



Church Responds to Tongan Disaster

by Rev. Dr. Debra Murray

On Saturday evening, Jan. 15, an unprecedented disaster hit Tonga, caused by the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano eruption. It sent tsunami waves rolling across the Tongan archipelago, damaging villages and resorts, and knocking out communications. Most of the drinking water has been contaminated by the volcanic ash that has fallen into the water catchment systems attached to each home and building.

The following week, I received a call for prayer from one of our FUMCPA Tongan members. They were frantically driving from store to store in search of the requested emergency supplies to send to Tonga. They had heard a broadcast that emergency items were needed to fill a shipping container leaving Oakland for Tonga. I prayed and then I did what you have asked me to do. I helped.

Once again, your generous giving has allowed us to be a blessing to our community. Your generosity

continued on page 8

New Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries Hired

by Linda Grossman

Your Staff Parish Relations Committee is delighted to introduce Rev. Gerardo García Palacios as Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministries (CYFM). Pastor Gerardo is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, who has served two San Francisco churches. He also brings the listening skills gained from two years as a spiritual care chaplain at Stanford Hospital.



Pastor 'G' loves children and loves spending time with his family—especially playing with his son David. He values their times of togetherness.

He's been on board for six weeks and has been meeting members and talking with families. By now you've had a chance to listen to his weekly children's messages in the worship service. On Jan. 16th we were treated to special effects contributed by David, who just turned 6.

Pastor G is looking forward to initiating a Sunday Bible study for kids. An online art class is planned for this month. (See details, page 3.) And he's already planning for Vacation Bible School.

You'll be able to meet Pastor Gerardo when we return to in-person worship Sunday mornings. In the meantime, watch the children's messages in online worship. Families are invited to join Zoom Sunday School and attend the Zoom art class. Watch the Friday e-news for additional information about CYF activities.

Read Pastor Gerardo's message to families on page 3. You can reach him at cyfministries@firstpaloalto.com or call the church at 650-323-6167. ❖

Great Decisions 2022 Sessions Begin in February

by Tom Fingar



As the football season winds down and we prepare for the season of Lent, we are also preparing for the return of the Great Decisions program that has been sponsored by First Church for more than 30 years. Each year we examine eight international issues and their policy implications for the United States. The program this year will begin on Feb. 20 and continue each Sunday until April 24 (except April 17, Easter). We had hoped—and planned—to resume in-person meetings, but the prevalence of COVID-19 and understandable reticence of many to attend church services and other public events have persuaded us to retain the Zoom-based arrangements we employed last year. If conditions allow, we will switch to a hybrid format and hold in-person meetings that also can be attended remotely. For the time being, though, you should plan to participate via Zoom. The sessions will be held on Sunday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30. All are welcome to join and I encourage you to attend as many or as few as you wish.

If you have participated in the past, we probably have your contact information but whether you are a returning or new participant, we encourage you to contact Lou Bellardo (lou@bellardo.com) so that we can send you updates and the Zoom link for each session. You can also find instructions for registering on the church website. Reminders and Zoom links will be pushed to all who have registered on the Thursday before each Sunday session.

First Session
Feb. 20, 7 p.m.
Topic: Biden's Foreign Policy Agenda
Led by Tom Fingar

At this point, we know the topics that are covered in the Great Decisions workbook prepared by the independent and non-partisan Foreign Policy Association, but we do not yet know the order in which we will discuss the topics. It is not necessary to purchase or read the workbook, but if you want to do so, you can use the Foreign Policy Association website at www.fpa.org/great_decisions/?act=gd_materials. The topics we will cover are:

- Biden's Agenda
- Outer Space
- Climate Change
- Russia and the United States
- Myanmar and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- The Quad Alliance (US, Australia, Japan, and India)
- Drug Policy in Latin America
- Industrial Policy

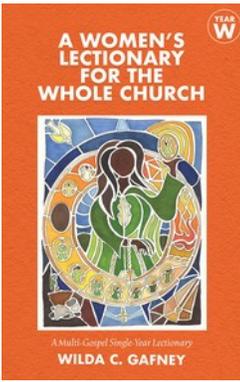
The February 20 session will discuss President Biden's foreign policy agenda. Tom Fingar will lead that session and also serve as coordinator of the program at First Palo Alto. Lou Bellardo will oversee logistical arrangements.

