

# KENSINGTON PRESS

JUNE/JULY 2018

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear companions on the journey:

I've just added a book to my summer reading list. It isn't a new book. Many of you may have read it when it was first published: Robert Putnam's **Bowling Alone**. Back in 2001, Putnam looked at data that revealed that Americans had changed their behavior, becoming increasingly disconnected from one another. He looked at how social structures, from the PTA to churches to political parties, were disintegrating.

I've decided to add this old book to my new reading list because it seems to me this trend is more responsible for where we are as a mainline Protestant congregation in Marin County in 2018 than just about anything else. I'm not alone in this thinking. Todd Dildine writes that the church is not dying because churches don't have good enough mission statements, preachers or websites. The problem isn't that we don't have band members wearing skinny jeans or read our Bibles enough. Those are all wonderful things to implement and improve, but, says Dildine, "If you think the solution to the church's decline is one of these, you are looking in the wrong place. ... When you talk about the collapse of the American church you must also talk about the collapse of the social fabric of our American society, because they are inextricably tied."

As I think about this, I'm increasingly convinced that this collapsing social fabric is at least partly if not largely responsible for many of our current social problems. Perhaps the shocking disparity between rich and poor, epidemic gun violence, and our failure to take climate change seriously have to do with the fact that we don't feel connected to each other, compassionate toward each other, even to some degree responsible for one another.

People never stopped needing community. We are built

for it. Humans are born helpless, and without community, we could not survive. But cultural trends and values that practically deify individualism, the rise of social media, and a changing workplace all impact the social fabric we once took for granted.

An articulate millennial offers her hope for the Church: "While my peers and I flock to protests, book clubs, and yoga classes, we are forging new paths of spiritual engagement. At the same time, I sense that many of us yearn for tradition: a household of inherited practices and beliefs to inhabit as our full selves. Tradition offers resilience, particularly in the face of tragedy and loss, to hold together our fractured identities."

Church could be a place for the kind connection and community people need. Here, we connect

with something bigger than ourselves that gives us purpose and hope. Here, we connect with a tradition that declares we are created to be loved, and to love one another.

Can we have a conversation about this? And maybe even include our neighbors, who are impacted by this just as much as we are? Watch for this summer's sermon series: "Created for Community."

Together – that's TOGETHER – we serve,

Joanne



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## FAMILY MINISTRIES

### A Letter from Molly Morris, Director of Family Ministries and Seminary Intern

Dear First Presbyterian Church,

Thank you for an amazing year. I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve as both your Director of Family Ministries and Pastoral Intern. Your community has taught me so much about life in a church and how loving and supportive churches can be. I love how dedicated you all are to doing the work of God in the world.

Through the REST shelter, the protests and marches, and other efforts to win peace and justice for everyone, you have shown me how a church can be more active in the world than in the sanctuary. Don't get me wrong, you are active in the sanctuary. Thank you for listening to my sermons and children's messages, giving me the space to experiment with worship elements, and giving me feedback all along the way. My future in the church is going to be fuller because of my experiences here. I have especially loved all the time I have engaged with the children and youth.

I have loved our game nights, service projects, Godly Play time, and sermons from the steps. Thank you for hanging out with me! As I move on from this place, I am not entirely sure what is coming next. After two weeks in Sydney, Australia at the end of June, I am hoping to be accepted to a year-long chaplaincy in a Clinical Pastoral Education program. Wherever I end up, the lessons I have learned from this past year will inform my work, and the support I have felt from this community will help sustain my journey.

Grace and Peace,

Molly K. Morris



### Graduate Recognition – June 10th

On Sunday, June 10, we will honor graduates during worship. High school graduates will receive special recognition. If a member of your family is graduating from high school, college or graduate school, please contact Pastor Whitt. And come celebrate with the graduates on June 10!

### Family Worship on Pentecost Sunday

The sanctuary was ready for a big birthday celebration: the birthday of the Church, when the Holy Spirit came to the apostles like tongues of fire and they started speaking in all kinds of different languages...and so we did. While Molly read Scripture, several members began proclaiming the same passage in Japanese, Spanish, Italian, German...



We had 5 boys singing and playing their ukuleles (The Octopus' Garden Gang). We sang Happy Birthday, there was a craft project (prayer flags), a present to open (a box filled with pinwheels), and CAKE after worship. It was a joyful celebration for all our church family.



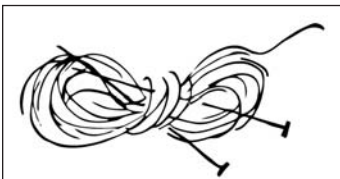
MORE! 



Mary gets a prayer flag.

### Goodbye to Seminary Intern, John Lyzenga

John has completed his internship with us and he goes with our blessings and a prayer shawl knitted by our Closely Knit team. John, as you complete your studies, come visit us from time to time!



### Save the Date: Closely Knit Day at FPC July 15, 2018

We're happy to announce that the Closely Knit team will gather in the Fireside Room after worship on Sunday, July 15. All knitters, whether learning, wanting to learn or experienced, are invited to spend part of your afternoon together. We will provide yarn, patterns as well as light snacks and juice.

We especially welcome those beginning to knit or hoping to learn as well as anyone looking for new projects to knit.

We continue to knit prayer shawls that have brought comfort to so many folk over the past 10 years. We knitted hundreds of caps, scarves and mitts for our REST guests. With the REST program ended we will consider other possible knitting projects for the wider community.

Email Phyllis Schlobohm ([phyllis@schlobohm.us](mailto:phyllis@schlobohm.us)) or Jillian Robinson ([jillianr@aol.com](mailto:jillianr@aol.com)) with questions or to let us know you plan to come Sunday, July 15.



### ...From the choir

The great Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "change is the only constant in life," and our consistently wonderful music program is experiencing such change! Many thanks to Melody Nishinaga who was our stellar temporary organist for a month. Now, we encourage you to welcome Natsuko Murayama as our new church organist and accompanist.

