Some Good News

This edition of the Federated Family Newsletter comes at a time when the world is in crisis, when things are changing daily before our eyes, when the path forward is uncertain. The impact of the health pandemic, whether it be physical, economic, psychological or political, touches us all. We have no choice in what is taking place, but we do have a choice in how we respond. The silver lining of this dark cloud has been the overwhelming presence of good – unpolluted air, clear water, family time, healthier eating, neighbors helping neighbors. John Kraskinski’s YouTube episodes of Some Good News have gone viral and even inspired us to add our own version to online Sunday services.

Many of the articles in this publication reflect people and groups telling and being good news in our local community with ripples to the larger world around us. Sewing face masks, providing technical resources, hands-on assistance with grocery shopping or transportation, financial assistance, supporting frontline workers and local small businesses, emotional support, and simply making sure that we all stay connected to the list, but the list of ways to help and give and love keeps growing, added to daily by both young and old. Pretty exciting!

Social networks abound with memes that comfort, encourage and make us smile. One that caught my attention said that the church could look at this like God’s fire drill…what would we do if we weren’t allowed to gather in our church facility every week? The answer? We would discover fresh new ways to be the church, the hands and feet of Jesus, wherever we are and however we can. We are seeing that happen and that is good news!

The Apostle Paul encountered numerous challenges when his world was turned upside down. His take-away from suffering? “I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.” Acts 20:24

History has shown us that we will return to health, to the freedom to move about and travel, to enjoy sporting events and vacations, and to worship together as SFC has done for 100 years. May history also reveal that we took to heart these words from Paul to the Galatians, “And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

Bill & Diane Allison
As I sit and write this, I’m looking out my front windows (sheltering-in-place) at the sun shining on the hills across the small valley. There is a time each day when it sets low in the sky and reflects on the windows of the houses on those hills. I can’t see the sun itself because of the angle of our house and another hill that blocks my view, but the reflection on the glass and the clouds is gorgeous! I am now waiting for that moment and trying to write this fast enough so that I can see it happen before I’m done. (I’ll let you know exactly when it happens.)

When the scriptures say that we were created in the image of God, it’s not just about value (which, of course it is). The description is also about purpose. Like the windows across the way, reflecting the light of the sun in the most incredible ways, we have a mission to reflect the character of God into the world. This is part of what Jesus meant when He said, “You are the light of the world.” Matthew 5:13. (Not yet.)

On some days, the clouds are so thick that there is no reflection. It doesn’t mean that the sun isn’t there, but it does mean that I don’t get to experience one of my favorite moments of the day. I know the sun is there, but its normal light is hidden. Jesus also said, “A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.” Matthew 5:14. (Still waiting.)

If I’m honest with myself, I do cover my “light” sometimes. Occasionally my life is like a cloudy day. I don’t always reflect the character of God into the world (or to my own family and friends). There are also days when the sun is shining bright and instead of reflecting the light, I turn the mirror inward at myself and no one sees the light. I even have days where it’s like an eclipse and I can’t see the light—all light at all. (Getting closer.)

Being created in the image of God is to live our lives like an angled mirror, reflecting Jesus into our world—after all, “The Son is the image of the invisible God…” Colossians 1:15.

THERE IT IS!

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the reflection that I LOVE! Right now, the hills are also a spectacular green (they’ll be California gold soon, so I’m enjoying this).

Here’s the point, I want to be the beautiful reflection of our incredible God that we find in Jesus and experience through the Holy Spirit. I want others to see Jesus in me.

Every evening this happens. Then night comes and it gets really dark. I know the sun is there just like I know the Son is there. We can’t always see God or what He’s up to in our lives, but even when it’s dark or cloudy, He is there. I pray that you would know Him deeply in this season. I pray that we, at SFC, would reflect His love in all kinds of fantastic ways.

Over the next couple of months, we are going to walk into a series about how the light shines in the midst of chaos and another series about how everyone’s invited to experience it. I hope you will be with us to worship, celebrate and shine like lights in the world.

