



Pastor's Message

*Take courage my soul, and let us journey on
Though the night is dark and I am far from home
Thanks be to God, the morning light appears.
The storm is passing over. The storm is passing over.
The storm is passing over, hallelu.
Hallelujah! Hal-le-lu-jah! Ha-le-lu-jah!*

I have sung this song more times and more ways than I can count. For a while it was the most-played song in my iTunes library. Never have I felt the words mean as much as they do this season. *The storm is passing over.* Like so many Biblical stories, we've endured the brunt of the waves, the winds, as well as the chaos and fear the storm brings. Now the seas are beginning to calm and the clouds part. Vaccinations are rolling out for (most) of our children. Boosters are already going into the arms of our elders. Here at FCCSR we have received clearance to **return to worship in our sanctuary!** *Hallelujah!*

That's correct, please mark your calendars for Sunday, October 24th. On that Sunday we will open the red doors of the sanctuary and invite you inside for 10am worship. I hope that this is good news for you and yours. And, yet, I also know that coming to church is not possible for all, and/or you might not be quite ready to sit in a building with others. Over the coming weeks we will also be turning on a few new cameras in the sanctuary that will bring what is happening directly into your living space. Hopefully in the coming weeks we will be able to worship together from literally everywhere. We will send out specifics on the live video as soon as it is available.

(continued on page 2)

The SEER October 2021

Inside this issue

Pastor's Message.....	1
Pastor's Message (cont.)	2
Worship Schedule	2
Council Highlights.....	3
Worship in the Sanctuary	3
Stewardship.....	4
Outreach Report.....	5
Financial Report	5
Mission Story	6
Mission Story (cont.)	7
October Birthdays	7
Green Minute.....	8

Pastor:

Diana Bell-Kerr

Music Director:

Bill O'Neill

Accompaniment:

Chris Alexander

Office Administrator

Paddy Coreris

2000 Humboldt Street
Sant Rosa, CA 95404

707-546-0998

Email:

firstucc.admin@sonic.net

Website: fccsr.org

(continued from page 1)

We have a few more projects on the horizon including the desire to create a family-friendly worship experience(s). Zoom fatigue hit our families extremely hard and we need to make space for them (and their weary eyes/bodies) in our sanctuary ritual(s). Sunday, October 31st we will worship utilizing some Godly Play storytelling. So, bring your inner child (and your actual ones) and join us for worship.

I would like to say that the storm has moved along, but that would be getting ahead of ourselves. The storm *is passing over*. There may be waves and wind gusts in our future – and we will ride those out together. Today, I give thanks for the opportunity to plan on seeing you in-person as we gather for worship.

The storm is passing over, hallelu!

Pastor Diana

2 versions of the “Storm Is Passing Over”

Susannah Blinkoff:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/3quH3AiK4WSl9pWcXdWxfJ?si=MGFyc4WWR0aorpNsLgVr2w>

FPC Brooklyn:

https://open.spotify.com/track/1gdvOt8woME4pigkxMQ8Hd?si=S3Fy_tkqQY2LWpHVTGf1og

Worship Schedule for October

Services begin at 10 am

October 10
Church parking lot in person

October 17
On Zoom

October 24
In person in the Sanctuary — Please print out your bulletin and bring it with you.

October 31
In person in the Sanctuary — Please print out your bulletin and bring it with you.



Council Highlights September 28, 2021

Winnie Hogoboom, Clerk

- Approved the report from the **Re-gathering Committee**. We will be worshipping in our Sanctuary with strict precautions in place: Masking, distancing, elbow-bumping, humming to hymns (congregation), choir singing while wearing special masks, and so on.
The first Sunday will be October 24! Be there!
- Heard that **Stewardship letters** will be mailed out on October 19, in preparation for kicking off the annual campaign on October 24.
- Discussed the process for finalizing the long-term revision of our **Bylaws**: Council will consider revisions on October 14. A copy and a summary of the more significant changes will be sent out on October 15; a Question & Answer session will be held after church on October 24; and the **membership will vote after church on Reformation Sunday, October 31, at a Congregational Meeting**.
- Council meetings will now be held on the **Second Thursday of each month, at 6:30. The next three meetings will be October 14, November 11, and December 9**. Meetings will continue to be on Zoom. They are open to congregants—call the office if you'd like to attend, and the link will be sent to you.

Worship In Person in the Sanctuary Beginning, Sunday, October 24, 2021 at 10am

What can I expect?

