



# First Congregational Church

## United Church of Christ, Santa Rosa

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## May 2024 SEER Newsletter

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For a pdf of this Newsletter with all attachments, [click here](#).

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Dear Siblings in Christ,

Easter season is truly a time of renewing around our church! I give thanks for everyone who is transitioning off and stepping into church leadership. Thank you to outgoing officers, Kelly and Rachel, who've led us all year. Welcome to Evelyn and Virginia who are now at our helm. And, well done to everyone who's offering to give some of their time and talents to a church team this year. Together we serve.

Parades are coming up and please note the dates and sign up to participate this and next month for the Rose and Pride parades. Thanks for Judy Cramer for leading our float creations. The religious leaders caucus from North Bay Organizing Project (NBOP) are working with Positive Images (also an NBOP member) to create a fun theme we can all put our voices behind: Social Justice League for LGBTQIA+ Housing! More information is forthcoming around the needs for LGBTQ people are housing (and housing discrimination). There will also be a second annual Interfaith Pride Service on Sunday evening. Please see the flier for more information and to sign up to be part of the interfaith choir. Together we march!

Mark your calendars for a special musical presentation in June from our choir! Together we sing! Together we listen! *Together we are the body of Christ*. I give thanks that as the school year winds down, we are just getting started with new ministries popping up and renewed energy to serve God and the community around us. However you are participating (even watching worship via streaming), you are making us who we are... and

we are making God's love tangible.

Together we love and serve,  
Pastor Diana

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## **The S.R. Rose Parade is BACK**

### **Saturday, May 18th**

Join us for the most fun of the year! March in the Santa Rosa Luther Burbank Rose Parade, for the first time in 5 years!! We will have marchers and banners, plus be pulling our float. The theme this year is "Trek Thru Time", and our churchy interpretation of that will be "Love Is The Future!" The parade route is 4th street only, similar to the Pride Parade last year but a bit longer.

So let me know if you'd like to march with us! If you have mobility problems, let me know. We will work something out. Email me at [judithcramer@rocketmail.com](mailto:judithcramer@rocketmail.com) or text me. If you bought a FCUCC tee last year, pull it out and get it ready to wear. If you don't have one, they only cost \$10 to cover expenses.

See you at the parade!

Judy Cramer, Outreach Team

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## **Pentecost Sunday**

May 19, 2024

Scripture says that on the Day of Pentecost "divided tongues as of fire" (Acts 2:3) landed on each person. Consider wearing your favorite "flame" colors to worship to help celebrate the Holy Spirit!

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## **Cantata Sunday**

June 9, 2024

On Sunday, June 9th during our Worship Service at 10am the FCUCC Music program will present a new cantata by Kyle Pederson with soloists, Chancel Choir and guest musicians. The five movements include poetry by Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, Shanelle Gabriel and Robert Bode. We really hope you will be there to hear these powerful pieces and we hope it will inspire all who's hear it to live our calling. To reach beyond our comfort zone and seek to build bridges of care and connection, finding a better way of being in community. Please join us!

Bill O'Neill, Music Director

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## **The Open and Affirming Coalition in partnership with the United Church of Christ Webinar April 23rd 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.**

THE OAC is offering several webinars over the next few months. The first in this series is on April 23rd from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Those in attendance will be invited to go beyond the limited scope of the “clobber texts” in the bible helping to foster a more inclusive and affirming environment within their faith community.

You are invited to join an engaged thoughtful discussion on embracing the full spectrum of biblical teachings, fostering understanding, and responding compassionately to inquiries about the seven texts often cited in discussions on LGBTQ+ inclusion.

The website is <https://openandaffirming.org/resources/webinars/> Registration for this webinar is \$30. The website offers more information of future webinars.

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## **Santa Rosa Junior College & North Bay Organizing Project's**

*7th Annual We the Future Social Justice Conference*

**Friday, May 3, 2024**

Community Power and Collaboration: Building Alliances for Land Justice

Registration is now open for this event that takes place on Friday, May 3, 2024 at SRJC Petaluma campus. You may register here. Register early so we can plan to provide all participants a free lunch and accommodate sufficient sessions and space.

