



In the 1800's, a British missionary named Charles T. Studd spoke these words: "The light that shines farthest shines brightest nearest home."

The United Methodist Church (UMC) Human Relations Day is a powerful avenue to extend help and service to our local communities. It is about getting out of our comfortable social circles and offering love and care to those who need help in our neighborhoods and cities.

Giving on UMC Human Relations Day nurtures at-risk youth, strengthens communities' self-improvement efforts, and advocates for the oppressed. Together on Human Relations Day, Jan. 17, we participate in helping our communities and being a bright light at home.

Celebrate Advent and Christmas

Saturday, Dec. 5. 1–5 p.m. (Byron St. parking lot)

LifeMoves Donation Drive

We will collect items for LifeMoves' holiday store where people who are unhoused can shop for free and receive warm coats and blankets. See the list of items needed on page 8.

Note: All worship services are streamed and pre-recorded. They can be viewed anytime. Find links at firstchurchchristmas.org.

Sunday, Dec. 6. 7 p.m.

Advent Lessons & Carols Service

Join us for a traditional service of Lessons & Carols as scripture is read and the choir sings.

Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 12–13. 5–7 p.m.

Luminaria Drive-By

Name a beautiful luminaria to honor a loved one: firstchurchchristmas.org/luminary-lights or contact the church office. The luminaria will be displayed in front of the church. Drive by to admire the display and listen to a brief message and musical presentation via your FM radio.



Sunday, Dec. 20. 4 p.m.

Community Carol Sing

Join us for a pre-recorded service of the choir and congregation singing familiar Christmas carols.

Thursday, Dec. 20. Christmas Eve

- ★ Family Service and Pageant, 4 p.m.
- ★ Short VirtuAll Choir Service, 6 p.m.
- ★ Traditional Service, 8 p.m.



Friday, Dec. 25. Christmas Day

- ★ Short VirtuAll Christmas Day Service, 11 a.m.

JOIN US FOR A VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Christmas Eve
December 24 at 4:00pm
Pre-recorded and will premiere on
Facebook and YouTube



Rock of Ages

On walks, I enjoy searching for heart-shaped rocks. One day in 2020, I spotted a broken heart, which seemed fitting as illness, racism and suffering dominated the headlines. I thought of Psalm 34:18, NIV: “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

Humans can be hard-hearted—pointing fingers, assuming the worst and failing to extend compassion. We often reject people who look, think or act differently from us. All these things break hearts, including God’s. Only with his help can we rise above hatred, learn to listen more than we speak, and express kindness, empathy and a willingness to learn.

Jesus, be our rock as we face life’s brokenness. Stay near and start the healing. Amen.

—Julie Lee, in The Newsletter Newsletter



JOIN OUR
STUDY

The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart by Alicia Garza. Book study meets weekly on Sundays at 4 p.m. during December and January. For details, contact Hope@firstpaloalto.com.



“Because God works from home. That’s why we never see God in person.”

FIRST UMC PALO ALTO

WINTER ART & STORY EVENT

Join us for creative drawing and
story time with local illustrator
Ben Conway and Pastor Ann.

Tuesday, December 15 at 4pm

RSVP for more information
and the Zoom link
ann@firstpaloalto.com



Ornaments Available

The holiday ornaments pre-ordered in September have arrived and are ready for distribution. We will deliver locally, have pick-up days at church, and will mail them if you cover shipping. These are a great gift not only for your own tree, but also for friends and family!

We have a few extras. If you would like one or more, go to tinyurl.com/fumcpaornaments. There are two different designs, each is approximately three inches wide and comes in an organza gift bag.

The colorful enamel ornament in the shape of a poinsettia with a raised metal outline is \$14, of which \$7 supports the Walk to End Alzheimers.

The pewter cast ornament of our church building with the church name and raised texture is \$22, of which \$12 supports the church budget.



