



“WHEN WE ARE SECURELY ROOTED IN PERSONAL INTIMACY WITH GOD, THE SOURCE OF LIFE, IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO REMAIN FLEXIBLE WITHOUT BEING RELATIVISTIC, CONVINCED WITHOUT BEING RIGID, WILLING TO CONFRONT WITHOUT BEING OFFENSIVE, GENTLE AND FORGIVING WITHOUT BEING SOFT.”

– HENRI J.M. NOUWEN

# THE CLARION

FALL  
2021

First Presbyterian Church of San Rafael • 1869 – 2019 • Serving our Community for 150 Years



## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH *of* SAN RAFAEL



I am grateful for the abundance of fruits and vegetables that have shown up at in our church and my office this

summer - plums, pears, tomatoes, potatoes, and more. This points me to a theology of abundance. It is built on the trust that regardless of what is going on in the world, there will be enough to share. In contrast, scarcity states that regardless of what is going on in the world, we will always need more than we have.

A theology of abundance assumes relationships with others. One pastor friend talks about this theology in terms of zucchini. “I may not have all I need, but my neighbor’s situation is different and the next thing I know, there’s zucchini on my porch as well as a shoulder to cry on.” There is enough, not just because I’m enough but because WE are enough and WE are beloved by God.

Over these past 18 months, I have seen ways our congregation has responded to the pandemic by living out a theology of abundance. We found ways to offer abundant friendship and connections on Zoom, phone calls, cards in the mail, and email. People generously donated funds to help others pay their rent so they would not lose their housing. You have been an amazing circle of love for people in our church when their beloved family members died. Most recently when we hosted memorial services for Sean Castle and Alan Pabst, there was an abundance of caring, hospitality and certainly cookies.

In the last month I have felt a paradox of abundance and scarcity. An abundance of fires that threaten so much of California’s beautiful forests, an abundance of worry for the women and girls of Afghanistan as the Taliban takes over, an abundance of grief as the reports of the climate crisis are published, an abundance of sadness over the deaths of over 600,000 from COVID-19. And there is the scarcity of water in California as we face a historic drought.

These are realities.

And so is this. There is an abundance of openness and courage in this Clarion as we begin a new program year in a very different world. In the midst of so many challenges and unknowns, the session and committees are making plans for worship, spiritual growth opportunities, action for social justice, loving our neighbors and inviting people of all ages to join in. New people are finding us online and being fed in our spiritual lives.

We will be cautious regarding COVID-19 and the Delta Variant while offering a variety of ways to be a community of faith rooted in Divine Love. When we are engaged in the life, ministry and mission of our church, the Spirit moves and we can experience hope, comfort, even joy.

*Cynthia*  
Cynthia Cochran-Carney

**Sundays beginning September 12**

8:30 am Contemplative Service in the chapel  
10:00 am Worship Service in the sanctuary

**Livestreaming on YouTube starting at 9:55 am**

Go to church website for link to YouTube livestream  
www.fpcsr.org

**September 12 Kickoff Sunday**

Sermon: Learning to See  
Scripture: John 9:1-12  
Preacher: Cynthia Cochran-Carney  
Special Music – Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir

**September 19**

**Series: Faith and Science in the 21st Century #1**  
(also Adult Ed classes)

Sermon: God and the Cosmos  
Preacher: Cynthia Cochran-Carney  
Welcoming Chitoka Webb as seminary intern  
Special Music – Chancel Choir and Handbell Duet

**September 26**

**Faith and Science Series #2**

Sermon: Quantum Physics and Eternity  
Preacher: Cynthia Cochran-Carney  
Special Music: Deborah Tisdale, singer

**October 3 World Communion Sunday**  
**Faith and Science Series #3**

Sermon: Imago Dei and Science  
(The Image of God in All People)  
Preacher: Cynthia Cochran-Carney  
Special Music – Chancel Choir and guest percussion

**October 10**

**Faith and Science Series #4**

Sermon: Science and Being Mortal  
Preacher: Cynthia Cochran-Carney  
Special Music – to be scheduled

**October 17**

Sermon/Theme: Love Our Neighbors  
Scripture: Matthew 22: 35-40  
Preacher: Cynthia Cochran-Carney  
Commission Presbyterian Disaster Assistance team  
to a week of rebuilding in Oroville, CA  
Special Music – Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir

**October 24**

Preacher: Chitoka Webb, seminary intern  
Guest Musician: Meredith Spears, singer