The Keynote Speaker is Dr. César Cruz, Education Activist, Author, School Designer & Co-Founder of Homies Empowerment. The Keynote will begin at 9am, and breakout sessions will be offered at 10:45 and noon. Information Tabling and Lunch will follow at 1pm.

This year's theme focuses on land theft as a product of settler colonial, white supremacy impacting the trajectory of generations of Black, Indigenous, Persons of Color, globally. However, rather than a narrative of displacement and oppression, our conference will explore the unbroken resistance to colonialism.

Sessions will focus on various ways indigenous people have survived in the face of oppression and attempted genocide and what that resistance can teach other allied movements against dehumanization and theft.

Conference sessions will cover topics such as using ancestral knowledge for sustaining a relationship with the land, languages, and traditions as well as discussions of equitable access to healthcare and education. Together, we will analyze current movements, proposals, and land use policies with a critical lens towards land justice. There will be opportunities to learn about current calls for land justice, and land back coalition building, as well as efforts to steward the land and support environmental education. If you have questions, please reach out to the team at [OurHouse@santarosa.edu](mailto:OurHouse@santarosa.edu).

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## **Translife Community Conference**

**Saturday, May 4, 2024**

The Translife Community Conference will take place on Saturday, May 4, 2024 at Finley Community Center in Santa Rosa, CA. This event is for the transgender and gender-expansive community and their children, parents/caregivers, and partners/spouses only. It is not an ally event.

Email [info@translifecommunity.org](mailto:info@translifecommunity.org) for more information.

\*IF you are an ALLY and want to support this event with your time (show up and volunteer to help make this event run smoothly), please contact Pastor Diana or Maggie Robinson to sign up.

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The Isaiah Partnership cohort read this book together last summer. It was thoughtful and provocative and we recommend it to anyone who wonders if/how church is/could be relevant to modern times. This event is from the Changemaker Initiative (the folks that created the curriculum we followed as part of IP). Enjoy:

**Why church? What is God up to?**  
A virtual conversation with Tim Soerens  
May 6th, 4-5pm PDT  
[Register now](#)

Join us for an inspiring conversation with Tim Soerens, author of *Everywhere you Look: Discovering the Church Right Where You Are*. Tim, founder of [Parish Collective](#), is a thoughtful, imaginative dreamer wondering what it means to be the church in, with, and for the neighborhood. This local grassroots focus deeply aligns with our changemaker work, and his book has been a key resource in some of our cohort programs. The event is free and open to all changemakers, clergy, lay people, and anyone interested in a vibrant future for the church.

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**PARADE DAY • JUNE 1**

# SOCIAL JUSTICE LEAGUE

## FOR LGBTQIA+ HOUSING AND BELONGING

### SONOMA COUNTY PRIDE 2024



- MAY 13 • 5-8 PM**  
 ART BUILD @  
 POSITIVE IMAGES  
 200 Montgomery St.  
 Santa Rosa
- MAY 20 • 5-8 PM**  
 ART BUILD @ NBOP  
 1717 Yulupa Ave  
 Santa Rosa
- MAY 25 • 11 AM-2 PM**  
 ART BUILD @  
 POSITIVE IMAGES  
 200 Montgomery St.  
 Santa Rosa
- JUNE 1 • 10 AM**  
 PRE-PARADE MEET UP  
 POSITIVE IMAGES  
 200 Montgomery St.  
 Santa Rosa

**SIGN UP**      **SIGN UP: [tinyurl.com/SJLPride24](https://tinyurl.com/SJLPride24)**  
**QUESTIONS? [info@posimages.org](mailto:info@posimages.org)**








North Bay Organizing Project (NBOP)'s  
Religious Leaders' Caucus invites you...

# INTERFAITH SERVICE FOR LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS AT SONOMA COUNTY PRIDE

**Sunday, June 2 • 7 PM**  
**The Glaser Center**  
**547 Mendocino Ave. Santa Rosa**

Join local LGBTQIA+ affirming Faith  
Communities as we raise our voices to call for  
justice and meaningful social change.