New Year's Eve Party

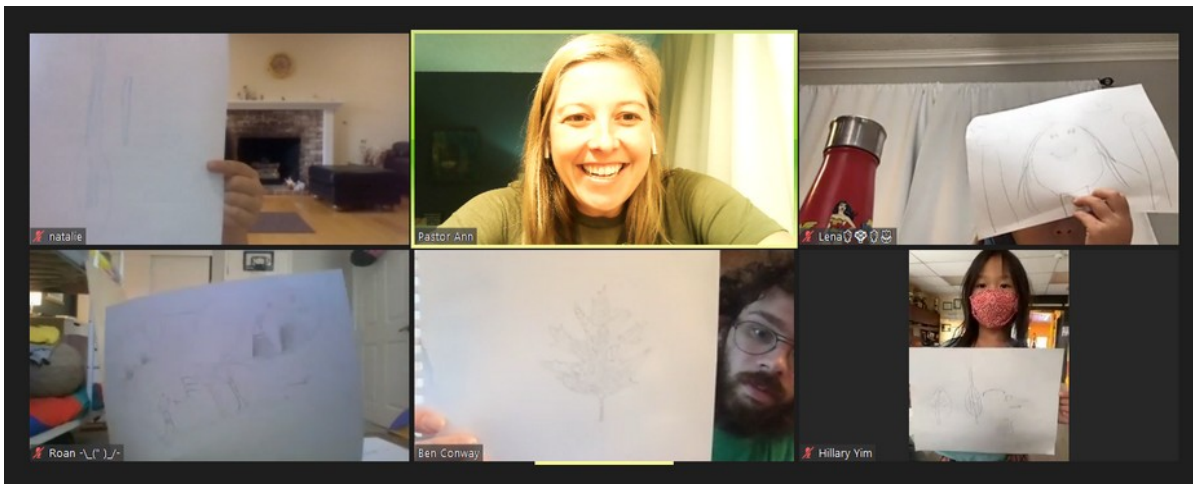
Join us via Zoom
on December 31

at 8 p.m. (for early bedtimers)
and again at 11 p.m.

to play games for an hour,
count down until midnight,
and pray together
for the new year



Pumpkin Painting Event,
Oct. 24 at church. 15 kids
and 30 people total
attended.



Children show
their artwork
at the
**Children's Fall
Art & Story
Time Event**
with artist Ben
Conway via
Zoom, Nov. 5.

All photos by
Ann Duncan

Kids enjoy socially distanced outdoor games at the church on **Kids Activity Day,** Nov. 14.





Green Notes

by Nancy Olson

As we close out one year and open a new year, it seems appropriate to quote from the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church:

“All creation is the Lord’s, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God’s creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings.

God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect. Economic, political, social, and technological developments have increased our human numbers, and lengthened and enriched our lives. However, these developments have led to regional defoliation, dramatic extinction of species, massive human suffering, overpopulation, and misuse and overconsumption of natural and nonrenewable resources, particularly by industrialized societies. This continued course of action jeopardizes the natural heritage that God has entrusted to all generations. Therefore, let us recognize the responsibility of the church and its members to place a high priority on changes in economic, political, social, and technological lifestyles to support a more ecologically equitable and sustainable world leading to a higher quality of life for all of God’s creation.”

WOW. The only thing left out is to remember to love one another.

I really relate to the church’s social principles, even when the church is grappling with how it is to relate in love with one another—to ALL God’s children.

As good stewards of God’s creation, we have to be watchful for threats and opportunities to take action. Currently drilling rights in Alaska’s pristine Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are being auctioned off. The call for bids that were published in November let companies pick land

to bid on during an upcoming lease sale on the refuge’s nearly 1.6 million acres. The area provides habitat for the world’s remaining Southern Beaufort Sea polar bears, 250 musk oxen, and 300,000 snow geese.

There are things we can do to protect nature:

Help friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers understand the importance of biodiversity. The extinction crisis is real but also fixable, and it will make the environment around us better for everyone now and into the future. To do this, we need policies and programs, but we also need people to choose to live more in balance with Earth.

Pay attention to what you eat. For example, avoid products containing palm oil—rainforests are being cut down to grow palm oil plants. Buy local to reduce greenhouse gases associated with transportation, and if you eat seafood, make sure it is sustainable.

We obviously do not know what the morrow brings—but I am wishing each of us a happy, healthy new year. ❖



“You wish to see; listen. Hearing is a step toward vision.”

