

# The Living Word

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## FINAL FAIRE REPORT - JON MEZZERA

Usually, I would do this report in January, but since I skipped making a newsletter, I had to wait until February. I wanted to pass along this information for the final Faire report to you all. The 28th Global Holiday Faire was a huge success. We raised \$14,122.48 which is the most since the pandemic, and the 5th most ever! I was thrilled to have raised so much money for our partner organizations.

I was particularly impressed by the generosity of our shoppers. Our alternative giving organizations were both up big over last year with Heifer International raising \$3,110 and Arbor Day Foundation raising \$632. We also took donations at the cash table for Reach Out and Read, collecting \$277.65 which was nearly \$50 more than we collected last year at the cash table. We also got donations for \$50 for our Big 4 (which each got a record \$1,047.38!), \$115 to help cover our expenses, and \$20 to Global Mamas (which put that organization over \$1,000 when added to the sales). That is over \$4,200 in donations!

Women's Bean Project had its best year with \$1,118.75. Concern America was up from last year with \$1,106. UPAVIM Crafts was up also, with \$849.90. Some organizations didn't do as well as 2024, but they were still successful. SERRV made \$985.66, Project Have Hope made \$525, and The Arc-Solano made \$319. Mary, the head organizer with Arc-Solano was so appreciative of being involved with the Faire and for that money. It didn't seem like a lot of money to me, especially when compared to the eight groups which made \$1,000+, but Mary was thrilled. She also just loves the Faire, doing most of her Christmas shopping while enjoying the festive atmosphere. It is a great example of a community partnership. They also helped to spread the word about the Faire in addition to participating that day.

On behalf of our ecumenical organizing committee, I want to once again thank everyone who helped make the Faire such a huge success! Thank you for donating, shopping, volunteering, spreading the word, praying, or doing anything else that helped us make so much money for so many great charities. This really is a group effort. And make sure you mark your calendar now for December 5th for the 29th Annual Global Holiday Faire. It is never too early to think about (although really, please don't ask me to think about it until at least August!).

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PASTOR'S PEN

**‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ~Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV)**

I want to begin this first message of the New Year by thanking all of you for your generosity to me. At our December church potluck I was presented with a bonus - a delightful surprise! (I guess I had forgotten about doing that in years past for other pastors!) I really do appreciate all of the ways this congregation supports my ministry and I feel very blessed to be able to serve alongside all of you. Thank you for taking an extra step to show your appreciation through this gift.

It has been a challenging month for many of us as we’ve worked hard to stay abreast of developing news across our country. We have been trying to make sense of what is happening and why and also what we can do in response.

Fundamentally, as Christians we are called to Love God and Love our Neighbors. Scripture is full of admonitions to care for the immigrants among us and to reject the use of power over others that diminishes freedom or dignity. We’ve been using worship as a time to focus on our values, to clarify our reasons for standing up for liberation, justice, and compassion, and to remember we are not alone in our fears and frustrations. We will continue to explore how to respond faithfully to each new wave of grief. We will keep coming back to scripture for comfort, guidance, and inspiration for how to lean into our faith in a time such as this. It is so good to be in community together.

In our prayer time we have made extra space for lament, crying out, and expressing our grief. We have joined in collective silent prayer together, believing that we can partner with God in bringing wholeness to our fragmented world.

Our congregation may be small, but we are mighty - both in what we can accomplish through our actions, and also in the depth of our faithfulness. I know that God will continue to show up among us and keep using us to build the kin-dom we all long to see. God is good, all the time.

God Bless You,  
Pastor Sara

## NOTES FROM THE PASTOR

Celebrate New Members

Our congregation joyfully embraces four new members that joined during Advent. Please join me in offering a warm welcome to:

**Rev. Dr. Christy Newton & Clive Loveless Newton**

**LaDonna Parker**

**Rev. Carol Bono**

We know that each of them will bring unique gifts and energy to our church and I pray that they will find spiritual connection, belonging, and new growth in our midst. We are grateful that God has called them to join us as we journey together in the Way of Christ!

Coffee with the Pastor

On Thursday, February 26th from 1-3 pm you can join me at Moschetti's Cafe at **925 Marin Street** (at Florida) in Vallejo for coffee and an informal chat. Grab a coffee, tea, or other treat and spend some time catching up.

Bible Study

Bible Study is back! We'll continue to meet on the last Sunday of the month to dive into scripture together. For February we'll meet after worship on Sunday the 22nd. Bring a brown bag lunch and your Bible. We'll meet in the Parlor.

