



December 2021 CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF BELMONT  
**THE MESSENGER**

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This photo not an attempt to offer some fall foliage for a Messenger cover. It's the Monterey Pine that has loomed over the backyard of CCB for at least 70 years. It sheltered generations of Carlmont Parents Nursery School kids and uncounted Rummage Sales with its branches supporting rugs and furniture. But the recent drought (and probably an onslaught of bark beetles) has brought it to its end. The dead pine will be professionally removed while CPNS is on its December break.



## Trains of Thought Christmas gifts: Little packages of our love

By Pastor Sally

We hear a lot of talk about how commercial Christmas has become. It is certainly true. However, there is a spiritual dimension to all the shopping that is worth celebrating.

I like to think of gifts as little packages of love. We wrap up our love in the most beautiful way we can in hopes that it will be

pleasing to the eye and the heart. Our goal is to bring a little happiness or joy into another's life. There are few activities more worthwhile than this.

As we shop for our gifts, we spend time



Rev. Sally Train

thinking about the person we are shopping for. We think about what she might need, what she cares about, and what might bring a smile to her face.

We take the time to notice his circumstances and his interests. In other words, we take the time to really look at the people in our lives and put ourselves in their  
**See GIFTS, Page 7**

**We are an Open and Affirming Congregation valuing everyone's race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, physical and mental abilities.**



Jane Fernald lights the candles on the birthday cake for Ella Mae Donovan (center) during Coffee Hour last month. Ella Mae celebrated her 96th birthday on Nov. 14 and was serenaded on the veranda after worship.

## Parish Personals

**Mary Beth Gray's** 22-year-old son, **Alex**, is scheduled for an 18-hour surgery on Dec 3 to finally remove a rare tumor in his shoulder. She ask for prayers for his endurance and healing, and for highest wisdom and skills from the different surgery teams involved. May we raise a thunderous multitude of prayers for strength for Alex and guidance for the surgeons' hands.

**Sally Stewart** suffered a small stroke just before Thanksgiving and was in the hospital for several days. She is home now and her son is taking care of her. Sally says she would love phone calls at 650-575-3419 or emails at [SallyStewart@SPCglobal.net](mailto:SallyStewart@SPCglobal.net).

**Terri Patterson Cripps, Carol Patterson's** daughter, underwent surgery on her shoulder early in October, Carol reports that the surgeon found more damage than the MRI showed. "It's going to be a long haul. She has been in a full brace 24/7 since Oct. 1 with a sling over that. She's improving but

it's going to take time. She told me today that the physical therapy is going to last six months."

The **Rev. John Brooke's three daughters, Judy, Suzi and Sally**, are planning a memorial service for CCB's pastor emeritus on Saturday, Feb. 19, at 10 a.m. with a reception to follow. They have asked that Caz Chorale sing some of the same songs they sang to their mother **Gretchen** when she was dying. Led by **Mike Venturino** on guitar, a group of Caz Chgorale singers drove to the Brooke home in Cotati and "sang her away." Gretchen died as the group was making its way back to Belmont.

Suzi asked CCB members who knew John to send her and her sisters any suggestions they might have for inclusion in the memorial service.

The **Rev. Valerie McEntee** is job hunting. Her position with the San Francisco Night Ministry has been eliminated Valerie was a ministerial intern serving CCB under the supervision of the **Rev. Kristi Denham**, and she also served as Director of Christian Education at CCB. She also instigated CCB's service project of making sack lunches for the homeless on the fifth

Sundays of the year which the San Francisco Night Ministry distributed in Golden Gate Park. It's not yet clear if that ministry will continue now that Valerie's no longer part of the Night Ministry program. We send Valerie are love and prayers for a new call in the near future.

## December Birthdays

- Dec. 2 Micki Carter  
Wendy Taylor
- Dec. 5 Dusty Cox
- Dec. 7 Steve Ramos
- Dec. 9 Ursula Jorgensen
- Dec. 12 David Shouse
- Dec. 14 Irene Hall
- Dec. 20 Linda Howard
- Dec. 27 Jane Dolan
- Dec. 29 Steve Chamberlin

If we don't have your birthday listed, please email the church office with the date so we can add it to our list.

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont website, click on [CCB](#).

# CCB hosts Narathon event for Thanksgiving and Christmas

By Lea Mavroudis

This year during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, CCB will host Narcotics Anonymous' annual Narathon for the Peninsula area.

This event runs for the 36 hours surrounding each holiday, day and night. The Narathon team welcomes NA members and other who need support, camaraderie or just a place to spend the day.

