

SALT & LIGHT

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF SEBASTOPOL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

The Community Church of Sebastopol

United Church of Christ

707.823.2484

www.uccseb.org

office@uccseb.org

Lead Minister

Rev. Dr. Benjamin J. Broadbent

Associate Minister of Faith Formation

Rev. Lacey Hunter

Associate Minister of Congregational Care

Rev. Rachel Knuth

Handbell Ensemble Director

Karna Roa

Keyboardist

J. Althea

Choral Director

Andy DelMonte

Congregational Administrator

Chris Chang Weeks

Bookkeeper

Deanna Euritt

Custodian

Luis Guzman

Pastor Emeritus

Rev. Gene Nelson



Sabbath in the New Year

By Rev. Benjamin Broadbent, Lead Minister

Time both crawls and flies. Crawling, our days are filled with so many twists and turns, developments and dissolutions, lessons and losses. Now in my 6th year serving Community Church, I marvel that there have been three presidents during my time here. Eight church staff have come and gone. We've had to cancel worship due to fire, disease, and storms. A lot has happened. The days have been full. And yet it has flown by since I first met this congregation at my candidating weekend, Mothers Day of 2016. At the dinner in Memorial Hall, members wrote down questions for me to answer on the spot. I remember this one: "No hellfire and brimstone, please." Not exactly a question, but I got the point. Seems like it wasn't too long ago that you and I were in our honeymoon period, hopeful and giddy, intrigued by the mutual mystery of the relationship between pastor and people. Whether it crawls like a banana slug or flies along like a leaf on a post-rain creek, for Christians, all time is sacred. We inherited this from our Jewish forebears who imagined that the creator God made all things in 6 days, and then rested on the seventh. In Israelite liturgy, the seventh day was set aside as a Sabbath, a day of rest. Created in the image of God, Israelites were to imitate God by resting one day per week, stepping off the treadmill of productivity and the worry that accompanies it, and simply enjoying the good things in life that were close at hand, scripture, family, healthy food, and nature.

As many of you know, I will be taking a sabbatical February 1 – May 1, 2022. Sabbatical is a common practice in churches, including in our denomination, the United Church of Christ, and is part of my call agreement. The word sabbatical related to Sabbath, a time of rest. For me, that means refilling the well of energy and inspiration I need to continue my ministry in a way that is life-giving to me and to this congregation. Specifically, I will focus on writing, a practice I have been neglecting as of late and would like to make a more central part of my life and career. But a pastoral sabbatical is not just for a pastor. It is also an opportunity for a congregation to discover its strengths and perhaps some weaknesses, to trust more deeply in God's presence that abides even in the pastor's absence.

And you will be in capable hands. Rev. Rachel Knuth, who has served this church longer than I have, will flex from half-time to full-time as Acting Lead Minister. She and Pastor Lacey and the Church Staff Team and many volunteers will be working together to provide capable and encouraging leadership to our congregation. Three months. It will crawl by and fly by. Filled with activity and change, graced by a Spirit that guides. I can't wait to return and learn how you spent this sabbatical. ☸

JANUARY 2022 WORSHIP

- ◆ We worship in the sanctuary every Sunday at 10:30 a.m.
- ◆ Services live streamed on our church's YouTube channel & Facebook page.
- ◆ Weekly bulletin and announcements available at www.uccseb.org.

January 2 – 2nd Sunday after Christmas

Today we will celebrate Holy Communion and light the candles of Advent and Christmas once more. Andy Del-Monte and Dawson Bell provide special music. Rev. Lacey Hunter, Associate Minister of Faith Formation, preaches a sermon celebrating the new year with John 1:1 – 18 as our guide.

January 6 – Feast of the Epiphany (No services)

January 9 – 1st Sunday after Epiphany / Baptism of Christ Sunday

Today marks the beginning of the season of Epiphany which culminates after 8 Sundays on Transfiguration Sunday, the last Sunday before Lent. The Chancel Choir provides worship music and Rev. Dr. Benjamin J. Broadbent, Lead Minister, preaches a sermon on Luke 3:15–22 entitled “Baptism, By the Way.”

