



JUNE 2026 VOLUME 24 ISSUE 6

THE NUGGET

Annual Congregational Meeting *Sunday, June 28*

We will hold our annual congregational meeting following worship on June 28. This is an important meeting, as we choose our new officers and committee chairs, as well as receiving annual reports from all of the committees and teams that contribute so faithfully to the ministry of our church. Many essential matters are discussed and voted on at this meeting, so please plan on attending!



*Whoever you are,
Wherever you are on
life's journey,
You are welcome here.*

WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

**Join us as we stand for
justice, peace and
democracy each
Sunday from 3 - 4 pm
at the stoplight in
Murphys.**

*We are in the season of
Pentecost and the color
is green.*



Interim Thoughts



Beloved,

Those familiar with his writings know that Richard Rohr is a treasure, one of God's choice gifts to the church for these challenging times.

Richard is a Franciscan priest who for many years has shared his writings with the wider world, in founding the Center for Action and Contemplation.

You can sign up to receive inspiring emails sent to your inbox every morning, completely free! Simply go to this website to learn more: <https://cac.org/about/about-the-center-for-action-and-contemplation/>

Here (below) is the message from Richard Rohr for May 18. May it bless you on your journey of faith.

In this issue of the Nugget you will also find some reflections by our UCC friend Tony Robinson on Pope Leo's important encyclical on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the dignity of work, as well as the Poet's Corner. I hope you'll read this issue of the Nugget and share your thoughts.

Gary

For Father Richard, true prayer begins with a positive "yes," a surrender to God and Reality:

When I entered the Franciscan seminary in 1961, part of our training was learning to avoid, resist, and oppose all distractions. It was such poor teaching, but it was the only way we thought back then. It was all about willpower: celibacy through willpower, poverty through willpower, community through willpower. But willpower isn't what we need—or it's not all that we need! We need the power to surrender the will, to face, and even to trust what is. Now, that's heroic! Anything less is a fruitless and futile effort, because if we start with negative energy, a "don't," we won't get very far (see Romans 7:7–11). That was the extent of the teaching I received, and it was really no teaching at all—just "Don't!" When we hear that, the ego immediately pushes back. Some days we have strong willpower and we succeed, but most days we barely succeed. [1]

We know the old shibboleth, "Don't think of an elephant." If we try not to, that dang elephant invariably sneaks back into our minds! Just wait. To actively oppose something actually engages with it and gives it energy. That's why so many spiritual teachers say, "What you resist persists."

Our first energy has to be "yes" energy, an acceptance of what is. From there we can move, build, and proceed, even if in opposition. We must choose the positive, which is to choose love, and rest there for a minimum of fifteen conscious seconds. It takes that long for positivity to imprint in the neurons, I'm told. [2]

Father Richard advises "neither clinging nor opposing" when it comes to facing distractions in contemplative prayer:

If I had told my novice master I wasn't going to fight my distractions, he would have said, "So you're going to entertain lustful or hateful thoughts?" But that would have missed the major point. The real learning curve happens when we can admit we're having a thought or feeling and recognize that it's empty, passing, and part of a fantasy that has no final reality except as a source of information.

We must listen honestly to ourselves. We must listen to whatever thought or feeling arises long enough to ask, "Why am I thinking this? What is this thought revealing in or about me? Why am I willing to entertain this negative, accusatory, or lustful thought?"

We don't have to hate or condemn ourselves for a thought or feeling, but we do have to let it yield its wisdom. Then we will realize it is a wounded or needy part of us that creates these unhealthy thoughts. Our true self, our whole self, doesn't need them, and will not identify with them.

If we can allow our thoughts and feelings to pass through us, neither clinging to them nor opposing them—and without ever expecting perfect success—I promise that we will come to a deeper, wider, and wiser place. Even our inability to fully succeed is, in itself, another wonderful lesson. [3]

References:

[1] Adapted from Richard Rohr, Morning Sit, June 12, 2023. Unpublished meditation.

[2] Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Just This* (CAC Publishing, 2017), 43, 44.

