars (no glass due to the danger of breakage). Let's fill the barrel, and then the Board of Mission will transport items to the warehouse.



MODERATOR'S REPORT

As we approach the holidays, the Church Council is working with the Board of Trustees, the Board of Ministry, and the Choir, to provide safe space for worship. This is a difficult, but necessary, task during this time when Covid continues to plague us.



At this point, we are continuing the requirement of wearing masks and social distancing. We will continue to keep most windows and doors open, but the use of space heaters should help.

Speakers who are standing alone at the pulpit may be unmasked while speaking. Therefore, we will not have the congregation sitting in the first two pews.

For our members who cannot be comfortable in the sanctuary, the live streaming of the Zoom service will continue, and we hope improvements in this are in the works.

We realize Marin County has done a pretty remarkable job of vaccination; however, many people are now moving about more, and Covid is still very active around us. I am sure that the safety measures will not be agreeable to everyone. Please know that the Church Council members struggled to come up with protocols that cover safety with a nod to comfort.

Having written all this, I want so much for us to be able to focus on the Christmas message, to worship together as a church family, and to find the joy in Christ's birth.

Lynn Grant, Moderator

HOLIDAY CONCERTS CONCERTS CONCERTS

This advent season once again offers musical opportunities that include several of our church family as performers. And in addition, the music itself is excellent!



Candlelight Choral Concert Marin Symphony Chamber Chorus

Saturday Dec. 4 at 7:30 PM

Sunday Dec. 5 at 4 PM

Mission San Rafael

\$34

Concert includes: Lucinda Ray, Charles Little, and Jeff Paul

College of Marin College Chorus and Chamber Singers

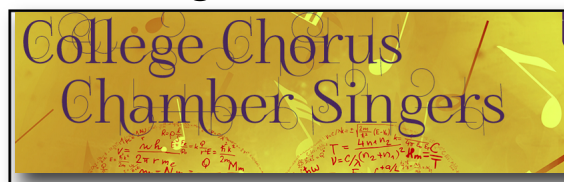
Tuesday, December 14 at 7:30 PM

James Dunn Theatre: College of Marin

Kentfield Campus

Donation

concert includes: Jeff Paul, Lucinda Ray, and Charles Little



BOARD OF MINISTRY REPORT

Music

- The Board of Ministry is grateful for the skilled piano accompaniment and special music that Gerry Grosz has offered these past weeks and will continue to offer until a permanent music director has been established. Members of the Music Director Search Committee report that the search continues with some candidates of interest having been identified for next steps. Thank you Gerry!
- The Choir has been meeting at 9 AM before worship to practice some special music that they have offered during worship (wearing their new “singers masks” and has been received with enthusiasm by congregation members. Thank you Choir Members!



Worship

If you would like to participate in worship by reading scripture or lighting an Advent Candle during Advent Sunday worship or Christmas Eve, please inform Pastor Jeffery or Amy Powers, our Office Administrator as soon as possible.

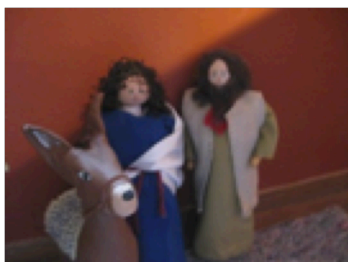
Education

• Advent Refection and Study

Pastor Jeffery will lead sessions each Monday at 7-8 pm on Zoom on December 6, 13, and 20, focused on theme of Light in the Darkness. See page 2 for more details.

Community

• Would you like to participate in an FCC Advent “Family Tradition”? Is There Room in the Inn of your House?



Would you like to “make room in the inn” of your home to Mary, Joseph and Joshua (the donkey) for a stay? They have started their journey and will need homes through the Advent season. They don’t take up much room and are very quiet and undemanding guests. The family reminds us of the journey of hope celebrated in the Advent season. They come with a journal from previous hosts and would like you to add your meditations or description of their visit to the book. Please let Cathi know if you want to schedule their

visit to your home. (The paper mache sculptured family and their handwoven and sewn clothing were created by our beloved Millie Bransford and Rev. Julianne Stokstad and have visited in our homes for about 2 decades.)

- **The Agape Team** gathered on November 7th for an uplifting time. The current Agape Team includes the following members: Tessa, Cathi, Caran, Jackie, Annie, Anice, David and Pastor Jeffery. What does the “Agape” Team do: "Provides compassionate connection to our church community through words of encouragement, cards, phone calls, home visits and other support as needed."

The decision was made to unite as one team rather than our previous arrangement of 3 rotating teams. We will meet monthly, 2nd Sunday of each month, after services, to update ourselves on any current joys and concerns.

