

THOUGHTS FROM THE PASTOR... REV. BARBARA PERONTEAU



The Great Question of the Age

At the end of the Second World War, America was victorious in Europe and in the Pacific. The GIs were coming home. Having just suffered through the Great Depression and a devastating war, industry and commerce geared up quickly, and the economy was booming. America led the world in design, imagination, and production. America showed the world the sky is the limit.

The imbalance of civil rights notwithstanding, America was riding on a high. God had smiled upon this nation once again, delivering her from the one-two-punch of her calamities. No more depression. No more war. In a re-sponse of faith, a grateful nation gave credit to God for her good fortune by returning to church and to synagogue, each according to their faith. The membership of the various congregations swelled to a new high.

Then came Vietnam and Watergate. By the early 1970's church attendance began to decline.

The momentum that had once been all about church growth had shifted toward decline. There are several factors that play into this overall pattern of decline, which I won't go into here. They range from socio-political to disfunction within particular churches to individuals not understanding the faith and having unrealistic expectations about their faith, pastor, or church.

In a recent Fox News Poll asking about the importance of religion in 2023, 39% said religion is "very important." Compare that with a similar poll in 1998 where 62% of the respondents said religion is "very important." In post-pandemic America, this is where we find ourselves.

We, here at First Congregational Church of San Rafael, are not the only ones wondering what's next for us. Every church of every denomination, non-denominational, and of every theological stripe are asking the same questions. As the Golden Gate Association meeting was about to close at the end of the Conference Annual Gathering, the Pastor of Congregational Church of Belmont, Jim Mitulski, asked the question that is on everyone's minds. "How do we stop shrinking and how do we grow?" This question resonated with every person at the meeting. Indeed, this topic will be theme for the Fall Meeting of the Golden Gate Association in November.

The time in which we live is not the first time the Church has had to ask "The Church Question." As the faithful returned home to Jerusalem, from their Babylonian

continued on the next page



Exile, Isaiah 56-66 addresses how to be, and rebuild the faithful community newly restored. The purpose for the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 CE was to answer Constantine's question of who is the Church, and what does the Church believe? To unify a disorganized Church, Pope Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome from 590-604 CE, instituted liturgical reforms, including Gregorian Chants. In the Sixteenth Century both Luther and Calvin brought many theological, liturgical, and polity changes to the Church, now reformed. Much of the theology of the mid-nineteenth-century concerns center around, what John W. Nevin refers to, in the Spring of 1845, as "the great question of the age."

According to a recent article in *Convergence* entitled, "Is it Time to Change the Questions You Are Asking About Your Church?" the author suggests that beginning with the premise that we must be doing something wrong, that a "good church" has people actively participating, that our finances must be at a certain level, when we keep the peace, that our survival needs to look like our glorified past, that these starting points are not helpful and only create unwarranted fear and anxiety. We are not there. Let's not start there.



It is our turn to ask "the great question of the age." As your pastor, let me be clear, that as we ask the right questions, our congregation is coming from a healthy place. Our Boards and Council are functioning in healthy ways. No one dominates the room in an unhealthy manner. Our finances are stable. Our attendance is average. Coming out of the pandemic, I'll take average for the moment. For now. We also have a hybrid worship, meaning, as we gather in-person we livestream on YouTube. Our congregation is caring, compassionate, embracing, affirming and welcoming of one another and "the other." (There is no "other" here. We are all one.) Our starting place is healthy. We are already a "good congregation."

Still, now is the time to start asking the right questions. What might those questions be you might ask? For that answer I refer you to our Moderator, Caran Cuneo's article on **pages 6 and 7** in this edition of the TIE.

Enjoy your summer. If I don't see you in Church, I'll definitely see you in September, as the song goes. Be prepared to rollup your sleeves. We're on a mission to find the answers to "the great question of the age."

Peace and Joy, Pastor Barbara K. Peronteau

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

July 2 - 8

Elaine Corvello

July 9 - 15

Caran Cuneo

July 16 - 22

Anne Dannecker

July 23 - 29

Bob De Haan and Nancy Sangster-De Haan

July 30 - August 5

Jackie Dema

August 6 - 12

Kristi Denham

August 13 - 19

Julie Dowling

August 20 - 26

Oak and Mary Dowling

August 27 - September 2

Anice Flesh





Come and Worship

w i t h u s !

We will be worshipping at 10 AM inside the sanctuary.

The service will also be available streaming on YouTube (see next page).