Sean Miller, Lead Pastor
Annual Meeting - From Home

We plan to hold our annual meeting electronically on Sunday, May 17 at 12:30 pm. Details for calling into or joining the meeting were mailed to all members and attenders in our church database prior to this newsletter. If you have any questions, feel free to call Jerry Bruce in the church office at (408) 867-1000, ext. 249.

All the ministries of the church are finding new ways to do church and be church without gathering our physical bodies in the same room. The annual meeting is no exception. By now you should have received a complete mailing that describes our planned process and gives you all the information about what is being voted on. If you are a registered member of the church, your packet should have included a proxy as well. We are hoping everyone who wants to vote will be able to return their proxy to us before the meeting. Completed proxies can be mailed to the church, or you can take a picture of it and email that picture to Olivia DCosta at olivia@saratogafederated.org.

Please be on the lookout for CHANGE! If there is one thing I have seen over the past two months it is that as soon as we think we have a good plan, the rules change, and we have to adapt. This article is being written a month before the meeting, and although I don’t know what will change, I suspect something will. We will use email and our website to alert you to changes, so if you do not have access to either of those, please ask one of your friends who is digitally connected to keep you posted.

At this time, we plan to hold the meeting live beginning at 12:30 pm on Sunday, May 17. This time was picked to be as soon as practical after the various online family ministry programs conclude so that all can join us.

Prior to the annual meeting, on the two Sundays preceding (May 3 and May 10) at 12:30 pm, we will hold online informational meetings. These prior meetings are designed to give you time to discuss any of the issues being voted on and have candid dialogue hosted by several members of the elders and senior staff. Please refer to the mailing you received for more details on how to participate in either of those two informational meetings.

If you did not receive your meeting package in the mail, please contact Olivia DCosta via her email above or by phone at (408) 867-2000 ext. 246.

Jerry Bruce, Minister of Church Operations

Bridge Builders Respite Day
Saturday, July 11
9:00 am to 1:00 pm
(volunteers arrive at 8:15 am for training and breakfast)

Since we were unable to host a respite event in May, we will host our first ever summer respite event on Saturday, July 11.

Join us for a day full of crafts, games, music, recreation and a petting zoo.

Parents, please register your children as soon as possible as we do fill up quickly.

The more volunteers we have, the more families we can accept, so volunteers, please sign up early so we know how many families we can serve.

Contact Debbie Lillo at dlillo@comcast.net to register your children and to volunteer to help.

No Cost
Must Pre-Register
Volunteers Needed!
Fed Family Newsletter

Care Update
Answering the Call During Crisis

The COVID-19 crisis is beyond what any of us thought we would be going through. There are so many challenges being faced including meeting basic needs and loneliness. Yet people are resilient and many of our church family are finding ways to help and care for others. The Care Team has deployed our Care Deacons and others to contact as many of our attenders as we can. We want to know that our church family’s basic needs are being met. Those receiving the calls have been so touched to know others are thinking about them. One lady was so excited that someone from the church called that she shared the news with a friend! Those making the calls have also reported experiencing joy and blessings as they engage in conversations and help the recipient get connected. I am happy to report that most of the people contacted are doing well, however some needs have been discovered and we are helping to meet them. If you consider SFC your church and haven’t been contacted, we likely do not have your correct contact information so please contact us (see below) with your name, email, address and phone number.

There are lots of people in our church stepping up to help others.

Some are serving their neighbors and friends by shopping for them. Two families are bringing restaurant meals to some of our congregants, not only blessing these individuals with wonderful meals, but helping support some of our local businesses. One of our members told me the Caesar salad she received was the best she had ever tasted! The Care Team wants to help you help others. We created a guide to aid your practice of Self-Care and Mutual Care in the Virus Crisis. It includes tips to keep yourself safe inside and outside of your home. It contains other resources that may benefit you or a friend, including medical and professional links to virus information, grocery store senior hours, spiritual growth resources and more.

The Care Team has launched two volunteer teams, one will provide technical assistance, the other, essential shopping assistance. For technical assistance, like to get help with watching the weekly online service or to learn how to use video conferencing tools, call the Tech Helpline at (408) 867-1000 ext. 265 and leave a detailed message. To get assistance with essential shopping, call the Shopping Helpline at (408) 867-1000 ext. 266 and leave a message. Be sure to speak your name and phone number clearly and your need. A volunteer will return your call as soon as they are able, generally within 24 hours. If you would like to be a volunteer, leave a message as well. Shopping volunteers must be age 19-59. We are humbled to be a part of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through our church body.

