

# The Living Word

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[www.vallejochristian.org](http://www.vallejochristian.org)  
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## Join Us for Advent!

After all of the wonderful activities of November, Advent begins on December 1. We celebrate Advent for the four Sundays before Christmas by preparing our hearts once again for Christ to be born into the world. During this time, we will light special candles, read inspirational scripture, sing powerful songs, and decorate our worship space with beauty and anticipation. This year's Advent theme is **"Prepare the Way..."** And together, we will once again prepare the way for Christ to be born and transform our world.

On Dec. 8, 15, and 22, we will collect new socks and underwear, as well as gently-used coats, sweaters, and blankets for people in need.

On Wednesday, Dec. 11, from 5:00-6:00 p.m., you are invited to a **Full Moon Labyrinth Walk** at the Earthrise Retreat Center with Pastor Christy. Earthrise Retreat Center is located at 101 San Antonio Road, Petaluma, CA 94952. We will meet and carpool from the church at 3:45 p.m. For more information and to register, visit <https://www.veriditas.org/event-3524955>. The event is free.



On the evening of Saturday, Dec. 21, at 7:00 p.m., we will hold our **Blue Christmas Service** to make space for the complexity of emotions arising during this time of year.

*I hope you will join us and participate throughout the Advent season!*

## *Living Stones*

*Every night before I go to sleep / I say out loud / Three things that I'm grateful for,  
All the significant, insignificant / Extraordinary, ordinary stuff of my life.  
It's a small practice and humble, / And yet, I find I sleep better  
Holding what lightens and softens my life / Ever so briefly at the end of the day.  
Sunlight, and blueberries, / Good dogs and wool socks,  
A fine rain, / A good friend, / Fresh basil and wild phlox,  
My father's good health, / My daughter's new job,  
The song that always makes me cry, / Always at the same part,  
No matter how many times I hear it.  
Decent coffee at the airport, / And your quiet breathing,  
The stories you told me, / The frost patterns on the windows,  
English horns and banjos, / Wood Thrush and June bugs,  
The smooth glassy calm of the morning pond,  
An old coat, / A new poem, / My library card,  
And that my car keeps running / Despite all the miles.  
And after three things, / More often than not,  
I get on a roll and I just keep on going, / I keep naming and listing,  
Until I lie grinning, / Blankets pulled up to my chin,  
Awash with wonder / At the sweetness of it all.  
—“Three Gratuities” by Carrie Newcomer*

After the John Pavlovitz speaking event on Friday night, I went home absolutely inspired and amazed. But as wonderful as John was, he was not the source of my inspiration and amazement. I was amazed and inspired by **you**. Now, seeing as we are into our 7th year of ministry together, perhaps I should not have been amazed. But I was amazed—and ever grateful for the many things you continue to teach me.

I wish I could have kept track of the incredible number of people who approached me at the event, thanking me for our church's overflowing hospitality and grace. “Please let your people know how much we appreciate all they're doing and their generosity!” Over and over. “They were even outside making sure we got inside safely!” “Oh, thank you for the coffee!” “Everything has been so easy and lovely and accessible and welcoming!” “Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!”

And even toward the end of an exceptionally busy fall, your hospitality and grace, your generosity and compassion continues to shine through. And I am left absolutely inspired and amazed. You teach me about the kind of Christian I aspire to be—simultaneously holding the world as it is now **and** holding a future vision for the world that can be full of greater justice and love and hope. I see you showing up—over and over—holding both of these things. I see you pouring your heart into serving our shut-ins, shepherding our Ministers-In-Training, visiting those in the hospital, giving to the Capital Campaign (*and new church windows, lighting, roof, and gutters!*), praying for all those in need and praying for all the ways God is present, leading special worship services, singing in the Choir, attending Anti-Racism Training, participating in FLURCH and Adult Bible Study, planning powerful events like

Pavlovitz and Haircuts 4 the Holidays, organizing the Stewardship Campaign and Church Budget, being baptized and making baptisms possible, coordinating the Global Holiday Faire and its incredible local and international outreach, asking for help when needed, building/painting/stocking the Free Little Pantry, bringing scripture to life in the Scripture Choir, preparing food to feed whoever comes (*There is always enough!*), working on Church Councils, committees, gardens, and whatever else needs attention. I see you! And I am inspired, amazed, and grateful for you. You continue to teach me about what it means to live faithfully out of generosity and abundance—even when it might not be the most comfortable thing. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!

