What does God call this congregation to be?

By Pastor Liz

Over the last few weeks, a number of us have come together to begin to think about how the Congregational Church of Belmont will move forward with congregational engagement of the tasks of the interim period and toward the call of your next pastor.

These have been very preliminary discussions intended to come up with a kind of roadmap for the next 12 months or so. Of course, the global health pandemic and the protocols for social distancing have brought requirements to the work and ask us to widen our view of everything church.

Early last month, after one such gathering, I was asked to give an idea of what an all-church engagement might look like. What I shared with the “visioning team” was a sketch of a group process that drew largely from a series I designed and led in a previous congregation. Anything CCB decides to do would be re-designed and adapted for specific needs of this congregation. Yes, what we imagine is a process is intended for the whole congregation, that is, all those who will want to make a commitment over several weeks.

You won’t be surprised to know that I have strong feelings about such things as this, the ways by which congregations come to understand how God calls them — each and together — to take part in God’s good work in the world. The quality of our shared experience in completing the interim work will, I believe, ensure the quality of the outcomes.

For this reason, a great deal of time is invested in cultivating a rich ground of personal stories and relationships, developing the ability to learn and discern together, so we can move into action together as a congregation. The period between one settled pastor and the next is the ideal time to “go deep” and that is what I would ask of you.

In my first meeting with the interim search committee and Council, I summed up my approach to the work of interim ministry in these two tasks: 1) I can help you explore what God calls this congregation as it is now to offer in service to God’s good in the world, to name and to move toward faithful action in response; and 2) help you clarify and define what pastoral leadership you will require to move together in action (with deeper understanding and relationships among you).

The first of these tasks is the congregational discernment process which we are envisioning now. The UCC local church profile required for posting a pastoral search comes after this process. This responsibility will be taken on by the formal search committee which, by that time, will have a good sense of the will of the congregation, deep See CONGREGATION, Page 8
Rentals create some COVID anxiety for CCB

By Greg Thornhill

The impact of COVID 19 and associated sheltering mandates are having a growing impact on our financials.

Before getting into too many details on that, a huge thank you goes out to CCB Treasurer Mike Venturino for his foresight and leadership in triggering the Payroll Protection Act loan. Without this, we would be in a much different financial position.

As you all know, rents are an incredibly important part of the financial viability of our church. Our building is an fabulous asset which allows us to rent to several organizations that benefit our local community with a preschool, an after-school program, occupational therapy services to children, art therapy to children, and another church. But that same asset can be a double-edged sword. Who would have foreseen a situation in which we not only are seeing what we knew as a risk (i.e. any keystone tenant either leaving or not paying), but several of our tenants finding themselves in situations that result in CCB’s near-term finances taking a significant hit?

This article is in no way meant to question the financial vitality of the church. If our tenants get back to normal in the next few months, we should be okay with the PPP loan plus additional reserves in our General Fund. But the extent of our revenue shortfalls will exceed the entirety of the roughly $19,000 PPP loan and then some.

As examples:
- CPNS has been unable to hold school and cancelled the remainder of the year with no tuition. RFK
- Catedral Da Familia has not been able to hold services or any of their other recurring meetings
- Destination Science, is a wild card, not knowing whether they’ll hold sessions onsite this summer at all (depending on San Mateo County rules). Hopefully they will be on-site, but in a smaller capacity.
- The Trustees are actively engaging with our renters, many of whom have reached out asking for rent concessions, many simply unable to pay with no income streams.
- Beyond our renters, we do get a fairly substantial amount of revenue from occasional-use renters. Virtually all rentals on the books have been cancelled and no requests are coming in at this point. Even Myriad Music, which rents two entire weekends per year, cancelled their May rental.

Trustees have also initiated a process of assessing what we might be required to do as a landlord as our renters decide to open back up for business. There are many shared spaces that undoubtedly will require some extra diligence in sanitization or even rethinking when we can have overlapping renters. This process is just kicking off, and we simply don’t yet know what will be required – but our renters are certainly looking for some guidance here.