Vacation

Pastor Sara will be on vacation February 11-17th and will return to the office on Wednesday the 18th. John Grose will bring the sermon and preside over worship with Beth Grose on Sunday, February 15th. Suzanne Awalt is the elder of the month and can be contacted in case of pastoral emergencies.

Ash Wednesday

We are invited to observe Ash Wednesday with Community Presbyterian Church as we mark the beginning of Lent this year. The service will be at 7 pm at 2800 Georgia Street in Vallejo. Come as you are, all are welcome.

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LENTEN WORSHIP - SEEKING HONEST QUESTIONS FOR DEEPER FAITH

- Rev. Sara Steenhouse

The lectionary for Lent offers us many stories of Jesus encountering people who are seeking: Nicodemus comes to him in the veil of night, he approaches a Samaritan woman at a well, he heals a man born without sight. In these stories, each person is seeking a new beginning, a different life, a deeper faith.

What unfolds is an exchange filled with questions and exploration. Often, an unveiling occurs—assumptions are disrupted, a new perspective is revealed, mystery grows.

Each week we'll approach the scripture with a question. These questions are hopeful, curious, challenging and restorative. Our questions won't necessarily lead to answers, but they can help us find clarity and a new perspective. Ultimately, we pray they lead to a new beginning, a restoration, a wider grace.

Like the characters in our Lenten scriptures, we are also seeking many things: clarity, connection, wonder, justice, balance. We are seeking our calling, the sacred, and how to live as a disciple. In the turbulence of these times, many of us are asking big questions about our lives and our faith. We hope this series will help us unpack some of those big questions in ways that are honest and faithful. Throughout this season, we hope you will continually ask yourself: what am I seeking? What is God seeking?

This Lent, we invite you to engage in the spiritual practice of seeking. We encourage you to stay curious, open, and nimble. We hope you will soften your assumptions and expand your perspectives. We pray that these questions will create a safe space to explore—to be drawn more deeply into the fullness of life, into the heart of God.



**seeking:**  
honest questions  
for deeper faith

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ON GRACE, GRATITUDE, AND GENEROSITY - MISSION ACTION REPORT

- Suzanne Awalt, Mission Action Coordinator

Monthly Gifts

For several years now (well before my joining the active FCCV family), our church budget has allocated a monthly donation to a mission activity outside of the church. As a missional congregation, we accept that outreach ministry into the local community and the larger world strongly aligns with our Christian and Disciples' values to bring wholeness to a fragmented world. As a congregation we have lent our financial support to a variety of charities working in the fields of peace activism, social, environmental, and gender justice, housing and homelessness services, hunger, poverty, refugee and immigration advocacy, and other local and global not-for-profit partners. Currently, our monthly donation is \$275. Each month our Ministry Council approves the donation to a suggested charity. If you would like to nominate a charity for consideration, please contact Suzanne Awalt.

For the month of January, the \$275 donation will go to Southern Poverty Law Center, a "catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people." [www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org)

For the month of February, the \$275 donation will go to Week of Compassion, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) relief, refugee, and development mission fund. Week of Compassion is a ministry of the whole church, working all year long to alleviate suffering and bring unity to a hurting world. [www.weekofcompassion.org](http://www.weekofcompassion.org)

Annually, the Church promotes a Special Day Offering for Week of Compassion during the month of February. This year's theme "A NEW WAY," is derived from the Gospel of Mark, 2:1-5. Mark's telling suggests that difficult and challenging times call for irregular and creative responses to hurt and need...as in lowering the paralytic man through the roof to get access to Jesus. Please remember Week of Compassion with a special offering February 15 and 22, 2026. See below for more information about this special offering.

Harvesting Hope in Honduras

Recently, I had the opportunity to travel to northern Honduras with staff members and fellow donors of Heifer International. Heifer has been partnering with small-scale farmers in Honduras for over 40 years and currently supports 70-100 technical staff in five regional offices throughout the country.

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## ON GRACE, GRATITUDE, AND GENEROSITY - MISSION ACTION REPORT

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Our visit focused on several “demonstration” farms highlighting improved livestock grazing methods, including carving out rotational paddocks and the installation of solar powered electric fencing surrounding them. Heifer supports the entrepreneurial efforts of farmers, such as the construction of an electric milk-chilling collection station. By cooperatively combining daily milk yields, the farmers can get a much better price for their milk sold directly in bulk to the processor. This is referred to as a “value chain,” and whether it is milk, coffee, honey, or cacao, Heifer is actively empowering communities to incubate small businesses showcasing their organic, artisanal products that compete well in the marketplace. I can attest that the honey, coffee, and chocolate are quite tasty.