See you in church,  
Christy

### FINAL FAIRE REMINDER

The Global Holiday Faire is just about a week away! The Faire is Saturday, December 7th. Even with just a short time before the Faire, there is still plenty you can do to help. You can make a donation of re-gifted items, baked goods (remember not to price your baked goods), crafts, and paper bags (particularly the small lunch bags - we are low on them and this is a very easy thing to buy and donate). Your donations can be brought on Saturday the 6th as we set up for the Faire starting at 6pm. If you have donations, but can't make it at one of those times, please contact either Helen or Jon Mezzera to arrange a time for you to bring them to the church.

And please continue to spread the word. The Fellowship Hall will be full of tables full of gifts. Last year, the Faire was a huge success, raising over 14, 600! However despite that success, we had many unsold items. The only way to raise more for the agencies at this year's Faire is to get more shoppers in the door. Invite people to come and shop. Invite people to come for lunch. Invite people to come for the festive atmosphere. Invite people to come and support this worthy Mission Action effort!

And don't forget to visit [www.globalholidayfaire.org](http://www.globalholidayfaire.org) for more information and like the Faire on Facebook (and share their posts!) to help spread the word!

### SABBATICAL PLANS IN PROGRESS FOR MAY 2020

Christy will go on sabbatical from mid-May to mid-August 2020. In preparation for the time, the Pastoral Relations Committee is starting to think about what that time will look like in the life of the congregation. We hope to share additional information and to seek congregational input at a special meeting following worship on **Sunday, Dec. 8**. In preparation for that meeting, please think about what types of *renewal* would be helpful to you personally and for our congregation as a whole. ***What does renewal mean to you? What might it look like?***

And as a reminder, the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program seeks to strengthen Christian congregations by providing opportunities for pastors to step away from the

persistent obligations of daily parish life and to engage in a period of renewal and reflection. Renewal periods are not vacations, but times for intentional exploration and reflection, for regaining the enthusiasm and creativity for ministry, for discovering what will make the pastor's heart sing.

If you would like more information about the Lilly Renewal Grant and/or Christy's sabbatical plans, focusing on "*Labyrinth Walking: Integrative Journeys for Renewal*," please let Christy know.

### **A SPECIAL BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE**

The holidays are always full of heightened emotions and expectations. Our culture readily celebrates the excitement, joy, and consumption of Christmas, but many of us also experience difficult feelings during this time of year. It is easy to get lost in the demands, activities, lights, shopping; the holidays can be quite stressful.

At our Blue Christmas Service, we create a quiet, peaceful, and supportive place where you are invited to slow down and recognize whatever emotions you may hold—including anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, depression, overwhelm, frustration, grief, loss, addiction, uncertainty. We will provide a space for anyone having a difficult time during the holidays—anyone needing to acknowledge some pain or loss they are carrying—and anyone simply needing to take a long, deep breath and slow down—in the midst of this season.

All are welcome to join in this beautiful and contemplative candlelight service, which will be held in our sanctuary on Saturday, December 21, at 7:00 p.m., the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year.

### **COMMON GROUND EVENT**

Common Ground will be having a major gathering on January 21<sup>st</sup>, which will include many City Council members, Supervisors, the new Police Chief and more. We will review the issues we have been working on and will discuss these with our guests. The more people we have in attendance, the more our concerns will be listened to. So please mark your calendars for January 21<sup>st</sup>, starting at 6:30 and come to St. Vincent's Gymnasium. Please let Allison or Carl know if you have any questions.

### **DECEMBER SCRIPTURE READINGS**

The Church's liturgical year is slightly different from a calendar year. The Church's year begins on the First Sunday of Advent (usually the last Sunday in November or, as this year, the first Sunday in December) and runs until the beginning of Advent the following year. Scripture readings for each Sunday during the liturgical year are based on a set of pre-determined readings from both the Old and New Testaments. This established set of readings for each Sunday is called the "Lectionary," - from the Latin word for "readings" - and there are three lectionary cycles that rotate from year to year, referred to as Cycles A, B and C.



We have just completed the year for Cycle C, in which the Gospel of Luke dominated each Sunday's reading, as you remember. And we are now beginning Cycle A, which will emphasize the Gospel of Matthew throughout the next year. You will notice that the readings

during this Advent will all be taken from Matthew's Gospel according to this cycle. A year from now, we will begin a new cycle that will highlight the Gospel of Mark, followed again by a year of readings from Luke, and so on.

