

From our pastor,

Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg

Our Theme for Advent and Christmas: “The Inn: Housing the Holy”

Relational God,
There are certain truths we know about ourselves.
We know that we will make mistakes.
We know that we need you.
We know that some days are beautiful, and some days are terrible.
And we know that we cannot go through life alone.
Like flowers need the sun,
we humans need relationships.
We need you.
We need this community.

So, we give you thanks for the connections we do have.

Thank you for the friends who know us.
Thank you for the families who claim us.
Thank you for the church who welcomes us.

Thank you for the neighbors who remember us.
Thank you for the mentors who believed in us,
and for the saints who taught us.

Like Naomi needed Ruth,
or Mary needed Joseph,
we know that we cannot make the long journey to Bethlehem alone.
So, for all who walk alongside us,
we give you thanks.

(Sanctified Art)

Our theme for this year is “The Inn: Housing the Holy.” Economic disparity runs rampant, locally and globally. As we enter the Advent season, the question is how our churches can become houses where the Holy will be born anew—offering respite, sustenance, and care, opening the doors ever wider to those seeking shelter from the onslaught of life? No one church can do it all, but each can do something. As we study the biblical prophets that call us to care for our neighbors and “make room in the inn,” the lonely and frightened spaces within us are filled with the light of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.



A couple of Sundays ago,
I asked if there were people in the congregation who had known each other (through church connections) more than 20, or 30 years... Several hands went up, confirming that this is a community which has held together for a long, long time. This is clearly a community, which has grown together, learned together, and remained committed to the call to make God’s love visible in the world.

Continued on the next page.

In the Buddhist tradition, people say that they will take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma (teachings), and the Sangha (community). There is a deep understanding that as people seek to bring harmony to all, that they need community, that they need people to walk alongside.

Especially in these times of turmoil, unrest, and challenges in our own lives, how do we keep cultivating our connection with the One who calls and sustains us? We often try to find answers to those questions all by ourselves, and tend to make our connection with the Divine more of an individual path and responsibility. At times that may leave us feeling a bit frightened and isolated. The prophets in times of old however, always started their call to the people to return to God with the words: "Hear O Israel." It was the community that was called, called to follow God's laws, called to care for neighbor. God's presence was woven into the very fabric of the community.

We too can take refuge in the community that we are a part of, encouraging one another, caring for one another, learning together what it means to do God's work in our time.

It is in working together, in caring for one another, in making room at the Inn, that the lonely and frightened spaces within us will be filled with the light of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love.

We would love for you to come and walk with us this Advent season.



Pastor Elisabeth

FILL THE CHURCH WITH POINSETTIAS

Memorial Poinsettias

Fill the sanctuary during Christmas with color in honor, in memory, or in celebration of a loved one(s). You may purchase a poinsettia by filling out the order form and including a check for \$10.00 (made out to FCCSR). Order forms will be available in the December Sunday bulletins. Remember to write "for poinsettia" in the memo area of your check.



PRAYER PARTNERS

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



December 1 - 7
Patty Trosclair

December 8 - 14
James "Trip" True

December 15 - 21
Jim Turner

December 22 - 28
Denise Walker

December 29 - January 4
Bruce Weir

COME and



Worship

with us!



**We will be worshipping at 10 AM inside the sanctuary.
The service will also be available streaming on YouTube (see next page).**

- | | | |
|-------------|-------|---|
| December 1 | 10 AM | First Sunday in Advent
“Making Room (Hope)” |
| December 8 | 10 AM | Second Sunday in Advent
“A Place at the Table (Peace)” |
| December 15 | 10 AM | Third Sunday in Advent
“How Much is Enough? (Joy)” |
| December 22 | 10 AM | Fourth Sunday in Advent
“A Room with a View (Love)” |

December 24 7 PM “The Inn”



Christmas
Eve
Service

7 PM Christmas Eve
A service of Carols and Scripture

11 PM Christmas Eve
A service by “firelight” with congregants reading the
“Christmas Story”

December 29 10 AM Worship



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=c2V0RXEvdWxkF4STNNSTlxbWFFTENuZz09>

Meeting ID: ID: 201 109 2691

Password: FCCSR!