You need not be a foreign policy expert to attend; just bring an open and eager mind. Newcomers and guests are welcome! If you have general questions, please contact Tom Fingar (tom@fingar.net). ❖

Worship With Us



First UMC Palo Alto's Reopening Task Force met in late January and determined the safest course of action under current conditions related to COVID-19 is to continue worship online only (no in-person worship) until further notice. The congregation will be notified 10 days in advance of resuming in-person worship. Join us Sunday mornings at 10:45 a.m. on YouTube. Find the link on the church website or in your email.



New Bible Study Focusing on Women's Stories Begins in Lent

What would it look like if women built a lectionary focusing on women's stories?

What does it look like to tell the good news through the stories of women who are often on the margins of scripture and often set up to represent bad news?

How would a lectionary centering women's stories, chosen with womanist and feminist commitments in mind, frame the presentation of the scriptures for proclamation and teaching?"

Wilda Gafney teaches us through the women's lectionary a new way to experience the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Please join us March 6, 9:00-10:00 a.m. via Zoom to begin our new Bible study and Lenten study using *A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church, Year W*. Please purchase the text at your usual bookseller.

Information about the Bible study will be posted on the church website. Invite your friends! ❖

Valentine's Art Activity for Children, Youth, and Families

You are invited to join Pastor G and artist Ben Conway

**Friday, February 4
at 6:00-6:45 p.m. online**

Learn to Make
Pop-Up Cards and Miniature Books
and create a secret code for messages

Find the Zoom link in the Friday e-news or
RSVP to cyfministries@firstpaloalto.com

Parents are welcome to participate!

A Message from Pastor Gerardo, Director of Children, Youth & Family Ministries

My name is Gerardo García Palacios. I am the new director of our beautiful church's children, youth, and families. It is an honor and a privilege that God has allowed me to be working in this great church and with its beloved little ones and young people. My primary objective is that children, youth, and families have spiritual growth that helps them maintain that connection with the Triune God throughout their lives. Thus, through this connection, they can find meaning and purpose in their lives to continue walking the path of the Lord.

We are in a difficult time where normality for a youth and children gathering is complicated but is not impossible. In the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic, God will open doors and fill us with new ideas to prevail. This year, 2022, will be the year of ecclesiastical creativity and reinventing new avenues. Our children, youth, and families can be ministered to and feel included in our community of faith.

I hope you can join us on the first Friday of February for our online Valentine's Art Activity.

Please be safe, and may the peace of God be with you.

—Rev. Gerardo García Palacios

SFCO Presents Beethoven's Eighth and Two World Premieres

CONCERT NOTES

PBO Showcases Classical Music Featuring Mozart, the Radical

On Feb. 26, you will be able to experience two rising young composers from Gabriela Lena Frank's Creative Academy of Music, who have written exciting new works for the **San Francisco Chamber Orchestra**. The new works will be followed by Beethoven's masterful Eighth Symphony. Here's the program:

"Breathe" by Carlos Simon, World Premiere for Chamber Orchestra

"Heat" by Jessica Hunt, World Premiere for Chamber Orchestra

Symphony No. 8 by Ludwig van Beethoven

Remember that this is a free concert, so come early to find your place in line. Sponsors are allowed to enter first and sit in the reserved section down in the front. The concert begins at 7:30 p.m.

To ensure the health and safety of all in attendance, proof of vaccination for everyone above 12 years old is required. Masks must be worn at all times when indoors.

It was sad to miss the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra's annual New Year's Day concert. Fortunately, it has been rescheduled for June 25.

Save
the NEW
Date

In this concert, on Feb. 11 at 7:30 p.m., we'll hear the **Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra** perform music of the classical period, when musicians still used many of the Baroque instruments.

Mozart was a composer who loved to test boundaries, and in his Symphony No. 38 you hear him pushing the orchestra of the day to the limit, expanding the horizons of the symphony. It's a veritable smorgasbord of invention, a riot of creativity.

In addition to Mozart's Symphony No. 38 in D major, K. 504 "Prague," the program also includes Mozart's Concerto for Fortepiano No. 24 in C minor, K. 491, Mozart's "Ch'io mi scordi di te? ... Non temer, amato bene," K. 505, and Mozart's "Bella mia fiamma, addio," K. 528.

