

The Living Word

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



www.vallejochristian.org

www.facebook.com/fccvallejo

THERE OUR HEARTS WILL BE - CARL CORDES



The Corinthian church lived in a culture that prized wealth, polish, and competition—and they were tempted to bring those same standards into their faith. Paul reminded them that God’s wisdom does not look like the world’s wisdom. It is not measured by numbers, status, or polish, but revealed through the Spirit in ways that often seem foolish to the world.

We face those same temptations today. Our culture whispers that success is found in bigger paychecks, well-padded retirement accounts, fuller sanctuaries, and shinier programs. We catch ourselves comparing—measuring our worth

against the megachurch down the street or the neighbor who seems to have it all together. But stewardship invites us into a different story, one not rooted in comparison or accumulation, but in trust, generosity, and grace.

Faith and generosity are not automatic—they grow through practice. Over time, endurance grows and builds a giving muscle.

Likewise, stewardship is not a single act, not a duty to check off, but a way of training our lives in the direction of God’s grace. Gift by gift, practice by practice, we are being shaken and shaped into people whose very lives tell the story of God’s abundance. That’s the race we are running together, a race that leads us deeper into the wisdom of God.

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THERE OUR HEARTS WILL BE CONTINUED

Each time we give, each time we open our hands, we are being stretched, shaken, and reshaped. Over time, what feels hard or uncertain begins to grow lighter, even joyful. That is how our lives echo the wisdom of God, not the wisdom of this age. On average, Americans give 2% of their income to charity. Giving even 1% more of our annual income would be transformative for our congregation and other organizations doing good in God's world. Thank you for prayerfully considering your commitment.

In the month of October you will be hearing more about our theme; "There Our Hearts Will Be". Each week will be a different thought from our awesome membership. Coming in November you will be asked to make your commitment to this Community of First Christian Church (DOC) of Vallejo.

As of this writing, I am looking for one more Worship Leader for October 11th. If interested, please let me know. I am truly inspired by this Congregation for all we do and for all we give for the Church and for others.

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MISSION ACTION GIFT - Helen Mezzera

Baby2Baby is receiving October's Mission Action monthly gift.

Baby2Baby is a nonprofit organization which provides support to more than one million children in need across the country. They help with diapers, clothing, and all the basic necessities that every child deserves. They reach out to homeless shelters, domestic violence programs, foster care, hospitals and school districts. They even help children who have lost everything in the wake of disasters.

Thank you Sonya for making us aware of Baby2Baby. If you have a suggestion for an organization that you would like Ministry Council to consider to receive our monthly mission action donation, please let me know.

Also: If you would like to support our Free Little Pantry, let me know. Personal items like soap, shampoo, etc. as well as snacks would sure be appreciated!

PASTOR'S PEN

So let's do it—full of belief, confident that we're presentable inside and out. Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word.

Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.

—Hebrews 10:24-25 (MSG)

Thank you to everyone who has been faithfully participating in our visioning process to produce refreshed Vision, Mission, and Identity statements for FCC Vallejo!

Scripture says we ought to be confident in who we are and stay true to the promise that God is calling us forward to something that gives us life. In this process I have seen us be inventive and encouraging, loving and helpful to one another. Every moment hasn't been easy, but seeing you work together as a group to solve problems and set off 'light bulbs' of discovery in one another has been a delight.

We've had two great worship sessions and collected lots of great wisdom in our work together. The work now continues with a smaller team who will be taking that work and honing into statements that best reflect the wisdom of our collective creativity. Sonya Blevins, Glenda Goode, Allison Mezzera, Jon Mezzera, and Beth Grose have all agreed to work together to create the draft statements that will be shared for reflection and feedback from the congregation. After some further fine-tuning we hope that we can adopt our new statements at our congregational meeting on December 13th.

For more information on the details of the workshops you can look for an email from me in our google group sent on September 23rd. Or reach out and I'll send it to you again!

Please reach out with any questions, and please continue praying for our congregation to be led by Spirit and Wisdom through this process.

