

The Living Word

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



www.vallejochristian.org
www.facebook.com/FCCVallejo

Giving Thanks

by Beth Grose

It's already been said: having 2020 vision has taken on a new meaning. 2020 started with unprecedented massive wildfires in Australia, has brought us a global pandemic as of this writing claiming over 1.18 million lives worldwide, 228,100 Americans, and 17,581 here in California. Massive protests against race-based police violence erupted nationwide. In an effort to control the spread, we've experienced isolation in our homes since the beginning of March. The pandemic has led to job loss, changes in living situations, remote classrooms for students of all ages. Gender equality has taken a step backwards – statistics indicate that more women than men have exited the workforce. A survey of parents of school-age children showed that women indicated that they were responsible for supervising their child's remote learning education at the rate of 67%, while men were at 28%. All of this before 2020 was half-way through. Comes the summer, and murder hornets invade the Pacific Northwest, we have devastating floods in the Midwest and then fire season starts. In California alone, more than 4 million acres have burned, bigger than the State of Connecticut. The sky was yellow for months over nearly the whole state. No one who experienced it will forget the eerie day the sun never could be seen through the thick smoke. And we're not done! We are just one storm away from tying the hurricane record. These were just the extraordinary events – the "regular" things of life went on, but weirdly changed. Babies were born, but not yet cooed over by relatives. Loved ones died, but we mourned them in solitude, unable to draw comfort from family and friends. Unable to celebrate together the richness of the life that has ended. Birthdays and graduations were done by car cavalcade, safely socially distanced. Travel was greatly curtailed, travel for pleasure is almost unheard of. So, what are we giving thanks for?

The Thanksgiving Holiday we celebrate is a continuation of a centuries-old, perhaps millennia-old tradition: the harvest festival. Most of us don't depend on our own vegetable and grain harvest to survive the winter months. So what harvest do we celebrate instead? For me, the harvest is synonymous with the work of the church. Together, we have harvested compassion, generosity, passion for justice, activism, community involvement, political engagement, time together in virtual worship and fellowship. Together we have plentifully reaped our concern for our country, our community, and our congregation. And yes, together we have literally harvested from our recently improved Johnson Garden. Everyone has something to give thanks for – if only gratitude for waking up this morning. I am thankful for your passion and commitment. I am thankful for your imagination and determination. I am thankful for your openness and willingness to be there for one another. Fire, flood, pandemic – nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Give thanks!

Living Stones

*In these times when anger / Is turned into anxiety
 And someone has stolen / The horizons and mountains,
 Our small emperors on parade / Never expect our indifference
 To disturb their nakedness.
 They keep their heads down / And their eyes gleam with reflection
 From aluminum economic ground,
 The media wraps everything / In a cellophane of sound,
 And the ghost surface of the virtual / Overlays the breathing earth.
 The industry of distraction / Makes us forget
 That we live in a universe.
 We have become converts / To the religion of stress
 And its deity of progress;
 That we may have courage / To turn aside from it all
 And come to kneel down before the poor, / To discover what we must do,
 How to turn anxiety / Back into anger,
 How to find our way home.
 —“For Citizenship” by John O’Donohue*

What has happened to empathy in our country? Not just empathy, care, and concern for our own families and closest circle of friends—but empathy for the ever-widening, rippling circle of people throughout our world—especially the poor and the vulnerable, the oppressed and the unprivileged. Politically, what has happened to welcoming the tired, poor, and huddled masses? What has taken us so far away from this sentiment and commitment? Sociologist and public theologian Parker Palmer asks, “Why do so many Americans want to re-elect an administration that’s done so much—via ideology, incompetence, and indifference—to make more private breadlines necessary for those who suffer? And why do so many Christians support leaders who mock the Gospel they claim to embrace—then offer rationales that would be anathema to [most of us and all those in need]: ‘Hey, just look at my 401(k)’ or ‘There’s only ONE issue I care about, and the leaders I’m voting for have it nailed’? Attitudes like that also have love, truth, and justice nailed. Again.”

These questions occupy my heart as we head into November. And I don’t need more political analysis or defensive rationales. I want and need deep, heartfelt, moral answers. What do we really want to be about as a church, community, country? What kind of world do we want to live in and create? Who do we want our country to serve better? For whom do we want our world to be “great”?

And no matter what the outcome of these elections, I choose to place my faith in God, creator of the constantly churning waves and rising and falling sun. God’s story consistently moves us toward more hope and more justice for all people. This story grounds me and calls me to offer love to those who feel hopeless. This story invites me to live out my ethics and deepest beliefs. This story charges me to practice empathy, compassion, and grace every single day. This story comforts me when hurt and devastation try to take hold. And this is the story that lives in my heart.

“Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

See you in (zoom) church,
Christy

THANK YOU!

Thank you all so much for remembering me during Ministry Appreciation Month. Your thoughtful gifts brightened my day! Even during this pandemic, I am delighted by the wonderful ways we share ministry and reach out to our community. You are blessings in my life!

Christy

ZOOM WORSHIP

As we continue to shelter-in-place, we will continue to worship together online using Zoom. Bible Study begins at 9:30. Worship begins at 10:30. Please join us for any or all of this time together by clicking the link below and joining us through video. Or alternatively, you can 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 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.

Bible Study and Worship

Weekly on Sundays, 9:30 a.m.—Bible Study

10:30 a.m.—Worship

WORSHIP NOTES

On Sunday, **Nov. 1**, we will celebrate **All Saints Sunday**. *On this day, you are invited to bring photos and keepsakes that conjure memories of the saints in your life and/or in the life of the church.* We will especially honor the life and memory of Wayne Caldwell, who we lost earlier this year. So, wear your aloha shirts to honor Wayne this Sunday!

In mid-November, specifically Nov. 15 and 22, we will celebrate our collective **Stewardship and collect our Pledges for the 2021 Budget**. Watch for more information and think about the gifts you want to offer our church.

ADVENT BEGINS SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Can you believe that Advent is just around the corner—starting November 29?!

Our theme for Advent this year is “*Beholding the Stars*.” Together, we will once again prepare the way for Christ to be born and transform our world.

During the four weeks of Advent, we would like to feature poems, reflections, songs, and visual art created, read, and performed by YOU! Please start thinking of ways you can add beauty and meaning to our Advent theme. And let Christy know you have something in the works!

Week 1—Nov. 29— **Hope: *Visualizing the Stars***

Week 2—Dec. 6— **Patience: *Painting the Stars***

Week 3—Dec. 13— **Courage: *Following the Stars***

Week 4—Dec. 20— **Peace: *Praising the Stars***

Also, please mark your calendars now for the Blue Christmas Service, which will take place on the longest night of the year, Monday, December 21, at 6:00 p.m. on Zoom.

CROSS CHAT

The next cross chat is coming on Saturday, November 7 at 9:30 am, in the Peace Garden. Please reach out to Carl or Tiffany if you plan to stop in. Bring a chair, a mask, and all your infinite wisdom!

C U SOON !!

All Our Love,
~~The Elders

FAIRE REMINDER

by Jon Mezzera

Usually at this time of the year, I would be writing about all the ways that you can help make the Global Holiday Faire a huge success. As you know, we won't be able to have an in person Faire this year, so the list of things that you can do is much shorter than usual. But, we are still having our Faire online. Visit www.globalholidayfaire.org for our Virtual Marketplace. There, you will find information and links to twelve nonprofit organizations which we are supporting this year.

On the site, you will find links to five organizations which sell a huge variety of products. Three of the five have offered our shoppers exclusive coupon codes! You will also find links to Heifer International and Arbor Day Foundation for alternative giving. Help us reach our goal of \$1500 for Heifer by donating through the link on the website. You will also find information on five Vallejo charities and how to support them. A donation to the Faire will help three of

those groups which will receive that money. Gifts can be sent to the church (make your check to the church and memo it Global Holiday Faire), through tithe.ly, or through the donate button on the Faire website.

In addition to shopping yourself, the other big way to help out is to spread the word. Help get your friends, family, neighbors and coworkers to skip Amazon and shop our Virtual Market instead!

Thanks for all that you have done and will continue to do which will make this year's very different Faire as successful as possible. And keep an eye out for more reminders and other ways you can help all the way through the end of the year.

COMMON GROUND UPDATE

At the Vallejo City Council this week, Common Ground made a presentation on various models of Citizen Oversight for the Vallejo Police Department.

In order to present this information, the Public Safety Team met with hundreds of community members to hear their concerns and discuss issues with experts on oversight. We intend for this to lead to study sessions, expert forums, more community input, and listening sessions with the VPD. We showed City Council and the viewers who Common Ground is and what we can do when we organize. When we say we want to be at the table we mean it!

AND BOY DID WE MAKE AN IMPRESSION!

The City Council could not have been more complimentary. They all praised not only the presentation, but the dedication of our organization. The Mayor also mentioned including Common Ground in the weekly City of Vallejo Newsletter that goes out to thousands in Vallejo!