The evening features Richard Egarr, conductor and fortepiano, and Elizabeth Watts, soprano.

Advanced ticket purchase is strongly encouraged through their website, philharmonia.org. Tickets are also available at the door.

Along with proof of vaccination against COVID-19, all patrons 12 and up must present proof of a COVID-19 booster shot administered at least two weeks prior to attendance at any PBO event. All patrons are required to wear a well-fitted mask at all performances. Please see additional information at philharmonia.org/safereturn/. ❖



The first half of February seems dominated by candy and roses. But people not in a loving romantic relationship can sometimes feel left out of the festivities. Of course, all people need love—and certainly love is not limited to the romantic kind. Author Leo Buscaglia, who became known as "Dr. Love" for writing about the topic, said, "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

Jesus taught that loving one another is second only in importance to loving God (Matthew 22:37-40), and that when we love one another, God lives in us (1 John 4:12). There are so many ways to love—beyond candy and roses! But Valentine's Day is as good a reminder as any.



Can We Communicate Better in 2022? Let's Try!

by Pamela Cutkosky, SPRC Chair

Your Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is tasked with a number of responsibilities: hire and support our staff, help the pastor set ministry priorities, promote church unity, help our staff achieve a work-life balance.

We are more than the complaint department! (But of course we deal with those too.)

One of our responsibilities is to foster good communication and positive relationship building among staff members, among congregation members, and among congregation and staff.

Two years of COVID-19 restrictions have been challenging—we haven't been able to talk in person as much as we're used to. Sometimes we actually have to avoid each other! We have relied much more on email and Zoom.

SPRC would like to share some tips to improve our communication with each other, whether in-person, in written emails, or in group Zooms.

A Checklist for Good Communication*

- ✓ Begin statements with “I believe,” “I feel,” and “In my opinion” rather than “we need” or “we should.” Encourage others to do the same.
- ✓ Encourage others to stay in the present, the here-and-now. Acknowledge ways that past activities are a strong foundation for current ministry, but stay away from “the way we used to do it” scenarios.
- ✓ Repeat back to the speaker what you have heard or read to ensure accuracy. Ask questions for information and clarity.
- ✓ Build trust by first finding what you can agree on, and then move on to any differences.
- ✓ Ask what the other person is feeling, if appropriate. Remember that some people find discussion of feelings offensive or irrelevant. Be aware of your own feelings about the conversation as well.
- ✓ Accept; do not judge. Accepting what the other person says does not necessarily mean you agree.
- ✓ Deliver feedback in a positive way with “I like ...” and “I wish ...” statements.
- ✓ Suggest opportunities for in-depth conversation if you can—like going for a walk.

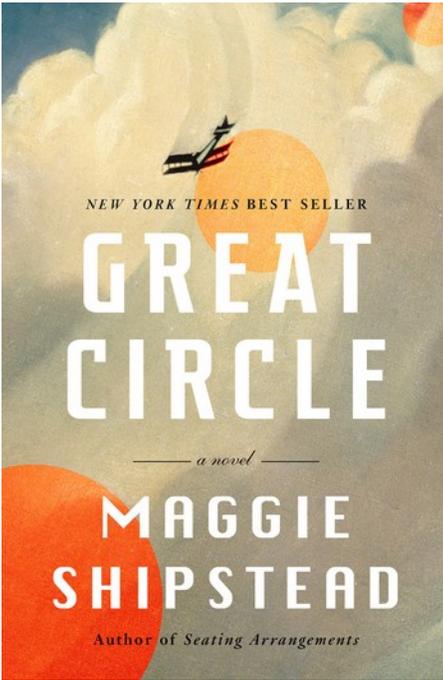
For our part, SPRC members need to be active listeners. We need to provide you, the congregation, with ways to share ideas and feedback. To that end, we have an email address—sprc@firstpaloalto.com—that you can write to. We welcome your ideas and feedback. How to start? Try an “I like ...” or “I wish ...” statement.

