Community Church of Sebastopol
United Church of Christ
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Keyboardist
Tim Imbach

Handbell Director
Karna Roa

Custodian
Paul Louden

Pastor Emeritus
Rev. Gene Nelson

SALT & LIGHT

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF SEBASTOPOL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
NOVEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER

Thoughts at the End of the Year

Rev. Dr. Benjamin J. Broadbent, Lead Minister

No, not the end of 2026. The end of the Christian liturgical calendar on November 22, Reign of Christ Sunday. The year begins anew the following week on the first Sunday in Advent. I was talking the other day with someone who had never heard of Advent, the four-week period of preparation for the feast of Christmas. They did not know that Christians have a way of marking time that is different from picking chocolates out of a plastic calendar counting the days from December 1st to 25th. They did not know about the major Christian themes attached to each Sunday – Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. When I let them know about this ancient practice, they were ecstatic – a new way to make Christmas, and the entire year, mean something beautiful.



As this liturgical year draws to an end, I want to reflect on 3 important things happening in our life as a congregation: Confirmation, Hymnals, and Money.

- **Confirmation** – This fall, eleven 8th and 9th graders have participated our Confirmation Program that happens every other year. I mentioned in a recent sermon that this might be my favorite Confirmation Class in 27 years of ministry (that's 13 classes!) I realize I may be captive to the moment – believe it or not I dubbed one cohort "the worst confirmation class" – but I feel genuine energy and enthusiasm from this group of young people. We can be proud to have these youth as part of our congregation and to be providing this kind of formative program for them. I'm grateful to **Tirza Dawn, Kelly Allen, and Reena Burton** for sharing the leadership with me. On November 22, we will bless and affirm all 11 participants, welcoming into active membership those who wish to confirm their baptism.
- **Hymnals** – Starting on November 29, we will begin using The New Century Hymnal in our worship. Over the past several years, we have been acquiring enough copies of the hymnal to replace our current Chalice Hymnal, which has served us well for over 30 years. When it was first published in 1995, the New Century Hymnal was the only hymnal released by a Christian church that honors in equal measure both male and female images of God. It combines contemporary language and traditional theology. One critique of the New Century

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Thoughts at the End of the Year Continued from Page 1

is that its versions of Christmas carols awkwardly diverge from the familiar words. To that I would say two things: It's okay to try new things, and we don't use the hymnal on Christmas Eve, so I think it will work out. I'm excited for us to work with this new hymnal, and I think church members will appreciate its fresh perspective.

- **Money** – As I write this, we are nearing the end of our Annual Campaign to support the 2027 Local Ministry and Wider Mission of this congregation. At a time when the economy is uncertain, church members and friends are committing resources to Community Church where their values are carried forward. People are finding vital community and spiritual sustenance here. As we share our money so the church may thrive, we are ensuring that what we care about most will weather the economic and political storms ahead. Come what may, with gratitude and generosity, we are flourishing forward.

Honor a Loved One or Special Event



Our Flower Team can create an arrangement which you can dedicate to a person or an event.
Here's how it works:

- Using the chart in the church narthex, sign your name on an available date.
- Give to the church office, or put in the offering plate, a check for $50-$75 payable to "Community Church" with "Chancel Flowers" in the memo line.
- 1-2 weeks prior to the date you selected, the church office will contact you for dedication information and a member of the Flower Team will contact you about the arrangement itself.
- Following the Sunday service, you may either take the arrangement home or request that it be delivered to a homebound member.

For more information, contact Kathy Matthies at kathleenmatthies57@gmail.com or 707.758.3970.

If you love to arrange flowers, (expertise is not a requirement), just the love of flowers and how they make worship beautiful. The commitment would be about 4-5 Sundays throughout the year. If you can help and share your love of flowers, please contact Kathy Matthies at kathleenmatthies57@gmail.com or 707.758.3970. The Flower Team awaits you.

NOVEMBER 2026 WORSHIP
REIGN OF CHRIST SUNDAY AND ADVENT BEGINS

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

NOVEMBER 1 – All Saints/Souls Sunday

This morning, we gather for multi-generational worship and celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion with an altar decorated with portraits of those we have loved and lost. We commission the Disaster Recovery Trip participants and the Chancel Choir, directed by Andy DelMonte, sings a version of "For All the Saints." **Abigail McGinnis and Alena Basso** provide a liturgical dance and **Rev. Benjamin J. Broadbent,** Lead Minister, preaches a sermon for all ages on Matthew 23:1–12 entitled, "They Came to Serve."