Peace,
Pastor Sara

NOTES FROM THE PASTOR•World Communion Sunday October 4th

As Disciples of Christ we practice sharing Communion at the Lord's Table every Sunday - but for many others it is much less frequent, sometimes monthly or quarterly practice. On the first Sunday in October each year we celebrate World Communion Sunday, a day that focuses on global Christian Unity in the shared celebration of Holy Communion. Congregations across the world will gather around tables of all kinds, breaking the bread and sharing the cup in the spirit of ecumenism and connection.

In worship on October 4th we'll celebrate 'bread for feasting' at FCC Vallejo as we remember Jesus sharing a post-resurrection breakfast on the beach with his Disciples. We'll see a collection of loaves and breads that remind us of the diversity and beauty of our siblings in faith around the world. I hope you'll join us in this celebration!

•All Saints Worship November 1st

For All Saints Day we'll honor the people in our lives and community who have passed from this life into the next. During worship we'll build an altar to remember their contributions and celebrate the love we still have for them. Bring photos, objects or other symbols to commemorate the saints in your life. They could be family members, friends or other spiritual ancestors that have guided you. We are so fortunate to belong to the communion of saints that connects us all, living and dead, in community and fellowship through Christ.

•Coffee with the Pastor

Would you like to join me for coffee and a chat? Please come! On Thursday, October 29th from 9:00 to 11:00 am you can find me at The Grind Cafe in Vallejo (402 Tuolumne St.). This is a chance to spend some informal time together catching up or discussing events of the day. Drop in for a few minutes or unwind for the whole time. No agenda, just an opportunity to connect.

•DSF Certificate Program Update

Since January I've been taking courses from the Disciples Seminary Foundation's Certificate Program for Pastoral Leadership in a Divided World. I've completed nine out of the ten courses and have just one to go! It's been a great way to connect with other lay and clergy leaders across the denomination, learn from top notch Disciples Academics, and reflect on my own identity in ministry here and now.

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The most recent course was called The Church at Work: Worship, Preaching, and Pastoral Care, and was taught by Rev. Dr. Miseon Choi. For our third lesson we learned about doing pastoral care through life-cycle rituals. For the assignment we read several chapters about the importance of rituals, worship across cultures, and liturgies that provide care for people. The following is a reflection I got to submit based on the readings - featuring none other than our very own congregation! I thought you might like to see a sample of the work I've been doing. (It features the four attributes of Ritual according to Susan Marie Smith: 1. Ritual creates strategic contrast, 2. It is contextual or situational, 3. It operates beneath the level of consciousness, and 4. It shifts and mediates power.)

The readings this week were really great at offering a wider view on what counts as ritual, how it makes a difference, and how it helps people move through significant life moments or changes. There were some great examples that helped me think about ways of incorporating new ideas in worship or congregational life.

One ritual that our congregation hosts each year is a "Blue Christmas" service. It's a somber and quiet service of meditation for people that are grieving, feeling sad, or are otherwise struggling during what is typically thought of as a happy holiday season. We hold it on the winter solstice, because it's the longest night of the year - symbolizing a turning point in the season and the return of 'the light' as days start to lengthen again.

The ritual creates strategic contrast because it stands out against the traditional Advent liturgies and cheerful celebrations of December. It is reflective instead of jubilant, it is set in the shadows of evening instead of the brightness of day. It is contextual because while people feel sadness and grief during all times of the year, during the holidays it can seem especially lonely to carry heavy burdens while everyone else seems happy. There's an added layer of longing when you miss someone or wish your life was different amidst the cheery commercials and images of loving families sharing special moments. I would say it operates beneath the level of consciousness because "participants are freed to enter a realm greater than themselves." They can "lose themselves" and are enabled to surrender to and be part of something over which they are not in charge." (Smith, 7). Instead of trying to hold in what are often considered negative emotions, people are invited to give voice to them, honoring the realities they are facing without trying to hide them. They see that they are not alone. They are able to receive care and compassion and can feel like there is space for them. This act of making visible what is often unseen, of taking back the cover from people's pain and sadness is the thing that then shifts and mediates power. Claiming your space to belong even when things are difficult can be very powerful.