Once we can gather in person again, we encourage you to talk with any member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee: Pamela Cutkosky (chair), Tom Fingar, Colleen Crangle, Linda Grossman, Sumith Kalas, Carol Kumer, and Lay Leader Caryn Cranston. ❖

*Checklist adapted from Guidelines for Pastor and Parish Relations, UMC Cal-Nevada Conference



Love never gives up.
Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut, doesn't have a swelled head, doesn't force itself on others, isn't always 'me first,' doesn't fly off the handle, doesn't keep score of the sins of others, doesn't revel when others grovel, takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, puts up with anything, trusts God always, always looks for the best, never looks back, but keeps going to the end.
Love never dies.
—1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, MSG



Hello, First Palo Alto Readers!

by Charlotte Cutkosky

Ready to tuck into some escapist historical fiction? The library committee recommends *Great Circle* by Maggie Shipstead, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Marian Graves is rescued as an infant from a sinking ocean liner in 1914. She's forced to spend the next 14 years with her "dissolute" uncle in Montana, but finally breaks free when she encounters a pair of early aviators and falls in love with flying. As Marian dreams of flying to the North and South poles, her story intersects with that of unhappy present-day actress Hadley Baxter, who is cast to play Marian in a biopic and throws herself into the role. Planes, arctic exploration, and Hollywood intrigue—what more could you ask for?

Happy reading, FUMCPA! ❖

Joy of Giving 2021 Campaign Raises \$14,525

by Nancy Glaser

The Joy of Giving is an annual Christmas tradition at First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto, an opportunity to show Christ's love to people in our local community and the world.

The Social Action Team selected six researched and recommended nonprofit organizations, both here and internationally. Through the Joy of Giving, you indicated to which listed organization your financial gift should be allocated.

This year our Joy of Giving organizations and the financial gifts our church supported totaled \$14,525 and are as follows:

Pastor's Discretion Fund:	\$5,800
Coding Collaborative:	\$ 535
Ecumenical Hunger Program (EHP):	\$4,785
Afghan Institute of Hope (Creating Hope International):	\$ 985
Missionvale Care:	\$1,085
Fistula Foundation:	\$1,335



United Methodist Women sold handmade Christmas cards and greeting cards on the church patio in December to support missions. Ruthie Waters (pictured) is the mastermind behind the annual card sales.



First Palo Alto United Methodist Church



Green Notes

by Nancy Olson

I hope the rains will continue for a while longer. Our earth, waterways, and spirits have needed the refreshing rain and mountain snow (except those trapped in their cars on impassable mountain roads.) :-(-

When the ground is soggy, we tend to forget how using water efficiently is important every day regardless of drought or rain conditions.

The City of Palo Alto and Valley Water offer rebates to Palo Alto residents who replace a high-water-use landscape with a qualifying low-water-use landscape. Palo Alto residents can schedule a free outdoor survey with a trained irrigation professional to evaluate the efficiency of your irrigation system, and receive a detailed report with recommended upgrades and repairs. Other cities within the county also offer increased rebates. Valley Water rebates are available throughout the county. Find details about landscape rebates at watersavings.org, or call 408-630-2554.

Weekly street sweeping continues into mid-February to help keep our streets safe, reduce flooding, and keep litter out of our creeks and the bay. We can help by keeping leaves off storm drain grates during rains to prevent flooding. Remember it is illegal to sweep your yard leaves into the street. The leaves can be left on your yard to degrade, or put into your green cart.

Winter storm safety tips include having an easily accessible emergency kit available—water, food, flashlights and batteries, first aid kit, manual can opener, tarps, rain gear and warm clothing. Always have cash on hand, gasoline in your car, and a cell phone because ATMs, gas pumps, and cordless phones may not work during a power outage.

The winter season can be a particularly harsh time for bees. Even in a good year, 35% to 75% of honeybee colonies are lost over winter. Here are four actions you can take from home to help bees survive winter.

- Keep raked leaves in the yard. Leaves provide great shelter for burrowing bumblebees and other overwintering pollinators. Place branches over the raked pile to keep leaves in place.
- Add clusters of winter-blooming plants to your garden or balcony. Winter-blooming plants (i.e. crocus, primrose, and snowdrop) provide bees some much-needed nourishment.
- Don't disturb bare areas of soil in your garden. Many wild bees, including bumblebees, spend the winter in small nests in the ground. This habitat helps them stay warm and safe.
- Avoid pesticides. This is important year round, but especially in winter when bees are at their most vulnerable.

Whether you take one or all of these steps, bees will thank you by emerging for spring in just a few short months. ❖

Planning to buy chocolate for Valentine's Day?