The holidays can be one of the most difficult times of year for those who struggle with addiction, and the Narathon event provides a fun, safe and supportive environment for them to spend the holidays.

CCB already hosts two weekly NA groups who meet in our Fireplace Room, and we are happy to expand this to accommodate this important event.

This is a cause that CCB is eager to support in any way we can, so I have

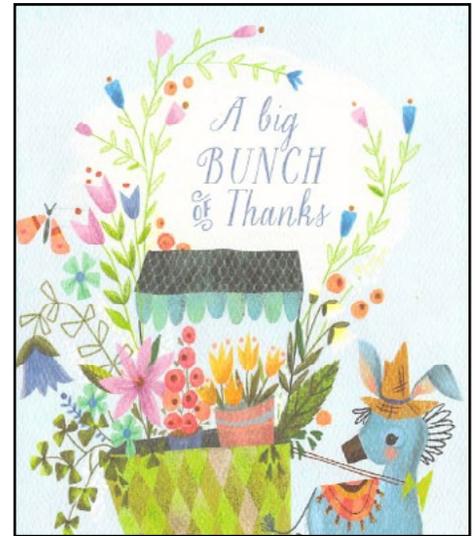
been coordinating closely with NA's representatives to find a way to make this work smoothly, while also being sensitive to other church events or rentals that may be going on.

Their people have been a pleasure to work with and they are very grateful to CCB for providing them with a venue.

During the events, the group shares morning and evening meals together and has a series of speakers scheduled throughout the day.

By all accounts the Thanksgiving event went really well with over 200 people attending. Cathedral da Familia was also on site for their own Thanksgiving event and the two groups managed to share the space successfully.

We're excited to welcome the Narathon group again next month for the Christmas event.



CCB received this Thank You card from the Linares Family: "Susan, Romeo, Robin, Jacob and I want to tell you how much the meals you have delivered to us this month have been appreciated and enjoyed. Every one was so delicious. Thank you so much for your kindness." It was signed by Lucille Uldrick, Susan's mother.

## Our Search process: What we know and what we don't

*As CCB continues the search process for a new settled pastor, Vice Moderator, Danielle Chamberlin took the time to summarize where we are on that process, what we've already accomplished and what questions may lie ahead. Here is that review.*

By Danielle Chamberlin

CCB started to prepare for the transition to a new minister in 2017, knowing that our full-time pastor was preparing to retire in 2019.

In 2019, we called an interim pastor, who unfortunately did not end up coming. During our period of lay-led church leadership, we conducted another visioning exercise at our 2019 Harvest Dinner. We gathered together over a meal to look at what our purpose should be, what draws us to church, and things we should let go of. That report is located [here](#).

We then hired Rev. Elizabeth Mitchell Clement in March 2020, who led us through a visioning process focused on Theory U. A number of lay leaders went through a "storycatcher training" and then we met together with the congregation to hear their

stories and find their meanings. The "red threads" that the storycatchers found are stored [here](#).

We distilled our thoughts into this visual: "A little church on the top of a hill that extends its arms out into its community and spreads love and healing and hope."

At our annual meeting in February 2021, we kicked off the next phase of our visioning exercise. We summarized, from our storycatching, what gives us energy and makes more energy. Then, we asked for people to share their visions with each other, through lent.

These visions were then deconstructed into their parts on sticky notes, and reconstructed into a poster on which the congregation voted for three items: what items they think will sustain our congregation, what is our personal passion, and what we think would bring people in.

Where we still do not have clarity is what the right structure is to sustain that vision. We have a building which is both an asset and takes a tremendous amount of volunteer effort to sustain. We have specific decisions to make about:

- With the limited membership and exhausted church leadership, should we try to grow, or should we look for merger/closure/shared service opportunities with the several other local UCCs which are in a similar situation?

- Or should we take our assets (membership of approximately 60 with 25 in worship on an average Sunday, about \$250k in the bank, and a building that brings in rental income) and invest them in the visions we've outlined?

- Do we sell the building to another congregation which is better suited to support it and rent back?

- Do we spin it off into a separate organization focused on renting the property and generating income while we focus on our church mission?

- Do we invest in growing the church by renovating/updating our building first?

- Do we need to hire paid staff to lead us through that effort?

Church Council is considering hiring a consultant to help us bring clarity to these questions and find our path forward.

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont website, click on [CCB](#).

# We can all add some cheer to lives of others

By Linda Howard  
Social Action Committee

In my former life as a school guidance counselor in Palo Alto, I always wrote a message to the staff a few days before the beginning of Winter Break. My mission was to bring an awareness to the staff that as the day of dismissal approached and joyful exuberance was building, not all students might be looking forward to the holidays.

