

SALT & LIGHT

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF SEBASTOPOL

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

DECEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

The Community Church
of Sebastopol
United Church of Christ
707.823.2484
www.uccseb.org
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Lead Minister
Rev. Dr. Benjamin J.
Broadbent

Associate Minister
Open

**Congregational
Administrator**
Joy Richards

Choral Director
Andy DelMonte

Keyboardist
J. Althea

Handbell Director
Karna Roa

Bookkeeper
Deanna Euritt

Custodian
Keith Brown

Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Gene Nelson



Transformative Solidarity

Dr. Rev. Benjamin J. Broadbent, Lead Minister

This year's Men's Retreat took place on a different continent. Crossing the San Andreas Fault, we gathered at St. Columba Retreat House in Inverness, a cozy and magical venue like something out of Harry Potter. And this year, in the wake of the recent national election, it truly felt like a retreat, almost as if the news hadn't yet reached the misty shores of that remote isthmus. I was happy to find my favorite room available, at the very top of the house, named after Saint Jean Vianney. On Saturday morning I woke up and looked out the window next to my bed and watched the sun rise in east over the Pacific Ocean. Impossible? Think Tomales Bay.

*"Made like Christ,
like Christ we rise."*
– Charles Wesley

Our retreat leader was the Vicar at St. Columba's, Rev. Vincent Pizzuto, who shared with us insights from his book, "Contemplating Christ: The Gospels and the Interior Life." From the first words of his first presentation, I knew this was going to be a banquet for my theological appetite. "The incarnation has made mystics of us all," he began. What could that mean? The incarnation is, of course, the astounding claim that God became flesh in the person of Jesus. Even more astounding is the related claim that, through Christ, God incarnates in every human. In this sense, we are all mystics, meaning all of us host the presence of God in our very bodies. As mystics, we live, move, and have our very being in and through and with God. We humans are God-soaked.



But that wasn't the most interesting thing Father Pizzuto served at the feast. Like a chef introducing a dish I'd heard of before, but never really tasted, he said, "Deification is the counterpart to Incarnation." Intellectually, I almost politely said, "No thanks," but fortunately I still had an appetite for something different. You see, as a Protestant in the Reformed tradition, I had heard of deification, or, in Greek, *theosis*, but I had largely dismissed it as an Eastern Orthodox belief that Protestants, for the most part, did not ascribe to, save Methodists' insistence on the possibility of sanctification, that is, maturing into holiness.

*"Let the same mind be in you
that was in Christ Jesus."*
– Philippians 2:5

DECEMBER 2024 WORSHIP

Advent & Christmas: “Transformative Solidarity”

Worship Details...

We worship in the sanctuary on Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Services are live streamed on [YouTube](#) & [Facebook](#)

Weekly bulletin and announcements available at www.uccseb.org

DECEMBER 1 – 1st Sunday in Advent: HOPE & the Promise of Truth

Today we light the first candle on our Advent wreath, the candle of “Hope.” The Chancel Choir sings, directed by Andy DelMonte, we celebrate Holy Communion, and guest preacher Rev. W. Matthew Broadbent, preaches a sermon on [Jeremiah 33:14–16](#) and [Luke 21:25–28](#) entitled, “In the Shadow of the Coming Apocalypse.”

DECEMBER 8 – 2nd Sunday in Advent: PEACE & the Promise of Compassion

We continue the season of Advent and light the second candle on our wreath, the candle of “Peace.” The Handbell Ensemble, directed by Kar-na Roa, provides worship music and Rev. Dr. Benjamin J. Broadbent, Lead Minister, preaches a sermon on [Luke 1:68–79](#) entitled, “Because of Tender Mercy.”



DECEMBER 15 – 3rd Sunday in Advent: JOY & the Promise of Restoration

Known traditionally as “Gaudete Sunday,” today we light the pink candle of “Joy.” The Chancel Choir provides worship music and Pastor Benjamin preaches a sermon on [Zephaniah 3:14–20](#) entitled, “God’s Being is Becoming.”

DECEMBER 22 – 4th Sunday in Advent: LOVE & the Promise of Justice

On this fourth and final Sunday in Advent, a Children’s Choir sings, and we light the candle of “Love.” Pastor Benjamin preaches a sermon on [Micah 5:2–5a](#), entitled, “A Many-Splendored Thing.”

DECEMBER 24 – Christmas Eve 4:30 – Family–Friendly Service with Pageant and 7:00 – Traditional Service with Choir, Handbells, and Sermon

DECEMBER 25 – Christmas Day

DECEMBER 29 – 1st Sunday after Christmas

Today we gather for a cozy and casual service to relight the candles on our Advent and Christmas wreath, sing more carols, including ones you may have missed on Christmas Eve, and hear the continuation of the Christmas story.