—St. Bernard of Clairvaux
(1090-1153)

CEF Grant Funds Science Lab in Nepal

by Brenda Birrell, Program Director at The Global Uplift Project

Students at the Sunaula School in Nepal have not been able to qualify to go on to further education because, although the school covers the national science curriculum, they have not had a science lab or the supplies to be able to perform the practical tasks.

The Global Uplift Project (formerly One Dollar For Life) has completed 150 projects in 17 of the poorest countries in the world, including 30 prior projects in Nepal. Science labs are among our favorite projects because they elevate the educational trajectories of thousands of young people, an effect that echoes for generations. In the case of the Sunaula lab, it was even better because the local people were so anxious for the students to have a science lab that they committed to raising 64% of the total cost. Early this summer, our Centennial Endowment Fund approved a grant for the remaining \$1,767.

Work was scheduled to start in July but the pandemic caused the whole of Nepal into an extended and complete lockdown. This is gradually being lifted and good progress is now being made. A classroom has been converted into a lab and the building work is now complete and the supplies ordered. As soon as the students are able to return to the school, the extensive list of samples and supplies that was

approved by our committee will be picked up, and the laboratory will be fully used.

Over its expected duration, the lab will help many thousands of earnest students have just a slightly better chance in life, and a better chance to contribute to the world. A huge “Thank You” to our Social Action Team and the Centennial Endowment Funds Committee for their vision and support.



Above: Building the lab benches in the new science lab at Sunaula School in Nepal.

Below: The old lab at Sunaula School. Local people committed to raising 64% of the total cost of the new lab.



Right: Stone countertops were installed in the new Sunaula lab.





Start Spreading the News

by Nancy Glaser

Nov. 20 marked a milestone with our progress of FIRST Workspace. This is the day our property leasing and management company, led by Josh Davis, came to take final photographs that will be used to market our property. It was also the day that we met with him to discuss the relationship with him and our church staff and Trustees.

In the next Insights issue, I will share the names of the church members who volunteered their time and talents to make this project a success. It truly was a labor of love and I am in awe of those who did so much to make this project happen. Thank you everyone who did their part. Your help is deeply appreciated!

Now it is time to spread the word! Once the marketing brochure is ready, we will share it on our Facebook page and website. The number to call for interest in our five office spaces is on our banner as you can see above. The banner is hanging in the upper patio area of the church property.

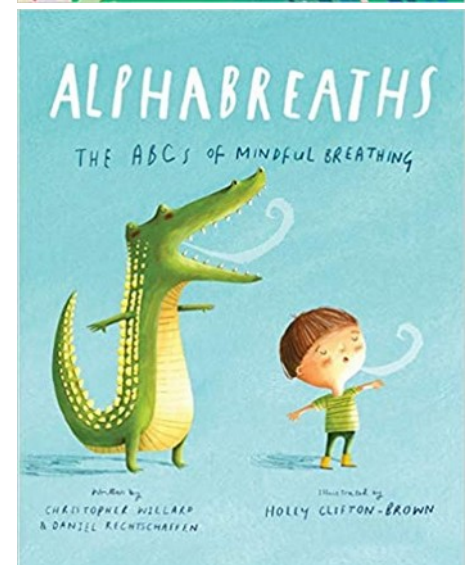
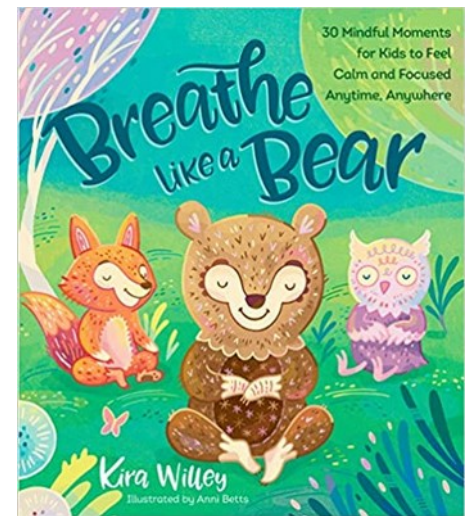
Christmas Reading and New Year Mindfulness

by Charlotte Cutkosky

Hello First Palo Alto readers! This year, as we're looking for new ways to celebrate Christmas while keeping old traditions alive, we recommend returning to some of your favorite Christmas classics. A favorite of ours is Tomie dePaola's *The Legend of the Poinsettia*. Enjoy dePaola's trademark warm, folksy illustrations in this retelling of a Mexican folktale about the creation of the poinsettia flower.