Vice-Moderator's Musings

It's hard to imagine, but we are approaching the one year mark that our church has been in transition. What a time it has been! We have certainly been blessed with Pastor Gary, and will celebrate his one year anniversary with us at the beginning of July. Most amazing to me were the church conversations that we had during the five weeks prior to Pentecost. So many of us were able to be part of those conversations, discussing the future of our congregation and our mission! And the atmosphere was absolutely electric! I am sorry that some of you were not able to participate. But we will be moving forward!

If you are able to be at church, you can review the summaries of each week's discussion, and some of the directions that our varying discussions took us. They are posted on the Pastor Search bulletin board. One thing is certain; we are not finished with this process. Together, we have identified three areas as priorities within our church:

- a) caring for the aging among us;
- b) improving our communication internally and externally;
- c) growing a strong youth and family program.

In addition, we have identified needs that we see in our communities that are important to us. These include places for teens to gather, transportation issues, food insecurity, and a comprehensive listing of services and resources. In short, we seek to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our communities.

So, what's next? The ACT would like to propose that we continue having conversations after church, perhaps once a month. We will begin addressing some of the ideas and actions that emerged from the conversations at the Annual Congregational Meeting on June 28th. We feel very certain that the Spirit is moving among us, and we want to be sure that all of us are aware and invited to participate. Stay tuned!

Submitted by Barbara Olivier



NCNC UCC PRESENTS 2026

CAMP TAM

- JR HIGH CAMP GRADES 7-9** (JULY 12-18)
- SR HIGH CAMP GRADES 9-12** (JULY 19-25)
- JUNIOR CAMP GRADES 4-6** (JULY 26 TO AUGUST 1)
- COUNSELOR-IN-TRAINING CAMP AGES 16-18** (JULY 26 TO AUG 1)

The graphic features a dark blue background with various outdoor icons like a sun, trees, a tent, a campfire, and a hammock. The text is in white and yellow, with dates in small white boxes.

SUMMER 2026 DIRECTORY UPDATE

The Summer 2026 directory will be available after the congregational meeting in June. If there are any updates to your contact information or photo, please contact the church office as soon as possible.

Tuning in With Our Music Director



Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee!

The bell ringers took us out on a sparkling high note with the postlude on Pentecost Sunday, accompanied by YOU joyfully singing! The words of "The Hymn of Joy" that we sang were written in 1907 by Henry van Dyke (American author, educator, diplomat, and Presbyterian clergyman) and set to the music of the final movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (1824), that includes a choral setting of Friedrich Schiller's poem "Ode to Joy," written in 1785. Joy is an enduring emotion! (Fun fact: Henry van Dyke officiated at Mark Twain's funeral at

Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City, in 1910.) For the "Joyful, Joyful" lyric in the bulletin I used the original "thee," rather than "you" that is used in the New Century Hymnal. There is lots of history around thee, thou, and thy. Many find it archaic (it is) or even stuffy or stilted. I have personal history that makes me love those words. When I was growing up, Pat Brooks, my mother's friend, used "thee" and "thy" when speaking to me. I asked my mother why, and her explanation was that Pat - a Quaker - felt close to me, and using those words expressed that closeness. I am sure that plays a large part in my experience of that language as poetic. I find that it gives me a sense of intimacy with the spirit that lives in all creation.

Bonnie and Daryl Hollinger will be joining the choir to sing Richard Smallwood's "Total Praise" on July 5. See the rehearsal schedule below if you would like to join in the singing!

Musical Sanctuary June 17, 5:30 pm The topic of the upcoming Musical Sanctuary is "Thy Name." Using Neil Douglas-Klotz's interpretation from the Aramaic published in "Prayers of the Cosmos," we will explore the first couple of lines of the Lord's Prayer. Neil has a Ph.D. in religious studies in comparative ancient Semitic language hermeneutics and an M.A. in somatic psychology. For eight years he served as co-chair of the Mysticism Group of the American Academy of Religion. His mysticism radiates from the page in his poetic riffs on the Lord's Prayer, and the "Body Prayers" he describes.