We are (were) pleased to present rousing gospel selections John Rutter's **Feel the Spirit** on June 3rd featuring an orchestra and Jessica Winn, alto, as the soloist. Hailed as a vocalist with "pure colors" that capture "ethereal qualities" in her performances, mezzo-soprano Jessica Winn has made her mark in the Bay Area classical vocal community. She has sung many roles in operas; Jessica is a current member of Marin Baroque.

When you wake up some gorgeous summer mornings do you just feel like singing? If so, summer choir begins on Sunday, June 17th. We practice easier music beginning at 9:00 am for worship at 10:00 am. Please join us any Sunday during the summer — we'd love to have you.

## CHURCH & SOCIETY

The following editorial first appeared in the *Marin IJ* on May 8th, 2018. It is printed here with permission from the Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity.

### Marin Voice: Building Bridges Between Police and Young Adults

By Cindy Aguilera

Martin Luther King's words, "the fierce urgency of now," have inspired the Youth Team from Ambassadors of Hope and Opportunity to directly address the deep-rooted tensions between young people and law enforcement by producing their first, youth-led "Building Bridges: Law Enforcement and Young Adults" event in Marin County high schools.

In collaboration with Marin's law enforcement, we are launching our groundbreaking "Building Bridges" event on May 10 at Marin Oaks High School in Novato.

The event's purpose is to begin creating a better understanding and relationship between young people and police.

As part of our activism, the AHO Youth Team, comprised of previously homeless youth served by AHO and their peers — who "give back" for the help AHO provides through their youth-led projects — have been dedicating time in their busy school and work schedules to spearhead this project.

Over the past five months we have engaged collaborators including the president of the student government at College of Marin; Novato and College of Marin police chiefs and officers; Jay Hamilton-Roth, former chair of the Marin County Civil Grand Jury; Anna Pletcher, volunteer Youth Court judge; and Kessa Early, Marin Oaks principal.

Miguel Ordenana, a board member of Carlos Santana's Milagro Foundation, attended one of our recent Youth Team meetings to see our planning and leadership training in action. The foundation recently awarded AHO a \$10,000 grant to further its mission of helping Marin's homeless youth.

Through our planning meetings we have been actively practicing the 21st Century Life Skills for Success as determined by the U.S. Department of Education that include initiation, collaboration, communication, creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking. In the process, we have created a flyer and agenda for the event, ground rules we call "the golden rules" for the discussions, along with a press release for the media and this Marin Voice column to help spread the word.

Juliana Steccone, the AHO Youth Team leader for the "Building Bridges" event, recently shared with me some of the personal changes she's experienced in the planning process.

"As a 24-year-old youth, I've had my own bad experiences with law enforcement like so many of my peers. However, planning this event in collaboration with Chief Marozick of COM, Officer Tony Spediacci and Chief McGill from Novato Police Department, I am now able to see law enforcement, less from an 'us versus them' perspective, toward a more, 'one human to another' perspective.

"In fact, I am now considering law enforcement as a possible career, which is a total surprise to me and anyone who knows me. I would have never considered this career path before our 'Building Bridges' collaboration with my peers and law enforcement. I am excited to share this opportunity to change lives and build youth leaders with all the schools in Marin."

I, too, have learned much in the process of working with my peers to bring "Building Bridges" to the schools. I have evolved in my tolerance of differing viewpoints, and have been able to begin to face the often uncomfortable feelings I've had about speaking to power, and sharing my voice. This experience has given me a new confidence and understanding that I have something to give, as well as receive from others, for which I am grateful.

With a better understanding between law enforcement and youth, both I and my peers feel that "Building Bridges" will become the catalyst for lessons learned and next steps for a new model of engagement. Together, as we identify and address the long-standing "us versus them" discord in a civil and insightful way, we will be creating a stronger and healthier community.

Our AHO Youth Team is excited to bring "Building Bridges" into more Marin high schools in the fall. You can schedule "Building Bridges" in your school by contacting Zara Babitzke, executive director of AHO, at [zarab@comcast.net](mailto:zarab@comcast.net) or visit [ahoproject.org](http://ahoproject.org).

Cindy Aguilera, 27, of Novato, is an AHO Youth Team member and aspiring writer.



## SUNDAY SEMINARS

### The Rev. Dr. Karla Koll, Mission Co-Worker at UBL Presents "Theological Education & Climate Justice"

By Dick Schlobohm

Join us on Sunday, June 10th at 11:30 am to welcome our mission co-worker and friend, the Rev. Dr. Karla Koll. Our congregation supports, in part, the work of the Rev. Dr. Karla Koll, a world mission co-worker for the PC(USA). She teaches at the Latin American Biblical University (UBL) located in San Jose, Costa Rica.

The UBL is a seminary, much like SFTS, that prepares students for work in ministry in the various churches across Latin America. Although established in 1923 as a Methodist-sponsored Bible college, UBL has been a state-recognized university for the last 21 years, granting bachelor, licentiate and master's degrees. Karla currently serves as Chair of the Theology Department.

First met Karla in Managua, Nicaragua in 1991, early in her working days with the PC(USA)'s Mission Agency, and seven years after she attended the UBL as a student. She has two master's degrees from Union Theological Seminary in New York. After completing her PhD from Princeton Seminary in 2000, she re-entered mission service teaching in Guatemala until 2013, when she moved to UBL's central campus in San Jose. She is a member of Pueblo Presbytery in SE Colorado. She is married to Javier Torrez Bermudez and they have a daughter Tamara who currently works at an immigration law office in Portland, OR.

About three-quarters of Costa Ricans are Roman Catholic, and approximately 15% are Protestant. It is not unusual for Catholic nuns and Pentecostal students to study together at UBL.