It is very tough to estimate what the total financial impact of COVID is going to be when there are so many unknowns. It is, however, feasible that we could see revenue shortfalls in the $20,000 to $40,000 range for 2020, offset partially by the PPP loan. There is certainly a fair amount of uncertainty as we look into rental income for next year. Will any of our tenants need to close up shop or find our rents unsustainable? Will competing rents drop significantly such that we need to re-assess our rates?

Will large gatherings that trigger many of our one-time use rentals take time to come back in favor (birthday parties, anniversaries, holiday parties, etc.). It will likely take some time to find an equilibrium where we understand our new normal of rental income. In the meantime, do reach out to Trustees with any questions. We are blessed with having a strong reserve based on a few events over the past few years, which creates a bit of a buffer as we weather this storm.

CCB receives $19,600 in federal CARES Act loan to pay salaries

By Mike Venturino

After a virtual congregational meeting and vote, CCB applied for and received a CARES Act loan of $19,600 in May.

This was less than what we had originally sought but still will be enough to pay all our employees through July 7 and some of our utility costs. During that time, we’ll be keeping track, to the penny, of what funds are used to pay what costs.

Since this is exactly what the loan was meant to do, the church also anticipates that it will be forgiven under the terms of the program.

The next step for the CCB financial management team will be to work through the process of applying for forgiveness. In addition to applying, we will be praying. We hope that the Small Business Administration will hear our prayers and heed our application. We hope to have your prayers as well as we work through this process to help keep CCB’s financial future as sound as possible.

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont website, click on CCB.
Meet new member Nancy Chambers up close

Nancy Chambers

“Joining this church was im-
portant to me. Before the
shutdown and before Pastor
Sally or Pastor Liz, I witnessed
what was truly remark-
able. A small congregation, full
don’t have your birthday listed,
please email the church office with the
date so we can add it to our list.

Both Family Camp at Monte Toyon and the Youth Mission Trip to San Diego have been cancelled.
Most of our deposits for both will roll over until next summer.

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The Messenger  June 2020

A DISCRETE PROCESS

Second reading

First reading and Psalm

Alternate/First reading and Psalm

Gospel

Trinity Sunday
June 7, 2020
First Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 1:1-2:4a
Psalm 8
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
2 Corinthians 13:11-13
Matthew 28:16-20

Proper 6 (11)
Second Sunday after Pentecost
June 14, 2020

Exodus 19:2-8a
Psalm 100
Romans 5:1-8
Matthew 9:25-10:8, (9-23)

Proper 7 (12)
Third Sunday after Pentecost
June 21, 2020

Genesis 21:2-8
Psalm 69:7-10, (11-15), 16-18
Romans 6:1b-11
Matthew 10:24-39

Proper 8 (13)
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
June 28, 2020

Genesis 22:1-14
Psalm 13
Romans 6:12-23
Matthew 10:40-42

Proper 9 (14)
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
July 5, 2020

Proper 10 (15)
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
July 12, 2020

Proper 11 (16)
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 19, 2020

Proper 12 (17)
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
July 26, 2020

Proper 13 (18)


Congregation
Continued from Page One

commitments and gifts alive here now.

While this, smaller group would be tasked with filling in the form, the entire congregation would be invited to contribute (especially to the big questions before us, time spent cultivating the relational spaces in and among the participants. This is time that reveals its value in the quality of our dialogue and the responses we eventually come to. And, you will notice, this asks us to focus first on the people of God and the richness of our relationships with each other, our Creator and our neighbors. For my way of thinking, this is the best part of life in the church.

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SF Night Ministry thanks us for all our help

Rev. Valerie McEntee has expressed the thanks of San Francisco Night Ministry for “all of your wonderful support over the years, all the lunches, blankets, socks, warm things and funds” in one note as well as special thanks to Micki Carter and Danielle and Alice Chamberlin for the masks they’ve made for Valerie to distribute to the homeless in San Francisco. “Cloth masks are very much sought after among our folks… I deeply appreciate you for supporting our folks in this lovely way.” Micki has been sourcing elastic from odd places since elastic is a hot commodity during the quarantine. However, she reports that she finally located a gold mine of elastic and will be in business for awhile.

Lea explains that odd new URL you’re seeing

By Lea Mavroudis

By now, I’m sure you have seen CCB’s new website and received emails from “@ ccbelmont.org” addresses. You may have also noticed a message mentioning Google Groups at the bottom of some of our emails. You may have been wondering, why all the changes?