All blessings,

Kate

VOCAL CHOIR REHEARSALS

Saturday, June 6

10:00 a.m.

Sunday, June 7

9:00 a.m.

Sunday, June 14

9:00 a.m.

Sunday, June 28

9:10 a.m.

MUSICAL
Sanctuary
Thy Name

Music and Guided Meditation
with Kate Moody

Wednesday, June 17, 5:30 pm
Open Door UCC
509 Algiers St.
Murphys *by donation*

Christian Education Recap

June is going to be a busy month for the Christian Enrichment team. We have a full schedule and we are planning away! Here are a few highlights:

***Sunday School** students have been asked to paint and decorate rocks for the Prayer Garden behind the Fisk house.

***Camp Tamarack** hosts Sr. High July 12-18

Jr . .High July 19-25

Junior camp and CIT training July 26-August 1

Camp Tam is part of the Outdoor Ministry program through NCNC UCC Conference. Located near Shaver Lake, east of Fresno, it sits about 7000' and is beautiful, rustic camp. Our church has been a loyal supporter of this program for many years by sending campers, counselors and nursing staff. I am excited that this year we will be well represented again.

* **VBS runs July 27-31** "Kids Connect" is our theme and its going to be a wonderful change fir our adults to connect with our students and community. We'll have games, music, crafts, Bible stories, skits and snacks. Each student and helper will get a t-shirt with out new logo. Also, look for the new banners advertising VBS around town. We welcome you to join us in this fun ministry. Invite your grandkids and neighbors as we connect to God's love for us and this world

***Open Door book Club** We'll meet once a week for four weeks for 1 hour, book to be determined. We'll explore how the characters of contemporary novels express and connect with faith, family and community. Please join us.

Evelyn



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR CHILDCARE ASSISTANT, ABBY FUQUA, WHO GRADUATED FROM BRET HARTE HIGH SCHOOL ON MAY 29, 2026. SHE WILL BE ATTENDING COLUMBIA COLLEGE IN THE FALL AND WILL CONTINUE WORKING IN OPEN DOOR'S SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM.



Treasurer's Report

Our name change is finalized with all of our investment accounts and the bank. Please make sure that you contact your bank if you have any automatic payments. We are working on changing our bank to one that has automatic deposit to make it easier for our staff. Monthly giving continues to be good and on target for the year. Thanks again for your generous financial support. Patty



From Our Hospitality Team

Thank you to all of you who have been so kind and generous bringing food for coffee hour! In order to provide more predictability, the hospitality team is going to do better about having a sign up sheet available on the counter. Four or five items are needed each Sunday. Quantity doesn't need to be large. Suggestions include fruit, cookies, muffins, egg dishes, cake, breads, cheese, crackers, donuts, really anything you would like to eat that time of day. As a trial this summer we would like folks with last names beginning with A through D to consider June their month to provide items; E through M will have July, and N through Z August. Thanks in advance, the Hospitality team.



Love to knit? Open Door ministry group, the Knitters and Hookers meet monthly to create prayer shawls for those who are struggling and are in need of loving comfort. The shawls are blessed by Pastor Gary and given away. If you would like to join, please contact Liz Tussey. You can also knit shawls on your own and bring them to church.



**\$40 8' X 12'
BOOTH SPACE!**



**PEDDLER'S FAIRE. JUNE 19 & 20, 9AM - 4PM
CORNER OF CHURCH AND ALGIERS ST., MURPHYS
ONE BLOCK FROM MURPHYS HOTEL
OPEN DOOR UCC PARKING LOT**

**WANT TO DECLUTTER ? DOWNSIZE? NOW IS YOUR CHANCE!
GATHER YOUR TREASURES AND BRING THEM TO CHURCH FOR OUR SALE.
PLEASE BRING CLEAN AND GENTLY USED ITEMS INCLUDING; SPORTS
EQUIPMENT, TOOLS, FURNITURE, AND CLOTHES. THIS SALE IS OPEN TO
COLLECTORS, DEALERS, CRAFTERS AND FAMILIES WHO WANT TO SELL
HOUSEHOLD ITEMS & TOOLS.**

MORE INFORMATION: 209/753-7616 OR 209/728-3141



**The California Department of
Public Health, in partnership with
the Resource Connection will be
distributing WIC resources on
Thursday, June 11 in the Open Door
UCC Social Hall from 9am - 4pm.**

Poet's Corner

This month's featured poem is delightful, with a twinge of nostalgia.