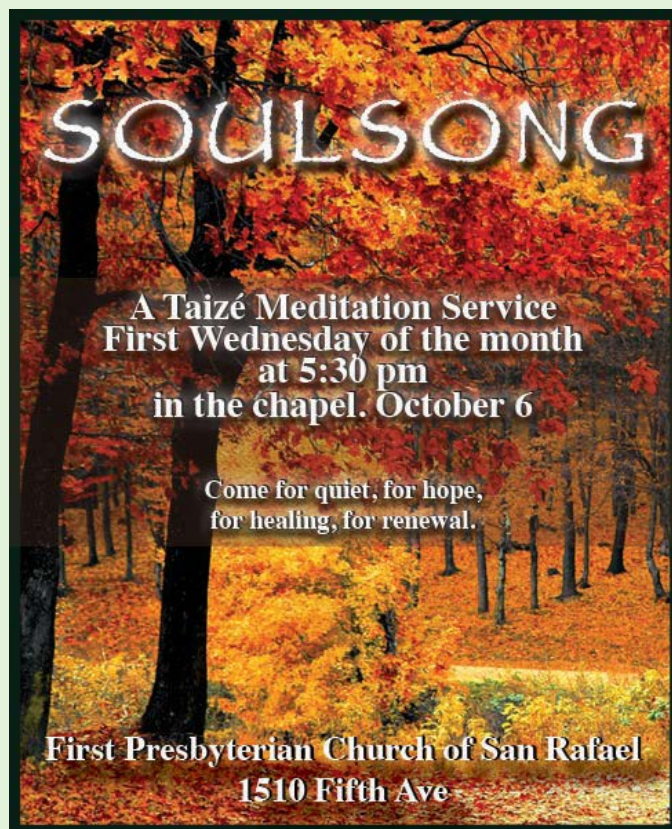
**October 31**

Sermon: *Dia de los Muertos*: Life, Death,  
and Remembering  
Preacher: Cynthia Cochran-Carney

**Fall Kickoff Luncheon**



Celebrate fall on September 12 with the return to two services and a Homecoming/Fall Kickoff Luncheon after the 10 am service. We'll have a simple lunch, most likely wrapped sandwiches, cookies, and fruit. The mantra is to be flexible. As it gets closer, we'll decide whether to eat outside on the patio or indoors in Canoles Hall. Can we count you in? Please RSVP to Ginny Schultz at virginia\_schultz@hotmail.com so we'll know how many to plan for.





# CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY

First Presbyterian Church has, for many years, provided a contemplative worship ministry. These programs provide opportunities for individuals to grow and nurture their spiritual life. Here are the current ongoing offerings that are open for all to join. As our program continues to develop, we will inform the congregation of new opportunities.

Lorna Wuertz, Contemplative Spirituality Coordinator [lornawuertz@gmail.com](mailto:lornawuertz@gmail.com)



## Centering Prayer

Centering Prayer is a practice of silent prayer and meditation based on the contemplative practices of early Christians. Individual responses vary, and this prayer of the heart can be an enriching experience in opening up to God's love. We use Fr. Thomas Keating's teaching as well as the expression of other modern-day mystics. The morning consists of moving meditation and silent still meditation, followed by time to respond *lectio-divina* style (to listen with the "ear of the heart") to readings, poetry, and writings. Centering Prayer is held on Wednesdays from 10 to 11 am.



## Contemplative Worship Service Sundays 8:30 am

The 8:30 Sunday morning contemplative worship service in our chapel weaves silence, meditative music, chants, and weekly communion around a sermon message. Discussion is encouraged around thoughts, concerns, and joys that are experienced during the service.



## SoulSong

SoulSong is a monthly candlelight service of contemplative readings, special music, and Taizé chants which invite the worship seeker to be still and listen to the voice within. This service takes place on the first Wednesday of the month at 5:30 pm in the chapel.



## Classes and Seasonal Retreats

We look forward to once again offering classes and occasional retreats in which the congregation and community can explore spiritual practices of Christianity and other traditions. These practices invite us to expand and deepen our experience of the Holy Mystery in new ways.