Coming in January... Epiphany, Baptism of Christ Sunday, Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend, Annual Meeting of the Congregation, New Members join

Transformative Solidarity...continued from page 1

Deification, as Pizzuto described it, is an ancient Christian idea that predates the cooption of Christianity by the Roman Emperor in 312 CE. If through Incarnation God empties divinity into humanity, through deification humanity partakes in and becomes divinity. This doesn't mean we become our own God, or that we replace Christ. It means, as Charles Wesley wrote, "Made like Christ, like Christ we rise," or, as Paul in Philippians writes, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." In other words, God didn't just visit the world for 33 years in Galilee 2000 years ago and say, "catch you on the flip side." No, much more radically, God become human so that humans could participate in the divine life, could partake of divine love, could embody Christ just as Jesus of Nazareth did.

This year's Advent worship theme, "Transformative Solidarity," will pick up on this interplay between Incarnation and Deification, between God's love made flesh in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ and, it's counterpart, God's love enfleshed in our living bodies. This is good and needed news as we enter a year, even four years, where we will need to remember that God is God and not a petty tyrant. And that God does not remain aloof but imbues all creation, and every human life with God's incarnate love. The transformation solidarity God enacts at Christmas is the same transformative solidarity we are called to enact in our very lives on behalf of all who do not know they are so loved, and so called.

*Image is "The Annunciation," (c.1437) a fresco by Fra Angelico in the Monastery of San Marco, Florence, Italy.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



December 1 Alina Peterson
December 3 Santiago Basso
December 3 Jen Bredeson
December 5 Deanna Euritt
December 6 Greg Nicholas
December 7 Alvin Hukins
December 10 Ginny Embry
December 11 Emilia Cassells
December 11 Jim Jenkins
December 13 Judy Bredeson
December 13 Elizabeth Thomas
December 14 Ruby Wood

December 15 Toni Cole
December 15 Daniela Kingwill
December 16 Craig Allender
December 16 Josephine Hole
December 19 Jack Dunlap
December 19 Chris Malone
December 19 Patty Raney
December 20 Dick Zimmer
December 24 Bruce Matson
December 24 Suzanne Albin
December 28 Mat Keller
December 28 Josie Malone

OWL WHOLE LIVES
SEXUALITY EDUCATION FOR OLDER ADULTS
Michael Ost and Lori Lapham

Michael Ost and I are excited to offer a 2025 workshop series titled “Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education for Older Adults”. That’s right -- OWL is not just for kids! We completed 19 hours of OWL facilitator training in September which prepares us to present a program around issues of sexuality in older adults. We care greatly for what this wonderful program provides and want to share it with our own beloved church community. Michael and I are both in the older adult 50+ category and work well together, so it is a good facilitator fit. You may think “what more can I learn about sexuality at my age?” Good question. Sexuality is a topic that evolves with time including gender identity/roles, sexual orientation, boundaries & consent, values & attitudes, the loss of an intimate partner, dating as an older adult, safe practices, dealing with health issues and more. Our workshop will incorporate the most up to date information and be fun & interactive with the participants. No lectures!

We plan to offer five Sunday workshops from January through May. They will be once a month from 11:20-1:20 with a 10 minute break midway for snacks and the restroom. We can take up to 14 participants and ask that you commit to all of the sessions so that we can build a safe space with each other. The first session on January 12 is especially important. If you can’t make that date then we ask that you do not sign up for this round. Sign-ups are available on Realm or in person.

The dates are as follows:

January 12 (required)
February 9
March 9
April 13
May 18

We hope you can join us!

With Blessings,

Lori Lapham and Michael Ost



PUTTING OUR FAITH INTO ACTION

Jenny Douglas and Judy Davison



We want to say a big thank you to the 10 members of our congregation who joined us on September 28 and October 12 to canvas in Santa Rosa with other volunteers of the North Bay Organizing Project's Deep Democracy Initiative. We canvassed in neighborhoods focused on low propensity voters, renters, people of color, young adults, low-income, and others who have not had access to political power.

Canvassers knocked on doors in pairs to share a voter guide, encourage people to vote, help them register, and learn what issues were important to them. Even when people were not home, we were able to leave a voter guide and other helpful information in both English and Spanish. Canvassers found the experience very rewarding, and one pair was even able to help a woman find resources to begin organizing tenants in her apartment building.