We hope you will contact us if you have not been contacted by the church or if you have a prayer request or other need. We want to stay connected!

How to Contact Care During Shelter in Place: send email to care@saratogafederated.org or call (408) 867-1000, ext. 239 or submit a care need request online. Care Associates retrieve messages each weekday, Monday to Friday. Our confidential prayer ministry continues in force. Pastoral care and counseling is being offered by phone. Submit requests through our team email address (above). The after hours care crisis line can be reached by selecting “1” after calling (408) 867-1000.

Peggy Beck, Care Ministry Associate for those 70 and older

Grief Recovery Workshop Postponed

Due to COVID-19, the Grief Recovery Workshop will be held at a later time, not yet determined. We do, however, have resources and ideas available to share remotely with those experiencing grief or loss. Some can be emailed, others accessed through phone or online chats. Please email Peggy Beck at peggy.beck@saratogafederated.org to get more information.
Care Reflection
Alone But Not Lonely: A Solitude Toolbox

In a culture that rewards extroversion, being alone is often viewed negatively. Current research shows that loneliness is a distressing epidemic with devastating effects on mental and physical health, yet it is possible to be alone and not lonely. Christ spent time alone. Saints and mystics of Christian history also sought spacious time which forged their deep interior life. While loneliness is unhealthy, solitude is healing and can nourish the soul, reconnecting us with our sense of self and of God.

Recently, we experienced collective social isolation as we fought to stem the tide of COVID-19. As many of us were forced into various degrees of aloneness, our experiences varied from person to person and from day to day. Some found being alone easy at first but draining and discouraging after too many days. Others were surprised by new rhythms they found, even through the emotions and struggles that isolation brings. Below you will find five tools for engaging solitude.

- **Lament** - Recognize your grief. Being alone hurts and we do everything not to feel the pain. Yet the only way to get through grief is to feel it. The Psalms are a vehicle of lament for the Christian life. Praying the Psalms reassures us that faith and sadness can coexist.
- **Hospitality** - The root of the word “hospitality,” hospes, means both host and guest. Care for yourself by attending to the classic elements of hospitality as you would attend to a guest; fold your laundry with intention and care, have a drink of your choice in a fancy glass, light a candle as a companion in your space.
- **Generosity** - Care for others by showing up for someone in a new way. Send them a book, a note or have a meal delivered. Tell them why you love them and why you are grateful for them.
- **Quality over Quantity** - Make your connections mean something. Go deeper. Ask the bigger questions. Be more vulnerable yourself. It will mean more and sustain you longer.
- **Ritual** - Find practices that remind you who you are and whose you are. A daily morning liturgy, singing songs, creating, cooking, walking. Find a rhythm and a practice that serves you.

Solitude can be a source of energy and rejuvenation where we discover new things about ourselves and about God. May you find safety, connection and wonder in this spacious season.

Savoy Stevens, Care Ministry Associate 20s and 30s

Serve Sunday - June 7

At the time of this writing we are hoping to be able to join together in service on June 7. What that will look like is anyone’s guess at this point. Stay tuned. If you are aware of specific service opportunities that might be appropriate for us to tackle on Serve Sunday, please let me know at jerry@saratogafederated.org. Until then, please serve each other by calling and praying for one another.
Local Outreach Report

Your Local Outreach Team has been working to help meet some of the needs in our community during the coronavirus time of stay-at-home. Thanks to contributions from you, the people of SFC, we have been able to look for ways to help. Here are a few things we have been able to do:

- Contribute to the Sustenance Fund used by the Care Team to support those who are especially hard hit during this time.
- Sent funds to Servant Partners via Annika John. Servant Partners is one of SFC’s supported ministries. They are imbedded in one of the hardest hit areas in San Jose, where many hourly workers have seen their income drop to zero, which impacts their ability to buy food and pay rent.
- We have started up the delivery of meals from Saratoga restaurants to medical staff who are on the front lines of this pandemic. We included a thank you placard expressing thanks for all they are doing. Initial delivery was from Florentine’s in Saratoga to El Camino Hospital in Los Gatos and El Camino Hospital in Mountain View. Max Murphy and Michael Deauville have been making this happen.
- We are continually checking in with our supported ministries to see how we can help them.