The first set of readings from the Old Testament and Psalms is called semi-continuous. These readings loosely follow each other for several weeks. The second set of Old Testament and Psalm readings is called complimentary (paired), and the connection to the Epistle and Gospel is a more obvious.

July 2 Fifth Sunday after Pentecost Theme: Holy Welcome

Genesis 22:1-14

and Psalm 13

or

Jeremiah 28:5-9

and Psalm 89: 1-4, 15-18 28:16-20

Romans 6:12-23

Matthew 10:40-42

July 9 Sixth Sunday after Pentecost Theme: Chosen Journeys

Genesis 24:24-38, 42-49, 58-67

and Psalm 45:10-17

and Song of Solomon 2:8-13

or

Zechariah 9:9-12

and Psalm 145:8-14

Romans 7:15-25

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

July 16 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost Theme: A House Divided

Genesis 25:10-13

and Psalm 119:105-112, 12-19

or

Isaiah 55:7-13

and Psalm 65:1-8, 9-13

Romans 8:1-11

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

**July 23 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
Theme: Wheat and Weeds Together**

Genesis 28:10-19a

and Psalm 86:11-17 or Wisdom of
12:13, 16-19

or

Isaiah 44:6-8

and Psalm 86:11-17

Romans 8:12-25

Matthew 13:24-30. 36-43



Come and Worship with us!

July 30 Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Theme: Weaving the Future

Genesis 29:15-28	and	Psalm 105:1-11, 45b, or Psalm 128
	or	
1 Kings 3:5-12	and	Psalm 119: 129-136
Romans 8: 26-39		Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

August 6 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Theme: Face to Face

Genesis 32:22-31	and	Psalm 17:1-7, 15
	or	
Isaiah 55:1-5	and	Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21
Romans 9:1-5		Matthew 14:13-21

August 13 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Theme: When All Seems Lost

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28	and	Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b
	or	
1 Kings 19:9-18	and	Psalm 85:8-13
Romans 10:5-15		Matthew 14:22-33

August 20 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Theme: Bold Moves

Genesis 45:1-15	and	Psalm 133
	or	
Isaiah 56:1-18	and	Psalm 85:8-13
Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32		Matthew 15:10-28

August 27 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Theme: Be Transformed

Exodus 1:802:10	and	Psalm 124
	or	
Isaiah 51:1-6	and	Psalm 138
Romans 12:1-8		Matthew 16:13-20



ZOOM MEETINGS LET US GATHER TOGETHER SAFELY

We are also providing our Sunday worship service streaming on YouTube at 10 a.m. You can use either your computer, your cell phone, or your tablet. See below.

Link to join all church Zoom meetings

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2011092691?pwd=c2V0RXEvWXF4STNNSTlxbWFFTENuZz09>

Meeting ID: ID: 201 109 2691

Password: FCCSR!

Call number 1-669-900-6833

SUNDAY WORSHIP IS NOW LIVE ON YOU TUBE

We broadcast live Sunday mornings on YouTube. Our channel address is:

- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbqLXLjsBEmjdGuoOKnOykA>
- Then click on videos->live
- Subscribe and each week you will get a direct link.

We will also post a direct link each week in the What's Happening? email.

The whole service unedited will be available for a few days; then an edited version to include just the sermon will be posted.

If you are having trouble getting connected, email Knopf.david@gmail.com

MEETINGS, MEETINGS, MEETINGS -- VIA ZOOM

July 13: The Board of Ministry will meet on **Tuesday**, July 11, at noon.

July 26: The Church Council meeting will be on **Wednesday**, July 26 at 5 PM.

August 10: The Board of Trustees will meet on **Thursday**, August 10, at 7 PM.

August 16: The Board of Mission will meet on **Wednesday**, August 16, at 1:00 PM.



CHURCH COUNCIL REMOVES THE MASK MANDATE

At their April meeting, the Church Council of the First Congregational Church of San Rafael discussed eliminating the mask mandate.

Going forward, masks are recommended but optional at this time. Please continue to be respectful of others.

MODERATOR CARAN CUNEO'S IMPORTANT THOUGHTS: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR US TO BE THE CHURCH?

As your new Church Moderator, I was asked to contribute an article for this month's edition of the TIE. I have given a lot of thought to what I might write, and welcome your comments, suggestions, and leadership as we move forward in the coming months.

Celebrating 130 years of service to our community, our congregation and our God! That's an impressive history. We can look at our beliefs as stated on our website:



Our church is welcoming, nurturing and educational.

We follow Jesus as our teacher and guide.

We welcome diversity and we celebrate the unique gifts each person brings.

We seek justice for all and harmony among all.

