



ORINDA Community Church

Seeking God, Loving Others,
Caring for the World

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December Council Minutes -
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Writers Group

Wednesday, January 8, 11:00
a.m., Library

Writing invitation: bring anything you
want to share, but if you need a
prompt, consider writing about "new

The Neighbor

January 2020

NEWSLETTER OF THE ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH

Jim's Reflection

Dear Friends of Orinda Community Church,

As I enter my seventh decade of life on planet earth (not nearly as impressive as it sounds), things seem somewhat similar here in America as to when I entered my first: distrust of government, racial divisiveness, talk of going to the moon, wars on the other side of the globe, etc. And now we can add environmental concerns and a larger financial gap between the rich and the poor.

Happy 2020!

There is also much we can be thankful for, and much we can do as individuals, and as a church community, to be agents of change - in both big and small ways. We here at O.C.C. have been working to create programs, spaces, and opportunities to learn and serve, and we look forward to stepping into 2020 with all of you (special thanks to Elizabeth and Leslie for their energy and creativity). I hope the pieces you see listed in this month's Neighbor appeal to you, and that you'll try to participate.

As we move into 2020, I am grateful for the chance to be offered a sabbatical this upcoming year, and to be able to focus attention on a couple projects that have been bouncing around in my head for a while. In order to be present for some responsibilities, and try not to leave Rev. Elizabeth and others with too much, I will break my 3-month sabbatical into two sections. The first will be from February 16-April 6, and the second will be somewhere between late-August and October.

My primary objective will be to conduct interviews, do research, create podcasts, and write around the theme: "The God Question". There are many ways to describe

year's resolutions I have known"--you can reflect playfully or seriously about past, present, or future resolutions!

All are welcome.



The Wednesday Evening Contemplative Service will resume at 7:00 p.m. on January 8. We are no longer sharing dinner before the service. This is a quiet time of contemplative, prayer, and communion. All are welcome



**Support Group
Saturday, January 11,
10:00 a.m., Fireside Room**
We offer confidential sharing and support. Facilitated by Lee Cruise.



**Women's Spirituality Group
Thursday, January 16, 6:30
in the Chapel**
Our theme this month is
Renewal. RSVP to Leslie by January
15 (lesliedarwino@gmail.com).

**Women of Spirit
Tuesday, January 21 at 7:00 p.m.
in the Narthex.**



We'll be hearing from our beloved Eartha Newsong, who will share her fascinating faith journey. Women of Spirit is open to all women not affiliated with any faith or religious organization. For more info, visit www.womenofspiritlamorinda.org

the Divine, pursue Mystery, and understand God; and I plan to use conversations, films, experiences, books, and studies to further explore and illumine this question. My hope is to do a bit of travel, so I might do some face-to-face interviews and meet with people I respect and admire.

Other objectives for the sabbatical are to do some creative writing, working on stories and ideas that need consistent focus. I will also be spending a week or two on retreat, and taking a class or two. One desire is to dive deeper into ways to support students and families in the greater community, working on some curriculum and programs.

For the winter/spring months, I will be staying closer to home for much of the time. The hope is to be a bit more adventurous in the summer/fall months, with a desire to explore religious communities, museums, and landmarks in Europe. Planning and saving needs to take place before that happens though J

More specifics of the church schedule, coverage, and preaching plans will be in next month's Neighbor. And I offer deep thanks to all of you for allowing me this special opportunity.

Yours,
Jim

Stewardship Update

The Stewardship and Finance Committee wants to thank everyone for their generous pledges to the 2020 year. We put forth a lofty goal - and while we haven't yet reached what we was hoped for (we are about \$40,000 short), the response (and increases) of most has been significant.

There will be more updates in the weeks ahead, as our committee and Council is works hard to come up with a budget that matches our revenue - and possible Endowment funding.

As you can understand, there will be certain ramifications to our not meeting the goal, and programs and dreams may need to be toned down (or cut). That said, we are aware that there is only so much each of you can give; and we thank you for responding with the generosity that you have.

Elizabeth's Thoughts

Dear Orinda Community Church Family,

We are on a threshold between the old year and a new year-actually a new decade! I was so grateful to spend

Ladies Lunch Bunch
Wednesday, Jan. 22, 11:30 a.m.



The first lunch of the New Year will be at Metro Lafayette, 3524 Mt. Diablo Boulevard in the Safeway Lafayette Shopping Area. Here's hoping this might fit on your calendars!