January 16 – 2nd Sunday after Epiphany / MLK Jr. Holiday Weekend

Today the Chancel Choir signs an Anthem and Pastor Benjamin preaches a sermon on John 2:1 – 11 entitled “Re-visiting the Drum Major Instinct.”

January 23 – 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

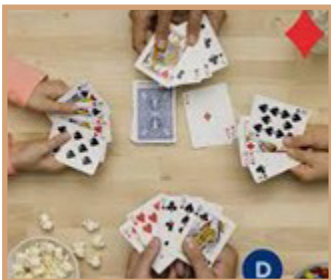
Today a small ensemble shares worship music and Pastor Lacey preaches a sermon on Luke 4:14–21, the story of Jesus returning to his hometown of Nazareth.

January 30 – 4th Sunday after Epiphany / Annual Meeting Sunday

Today the Handbell Ensemble shares worship music, New Members are received, and Pastor Benjamin preaches a sermon on Luke 4:21–30 entitled “Good Departures.”

Coming in February... Pastor Benjamin begins Sabbatical, Pastor Rachel becomes Acting Lead Minister, Guest Preachers, Transfiguration Sunday

The Sebastopol Community Church's **Annual Meeting** will be held at the church at Noon on Sunday, January 30, 2022, to conduct the business of the congregation, including election of Leadership Council and Nominating Committee members; and adoption of the budget. More details will be provided in early January. Please save the date and we hope to see you there!



Games Group: All Are Welcome!

Want a fun and casual way to get to know other people? Come play games and make friends at the newly formed Games Group. Come as you are, no need to sign up ahead of time, just show up ready to play. All people are welcome. Come join the group playing board games and card games on Friday, January 7 from 1:00-3:00pm in the Media Room. For more information contact Gail Thomas at gailgthomas1@gmail.com.

Faith Formation: Formed for Journeys

by: Rev. Lacey Hunter



As we enter 2022, a new year together, I am thinking a lot about where we've been, especially our faith formation ministries, and where we might be going. I'm reminded of the Epiphany blessing, "For Those Who Have Far to Travel," by the poet and theologian, Jan Richardson. Her blessing begins, "If you could see / the journey whole, / you might never / undertake it, / might never dare / the first step / that propels you / from the place / you have known / toward the place / you know not." When 2021 began, there had not yet been a white supremacist insurrection at the Capital, or approved COVID vaccinations, or the Delta and Omicron variants. School and church and much of our lives were still in pandemic lockdown and had been

for almost a year. If we had seen the journey whole...Lord have mercy.

But the blessing continues, "Call it / one of the mercies / of the road: / that we see it / only by stages / as it opens / before us, / as it comes into / our keeping, / step by / single step." In the midst of each new challenge, I think about the ways our faith formation ministry leaders continued to open themselves again and again to the surprising and new thing being invited of them. The journey of children's and youth ministries especially, has been one of steadfast change, as we reorganized our activities time and time again so that all participants could be as safe as possible. At the height of pandemic lockdown, many people's lives slowed down in one way or another and in the midst of that, youth group was able to meet every Sunday on Zoom. Youth member participation was more consistent than pre-pandemic times and folks we had not seen in a while, as well as new folks, began engaging. As communal spaces and activities began to reopen and the daily pace with which people are being asked to live at again picked up speed, we realized we too had to adapt again and open ourselves to the next step. In the fall of 2021, children and many youth still did not have access to vaccines, so we explored outdoor variations of children's church and youth group simultaneous to worship. Sunday morning Children's Church has been a joy, as we have been able to gather again with the youngest members of our congregation, for prayer, creativity and play. And we are noticing that the weekly Sunday morning youth group gathering might not be what our community wants at this time. While most Sunday's one or two youth members participate, when we have gathered for special service projects and community building, 15-20 young people join. So again, with each change and question, I look to the blessing that continues:

"There is nothing / for it / but to go, / and by our going / take the vows / the pilgrim takes: to be faithful to / the next step; / to rely on more / than the map; / to heed the signposts / of intuition and dream; / to follow the star / that only you / will recognize;

We don't know what the path ahead will be but we know that we need one another to be the church in the world, committed to nurturing one another's faith journeys across generations. What next step are you being called to take with this congregation?