As Karla pursues her work, she is inspired by 2 Cor 5:17-21: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (NRSV)

Karla's special focus is the history of Christianity, especially

in Latin America. However, Karla's service to the church extends further into the International realm. She has been to meetings in Arusha, Tanzania; Accra, Ghana; Berekfürdő, Hungary; Rosario, Argentina; Leipzig Germany; and most recently the Amazon Basin jungle in Peru ... for the World Council of Churches and The World Communion of Reformed Churches. And for the PC(USA), she will serve as a Missionary Advisory Delegate at the General Assembly (GA) as it meets this year in St. Louis. I have told her of the three Overtures originating or endorsed from our church and forwarded by Redwoods Presbytery to the GA and the presence of our Overture Advocates from our church.

UBL is committed to environmental justice (and to reduce operating costs); they have a goal to raise enough money to install the 52 solar panels which will reduce their energy use by 85%.

#### Meet and Greet

Dick & Phyllis want to be sure that Church & Society members have a relaxed time to visit personally with Karla ... so have invited them, and any others especially interested, to come to our home at 1 Vasco Drive, Mill Valley, for a 7:00 pm desert event on Saturday, June 9th. Please give us a call at (415) 388-3082 if you can come.



*Karla and her husband, Javier*

## Notes on the Last Night of REST

By Joy Snyder

I'm not gonna lie, Friday, April 27th was a night spent with mixed emotions. Most of you know that it was not only the end of the "season" of REST ... but also the end of the program-at-large. Obviously, we didn't want to make it a sad experience for our guests, and yet our own sadness and concerns as volunteers and friends, was somewhat palpable. As regular volunteers, we have always somewhat dreaded the end of the season, wondering what will happen to our friends in the homeless community every year ... where they will go, will they be safe, etc. And we always look forward to the next November, when we can reconnect with those who return to REST (and get updates on those who don't). But, of course, this year, there won't be a "next November."

**NOTE** — For a thorough discussion of why the program is ending, please see this very well-written article in the IJ: <http://www.marinij.com/general-news/20180417/funding-sought-for-new-approach-to-marin-homeless>

We tried to keep things "normal" for the welcoming circle (see pic) as well as for the rest of the evening. But by the end, the mood was a little bit somber, as we said our goodbyes.

A few of the guys did share with me that they had fairly safe options, at least for the summer, with tents in fairly secure locations. In some cases, they even reported that the police (or at least one officer) knew where they were and did NOT give them any hassle about it. Another guest told me that he would just be traveling "up north". He

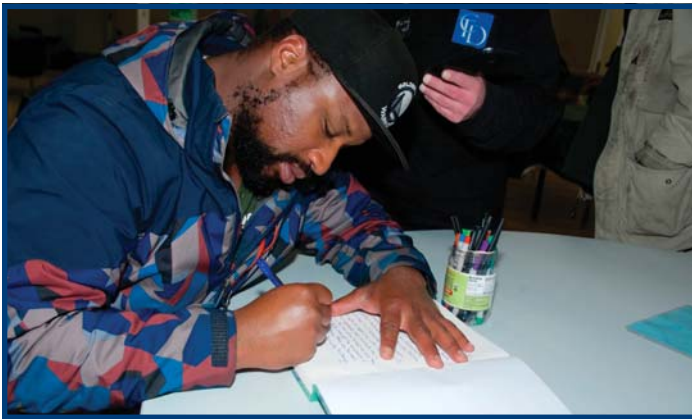
shared with me that he could stay in state parks, usually without any hassle at all from Rangers or other folks and that this was a way to make it "feel" like he was on vacation. He said he had decent camping gear and could often pick up some odd jobs when necessary.

One of the other guests (Charles) said that he had enough resources to get away to Hawaii ... and I just realized as I'm writing this that he may be affected by these horrible volcanic eruptions. I also realized that I happen to have his text ph# and so am trying to confirm his safety ... to be continued!

There was a "Memory Book" available for the guys to write comments in if they wanted to, and a surprising number of them did! (See pics taken with permission.)

The end of the night was a bit gradual for us, as none of us really wanted to leave and yet we knew it was time. (Thinking of that metaphor re whether to tear the Band-Aid off or do it gradually ... it was like that.) We said our good-byes, each in our own way, and went home feeling grateful (and a little guilty) for the roofs over our heads and the warmth/softness of our beds.





## Celebrating REST Volunteers: A Happening Thing That Happened on May 11, 2018

By Joy Snyder

The evening began with a welcoming Circle, just as it did on every regular shelter night throughout the nine years we've been participating, i.e. with the "gong" of my prayer/singing bowl.

Within that circle, I acknowledged the "invisible" volunteers, e.g. Joanne Whitt and Barb Shindelus (who have faithfully rotated the weekly responsibility for purchasing and delivering our milk, OJ, dinner rolls and fruit for the last couple of YEARS!). And Audrey Mahler (who has overseen our complete inventory/pantry FOREVUH on a weekly basis ...making sure that we never ran out of anything from T.P. to Emergen-C to coffee to hot chocolate to ... you get the picture, as well as serving "Uber-Duty" for carting me and/or making the trip to Costco and often to other groceries looking for the best deals throughout each month).

Unfortunately, I forgot to call out Raquel Nelson's name for her set-up and support to our online sign-ups: my bad, Raquel, I'm so sorry. And then Royce Truex gave an especially touching blessing to our circle, calling out some of the names of our homeless guests to represent that community-at-large for our prayers and concerns.

We also, thanks to Phil Boyle, (who biked through wind and rain and sleet and snow—just kidding, but did bike to my place to pick up a flash drive of photos from me, and then made them into a slide show) who literally dragged his own flat-screen TV into Duncan Hall so that we could feature a repeating loop of these 100+ pictures from over all the seasons we have participated. Those pictures (as well as these you are seeing in this issue of the KP) are/were a compilation of pics from Dick Schlobohm and me over the years. It was especially touching (you could hear the "sighs") to see and remember some of the volunteers who are no longer with us, especially Phyllis Ongaro and

Shirley New, who were both critically important to the evolution of our participation in REST.