CCB has taken advantage of the business suite offered by Google, allowing us to create our own domain (www.ccbelmont.org) and add email accounts within that domain, along with many other useful features. The new website was a team effort, spearheaded by Steve and Alice Chamberlin, Kendall House and Micki Carter. I think you’ll agree they did a wonderful job! Now the communications team and I are able to easily make updates and add new features to the site.

By pure coincidence, this all occurred right before quarantine started, which also happened to be when I started at CCB as the new office admin. With the new administration, we can take you more time on our hands, and with the vision that CCB leadership had for the future, we started updating our communications. This seemed all the more vital since we were unable to meet in person.

Now, each person sending emails on behalf of the church has his or her own @ ccbelmont.org account, which provides some consistency in our communications and church “branding,” if you will. The Google Business Suite allows us to manage all these accounts centrally, making trouble-shooting and record-keeping much easier.

Under the guidance of Micki Carter and Greg Thornhill, I also took on the project of updating CCB’s distribution list processes. Previously, these were maintained primarily by individual email account contact lists or set up as Google Groups by chairs of committees. This made keeping them up-to-date across the board challenging. With the G Suite admin console, we can create a single email address for each distribution list. For example, we can now reach all 193 people on our current email list by typing in a single address. We also now have consistent distribution lists for all major CCB committees and boards.

Not only does this make reaching our entire congregation much easier, it also allows us to centrally manage the contacts list, adding and removing people from a single, central place.

Another great feature here is the option to self-remove from the list; you may have noticed that short Google Group text at the bottom of our emails includes instructions on how to unsubscribe. We would hate to see you leave, but if you ever feel the need to be removed from our mailing list, you can now do so easily and anonymously.

Now the most important question: what does this mean for you? We hope this will help us keep in better touch with you and serve your needs more efficiently. We also hope you enjoy the new website. Other than that, we are still the same CCB you know, and very little changes on your end.

If you have any questions or concerns about how any of this works, I would be happy to address them. You can reach me at office@ccbelmont.org or leave me a voice-mail at the church office (650) 593-4547. I check it every day even while working from home.

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont website, click on CCB.
By Thomas Crosby

A couple of weeks ago, a news article focused on folks showing appreciation to essential local workers. As a chaplain, I prefer face-to-face interaction as a means of showing support. This pandemic makes such communication nearly impossible.

The night I read the article, I ordered items from the website of a local office supply store that read “25% off custom-made posters.” An idea was born! Chaplains build a poster for passersby.

The poster had to be short enough for passersby to read and long enough to convey appreciation “THANK YOU for coming here today!” was the message of choice.

Two days later, arriving at work, I parked my car, walked to a visible spot, and took a deep breath. I raised the poster high greeting and waving to all entering the hospital campus. The looks I got were priceless. On Day One, most appeared uncertain of how to respond. I, too, wondered what the heck I was doing.

However, upon arrival at my office, there was an email from a social worker. It merely said, “I appreciate you, and love your sign.”

My heart warmed. I had touched someone.

Reactions on the second day were different. People smiled and waved — a few stopped to take pictures; others sent emails of appreciation. The desired connection started.

The third day another chaplain joined, prompting more smiles, waves, photos and emails. By Day Four, the entire Chaplain Service staff had joined me. A much-needed show of appreciation became visible at VA-Menlo Park. For work ongoing despite COVID-19.

Editor’s note: Thomas has invited us to send cards to the health care team at the VA Hospital in Menlo Park. You can just say “Thank you!” and leave the cards in the box on the porch of the church.

Thanking the essential workers at the VA

Come to (virtual) tea with Pastor Liz!

You are invited to virtual BYO Tea with Pastor Liz weekly from 4-5:30 p.m. Thursdays via Google Meets.

Stop by when you have time for a visit.

Join with Google Meet

meet.google.com/nma-cjgm-oqk

Or join by phone

+1 417-719-7746

PIN: 160 305 954 #

When you follow the link, click “Ask to Join,” and Pastor Liz will approve you to join the meeting. Oh, and don’t forget your tea.