We take the Bible seriously but not always literally.

The Earth is our home.

We believe there is no conflict between science and religion.

We are a self-governing church.

In this age, with the changes we have seen in our community and our world, it is important to ensure our resources – time, talent, dollars, physical spaces – are being used to their fullest potential. The old saying of “build it and they will come” no longer applies when it comes to church activities and initiatives, unless they are a part of a very intentional, larger process of discernment and strategic visioning.

Pastor Barbara recently shared ideas from an article from CP Works, *Convergence*, entitled, “Is It Time to Change the Questions We Ask About Our Church?” Here are some of the suggested new questions:

- How is God calling a particular group of people to fellowship, break bread, learn, and serve together?
- Is our church a learning lab for navigating life's changes and conflicts in healthy and transformative ways?
- What kind of church does God need to heal the world in 2023, in 2053, and in 2123?

This leads to a new framework, such as:

- Groups of people are called together by God to do Christian life together.
- The forms this will take are unique and local and will vary as much as the flora and fauna that surrounds us.

continued on the next page

- Truly “doing life together” requires more than 1 hour per week in order to share practice, build community, and truly know and be known.
- Christian life together should teach and model healthy communication, and transformational change skills, and must focus on the well-being of others more than ourselves.



I would suggest and welcome us to spend some sacred time in discussion to develop a strategic vision for our future. We are financially sound, with a beautiful and peaceful sanctuary. We have active ministries with dedicated members participating in Board of Mission, Board of Ministry, Council and Trustees.

As Gil Rendle writes in *Doing the Math of Mission: Fruits, Faithfulness and Metrics*, “is it time to take a new approach – to chart a new course or explore a new path? With the excitement and anticipation of something new, there is also some fear. Let’s take the time to name those fears as well as the excitement. What we need now is conversation about purpose, clear outcomes of ministry and conversations about what God calls us to make different in the mission field we are placed.”

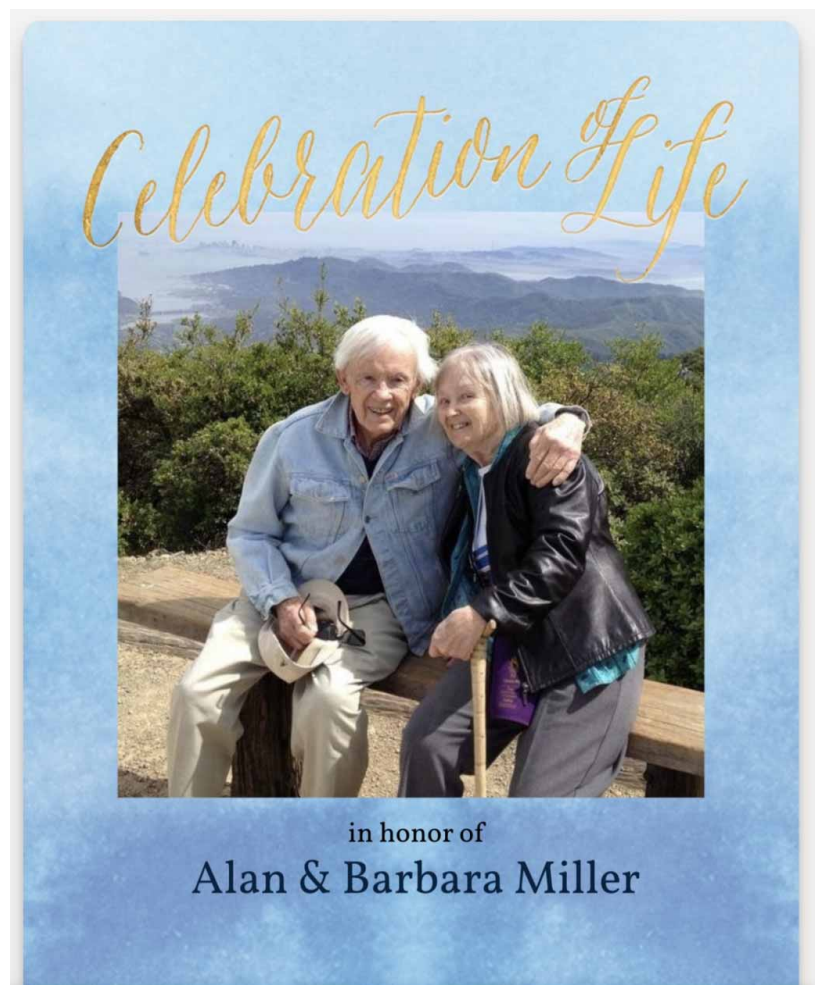
Going to church is a gathering, Being the church is the way we live out our faith. Please join in charting the course!