The food was spectacular, and I'm not exaggerating when I say that. As you might see from the pictures, the cuisine

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## REST

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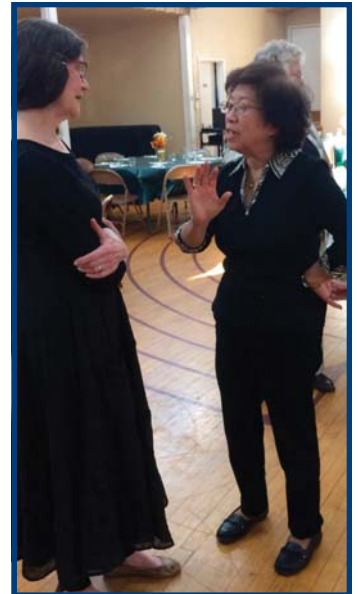
was broad-ranging, as was the good fellowship observed at the various tables. We nearly filled 8 of our traditionally set-up tables, so you can figure we served approximately 60 folks, and many of them wound up in the kitchen drying dishes, just like on a regular shelter night.

As the desserts were nearly consumed, we began our program of sorts. It was my pleasure to introduce the Children for Change families who attended. Emily Elder spoke about the children who presented at the most recent meeting of the Board of Supervisors. Then, her daughter Nora, read her letter, written to the IJ.

And I believe that the next most meaningful contribution to that program occurred when Annelise Bauer (also from Children for Change) shared a story about the kids' participation in that Supervisors' meeting, and the really inspiring results that they were able to experience directly. Apparently, after they read their letters, there was a homeless woman who spoke briefly about what her life was like since becoming homeless. Then, at the end of the meeting, as the kids were leaving, that woman waited at the exit to thank them personally for their presentation. And THEN, a representative from the Board actually came over and asked the woman to stay so that they could see whether there was something they could do for her! Annelise spoke of how meaningful it was for the kids to see a direct result of their participation in the process of advocating for the homeless.

Rounding out the evening, Jo Gross made some nostalgic and wise (I can't help it if everything Jo says sounds wise and deep) closing comments, and then Joanne presented me with a gift certificate for massages ... with a message! FYI - the certificate reads, "From your church family - we want you to be rubbed the right way." It was nice to have a little levity (with deep meaning, as in "deep massage", right?), as we all drifted off to our various evening plans.

I'd like to see us do this again, even if only every other month or so. Thoughts?





**223rd General Assembly (2018)**

They Presbyterian Church (USA) meets for its biennial national gathering in St Louis this month. Once again, our congregation has brought 3 overtures to the Presbytery of the Redwoods. Two of these are concurrent, meaning that they originated in another presbytery. The third overture was written by David Jones. It urges Re/Max to stop facilitating the sale of properties in the illegal Israeli Settlement colonies.

The first concurrent overture seeks to have the weight of the PC(USA) push for the US to promote democracy, good governance and sustainable development in Madagascar. The Rev. Dean McDonald will speak to the Peacemaking Committee as an overture advocate.

The second concurrent overture is similar to an overture brought 2 years ago. It asks the Board of Pensions and The PC(USA) Foundation to divest from fossil fuel and actively invest in securities that focus on renewable energy.

David Jones returns as an overture advocate; Jillian Robinson is an Elder Commissioner (from Redwoods Presbytery) and April Hewes is attending as a Theological Student Advisory Delegate.

**The IPMN Recommends**

Thanks to the Israel Palestine Mission Network, below is a list of overtures to watch for and a brief rationale for their recommendations, from a Guide for Commissioners to the General Assembly.

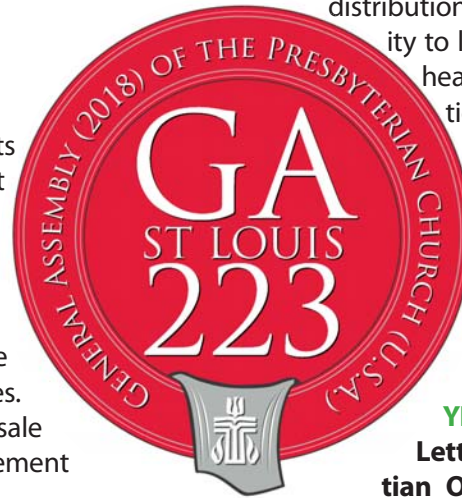
<http://new.israelpalestinemissionnetwork.org/?id=370>

**YES 12-01 On Opposition to Congressional and State Anti-BDS Legislation**

**Rationale for support:** To target nonviolent BDS work with congressional and state anti-BDS laws carrying civil and criminal penalties in the U.S. on one issue, namely the violation of human rights towards Palestinians in Israel/Palestine, is unconstitutional.

**YES 12-02 On Advocating for the Human Rights of All Citizens of Israel**

**Rationale for support:** There exists in Israeli law and practices, a structural system of inequalities for Israeli citizens of minority ethnicities and faiths. Demonstrated in the legal system, citizenship privileges, income and employment,



distribution of resource and social welfare, accessibility to land, educational resources, availability of healthcare, and blocks to equal political participation, the different application of Israeli laws toward minority Palestinian citizens violates their human rights.

**YES 12-03 On Creating a Task Force to Examine NCCOP's Call to Ecumenical Solidarity for Justice for Palestinians****AND****YES 12-04 On Responding to the Open Letter from the National Coalition of Christian Organizations in Palestine (NCCOP) to the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Movement.**

**Rationale for support:** For over a decade, the PC(USA) has been a leader among its ecumenical peers in responding to calls for justice from the Palestinian community. This overture accompanies our Palestinian Christian siblings in Christ.