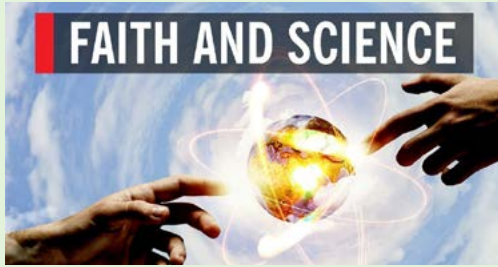


## Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction is an opportunity to meet one-on-one with a trained spiritual director who can help you identify and trust your own experiences of the Divine; to assist you in discernment and difficult choices; or to share your hopes, struggles, and losses. A spiritual director serves as a companion and witness, one who helps you discern the Divine where you might have missed it and to integrate that awareness into your daily life. Trained spiritual directors are available through our church. If you have questions, contact Lorna Wuertz, [lornawuertz@gmail.com](mailto:lornawuertz@gmail.com).



One of the great discoveries in the past year was the value of our Zoom sermon discussions: opportunities to reflect on a teaching, learn more about a topic, and share our thoughts and questions. With a robust sermon series coming this fall, what better time to have more rewarding discussions?



## **Faith and Science**

**September 19 – October 10**

**Following 10:00 am worship service**

We are so enthused about our fall sermon series on faith and science that we will be offering weekly Adult Education sessions during the series, including resources such as short videos on the sermon topic, responses to the sermon, and discussion. We will be sharing resources from the

Episcopal Church, which describes its “Faith and Science in the 21st Century” series this way: “Science or faith? The battle rages, from millennials and GenXers questioning the relevance of religion to older adults who doubt the validity of science (and vice versa), but these two are not mutually exclusive. They can, in fact, be mutually enriching and complementary, once their proper domains are understood and respected.”

September 19: God and the Cosmos

September 26: Quantum Physics and Eternity

October 3: Imago Dei and Science (The Image of God in All People)

October 10: Science and Being Mortal

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## **Stewardship Questions and Answers**

**October 31, 11:10 am**

Please join the Stewardship Committee to learn about our church finances and how you can contribute to the church’s continuing vitality as we move into the future.

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## **Indigenous Revitalization**

**Rev. Nancy Wiens**

**November 21, 11:10 am**



Redwoods Presbytery operates 47 churches and two camps on land that was once home to 13 tribal nations. We have an opportunity to humbly and honestly participate in shaping how we move forward in relationship with the Indigenous people of this land.

Among the many issues pertinent to Indigenous Revitalization, two rise to the surface now. The Doctrine of Discovery, which originated in the 15th century, is at the core of dispossessing Indigenous people of their lands. In 2018, our denomination joined other mainline denominations in repudiating this doctrine. Second, U.S. boarding schools for Native American children have entered the public spotlight with the discovery of children’s bodies on these old sites. Many of the schools were operated by Christian churches; Presbyterians ran

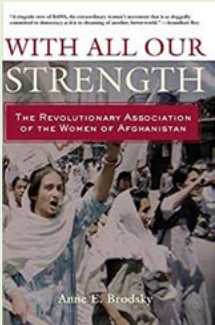
nine or more. At least part of the intent of the schools was to remove the Indigenous culture of the children. We cannot be responsible for our ancestors’ worldviews, decisions, or actions. Nancy will help us lament the past and learn what type of allyship is desired of us in the future.

Please see the weekly Enews for announcements of other Adult Education offerings.



**Women’s Book Group – Next meeting September 29, 7:00 pm (hopefully at church)**

The women and friends of our church have been meeting monthly for many years to discuss a book that was agreed to be read and discussed. We have found that having a discussion leader helps to keep our conversation focused on the book’s message. However, we always have time set aside for personal sharing and (before COVID) snacks!



We’ve read many books on subjects including war; antisemitism; race relations; biographies, non-Christian religions; mysteries; fiction; historical events; and life, marriage, and family.

We have selected an historical novel for conversation on September 29, *Eternal* by Lisa Scottoline. A brief review: ‘Life seems ideal, yet beneath the surface, a moral storm is brewing. Through the characters presented in *Eternal* we watch Italy come to terms with fascism and antisemitism, and desperate families deal with food shortages, assaults, and the loss of loved ones. Elisabetta is just one of the novel’s many strong female characters who perform countless acts of heroism in aid of family, friends, and country. It’s all set against Benito Mussolini’s rise to power.’

All women are welcome to join our conversation. Please come and share the ideas that came up for you reading the book, or come and decide if the book being discussed is something you might like to read.

