



**From our pastor,**  
Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg

“First Coming” by Madeleine L'Engle

*God did not wait till the world was ready,  
till men and nations were at peace,  
but came when the Heavens were unsteady,  
and prisoners cried out for release.*

*God did not wait for the perfect time.  
God came when the need was deep and  
great.  
and dined with sinners in all their grime,  
turned water into wine.*

*We cannot wait till the world is sane  
to raise our songs with joyful voice,  
or to share our grief, to touch our pain,  
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!*

Madeleine L'Engle wrote this poem some fifty years ago, but it remains timeless—as relevant today as when it was first written.

Some years we enter Advent with heavy hearts. Caught up in the circumstances of our time, it may feel like we have quite a bit of work to do before we can truly experience what our Advent themes call us to: Hope, Joy, Love, and Peace.

In her book *The First Advent in Palestine*, Kelley Nikondeha invites us to start at the edges of darkness—to recognize that the hardships and sorrows people experience today are not so different from what people faced around the time of Jesus' birth. When we understand the backdrop of that first Advent, we better grasp how God intervened in a time of profound hardship.

Advent then, like Advent now, happened as most people were simply trying to survive. Caesar had declared the “Pax Romana”—the peace of Rome—just a few decades before Jesus was born. History remembers it as a relatively quiet time of peace. But that peace belonged only to a privileged few, a particular group of Roman citizens. For most people, this was a time of oppression and suffering.



It is precisely during this time that God intervenes. Through the births of John and Jesus, and through Jesus' ministry, God makes visible what peace is really about and for whom that peace is intended.

The Advent stories, in all their complexity, are amazing reminders that God is still at work among us, working through ordinary people and equipping them to be practitioners of hope and peace.

I hope you will join us throughout Advent and Christmas as we journey toward a better understanding of God's hope for the world—for our world. Remember:



*God did not wait for the perfect time.  
God came when the need was deep and great.  
We cannot wait to raise our songs with joyful voice,  
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,  
God came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!*

Grateful to be on the journey with you.

*Pastor Elisabeth*

## **FILL THE CHURCH WITH POINSETTIAS**

### **Memorial Poinsettias**

Fill the sanctuary during Christmas with color in honor of, in memory of, or in celebration of a loved one(s). 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 and write “for poinsettia” in the memo area of your check or on your envelope.



## **PRAYER PARTNERS**

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



**November 30 - December 6**

Jackie Dema

**December 7 - 13**

Julie Dowling

**December 14 - 20**

Oak Dowling

**December 21 - 27**

Anice Flesh

**December 28 - January 3**

Louis and Khamla Frost

COME and

Worship

w i t h u s !



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

**December Services**

**Theme: What Child Is This?**

<b>December 7</b>	<b>10 AM</b>	<b>Peace</b>	<b>Beyond the Lullaby</b> Lamentation 3:46-57 Maccabees 1:1-28 Luke 2:1-5
<b>December 14</b>	<b>10 AM</b>	<b>Joy</b>	<b>The Son of Mary</b> Luke 1:26-56 (You are welcome to bring pictures of Mary)
<b>December 21</b>	<b>10 AM</b>	<b>Love</b>	<b>How to Be Human in an Unstable World</b> Matthew 1:18-25 (You are welcome to bring nativity scenes)

**December 24 7 PM The Babe What Child Is This?**  
Luke 2:1-19



**7 PM Christmas Eve**

An evening of scriptures and songs.

**11 PM Christmas Eve**

A service by "firelight" with congregants reading the Christmas Story.

**December 28 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=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](mailto:Knopf.david@gmail.com)

## MEETINGS, MEETINGS, MEETINGS -- VIA ZOOM

- Dec. 2:** The Board of Ministry will meet on **Tuesday, Dec. 2**, at 11:45 AM.
- Dec. 3:** The Board of Mission will meet on **Wednesday, Dec. 3**, at 1 PM.
- Dec. 5:** The Board of Trustees will meet on **Thursday, Dec 4, 6** at 7:00 PM.
- Dec. 16:** The Church Council will meet on **Wednesday, Dec. 16**, at 6 PM.



**KINDNESS — PASS IT ON!**

*Do a favor*

## A REPORT FROM YOUR SEARCH COMMITTEE



Our FCC Search committee began its work in February 2025. The initial tasks focused on developing our profile and updating our website. After posting our position with UCC in May, we received 10 resumes from the conference, some with profiles, others only CVs. We have reached out to all candidates. As discussed with our Conference Minister, Rev. Davena Jones and Rev. Melissa, some of those resumes were never interested in FCC and some were surprised we had their profiles at all.

