

The TIE



From our pastor,

Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg

“Someday at Christmas”

Stevie Wonder

Someday at Christmas men won't be
boys
Playing with bombs like kids play with
toys
One warm December our hearts will see
A world where all are free.

Someday at Christmas there'll be no wars
When we have learned what Christmas is
for
When we have found what life's really
worth.
There'll be peace on earth.

Someday at Christmas we'll see a land
With no hungry children, no empty hand

One happy morning people will share
A world where people care.

Someday in a world where all are free
Maybe not in time for you and me
But someday at Christmastime
Someday at Christmastime.



When I came into work this morning, I walked into the sanctuary, and suddenly had a moment of being transported back to our Advent and Christmas Eve services, with all of the beauty of the decorations and lights in the sanctuary, and of course, to the joy of being together. It was wonderful to see so many people, families especially the people who had not been in church for a while. I am not quite ready yet to leave Christmas, or its music behind, and on my way up to San Rafael, I listened to the song “Someday at Christmas,” sung in 1967 by Stevie Wonder.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaA7B9cu4kU>)

The song so reflects the hope and peace we long for: “someday at Christmas, there’ll be no wars. No hungry children, no empty hands..... “

This song has been sung every year for more than 50 years, and yet peace does not seem any closer now than it was then. But these words are more than words – they are the words and the hope we can carry with us as we start a New Year. And as we begin again, as we renew our commitment to

abide and trust in a strength greater than our own, we continue the work we are called to do. If you find that there is a song which is being sung in your being, grab ahold of it and allow the words or the music to carry you, to still you, to comfort you or to inspire you. Pray that in this year to come, we all may be drawn closer to the Holy One and be sustained by God's Spirit dwelling among us and in us.



I am so grateful that you have given me the opportunity to walk alongside you as your interim pastor. I am grateful to witness the deep and abiding care that you have for each other and for the world around you. There is among you a spirit of great beauty.

Looking ahead to the year 2025, I am reminded of the words of Clarissa Pinkola Estes, who speaks to what is needed in an uncertain world. She says:

One of the most calming and powerful actions you can do to intervene in a stormy world is to stand up and show your soul. To display the lantern of soul in shadowy times like these - to be fierce and to show mercy toward others; both are acts of immense bravery and greatest necessity.

May we continue to grow and allow ourselves to be guided by God's grace. Let us savor the months ahead. The world is in need of the unique blessings of FCC San Rafael.

Someday at Christmas we will not fail
Hate will be gone and love will prevail
Someday a new world that we can start
With hope in every heart.

Pastor Elisabeth

FEBRUARY 23



PRAYER PARTNERS

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



December 29 - January 4
Bruce Weir

January 5 - 11
Barbara Alexander

January 12 - 18
Kelly Anderson

January 19 - 25
Bob and Christine Bandettini

January 26 - February 1
Roger Barber

Come and Worship with us!

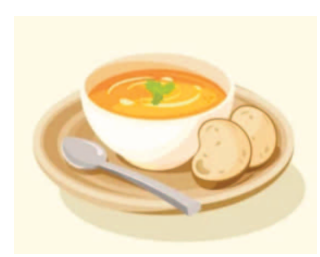


**We will be worshipping at 10 AM inside the sanctuary.
The service will also be available streaming on YouTube (see next page).**

January 5	10 AM	Epiphany Sunday Matthew 2:1-12
January 12	10 AM	First Sunday after Epiphany “Clearing the Stable, Refugees” Matthew 2:13-18
January 19	10 AM	Second Sunday after Epiphany “Fill my House with Hoping” John 2:1-11
January 26	10 AM	Third Sunday after Epiphany “Fill my Plans with Purpose” Luke 4:14-21

January 19th: Third Sunday lunch together

Since La Hacienda is closed following a kitchen fire, the Board of Ministry has offered to provide soup, so we can meet and eat together after worship in the Community room on January 19th. Please let Cathi or Jackie know if you want to bring fruit, bread, or cheese.





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=c2V0RXEvdW9F4STNNSTlxbWFFTENuZz09>

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

- Jan. 6:** The Board of Trustees will meet on **Thursday**, Jan. 6 at 7 PM.
- Jan. 14:** The Board of Ministry will meet on **Tuesday**, Jan. 14 at 11:45 AM.
- Jan. 22:** The Church Council will meet on **Wednesday**, Jan. 22 at 6 PM.
- Jan. 23:** The Search Committee will meet on **Thursday**, Jan. 23 at 6 PM.
- Jan. 29:** The Board of Mission will meet on **Wednesday**, Jan. 29 at 1 PM.