(Expect to hear more as we get a little closer.)

Expect to be welcomed into our sanctuary through the front doors.

Expect to sanitize your hands and make sure your mask is secure and snug as you enter.

Expect to keep those elbow bump and waves coming!

Expect to worship with a full liturgy including prayers, preaching, and choral music.

Expect the chairs to be spaced apart to encourage air circulation.

Expect to come caffeinated (the kitchen is closed; coffee/food will not be served at this time).

Expect to bring your whole self to worship.

Expect to experience the Holy Spirit.

Expect to participate (by your presence) in offering strength and support to others.

We hope to see you in-person and on the live stream soon!

Stewardship

Virginia Greenwald

Supporting our Church into the Future

As we enter the time of year when we are being asked to discern our commitment to support the mission of our congregation for 2022, we might also think about what we are able to do to sustain our congregation’s mission for future generations.

Do you know that our congregation has a small endowment fund? It was created to provide interest income that supports ministry into the future. By building up this fund, future generations will be able to count on support to continue ministry in this place. Dan and I are grateful to be able to contribute to this fund. If you are able, we invite you to consider joining us in this opportunity to be a blessing to future generations. Checks can be sent to the church with the designation “Endowment Fund” on the note line.

FCCSR is “Building our Soil”

As we regather this fall we are coming together in new and old ways – thankful that the soil has held us firmly. We want to build the soil and plant seeds for future years and generations to harvest. We know that the soil needs tending so, let us pledge to build our soil together this day and in coming days and weeks. That vision begins today as we invest in one another through this community. We hope you will look for ways you can build our soil in coming weeks through our fall stewardship campaign.



Outreach News

Ruth Tucker Bogart

Neighbors in Need

We are proud to be a “5 for 5” church, giving to each of the five special offerings of the UCC. Neighbors in Need is typically observed World Communion Sunday, the first Sunday in October, but your gifts are welcome any time.

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the [Council for American Indian Ministry](#) (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC’s Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.

There are several ways to give to Neighbors in Need. You can mail a check to the church, writing NiN on the memo line. Alternatively, you can go to the Giving page of the church’s website (<https://fccsr.org/giving/>) and choose Givelify or PayPal.

Givelify lets you choose whether your gift is for offering, tithe, or other. If you choose other, you’ll have the opportunity to enter a message. Here you can type NiN. There is also a Givelify app, available from the App Store or Google Play Store. To use the app the first time, you will need to specify that the donation goes to our church. Look up “First Congregational UCC Santa Rosa.” Then you create an account with your bank or credit card information. After you have done it once, it’s a very simple click for subsequent donations.

Financial Report

Kathy Johnson, Secretary

Between January and August, we received \$94,108.80 in General Operations donations toward our pledged goal of \$128,596. We also had \$815 donated to Plate even though we aren’t literally passing a plate.

For Missions we had received \$7308, plus donations for FISH (\$525), Strengthen the Church (\$240), Memorial Gifts (\$220), and One Great Hour of Sharing (\$370).

There are several convenient ways to donate to our church: write a check and send or deliver it to the office; add the Givelify app to your smart phone and quick-click a donation; sign up for auto-withdrawal from your checking or savings account; or find us on PayPal. Find details at <https://fccsr.org/giving/> or if you have any questions, contact Kathy Johnson at fkathj@sonic.net or 707-292-8684.

One Vote Secured Our Survival

Hannah Wallstrum

The following story comes from First Congregational's Story Team. Our goal is to publish stories that help us get to know each other better and to live in our church's mission, which is to make God's love visible.

Throughout its history, First Congregational Church of Santa Rosa has had its share of dark nights of the soul. We're still here today, so clearly the dark nights have been followed by the salvation of sunlight. In the darkest moments heroes have stepped up and spoken against the prevailing wind. This story is about one such hero, Charles G. Thompson and his family.

Ed Thompson, one of Charles' six children, sets the scene: "Before moving to the present location, First Congregational Church of Santa Rosa met in an aging church building on South E Street, across the street from the library. Despite interior remodeling to meet changing needs, the congregation came to the conclusion that a change must be made. Due to post-war population growth, the building was becoming crowded with more worshippers, and the building itself needed repairs that would cost more than the building was worth. Thus, the decision to build a new church and move." But the decision was not easily accomplished.