NOVEMBER 8 – Gratitude Sunday

Today we conclude our annual pledge drive, "Flourishing Forward," giving thanks to God for resources shared to support the 2027 local ministry and wider mission of our church. Our Handbell Ensemble, directed by **Karna Roa**, shares music and **Pastor Benjamin** preaches a sermon on Matthew 25:1–13 entitled, "Kept in the Dark."

NOVEMBER 15 – 25th Sunday after Pentecost

Today the Chancel Choir sings and **Pastor Benjamin** preaches a sermon on Matthew 25:14–30 entitled, "Harsh Words, Honest Hope."



NOVEMBER 22 – Reign of Christ /Confirmation Sunday

Today we gather on the last Sunday of the Christian liturgical year to bless 11 participants in this year's Confirmation program. All Things New provides worship music and Pastor Benjamin preaches a sermon on Matthew 25:31–46 entitled, "Don't Be the G.O.A.T."

NOVEMBER 29 – First Sunday of Advent: HOPE

Today we begin the season of Advent with a contemplative service featuring music from the Taizé Community in France. We light the first candle on our Advent wreath, the candle of Hope, and **Pastor Benjamin** preaches a sermon on Mark 13:24–37 entitled, "Refusing to Pretend."

Coming in December… Season of Advent, Advent Children's Choir, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, 12 Days of Christmas, Christmas Fund Special Offering of the United Church of Christ

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS



NOVEMBER 3
Gladys Chappell
Bob Amiral

NOVEMBER 5
Quinn Curtis

NOVEMBER 6
Marylou Hillberg
Julie Seth

NOVEMBER 8
Chris Berndt
Lorenda Mathis
Greanna Holiman

NOVEMBER 9
Sophia Berndt

NOVEMBER 10
Jim Davis
Julie Hodge
William Hickox

NOVEMBER 12
Pat Furber
Kristen DelMonte
Benjamin Broadbent
Harry Sims
Matt Witteman

NOVEMBER 13
Debbie McCallum
Warren Brisbin
Helen Olson
Raymond Dougherty

NOVEMBER 14
Tom Terry

NOVEMBER 15
Dale Phillips
Patricia Huffman
Poppy Wright

NOVEMBER 17
Marilyn Foster
Iris Wright
Ann Keller

NOVEMBER 20
Noe Margulis
Anna Citrino

NOVEMBER 22
Scott Amberg-Aguayo

NOVEMBER 25
Karna Roa

NOVEMBER 26
Norm Stupfel

NOVEMBER 27
Lesley Bagley
Emily Bell

NOVEMBER 28
Barbara Whitson
Loren Jacobs

NOVEMBER 29
Stuart Mitchell

NOVEMBER 30
Dee Schilling

What is a Digital Ministry and Visitation Intern?

Ross Pimentel

Many of you know that I have just started my second year as a Master of Divinity student at Pacific School of Religion. This is an exciting year in the program because we get to start putting everything from our first year into practice through some form of field education. I feel extremely blessed that I was not only able to serve an internship at my home congregation here at the Community Church, but also warmly invited to do so. I am even more blessed to have been given the opportunity to explore areas of ministry I feel called to, which don't necessarily have a noticeable presence at the Community Church.



I have been asked by a few, "What is a digital ministry and a visitation intern?" And honestly, some days I ask myself the same thing! So, let's break it down together of what this role might look like here. Let's start with the easier part: Visitation Intern.

One of my main drives in ministry is working with people. Pastoral and Spiritual care is an emphasis of the ministry I feel called to provide. Community Church already has many people working to provide this type of care, but it can always use more. As part of my internship, I have the opportunity to expand beyond the walls of our church by conducting home visits with members who may not have the capacity to attend church as they used to. It's an opportunity to remind everyone that no matter what happens, they are still a valued part of our community. Now the bigger question: What is Digital Ministry?

At its most basic level, digital ministry is any ministry offered through electronic means. This might include our social media pages, livestreamed worship services, online Bible studies, or even pastoral visits over Zoom. The possibilities for digital ministry are limited only by our imagination and our willingness to explore them. I think the most important thing to remember is that digital ministry is just that: ministry.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, churches have been challenged and invited to reconsider how we provide ministry, where it takes place, and whom it can reach. Community Church is no exception Digital ministry invites us to think beyond the physical walls of our sanctuary and consider how we might continue building meaningful relationships, nurturing faith, and creating opportunities for belonging wherever people may be.

The two central questions I am exploring through this internship are: "How are we already participating in digital ministry?" and "Where can we, and where do we want to, grow in our digital ministry?" But this isn't a solo mission. This is a collaborative effort!

