



First Congregational Church of Santa Barbara + United Church of Christ+

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CHURCH LIFE

December 2025



WHAT'S GOING ON?

What's Going On?

Did you get to see the church decorated with all the quilts this year? I missed that Sunday this year, but I still carry memories of all the years those quilts have preached of breathtaking generosity and care offered by a small group of dedicated quilters. I hope that the little church on State and Padre will continue to find such concrete signs of love to offer to all in need!

This November we met with WayCo for a delicious lunch, and we had a forum to discuss the merger process. Our Transition Committee has been meeting and working so hard behind the scenes! Please continue to pray for them and for FCC.

This year our Christmas Eve service will be held at 4:30 PM. WayCo will join us for this service, and the format will be inclusive of both traditions, with a piano prelude and a Christmas anthem, with some more meditative music supported by guitar and violin, and some carols. The service will conclude with the traditional candle lighting ritual.

We contributed to Storyteller's food drive this November. Storyteller also has plans for other support folks can offer as they feel called. They have an Adopt-a-Family program if you would like to provide some specific holiday help to a particular

family. They will also have a spring project of packing Family Essentials kits with hygiene and cleaning supplies and/or planting flower in their garden spaces. Please contact jazmin@wearestoryteller.org if you are interested in any of these programs.

Sunday, Dec 7 we will have another forum after service for more opportunity to ask questions about transition progress. Come with questions!

Jan 1 is the deadline for your contributions to the Annual Report. Do yourself *and* Cara a favor, and send it in early.

As Advent begins, I hope you will all take a couple of minutes each day to stop and listen for the peace, the quiet, the underground renewing that Advent can bring. Advent provides the opposite of the "holiday hassles" that can bedevil us during this season. And, as always, if you have questions or concerns, you can contact me at mmpeyton@gmail.com or 805-729-1046.

I love you!





NOVEMBER TRANSITION HOUSE

On Veteran's Day evening, Tues. Nov. 11th FCCSB provided a nutritious meal and next-day lunches for the residents of Transition House's Ortega St. Shelter. A big "thank you" goes to all FoodTeam members. Your participation fed the 54 hungry residents: 27 adults & teens, 27 children, between 2 & 12 years and a few infants, plus the evening manger and shelter workers.

As usual Peter Ford and I arrived at the shelter (434 E. Ortega St.) a bit prior to 5:30 pm. We were greeted by Chris, the volunteer evening manager who was setting tables as we unloaded the dinner supplies and I turned on the ovens. We were soon joined by Bud Kayser with the lunch materials and some persimmons. Bud and Peter worked on next-day lunch preparations as I sliced bread and placed butter out on the tables. Lynn arrived before 6 pm with hot carrots and materials for a green salad.

When preparations were complete, we had time not only for our short prayer of thanksgiving, but also for chit-chat, before it was time to serve. @ 6:30 pm Peter, Bud, and Lynn served slices of warmed French bread,* oven-BBQ'd chicken pieces,* rice w/ tomatoes & turmeric or rice w/ vegetables (both rice dishes were leftover from previous months and had been kept in my freezer), black beans w/ corn and tomato salsa,* hot carrots (Lynn) and/or green salad (Lynn) and persimmon pieces (Sharon Kayser). Butter* was on each of the tables; sliced, pickled jalapenos, grated cheese* and salsa* were on a side table near the serving counter so that residents could help themselves.

When those in the dining room were served, the servers made up late plates for residents who would

return after the dinner hour, while also giving out seconds for any who wished them as I passed out the ever-popular choc. chip cake (Nancy Chase) for dessert. Once again we heard many "Thank You's.

The next opportunity to participate as a FCCSB TH Foodteam Member will be on Tues. Dec. 9th. Please let me know if you'd like to help in any way. Each month it is very obvious: This Outreach cannot be done by just one or two persons. It takes a dedicated Congregation!

Mary Howe-Grant, Monthly TH Meal Coordinator

P.S. Last month I introduced a new FoodTeam member from WayCo. Unfortunately I misspelled her first name. It is Sheryl, not Sherry.

* Purchased using money from FCCSBUCC's TH monthly meal funds.

2025 OUTREACH REPORT

Every year our congregation sets aside a sum of money to be used for Outreach. This money is given in the name of First Congregational Church to organizations the congregation wants to support. The Mission Board approves all Outreach grants. Anyone can suggest a worthy cause; all suggestions are considered. The amount set aside for 2025 was \$11,000.

Kay Utterback and Ellie Starfas served together as a committee to prepare the Outreach recommendations for 2025. Their beginning agreements were:

- Grants would usually be \$1000 each, as smaller grants do not make much difference in the world today. However, a larger grant would be considered as well.
- Priority for grants would be given to smaller organizations as much as possible, so the \$1000 grants would be more meaningful.
- Grants would be selected to meet several different community needs.
- The needs of the immigrant community are especially critical this year.

After much discussion, the committee made these choices:

- \$1000 grants to Transition House, Freedom for Youth, and the 805UndocuFund. A \$1500 grant to Showers of Blessing. These organizations serve individuals in crisis and children.
- \$1000 grants to Healing Justice Santa Barbara and Pacific Pride. A \$1500 grant to the Immigrant Legal Defense Center. These organizations support social justice.
- \$1000 grants for Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and the Environmental Defense Center. These grants support and protect the environment.
- \$1000 grant to the Mental Wellness Center, for their mental wellness work.

This summary of FCC's Outreach grants for the year totals \$11,000. If anyone reading this would like to serve on the Outreach committee for 2026, please drop a note in Martha's box. Then expect to be contacted in October of 2026!