We could all use a little mindfulness and meditation these days, but

mindfulness isn't just for grown-ups. Books like *Breathe Like a Bear* by Kira Willey and *Alphabreaths: The ABCs of Mindful Breathing* by Christopher Willard make mindfulness and meditation easy for kids, creating meditation and grounding activities with easy-to-remember names and steps based on animals. Both books feature exercises designed to be used anywhere and to encourage introspection, gratitude, and self-assurance.



We hope you enjoy these recommendations, and as always, happy reading! ❖

Fashioned in the Clay

Look, now, at the potter whose wheel is spinning 'round,
Shaping with her hands the past and future from the ground.
Cups that will be filled and drunk, so warm in wintertime,
Plates and bowls for dinner served with candlelight and wine.
She believes, she believes.
By her work, it's so easy to see
That the future is more than the following day,
It's fashioned securely in the clay.
Look now at the farmer working in his field,
Hoping that the sun and rain will guarantee his yield.
Like the seed the wind has blown to unfamiliar ground,
He waits to see what fate will bring as each year rolls around.
He believes, he believes.
By his work, it's so easy to see
That the future is more than the following day,
It's fashioned securely in the clay.
Elsewhere, there are lovers in a warm embrace,
Happy with their plans to carry on the human race.
Now the baby cries and wonders if it's all alone,
Softly, a voice reassures: there'll always be a home.
They believe, they believe.
By their work, it's so easy to see
That the future is more than the following day,
It's fashioned securely in the clay.

LIFE MOVES DONATION DRIVE

Your donations will help the homeless this season

NEW ITEMS NEEDED:

Sleeping bags / Blankets
Undergarments
(underwear & socks)
Warm Coats
Heavy Hoodies
Wool Hats, Mittens, Scarves
Backpacks
Umbrellas / Rain Ponchos
Sleeping Mats
Gift cards
(gas, meals, Walmart)



****Note: All sizes should be for
ADULT and be NEW****

DONATIONS WILL BE COLLECTED AT:

First United Methodist Church Palo Alto
625 Hamilton Ave. (donations go to the parking lot off Byron St.)
Palo Alto, CA 94301

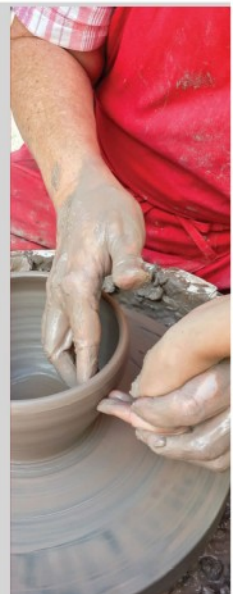
Saturday, December 5 from 1pm to 5pm in the Parking Lot

For additional information, please contact:

Alicia Breen
fcbreens@gmail.com

So, if you have been worried that tomorrow
wouldn't come,
Look to see the ones whose lives are following
the sun.
And the hope that springs so clearly from the work
they do
Will spread a little further when it finds a place in you.
We believe, we believe.
By our work, it's so easy to see
That the future is more than the following day,
It's fashioned securely in the clay.

Words and music by Elmer Beal, Jr. ©1983



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN *CONNECTIONS*

by Nancy Olson

It seems impossible that we are finishing up 2020 when it seems we were not really “involved” all year. We are facing a brand new year with no real idea of what is to come. As we navigate our present and hope for our future, we know the only constant is change—and God.



*Lately we have seen a lot of change in our everyday lives. But there is a difference between change and transition. While change may be a given, transition is not. Change is an external and physical evolution, manipulation or development that happens in life or in an organization. Some changes are intentional and controlled. Other change just comes our way, and we can't stop it. Either way, change is always happening all around us, on a personal, organizational, civic, political, or global level.

Transition, on the other hand, is an internal, psychological process that happens on the personal level. Transition is about what is happening to people, in people, and with people as they experience change. Unlike change itself, transition is not a given, it requires effort, care and intentionality. People can choose to either make a transition or to resist it.