**YES 12-05 On Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Israeli Occupation of Palestine**

**Rationale for support:** When there is resistance to dialogue, we are complicit to injustice by our silence. Relationship-building between the PC(USA) and our Jewish colleagues following the Holocaust has included necessary self-examination of Christian anti-Semitism, as well as fruitful partnership in a wide range of social justice work. This overture seeks an honest, searching, and respectful season of dialogue, breaking new ground in important relationships.

**NO 12-06 For the Protection of the Children of Israel and Palestine**

**Rationale for opposition:** This overture is "a balancing effort" with the implication that such balance good. However, one of the significant issues in the Israel/Palestine conflict is precisely the lack of balance, or asymmetrical access to power. To present a narrative which suggests that the welfare of children is equally threatened by both sides in this conflict is inaccurate and inconsistent with the findings of UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, and with Israel/Palestine: For Human Values in the Absence of a Just Peace, which was adopted by the 222nd GA.

**YES 12-07 On Urging RE/MAX to Stop Facilitating the Sale of Property in Israeli Settlement Colonies**

**Rationale for support:** RE/MAX must cease selling Jewish-

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only housing in Israeli settlements of the occupied West Bank. The settlements are illegal under international law and RE/MAX enables segregation in the region through these listings.

### YES 12-08 A Resolution on the Status of Jerusalem

**Rationale for support:** We support the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns to be empowered to prepare reports on the status of Jerusalem in an effort to stop the tragic cycles of fear and violence in the holiest of cities.

The following Overture recommendations made by the IPMN that promote the ethic of a "Just Peace."

**YES 4-02** A Resolution on Prioritizing Translation and Accessibility in PC(USA). **Rationale:** Barriers to access and language are a form of exclusion, in the PC(USA) and in Israel.

**NO 7-01** On America's Interfaith Context and the Church's Challenge. **Rationale:** While inter-religious dialogue is imperative, this overture seeks to adopt: a paper already church policy (2014), one already received for study (1987), and one disapproved with direction to bring in more voices, especially Palestinian Christians (2010). This overture does not address that limitation of voices.

**YES 8-01** On [Direction to] Divest from Fossil Fuel and Actively Invest in...Renewable Energy **Rationale:** Divesting from fossil fuels (which contribute to climate change, disproportionately impacting people of color and the Global South) is consistent with the PC(USA)'s action to divest from companies profiting off the Israeli occupation—let us not profit from oppression!

**YES 9-03** On Support of Peace Churches in the PC(USA) **Rationale:** Commitments to peace are one of the most urgently needed priorities of the global church and the world. It is integral to our biblical mandate and Reformed theology.

**YES 9-05** A Resolution to Advocate for Human Rights of All Citizens of Yemen **Rationale:** To remain silent is to be complicit. "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40).

**YES 9-06** A Resolution on Global Order and National Purpose. **Rationale:** A broad political spectrum of experts believe global order faces a crisis in American leadership. This study seeks a more realistic understanding of American purpose.

**YES 11-11** Declare an Imperative for Reformation of PC(USA) in being a Transformative Church in This Intercultural Era , **AND**

**YES 11-18** Responding to Racist Nationalism. **Rationale:** Racism is deeply rooted in the colonial powers of Israel and North America. We seek to dismantle white supremacy in our Reformed theology, in our pews, and in our just peace work in Israel/Palestine.

**YES 11-14** On...Movement of Spirit to Engage...in Nation-Wide Action to Prevent Gun Violence **Rationale:** Militarization, in the U.S. and Israel, is destructive and contrary to Christ's embodiment of just mercy, humility, and non-violence.

**YES 11-16** A Resolution on Honest Patriotism. **Rationale:** This overture is an affirmation of the Reformed tradition of Christian political engagement from a justice perspective.

**YES 12-09** On Responding to Current Syrian Crisis. **Rationale:** The PC(USA) has no policy on Syria; this overture meets the wishes of our regional partner, the Synod of Syria and Lebanon.



### June is Anti-Torture Month

June is the month the United Nations commemorates victims of torture worldwide. There will be two events at FPCSA in June relating to anti-torture. On June 3, Rebecca Gordon, professor at University of San Francisco, makes a return visit to our **Sunday Seminar**. Professor Gordon will update for us her work against torture — both as practice and as government policy. She will also discuss the politics of torture in the United States under President Trump, who has brought a pro-torture message to his administration, and who has nominated as CIA director Gina Haspel—an admitted torture cover up (and alleged conductor of torture). Come to Adult Ed on June 3 to learn more about what is going on and how citizens can effectively respond.

Then on Tuesday, June 26, is our annual fast against torture as our commemoration of the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, which promotes the total eradication of torture and the effective functioning of the "*Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*." A fast and day of prayer may be scheduled for any 23 hours of your choosing during that time period, in solidarity with the time a prisoner is daily kept in solitary confinement in U.S. prisons.

If you participate in the fast, and you'd like to join in a group picture, we will meet in front of the church on June 26 at 5pm.

This story first appeared on the IPMN website: <https://bit.ly/2smciHm>

## Reflections on The Nakba\* at 70 Years: What the Nakba Means to Us

by Nahida Halaby Gordon and Sami A. Halaby

It has been slightly more than 70 years since we had to leave our home, our Palestine, and our Palestinian community of family, friends, and neighbors. It was a traumatic event in our lives, which we relive year after year.

Imagine how you would feel if when you visit the country of your birth, you are treated as an enemy alien and if allowed to enter you would only be able to stay at most three months. You find your home confiscated and occupied by people who were encouraged to come because they were persecuted elsewhere. As you move around you become aware that your community has been erased. Your roots have been cut. Nothing is recognizable — villages have been destroyed, churches, mosques, schools and cemeteries and other infrastructure have been replaced. Palestinian street names are replaced by Israeli names. Olive trees and farmland that have been terraced for generations are being replaced by ecologically unsustainable agriculture. The wasteful use of water has reduced the Jordan River to a trickle, the Dead Sea is shrinking, and Lake Hula in the Galilee has dried up. People in Tel Aviv and in the illegal settlements water their lawns; fill their swimming pools and plant trees unsuited to the environment in order to maintain a European lifestyle alien to this part of the world. The injustice of it all is galling.