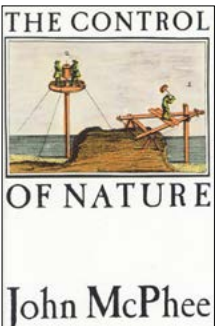
If you have questions, check the weekly Enews or contact [susan.isler.sport@gmail.com](mailto:susan.isler.sport@gmail.com) 415-272-2526.

**Men’s Book Group**

**The Men’s Book Group meets at 8:30 am on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month**

Until further notice, we will be meeting by Zoom, using the usual link to FPCSR Zoom gatherings.

Our next book, *The Control of Nature*, is John McPhee’s bestselling account of places where people are locked in combat with nature. Taking us deep into these contested territories, McPhee details the strategies and tactics through



which people attempt to control nature. Most striking is his depiction of the main contestants: nature in complex and awesome guises and those attempting to wrest control from her — stubborn, sometimes foolhardy, often ingenious, and always arresting characters.

Schedule for *The Control of Nature*

- 9 September: pages 3–94;
- 23 September: pages 95–182;
- 14 October: pages 183–277

Please contact John Robinson – [johnrob82p@gmail.com](mailto:johnrob82p@gmail.com) for more information.



**Bible Study with Bob Hirni**  
**Wednesdays at 11:15 in the Sanctuary**

Wednesday morning Bible study will resume at 11:15 in the Sanctuary. Bob Hirni will moderate the discussion of the Book of Hebrews. All are welcome.



## Brief Financial Update

### Financial Update

Many have been wondering about the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the church's financial situation. The primary consequence has been the inability to hold in-person meetings and events, which has resulted in a large drop in our rental income. In addition, the Marin Head Start lease ended as of July 31. We have another preschool/daycare program that is very interested in moving into the space in a few months, but we are not currently receiving rent on this space.

The church budget breaks out our income as follows:

Pledges and contributions from members and friends: ~ 67% of income

Rental income: ~25% of income

Investment income and releases from our quasi-endowments: ~7% of income

In 2020, our rental income was down by over \$45,000. However, that shortfall was mostly offset by the \$40,170 funding we received from the U.S. Government's CARES Act program. This year, we didn't qualify to receive CARES Act funding, and our rental income is likely to be even less than last year. We are fortunate to have a strong balance sheet with no debt and significant quasi-endowments. While we weather these difficult times, we continue to be grateful for the generous contributions made by our members and friends. If you are able, please consider whether you would like to make an additional contribution to help cover the shortfall.

## Stewardship

Thank you for your generosity during the year. Fall is the time we think about the financial commitments we pledge to the church for the coming year. Regardless of the amount, each pledge is very important. By pledging, you provide the session with the means to carry out our plans. Pledge information will be sent to all members and active friends in mid-October and due back by late November.



Donations, including pledges, can be made by cash, check, or online (<https://www.fpcsr.org/giving> or use the QR code below). Other ways to donate include transferring appreciated securities, e.g., stocks, as well as distributions from your IRA.

Please contact Susan Bryant, Lynn MacDermott, or Ann Pope in the church office if you have questions.





The Mission and Social Justice Committee has started planning for a full year of service projects, educational programs, and work with a variety of local, national, and international service organizations. Over the summer, we completed the distribution of \$8,000 budgeted for support of the following organizations: Marin Interfaith Council, the Ecumenical Association for Housing, The Street Chaplaincy, Westminster Woods, Marin Organizing Committee, Bread for the World, Homeward Bound of Marin, Interfaith Power and Light, San Francisco Theological Seminary, Spahr Center/Transgender Heartline Center, Project Avery, Gilead House, and Presbyterian Mission Co-worker Rev. Karla Koll in Costa Rica. These organizations help us extend the mission outreach of our congregation further than we can do on our own.



The programs for fall include supporting the **Welcoming Home** collection of household items for families moving into permanent housing after a time of homelessness (September 18) and participating in the **Pedal for Protein** bike ride (September 16–23). We are also sending a team to help rebuild homes in the Sierra Foothills decimated by recent fires (see story on **PDA Mission trip** to Oroville). On November 14, the congregation will come together to pack **50 bags of groceries**, which will be distributed by the Ritter Center in time

for Thanksgiving. Please save the date of December 5 for our annual **Advent Festival** and **Alternative Gift Market** when we host a variety of organizations with products to sell and opportunities to support agencies.