The Board of Ministry Team members want to acknowledge that this holiday season when the darkening days, challenging world news, recent personal losses, health difficulties and being alone can be especially painful, sad and lonely; we may be especially needful of Light in the Darkness. We will welcome Advent together, the coming of the Christ!

TRUSTEE'S REPORT



GRATITUDE IN ACTION

Put your gratitude into action with your pledge for next year. Let us know some of the ways you can help our shared ministry. There are many ways large and small. We are counting on you. Can you pray for us, join a project team or committee, be a greeter, bring flowers? Can you provide the church a regular financial offering? Please mail the green sheet to the church or bring it Sunday.

NEW SIGN

Our faded old street sign is now replaced with a fresh redesign by W.I.G.T Graphics and the Davis Sign Company. The new sign features a changeable line in the middle. Can you think of any good short, punchy phrases describing the church or the seasons which you think might work? Try just 4-8 words. If you have any suggestions send them to the office or David Knopf.

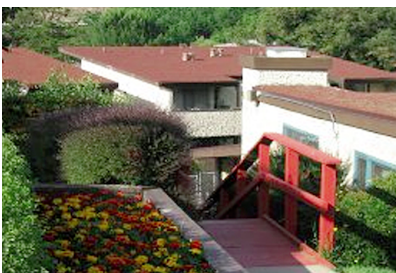


INCREASING COVID SAFETY

Due to the continuing pandemic and a predicted winter surge we continue to be cautious, even though we think everybody has been vaccinated. We are adding an extra layer of protection by ordering two new large room air purifiers. These air purifiers are the highest rated in Consumers Reports testing. They have hospital grade H-13 filters which will completely purify the air in the sanctuary every 30 minutes. We have been keeping the windows open to improve ventilation, but that can make things cold. To make sure everybody is warm enough, we have reset the thermostat and raised the temperature. We are also prepared to offer space heaters if needed.

DID YOU KNOW?

Our most frequent renter which we used to know as MDDL (Ministerios de Dios Latinos) is now known as The Real Life Church. They are now back to meeting more frequently than before.



PILGRIM PARK UPDATE

The Holidays at Pilgrim Park – The Community Center is decked out in holiday finery – lights, pointsettias, lighted trees, and animals. Come visit and share a coffee. The directors and staff and their spouses will meet for their annual catered dinner – about the only perk the director get. Later I hope that there will be an evening event for residents to meet, greet and enjoy coffee,

cookies and holiday cheer.

Covid – Management has asked the county medical folks to arrange a clinic at Pilgrim Park for booster shots.

Mrs. Jones – I regret to tell you that Mrs. Jones, one of the longest residents at Pilgrim Park, recently passed away. Mrs. Jones, with her husband and children moved to PP in 1977, just six years after opening. While at PP, she and her husband, raised their children, her husband died, and Mrs. Jones had a stroke. Partially disabled, she lived in one of the three ADA apartments. She was cared for by various family members, most recently a grandson. I chatted with her and two grandsons at this year's picnic. She recently suffered another stroke and was moved to the hospital. As she was noticeably declining in health, she asked to be moved back to PP, where she died. I am saddened by the loss of a friend of many years.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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

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 issue - Mon., December 27

The deadline for articles and news for the January 2022 issue of The TIE is Monday, December 27th. Please email your articles to lucindaray@aol.com by Monday, December 27th.



CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Both Amy and Jeffrey are working from home.

You can contact them via email

NOTE: Pastor Jeffrey's 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 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28  10am-11am Worship, Church School & Child Care Our service is ALSO livestreamed on Zoom at 10 AM	29  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	30  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	December 1  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	2  8:30am-10:30am Music Director Speech Committee	3  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	4  Movie Night at home.
5  10am-11am Worship, Church School & Child Care Our service is ALSO livestreamed on Zoom at 10 AM	6  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	7  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	8  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	9  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	10  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	11  Movie Night at home.
12  10am-11am Worship, Church School & Child Care Our service is ALSO livestreamed on Zoom at 10 AM	13  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	14  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	15  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	16  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	17  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	18  Movie Night at home.
19  10am-11am Worship, Church School & Child Care Our service is ALSO livestreamed on Zoom at 10 AM	20  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	21  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	22  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	23  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	24  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	25  Christmas Day Movie Night at home.
26  10am-11am Worship, Church School & Child Care Our service is ALSO livestreamed on Zoom at 10 AM	27  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	28  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	29  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	30  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	31  7am-8am ADVENT DEVOTIONS via Zoom	1 New Year's Day

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.