"Each promise becomes / part of the path, / each choice creates / the road / that will take you / to the place / where at last / you will kneel / to offer the gift / most needed— / the gift that only you / can give— / before turning to go / home by / another way." ❁

A Care Note from Pastor Rachel: Moving to Acting Lead Minister

Dear Friends,

It is my deep delight to serve our congregation as Acting Lead Minister this Spring, while Pastor Benjamin engages a sabbatical. I am excited for new opportunities to grow in leadership and to learn more of the craft of the Lead Minister position. I'm also looking forward to deepening my relationships and working with our congregation's leaders in new ways. I'm honored to be entrusted with this responsibility and opportunity for ministry among you all. My attitude is: Yes! Let's do this!

Many of you know that I am a person who loves to be prepared. In my spiritual life I thrive on "freedom within form." For example, one of the most meaningful practices I love is praying with prayer beads. The "form" of the circular string of beads offers a structure for prayer to happen. I often feel the movement of the Holy Spirit as I pray using the form of the prayer beads. Juicy creative ideas emerge with inspiration! Similarly, as I prepare for this time, I have been looking for the "form" or "structures" within which the Spirit will move among us as well. I am grateful for several supports: our Leadership Council, the Staff Team, my Pastor-Parish Relations Team, a newly formed Sabbatical Support Team, the Lenten and Eastertide liturgy, guest preachers, and of course the Acting Lead Minister Job Description. I will also be taking a preparation week in the middle of January to spend some concentrated time thinking through the rhythm of our spring together. I am comforted and inspired by these structural supports.



Some of you have kindly inquired about how my family will respond to this shift in my leadership role at our church, and especially the move from part-time to full-time for these three months. As a working mother of four children (ages 18, 16, 14, and 9) I am so grateful to have a supportive family, and wonderful spouse, who are on board with the plan. They know it's a time-limited position and also a great opportunity for professional growth. We have a babysitter whose hours will increase, my parents may come for a window of time to help out, and we plan to have a little extra housekeeping help. My spouse also travels for work every other week— so I intend to schedule evening meetings for the weeks he is home, as much as possible. And yet, even with all of those things in place, there will be times when I must set a boundary with my work in order to be with my family, and I'm grateful to you all for understanding that. Yes— I am called to Ministry— and, my "first call" is to my family. I still intend to go to middle school band concerts and high school sports games, I plan to tend our family's garden, and exercise, and have some mental space to relax with my family, whom I love so much. These activities give me life, which I believe inform my Ministry in positive ways.



Many of you also know that I have perfectionist tendencies and am committed to excellence in my work as a Minister. So I am preparing myself to step into this position as Acting Lead Minister, and would not say yes to filling this role if I didn't think I could rise to the occasion. I'm also a believer in grace, and know that people who learn new things make mistakes. I'm sure I will make a few mistakes (even when it isn't my "plan" to make mistakes), but I'm grateful to be a "learner" in a place where relationships and community are more important than being perfect. And I trust the movement of the Holy Spirit to continue to grow in you, and in me, the skills to meet this moment in our church's life.

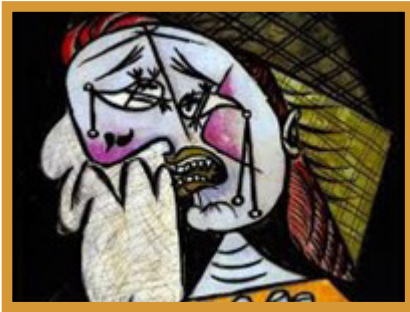
I look forward to serving our church as Acting Lead Minister in February, March, and April.

With Gratitude for the Fullness of Life,
Pastor Rachel

Planting the Seeds for a “Behavioral Covenant” at Community Church

By Pastor Rachel

Emerging from the holiday season this winter, I have noticed some common laments: “Coming out of covid lockdowns, people assume the worst in each other, even in the grocery store parking lot” or “The tone of all our media is so quick to call ‘foul’ and there isn’t any room for forgiveness or complexity” or “My family disagrees about mask-wearing/ politics and we can’t even begin to talk about it.” I often hear the lament of how our wider American culture is growing more rude and intolerant. It seems like we have shifted from the sentiment of “we’re all in this together” at the beginning of the pandemic, to an extreme selfishness and individuality, marked by intolerance and anger. I hear sociologists and historians who look at decades and centuries of trends, naming this time we’re in as a “societal regression.”