Sending this out with love to all our Open Door teachers and former teachers!

Pastor Gary

Smart Pencils

by Ron Lauderbach

I keep hundreds of pencils I picked up
off the ground during my teaching career
in a PF Flyer shoebox, under my bed.
They wait for a colorful slip-on eraser
I attach when I bring one back to life.

My found pencils are not rookies from
a yellow Ticonderoga box, but
seasoned veterans, bearing bite-marks
and other scars—proof of lives lived.
Many are surprised by my electric

sharpener, a device that did not exist
when they were dropped. Some have art class
paint on them and others grease from auto-shop.
I have one that says Oscar loves written on
its roundness, but the name of Oscar's lover

has been sharpened away. I like to write
with my found pencils. I believe they
impart wisdom from their past lives. A lot
of pencils advertise businesses and
institutions, many of which are

gone forever. I have one pencil
with a student's name I remember
on it, in my car, in case I ever
see him around town. I have some ink
pens too, but dry—unable to reveal secrets.

*From Snapshots, Kelsay Books, 2022,
RON LAUDERBACH.*



Save the Date!

We are excited to announce that our beloved Bonnie Lee and Daryl Hollinger will be visiting California this summer! They will be at church on Sunday, July 5 with a special musical offering. Dr. Daryl will also be hosting an organ concert the following Sunday, please see the flyer below.

**A Festive
Organ Concert**
Free Admission

Featuring
Dr. Daryl Hollinger
performing on the **Allen Digital Organ**
St. Matthew Lutheran Church
13880 Joshua Way, Sonora
July 12 - Sunday 4 pm

Enjoy an inspiring afternoon of organ music featuring works by J. S. Bach, Buxtehude, Mendelssohn, Langlais, Young, and Fey, plus Dr. Hollinger's own hymn arrangements and original compositions, including the premiere of his three-movement setting of *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*.

A Festival Choir of local singers will also perform Dr. Hollinger's *Psalm 98* for organ and choir.

All are invited to a reception following the concert.

Guest Column

"Magnificent Humanity," What A Concept !

Anthony Robinson

May 25, 2026



In a time when it may be far easier to see evidence of humanity's inhumanity and failures, the very title of Pope Leo's encyclical is a lightning strike for a defiant humanism.

"Magnifica Humanitas," meaning "Magnificent Humanity" speaks an important truth often forgotten in these cynical times: human beings are amazing creatures

who possess an inherent worth and dignity. Our achievements, whether in art or engineering, political thought or medicine are incredible. Our capacity for courage and compassion, for the creation of beauty and for love, is astounding.

A good word for humanity! Yay! God knows we need it!

The Bible's Eighth Psalm makes the point lyrically, in its awed address of the Almighty:

"When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than angels, and crowned them with glory and honor." (Ps. 8: 3 - 5)

In a word, "magnificent!"

In "Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence," Pope Leo reminds us 1) that AI is a human creation, a tool created by human beings, and 2) as with any technology the question is what, and whose, purposes will it serve? Basics easily forgotten in the mix of utopian claims and dystopian warnings.

Amid all the hype and fever dreams you get the impression — which may be the intent of some — that AI has a life of its own and that asking questions or standing in its way is no more possible than standing up to a tsunami. It is this kind of technological triumphalism (or apocalypticism) that Pope Leo challenges in the name of human dignity and agency. "We must lovingly safeguard the grandeur of humanity bestowed on us and revealed in its fullness in Christ, the splendor of which no machine can ever replace."