In the coming weeks, I will begin gathering a team of people interested in exploring these questions together. Through a series of conversations and workshops using a process called *Design Thinking*, we

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What is a Digital Ministry and Visitation Intern continued from Page 5

will listen, imagine, experiment, and consider what the next chapter of digital ministry might look like at Community Church. My hope is not simply to introduce modern technology, but to explore how technology might help us deepen relationships, expand accessibility, and strengthen the community we already cherish.

Alongside these responsibilities, I am also grateful for opportunities to become more involved in our Sunday worship services and to learn more about worship practices, rituals, and congregational leadership. One of the most exciting parts of pursuing a theological education is discovering just how many creative and meaningful ways there are to practice ministry and share in the life of the church

Ultimately, whether I am sitting with someone in their living room, participating in worship on Sunday morning, or exploring new ways to connect online, I see these experiences as part of the same calling: finding ways to meet people where they are and reminding them that they belong.

Keep an eye out for an invitation to our upcoming Digital Ministry Workshop! In the meantime, please come and say hello after church. I would love to hear your thoughts about the future of our community, answer questions about my internship, or simply share a little of our journeys with one another.
I look forward to discovering what we can imagine and create together!

45TH ANNUAL WOMEN'S RETREAT
JANUARY 15-18, 2027

SAVE THE DATE - JANUARY 15-18. 2027
The 45TH Annual Women's Retreat
" Spring Cleaning for the Soul"
Making room,
Letting go
Opening to new Life
Led by our own Dynamic Duo the Rev. Bethany Nelson and Heather Manchester
Walker Creek Ranch on the Marshall-Petaluma Rd.

Registration will open later this month.

When the Veil Grows Thin: Honoring Our Ancestors and Reflecting on Death

Tirza Dawn



November invites us into a season of remembrance. As the days grow shorter and the natural world turns toward winter, many cultures make space to honor those who have died and reflect on the mystery of what lies beyond this life. In some spiritual traditions, this is described as a time when the veil between living and the dead grows thin. From the ancient Celtic observance of Samhain to the Mexican celebration of *Día de los Muertos*, people across the world have developed beautiful ways to remember their ancestors, share stories, prepare offerings, and celebrate the lives of those who came before us.

One of my favorite holidays is *Día de los Muertos*, or Day of the Dead, celebrated on November 1 and 2. Rooted in Indigenous Mesoamerican traditions and intertwined with Catholic observances, it invites us to remember our departed loved ones with photographs, flowers, food, music, and colorful altars called *ofrendas*. Rather than turning away from death, this tradition makes room for grief and joy together, reminding us that the people we have loved continue to shape who we are. We stand on the shoulders of our ancestors, carrying their stories, their struggles, their gifts, and their unfinished hopes into the future.

Although Christian communities differ in how they observe this season, Christianity has its own traditions of remembrance. All Saints' Day on November 1 honors the saints, while All Souls' Day on November 2 is traditionally devoted to remembering the faithful departed. We at Community Church of Sebastopol will be having our yearly traditional ancestor's altar on the chancel mantle and this year we have a special liturgical dance offering by **Abigail McGinnis** and **Alena Basso** to commemorate our ancestors.

I'm always interested in interfaith perspectives and right now I'm curious about some of the major faiths in our world in regard to these practices and perspectives. Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam offer distinct understandings of death and what may follow. Many Christian traditions look toward resurrection, eternal life with God, and the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ. In Buddhism, death is understood within the larger cycle of *samsara*—birth, death, and rebirth—until awakening and liberation, known as *nirvana*, bring an end to that cycle. In Islam, death is followed by an intermediate state, and believers look toward resurrection and the final judgment of God, with the hope of entering *Jannah*, or Paradise. These traditions differ in profound ways, yet each invites us to consider how we live, what gives our lives meaning, and how we relate to the mystery of our mortality.

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When the Veil Grows Thin: Honoring Our Ancestors and Reflecting on Death

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This November, our Faith Formation Hour will offer three sessions exploring the sensitive and deeply human subject of death and dying. Inspired by congregation member Douglas Freeman, the series will be led by **Freeman, Pastor Benjamin, and Maria Culberson**, who brings training in hospice care and experience with the practical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the dying process. In addition, keep an eye out for a new "Grief Group," coming to our congregation soon.

We are blessed to have a community where we can make space for these conversations, share our experiences, and learn from one another. Whether we approach death through faith, uncertainty, grief, or wonder, we all encounter its presence in our lives. May this season help us remember those who have gone before us, care for those who are grieving, and live with greater tenderness, courage, and gratitude for the time we have together.

DEDICATE A POINSETTIA FOR CHRISTMAS



For many years now our church has asked members of the congregation to donate to a poinsettia that will grace the altar for Christmas. It is a way to dedicate to someone whom we have lost or to someone to be honored. Multiple dedications can be made per plant. Dedications will be printed in the service bulletin on Christmas Eve.

