

The Living Word

1035 Indiana St.
Vallejo CA 94590
707-643-7973



www.vallejochristian.org

www.facebook.com/fccvallejo

ORDINATION PAPER DISCUSSION - SARA STEENHOUSE

The Shepherding Committee of Beth, Carl, and Sara has been meeting with Shannon Gomez as she progresses toward ordination. We are happy to share that we are nearly through the candidacy process! Shannon's final requirement for FCCV is to share her Ordination Paper with the elders for discussion and pondering. This is the paper required by the Regional Church's Training and Care Committee that will be a major part of Shannon's official Ordination Interview this fall. We are lucky to get a preview of Shannon's work and a chance to discuss it with her in an informal Q&A session. We will meet after worship on August 18 in the Fellowship Hall. In advance of this date, a copy of Shannon's paper will be distributed by email to the elders and any others who plan to attend in person. After reading on our own time, everyone will have an opportunity to submit some questions by email for discussion.

When we meet on the 18th, we'll eat our brown bag lunches and hear Shannon respond to our inquiries. We will get to listen and discuss! This will be a great opportunity for all of us to grow in understanding together and support our Ministry candidate. Don't forget to bring your curiosity and thoughtful reflections!

If you haven't already, please fill out the "Get to Know" a FCCV-er form so that Shannon/Allison can get these uploaded to our social media pages!

We want to celebrate OUT LOUD all those who make our congregation a special place. If you have any questions about the process, feel free to reach out to Shannon. Thank you!

Greetings, FCC Vallejo Family!

We find ourselves in the middle of summer and turning our attention to both the process of seeking a settled pastor and preparing for our 125th anniversary—what an exciting time! Last month worship focused on our theme of “Against all odds keeping hope alive,” while now our attention moves to “Sustaining Hope with Faith and Trust.” We will be hearing sermons about some familiar Bible stories told through new lenses, having meetings for congregational care, and having our Transitional Training Retreat to define who we are and where we are going in the next 125 years.

I want to remind you that I have appointments available for pastoral care—just text me to set up an appointment, please.

I look forward to working with you all in this next season.

Peace,

Pastor nicki

.....
4TH OF JULY CHALLENGE - David Mezzera

Our upcoming historical event in July is of course Independence Day (July 4th). One of the symbols of Independence Day is the Liberty Bell that is on display in Philadelphia. Speaking of "The Bell," an inscription forged onto the bell when it was cast is taken from which of the following origins?

- [A] Magna Carta (granting due process);
- [B] Preamble to the Constitution ("We the people . . .");
- [C] Book of Leviticus (from the Old Testament);
- [D] Declaration of Independence ("We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .");
- [E] Patrick Henry ("Give me liberty or give me death").

See elsewhere in the Living Word for the answer.

.....
DO YOU HAIKU? - Suzanne Awalt

O+A
 Early adopters*
 What’s “Open and Affirming?”
 Well...that’s who we are!

* First Christian Church Vallejo 6/26/94. One of the earliest affiliates of Disciples AllianceQ

LOOKING BACK... LIVING FORWARD - Jon Mezzera

We just passed a big anniversary in the history of First Christian Church, Vallejo. On June 26, 1994, the church voted to become an Open & Affirming congregation. This meeting and vote was the culmination of several months of study and discussion on the issue following the leadership of Pastor Karen Stanley. The process included small group meetings and guest speakers. At the time, we were the 27th Disciple-affiliated organization (including churches, campus ministry groups and other organizations) to become Open & Affirming. We were the first church in Vallejo to openly welcome members of the gay and lesbian community. In fact, I remember not that long ago when a Lutheran church in town became just the second Open & Affirming Vallejo Church. We were definitely, ahead of a lot of Christians on this issue.

At that meeting in 1994, our Open & Affirming Statement was adopted. You can read the statement in its entirety in the history book or on our website (on the website, you can see a special video on the anniversary starring Ted & Glenda!). The main point of the statement was that the congregation would welcome anyone into full membership in the church regardless of age, gender, race, class, family configuration, sexual orientation and medical condition.

What I find interesting about the vote is that it wasn't unanimous. The motion to adopt the statement and declare ourselves to be Open & Affirming passed 27-9 with 2 abstentions. While I am proud to have grown up in a church that was so progressive, this was still a divisive issue in 1994 even in our welcoming church. It was not an easy decision. If it had been, we wouldn't have taken months to study and discuss the topic. We also did very little if anything to actually reach out to the LGBTQ+ community for several years after that big decision in 1994. So, how committed were we to the idea of being that welcoming to "those" people? But, it was an important start to becoming the truly welcoming church that we would become over time, and continue to aspire to be.