In addition to serving our own congregation, I have seen some community members return for only this service year after year because they need the healing it offers. I hope that it helps people make sense of how to hold grief and loneliness together with love and cosmic hope.

RUACH READS - Sara Steenhouse

Ruach: (Hebrew) *n. Wind, breath, spirit. An invisible, animating force known by its movement. Pronounced ROO-ahkh.*

FCC Vallejo has launched a new Spirituality Book Club called **Ruach Reads**. This offering will give us a chance to read, reflect, and discuss books that focus on our faith lives. I hope the reading and discussions will speak to our souls and give us some meaningful opportunities for growth. We'll meet bi-monthly in the fourth week. I hope to be able to offer attendance by Zoom for those unable to join in-person. If you'd like to host a meeting in your home, let me know!

Our first meeting in August was delightful! Thanks to Carl & Jeanne Cordes for hosting.

We're still arranging the time and place for October's meeting, but you can get a book now to be prepared.

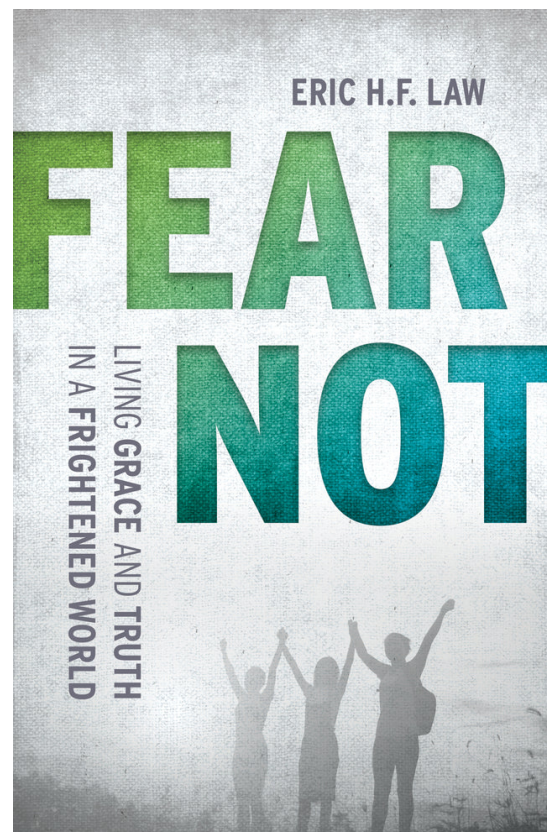
For our second meeting we'll read the book **Fear Not: Living Grace and Truth in a Frightened World**

Discover how to break free of fear and live courageously in anxious times.

We're more afraid than ever right now. Scripture tells us to "fear not," but how do we actually do that? How do we move from fear-based living to more faithful, graceful living in frightened times?

Fear Not takes a look at what's behind our culture of fear and offers a vision for living in courageous communities committed to truth-telling, grace, hope, and love.

Author Eric H. F. Law, an Episcopal priest, is the founder and executive director of the Kaleidoscope Institute, the mission of which is to create diverse and sustainable communities. For more than 20 years, he has provided transformative and comprehensive training and resources for churches and ministries in all the major church denominations in the United States and Canada.



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RUACH READS - continued.

You can purchase the book from [Chalice Press here](#) (30% off right now!) Or if you prefer, [here from bookshop.org](#).

I hope you'll join us for some snacks, connection, and discussion of this book. Even if you don't finish it all, pick a couple of chapters that look interesting and we'd love to hear what you think.