Our society tells us we must be especially joyful this time of year, but stressors such as loss of income, death of a loved one, divorce or illness do not take a holiday. The holidays can trigger memories of Christmases past that were painful.

Wealth divides our community between those who have wealth and those who do not. The people who live on the lower socio-economic end experience even more duress due to the cost of living.

Imagine barely having enough to feed and clothe your family and pay the rent. Yet, everywhere you go you are confronted with advertisements to buy in order to achieve happiness for yourself and your children.

We cannot change the circumstances or wave a magic wand to grant contentment, joy or peace of mind to people, but there are opportunities for everyone to make a difference in someone's life.

Notice people around you. Give a smile to a stranger. Be nice to people who check out your groceries or retail sales people. Talk to a child. Give a compliment. Start a conversation with someone you don't normally talk to and then genuinely LISTEN.

There is always a need for monetary donations. Our church sponsors charitable giving to several causes. To make it easy, you may donate through the CCB [donation site](#). Be sure to note which charity you wish your money to reach.

Family to Family (through Samaritan House)

Puente De La Sur — To assist families on the coast; many are employed as agricultural workers.

Service League of San Mateo — To assist formerly incarcerated individuals with counseling, employment training and a variety of ways to help them become productive members of society.



Linda Howard poses with the boxes of children's clothing that CCB members gathered to donate to Samaritan House for the holidays.

Guardian Scholar Program — To assist students who attend San Francisco State and were in foster care for most of their childhoods.

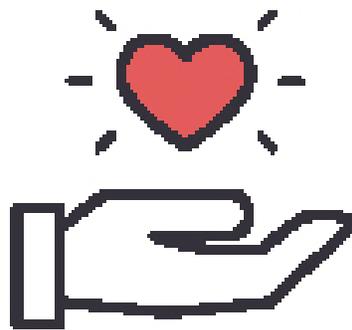
We all have the opportunity to make a difference, however small, in someone's life.

*We are all at once both a composition and a composer. We have the ability not only to compose the future of our own lives, but to help compose the future of everyone around us and the communities in which we live. — Maya Angelou*

## It's back!

### The Stewardship Brunch — with Greg's blueberry blinis — will take place after worship on Sunday, Dec. 5. Be there!

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont website, click on [CCB](#).



**PENINSULA MULTIFAITH COALITION**

# TEEN SERVICE ACTIVITY

Join us for service, fun and pizza!  
All youth ages 12-18 invited

**SATURDAY, DEC. 18 | NOON-1:30PM**  
**751 ALAMEDA DE LAS PULGAS,**  
**BELMONT**

We will pack lunches and make cards for  
the homeless and eat pizza. Get to know  
teens from other faith houses!

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On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, Elizabeth Nordt, Andrew and Henry Altorfer joined CCB's former pastor, Kristi Denham, at the Peninsula Multifaith Coalition Thanksgiving Picnic at Central Park in San Mateo. The 68 attendees represented 27 congregations and all of our major faiths. It was a joyous occasion highlighted by a Mediterranean lunch hosted by PMC and our member organization, Pacifica Institute. In addition, 330 pounds of food were collected and donated to Second Harvest.

## Turning the page on Chocolate Fest 2021

By Micki Carter

The last order has filled, and the Sunday School Room will soon be emptied of its precious supply of fantastic artisan chocolate.

The 38th edition of Chocolate Fest (adapted for the pandemic) is over and the Online Chocolate Shop is closed.

This year's event began with the Pop-up Chocolate Shop on Saturday Oct. 9. As soon as the doors closed, we launched the online store and moved our inventory of the wares of nine of the best Bay Area chocolatiers to

the Sunday School Room.

After church on most Sundays, we opened the doors to members and friends, and during the week, we filled those online orders.

We topped \$10,000 in sales, and 20 percent of that stays with the church to be split in the usual Chocolate Fest fashion!

We have many people to thank for the success of the Chocolate Fest in this new format, starting with Elyce Zahn of CocoTutti who designed our Shopify site and maintained it for us.

The basic CF team (Danielle Chamberlin, Lea Mavroudis and I) got liberal assistance from Lynne Benson-Colbert, Marcia Hilo, Maura Whitmore, Jane Fernald and Georgi LaBerge (with Lisa Lucett on call). Thank you all for your help!

And, of course, Bookkeeper Larry Kieffer will be busy writing checks to nine very happy chocolatiers who were able to introduce their wares to our Chocolate Fest fans.