It begs the question— how do we want to be together, as we emerge from pandemic life? How do we want to treat each other, and what wisdom can the church offer the world at this moment in time?

Our Leadership Council spent some time in December exploring just that very question, thinking together about “holy manners” and how congregations in general might have something to share with our wider culture. Some of these ideas the LC brainstormed were:

- ❑ Churches can show that we don’t all think alike but can come together
- ❑ Churches can teach how to think about another person’s perspective, and sometimes put it in front of their own
- ❑ Churches have spiritual resources to be “in the hard things”
- ❑ Churches can be a place to practice the disruption of inequities, and to bring healthy policies that support diversity out into the world
- ❑ Churches can be a refuge for difference, where each person can fully be themselves.



I think it’s totally interesting to think of the church as evangelizing values that foster healthy relationship in the public sphere. So how do we begin?

Well, we begin with ourselves, right here, where we are— as an imperfect, complex, caring church community in West County. This November the Leadership Council approved a team of three (Bob Curtis, Moderator, Kathy Bell, Council Member for Personnel, and me) to begin looking at Behavioral Covenants and the process of creating one for our church. We have met several times already, are resourcing ourselves with best practices from other congregations, and are in the process of discerning next steps in our congregation. The Behavioral Covenant Team is aiming to hold several “listening circles” to hear from the whole congregation this Spring, with the goal of presenting a draft of a Behavioral Covenant for approval at the May/June Leadership Council meeting. We want to go slow so we can engage as many people as possible.



Our hope is that through conversation and prayer, our congregation might come to some group agreements for healthy communication and grace-full ways of treating each other, even when there are differences or hurt feelings, or any of the myriad issues that might arise from being messy human beings who care

Continued on page 8

Engaged Membership

By Rev. Benjamin Broadbent, Lead Minister

Upcoming Inquirers' Class

Date: January 9, 2022

Time: 11:45 a.m. - 1:45 p.m.

Where: Media Room

Please RSVP to office@uccseb.org no later than Wed, Jan 5

On January 9, all who are interested in exploring The Community Church of Sebastopol and our denomination, the United Church of Christ, are invited to attend an Inquirers' Class, 11:45 a.m. – 1:45 p.m. in the Media Room. Please RSVP to the church office no later than Wednesday, January 5. Let us know whether you require childcare and/or whether you have any dietary restrictions.

We will welcome new members into the life of Community Church during worship on January 30. Encouraged by the congregation, new members will respond to these questions from the Book of Worship of our denomination, the United Church of Christ:

1. Do you desire to affirm your Baptism into the faith and family of Jesus Christ?
2. Will you resist the powers of the world which demean people and harm the earth, and do you desire the freedom to be fully yourself in Christ?
3. Will you strive to deepen your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?
4. Will you attempt, by the grace of God, to follow in the way of Jesus as his disciple, to resist oppression and violence, to show love and justice, and to embody the work and word of Jesus Christ as best you are able?
5. As a member of the church of Jesus Christ, do you intend to grow in the Christian faith, joining in the dynamic movement of God's people in this local congregation and as part of the global church by sharing in its joys and sorrows, listening to and learning from people older and younger, and by sharing your own gifts and perspectives so that together we may celebrate Christ's presence and serve this community and the world in Christ's name?

As engaged members, we are asking each other to fulfill these commitments:

- ♦ To endeavor to deepen spiritually in the Christian faith, accompanying the other members of this church in faithfulness and love
- ♦ To attend services of worship, and to observe the sacraments, as regularly as life allows
- ♦ To support the church regularly and generously, each from within our various financial circumstances
- ♦ To aspire to a leadership role
- ♦ To serve faithfully as the church in the wider community, sharing with others the meaning and purpose of our covenant

