



# The Federated Family

== Filling the World with God's Love, Justice and Beauty ==



## 2 EASTER SUNDAY

We were able to gather together under a tent on Easter Sunday.

## 3 PARADIGM SHIFT

Finding ourselves in the story of Jonah.

## 6 MUSTARD SEE CHRONICLES

Part 3: Pulling Weeds in the Dark



## 4 MEXICO ALTERNATIVE

Served locally since traveling to Mexico wasn't an option this year.

## EASTER GATHERINGS

BY KELLY BLOUGH



Saratoga Federated had a joyful reunion on Easter Sunday! Congregation members and visitors flocked to our new tent “tabernacle” to worship together - masked and socially-distant - in two identical services. Guest worship leaders, Jeff Lane and John Voelz, led the congregation in traditional hymns, such as *He Lives*, as well as contemporary praise songs. Lindsay Roush and her sister, Jessica Thompson, performed a moving duet of *Speak the Name*.

Sean’s message, *Land of Hope and Dreams*, called the congregation to renewed faith and hope as followers of Jesus on a transformational journey. The two services were livestreamed to accommodate those who felt more comfortable participating from home.

Many thanks to the many volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this extraordinary and long-awaited day a reality. It was a joy to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord together.



## NEW SERIES: PARADIGM SHIFT

FINDING OURSELVES IN THE STORY OF JONAH - MAY 16 TO JUNE 6

BY SEAN MILLER

Eugene Peterson wrote, “One reason for the long-run popularity of Jonah is that it invites playfulness. The book of Jonah both in content and in style is playful. And it invokes playfulness in us.”

However, within its playfulness are deep insights, unnerving convictions, and mysteries of God’s love, justice, and beauty.

One of the beautiful things about Jonah is that it’s accessible to everyone. Children, adults, the spiritually curious, and longtime followers of Jesus can all find treasured wisdom in this story. Doing a deep-dive into Jonah can comfort, provoke, convict, and even unnerve us. A good reading of Jonah will also show us the power of a paradigm shift. A paradigm is a model or pattern for grasping reality. A paradigm shift is a fundamental change in approach or underlying assumptions.

Paradigm shifts are both necessary and painful. They are necessary because they equip us to understand the past, present, and future—to see them more accurately. Painful because the truth can hurt. But truth protects us from destructive patterns in our lives and in our thoughts. Truth also leads us to more fulfillment in our relationships. This is why Jesus says that “...when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.” If this is the work of the Spirit, then the life of a follower of Jesus will include paradigm shifts from time to time.

*Necessary* and *painful* also describe the transformational journey. If we are to grow and become more like Jesus, we must embrace paradigm shifts when the Spirit of God invites us into one. Jonah is a story about a person who fought tooth-and-nail to resist his own necessary and painful shift. He runs, he cries out, and he unwillingly obeys, but never puts his heart into it. In fact, he guards his heart from God until the very end of the story.

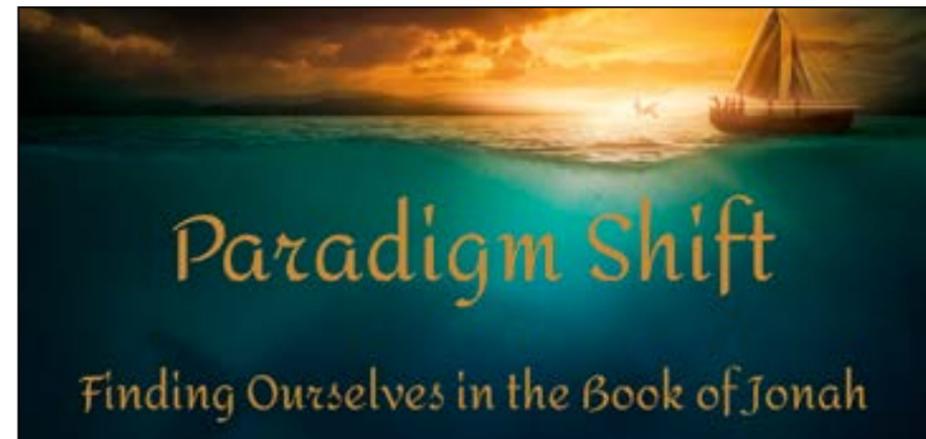
Jonah has a strange ending that includes anger, resentment, confusion, and tension. Jonah is disillusioned and can’t see the grandness of God’s mysterious grace. His priorities are out of alignment with God and so is his heart. Really, his anger is an expression

of something much deeper, something we will explore together. The story ends as an unresolved cliffhanger. We don’t know what happened with this ancient prophet, but are left to wonder how we will respond when we find ourselves in his place.