Initially, all candidates were sent emails thanking them for their interest and asking them to respond with what caused them to be specifically interested in FCC of San Rafael. Those who responded were interviewed. We have interviewed 4 candidates, with one finalist asking to be withdrawn from consideration recently. We have not received any additional resumes or profiles, and are not anticipating much response as we approach the Advent season.

We intend to pause our search and disband our Search committee. At our request, our profile has been taken down from the UCC website. As a congregation, we feel a renewed energy and increased participation from current and former members.

After considerable discernment, we feel the Spirit is guiding us to retain Pastor Elisabeth. Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg has agreed to negotiate a continuation contract as an interim pastor with us at FCC! The Board of Trustees and Pastor Elisabeth are in negotiations currently.

Effective January 2026, we look forward to a new Call Agreement for one year, with the possibility of another one year extension!

Please join us in welcoming our beloved Pastor Elisabeth as she remains our Interim Pastor in 2026.

When this was announced during worship on November 30, all the people applauded and said Amen!





## 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. We are grateful for the very personalized greeting cards that Helen has been sending folk and for the Agape church members and Pastor for their home or hospital visits, for offering rides to appointments and to church.

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

**Tuesdays at 5 PM** Meditation continues every Tuesdays at 5 PM. Tell Elisabeth if you wish to join by Zoom or need a ride if you cannot attend in person.

**Worship:** The Choir is back weekly performing inspiring music. Lovely to have recent addition of Jean and Dick adding their voices. Feel free to applaud enthusiastically if you are led to do so.

### **In November:**

**Nov. 3 All Saints Day Sunday** We remembered with gratitude our loved ones, our family and church family members who have “crossed the veil.” We displayed their photos and lit candles placed on the Communion Table.

**Nov. 9 Veteran’s Day Sunday** we honored the Veterans among our congregation and families. Guest preacher, Elizabeth Conway, MDiv Student SFTS, preached on “Making Sense from the Ashes.” We appreciated her sermon, warm presence and took home “homework” for finding ways to “soften our heart.”

**Nov. 23 Thanksgiving Sunday** Pastor Elisabeth Middelberg preached on Gratitude Thanksgiving Sunday. We are so very grateful for the flourishing of our church community under her leadership. The choir hymn “For All The Blessings Of The Year” (by Lloyd Larson) echoed the theme through the beauty of music. Our Sanctuary, full of gift cards, warm garments and food bags for Ritter Center identified individuals and families, neighbors in the community demonstrated our Gratitude overflowing.

**Nov 30 The First Sunday in Advent** We welcome the promise of Emmanuel, the Hope that God is With Us even in the suffering and chaos in our world.

### **Worship in December:**

Following the first two weeks of Sunday worship, Board of Ministry welcomes you to join in “hanging of the greens” for Advent.

Candlelight Meditation in the Sanctuary will continue on Tuesdays at 5pm with the exception of December 9th when we will be preparing the meal and dining with our unhoused neighbors at the Interfaith Chaplaincy Ministry dinner.

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Please continue sharing the message of Hope and that God is With Us by donating resources and time on Dec. 9th: by cooking the meal (supervised by their chef), joining the mealtime fellowship and/or bringing to church next Sunday (Dec 7th) warm attire, camping gear, and toiletries that the unhoused guest may take with them if they wish.



Next Board of Ministry meeting: 11:30 AM on Zoom, Tuesday, December 2nd.



## 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.)

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES REPORT



**Don’t be left out!** Join in supporting FCC to have an awesome year in 2026. If you haven’t turned in your pledge you can put it in the offering, give it to Val, drop it in her mailbox at church, or email it to her at [valpub@sbcglobal.net](mailto:valpub@sbcglobal.net).



**Landscape Project.** Last month we noted that MMWD is requiring us to put in better water conserving fixtures as part of our being allowed to access recycled water for the street side landscaping project. A new Energy Star dishwasher has been installed in the kitchen downstairs, and five new toilets are scheduled to be installed Thursday, December 4.

**Videomaster Returns.** Will Godbey has returned from nearly two months in Japan and once again will masterfully stream our services. We are now also streaming directly to our website at [www.fccSanRafael.org](http://www.fccSanRafael.org) then go to Sermons and Services.

**Next Trustees meeting** is the first Thursday, December 4.

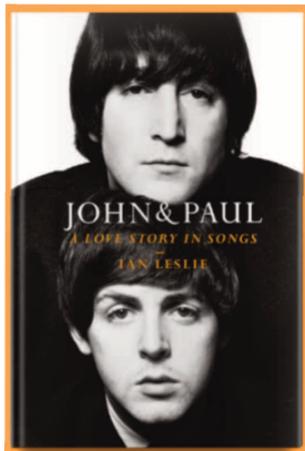
## ELDERS MEET ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 6:30 - 7:30 PM

### Oh The Stories We Tell!

The fire alarms were ringing on all three floors of the Sorority House at Cal. Ed, who was in charge for the night, couldn't figure out how to turn them off. That story, in far more detail, was one of the things we learned, laughing hilariously, about Ed Briggs' time working his way through Berkeley in the 1960's.