Our Care Ministry manages a fund designed to help members and neighbors with emergency short-term financial needs. Any SFC member can inform Arvin Engelson of a need. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. The SFC Sustenance Fund is not in the church budget. It is funded by direct donations. Tax deductible contributions can be made to this fund through SFC’s finance office.

In addition to the Covid-19 relief in our immediate area, SFC’s Local Outreach Team, through our sponsorship of the Points of Light (POL) program, is helping with a serious problem in Oakland. Over 60% of the children in Oakland receive one or more meals each school day. At the current time, meals are available for children to pick-up at their schools. While this works for those with transportation, it leaves others to go hungry. POL is working with five different Oakland schools on a program in which POL picks up these meals and delivers them to the students’ homes. To date POL has delivered over 4,000 meals. Additionally, POL is purchasing food for those families who are unable to provide for themselves. POL also meets with small family groups and individuals to provide counseling and encouragement. God is at work in Oakland and Saratoga Federated Church is doing its part to help!

Again, we thank you for your past support of Local Outreach. We are open to supporting other needs in Saratoga and its surrounding communities. If you are aware of needs which are not being otherwise addressed, please send this information to Bob Connors at bconnors6000@gmail.com.
“The Bible is rich with invitation.”

During a recent phone call with Audrey Carlson, she spoke these wise words! God is continually inviting us into relationship with Him; seeking us when we are lost; offering us the abundant life in Christ. Here are a few ways to partake in those biblical invitations.

In these uncertain times, you long for peace and assurance of God’s presence. Our first and foremost need for community is communion with our Creator. You remember how flight attendants, when giving their safety spiel, would remind us to put our oxygen masks on before helping another person? We need to care for our souls before caring for others. These resources are designed to guide you in reflection, discovery and prayer.

Pray As You Go.
Available online at https://pray-as-you-go.org/ or as an app on your smart phone. Pray As You go offers a new guided prayer and scripture reflection each day. Each session lasts about 12 minutes and combines music, scripture and questions for reflection. It is designed to help you become more aware of God’s presence in your life, listen to and reflect on God’s word and grow in your relationship with God. (All voices have a wonderful British accent!)

Center for Action and Contemplation Daily Meditations
https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/

CAC reminds us that life in Christ includes both action and contemplation, and leads us towards that ideal, as modeled by Jesus.

Every Moment Holy by Douglas McKelvey
This book of liturgies offers a way to focus our prayers, often helpful when we feel too overwhelmed to pray. Some liturgies are available for download at https://www.everymomentholy.com/.

The Practice of Examen
Examen comes from the Ignatian spiritual exercises and is a valuable way of living a “with God” life. Simply, it is a way of looking at your life at the end of each day to 1) become aware of God’s presence; 2) review the day with gratitude; 3) pay attention to your emotions; 4) choose one feature of the day and pray from it; 5) look toward tomorrow. Close by saying the Lord’s Prayer.

Life Groups
25 of our 47 Life Groups are meeting via Zoom. It’s not quite the same as meeting in person, but it’s a wonderful way to stay together!

Sean mentioned the theologian N.T. Wright in a recent sermon, saying that people will be reading his work 500 years from now because he is such an excellent scholar and author. If your Life Group is looking for a new study, we have NT Wright’s Life Group studies on the new testament available for you to peruse. The guides in this series are designed to help you understand scripture in fresh ways under the guidance of one of the world’s leading new testament scholars. Thoughtful questions, prayer suggestions and useful background and cultural information all guide you or a group more deeply into God’s word. Discover how you can participate more fully in God’s kingdom. The New Testament and its World is an excellent accompaniment to any study of the life of Christ and the Gospels.