In other Common Ground news, the Mobile Crisis Unit Team is currently contacting people and organizations in the County in an effort to find all the people who have invested interest in making a mobile crisis unit in Vallejo-Benicia. The County currently is embarking on a mobile crisis unit pilot program that will begin in Fairfield and Dixon in January, but may not come to Vallejo until 2023 at the earliest! That is not good enough... People are hurting, people are dying, and there is no time to wait! So we are hoping to pressure the county to open a unit in Vallejo or for the city to start an independent crisis unit. There is a lot of excitement for this from non-profits, hospitals, city official, and community members, so the time is now to get to work!

While I am mostly involved in the Public Safety Team, Common Ground still has teams working on renters assistance, housing/homelessness, and economic recovery! So there is a lot to get involved in!

If you would like to get involved or just want a call to discuss these items and Common Ground, please let me know!

Allison

ADA – 30th ANNIVERSARY

Ask yourselves... Would everyone be able to get into this room? How can I be more inclusive and accessible to people with physical or mental disabilities?

Did you know that this year was the 30th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)? Neither did I! This gave people with disabilities broad protections of civil rights in the country. However, it did not end the stigma many people with disabilities deal with on a daily basis.

What is ableism? Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability. Like racism and sexism, ableism classifies entire groups of people as 'less than', and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of people with disabilities.

Ableism comes in many forms. Below are just a few:

- Lack of compliance with disability rights laws like the ADA
- Segregating students with disabilities into separate schools
- Failing to incorporate accessibility into building design plans
- Buildings without braille on signs, elevator buttons, etc.
- Building inaccessible websites
- The assumption that people with disabilities want or need to be 'fixed'
- Using disability as a punchline, or mocking people with disabilities

There is still so much to do help make sure you are living an anti-ableist life!

Read and Research:

[ADA | ACL Administration for Community Living](#)

<https://www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/>

Donate:

The Arc Alliance - supports individuals of all ages with developmental disabilities and other disabilities and their families, by providing exceptional personal services, support and training; inspiring hope, potential, and well-being, ensuring valued life experiences and treatment expected by all people.

<https://thearcalliance.org/donate-2/>

Easterseals - offers indispensable resources to more than a million people and families living with a disability annually. Offers hundreds of home and community based services and supports—categorized into five distinct support areas: Live, Learn, Work, Play and Act.

<https://www.easterseals.com/>

Dreamscape Foundation - actively working to ensure that anyone who lives with this struggle is provided with the tools and resources needed to meet their educational, employment, and independent living goals.

<https://dreamscapefoundation.org/>

MISSION ACTION GIFT

This month we are donating to two important organizations. In honor of LGBT History Month, we are donating to GLSEN (glsen.org), formerly known as the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, which is dedicated to ending homophobia in K-12 schools and fostering inclusivity in education. We are also donating to Justice in Motion (justiceinmotion.org), which defends the rights of migrant workers and their families, including seeking to end the separation of families at the border and the detention of children.

Sara

2020 has been a difficult year to say the least and it is not over. But through the grace of our Lord we are making the best of it. Keeping in touch, finding ways to help each other, learning how to use our computers better, hopefully keeping ourselves healthy....but for some, this is not the case. Our giving has, I feel, reflected our love for our church and community. Even though the church has been used less, we have continued to pay our bills and continued to help others in our monthly donations.

This October, November and December, the Ministry and Administrative Councils have agreed to double our monthly Mission Action giving. So for November the thought was because we will not be having a Thanksgiving meal (both church and family), we are asking you to donate to the church the money you might have spent on food and or gifts. We will then donate this money to a local food bank feeding those less fortunate. We will include these contributions with our monthly donation. Please think about it and have your donation into the office or on Tithely before November 22nd. Thank you in advance.

Carl

**DON'T FORGET:**

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

- ✓ Use www.goodsearch.com (instead of Google or Bing) for your internet searches.
- ✓ Start at www.goodshop.com when shopping online.
- ✓ Sign up at www.escrip.com for when you patronize local stores and restaurants.
- ✓ Take your recycling to Valcore (www.valcorerecycling.org) and ask that the money go to the church.
- ✓ Use 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!

Mark Your Calendar

Saturday, October 31	Halloween and ending Daylight Savings Time
Sunday, November 1	All Saints Sunday
Tuesday, November 3	Election Day
Saturday, November 7	Cross Chat, 9:30 a.m. in the Peace Garden
Sunday, November 8	Zoom Elders' Meeting, following worship
Wednesday, November 11	Zoom Administrative Council, 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, November 18	Zoom Ministry Council, 5:30 p.m.
Sunday, November 22	Thanksgiving / Pledge Sunday
Sunday, November 29	1st Sunday of Advent