KINDNESS — PASS IT ON!
Let another person go first

ELDERS STROLL DOWN MEMORY LANE, WED., JANUARY 15

In January, The Elders will be meeting on Wednesday, January 15th, from 6:30-7:30. The New Year's conversation will be about Memories of Our Youth, led by Joan Roane. We may also talk about our hopes and plans for 2025. 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



CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Happy New Year!

2025 promises to be an exciting time as we move forward in our Search for a Settled Pastor. Please mark your calendars now for some important dates.

Sunday January 26 will be a time of sharing with the congregation the results of the recent Holy Cow Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT). Please come prepared to react, share, discuss and discern what the results mean for our congregation moving forward in 2025 and beyond.

Then on **Sunday, February 2**, we will be joined by our Northern California Nevada Conference minister, Rev. Davena Jones. She will lead us through a “Day of Discovery” session. Again, we need your participation and guidance to make First Congregational Church of San Rafael relevant to you, your family and friends, and to ensure we have an impact on our community, both locally, nationally and globally.

As always, please feel free to share your thoughts with any member of our church Council or with Pastor Elisabeth.

Your Council is made up from the chairs of each of the Boards: Ministry, Trustees, Mission, Finance. Look for the upcoming Annual Report where each Board will share their most significant accomplishments. We will also be confirming all members who will continue serving on Boards in the coming year. Please feel free to join a Board if you have not yet done so. We need your spiritual energy!

As with any effort, our committees need new leadership and ideas. Please feel free to “Be the Church” by sharing your time, talents and resources by joining a Board.

Lastly, please plan to participate in the **Annual Meeting on Sunday, February 23**, immediately following worship. Then plan to contribute and join in the traditional pot luck that follows. It’s a wonderful time of fellowship and renewal in the New Year.

ANNUAL REPORTS DUE JANUARY 30

If you are a chair of a Board or Committee of the church your annual report is due in the church office on Thursday, January 30. Please email the reports to Amy at office@fccsanrafael.org

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

BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT



FACILITIES

Finally, the ADA mirror in the restroom by the offices has been installed. This commercial grade angled mirror locks onto the frame, but the mirror came with no key. When the key finally arrived Francisco of Pilgrim Park helped install it securely.

The other new facility issue is the dripping from the ceiling in the corner of the Community Room. That section has a flat roof that pools water. We have calls into the roofer and hope to get the repairs scheduled soon.

PERSONNEL

Pastor Elisabeth deferred a usual pre-Christmas trip to see family in Holland, so she will take some time in January instead.

Christmas is a busy time for our Office Manager, Amy Powell, our Music Director, Gerry Grosz, and our the Cleaning Service of Damian Zilchis. Extra thanks for your hard work making everything beautiful.

And special thanks to Pastor Elisabeth and Gerry for inspired, even transcendent worship services thus Advent.

The next Board of Trustees meeting is Monday, January 6, at 7:00 PM on Zoom.



BOARD OF MISSION MISSION MATTERS



STREET CHAPLAINCY DINNER - FEBRUARY 4



The Board of Mission has committed to helping prepare and serve dinner for those in need four times this year. On Tuesday, February 4, 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 80-100 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. These are pictures of our crew at the Dec. 3 dinner.



Please contact Lucinda Ray if you can help. lucindaray@aol.com

THANK YOU for your Generosity! RITTER CENTER FAMILY HOLIDAY

For the The Ritter Center's Family to Family Holiday Gift Card Program our congregation provided 17 gift cards to Ritter Center registered families and individuals so they can fulfill their kids' holiday wishes and buy what they need this winter. This was a total gift of \$455!



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 bags, cooking oil, boxed milk, peanut butter, canned goods, rice, cereal, canned meat are especially welcome. Sugar and flour are also needed. 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 December

Our ADVENT Worship theme in December was: “The Inn: Housing the Holy “:

Dec 1: First Sunday of Advent: Pr. Elisabeth preached on “Making Room” (Hope). Our guest pianist, Sarah, played some hope-themed music, including from the Beatles. We decked our sanctuary “halls” with greenery reminding us of the blessing of water and Living Waters.

Dec. 8 - Second Sunday of Advent: Pr. Elisabeth preached on “A Place at the Table” (Peace) and we lit our hearts and windows in welcoming lights.

Dec. 15 - Third Sunday of Advent: Our Poinsettia-filled cross framed our guest preacher, Rev. Chitoka Webb, as she preached on the theme of Joy and stayed during our Community Time for warm pastry and heart-warming chat.

Dec. 22 - Fourth Sunday of Advent: Pr. Elisabeth preached on “A Room with a View” (Love). The theme of love was reflected in the abundance of Poinsettias gifted in memory and loved ones as well as numerous Crèche from around the world that were shared by members from their household traditions.