In striking such notes, Pope Leo builds on the teaching of his predecessor, Pope Francis. Author, Stephen Millies, comments: "Pope Francis condemned what he called 'the technocratic paradigm that seeks to reduce everything to an object to be dominated.' In other words, "de-humanization."

"Pope Leo," Millies continues, "agrees. What dehumanizes us ultimately results from a misguided relationship to technology and economics — a **tendency to let the logic of efficiency, control and profit alone shape personal, social and economic life.**' Technology and economics themselves are not bad things so long as we remember that they are at the service of all people, not the few. Leo is clear that we ought 'neither to demonize nor idolize' the tools of technology or economics, but see them for what they must be — instruments of the common good for all."

Thank God for some leader saying such things.

The threat that AI will be used by the few and ultra-wealthy to dominate the many in ways that are dehumanizing is real. That perceived threat may explain why so many of the recent graduation speakers who, when heralding AI, found themselves met with groans and boos from the graduates.

Given the autocratic turn of contemporary politics and the immense and uncontrolled power of tech giants, people fear that AI will become, not an enhancement of human life, but a tool of surveillance, control and domination of the many by the few. Pope Leo is speaking squarely to those fears and to those who, in the words of Kim Daniels of Georgetown University ask, “Who is AI for, and who is it leaving behind?”

A couple of quick take-aways/ observations based on my reading of excerpts from “Magnifica Humanitas” and articles about it.

1. For those unfamiliar with the term and function of an “encyclical” in the Catholic tradition, it is primarily a teaching document. It is to be used throughout the church as it wrestles with these issues. It is available, as well, to those of other faiths or no religious faith who may be interested. The idea is to formulate the issues and articulate core ethical and spiritual principles that need to be considered when encountering such a social and technological challenge. In other words, an encyclical isn’t the Pope telling people what to think, but a document intended to help people think. It frames the issues. To my (Protestant) mind this is great service to all of us at this juncture.
2. A sense of history was at work as Leo signed his encyclical on the 135th anniversary of another important encyclical from another Pope Leo. In 1892 Pope Leo XIII tackled the challenges of the Industrial Revolution in “Rerum Novarum.” Leo’s nod to history is a caution against a present-mindedness that regards the past as irrelevant and the present moment as one without parallel. History provides context and perspective. This isn’t our first rodeo.
3. “Magnifica Humanitas” focuses on the dignity of work. As many today find themselves feeling like cogs in a faceless machine (see the TV show “Severance”), Leo writes, **“The various kinds of job insecurity, fragmented career paths and automation must not be evaluated solely in terms of efficiency, but in relation to the dignity of the worker, the right to sufficient remuneration and the genuine possibility of participating in society.”**
4. Also on Leo’s mind here, notes Daniels, is “care for the vulnerable. How our society treats those in need is the true measure of our commitment to the common good. **How AI systems are built will either advance human dignity and the common good or leave the most vulnerable further behind, and we are making such choices now.”**
5. Noteworthy was the presence of Anthropic’s co-founder, Christopher Olah. While Pope Leo may have been delivering a message to some giants of tech who share an enthusiasm for “trans humanism,” with its focus on “a post-human future,” Leo and his church are in dialogue with tech leaders who also recognize the urgency of ethical questions.

Beneath and beyond so many of the daily news items, Magnifica Humanitas gets at the core issue. Will life for our children and grandchildren be more humane or less? Will the world of the future invite human flourishing or diminish it?

“Humanity — in all its grandeur and woundedness — must never be replaced or surpassed,” writes Leo. “We can embrace the technological progress that alleviates suffering and unlocks new possibilities, provided that we do not abandon the very essence of our humanity, namely the capacity for relationship and love.”

In this often discouraging time in our country and world, “Magnifica Humanitas” is a word of hope. To be reminded of our human dignity and beauty, capacity and responsibility is a much needed balm and tonic. Thank you Pope Leo!

Cherishing our members, friends, and community...

Happy Birthday!