January Birthdays						
	8	Sharon Olson	17	Rhonda Matheny	25	Bill McMillon
1	Dino Rocha	8	Kim Buckman	17	Joan Martin	25
3	Gary Gordon	• 12	Virginia Hughes	• 17	Fred Martin	• 26
4	Tom Dilley	• 12	Gail Thomas	• 19	Beth Trivunovic	• 26
4	Melody Anderson	• 12	Jim McLeod	• 20	Dylan Arendt	• 27
5	Pat Dilley	• 13	Yvonne Johnson	• 20	Benji Margulis	• 28
6	Marge Holland	• 14	Vicki Reno	• 21	Steve Bradley	• 29
6	Diana Wilson	• 15	Julie Smith	• 23	Joanne Matson	• 29
7	Marlene Hooper	15	Edythe Briggs	23	Loren Brueggemann	30
7	Bryan Peterson	15	Brenda Flynn	23	Jane Rasmus	30
8	Hollace Vaughan	16	Destiny Stone	24	Chris Wagner	30
8	Susan Nestor					31
						Peg Anderson

Things that Happened in Advent

Advent is always a busy season for the church, but it seemed especially more so since we have started to emerge from a long pandemic induced confinement.



The Advent Children's Choir sang the song Emmanuel during the offering at the Fourth Sunday in Advent. ❁



Twenty Middle and High School youth members gathered Saturday December 18 to help Outreach members Joyce Cox and Judy Davison assemble and decorate Christmas bags for the Sam Jones Homeless Shelter. Kathy Bell led activities including a white elephant gift exchange and Christmas tree relay race. Kathy Matthies provided festive treats. In total, 137 bags were delivered to Sam Jones. This was a joint project with Stone Creek Zen Center and Hillcrest School. ❁



Kindred Groups are Morphing to "Kindred Care"

By Pastor Rachel

The Kindred Group Leader Team, Kathy Matthies (Leadership Council Member for Care & Fellowship), and I are casting a new vision for Kindred Care in our congregation. It is our intention to morph the current Kindred Groups into communities of care, much like a parish care or diaconate model. We are hoping to respond to the shifting priorities as our congregation emerges from covid. What we're seeing is more of a need for circles of care, and less emphasis on social fellowship.

The current Kindred Groups, created based on geography, will remain in place – you'll still be in the same group named after apples! But the role of leaders (previously, to create social opportunities, fill ushering slots, and communicate care needs) will be honed in to be care-oriented only. Many of the groups have lain fallow during the past two years, which has allowed us to thoughtfully consider the next phase of this ministry. Our intention is for the newly emerging "Kindred Care" program to communicate care needs and become avenues of support within the congregation, in simple and effective ways. For example, if a member of your Kindred Care group becomes ill, your Leader might invite you to send them a card (even if you don't know them very well!) or an email with a word of support. These simple kindnesses help build community and care for one another.

In the coming months, be on the lookout for some changes in the Kindred Care Leadership Team, as well as future newsletter articles outlining this emerging ministry of care. And please bear with the Kindred Leaders as this shift in emphasis unfolds. For more information or to check in about Kindred Care, or to get involved, please feel free to be in touch with me: pastorrachel@uccseb.org. May God bless our congregation as we minister to one another with loving kindness. ❁

Planting the Seeds, Continued from page 4

about each other and share in community. And our ultimate hope would be that our church might be a beacon for this work in the world.

Just to give you an idea, here is one example of a Behavioral Covenant, from "The Discernment Travelogue," a UCC pamphlet:

- Be fully present, extending and presuming welcome to and from others.
- Listen generously and suspend judgment about another's story. Hold stories with care and respect.
- Author your own story and share your own gifts.
- Wonder. Welcome discomfort. Love the questions.
- Be mindful and respectful of time.
- Practice hospitality and inclusion, especially when diverse cultures meet. There are many excellent methods for discernment but not all of them model intercultural awareness; therefore be discerning about discernment together: appreciate many ways of hearing God together.
- Believe that it is possible to emerge from our time together refreshed, surprised, and less burdened than when we came.

There are many more examples out there, and questions and ideas to explore together as a congregation. In the meantime, I invite you to pray for the work of our Leadership Council and Behavioral Covenant Team, and to think about what "group agreements" you think are the most important to you. Be on the lookout for more information, including dates of "listening circles" this spring. And if you have questions or ideas, or would like to get involved with this work, please reach out to me (pastorrachel@uccseb.org), Bob Curtis (robertfcurtis@gmail.com), or Kathy Bell (kbellnow@yahoo.com). We look forward to seeing what grows out of this work this spring, for the flourishing of our community. ✿

Thresholds

Deaths: We Release with Care...