That's the kind of story we hear about our FCCSR friends in our monthly Elders' meetings. You don't want to miss them. Join us to hear and share more memories from our pasts. The next meeting is on Tuesday evening, December 2, at 6:30 over the church's Zoom link. Be There or Be Square.



### BOOK CLUB - DECEMBER 11, 8:00 PM

We will be reading *John & Paul A Love Story in Songs*, by Ian Leslie. It is available from both the Sonoma County and Marin County libraries. The beginning of this review from *The Guardian* lets you know what a treat you are in for when you read it and we have a chance to discuss it:

“It is a strange and beguiling experience to find music you have had in your head since childhood reveal new and unsuspected shades of meaning 50 years later. Beatles songs aren't like most pop songs; instead of fading, they take on a richer colour and nuance, not least because new generations of fans inquire more deeply into what previous listeners

might have overlooked or simply misunderstood. One twist of the kaleidoscope and a song we thought we knew suddenly sounds even better than it did the first 100 times we heard it.

This is the effect of reading Ian Leslie's brilliant study of the Beatles' music, a book that offers not only a lesson in listening (again) but an enthralling narrative of friendship, creative genius and loss. At its centre is the songwriting partnership of John Lennon and Paul McCartney, and the unprecedented peaks the two of them scaled in remaking English popular music. You may find it impossible not to be awed by their achievement all over again. But Leslie also wants to challenge a myth about the pair. After the Beatles finally disbanded, a consensus formed that Paul was the straight man to John's rebel bohemian – vanilla against brimstone – which hardened into holy writ on Lennon's murder in 1980. McCartney's inadequate off-the-cuff response to the news (“it's a drag”) took some living down. Leslie lays to rest this old opposition, arguing that there was “no John without Paul, and vice versa”. Their collaboration was as tight and co-dependent as two climbers roped together on a mountain face.”



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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

## SAVE THE DATE! HOLIDAY CHORAL BY CANDLELIGHT DECEMBER 6 AND 7

### Candlelight Choral Concert

Marin Symphony Chamber Chorus

Saturday Dec. 6 at 7:30 PM

Sunday Dec. 7 at 4 PM

Mission San Rafael

\$41

This concert includes Lucinda Ray, Charles Little, Christina Schiffner Santschi, and David Santschi.



## TIE DEADLINE for JANUARY 2026 TIE - MON., DEC. 29

The deadline for articles and news for the January 2026 issue of The TIE is Monday, December 29. Please email your articles to [lucindaray@aol.com](mailto:lucindaray@aol.com) by Monday, December 29.



### Rev. Elisabeth Middelberg

Thursday mornings

or by appointment

Phone: 707 280-0382

Email: [Elismid@yahoo.com](mailto:Elismid@yahoo.com)

### Amy Powers – Office Manager

Monday and Thursday 10:30 AM - 2 PM

You can contact Amy by phone  
or email any time.

Office Phone : 415 479-2747

Email: [office@fccsanrafael.org](mailto:office@fccsanrafael.org)

# FCC Calendar **DECEMBER** 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>30</b>  10 am Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM! 12:30 pm - 1:30 pm  CANDY PARTY	<b>December 1</b>	<b>2</b>  11:45 am Board of Ministry Meeting 11:45 via ZOOM 5 pm - 6 pm  Meditation in the Sanctuary 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm  ELDER'S MEETING ON ZOOM!	<b>3</b>  12:15 pm - 1:15 pm BOARD of MISSION Meeting on ZOOM!	<b>4</b> 7 am - 8 pm  BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING via ZOOM	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b> Pentecost Remembrance Day 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM!	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 4 pm - 7 pm  STEEBET CHARITABLE DINNER	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 8 am - 9 pm  BOOK CLUB reading JOHN & PAUL	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b> 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM!	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> 5 pm - 6 pm  Meditation in the Sanctuary	<b>17</b> 6 am - 7 am  Church Council Meeting via ZOOM	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b> 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM!	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 5 pm - 6 pm  Meditation in the Sanctuary	<b>24</b> 7 pm  CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES 7 PM and 11 PM	<b>25</b>  Christmas Day	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b> 10 am  Worship, Church School & Child Care 10 am - 11 am Our service is on YOUTUBE at 10 AM!	<b>29</b> 5 pm  THE DEADLINE 5 PM	<b>30</b> 5 pm - 6 pm  Meditation in the Sanctuary	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b> New Year's Day	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

*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).*