In some respect, we are all Jonah. In this series, we will journey all the way to Tarshish and back, and hopefully see a God who shows us our true selves and his majestic love.

In His Firm Grip,

Sean



## MEXICO ALTERNATIVE

BY MATT HALL

Unable to build houses with Amor Ministries in Mexico for the second year in a row, last month, our youth ministry led local service projects instead. Over 30 adults and students served at least once over the three days of projects.

In Felton, Neal and Sonja Locke led a bunk refurbishment project at Camp Daybreak. Daybreak is a non-denominational camping ministry that is working on refurbishing cabins ahead of their summer season. Unable to host their usual camps for youth groups, they're planning to host families. Our crew cleaned and painted the bunks' metal frames, cut and sealed plywood sheets, and cleaned the mattresses.

At the church, Amy and Spencer Sells led two different projects. We built a playhouse and made blankets for the families ministered to by CityTeam Ministries. The playhouse utilized many skills developed in Mexico, though this year we got to utilize power tools!

Our group also hosted social events in the evening: a game night, an outdoor movie, and a BBQ. It was great to get to serve and play together. We are looking forward to our next project: fundraising to support the ongoing work of Amor Ministries in Mexico.



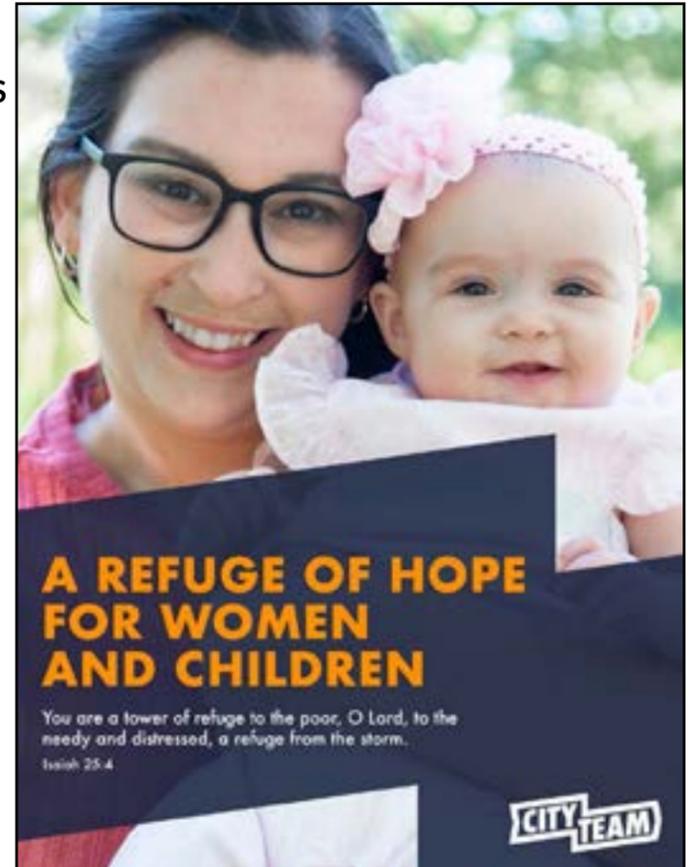
## LENTEN OFFERING UPDATE

BY OUR LOCAL AND GLOBAL OUTREACH TEAMS

Thanks to your generosity, Saratoga Federated was able to raise \$18,965 for our annual Lenten offering. This money will be equally split between our local and global offering recipients.

Your gift of \$9,482 will help CityTeam in their acquisition of an apartment complex adjacent to House of Grace. This complex will add another 50 apartment units to house four times as many women and children in crisis.

Our global offering will go toward building a high school in the village of Mulanje, Malawi. Your gift of \$9,482 provides an education to those who otherwise would have no opportunity to attend school, and shares the love of Jesus in this predominately Muslim part of Malawi.



## CARE UPDATE: GRIEF SHARE BRINGS HOPE

BY PEGGY BECK

The GriefShare seminar and support group we launched at SFC in February is proving to be beneficial and very much appreciated. Participants are finding encouragement and gaining tools to process their grief, such as learning to navigate meaningful milestones and respond to well-intentioned yet unhelpful comments. The team of facilitators has given generously of their time and hearts. Grief is a hard and often lonely journey.