*Interpretación en español disponible para el servicio.*

**RSVP: [tinyurl.com/interfaithpride24](https://tinyurl.com/interfaithpride24)**  
**Questions? [comms@northbayop.org](mailto:comms@northbayop.org)**



UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
CONGREGATION  
SANTA ROSA

Christ Church  
United Methodist

First Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ, Santa Rosa



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## Medical Debt Relief

brought to you by Outreach Team

The article below is from your Outreach Team and gives you information on medical debt relief.

People should not have to go into debt to receive healthcare. (Right?!) We hope you will consider participating in this ministry to help alleviate debts to families in need. In May, we will have a large water jug available each Sunday to receive any loose change you'd like to donate. Let's see how much we can gather to buy medical debt in 2024. For every \$1, we can abolish approximately \$100 of debt!

To read more about medical debt and one of the organizations fighting to help people recover, [click here](#).

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**Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Phil. 4:6-7**

The United Church of Christ has established a site called People's Prayers for Peace. Prayers are posted daily. You can read or submit a prayer at:

<https://www.ucc.org/peoples-prayers-for-peace/#peoplesprayersforpeaceform>

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## **Treasurer Report**

**Kathy Johnson**

During the first quarter of 2024, we made some of the most significant decisions in our recent history. One of those was passing a budget with an \$84,000 deficit and the assurance that we would be able to fill that gap with available assets, and that in upcoming years we will find ways to generate funding to cover all our regular operating expenses without depleting our limited savings.

We ended the first quarter of 2024 somewhat less in the red than anticipated; our total income for January-March was \$42,926.68 and expenditures \$59,309.56. Our income from rentals has been and may continue to be less than in the past as we must require that only non-profit organizations or government entities (such as public schools) can use any part of our building. Most of our expenses are non-discretionary and cover salaries, utilities, insurance, and routine maintenance.

Any member may review our financial statements or discuss our finances with the Treasurer or Financial Secretary. Contact us any time you have questions. We are glad to know you are interested!



Give Now with Givelify

**Another way to give: TEXT-TO-GIVE 707-383-7980**

First Congregational United Church of Christ  
2000 Humboldt Street  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404  
707-546-0998  
firstucc.admin@sonic.net  
FCCSR.org

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*For many congregations, wiping out medical debt has become a popular calling. While donations from religious groups constitute less than 20 percent of RIP Medical Debt's overall revenue, they are becoming an increasingly common way for congregations to do social justice work.*

Americans owe at least \$195 billion of medical debt, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. More than 100 million people — about [41 percent of U.S. adults](#)— have debt from medical or dental bills. Among Black and Hispanic Americans that figure jumps to about 60 percent.

Helping ease medical debt, especially for people of color, is an increasingly popular social justice project among liberal Christian, Jewish and Muslim congregations. Over the past few years some 800 U.S. congregations have partnered with [RIP Medical Debt](#) <https://ripmedicaldebt.org/> to do so.

The nine-year-old nonprofit uses donations to buy large bundled portfolios of medical debt from collection agencies and other third parties at a steep discount. It then turns around and notifies people their debts have been erased. To date, RIP has abolished \$8.5 billion in medical debt and relieved 5.4 million Americans of their unpaid bills.

One reason may be that debt relief has deep biblical resonance. The Book of Leviticus speaks of the jubilee year as a time when the people of Israel were required to free enslaved people and cancel debts. “It’s a wonderful way to take ancient biblical values and actualize them,” said Rabbi Ari Hart, whose Agudath Jacob Synagogue in Skokie, Ill., partnered with two predominantly Black churches in Chicago to raise \$10,000 for medical debt relief last year.

RIP used the money to purchase \$1.9 million in debt and unburden 2,327 people in the Chicago area of their medical debts.

Raising money for medical debt relief won’t solve the larger structural issues created by a health system Americans can’t afford. The United States has the most expensive health-care system of any country. But it can bring relief. This is treating a symptom, not a cause, but it’s something we can do. Is there any other example where our money can go that far and have such a positive impact on individuals? This is targeted relief that will reduce economic stress and support families in need of economic relief.

Excerpt from Washington Post article March 2023 –*Religion News Service*