As we digest the results of the election and think about our local communities that could be most impacted, NBOP's work to build local leadership and grassroots power for social, economic, racial, and environmental justice will be needed now more than ever. With that in mind, we are establishing a Faith in Action Team (FIAT) to keep church members informed and engaged in the work of NBOP and help make decisions about how our church should be involved in NBOP's initiatives and task forces going forward.

This team will launch in early 2025 with an initial session facilitated by our NBOP organizer, **Karym Sanchez**. One of our main focus areas in 2025 will be the Issues Assembly, which takes place every two years around March to identify and prioritize the most urgent issues in our communities. These issues will become the task forces for the next two years. NBOP's current task forces are Immigrant Defense and Police Accountability.

If you are interested in joining the Faith in Action Team, please contact **Judy Davison** at (707) 486-7755 or jdavison95472@yahoo.com.



Four Ways to Pledge More to the Church and Pay Less Taxes:

Strategies to maximize charitable gifts while minimizing tax liabilities

Susan Olson

If you are writing a check from your personal bank account to the church for your pledge, you might want to rethink that for 2025. There are ways to give more tax efficiently and save up to 30% on taxes. That could even mean you can increase your pledge and lower your tax bill.

Here are four questions to ask yourself:

1. Are you 70 ½ or older *and have an IRA?*

If so, you can transfer funds directly from the IRA to the church if you are not actively receiving employer contributions, and give to a charity. This is called a **qualified charitable deduction (QCD)**. You won't pay income taxes on the amount you donate. Funds must go directly from the IRA to the charity (you can't receive the funds then send out to the charity), but your advisor or broker can help you with this. Some of our clients have a checkbook for their IRA account so they can write a check directly from the IRA to the charity. If you are over 73 and have a required minimum distribution (RMD), you can deduct the QCD gift amount from your taxable income. Just be sure to tell your CPA that you did a QCD because your 1099-R won't reflect the gift. Two ways to do it:

1. Contact your plan administrator or IRA custodian and provide them with the information they need to issue a check to the charity.
2. If you have a checkbook for your IRA account, you can write a check. Just be sure there is enough cash in the IRA to cover the check so it doesn't bounce!

Example:

	Take \$5,000 out of your IRA, pay taxes, then give it to church	Give \$5,000 DIRECTLY from IRA to the church
Intended gift	\$5,000	\$5,000
Income taxes on IRA withdrawal (20% fed, 10% CA)	\$1,500	\$0
Total donation to church	\$3,500	\$5,000

2. Do you have appreciated shares of stocks or mutual funds that are in a taxable (non-retirement) account? That means they are worth more than when you bought them. Two options to use them as your gift instead of writing a check:

1. You can donate the appreciated shares directly to the church. The church pays no capital gains on the shares when they sell them. You avoid capital gains tax on the appreciation AND receive a tax deduction for the fair market value. This works best if you itemize your deductions, but that is not necessary. Here is an example of a holding that you paid \$100 for and now it is worth \$10,000. Assuming a 15% capital gains tax rate plus an 9% CA income rate:

	Sell & donate proceeds	Donate directly to church
Current value of stock	\$10,000	\$10,000
Cap gains taxes owed (15% fed, 9% state)	\$2,376	\$0
Total donation to church	\$7,624	\$10,000

2. Same thing as above, but you can donate appreciated shares to a donor advised fund (DAF) and then can distribute the funds over time to the church and other charities. You get an immediate tax deduction in the year you put the shares into the DAF. Also, you can invest the DAF funds so they grow while they are waiting for you to give to your favorite charities.

How do you do these transfers? Ask **Greg Yaylian**, Treasurer, for the receiving bank information to provide to your advisor or to process yourself online, gyaylian@gmail.com. They will provide the bank information to receive the donation. It probably works best to do the donation as an annual lump sum to make it simpler for you and for the church.

3. Does your employer offer a matching gift for charitable contributions?

Ask them! Free money for the church. Many employers match charitable contributions up to a certain amount. <https://doublethedonation.com/matching-gift-search/>

4. Will you have a large capital gain or income event this year?

You can donate several years worth of giving to a donor advised fund (DAF) this year to offset the higher income, then give the funds in the DAF to charity over a number of years. You get the entire deduction in the year you put it in the DAF, so if you put \$30,000 in the DAF, you get that deduction this year, and can dole it out at your own pace to charities in coming years.

Church member and financial advisor **Susan Olson** is happy to help with questions about these strategies and how they might apply to you. It is confidential and she's happy to help you figure out the best way to donate for your circumstances. Call or email **Susan** at (707) 322-1312 or susaneolson1@gmail.com.