Find advice about choosing ethically produced chocolate, and a list of companies that use only ethically produced cocoa, at www.slavefreechocolate.org/ethical-chocolate-companies/ Many ethically produced chocolate products are sold locally and are easy to find at area groceries, supermarkets, and other retailers.



First UMC Palo Alto provided assistance to the local Tongan community for gathering relief supplies to be shipped to Tonga following the volcanic eruption and tsunami in January.

Tonga from page 1

allowed us to send water, medical supplies, masks, disinfectants, and food to the Kingdom of Tonga. Our local Tongan community and the recipients of the supplies are profoundly grateful. Thank you. ❖



Let's end this pandemic.

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BEYOND BORDERS

The Interfaith Movement to End the Pandemic

The Advance
Global Ministries | The United Methodist Church

IN SUPPORT OF
unicef USA
for every child

by Nancy Olson

Some items for your 2022 calendar:

- Feb. 5 ECRD UMW Connect & Learn
- Mar. 19 CA/NV Conference Legislative Event
- Mar. 26 ECRD UMW Virtual Spiritual Retreat
- May 20-22 Assembly 2022 (Orlando, FL)
- Oct. 1 ECRD UMW Annual Celebration

I usually add calendar events at the end of articles, sort of as a P.S. But it is time to highlight the fact that although we have been rather dormant during this prolonged pandemic, the UMW continues to function and thrive.

Many classes and events continue to be online zoom or webinar, which sadly does not reach many of you. I continue to pray for inspiration on how we can come together. Your prayers and suggestions are encouraged.

I plan to attend the Connect & Learn session which will focus on learning more about being part of United Methodist Women and includes training and information about ways we can expand our mission and ministry through UMW as well as information about specific leadership roles in local groups.

As we unwind from the holiday busyness, it is easy to forget to take time to be grateful for what we have. Here are a few random ways we can share a grateful spirit with our family, friends, and neighbors:

- Journaling—what I am grateful for
- Random acts of kindness
- Curb your complaining for a week
- Giving to those in need
- Be a ‘fan’ of your friends
- Say thank you to your family

Mary Elizabeth Inn in San Francisco is one of our UMW national institutions that El Camino Real District supports, and one of the mission projects First Palo Alto UMW has long supported.

The UMW of the Korean UMC of Santa Clara Valley assembled 100 UMCOR hygiene kits and sent the kits to the UMCOR Sager Brown Depot in Baldwin, Louisiana, in September 2021. After the kits were sent, the Korean women of the church donated enough money to make another 100 hygiene kits which were sent to the UMCOR Depot.

Then the Korean UMW groups of Santa Clara Valley in San Jose and New Creation UMC in Campbell joined together in mission to make and send over 730 hand-made items, including over 650 fleece scarves.

The scarves were made for the people of Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, Arizona Hopi nation, and Kazakhstan, to help keep people warm in cold weather.

These women found ways to be in mission.

Julia Fogg is a pastor and New Testament scholar who has been serving immigrant families in southern California for a number of years. In her book *Finding Jesus at the Border*, she personalizes issues related to immigration and connects them to Bible stories. This book is in the “Education for Mission” category of the UMW Reading Program.

I am still searching for ways to bring our group together. I keep asking for your suggestions. There are members of our congregation who could use a smile, a greeting, a card, a call Can we join with the Hospitality Committee to reach out to make sure no one is left aside? Will you join me in sending a card or making a phone call? Contact Nancy Olson, ns02431@icloud.com ❖



GO, SOW, GROW

Throughout 2022 churches across the UMC California-Nevada Conference are invited to pray for one another each day at noon. Go, Sow, Grow is an effort for us to stop striving in anxious toil to survive as a church, and instead rely on and respond to the initiatives of the Holy Spirit. We **Go** humbly into God's presence; **Sow** prayerfully our hopes and dreams for the church; and see our congregations **Grow** abundantly in spirit and number.