The **Nakba** has transformed Palestine from a pastoral country where people lived peacefully to an expansionist, highly militarized, insecure state that is constantly at war with its neighbors. It has a state religion; it refuses to define its borders; and it privileges those who are identified as belonging to the state religion.

The lack of a just resolution to the displacement of our community, the continual attack upon our culture and upon our memories continues the pain of separation from our Palestine. As the years pass, the realization that the end of our days will arrive before we see a resolution to our loss is a suffering that can only be lessened by our faith and hope that a better day will come, if not for us then for those who follow us.

*~ Nahida Halaby Gordon and Sami A. Halaby are siblings who lived through the Nakba. Curiously, they cannot technically be called “refugees” because the family had the wherewithal to get to safety before it was too late (and before an artificial date established by the dominant culture of that day). But that does not make them any less children of the refugee diaspora. They were young children who with their parents escaped their home in Jaffa never to return. Their hearts still long for a home that shall never again belong to them. Nahida has served in leadership positions in our network for many years and in telling us her story, both she and her family have brought Palestine to life in our hearts. Their witness to us has been continual and inspiring. There is no better way for us to remember the tragedy of the Nakba than to hear about it in their own words. We thank both Nahida and Sami for their willingness to share. Theirs is a story we must never forget.*

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\* Nakba is arabic for catastrophe.



## The Darkness and the Needle

by Emily Johnston (February 16, 2018)

*"It may be that when we no longer know what to do, we have come to our real work, and when we no longer know which way to go, we have begun our real journey."*

~ Wendell Berry

When I moved from Portland to Seattle twelve years ago, I was a fiction writer who'd worked for a long time on a single novel and an assortment of stories—and had much encouragement about them, but no success in publishing. This is an old story, and not a very interesting one.

But to my surprise, when my life was jarred that year by the breakup of the relationship I'd moved for and then the death of my beloved young dog, I began writing poetry, and only poetry. It started out being bad poetry, but never mind that—I wanted to keep going. When friends asked, I told them I felt like I was sailing into the fog at night. I had no idea what I was doing—I hadn't even read much poetry till then, though I began reading it voraciously: Szymborska, Ahkmatova, Gennady Aygi, and more.

I didn't know what I was doing, or where I was going, but I knew I wanted to keep going—and eventually, I was writing things that interested me, and that felt, mostly, unembarrassing. Mostly. I was part of a tiny writers' group, and the father of one of those people was the editor of a small press that was about to re-start its book publishing. Drew thought his dad would love my book of poetry, so he asked if he could send it to him. They published it as their first book, and it became a finalist for the Washington State Book Award....and it turned out, more or less, to be that easy, after nearly thirty years of it being difficult.

The travails of writing and publishing are well known. What I want to talk about today is darkness and uncertainty—because we are at the start of a long period of darkness and uncertainty, and if we cannot learn to inhabit them, to be strong and steady in that dark fog, we will not survive.

I've written only a handful of poems in the two years since my book came out; I'm not even sure I'd call a single one of them finished. It's not that I've lost interest—if I had the time, there's nothing I'd rather do, and the lack of that time writing hurts me like a phantom limb, sometimes.

But I understand the stakes of this moment, and writing cannot be my priority right now.

Most or all of you probably understand something about the dangers of climate change. What you probably don't know, if you don't inhabit the world that I do, is that we likely have only about two and a half years to keep cata-

strophic climate change from being irreversible. This is not the assessment of an outlier scientist with a tin-foil hat; that was the word used, and the time frame used, by Christina Figueres, the former UN climate chief, last June (at that point, she said "three years"), based on the assessment of many, many scientists. Others use slightly different timing (I've also heard "two years"; and that was last year), depending on what benchmark they're using—1.5° versus 2° Celsius of warming, etc. But all are agreed, we are in dire shape, and our time-window for keeping this from being permanent is very, very short.

We can't stop climate catastrophe from happening—as you probably know, it's already happening, mostly in other parts of the world, like Syria and Yemen and low-lying island nations, but also here: in Houston, in Puerto Rico, even in New York or Oregon or Washington. Whether it's unprecedented wildfires or storms or oceans so acidic that shellfish are struggling, we have already changed our ecosystems so radically that all kinds of expected and unexpected processes have begun, some of which we don't know if we can stop.

And all of this will get worse—probably much worse. We know this for a fact.

But if these scientists are right—and there is reason to hope that they are—then we have another couple of years to ensure that these tragedies are not permanent. This doesn't even require us stopping the use of all fossil fuels at this very moment—it does require us to significantly reduce emissions immediately, because if we're not on that path—that short and exceedingly focused path—in a couple of years, we'll miss that turn, and there will be no way back.

The next two years, give or take, are the most important years in the history of humanity. We have the profound responsibility of being perhaps the only people in history to know exactly what threatens the world most, while still being in a position to avert much of it.

When those two and a half years are over, we cannot say, "we did what we could" and walk away. In our lifetimes, there will be no walking away, because we know that the range of possibility is enormous: at one end, we might lose five or ten percent of species, and tens of millions of human lives, at the other end the Earth might lose 95% of its species, as it did the last time greenhouse gases overwhelmed it. In that case, humans will surely be among them. We know for a fact that this is a real risk.

That's an unthinkable range—and we will never have the satisfaction of knowing what, exactly, we helped to

*Continued on Page 13*

save. It doesn't work like that. But for our lifetimes, at least, there will be the possibility of changing human systems and human behavior so that we work with the necessities dictated by physics, and not against them, and that means we can always help to stave off the ugliest end of that range of possibility.