Call in 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

Dec. 4: The Board of Ministry will meet on **Tuesday**, Dec. 4 at 11:45 AM.

Dec. 5: The Search Committee will meet on **Thursday**, Dec. 5 at 6 PM.

Dec. 5: The Board of Trustees will meet on **Thursday**, Dec. 5 at 7 PM

Dec. 18: The Board of Mission will meet on **Wednesday**, Dec. 18, at 1 PM.

Dec. 18: The Church Council will meet on **Wednesday**, Dec. 18, at 6 PM.



KINDNESS — PASS IT ON!

Call a lonely person

CANDY-MAKING PARTY - SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1



Before the pandemic, we had an annual candy-making party on the Sunday after Thanksgiving at the home of Lucinda Ray. She is reviving that tradition this year.

It will be held on Sunday, December 1, at about 12:30. We will start with a simple soup lunch. People bring ingredients and help make the delicious toffee, or watch and offer advice. If you would like to come, she will have a sign-up list in worship where you can indicate what you can bring (butter, sugar, chocolate chips, pecans, cookie sheets, etc. Men and women are equally welcome!



BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT

Pledges, Pledges, Pledges

PLEDGE Sunday, November 27, started our annual Stewardship efforts with a bang. In one day, pledges totaling \$65,000 were received.

As we pledge this year we are mindfully aware that how many pledges we receive will help guide our Search Committee's in deciding what we can offer potential new pastors.

Don't be left out! Prayerfully consider you pledge for next year, and fill out the pledge card mailed to you, or get one at church. You can put in the offering, give to Val, or put it in her box at church.

Repairs, Repairs, Repairs

November was a busy month for repairing. The downstairs power flush toilet mechanism has had to be replaced. The gutters had to be cleaned. We discovered a leak in the drip system which Audel was able to repair with new valves. We got a new ADA tilted mirror for the restroom next to the office, but the key to unlock the mirror from the frame was not included, so now we wait for the replacement key.

Invisible "Spiff-Up-the-Church Day"

You couldn't see it on our usual "Spiff Up the Church Day" (on a Saturday in November) because it didn't happen. Nevertheless, the church still sparkled for the David Hill Memorial. Our rental church colleagues of the Real Life Church came odd hours to do extra cleaning. We ate grateful for their energy and talents.

A NOTE FROM YOUR PLEDGE SECRETARY

Thank you to all who have submitted 2025 pledges. Extra thanks to those who increased their amount! We need as many pledges as possible by mid December in order to plan our budget for 2025. Forms were mailed out recently. You may bring your pledge form to church on Sunday, mail to 8 N. San Pedro Rd, 94903, or email your planned pledge to valpub@sbc-global.net, with "FCC pledge" in the subject.

-Val Sherer, pledge secretary

BOOK CLUB DECEMBER 12

On Thursday, December 12, at 7:30 on Zoom, the Book Club will be reading *Jacqueline in Paris*, by Ann Mah. This historical novel is a rare and dazzling portrait of Jacqueline Bouvier's college year abroad in postwar Paris, an intimate and electrifying story of love and betrayal, and the coming-of-age of an American icon – before the world knew her as Jackie.

France is a fragile place still haunted by the Occupation. In the aftermath of World War II, Paris has become a nest of spies, and suspicion, deception, and betrayal lurk around every corner. Jacqueline is stunned to watch the rise of communism – never guessing she is witnessing the beginning of the political environment that will shape the rest of her life—and that of her future husband.

You can get copies at the Marin County and Sonoma County libraries, including audiobook versions and large print versions.



THE INTERIM PROCESS -- HERE ARE THE NEXT STEPS:

- We appoint an Interim Search Committee to locate and recommend an interim pastor
The Interim Search Committee is Louis Frost, Megan Fuller, and David Santschi.
- We hire an Interim Pastor **Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg began on March 17, 2024.**
- We appoint a Search Committee **The Search Committee is Caran Cuneo, David Santschi, Annie Song-Hill, Lucinda Ray, and Cathi Fuller.**
- We update our church's website and engage the congregation through surveys to better represent who we are.
- We create our Church Profile, a description of our church to be read by potential pastors
- The Search Committee will consider all potential candidates
- The Search Committee will select possible candidates
- The Search Committee will interview these candidates
- One candidate will be recommended to the congregation
- The congregation will have an opportunity to meet the candidate
- We will vote on the recommended candidate
- We will join in worship to install our new pastor

SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE



If you haven't visited our First Congregational Church of San Rafael website lately, I encourage you to do so!