Two other efforts of the church that come under the Mission Committee are the **Green Team** and the **Youth on the Move** program. The Green Team (chaired by Ralph Purdy) promotes individual and group efforts to address climate change locally and beyond. Youth on the Move sponsors a variety of programs for young people, and this fall we are excited that we will be able to resume an afterschool enrichment program for underserved children enrolled at San Pedro Elementary School in San Rafael. This project provides classes and hands-on experiences one afternoon a week for first-to-fifth-graders in cooking/nutrition, science, art, gardening, and movement. Anyone interested in observing one of these classes or thinking of volunteering to be an aide, please contact Leslie Purdy (email below).

The Mission Committee meets most third Tuesdays of the month at 7 pm throughout the year and welcomes guests and observers. Please contact Leslie Purdy, [rlpurdy869@gmail.com](mailto:rlpurdy869@gmail.com) if you would like to support a particular project or just come to learn more about the many ways we can be contributing to our church, our community and the world.



## Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) Mission Trip October 17–22, 2021

The FPCSR PDA mission team will travel to Oroville, California to help rebuild houses damaged or destroyed by the Camp Fire in November 2018. Paradise, a foothill town in Butte County, was completely destroyed by the Camp Fire. Our work will focus on home rebuilding in the town of Paradise or other smaller communities. We will stay at the Trinity Presbyterian Church in Oroville. This will be the first time we will drive, rather than fly, to our host church and worksites after years of traveling out of state.

Our work will involve such activities as framing, drywall, painting, siding, flooring, etc. We are fortunate to have the Hope Crisis Response Network (HCRN) to direct our work on the homes in Paradise. They will have construction experts available to guide us and answer our questions.

If you can make a donation to support the PDA mission trip, you can mail a check to the church or go to the church website and click on "Give Online." Enter amount in "other" category and write in "2021 PDA mission trip." We have 14 people signed up, with room for more. To join our group or get more information please contact Ralph Purdy, [rlpurdy869@gmail.com](mailto:rlpurdy869@gmail.com).



# CALENDER AND SEMINARY INTERN

## **Fall Highlights**

### **Sunday, September 12:**

Return to two services – 8:30 am and 10:00 am  
Homecoming and Fall Kickoff Luncheon

### **Saturday, September 18:**

Next collection for Welcoming Home at  
St. Luke's Presbyterian Church  
Redwoods Presbytery meeting at Westminster Woods,  
Occidental, CA

### **September 19–25:**

Pedal for Protein fundraiser for food pantries & meal ministries in  
Northern California

### **Sunday, October 3:**

World Communion Sunday  
Peace and Global Witness special offering

### **Wednesday, October 6:**

SoulSong monthly service resumes at 5:30 pm

### **October 17–22:**

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance mission trip to Oroville  
for home repair after fires

### **Sunday, November 14:**

Pack Thanksgiving bags for Ritter Center, after 10:00 service

### **Sunday, December 5:**

Advent Festival and Alternative Gift Fair

## **Zoom Info for all gatherings**

Click on link <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/738258079>

Password for the FPCSR Zoom room. **996359**

Meeting ID: 738 258 079

Call in number 1-669-900-9128



## **Chitoka Webb, Seminary Intern**

During worship on September 19, we will welcome our friend Chitoka Webb, who has been worshipping with us since early 2020, in a new role as seminary intern at FPCSR. Chitoka was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee, and came to San Francisco Theological Seminary from Iowa City, Iowa, where she received a BA in English from the University of Iowa and was a member of the First Presbyterian Church of Iowa City. She expects to graduate in the fall of 2022. She is under care of the Presbytery of East Iowa as a candidate for ministry.

Chitoka's internship (10 hours per week, September through May) will include helping to lead worship at least monthly, preaching three or four times, and teaching occasional adult education classes. She will meet weekly with Cynthia Cochran-Carney, who is serving as her supervisor. She will also plan and work with church volunteers to implement and evaluate programs in which people from the church and community participate, and work with Cynthia and pastoral care associate Lorna Wuertz on attending to pastoral care needs. She will attend meetings of the session, FPCSR committees, and Redwoods Presbytery. As time allows, she will continue community service projects at San Quentin Death Row Ministry, Trans Heartline House, and the garden at San Pedro School.

**First Presbyterian Church of San Rafael** – 1510 Fifth Avenue, San Rafael, California 94901

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Pastor: Rev. Cynthia Cochran-Carney

Sunday Worship Services – 8:30 am and 10:00 am