So we will live in darkness and fog, not just because the world will be a much harder place in the coming decades, though it will, but also because we'll almost always be uncertain what we're really accomplishing, and we're not used to that. We like feedback; we like praise; we like studies that show what really works. Restoring the Earth to stability, or even to lesser instability, isn't like that, and if we aren't inner-directed, we won't be directed at all, because these changes will take place on a time frame of centuries and millennia.

Which isn't to say that this is a solitary process—far from it. We must join together in our communities, whatever those may be, and support our mutual work in every way that we can, because our political system is as stuck as stuck can be, and the most effective way to change political reality is with powerful grassroots movements. This is not a fight that can be won by changing light bulbs, bicycling, and voting for the right person—we're way beyond that now. If we don't make it possible for everyone to get to work and eat and warm their homes without fossil fuels, we fail—tragically.

Which leads me to another short personal anecdote, which is that in all those years of writing fiction—and waitressing, and making web pages, and building things—I was profoundly worried about climate change, but I wasn't doing anything about it other than reading everything I could, and worrying. I'm an introvert, and though I'd briefly been an activist when I was about 20, I'd moved entirely into a private life for about 25 years after that; I don't really like crowds and noise, I was terrified of public speaking, I'm more at home with nuance than slogans....I just wasn't a good fit for the activist world, or so I thought. But when Bill McKibben asked people to come to the White House to be arrested protesting Keystone XL, and NASA scientist James Hansen said full development of the tar sands would be "game over" for the climate, I could find no excuse not to go, even though I had precisely zero faith that it would be meaningful in any real way. I had been hoping for years that scientists and politicians would consult like grownups, and forestall disaster. But it was clear that wasn't happening, so I had to try to do what I could.

I went, and was arrested, and then came back to Seattle thinking it was a backwater of a place for climate work. How wrong that was is a funny story, but for now let me

just say: I found some people; we banded together to create 350 Seattle; it wasn't easy; but eventually, after a couple of years, some things started to cohere pretty magically, and I got to work—and work, and work—on the single most rewarding fight I've ever worked on, which was the ShellNo campaign, the Seattle portion of which ended with us in kayaks trying to blockade the Arctic rig. And we won that fight a few months later—which shocked me, to be honest. And I've worked—and worked, and worked—on many other fights since, and we've also won many of those. I'm still an introvert, though public speaking is mostly fine now; I still prefer nuance to slogans, and don't like crowds. Nothing about moving into being an activist and organizer was easy, but as with writing poetry, I didn't know where I was going, but I did know I wanted to keep going. I also met people whose love and intelligence and commitment to this work astonished me, and helped keep me in even when my frustrations with others made me desperate to walk away.

One of the benefits of being a writer and an introvert, perhaps, is that we have an advantage over most people in our willingness to be reflective, and sit with uncertainty and mystery—Keats' famous "negative capability". We're used to being pulled along by the current of a poem or story without knowing where it's headed, and we're no strangers to darkness, as a group. That's invaluable now—as a culture, we seem to have forgotten how to be comfortable with anything but feelings of absolute certainty (ideally, a certainty shared by everyone in our peer group). Those of us to whom questioning and mystery and empathy come more naturally can bring those qualities to the groups that we're part of, and maybe help balance them thereby. Internal direction tends to be how we find our way. "The Sailor cannot see the North, but knows the Needle can," wrote Dickinson.

We're seldom the engine of those groups, but we can be the steady hand on the tiller, and the ones whose instincts help set the course. Darkness doesn't make us lose our bearings. Sometimes, our job is to be the needle.

Most of you are quite young, and the next two years are probably pretty booked. I wish I could say—don't worry, this is the job of the grownups, just finish school and work on climate change later. But I can't. Your future is at stake, and though it's not necessary that everyone focus above all else on climate change, it is necessary that anyone who feels even the embryo of an urge to do so, do so. Find a way. You know who you are, and you're needed by every soul on Earth right now.

As for the rest of you, you're not off the hook: devote what time you can to this: for some of you, with jobs or families that

## WORSHIP

### Worship in June and July 2018

**JUNE 3** Commissioning of General Assembly Participants  
**"Feel the Spirit"**

A selection of upbeat gospel music arranged  
by John Rutter  
Romans 8:22-27

*A service of mostly music presented by our choir, orchestra  
and guest singers.*

**JUNE 10** Recognition of Graduates  
**"What do you do when the old no longer  
works and the new has not arrived?"**

Acts 1: 1-11  
Daniel 1:1-17  
The Rev. Floyd Thompkins, preaching

**JUNE 17** Communion  
FAMILY SUNDAY  
**Created for Community**  
**"Communion/Community"**

Mark 4:26-34.  
The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, preaching

**JUNE 24** **Created for Community**  
**"No Obstacle"**

2 Corinthians 6:1-13  
The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, preaching

.....  
**JULY 2** Communion  
**Created for Community**  
**"Plenty"**

2 Corinthians 8:1-15  
The Rev. Joanne Whitt, preaching

**JULY 8** **Created for Community**  
**"Calculating Privilege, Abusing Power"**

2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10  
2 Corinthians 12:2-10  
The Rev. Douglas Olds, preaching

**JULY 15** **Created for Community**  
**"Shall We Dance?"**

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19  
The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, preaching

**JULY 22** **Created for Community**  
TBD

The Rev. Scott Clark, preaching

**JULY 29** **Created for Community**  
**"Miracles"**

Psalms 14  
John 6:1-21  
The Rev. Douglas Olds, preaching

### Guest Preacher on June 10: The Rev. Floyd Thompkins, Award-Winning Community Leader and Director of the SFTS Center for Innovation in Ministry



On Sunday, June 10, we're pleased that the Rev. Floyd Thompkins will return to our pulpit as a guest preacher. The Rev. Thompkins has served as the Director of the Center for Innovation in Ministry at San Francisco Theological Seminary since 2016. Says seminary president Jim McDonald: "For many years Floyd Thompkins has been one of the most influential

thinkers and creative doers, not only in the African-American church but in the entire Christian community. His experience and skill is impressive and expansive."