If you are ever inquisitive about which rotating cycle is in place for a particular year, just take the year (such as 2020 upcoming) and divide by 3. If the remainder of the quotient is "1," the year belongs to Cycle A. If the remainder is "2," it's the year for Cycle B. Thus,  $2020 \div 3 = 673 \text{ r. } 1$ , and thus we are entering Cycle A (Matthew) this Advent.

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Please remember that everyone is invited to join Sunday School/Bible Study starting at 9:30 on Sunday mornings.

Kids meet upstairs with our fabulous teacher Sara Steenhouse. They have named their Sunday School class FLURCH (Fun Learning chURCH).

Adults meet in the Parlor with our incredible Minister-In-Training Renae Earl. We always share a rich and engaging conversation, and all voices/perspectives/insights are welcome.

## **BOOK STUDY**

Hello ALL! I am excited to be sharing an up and coming book study starting January 2020! We will be reading and discussing the book "So you want to talk about race" by Ijeoma Oluo. My hope for our time together is that it will be conversational, inward-looking, and challenging. You don't have to bring anything to the table except your presence! You can find the book on Amazon at a pretty affordable rate. Also, the day and time is TBD based on your input. There will be a sign-up sheet in the back to gauge interest and best times for everyone! I look forward to our time together.

~Shannon

## **HAIRCUTS 4 THE HOLIDAYS**

The Thanksgiving Haircuts 4 the Holidays event was a hit! Many folks got haircuts, many more enjoyed a good lunch. We're gearing up to do the second round on December 21st. Please pass on this information and invite those you know who could not otherwise afford a haircut to come. To volunteer please contact Renae at [nae2nae@att.net](mailto:nae2nae@att.net). Below is a list of needs if you would like to donate for the event.

Donations for Health & Hygiene kits\*:

Travel sized toiletries:

Toothpaste

Toothbrush

Bar soap

Razors

Tampons/Pads

Condoms

Wash cloth

Socks- adult size med – black or white



Underwear- adult size med - men and women  
 Tissues (individual packs)  
 \$5 or \$10 Gift Cards – Grocery Outlet, Starbucks, Fast Food, 7-11 (local)  
 Trail mix (single sized bags) or Protein Bars  
 Beef Jerky (snack sized bags)

#### Donations for Event:

Lice Kits  
 Monetary or Grocery Outlet Gift Cards to provide lunch  
 Your time, Please contact Renae Earl to volunteer (925) 518-9389

#### Ways to give:

By donating directly to First Christian Church Vallejo by check or cash designating funds to Haircuts 4 Holidays or through the tithe.ly app Designate H4H  
 Bring supplies to First Christian Church Vallejo c/o Renae Earl H4H or donate directly to Renae Earl, if not in Vallejo area or if not able to deliver, set up pickup time with her.

\*any leftover goods will go into the new Little Free Pantry!

#### DON'T FORGET:

To help earn money for the church beyond your generous donations:

- ✓ Use [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com) (instead of Google or Bing) for your internet searches.
- ✓ Start at [www.goodshop.com](http://www.goodshop.com) when shopping online.
- ✓ Sign up at [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) for when you patronize local stores and restaurants.
- ✓ Take your recycling to Valcore ([www.valcorerecycling.org](http://www.valcorerecycling.org)) and ask that the money go to the church.
- ✓ Use [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com). The first time you use it, you will be asked to select a charity to support. Pick our church, and don't forget to bookmark the page!

#### DEACON'S SCHEDULE

December 1	*Rebecca Morris	Florence Gomez
December 8	*Amanda Trujillo	Armoni Steenhouse
December 15	*George Morris	Sara Morgado
December 22	*Adriana Zaragoza	Lisa Vigil
December 29	*Rebecca Morris	Amanda Trujillo

\*Denotes Head Deacon (set flags out in front of church & bring in after service, check collection envelopes & replenish if needed, light candles in front of church before service & extinguish after & enter attendance into log).

## Mark Your Calendar

Sunday, December 1	Advent begins Elders Meeting, following worship
Wednesday, December 4	Administrative Council, 5:30 p.m.
Saturday, December 7	Global Holiday Faire
Wednesday, December 11	Full Moon Labyrinth Walk at the Earthrise Retreat Center, 5:00-6:00
Sunday, December 15	FCCV Christmas Party after worship
Saturday, December 21	Haircuts 4 the Holidays, 9:00-4:00 Blue Christmas Service, 7:00

### THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS

*When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among others,  
To make music in the heart.  
—Howard Thurman*