Change management is not just an organizational must, it is a key component of discipleship. After all, we serve a God who has an agenda to change us! Read scripture such as Romans 12:2 (CEB): “Don't be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God's will is—what is good and pleasing and mature.”

If God is seeking to transform us, then learning to manage transition and change is essential spiritually as well as organizationally.

People react to change and transition in one of two ways. We either view change as something dangerous (and therefore something to be resisted and avoided), or we view change as something to be embraced (even if we didn't choose it) as an opportunity to learn and grow.

The bad news is, we don't get to choose the change that is coming at us—the COVID-19 global health crisis has been an exceptional example of this. The good news is we get to choose how we will respond to that change.

While it can be tempting to want to go back, every minute we spend longing for the past is energy we aren't giving to the new future that God is leading us toward.

continued at bottom of column 2

Waiting Until God Is Heard

We're often taught that prayer is speaking to God. And of course, that's part of it. It's good to pray for the well-being and needs of others—even Jesus prayed for his disciples. It's okay to pray for our own growth in faith and love. It's a wonderful, powerful thing, modeled especially by the Psalmists, to give God thanks and praise. And God welcomes our cries of pain and sorrow, offering the Spirit's help when words fail us (Romans 8:26).

But through the ages, many deeply faithful followers of Christ have practiced contemplative prayer, centering prayer, and other forms of stillness before God. Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) expressed it this way: “To pray does not mean to listen to oneself speaking. Prayer involves becoming silent, and being silent, and waiting until God is heard.”

from column 1

As we enter the new year we have many decisions to make about how we can restructure our UMW group to fit new circumstances and new opportunities. Your individual ideas and suggestions are eagerly encouraged and wanted. Your help is needed. ❖

*Based on the Bible Study in *RESPONSE* magazine, and *Let Go: Leaning Into the Future Without Fear*, by Rev. Matt Miofsky

December and January Birthdays and Anniversaries

12/1 Brian Steen	12/13 Karen Black	1/9 Carl Herbert
12/1 Angela Chen	12/13 Lakshmi Arunachalam	1/10 Allyson Laughton/Santos
12/1 Owen Iglehart	12/17 Marcia Sterling	1/11 Tom Fingar
12/1 Janie Serkes	12/18 Merribeth Munyon	1/11 Alo K. Sanft
12/3 Kevin Nichols	12/19 Jesse Fifita	1/12 Samantha Sasaki
12/3 Tuli Fakalata	12/20 Mira Dabrowski	1/18 Andrew Breen
12/3 Mel Smith	12/22 Phyllis Sherlock	1/19 Mark Bui-Ford
12/4 Salome Bikai	12/23 Emily King	1/19 Kyle Trammell
12/6 Florence Jensen	12/25 Carol Kumer	1/20 Fran Moyer
12/7 Joanne Perry	12/25 Tutu Fakalata	1/20 Joe Witte
12/8 Jamie McCartney	12/27 Charlotte Cutkosky	1/23 Thomas Garner
12/9 Lucy Tompkin	12/29 Maeva Herbert-Paz	1/24 Andrew Michel
12/9 Bill Bauriedel	12/31 Jo Zimmerman	1/25 Ally Yang
12/10 Judy Buttrill	1/2 Pamela Cutkosky	1/27 Chrissie Blair
12/10 Mark Shaull	1/2 Diane Keller	1/28 John Larson
12/11 Wayne Wiebe	1/3 Jose Irizarry	1/29 Al Nilsen
12/12 Carol Carpenter	1/4 Megan Sheridan	1/30 Michael Salsbury
12/12 Aavya Kalas	1/9 Peggy Foiles	1/30 Scott Thomas
12/12 Drew Camens		
	12/31/1943 Orin & Jo Zimmerman	
	12/9/1981 Ruthie Waters & Craig Laughton	
	12/26/1987 Linéa Stewart & Gary Ahlberg	
	12/4/2010 Jose and Sally Irizarry	
	01/22/1994 Keith & Heather Perry	



The Finance Committee thanks you for your generous and gracious support and requests that you continue to keep your pledges current. Please direct inquiries to Lou Bellardo: lou@bellardo.com