Ruach Reads Calendar

October *Fear Not* by Eric Law

February *All About Love* by bell hooks

April *Sustaining Hope in an Unjust World: How to Keep Going When You Want to Give Up* by Timothy Charles Murphy

June *In Defense of Kindness: Why It Matters, How It Changes Our Lives, and How It Can Save the World* by Bruce Reyes-Chow

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WHERE IN THE CHURCH...? - Dave Mezzera

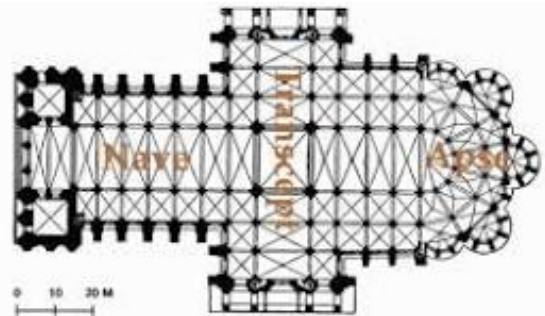
Jon and Allison are recently back from a two-week trek through Great Britain. One of their adventures was a tour of Westminster Abbey - a cathedral in London that's just a "little larger" than our sanctuary at FCC-Vallejo! Some of the architectural terms found in a cathedral such as that or in a large basilica are different from what we might be used to here. Are you aware of these liturgical and ecclesiastical terms? If not, their explanations may be found below.

- [A] Apse;
- [B] Nave;
- [C] Transept;
- [D] Narthex;
- [E] Chancel;
- [F] Vestibule;
- [G] Pulpit;
- [H] Ambo;
- [I] Lectern;
- [J] Sacristy.

WHERE IN THE CHURCH...?- Dave Mezzera

[A] Check the diagram to the right: an **apse** is the large semi-circular recess in a cathedral, with a dome roof, under which sits the altar. It comes from the Latin word for "arch."

[B] Check the diagram to the right: a **nave** is the central part of a cathedral, intended to accommodate most of the congregation.



[C] Check the diagram to the right: the **transept** is either of the two parts forming the arms of a cross (as can be seen from the overhead view) that project out from the nave; from the Latin word for "transverse."

[D] The **narthex** is a porch over the entrance of some churches where catechumens (those studying to be members of the Church) would be required to sit.

[E] The **chancel** is a part of the cathedral near the altar reserved for clergy or choir members, usually up a set of stairs and facing the altar perpendicularly. Note that our neighbor, First Presbyterian Church, refers to their choir as the "Chancel Choir."

[F] **Vestibule** comes from a Latin word for "entrance." It is the hall or lobby just inside the outer doors of a church. We actually have a **vestibule** at FCC-V, between the outer big doors and the inner doors leading into the sanctuary.

[G] Now on to some other features inside a church itself: a **pulpit** is a raised, enclosed stand, usually on a side wall of a cathedral, where the clergy would preach a sermon. See the picture below left.



[H] An **ambo** is a type of **pulpit**; but instead of the stairs being hidden, it is an oblong raised dais with visible steps at either end. See the picture above right.

[I] What about a **lectern**? It is a stand with a sloping top to hold books or notes that a lector or preacher stands behind to read or sermonize. FCC-V actually has three of them - one next to and two above/behind the altar.

Rev. Renae Earl, friend of FCCV, a palliative care chaplain at Kaiser Hospital (San Leandro) and a member of First Christian Church in Concord, will be facilitating a Grief Group on Zoom beginning October 1 and continuing on the first Thursday of every month. Grief can take many forms-- loss of a job, death of a loved one, divorce, or receiving a medical diagnosis, to name a few. All who are grieving are welcome to attend. You are not alone. Shared community and prayer have power. If you have questions, please reach out to Rev. Renae Earl at Nae2Nae@att.net.



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

October 3 - Narcan Training and IHART Conversation, 1:00-3:00 pm.

October 5-12 - Pastor Sara on vacation, out of office.

October 8 - Admin Council Meeting, 5 pm on Zoom.

October 15 - Ministry Council Meeting, 5 pm on Zoom.

October 16-18 - CCNC-N Men's Retreat

October 17 - FCCV at the Farmers' Market

October 19 - Elders Meeting, 6:30 pm on Zoom.

October 22 - PRC Meeting, 1:30 pm in the parlor.

October 27 - Ruach Reads, 7:00 - 8:30 pm in the Parlor.

October 29 - Coffee with the Pastor, 9-11 am at The Grind Cafe.

The deadline for the next Living Word is October 28