At some future time, I will be sharing more from my trip with Heifer Honduras. For now, I want to affirm to you that your donations to Heifer International are making a significant impact on the lives of farmers around the world like the Rodriguez sisters and Delia Canales, third-generation women farmers (in a machismo culture), who exemplify leadership and a willingness to adopt new technologies in the farming life they love for the long-term good of family and community.





## Week of Compassion Special Offering 2026 **A NEW WAY**

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door, and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. **And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.** When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." (Mark 2: 1 - 5)

suggested offering dates : **February 15  
& 22, 2026**

FOUNDING FATHERS AND THEIR RELIGION - David Mezzera

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As we celebrate Presidents' Day this month, I wondered what religious background our Presidents and Founding Fathers professed. So I looked up a few names and their religious preferences.

George Washington was raised an Anglican (the colonial predecessor to the Episcopal Church). Since the British monarch was Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and its clergy swear an Oath of Supremacy to the monarch, the American churches established the Episcopal Church in 1789 following the American Revolution as an independent successor to the Church of England. After his presidency, Washington and his wife Martha attended Pohick Episcopal Church near Mount Vernon (as seen above), where he served as a vestry-man (a member of the church's council).



John Adams was raised in the Puritan tradition (as were many colonists) but became an active Congregationalist. The Puritans advocated a strict Calvinist theology, biblical literalism, and intense personal piety. Adams himself professed traditional faith, emphasizing a moral God, human free will, with the Bible as the guide to a righteous life, advocating for religious liberty as essential for a republic. He also occasionally attended Episcopal services.

Thomas Jefferson followed the Unitarian tradition, believing in a Creator God, but looking upon Jesus only as a teacher, not believing in the Divinity of Christ, all the while believing in individual conscience. He wrote into the Declaration of Independence that "All men are created equal," and yet he and his family were slave owners!

Extra credit: Out of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence only one was a Catholic: Charles Carroll from Maryland. This colony was founded by Lord Baltimore who sought to create a haven for English Catholics to show that Catholics and Protestants could live together peacefully in the New World. Interestingly, Carroll's younger brother, John Carroll, was ordained a priest in Europe and came to America, where he started a boy's school south of Maryland on the Potomac River in an area called Georgetown, named after George Washington.

Extra, extra credit: Although Abraham Lincoln was not a Founding Father, we do celebrate his birthday this month. Lincoln was raised Baptist but never joined any church. His faith was characterized by deep scriptural knowledge (quoting scripture often, such as "A house divided against itself cannot stand"). His stand against slavery showed his moral conviction, and he professed that God's providence would see us through the Civil War. As he spoke in his Second Inaugural Address: "It must be said that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether"



## HYBRID WORSHIP CONTINUES

We continue to develop and improve our hybrid worship abilities. Every Sunday morning, we have some members of our worshipping community onsite in our sanctuary and some members of our worshipping community online on Zoom. We continue to work to make both formats engaging and accessible. Please share comments and suggestions that might make both formats better for everyone.

Our worship services begin at 10:30. To join us for worship on Zoom, click the link below and joining us through video. Or dial in by calling the number below according to your time zone. The instructions to connect are fairly easy, but if you need help, please reach out.

In preparation for Zoom worship, please have communion elements of some form with you so that we can all partake together. This can be bread and juice—or any other elements that evoke the Last Supper for you. You may also want to light a candle near you as we worship together.

### **Worship on Sundays, 10:30 a.m. PLEASE NOTE THE NEW MEETING INFO!**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83204891403?pwd=YkJBNTQwWURabEtpRFVoaDU5aU5hQT09>

Meeting ID: 884 4460 0052

Passcode: 503337

Dial by your location

- +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
- +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
- +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)
- +1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

# Mark Your Calendar

February 5 - Ministry Council Meeting, 5 pm on Zoom.

February 7 - Elders Retreat, 9:30 am in the Parlor.

February 12 - Admin Council Meeting, 5 pm on Zoom.

February 18 - Ash Wednesday Service, 7 pm at Community Presbyterian.

February 22 - Bible Study, after worship (bring a bag lunch).

February 26 - Coffee with the Pastor, 1-3 pm at Moschetti's Cafe.

**The deadline for the next Living Word is February 25**

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