Caran Cuneo

THE MILLER FAMILY INVITES YOU

**Saturday, August 12
11 AM**

**First Congregational
Church
of San Rafael**



PARTY PARTY PARTY



You are invited to a Nonagenarian Tea Party Celebration on July 16th

What: Let's celebrate our 90 Year Olds!

Wow, we have 7 "nonagenarian" FCC Family members.
Many celebrated a 90th birthday very recently.

When: Sunday, July 16, around 11 AM, following our FCC worship service during our Community Time.

Where: At the First Congregational Church in San Rafael, 8 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael.

Event: Tea, coffee and lemonade, cupcakes, fruit cups and tea sandwiches will be served.

Wear a hat: You may win the Hat Contest and receive a small surprise! What party is complete without a game?

Yes, wear your favorite party hat, Easter bonnet, cloche, beret, baseball cap, fedora, bowler, Panama, boater, pillbox, fascination, mortar board, cowboy, pork pie hat...or (you get the idea!).

Bring a friend!



BOARD OF TRUSTEE'S REPORT

Parking Considerations

We have a request to ease the access to the church by increasing disabled parking spots, which the Church Council has encouraged. Formal disabled parking spots require wider spaces for van door opening and curb re-working. We would have to permanently reduce our amount of other parking spaces.

Formal disabled parking spots require wider spaces for van door opening and curb re-working. We would have to permanently reduce our amount of other parking spaces. Although we have plenty of extra parking spots Sunday mornings, several renting groups use the parking lot to overflowing.

An alternative has been suggested. Could we reserve the front row of parking spots for people with mobility limitations just on Sunday mornings? Everybody else then would park across the lane or closer to the street. We would put out temporary signs reminding members of this. This alternative would allow us to continue having the same number of parking spots, and save us the cost of curb replacement. The Trustees plan to try this approach this summer.

Guest Preachers Coming

We will have several guest preachers this summer. Pastor Barbara gets off the fifth Sunday of any month, and will then take a two week vacation the beginning of August

July 30: The co-founder of the first Spanish language UCC church in Northern California, Rev Rhina Ramos, will preach July 30th. She helped create Ministerios Latinos which began in the home of an immigrant Guatemalan family and has a dedication to serving Spanish speaking LGBTQTI. She has been highly recommended to us by Sally Train.

August 6: Rev. Julianne Stokstad, a previous pastor, will I preach August 6.

August 13: Still to be determined.

Our Facility Serves Many including:

- Acqua Montessori pre-school (5 says a week)
- Real Life Church (5 nights a week)
- Church of God (Seventh Day) Saturday afternoons
- Food Anonymous (twice a week)
- Toastmasters Cub (Tuesday evenings)
- Threshold Choir (twice a month)
- Yoga group (Tuesday afternoons)
- 4H (Sunday afternoons and Monday evenings)
- AARP Tax Assistance (tax season Feb-April)



BOARD OF MINISTRY REPORT

The Board of Ministry Team's key role in the church is to coordinate with the Pastor and Music Director in providing meaningful worship services throughout the liturgical year. We address the spiritual life of the church through the following areas: welcome and outreach, worship and prayer, fellowship, and education.



In June



On June 18th we celebrated Juneteenth and Father's Day in worship and, in our community time, some red treats.

On June 25th, Pride Sunday, we shared in the litany, sermon message, uplifting music and even our refreshments and church adornments celebrating the rainbow beauty of the diversity of the Family of God.



Coming in July and August

July 2. Celebrating the 66th Anniversary of the United Church of Christ

Guest preachers this summer:

July 30: Rev. Rita Ramos

August 6: Rev Julianne Stokstad

August 13: To be announced

Community

July 16 11 AM Tea party in Celebration of our Nonagenarians after worship.

Let's celebrate our awesome seven FCC family members, recently in their 90's! Enjoy some treats, attire yourself with a hat (fashionable, festive, fan caps, functional or funny)...You may win a small surprise. You don't have to be 90 years of age to attend. Bring a friend and bring your inner child. Let's party!

Other Recognitions: Shout out to Sean Kaufman who turned 16 years old this year. Safe travels to you! Shout out to Liz, who graduated with a Dual Masters in Fine Arts & in Visual & Critical Studies! We wish you joy and creativity in your future career.

Next Board of Ministry meeting: Tuesday, July 11, at noon on Zoom.