GriefShare allows us opportunities to have our feelings validated, for God to utilize our grief to help others and bring us closer to him. GriefShare also highlights helpful scriptures and points to Jesus as the ultimate healer and source of hope.

One participant shared that it was "very healing to speak with others in my position." To have others truly understand what you are going through is

comforting. One facilitator recently noted how God is showing him that our grief doesn't go to waste and his is being used to help others. Another participant expressed that GriefShare was helping him grieve and that being around those with strong faith is helping him draw closer to God.

GriefShare, though Christian based, is open to anyone suffering loss through death. Several participants were referred to GriefShare by a counselor, a friend or found us online. Our online format has allowed people from out of the area to participate too! We plan to offer GriefShare again in the future, and we will welcome both current participants and newcomers. Some find that repeating the series is beneficial since they are at a different place in their journey and they may bring hope and encouragement to another.

**THE MUSTARD SEED CHRONICLES**  
**PART 3: PULLING WEEDS IN THE DARK**  
 BY SAVOY STEVENS; ILLUSTRATION BY SAGE STEVENS

The school bell finally rang and kids poured out of the double doors in front of the school on Oak Street. Just a few weeks until summer vacation and the students and teachers could hardly wait! Gwyn, Avery, and Leo quickly found each other on the sidewalk and started walking up the hill towards home. Junia, Leo's dog, was waiting for them at the corner as usual.



They walked past the blue house with the red door, then by Mr. Campbell's white house with the black Model-T parked out front. As they got closer to their own houses, they noticed that Ms. Murdock's mail had been piling up on her front porch, and newspapers littered the sidewalk. The grass in the yard was starting to turn yellow and Ms. Murdock's prize sunflowers were drooping, to say nothing of the petunias! "It looks like Ms. Murdock forgot to leave the sprinklers on," Leo said. "Yeah, her garden looks pretty sad" quipped Gwyn. "Except for the weeds!" chimed in Avery.

The weeds did look very happy in Ms. Murdock's garden. Ms. Murdock must have left town very quickly. She usually hired one of the kids to water and weed while she was away. It was odd that she hadn't and soon, the plants in her garden would be dead and the weeds would take over. The kids were quiet the rest of the way home, thinking about Ms. Murdock coming home to a dead garden.

That evening, after dinner, Gwyn and Avery heard a knock on their back door. It was Leo. In a hushed voice, he said, "Meet me in Ms. Murdock's front yard at midnight, bring gloves and make sure no one sees you!" Just then, the girls' mother came around the corner and told the girls it was time for bed. They got tucked in but set an alarm for eleven-thirty.

It was hard to leave their cozy beds when the alarm rang. The girls got dressed in the dark and tiptoed downstairs, grabbing gloves as they moved silently out the back door. The neighborhood was hushed and dark. Arriving at Ms. Murdock's house, they were greeted by Junia's soft nuzzle. "We're going to pull the weeds and set the sprinklers," Leo said. "We could have done that after school tomorrow," Gwyn noted. "We could have," said Avery, "but it wouldn't be quite so adventurous!" The kids pulled on their gloves and got down on their hands and knees in the garden, pulling the stubborn weeds. Then they set the sprinklers to turn on twice a day and snuck back home to their beds.

A few days had passed since their midnight adventure, and the kids were on their way home from getting ice cream. They noticed Ms. Murdock standing in her front yard, looking at her flowers and vegetables with a huge smile on her face, shaking her head back and forth in disbelief. The kids shared knowing glances with one another but said nothing.

Giving and serving with generosity is its own sweet reward and keeping their hard work a secret made it even sweeter - and more fun!