Liz Armstrong 2

Jim Reynolds 4

Martha See 8

Rich Gutierrez 9

Cynthia Restivo 10

Fred Bender 11

Vee Domazlicky 12

April Friend 13

Melissa Horcasitas 14

Jamie Leigh 15

Chris Marques 16

Emily Lawrence 18

Liz Tussey 19

J.T. Glessman 19

Jenny Fuqua 19

Susan Giannini 20

Fay Messer 20

Ainsley Ryan 20

Cassie Ryan 21

Sharon Greed 25

Doris Williams 26

Don't see your birthday listed? We promise it isn't on purpose! If you would like to have your special day listed in the newsletter, please call or email the church office.

Prayer List

The scriptures tell us:

“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 4:19

We continue to witness the stories of how God answers our prayers!

God hears our cries and answers them.

Let us pray daily for the following members and friends of our community:

Family of Janet Reynolds
Family of Miriam Egbert
Family of Michael Abando
Family of Sandra Carrillo
Miley Sophia (Breen)
Will and parents (Penny Sarvis)
Sandy Maus
Diane Tussey
Enoch Samraj
Herb Good
Ryan VanCleave
Faye Morrison
Miriam Thorsen
Shoshana (Laura Leonard)
Jodie Gibson
Tabitha Kremesec
Lauren, Gordon, Emre, Willow (Jesse Hampton)
Shirley Soderer
Bonnie & Chuck (Mark McCormick)
Terry Dowell
Robin Chesnut
Tari Takara
Ben Richardson (LaMonts)
Bruce (Miriam Thorsen)
Dodi Horvath
Brian Whitehead (Nancy Burton)
Rev. John Randlett
Rev. Marty Williams

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 6:30pm Al-Anon	2 12pm ACT meeting	3 8:15am Morning Prayer, Zoom 10am Worship committee mtg. 12:30pm AA 6:30pm AA	4	5 12pm Women's AA	6 10am Vocal Choir rehearsal
7 9am Vocal Choir Holy Communion 11am small group	8 6:30pm Al-Anon	9 12pm ACT meeting	10 8:15am Morning Prayer, Zoom 12:30pm AA 6:30pm AA	11 9am - 4pm WIC in Social Hall	12 10:30am The Wanderers	13
14 9am Vocal Choir rehearsal	15 5:30pm South Grove Bunch 6:30pm Al-Anon	16 10:30am Family Connections. EEC 12pm ACT meeting 1:30pm F&F mtg.,	17 8:15am Morning Prayer, Zoom 5:30pm Musical Sanctuary 12:30pm AA 6:30pm AA	18	19 12pm Women's AA 9am - 4pm Peddler's Faire	20 9am - 4pm Peddler's Faire
21 11am Council mtg., EEC	22 6:30pm Al-Anon	23 12pm ACT meeting 1:30PM M&C mtg., Social Hall 5:30pm The Seekers	24 8:15am Morning Prayer, Zoom 11am Angels Angels 11am Knitters & Hookers 12:30pm AA 6:30pm AA	25	26 12pm Women's AA	27
28 9am Vocal Choir rehearsal ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING	29 6:30pm Al-Anon	30 12pm ACT meeting				

God's love echoes through us to all creation.

Webpage: www.fcmmurph.org

Email: nugget@fcmmurph.org

Phone: (209)728-3141

JUNE 2026

DATED MATERIAL - DO NOT DELAY

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Murphys, CA 95247

509 N. Algiers Street

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

First Congregational Church of Murphys

THE NUGGET



www.ucc.org

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Pastor Emeritus Rev. Dr. John Randlett

Music Director Kate Moody

Secretary Jenny Fuqua

Christian Ed Director Evelyn Betts

Childcare Abby Fuqua

Ministers at Large: All Members at Open Door UCC!

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Treasurer Patty Haskell

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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, MURPHYS MISSION STATEMENT

We believe that all people are beloved by God and we strive to serve as a welcoming and nurturing church community to discern the Bible with insight for today and to live out Christ's teachings.

The Nugget Committee invites you to submit articles of interest and wishes to stress that the deadline is always the 20th of each month.

The Committee reserves the right to edit submissions for length and content.