October 2020 Income and Expense Summary--DRAFT	October 2020 Actual	Actual YTD 2020	Budget YTD 2020	Budget Annual 2020
Income				
Total Member Giving	23,025	310,871	333,986	415,728
Total Income All Other Sources	7,699	119,867	195,266	230,870
Total Income	30,724	430,738	529,252	646,598
Expenses				
Conference Tithe	3,041	39,492	47,917	57,500
Council on Ministries	1,004	9,272	36,271	42,325
Staff Parish Relations	28,262	293,707	332,198	389,382
Office and Finance	1,378	13,534	15,875	19,200
Board of Trustees	5,639	100,815	159,676	182,000
Total Expenses	39,324	456,820	591,937	690,407
Excess (Deficit) of Income over Expense	-8,600	-26,082	-62,685	-43,809

DECEMBER

→ Streamed services are pre-recorded and can be viewed anytime. See website for links.

- 1 SPRC, Zoom meeting, 7 p.m.
- 5 LifeMoves collection, 1–5 p.m. Byron St. parking lot
- 6 Advent Lessons and Carols Service, 7 p.m. (streamed)
- 8 Trustees, Zoom meeting, 7:30 p.m.
- 12 Luminaria Drive-By, 5–7 p.m.
- 13 Luminaria Drive-By, 5–7 p.m.
- 15 Children & Youth Art & Story Event, online via Zoom, 4 p.m.
- Finance, Zoom meeting, 7:30 p.m.
- 20 Community Carol Sing, 4 p.m. (streamed)
- 22 Church Council, Zoom meeting, 7 p.m.
- 24 **Christmas Eve** (all services streamed)
Family Service and Pageant, 4 p.m.
Short Virtual Choir Service, 6 p.m.
Traditional Service, 8 p.m.
- 25 **Christmas** (service streamed)
Short Virtual Christmas Day Service, 11 a.m.
Church office closed
- 31 New Year's Eve Party, Zoom, 8 and 11 p.m.

JANUARY

- 1 Church office closed
- 5 SPRC, Zoom meeting, 7 p.m.
- 12 Trustees, Zoom meeting, 7:30 p.m.
- 17 UMC Human Relations Day, special offering
- 19 Finance, Zoom meeting, 7:30 p.m.
- 20 Insights deadline for February issue
- 26 Church Council, Zoom meeting, 7 p.m.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

→ All activities are via Zoom except Sunday worship which is available on Facebook and YouTube.

→ The church office is operating remotely and can be contacted by phone or email.

Sundays

- 9:30 a.m. Bible Study
- 10:45 a.m. Worship, on Facebook and YouTube
Find links at firstpaloalto.com.
Virtual Coffee & Chat, after worship
- 10:00 a.m. Children's Sunday School (see also, Wednesdays)
- 12:30 p.m. Community Affairs small group
- 4:00 p.m. Book Study

Mondays

- 7:00 p.m. Social Justice team hosts movie discussions. See the church e-news for movie details.
- 7:30 p.m. Bible Study small group

Tuesdays

- Noon Community Chats & Check In
- 2 p.m. Bible Study, Channing House

Wednesdays

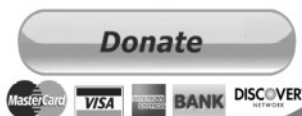
- 4:00 p.m. Children's Sunday School (see also, Sundays)
- 7:00 p.m. Upstream Bible Study and Contemporary Worship Service

Thursdays

- Noon Community Chats & Check In
- 7:00 p.m. Chancel Choir

Information for the next edition of the Insights newsletter is due January 20. Photos of church events are accepted at any time. Include photographer's name, date of the photo, and a brief description of the event. Everything is subject to editing. Please send your submissions via email to Insights editor Michele W. Conway: insightsfirstpa@gmail.com or bring them to the church office. Thank you!

Our electronic giving page is always open! Give with a few clicks at <http://www.firstpaloalto.com/give> or text Give to 1-650-376-6784 for a link with instructions. Your generosity makes our mission possible. Thank you!





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JANUARY 2021**

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- LifeMoves Wishlist, p. 8

Next INSIGHTS deadline Jan. 20



WISHING YOU A

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**