...Lowell Yeager, July 14, 1922 - December 11, 2021

Long-term church member, Lowell "Louie" Yeager, died at the age of 99. He was a former Principal at Analy High School, from 1964-1981, and spent many years serving our church as an usher. Our prayers are with his family and friends, and especially with his wife Carmen, as they grieve his loss. He will be missed.

To include a Threshold announcement in next month's Salt&Light, please contact Pastor Rachel by the 15th of the month: pastorrachel@uccseb.org.

Events in January at Community Church

We are gradually reopening at Community Church. Outdoor in-person worship services have commenced. Check our online calendar at <https://uccseb.org/Calendar.php> for updates.

Jan 1	New Year's Day
Jan 2	2nd Sunday after Christmas, 10:30 a.m., Sanctuary Kinship Time, 11:30 a.m., Bell Tower Courtyard
Jan 4	Grounds Team, 9:00 a.m., church campus Facility Committee, 10:00 a.m., Fireside Room Men's Discussion Group, 11:30 a.m., Fireside Room Handbell Ensemble, 4:30 p.m., Sanctuary Board
Jan 5	Women's Bible Study, 9:30 a.m., Classroom 6 Staff Team, 10:00 a.m., Youth Lounge Handbell Ensemble, 2:00 p.m., Sanctuary
Jan 6	Women's Fellowship Card Writing Ministry, 3:00 p.m., Women's Fellowship Rm
Jan 7	Board Games Group, 1:00 p.m., Media Room
Jan 8	Second Saturday Lunch, 11:30 a.m., Bell Tower Courtyard
Jan 9	1st Sunday after Epiphany, 10:30 a.m., Sanctuary Children's Church, 10:45 a.m., Fountain Courtyard & Memorial Hall Kinship Time, 11:30 a.m., Bell Tower Courtyard Inquirers' Class, 12:00 p.m., Media Room
Jan 11	Grounds Team, 9:00 a.m., church campus Pastor Parish Relations Team (Ben), 4:00 p.m., Zoom Handbell Ensemble, 4:30 p.m., Sanctuary Board
Jan 12	Women's Bible Study, 9:30 a.m., Classroom 6 Staff Team, 10:00 a.m., Youth Lounge Handbell Ensemble, 2:00 p.m., Sanctuary Outreach Committee, 5:00 p.m., Chapel
Jan 15	Salt & Light Newsletter deadline
Jan 16	2nd Sunday after Epiphany/MLK Jr Holiday Weekend, 10:30 a.m., Sanctuary Children's Church, 10:45 a.m., Fountain Courtyard & Memorial Hall Kinship Time, 11:30 a.m., Bell Tower Courtyard
Jan 17	Prayer Shawl Group, 10:00 a.m., Fireside Room
Jan 18	Grounds Team, 9:00 a.m., church campus Handbell Ensemble, 4:30 p.m., Sanctuary Board
Jan 19	Women's Bible Study, 9:30 a.m., Classroom 6 Staff Team, 10:00 a.m., Youth Lounge Handbell Ensemble, 2:00 p.m., Sanctuary Leadership Council, 6:30 p.m., Media Room
Jan 23	3rd Sunday after Epiphany, 10:30 a.m., Sanctuary Children's Church, 10:45 a.m., Fountain Courtyard & Memorial Hall Kinship Time, 11:30 a.m., Bell Tower Courtyard
Jan 25	Grounds Team, 9:00 a.m., church campus Handbell Ensemble, 4:30 p.m., Sanctuary
Jan 26	Women's Bible Study, 9:30 a.m., Classroom 6 Staff Team, 10:00 a.m., Youth Lounge Handbell Ensemble, 2:00 p.m., Sanctuary
Jan 27	Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 7:00 p.m., Choir Room
Jan 30	4th Sunday after Epiphany/Annual Meeting Sunday 10:30 a.m., Sanctuary New members join Children's Church, 10:45 a.m., Fountain Courtyard & Memorial Hall Kinship Time, 11:30 a.m., Bell Tower Courtyard

Suspended until further notice:

- Showers
- UkeStars

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