Congrats Confirmation Class of 2024

Pictures by Stuart Mitchell





December 2024 Events At Community Church

December 1

First Sunday of Advent: Hope, Worship Service, 10 am, Sanctuary
Kinship Time, 11 am, Bell Tower Courtyard
All Ages Advent Workshop, 11:15 am, Fellowship Hall

December 2

Prayer Shawl Group, 10 am, Fireside Room

December 3

Grounds Team, 9 am, Church Campus
Shower Program, 9 am, Memorial Hall
Handbell Ensemble, 4 pm, Sanctuary
Men's Discussion Group, 6 pm, Fireside Room

December 4

Staff Team, 10 am, Fireside Room
Women's Bible Study, 10 am, Room 6

December 5

Meditation Group, Noon, Room 6
Women's Fellowship Card Writing, 2 pm, WF Room
Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 6:30 pm, Choir Room

December 8

Second Sunday of Advent: Faith, Worship Service, 10 am, Sanctuary
Kinship Time, 11 am, Bell Tower Courtyard
Faith Formation, 11:15 am, Various Location

December 10

Grounds Team, 9 am, Campus
Shower Program, 9 am, Memorial Hall
Facilities Committee, 10 am, Fireside Room
Personnel Committee, 4 pm, Fireside Room
Handbell Ensemble, 4 pm, Sanctuary
Lead Minister PPRT, 5 pm, Fireside Room
Outreach Committee, 7 pm, Fireside Room

December 11

Staff Team, 10 am, Fireside Room
Women's Bible Study, 10 am, Room 6

December 12

Meditation Group, Noon, Room 6
Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 6:30 pm, Choir Room

December 14

Second Saturday Luncheon, Noon, Fellowship Hall
Women's Discussion Group, 2 pm, Fireside Room
Youth Group Christmas Party, 4 pm, Youth Lounge

December 15

January Salt & Light Newsletter Deadline
Third Sunday of Advent: Joy, Worship Service, 10 am, Sanctuary
Kinship Time, 11am, Bell Tower Courtyard
Faith Formation, 11:15 am, Various Locations

December 16

Prayer Shawl Group, 10 am, Fireside Room

November 2024 Events at Community Church cont.

December 17	Grounds Team, 9 am, Church Campus Shower Program, 9 am, Memorial Hall Finance Committee, 3 pm, Fireside Room
December 18	Staff Meeting, 10 am, Fireside Room Women's Bible Study, 10 am, Room 6 LC Capital Campaign Discussion, 5:30 pm, Media Room Leadership Council, 6:30 pm, Media Room
December 19	Meditation Group, 12 pm, Room 6 Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 6:30 pm, Choir Room
December 22	Fourth Sunday of Advent: Joy Worship Service, 10am, Sanctuary Kinship Time, 11am, Bell Tower Courtyard Faith Formation, 11:15 am, Various Locations
December 24	Christmas Eve , Worship Service 4:30 pm – Family–Friendly Service with Pageant 7:00 pm – Traditional Service with Choir, Handbells, and Sermon
December 25	CHRISTMAS DAY
December 26	Meditation Group, Noon, Room 6 Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 6:30 pm, Choir Room
December 29	First Sunday After Christmas , Worship Service, 10am, Sanctuary Kinship Time, 11am, Bell Tower Courtyard



GRAINS OF SALT



SPECS OF LIGHT



WOMEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP for December at **Bobbie Johanson's** (765 Pinecrest Ave) Dec 14, 2 p.m. Cookies served and memories shared. Bring a favorite ornament to show or share your favorite Christmas Carol.

HOLIDAY GIFT BAG MINISTRY for Mission and Outreach yearly ministry to over 150 recipients at the Sam Jones shelter in Santa Rosa. We need your help in bag donations. If you could look for bags the size of a grocery bag 15”H x 13”L x 5”W, purchase as many as you are able and donate to the supply we need. A donation box is located in the church entry. Contact **Joyce Cox** at 829-0750.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP CARE CARD MINISTRY will meet on Thurs., Dec 5, at 2 p.m., in the Women's Fellowship Office.

FRESH WREATHS AND SEE'S CANDY will be sold by the Women's Retreat Committee during Advent. Wreaths are available Sun., Dec. 1 & 8, in the Bell Tower Courtyard during Kinship Time for \$25 each. A variety of See's Candy gift boxes are available Dec. 8 and 15. Buy early for the best selection.

POINSETTIA DEDICATIONS - Donate a poinsettia that will grace the altar for Christmas. Multiple dedications can be made. Just return the form included in your bulletin starting Dec., 1. The cost is \$15 per poinsettia.





I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

*I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.*

*I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along th'unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.*

*And in despair I bowed my head:
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men."*

*Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men.*

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807—1882

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