Rev. Judith Jones would start doing some evangelism to the LGBTQ+ community early in her time with us as our pastor. It started with a letter to the editor that she sent to the Vallejo Times-Herald. A few gay couples read that letter and started coming to the church in the early 2000s. That part of our congregation grew in large part due to a few of them reaching out to the gay community in Vallejo to spread the word that we were a welcoming church to all people. In the last 20 years, we have had many gay members as well as transgender members. We've had a member transition after joining our church with a brave letter sent out to all of the congregation saying that we assumed she was a woman, but he is a man. We've had multiple gay couples married in our church. With Rev. Christy Newton, we called our first openly gay pastor. I can say with great certainty that that would not have happened 30 years ago even after voting to become Open & Affirming. Becoming Open & Affirming isn't really something that just happened on June 26, 1994. It has been a 30 year process. We aren't that far removed from our then Minister-In-Training Godfrey McIntyre leading a class on gender identity to continue our education on these important issues. I'm sure as we move into the future, we will continue to grow and work on being truly open and welcoming to all of God's children.

4TH OF JULY ANSWER - David Mezzera

Three of the possible answers [B], [D] and [E] came about after the bell was made in 1753 (the year MDCCLIII is inscribed on the bell itself). Believe it or not [C], a verse from Leviticus 25:10, is actually forged right onto the bell: “**Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.**” Although [A] long predates the bell (1215), it does not appear on it. So the bible has a role in the story of the Liberty Bell.

P.S. Most people assume that the Liberty Bell was rung from the bell tower at Independence Hall on July 4, 1776, but this is not true for two reasons: For starters, the public announcement of the signing of the Declaration of Independence did not actually take place until July 8th. The delegates to the Second Continental Congress agreed to a draft document on July 2nd. It was then formally committed to parchment (with the date July 4, 1776 at the top), signed two days later and then publicly announced four days later still. The second reason that the bell could not have been rung on July 4th was that even if bells were rung throughout Philadelphia that day, the bell tower in the Statehouse (as Independence Hall was called in those days) was under repair making it unlikely that the bell was in use on the 4th.

P.P.S.S. With all that said, do you know where the Declaration of Independence was signed?
Answer: At the bottom!

MISSION ACTION UPDATES - Allison Mezzera

A Quick Mission Action Correction!

My last article in the May newsletter stated the May Mission Action recipient was “Veterans for Peace”. This should have been for June Mission Action. Reminder if you want more info go to <https://www.veteransforpeace.org/>

Our May Mission Action actually went to Church World Service to go along with the funds raised during our Annual CROP Walk. By the way, you can still donate to the Vallejo CROP Hunger Walk through 6/30/24! - <https://events.crophungerwalk.org/cropwalks/event/vallejoca>

LITTLE PEACE PANTRY

An Amazon wish list has been created for the Little Peace Pantry basic needs items. Some items have been added, including sunscreen, feminine hygiene, and toilet needs.

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3O734C3DKZ30?ref_=wl_share

Also, with the heat of the summer upon us, bottles of water are really essential!! Pick up a pack today!

JULY MONTHLY MISSION - "SUDAN RELIEF FUND" — Allison Mezzera

The fallout from years of genocide, fighting, and violence has taken a toll on Sudan, resulting in widespread humanitarian crises, and has gone largely ignored by the West. Sudan Relief Fund is dedicated to bringing food, clean water, clothing, shelter, medical attention, education, and hope to the people of South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. Since 1998, Sudan Relief Fund has been on the ground working tirelessly to provide lifesaving help to people in desperate circumstances, and to lay the groundwork for long term solutions.

A snapshot from their website of the nation's condition shows how dire the situation is in South Sudan.

- At least 80 percent of the population lives in extreme poverty.
- Years of fighting decimated the economy and infrastructure of cities, towns, roads, and villages.
- Nearly half the population has no access to clean water.
 - Nearly 8 million people are predicted to suffer severe malnourishment this year and face starvation – that's 2 out of every 3 men, women, and children living in South Sudan.
- Brutal attacks from tribal infighting continue to create refugees and orphans.
 - It's estimated at least 60 percent of South Sudan's two million refugees are orphaned children. More arrive daily to escape the violent warfare in Sudan.
- Government sponsored healthcare and social services are non-existent.
- Diseases such as typhoid and malaria plague the people.
- The mother/infant mortality rate is one of the highest in the world.

Their mission is "to provide peace and hope for the future by alleviating immediate humanitarian concerns and aiding in the development of infrastructure necessary for growth and stability in the world's youngest nation. We are achieving this by building schools, hospitals, and training programs to empower the people of South Sudan and the Nuba region so they are better equipped to successfully take control of their own future."

If you would like to make a separate donation or to get more information, go to <https://sdnrlf.com/>

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: 832 0489 1403

Passcode: 157093

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

July 8 - 125th Anniversary meeting, 7 pm on Zoom.

July 10 - Ministry Council meeting, 5 pm on Zoom.

July 12 - Elders meeting, 5 pm on Zoom.

July 14 - Transitional Retreat immediately after worship. Bring a bag lunch.

July 19 - Administrative Council meeting, 5 pm on Zoom.

July 20 - A Morning Walk, 10-11 am in the Fellowship Hall.

August 18 - Ordination Paper Q&A, following worship in the Fellowship Hall (bring lunch).

The deadline for the next Living Word is July 24