Together we will align our prayers for God's vision of growth and abundance to manifest among us. See the prayer calendar at tinyurl.com/CNUMC-GoSowGrow to support the prayer initiative with your daily prayers. ❖



Finance Update



- | | | | |
|------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| 2/1 | Lee Buttrill | 2/21 | Carol Foster |
| 2/2 | Christy Fung | 2/22 | Sheralee Iglehart |
| 2/2 | Heinz Erzberger | 2/24 | Rick Riley |
| 2/3 | Asotolu Fifita | 2/25 | Marianne Kombou |
| 2/3 | Leslie Furney-Howe | 2/26 | Victoria Crayton |
| 2/6 | Nathaniel Sterling | 2/26 | Linda Holbrook |
| 2/10 | Katie Bartholomew | | |
| 2/11 | Viliame Fifita | | |
| 2/11 | Sheila Gholson | | |
| 2/11 | Nathan Bailon | | |
| 2/12 | Jim Carpenter | | |
| 2/12 | Keith Perry | | |
| 2/12 | Sophia Sasaki | | |
| 2/12 | Amy Flaskerud | | |
| 2/16 | Kent Iglehart | | |
| 2/16 | Kaylee DeBacker | | |
| 2/16 | Lordess Tellis | 2/14/2009 | Sandra Florstedt,
Bill Davidson |
| 2/17 | Derick Anderes | 2/8/1992 | Blake Stafford,
Julianne Stafford |
| 2/18 | Christopher Rahn | 2/14/1981 | Dave Shelly,
Pat Shelly |
| 2/18 | David Tsai | | |
| 2/18 | Jonathan Tsai | | |

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY



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

December 2021 (Year End) Income and Expense Summary DRAFT	December 2021 Actual	Actual YTD 2021	Budget YTD 2021	Budget Annual 2021
Income				
Total Member Giving	28,502	401,251	409,000	409,000
Total Income All Other Sources	38,345	192,857	197,800	197,800
	66,847	594,108	606,800	606,800
Expenses				
Conference Tithe	6,346	50,950	54,000	54,000
Council on Ministries	6,422	25,682	38,930	38,930
Staff Parish Relations	27,664	340,989	394,860	394,860
Office and Finance	2,556	16,727	19,975	19,975
Board of Trustees	11,878	146,921	158,582	158,582
Total Expenses	54,866	581,269	666,347	666,347
Excess (Deficit) of Income over Expense	11,981	12,839	-59,547	-59,547



- 1 SPRC, 7 p.m.
- 4 CYF Valentine's Art Activity, 6 – 6:45 p.m.
(information on page 3)
- 8 Trustees, 7:30 p.m.
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 15 Finance, 7:30 p.m.
- 20 Great Decisions, 7 p.m. (information on page 2)
Insights deadline for March issue
- 21 Presidents Day (church office closed)
- 22 Church Council, 7:30 p.m.
- 26 SFCO Concert, 7:30 p.m. (in-person)
- 27 Great Decisions, 7 p.m.

March dates to note:

- 2 Ash Wednesday
- 6 Women's Lectionary Study, 9–10 a.m.
(information on page 3)

Great Decisions continues on Sunday evenings at 7:00 throughout March.

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



WEEKLY SCHEDULE

→ In-person worship has been suspended. Watch safely on YouTube until further notice. All other activities continue online via Zoom, unless noted.

→ The church office is open, but the doors are locked. Please phone the office—or ring the electronic door bell—to be admitted. **Masks are required.** Office hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Sundays

10:45 a.m. Worship, available via YouTube until further notice. Check firstpaloalto.com or Friday e-news for the link.

Coffee & Chat via Zoom, after worship

9:00 a.m. Sunday School

12:30 p.m. Community Affairs discussion

Mondays

7 p.m. Social Justice movie discussions. See the church e-news for details.

7:30 p.m. Bible Study

Tuesdays

Noon Community Chats & Check In

2 p.m. Bible Study, Channing House

Wednesdays

6:45 p.m. Upstream Bible Study and Contemporary Worship Service

Thursdays

Noon Community Chats & Check In

7:30 p.m. Chancel Choir

Information for the next issue of the Insights newsletter is due Feb. 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!



FIRST PALO ALTO
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

First Palo Alto United Methodist Church
625 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301-2016
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FIRST PALO ALTO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Inside this issue of **INSIGHTS**
FEBRUARY 2022

- New CYFM Director, pp. 1, 3
- Great Decisions, p. 2
- Women's Lectionary, p. 3
- Better Communication, p. 5
- Joy of Giving Report, p. 6

Next INSIGHTS deadline: Feb. 20