Standby for news on Chocolate Fest 2022!

**Keep Sunday evening, Dec. 19, open for caroling. We're still working out the details, but we would love to sing even if we have to stay outside.**

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# CCB Calendar for December 2021

|           |                   |  |  |
|-----------|-------------------|--|--|
| 1<br>Wed  | 7:00PM - 9:00PM   | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Watching and discussing Mission:JOY                            |
| 2<br>Thu  | 7:30PM - 9PM ✉    | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Choir practice   |
| 3<br>Fri  | 1:00PM - 4:00PM   | <input type="checkbox"/> Chocolate Fest  | Chocolate Fest pickup/Sanctuary and Narthex                    |
| 5<br>Sun  | 10:30AM - 12:00PM | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship         | Communion worship with Pastor Sally Train: First Things First  |
|           | 11:30AM - 12:00PM | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Coffee Hour  |
|           | 11:30AM - 1PM     | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Stewardship Brunch   |
| 9<br>Thu  | 7:30PM - 9PM ✉    | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Choir practice   |
| 11<br>Sat | 3:30PM - 5:00PM   | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | CCB Youth Group on the Veranda                                 |
| 12<br>Sun | 10:30AM - 12:00PM | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship         | Advent worship with Pastor Sally Train: Mary, Blessed Disciple |
|           | 11:30AM - 12:00PM | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Coffee Hour  |
| 16<br>Thu | 7:30PM - 9PM ✉    | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Choir practice   |
| 18<br>Sat | 12:00PM - 3PM     | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | PMC Youth Sandwichmaking                                       |
| 19<br>Sun | 10:30AM - 12:00PM | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship         | Youth Christmas Pageant  |
|           | 11:30AM - 12:00PM | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Coffee Hour  |
| 23<br>Thu | 7:30PM - 9PM ✉    | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Choir practice   |
| 24<br>Fri | 5:30PM - 6:00PM   | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship         | Children's Christmas Eve Service                               |
|           | 9:00PM            | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship         | Christmas Eve Candlelight Service                              |
| 26<br>Sun | 10:30AM - 12:00PM | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship         | Sunday worship with Pastor Sally Train: Spiritual Maturity     |
|           | 11:30AM - 12:00PM | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Coffee Hour  |
| 27<br>Mon | 7PM - 9PM ✉       | <input type="checkbox"/> Off-site events | Council Meeting  |
| 30<br>Thu | 7:30PM - 9PM ✉    | <input type="checkbox"/> Church Events   | Choir practice   |

## Gifts

### Continued from Page One

shoes, if only for a moment. There are few activities more worthwhile than this.

Shopping for gifts requires an open-handed generosity that cares more about the other's happiness than our own. We learn

the art of letting go and the joy of giving. There are few activities more worthwhile than this.

While we can certainly go overboard with holiday shopping, if we approach it in a balanced and caring way, it can be a spiritual discipline that helps us grow. When we truly shop with care and love, it shows in the gift

and the way we give it. It communicates at a deeper level. The gift becomes a package of love and blesses both the giver and the receiver.

I wish you a beautiful Christmas season filled with the gifts of the spirit: inner peace, joy, love, hope, kindness, generosity, and tranquility. Shalom!

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont website, click on [CCB](#).

**MISSION:**  
**JOY**  
FINDING HAPPINESS  
IN TROUBLED TIMES



## Let's get together and talk about being joyful

Please join us at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec.1, in person (masked and vaxxed, of course) in the Sanctuary to watch an amazing film Mission: JOY, based on a terrific book,

Deeply moving and laugh-out-loud funny, Mission: JOY is a documentary with unprecedented access to the unlikely friendship of two international icons who transcend religion: His Holiness the Dalai

Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

In their final joint mission, these selfdescribed mischievous brothers give a master class in how to create joy in a world that was never easy for them. They offer neuroscience-backed wisdom to help each of us live with more joy, despite circumstances.

Inspired by New York Times bestseller,

*The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*, the film showcases the exchange between these two Nobel Peace Prize winners that led to that book.

You can watch a trailer of the movie [here](#).

We will discuss the film after so plan to stay and talk.

Popcorn is optional.

**January Messenger deadline will be Monday, Dec. 27**



## It's budget time and the Trustees need your pledge for 2022.

Email it confidentially to Financial Secretary Keith Howard at [geokeith39@gmail.com](mailto:geokeith39@gmail.com) or ask for a pledge card.

To go to the Congregational Church of Belmont website, click on [CCB](#).