Prior to coming to San Anselmo, Thompkins served as a dean and chaplain at Stanford and Princeton universities. He developed unique, highly effective programs to empower underserved teenage youth and young adults in urban and rural areas—in East Palo Alto, CA and rural South Georgia. He led the Antioch Baptist Church, the oldest African American Church in San Jose, CA, and was the Education and Administrative Pastor of Covenant Christian Church in Douglas, GA.

As Associate Dean of Memorial Church at Stanford University, Rev. Thompkins founded Black Church, the largest multi-cultural religious gathering on the Stanford campus. He also implemented a special freshman support system still being used as a base academic support program. Mr. Thompkins has led grassroots non-profits. In Georgia, he was executive director of the Bower Fund and with Youth Empowerment Today, organizations dedicated to mentoring at-risk youth through middle school, high school, and into college. He is a curriculum writer and a published author with several books to his credit.

His many awards include the Presidential Award for Community Service from President Bill Clinton, The Benjamin E. Mays Fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, The Edward G. Howel Preaching Award from Princeton Theological Seminary, the Regional Service Award from the Northern California Kidney Association.



#### Memorial Service for Maida Barrick

A memorial service for Maida Barrick will be held on  
June 9th, at 2:00 pm.

Continued from Page 13

need you in addition to your studies, that may be a few hours a month. For others, is a few hours a week really asking too much, considering the stakes? And support the ones giving their lives to this, and the fight itself, in every way that you can—argue with your parents and hopeless friends, show up at protests even when you're not sure if it matters, call every legislator you can find a number for and tell them to act now. None of that requires much time; it only requires that you understand that we are in what may be our last battle for survival, and the least you can do is show up.

With every day that passes, we come closer to the very real possibility of human extinction—and even if you're like me, and that doesn't always strike you as the worst thing for the planet, the truth is that the people who are suffering most, and will suffer ever more, are those who did the least to cause this problem. We, on the other hand, live in the nation that did the most to cause it, and that is also the most resistant to acting appropriately. It's our job to change that. No one else can.

It's common now to hear people say that we're living under fascism—but while there are terrible—and yes, fascist—things going on in our country now, most of us—especially people with some level of privilege—still have a level of freedom to dissent that could only be dreamed of in Apartheid-era South Africa, or Milosevic's Serbia, or Ben Ali's Tunisia. Yet in all of those places, against great odds, it was the people who won: the visionary, hopeful, utterly unrealistic movements that couldn't be squelched. With our greater levels of privilege, if we cannot successfully change the political landscape so that it is baseline responsive to the requirements of a stable planet fit for human habitation, then who are we? Are we so much weaker than they were?

There are still moments when I feel exhausted and frustrated and alone—not a compass for anything but sorrow. But it's such an astonishing honor to live in this moment, knowing that we probably still have the power to set the world back onto a stable path, and thereby make life better, or at least possible, for countless people and other beings. I cannot imagine anything more meaningful.

Uncertainty is possibility. In the uncertainty before us, in the sacrifices and joy of our connections with each other and every living thing, we have been given overwhelming abundance.

In this darkness, we have begun our real journey.

*(This piece is adapted from a lecture at Willamette University on February 1, 2018—sponsored by the Hallie Ford Chair in Writing, the Teppola Prize in Creative Writing, and the Department of English).*

Used by permission. It can be found online at: <https://bit.ly/2BD0Ehz>

### **Pedal for Protein Fundariser On August 26th**

There will be fundraiser for the Pedal for Protein Ride during coffee hour. Items include Equal Exchange coffee, chocolates, and teas. Also, Global Crafts and Crafts by Mira, both fair trade companies. Here's your chance to shop for fall birthdays and...Christmas. Really.

Do something nice for yourself, a family member or a friend. Profits will go to food pantries and root cause projects that deal with hunger. This is the 5th year of the charity ride; each successive year has raised more than the previous year. This year's goal is \$50,000!



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## **SUNDAY WORSHIP**

10:00am  
(Nursery Care)

### **The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt**

Pastor and Head of Staff

### **The Rev. Doug Olds**

Parish Associate

### **Laurie Buntain**

Church Accountant

### **Daniel Canosa**

Director of Music

### **Tom Lannert**

Church Custodian

### **Joanna Magee**

Office Administrator

### **Audrey Mahler**

Sexton

### **Natsuko Murayama**

Organist

### **Martha Spears**

Coordinator of Older Adult Ministries

### **Mary Wright Gillespie**

Associate Pastor Emerita

### **Sally Johnson**

Director of Music Emerita

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Please submit stories by the 15th of the month prior to publication.

# Join the 5th Annual Northern California Ride



- Ride to help feed hungry people and have fun too!
- Ride to support food pantries with healthy protein food.
- Riders can choose from two ride choices — A 6-day or a 1-day ride.
- The 6-day ride is limited; sign up soon to reserve your spot.

To Register for the Ride or to Donate, Support, or Volunteer Time or Space:

[www.imathlete.com/events/PedalforProtein](http://www.imathlete.com/events/PedalforProtein)

[www.imathlete.com/donate/PedalforProtein5](http://www.imathlete.com/donate/PedalforProtein5)

The ride is organized by The Hunger Task Force of the Presbytery of the Redwoods, Patty Sanders, Ride Director

Email: [PattyRedwoodsHAE@sbcglobal.net](mailto:PattyRedwoodsHAE@sbcglobal.net)

100% is donated to support local food pantries & food justice projects