Dec. 24, 7 PM - Christmas Eve: “The Inn” (Christ is Born), A service of Carols and Scripture for members present and past, friends and family filled our church with warmth. It was a delight to have the 3 generations of the Kaufman-Hodges lighting the Advent wreath, to reunite (and meet) 3 generations of Nadells gracing the “Nadell” pew, and Will Godby reading scripture in his poetic voice. Gerry accompanying Lucinda, Charles, Christina, and David singing “Ave Verum Corpus” by Wolfgang A. Mozart and kept us believing in “Angels among us”!

Dec. 24, 11 PM - Christmas Eve: A service by “fire-light” where we, meditatively, read the “Christmas Story” in the scripture and listened to recorded Christmas hymns by YoYo Ma, Mahalia Jackson, the Pentatonics and many other exquisite voices. We closed with “Communion” of hot cider and gingerbread.



Worship in January (see page 3 for worship themes and scripture)

Meditation: on Tuesdays at 5 PM, resumes in January.

Thank you to Pr. Elisabeth for sharing the self-led Advent devotional books, *Words for the Beginning*. There are still copies available.



Community Time

January 19th: Third Sunday lunch together: Since La Hacienda is closed following a kitchen fire, the Board of Ministry has offered to provide soup, so we can meet and eat together after worship in the Community room on January 19th. Please let Cathi or Jackie know if you want to bring fruit, bread or cheese.

We will be renewing our tradition of singing a monthly Happy Birthday to birthday folk, once a month during announcement time. Board of Ministry will welcome your feedback.

PLEASE consider if you feel called to join the Ministry Team in planning worship and community spiritual ministries. We welcome new members for next year!

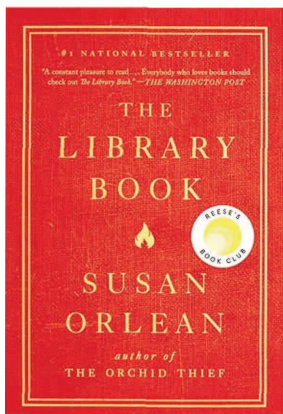
Gratitude

- Thank you to Caryl Hodges, Anice Flesh, Cecil Sherrod, Cathy Krise, Julie & Oak Dowling, Megan & Jackie, Caryl, Amy and Cio for the reading and the lighting of our Advent wreath throughout Advent.
- Thank you to all who help “Deck the Halls with boughs” in the Sanctuary, prepared the altar, brought flowers for the altar, put out Red Hymnals, passed out Christmas Eve candles, served as greeters, coffee makers and delicious refreshment (Jackie more than once!), to liturgists and readers. Thank you to our tech team (David Knopf and Bob Spofford) and our Ministry Team (Louis, Cathi, Jackie & Charles), the Choir members and Gerry Grosz for all the extra time and thoughtful preparation to make our Advent services very special.
- We recall with gratitude, the gift of creation of our churches wooden cross and metal inserts designed and built by Bob De Haan along with his gift of the velvet poinsettia that grace it each Christmas!
- What a gift to have Christina and David Schiffner-Santschi, Lucinda Ray, and Charles Little sing the special music “Ave Verum Corpus” accompanied by Gerry Grosz on Christmas Eve!
- We are so deeply grateful to Reverend Elisabeth Middelberg for the spiritually inspiring while challenging sermons, the exquisite beauty of our Advent worship times, and the loving pastoral care that you share with us (and the many practical ways you jump in to help out)!

Thank you to all who bought Poinsettias in honor/ memory of loved ones:

- In honor of Sean and Cio Kaufman. In memory of David, Edward, Miriam Hodges, Gayle Kaufman, L.J. and Sue Cox, Theresa Tompkins, Caryl Montgomery
- In honor of Janet Schiffner, Tim and Jan Santschi. In memory of Heinz Schiffner
- In memory of Paul and Eleanor Wishart
- In memory of Ralph Sherer
- In memory of Lynn Grant
- In memory of Fuller loved ones, In memory of Knopf loved ones, In memory of Lester loved ones, In memory of Lindgren loved ones
- In memory of Charles and Lucille Frost, of Anthony Thomas, of Louis deGravelle
- In memory of Mary Dowling (May her laughter and light shine on!)
- In honor of Darlene Spinks and Washington Maxwell. In honor of Albert and Roelie Middelberg

CANDY MAKING - DEC. 1



JANUARY BOOK CLUB - THURSDAY, JAN., 16

We will be reading *The Library Book*, by Susan Orlean for our next Book Club meeting, Thursday, January 16, 2025, at 7:30 PM on Zoom. Many copies are available at the Marin County and Sonoma County libraries. Here is a brief introduction to the book:

On the morning of April 28, 1986, a fire alarm sounded in the Los Angeles Public Library. The fire was disastrous: it reached two thousand degrees and burned for more than seven hours. By the time it was extinguished, it had consumed four hundred thousand books and damaged seven hundred thousand more. Investigators descended on the scene, but more than thirty years later, the mystery remains: Did someone purposefully set fire to the library—and if so, who?