The Search committee has updated a number of pages on the website to more accurately reflect who we are now as a congregation. Special thanks to our hard working Search committee members and to Bob Spofford for his technical assistance.

We distributed the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) and got 37 responses. Holy Cow has now begun the data analysis of our CAT submissions. Once completed, the Search committee, Trustees, Council members (other leadership) will hear results via a zoom with the consultants.

Please note the following dates on your calendars for 2025:

January 19 – Church leadership shares results of the analysis with our congregation. We have an in-depth discussion about the results. All are welcome to share your thoughts as we define our profile and define our needs and wants in our next Settled Pastor.

February 2 – Rev Davena Jones with NCNC joins us for worship/discussion following worship for a Day of Discovery. What does the survey tell us about core competencies, and about the scope of work that is a priority for our membership? We need your input and feedback.

February 23 – Congregational Annual Meeting

March 1 – Profile is completed and Settled Pastor position is posted and advertised widely.

Many of you have commented on how blessed we are to have Rev. Elisabeth as our Interim Minister. We are truly grateful for her. She has committed to serve our congregation until we have selected our Settled Pastor. So rest assured, Pastor Elisabeth will continue with us during this transition. We are truly blessed.



BOARD OF MISSION MISSION MATTERS



STREET CHAPLAINCY DINNER - DECEMBER 3



The Board of Mission has committed to helping prepare and serve dinner for those in need four times this year. On Tuesday, December 3, a group of us will volunteer at the Street Chaplaincy dinner at the First Presbyterian Church in San Rafael. We need to be there from 4 - 7 PM. We are also collecting warm coats, rain gear, hats, and socks to give away. Sleeping bags are especially welcome.

It costs about \$250 dollars to purchase the groceries for each meal, at which we feed about 80 people. So where does the money come from? The Board of Mission is using money from The Pilgrim Hill Fund, which was created two decades ago by our church as a special fund for mission in our community. Please contact Lucinda Ray if you can help. lucindaray@aol.com

ITTER CENTER FAMILY HOLIDAY GIFT CARD COLLECTION - SUNDAY, DEC. 8

The Ritter Center's Family to Family Holiday Gift Card Program provides gift cards to Ritter Center registered families and individuals so they can fulfill their kids' holiday wishes and buy what they need this winter.



We recommend gift cards to Target and Safeway, in amounts of either \$25 or \$50. We will be collecting the gift cards on Sunday, December 8.

THANKSGIVING THANK YOU!

When Ritter Center staff reached out to the community to gather "Thanksgiving in a bag" for families they had identified as needing some neighborly support in accessing food for their dinners, we committed to gathering grocery bags and gift cards (toward the purchase of a turkey). On Monday, Nov. 18, Cathi Fuller delivered 10 full complete bags with gift cards and 3 extra gift cards. Each bag contained at least the following: two cans of vegetables, stuffing, cornbread mix, cranberry



sauce, gravy, ingredients for a dessert (pumpkin pie, cake and frosting, or gingerbread) and a grocery store gift card.

We are grateful for our church family members' kind hearts and generous giving.

REMEMBER THE FOOD BANK

Please help us continue to stock the pantry at the Marin Food Bank for neighbors in Marin who continue to struggle with food insecurity.

Bring in non-perishable food items - coffee, tea, cooking oil, boxed milk, peanut butter, canned goods, rice, cereal, canned meat. Please deposit them in our Food Bank barrel.



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.



Agape Team

The Agape Team provides “compassionate connection to our church community through words of encouragement, cards, phone calls, home visits, and other support as needed. Leave a message in the church office or contact Jackie Dema or Cathi Fuller if you have a request.

Prayer Chain E-mail either Julie Dowling isabella1472@comcast.net or Annie Song-Hill asonghill@gmail.com if you have a prayer request you would like included in the prayer chain.