If you are not part of a Life Group but would like to join one, please contact Sally Bryant at sally@saratogafederated.org.
Children’s Ministry

Just as you’re navigating home life while sheltering in place, at Saratoga Federated we are navigating new ways to bring Sunday school to children and their families. All our Sunday school teachers and leaders miss worshiping and learning in person with all the kids at SFC, but it’s been wonderful to connect through our Sunday morning Zoom mini Sunday school. How fun to see the faces of preschoolers all the way to 5th graders (plus ALL their teachers!) praising God and hearing stories! Families are also receiving weekly links for interactive at-home Sunday school lessons with music, Bible stories and supplemental activities. It is truly our goal that during this time, the children of our church not wither but grow in their faith. In addition to our Sunday activities, we are offering resources for families through Instagram and Facebook posts (Insta: sfc_kidsmin, Facebook: sfc kids town), a Right Now Media subscription for studies and kids videos, and the Parent Cue App (a resource from our curriculum company) for parenting tips and resources.

I speak for the whole Children’s Ministry team when I say that we love and miss all the kids and would love to support families in any way we can. Please feel free to contact us with prayer requests, help linking to our resources or just to say “hi” by emailing amy@saratogafederated.org.

Amy Sells, Interim Director of Children & Family Ministries

Village Preschool

Due to the mandated closing of our school on March 13 this year, we are so missing our families and staff at Village Preschool. Hearing this news hit us so hard. Our teachers and staff have rallied around each of our families by calling them and checking in each week with Zoom meetings. We have also created a Google drive folder to place special videos of different experiences with each teacher either reading, singing or doing movement for the children to enjoy watching and participating in. All of the families have enjoyed keeping the connection with each of their teachers and have enjoyed having the children stay connected to their classmates. We are praying for everyone’s health and safety during this time, and are working hard for a meaningful closure to our school year. We are also praying for a better and even stronger community when we can all return back to Village and SFC.

Linda Kerin, Village Preschool Director

High School

As we shelter-in-place, our high school ministry is using Zoom to hold our Sunday and mid-week gatherings. While we miss being together, a silver lining to this situation is that students who struggled to attend in the past are now joining us regularly. Our students are busy with extracurricular activities or homework, and sometimes because of the schedule of their family, could not find a ride to the church. It has been great to have these connections in this season.

Our Sunday curriculum has shifted from our planned curriculum to hitting topics relevant to this unusual season. We discussed being an encouraging friend and being the Light of Jesus to friends and family who may be struggling. We talked about dealing with anxiety through faith and professional counseling. We evaluated how we were using our time in this season.

The high school ministry, students and leaders alike, are anxiously looking to resume our regular in-person events but are making the best of this season. If you know of a student who would like to join our group, please send me an email at matt.hall@saratogafederated.org.

Matt Hall, Director of Youth & Family Ministries

Our 4th and 5th graders had a ton of fun at our last Jam 45 making pizza, singing karaoke and hanging out!
Junior High

Junior high students are resilient. Wherever they are, they jump in and enjoy the ride. But during these turbulent times, things are not that easy. Some students have school, and some students have none. Siblings are continuously together and get on each other’s nerves, while others are bored and lonely. Earthly matters weigh heavy and have built anxiety in their hearts. But behind the clouds, God always provides silver linings, blessings. For example, students continue to join MadHouse Wednesdays and Sundays via Zoom. One week, we enjoyed Disney night and played I-Spy, while another night, we dressed up as pirates and played Wheel of Fortune. On MadHouse Sundays, we study the life of Elisha and talk about the keys to 20/20 spiritual vision. For Easter, we enjoyed a virtual holy week tour “In the Steps” of Jesus, narrated by our small group leaders. We even have an ongoing service project, mailing cards and letters to our SFC church family. So I guess you could say junior high students continue to be resilient in these strange times. They find their resiliency walking together and sharing Jesus. Please continue to pray for the MadHouse students, and leaders.

Yvette Lee,
Director of Junior High Ministry
Random Acts of Kindness

Before we were all sheltering in place, I was the recipient of a Random Act of Kindness. As I left church one Sunday, I noticed a note on my car windshield. It said my right front tire was split. I hadn’t noticed this. This random act of kindness may have prevented me from having a tire blow out and even being in an accident. A random act of kindness may save a life! Thank you to whoever did this.

What random acts of kindness have you noticed? Email Sally Bryant at sally@saratogafederated.org with your kindness stories.