For reflection on Independence Day, from Amanda Gorman's poem
Believer's Hymn for the Republic

"...Americans know one another by our love of liberty.
When in fact, we are liberated by our love for one another.
We understand that a house divided cannot stand.
So let us make a pact to be the country that acts
As compassionate as we are courageous.
In the declaration's pages, we write a new order for the ages,
Where out of many, we are one,
Bright as a sun, and bold as an eagle,
A nation of all people, by all people,
For all people."....



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 PICNIC AND PADDLING

You are invited to our summer First Congregational Church of San Rafael family picnic on the dock (or on the couch) at Lynn Grant's home.

When: After church on Sunday, September 3, beginning at 1 PM

Where: Lynn Grant's patio in Bel Marin Keyes, Novato

What to bring: Potluck picnic foods such as salads, breads, desserts and cold cuts. Bring picnic plates, cups and utensils for your own family if you can. If you forget, come anyway; there will be extra dishes on hand as back-up.

AND Bring a friend!

What to wear: Comfortable clothes (a bathing suit and towel if you want to swim from the dock) so you can take a turn rowing in the canoe, kayak or paddle boat. Bring life jackets for kids, please!

HELP IS NEEDED!

Meals on Wheels in San Rafael is short staffed and very much in need of volunteers, paid drivers, and paid meal packers! The work days are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings.

Paid drivers will have a company car to complete deliveries and are paid \$20/hr. Volunteers use their own vehicles but are compensated for mileage and generally have short routes.

If interested please contact:

Erika Vaughn (415) 261-4585 or
evaughn@vivalon.org,

or

Abby Cretan (415) 456-9062 or
ACretan@vivalon.org





JULY BIRTHDAYS

3 — Jack Intrater
5 — Saba Dempsey
6 — Cyndi Siroky
26 — Tristan Cline-Meehan
Michael Cline-Meehan
Jacob Cline-Meehan
Taylor Cline-Meehan
27 — Louis Frost
29 — Catherine Hills

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

6 — Jamie Cline
6 — Audrey Hills
12 — Rebecca Knopf
13 — Cio Kaufman
17 — Helen MacLam
19 — Emma Intrater
19 — Melanie Sakskul
22 — Amy Smith
24 — Jacob Dempsey
27 — David Knopf
28 — Judy Girard



What is a
mathematician's
favorite book
of the Bible?
Numbers.

Q: Need to build
an ark?

A: I noah guy.



Why didn't
Noah go fishing?
He only had
two worms.

TIE DEADLINE for SEPTEMBER 2023 issue - Mon., August 28

The deadline for articles and news for the July/August 2023 issue of The TIE is Monday, August 28. Please email your articles to lucindaray@aol.com by Monday, August 28.



Rev. Barbara Peronteau — Pastor
Tues., Wed., Thurs., 10 AM – 2 PM

Office Phone: 415-479-2747
Cell Phone: 510-646-2372
Email: barbareau433@yahoo.com














Amy Powers — Office Manager

Monday 11 AM – 2 PM
Wednesday and Thursday 10 AM – 2 PM

You can contact Amy by phone or email any time.

Office Phone: 415-479-2747
Email: office@fcssanrafael.org










FCC Calendar JULY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
25  10 am - 11 am Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 10 am - 11 am PRIDE SUNDAY	26 5 am  THE Deadline for JULY/AUG 2023 Issue					July 1
2 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM	3	4  Independence Day	5	6	7	8
9 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM	10	11 1 am  Board of Ministry Meeting 12 noon via ZOOM	12	13	14	15
16 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM	17		18	19	20	21
23 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 11 am  NON-GRABEN PARTY 11 AM	24 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM	25 5 am - 6 am  Church Council Meeting via ZOOM	26 5 am - 6 am  Church Council Meeting via ZOOM	27	28	29
30 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 11 am BACKPACK SUNDAY	31	1	2	3	4	5

EPSON Software Updater

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.

FCC Calendar AUGUST 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10am-11am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 10am BACKPACK SUNDAY	31 August 1	2	3	4	5	
6  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10am-11am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 10am	7	8	9	10 7am-8am  BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING via ZOOM	11	12 11am  MILLER - CELEBRATION OF LIFE
13  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10am-11am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 10am	14	15	16 11am-2pm  BOARD of MISSION Meeting on ZOOM	17	18	19
20  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10am-11am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 10am	21	22	23	24	25	26
27  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10am-11am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 10am	28 5pm  THE Deadline for SEPTEMBER 2023 Issue	29	30	31	1	2

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.