Church historian Marabel Beck, writing in the sixties, observes: "On September 24, 1948, a serious discussion of church problems resulted in a request of Dr. Buckham, Congregational Conference Superintendent, to come and consult with the church. Three weeks later, Dr. Buckham told the congregation they might have to face the idea of folding up and suggested that the church might consider using a seminary student as a cost-cutting measure. During this period there was a motion before the Board of Trustees to actually discontinue as First Congregational Church of Santa Rosa. At about this time, church membership went down to some 60 or 70 people.



Charles Thompson (r) and Rev. William Welch (l) at the new sanctuary groundbreaking.

"Much credit is due Mr. Charles G. Thompson, whose vote and faithful pleading, kept the church together," writes Beck. With a divided Board, he placed the deciding vote for an alternative. Rather than disband, he posed a challenge – to build a new church. Thompson led in securing a \$6,000 loan from the Conference for a piece of land on Humboldt Street, and an enthusiastic young seminary student named William Welch came on board. Four years later, on November 22, 1953 the sanctuary where we still worship was dedicated. By 1958, membership had grown to nearly 225.

(continued on page 7)

(continued from page 6)

The Difference a Family Can Make

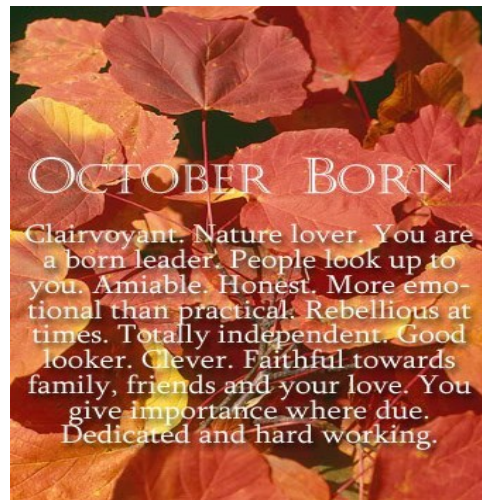
Charles Thompson and his clan were responsible for so much more than a decisive vote and financial support, and their leadership provided enthusiasm and growth for a thriving congregation.

They are best remembered for their musical gifts. Charles and his wife Mary Olga Thompson had six children: Mary Margaret, Charles (called Ed), Harold, Gene, Bobette, and Noelle. The kids formed a singing group, often providing special music during Sunday worship. In the 1950s, KSRO radio featured the family singing hymns on Sunday evenings.

In this family of givers, Bobette, who sang and played the violin, was the choir director when our church was on E Street. Mother Thompson played piano and organ. In fact, after her death in 1953, the family purchased chimes for the church in her name, commemorated by a plaque in the sanctuary. Ed's deep bass voice set a solid foundation for the family ensemble as well as the choir. He told me, "I didn't have formal singing education; I just knew if the notes went up or down." Ed sang in our church choir for more than fifty years, as did his wife Doris. They retired from the choir in 2015, leaving noticeable holes in the bass and soprano sections.

In a recent interview I had with Ed and Doris, I was reminded of the family's generosity and engagement in the life of our church and how it reflects the generosity and engagement of First Congregational Church's members today. Such commitment demonstrates how a small congregation in a small city can endure and thrive, serving God and each other with the precious gifts of fellowship and faith.

- 10/9 Jeff Wilson
- 10/10 David Lamb
- 10/13 Judy Cramer
- 10/20 Jonathan Kendall
- 10/24 Gretchen Van Tassel



Green Minute

California has a new law that demonstrates our commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. SB 1383 will take effect January 1, 2022 and requires “all residents and businesses to divert organic materials” from the landfill. That translates, for us as a church and for each of us in our homes, to mean we must place not only yard waste, but also food scraps and unlined soiled paper products in our green bins. Unless you compost at home, which is the best option of all. If you do keep a compost pile or home bin, let us know how it’s going for you!

We are all able to see the impacts of the climate crisis, with heat domes, increasingly intense storms, extreme drought, and the plague of fires right here and around the globe. Doing our little part to help prevent it from getting worse is one way to show our commitment to caring for our neighbors and the planet. For more information, see:

- <https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp>
- <https://www.recology.com/recology-sonoma-marin/legislation/>

First Congregational United
Church of Christ

2000 Humboldt Street
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

707-546-0998
firstucc.admin@sonic.net
www.fccsr.org

PLEASE
PLACE
STAMP
HERE