Weaving her lifelong love of books and reading into an investigation of the fire, award-winning New Yorker reporter and New York Times bestselling author Susan Orlean delivers a “delightful...reflection on the past, present, and future of libraries in America” that manages to tell the broader story of libraries and librarians in a way that has never been done before.

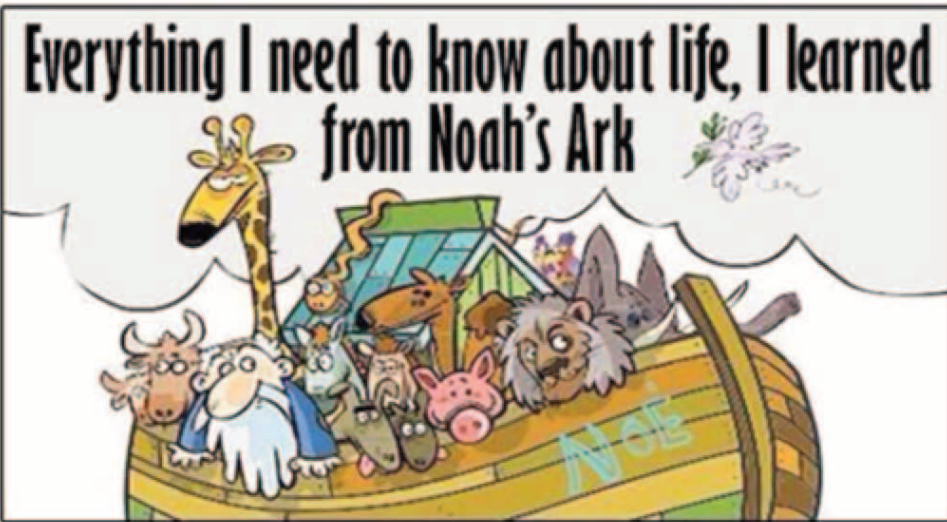
In the “exquisitely written, consistently entertaining” (The New York Times) *The Library Book*, Orlean chronicles the LAPL fire and its aftermath to showcase the larger, crucial role that libraries play in our lives; delves into the evolution of libraries; brings each department of the library to vivid life; studies arson and attempts to burn a copy of a book herself; and reexamines the case of Harry Peak, the blond-haired actor long suspected of setting fire to the LAPL more than thirty years ago.



JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 6 — Oak Dowling
- 20 — Doug Shannon
- 20 — James True

Everything I need to know about life, I learned from Noah's Ark



- 1 Don't miss the boat.
- 2 Remember that we are all in the same boat.
- 3 Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
- 4 Stay fit. When you're really old, someone may ask you to do some thing really big.
- 5 Don't listen to the critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.
- 6 Build your future on high ground.
- 7 For safety sake, travel in pairs.
- 8 Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs
- 9 When you're stressed, float a while
- 10 Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
- 11 No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting..

TIE DEADLINE for FEBRUARY 2025 issue - MON., JAN. 27

The deadline for articles and news for the January 2025 issue of The TIE is Monday, January 27. Please email your articles to lucindaray@aol.com by Monday, January 27.



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 **JANUARY** 2025

29	30	31	January 1 New Year's Day	2	3	4
<p>10 am </p> <p>Worship, Church School & Child Care</p> <p>10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM</p>	<p>7 pm - 8 pm </p> <p>BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING via ZOOM</p>	<p>5 pm - 6 pm </p> <p>Meditation in the Sanctuary</p>	<p>6:30 pm - 7:30 pm </p> <p>ELDERS MEETING ON ZOOM</p>	<p>7:30 pm - 8:30 pm </p> <p>BOOK CLUB reading JACQUELINE IN PARIS</p>		
<p>10 am </p> <p>Worship, Church School & Child Care</p> <p>10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM</p>	<p>11 am </p> <p>Worship, Church School & Child Care</p> <p>10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM</p>	<p>11:45 am </p> <p>Board of Ministry Meeting 11:45 via ZOOM</p> <p>5 pm - 6 pm </p> <p>Meditation in the Sanctuary</p>	<p>6 pm - 7 pm </p> <p>Church Council Meeting via ZOOM</p>	<p>6 pm - 7 pm </p> <p>SEARCH COMMITTEE</p>		
<p>10 am </p> <p>Worship, Church School & Child Care</p> <p>10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM</p>	<p>5 pm </p> <p>THE DEADLINE 5 PM</p>	<p>5 pm - 6 pm </p> <p>Meditation in the Sanctuary</p>	<p>1 pm - 2 pm </p> <p>BOARD OF MISSION Meeting on ZOOM</p>			

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.