**BEREAVEMENTS**

We celebrate the life of **Muriel Alexander** who died on March 19.  
 Norman Alexander (husband)

We celebrate the life of **Aram Ganoumian** who died on March 24.  
 Janet Ganoumian (wife)  
 Doris & Joe Madden (daughter & son-in-law)

We celebrate the life of **Rae Downey** who died on March 29.  
 Andy Eschenfelder (husband)

**BIRTHS**

We celebrate the life of **Brayden William Cook** who was born on March 12.  
 Peter & Crystal Cook (parents)  
 Jason, Emma, Kaitlyn (siblings)

**ANNIVERSARIES**

Tadashi & Sarah Okuno	May 1	28 years
Rolf & Bonnie Noehr	May 2	51 years
Tom & Ellen Hogue	May 5	59 years
Bill & Linelle Bell	May 6	54 years
Steve & Lisa Sinclair	May 7	27 years
Neil & Joan Holland	May 9	29 years
Nick & Karen Seroff	May 11	36 years
Jon & Arianna Gerry	May 15	11 years
Mark & Julie Cabrales	May 20	32 years
Joel & Sarah Carter	May 21	16 years
Roger & Janine Murray	May 21	44 years
Craig & Laura Lewis	May 23	51 years
Norb Fronczak & Margaret Dancey	May 26	26 years
Mark & Tarla Draper	May 26	9 years
Stephen Kempf & Shira Stone	May 26	9 years
Charlie Snyder & Debbie Supnet	May 28	10 years
Neal & Sonja Locke	May 30	29 years
Alex & Terri Bailey	May 31	35 years

Do you attend SFC and have an anniversary, birth or wedding you would like to celebrate in an upcoming issue? Please email Kelly Blough at [kelly@saratogafederated.org](mailto:kelly@saratogafederated.org).

**CHURCH FINANCE UPDATE**  
 BY JERRY BRUCE

As I write this in mid-April, our fiscal year-to-date finances tell a story that has both positive and negative components.

On the positive side, many people have continued to give faithfully to the Lord's work through this church. During the safety-related campus closure, we have been able to reduce expenses, partly due to lower operating costs and partly due to unfilled staff positions (primarily in the area of worship). In addition, through the government-sponsored pandemic relief packages, the church has been able to maintain salaries and wages for our staff whose jobs were curtailed by the closure.

On the negative side, our overall giving is noticeably below our budget target and pre-Covid trend levels.

The net of these factors indicate we will not have a short-term budget crisis, but we are concerned about our ability to maintain staffing levels into the future. Please continue to prayerfully consider how God would have you handle your family's giving and overall finances, and for our church leadership to be wise in the application of your gifts.

For more information or to give, visit: <https://www.saratogafederated.org/give.html>.

# UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

ADDITIONAL DETAILS AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE  
[WWW.SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG](http://WWW.SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG)

## MONDAY, MAY 3 – 6:30 PM LEADERSHIP HUDDLE

LOCATION: VIRTUAL GATHERING

[WWW.SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG](http://WWW.SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG)

A conversation about one of the most important elements of a healthy church – unity.

## SATURDAY, MAY 8 – 1:00 TO 3:00 PICK UP VIRTUAL WINE TASTING FUNDRAISER

CONTACT: MATT HALL – (408) 857-1000 EXT. 336

[WWW.SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG/WINETASTING](http://WWW.SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG/WINETASTING)

LOCATION: COURTYARD

Wine and charcuterie plate available for pick up.

## SUNDAY, MAY 9 – 9:30 & 11:00 AM BABY DEDICATION

CONTACT: ROBYN SWAN – (408) 857-1000 EXT. 240

[ROBYN@SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG](mailto:ROBYN@SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG)

LOCATION: ON CAMPUS

If you would like to have your baby dedicated, contact Robyn Swan.



## SUNDAY, MAY 16 – 12:30 PM ANNUAL MEETING

CONTACT: OLIVIA DCOSTA - (408) 867-1000 EXT. 246

[OLIVIA@SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG](mailto:OLIVIA@SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG)

LOCATION: VIRTUAL GATHERING

Our annual meeting will be held again on Zoom. Information packets with proxies were mailed to all members. If you need a packet, contact Olivia Dcosta.

## THURSDAY, MAY 20 – 12:00 PM WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB

CONTACT: JEANNIE HILT – (408) 858-8623

[JEANNIEHILT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:JEANNIEHILT@GMAIL.COM)

LOCATION: VIRTUAL GATHERING

Discussing: *His Only Wife* by Peace Adzo Medie

## SUNDAY, MAY 30 - 10:00 AM TO 1:00 PM FAMILY ADVENTURE DAY

CONTACT: SAVOY STEVENS - (408) 867-1000 EXT. 251

[SAVOY@SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG](mailto:SAVOY@SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG)

LOCATION: MONTALVO ARTS CENTER, SARATOGA

REGISTER: [WWW.SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG](http://WWW.SARATOGAFEDERATED.ORG)

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