Masks for Front-Line Workers

About 20 women from our church and community have made almost 700 masks for frontline workers including employees at Zanotto’s, Lunardi’s, those feeding the homeless, facility workers at Levi Stadium and health care professionals. We are still accepting cotton fabric and seeking sewers. If you can help, contact Sally Bryant at sally@saratogafederated.org. Thank you!

Operation Gratitude

Laurel Perusa, one of our SFC members, posted this message, “I am asking my family and friends to participate in “Operation Gratitude.” Write a note of gratitude to your grocery and pharmacy staff. The next time you visit your grocery store or pharmacy, give your note of gratitude to the store manager, who will in turn share the message with his staff. Notes will be posted in the staff room for all to read.
Women’s Fellowship

Due to the current shelter-in-place order, the Women’s Fellowship luncheon for May has been postponed. Circle leaders are contacting their members personally until we meet again.

We are hoping our June luncheon will be held as planned. On Tuesday, June 2, we will lunch together on the courtyard and in Douglass Hall. Watch for more detailed information to follow as we learn about the lifting of the shelter-in-place order.

If you need more information about joining a Circle now or next year, contact Joan Leonard at (408) 741-0213. We’d love to include you!

Who knew 2020 would provide us with so many more Random Acts of Kindness to add to our list of 100. Things we never would have thought of without being in our current situation. Who knew? I think we all know exactly who knew. God is good. Thank you for being His hands and feet to our community in so many wonderful and creative ways.

Some Good News...In Pictures
May Anniversaries

Mark & Kimberly Leonard May 1 27 years
Tadashi & Sarah Okuno May 1 27 years
Rolf & Bonnie Noehr May 2 50 years
Tom & Ellen Hogue May 5 58 years
Bill & Linelle Bell May 6 53 years
Steve & Lisa Sinclair May 7 26 years
Neil & Joan Holland May 9 28 years
Nick & Karen Seroff May 11 35 years
Jon & Arianna Gerry May 15 10 years
Mark & Julie Cabrales May 20 31 years
Roger & Janine Murray May 21 43 years
Joel & Sarah Carter May 21 15 years
Norb Fronczak & Margaret Dancey May 26 25 years
Mark & Tarla Draper May 26 8 years
Stephen & Shira Kempf May 26 8 years
Charlie Snyder & Debbie Supnet May 28 9 years
Norman & Muriel Alexander May 30 63 years
Neal & Sonja Locke May 30 28 years
Alex & Terri Bailey May 31 34 years

June Anniversaries

Tom & Mary Priest June 1 52 years
Mike & Bev Poellot June 3 53 years
Bob & Gay Bohn June 4 63 years
Greg & Debi Cormier June 5 44 years
Bruce & Diana McFarling June 6 55 years
Arvin & Dale Engelson June 8 52 years
Eric & Marguerite McAfee June 8 29 years
Craig & Carrie Elin Awbrey June 10 31 years
David & Karen Leitzell June 11 37 years
Darrell & Betty Qualls June 13 61 years
Dan & Ann Nash June 13 28 years
Bob & Barbara Goedjen June 15 65 years
Bill & Nancy Sanderson June 15 63 years
Dana & Melinda Chase June 15 52 years
Lawson & Lynn Adams June 16 52 years
Karsten & Lauren Temme June 16 13 years
Charles & Phyllis Marsh June 17 69 years
Mike & Ginny Bowman June 18 26 years
Vincent & Arlene Tong June 18 26 years
Al & Ellen Trimble June 21 62 years
Jeff & Jean Cherniss June 21 33 years
Jim & Hester O’Gara June 22 46 years
Carl & Olivia DCosta June 23 34 years
Don & Carolyn Armstrong June 24 53 years
Jon & Stephanie Giamanco June 25 14 years
Bill & Diane Janz June 26 55 years
Doug & Audrey Bloom June 27 39 years
John & Peggy Kimball June 28 34 years
Trevor & Laurel Shephard June 28 6 years
Ken & Doris Johnson June 30 64 years
Dick & Bobbi Brendlen June 30 36 years
Joe & Crista Fabbri June 30 8 years

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