TRANSITION COMMITTEE UPDATE 4

DESIGNING, PLANNING, AND GROWING TOGETHER

Dear FCCSB and Way Collective Community,

As we move closer toward the future we are creating together, the Transition Committee is grateful for the energy, insight, and support so many of you continue to offer. Every week brings another step toward shaping Kin Commons into a shared spiritual home that honors our histories while opening doors for generations still to come. Here are a few important updates from the past couple of weeks:

- **Beginning combined budgeting conversations**
This coming Monday, representatives from FCCSB's Finance & Facilities Committee and Way Collective's Systems Circle will meet for the first time to get a "bird's eye view" of both communities' needs. This is the beginning of shaping a unified budget that will support our collaboration, clarify the practical details ahead, and ensure we start planning wisely for our shared future.

- **Campus visioning and space planning**

We're excited to share that a couple of space planners have expressed interest in walking the FCCSB property with us. Over the next month or so, we hope to tour them through the campus and begin exploring how our buildings can be modernized, opened up, and creatively reimagined for new ministry, contemplative practice, and hospitable community life.

- **Continued refinement of bylaws and legal clarity**

Our bylaws work is progressing steadily. FCC's attorney, Mindy Wolfe, recommended several refinements to ensure the documents clearly reflect the continued ministry of FCCSB, particularly so neighbors and the wider community can recognize the new name without confusion. As a reminder, Kin Commons, Way Collective, Mindfulness & More, etc. will function as ministry strategies and programs of FCCSB after we combine. They will remain the same in form and function as they are now, but will be technically under the umbrella of FCCSB for legal purposes.

To ensure clarity—in practice and, if ever necessary, in court—we are preparing three aligned documents. We are actively revising these and will share these with you as soon as possible:

1. **Articles of Incorporation of FCCSB**
2. **Restated Bylaws of FCCSB**
3. **A Ministry & Programming Document**

- **Denominational engagement and dual standing**

We have reached out to both the United Church of Christ Conference and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Region and continue to gain clarity around what each denomination requires for our congregation to hold standing in both traditions. This is a meaningful step in honoring our shared heritage and widening our welcome, and we hope to have the steps in place by the new year.

- **Creative design and visual storytelling**

Finally, we are continuing our work with a creative design agency that will help us tell the story of this emerging partnership visually. We're excited to shape materials that help our wider Santa Barbara community "catch the vision" of the new spiritual home we are becoming together, and will share these with you all soon.

Thank you all for your enthusiasm, your feedback, and the spirit of collaboration that continues to guide this journey. If you have any questions at all, please reach out to any member of the Transition

Committee—or to me directly. We're grateful to walk this path with you.

With warmth,

The FCCSB & Way Collective Transition Committee

Peter Brown
Tim Burnette
Nancy Chase
Lori Corry
Ethan Elisara
Pat Lockwood
Robin Rickershauser

ADVENT 2025

The first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the Church calendar year.

Advent is the season of preparation, of waiting in hope and anticipation for Christmas and our celebration of the coming of the Christ.

The sense of waiting and preparation will be reflected in the Sanctuary as the Advent banners based upon the hymn "*O Come, O Come Emmanuel!*" are hung.

The adorning of our sacred space will take place gradually throughout the season.,

As is our tradition, members of this Faith community will light the Advent candles.

The candle of Hope, the candle of Peace, the candle of Joy, and the candle of Love.

As you worship at home you may wish to light candles representing the Advent themes.

May our hearts and minds reflect the expectation and hope of this Advent times as we hear the words of scripture, listen and reflect on the homilies, pray, light candles and sing together.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel!
God with Us!

CHURCH CHRISTMAS GIVING in 2025

Advent brings all of us at FCCSB two church Christmas giving opportunities. One for the UCC, the other for our church.

The UCC's Christmas Fund has existed for at least 100 years. Donations are used to assist retired UCC clergy and lay employees currently living on limited incomes and/or facing difficult financial circumstances. Gifts for this UCC fund should be clearly marked as UCC Christmas and can be given at any time during Advent. Donations will be 'passed through' our church to the UCC. For example, if donating via check, make the check out to FCCSB and then indicate UCC Christmas in the memo line.

The second Christmas Fund, is for our congregation. This year donations will go to build up FCCSB's Samaritan Fund. These monies are used by our pastor to assist members of our congregation who may be experiencing an emergency financial need. Traditionally the FCCSB's Christmas Fund has been collected on Christmas Eve, but donations can be made anytime during Advent. Again, please indicate that your gift should go to FCCSB's Christmas Fund.

Submitted by Mary Howe-Grant for FCCSB's F & F Committee

HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS!



HAPPY NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Dec 16 Sally Thacher
Dec 18 Bud Kayser
Dec 20 Dennis Peterson
Dec 23 Michael Spencer

2025 Officers and Committees

Church Officers

Moderator	Martha Peyton ^{MB}
Vice Moderator	Johanna Preiswerk ^{MB}
Recording Clerk	Peter Brown ^{MB}
Treasurer	Salome Crowley ^{MB}
Asst. Treasurer	Mary Howe-Grant
Financial Co-Secretaries	Lynn Stewart & Sue Lael Katnic
Membership Clerk	Karen Steward
Systems Administrator	Steve Butner
Historian	Karen Steward

At-Large Mission Board Members

Karen Steward MB Gail Gillies MB
Sally Thacher MB Sharon Kayser MB

Conference Delegates

Adult Karen Steward
Adult Martha Peyton

Standing Committees

Finance and Facilities

3-7 members
Lynn Stewart*
Peter Preiswerk
Salome Crowley*
Bud Kayser
Peter Ford

Pastoral Relations

3-7 members
Peter Brown
Nancy Chase
Kay Utterback

Personnel

3-7 members
Johanna Preiswerk*
Peter Ford

Nominating Committee