We are asking for a donation of $15.00 for the cost of the poinsettia. The donation form is located in the church narthex on Sunday or visit the church office during the week Submit it with your $15 cash or a check made payable to "Community Church of Sebastopol," by Sunday, December 13.

NOVEMBER 2026 Events at Community Church

NOVEMBER 1 **ALL SAINTS/SOULS SUNDAY**
Worship Service, 10 am, Sanctuary
Kinship Time, 11:15 am, Bell Tower Courtyard
Church Chat, 11:15 am, ChapeL
Confirmation Class, 5 pm, Youth Lounge

NOVEMBER 2 Prayer Shawls, 10 am, Fireside Room

NOVEMBER 3 Grounds Team, 9 am, Church Campus
Shower Program, 9 am, Memorial Hall
Handbell Ensemble, 4 pm, Sanctuary
Spiritual Exploration Group, 5 pm, Zoom
Men's Discussion Group, 6 pm, Fireside Room

NOVEMBER 5 Meditation Group, 12 pm, Room 6
Women's Fellowship Card Writing, 2 pm, WF Room
Chancel Choir, 6:30 pm, Choir Room

NOVEMBER 8 **GRATITUDE SUNDAY**
Worship Service, 10 am, Sanctuary
Wondering Circle, 10:15 am, Room 5
Kinship Time, 11 am, Bell Tower Courtyard
Church Chat, 11:15 am, Chapel
Confirmation Class, 5 pm, Youth Lounge

NOVEMBER 10 Grounds Team, 9 am, Church Campus
Shower Program, 9 am, Memorial HaLL
Handbell Ensemble, 4 pm, Sanctuary
Pastor Parish Relations, 5 pm, Fireside Room
Spiritual Exploration Group, 5 pm, Zoom
Facilities Committee, 6 pm, Media Room
Outreach Committee, 7 pm, Fireside Room

NOVEMBER 11 **VETERAN'S DAY - OFFICE CLOSED**

NOVEMBER 12 Meditation Group, Noon, Room 6
Chancel Choir, 6:30 pm, Music Room
Standing Together Event, 7 pm, Sanctuary

NOVEMBER 14 Second Saturday Lunch, 11:30 am, Fellowship Hall

NOVEMBER 15 **SALT & LIGHT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**
25TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
Worship Service, 10 am, Sanctuary
Wondering Circle, 10:15 am, Room 5
Kinship Time, 11:15 am, Bell Tower Courtyard
Church Chat, 11:15 am, Chapel
Intergenerational Gym, 11:15, MH Gym
Confirmation Class, 5:00 pm, Youth Lounge

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NOVEMBER 2026 Events at Community Church continued

NOVEMBER 16
Prayer Shawls, 10 am, Fireside Room
Health & Safety Team, 3:30 pm, Fireside Room

NOVEMBER 17
Grounds Team, 9 am, Church Campus
Shower Program, 9 am, Memorial Hall
Finance Committee, 3:30 pm, Fireside Room
Handbell Ensemble, 4 pm, Sanctuary
Spiritual Exploration Group, 5 pm, Zoom
Intercessory Prayer Group, 5 pm, Room 6
Faith In Action Team, 5:30 pm, Fireside Room

NOVEMBER 18
Leadership Council, 6 pm, Media Room

NOVEMBER 19
Meditation Group, 12 pm, Room 6
Chancel Choir, 6:30 pm, Choir Room

NOVEMBER 22 **REIGN OF CHRIST/CONFIRMATION SUNDAY**
Worship Service, 10 am, Sanctuary
Wondering Circle, 10:15, Room 6
Kinship Time, 11:15 am, Bell Tower Courtyard
Church Chat, 11:15 am, ChapeL
Confirmation Class, 5 pm, Youth Lounge

NOVEMBER 24
Grounds Team, 9 am, Church Campus
Shower Program, 9 am, Memorial Hall
Handbell Ensemble, 4 pm, Sanctuary
Spiritual Exploration Group, 5 pm, Zoom

NOVEMBER 26 **OFFICE CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING**
Thanksgiving Dinner, 12 pm, Fellowship Hall

NOVEMBER 27 **OFFICE CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING**

NOVEMBER 29 **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: HOPE**
Worship Service, 10 am, Sanctuary
Wondering Circle, 10:15, Room 6
Kinship Time, 11:15 am, Bell Tower Courtyard
Church Chat, 11:15 am, ChapeL
Dennis Olson Memorial Service & Reception, 2 pm, Sanctuary

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SALT & LIGHT

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