In November

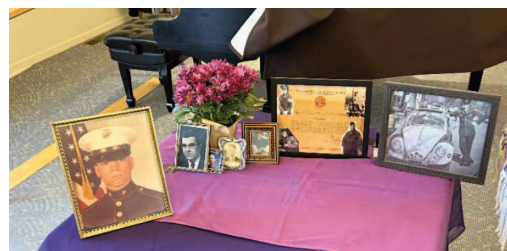
We are deeply grateful to Elisabeth for her challenging, brave, inspiring and hope-providing sermons in this past month when many of us have felt deep grief and distress at the current national and world tragedies. Our Tuesday Meditation in the Sanctuary time has also been a spiritual lifeline for us during challenges. We also experience heartfelt gratitude to Gerry and the choir for their preparation and shared musical gifts for the special music and the hymn choices that bring light and beauty to our worship and help us welcome the new week.

On All Saint's Day Sunday, we shared photos of our church family and individual family members who have passed on. We participated in praying the Litany of the Saints, in lighting candles and Communion. Pastor Elisabeth's sermon challenged us to be ordinary “saints” in our community. This theme was framed by our opening thought from Frederick Buechner and the closing hymn, “I Sing A Song of the Saint's of God.”



On Veteran's Day Sunday, there was time for our Veterans to share and also to hear stories from many church members of their loved ones who served in a wide range of roles in military service. Gratitude was also expressed for veterans of the struggle for peace. Prayers for healing were offered for those who have paid the price of physical and mental health challenges.

The music and sermon inspired “hope in times of darkness.” We were reminded that positive change does not happen overnight but it is happening all the time, around us.



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Nov. 16 Celebration of the Life of David Hill.

Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg led the service. Many warm, joy-filled and loving memories were shared by Song-Hill family members, numerous friends and colleagues.



Robby, accompanied by Gerry, sang Bob Dylan's "Make You Feel My Love," and Stanton shared a poem he had written for his father. We sang a rousing rendition of "Take Me out to the Ballgame" to honor David's love of the game and his attitude toward living: being prepared by daily discipline for physical and mental challenges, taking every opportunity to spend time and sharing his love of "the great outdoors," whether coaching Little League, backpacking the Sierras, kayaking, or building the "Baja" deck for the family to enjoy views of Mt. Tam.



A delicious reception and heartwarming gathering followed the service in the Community Room and spilled out to the Courtyard on a golden autumn afternoon.

ADVENT begins December 1

Tuesdays at 5pm Our weekly Meditation in the Sanctuary will meet in December on December 10th and 17th.

Our informal 3rd Sunday luncheons will resume in January.

Join us in worship through Advent and Christmas. Our Theme: "The Inn: Housing the Holy."

Dec. 1 First Sunday of Advent "Making Room" (Hope)

Please stay following worship to help "Deck the Halls" of the Sanctuary with our boughs of green wreaths and garlands.

Dec. 8 Second Sunday of Advent, "A Place at the Table" (Peace)

Dec. 15 Third Sunday of Advent, "How Much is Enough" (Joy)

Dec. 22 Fourth Sunday of Advent, "A Room with a View" (Love)

Dec. 24 7 PM Christmas Eve: "The Inn" (Christ is Born), A service of Carols and Scripture for the whole family. Bring your friends too.

Dec. 24 11 PM Christmas Eve: A service by "firelight" with congregants reading the "Christmas Story" and a wide range of recorded Christmas music by favorite musicians. We will close by sharing "communion" of hot cider and gingerbread cookies in cozy candlelit company.

If you would like to participate in an Advent service by lighting the candles of the Advent wreath during an Advent Sunday worship or on Christmas Eve, please inform Amy Powers in the Office or tell Cathi or Jackie.

Next meeting of the Board of Ministry: Tuesday, December 4

ADVENT POSADA TRADITION

Would you like to participate in an FCC Advent Posada Tradition?

Mary, Joseph and Joshua (the donkey) will need homes, “a room in the inn,” through the Advent season. They don’t take up much room and are very quiet 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 a brief description of their visit to the book. Please let Cathi know if you want to schedule a visit to your home. (The paper mache sculptured family and their handwoven and sewn clothing were created by Millie Bransford and Rev. Julianne Stokstad, and have been visiting in FCC homes for 2 decades).



EVERY DOLLAR FEEDS KIDS



For more than 25 years, our church has been supporting Vamos! an education and food program for very very poor children in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and surrounding vil-lages. Our non-profit, Every Dollar Feeds Kids is run by church members. All money received goes directly and safely to the operators of the educational programs in Mexico. Children get nutritious meals prepared by local adults, enabling to concentrate on learning, not hunger.

We appreciate the ongoing support of several members of our congregation. In 2024, we have sent about \$5000 to the program and hope to at least double that by the end of the year. Tax deductible checks should be made out to Every Dollar Feeds Kids, Inc.

Bring your contributions to church, or mail them to 8 N. San Pedro Road, San Rafael CA 94903.

-Louis, Val, Lucinda, and Megan, Board Members

MISSION MOMENT - November 24

Many thanks to Kelly Anderson, who spoke during worship on Sunday, November 24. Kelly works for the Fistula Foundation, an organization that provides obstetric fistula surgery and care for women which dramatically improves their health and quality of life. The Foundation serves women in Africa and all over the world.

Like many others in our congregation, Kelly’s work serves many people beyond our church.



If you would be willing to share a way you serve others beyond our church community in a Mission Moment, either through your work or through a hobby or activity you are passionate about, please contact Pastor Elisabeth or a member of the Board of Mission: Cathi Fuller, Caran Cuneo, Annie Song-Hill, or Lucinda Ray.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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

HOLIDAY CONCERT

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

Marin Symphony Chamber Chorus

Saturday Dec. 7 at 7:30 PM Sunday Dec. 7 at 4 PM

Mission San Rafael \$40

Concert includes Lucinda Ray, Charles Little, Christina Santschi, and David Santschi.



ELDERS STROLL DOWN MEMORY LANE, WED., JANUARY 15

After a break for the Christmas season, The Elders will be meeting on Wednesday, January 15th, from 6:30-7:30. After our delightful November of holidays, the New Year's conversation will be about Memories of Our Youth, led by Joan Roane. As usual we'll be meeting via the Church's Zoom link.

Besides the value of the discussions, we all learn about, and become closer with, each other. We hope you can join us.
Charles Little



TIE DEADLINE for JANUARY 2025 issue - THUR., DEC. 26

The deadline for articles and news for the January 2025 issue of The TIE is Thursday, December 26. Please email your articles to lucindaray@aol.com by Thursday, December 26.



Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg

Thursday mornings

or by appointment

Phone: 707 280-0382

Email: Elismid@yahoo.com

Amy Powers – Office Manager

















Tuesday and Thursday 10 AM - 2 PM

You can contact Amy by phone
or email any time.

Office Phone : 415 479-2747

Email: office@fccsanrafael.org

FCC Calendar **DECEMBER** 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1  10 am Worship, Church School & Child Care Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 12:30 pm - 3 pm CANDY MAKING PARTY - Home of Lucinda Bay and Charles Little		3 4 pm - 7 pm  Street Chivaldity Dinner	4 7:45 am  Board of Ministry Meeting 7:45 via ZOOM	5 6 pm - 7 pm  SEARCH COMMITTEE 7 pm - 8 pm  BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING via ZOOM	6	7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
8 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM 10 am - 11 am  CRAFT CARDS for Retiree Center		10 5 pm - 6 pm  Meditation in the Sanctuary	11	12 7:30 am - 8:30 am  BOOK CLUB reading JACQUELINE IN PARIS	13	14
15 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM		17 5 pm - 6 pm  Meditation in the Sanctuary	18 1 pm - 2 pm  BOARD of MISSION Meeting via ZOOM 6 pm - 7 pm  Church Council Meeting via ZOOM	19	20	21
22 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM		24 7 pm - 8 pm  CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE 11 pm - 12 am  CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE	25  Christmas Day	26 5 pm  THE DEBUNKING 5 PM	27	28
29 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM		31	1 New Year's Day	2	3	4

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.