Transportation can be shared from the OCC parking lot if you let me know what would work best for you. Please RSVP to Marty Parriott at mparriott@earthlink.net by Monday, January 20.



Food Bank Sorting, Alameda County Community Food Bank
Mon., Jan. 27, 8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

We will meet at church at 8:00 a.m., then carpool down to the Alameda County Community Food Bank for a time of sorting and getting to know each other better. On our way back we'll stop at In-N-Out Burger (bring a few \$\$). RSVP to Rev. Jim (jim@orindachurch.org) so we have a count. We have room for up to 10 people.

"Souper Bowl" Sunday
Sunday, February 2, before and after worship

Children and youth will be collecting change in soup pots to help raise money for people with food insecurities. Please save up in the weeks leading up to the event.



Exploration of the Spiritual Classics (Part 1)
Sunday, February 2, 11:30 a.m., Fireside Room

Mitch Breitwieser will lead us through several classes this winter/spring, as we look at the spiritual writings of various authors.

time with you on Sunday, December 29 in reflection and then on Monday, December 30 in an incredibly full and creative celebration of John Staten's life. It is so good to be together in both joy and loss. I look forward to what we can do together as a church in the coming year-work for justice and environment, sharing stories and meals, learning more deeply about the many ways God unfolds in our lives. Thank you for accompanying me and welcoming me through the great change in my life of moving to California and becoming a part of your community. As a good-bye to 2019 and a hello to 2020, I am sending you my reflection from the last Sunday of 2019.

Biggest and warmest blessings on all of you for the coming adventures,

Elizabeth

A Reflection at the Intersection of the Year Ending and the Year Beginning

Jesus, in John 14:28, told his followers, "I am going away and I am coming back." The verbs in this statement are worth considering. Almost all translations keep them present tense, active. I am going away and I am coming back, almost as though the two things are simultaneous. My friend Birte (whom some of you met at my installation) once offered a sermon that reflected on this: she described going on a trip in which she used the same road to travel away and then return home. All of it active. All of it continuous. All of it embedded in change.

I am thinking today of the mystery of God and of change in our lives. At the end of the year, we are starting again. For a few weeks, we will get confused and write the date as 2019, but then we will get oriented to where we are in time and space and start writing 2020. Even though it is a new year, a year that we have never lived through before, we will recognize some things. We know our nearest and dearest and make dinner with them, meet up with our friends, celebrate birthdays. We recognize winter, spring, summer, fall. There is constant change, and there are rhythm and cycles. We are always going away from the familiar and coming back to what we know.

What does this teach us about God's place in all the change that comes with living? There are hints in the Bible that God, though steadfast, may change. God changes God's mind when Abraham asks for help in the wilderness. God changes God's mind when the Ninevites listen to Jonah's call to reform and God decides not to punish them.

All of which is to say that God's change is responsive, attentive. It is not abandonment. There is a saying attributed to Nicholas of Cusa from the 15th Century: "God is an infinite circle whose center is everywhere



and whose circumference is nowhere." We, humans, with our ups and downs, our losses and our joys, live in the heart of that circle. If we feel that God has left us, perhaps we are just feeling the arc of the curve, the roundness of God's movement who, in going away, is always, always coming back to us.

**Scout Sunday (with lunch)
February 9**



Troop 237 will take part in the worship service and then serve a delicious lunch after church. This is a chance for the them to show their appreciation for use of church facilities. Please be there to give them the chance to give this gift.

"Just Mercy" Movie Watching

Friday, January 10, 2020, 11:30 p.m. and/or
Saturday, January 11, 6:00 p.m.



Meet at the church parking lot at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, or 6:00 p.m. Saturday to carpool to Century Theatre in W.C.

This film, based on the book by Bryn Stevenson, is worth a watch and discussion. You are encouraged to read the book, Just Mercy before watching the film, but it's certainly not a requirement.

**Second Hour: Art and Spirituality
Sunday, January 12, 11:30 a.m, Fireside Room**

Elizabeth Robinson will lead a discussion about faith and poetry.

**Sunday, February 16, after
worship**

**Showing of the film
"This Changes Everything"**
sponsored by the Green Team/Mercy
and Justice.



Handbell Choir Rehearsals

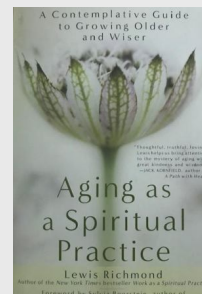


The next Sunday Service during which the handbell choir will play is February 2. Rehearsals for this will be January 7, 14, 21, and 28 in the music room at 6:30 PM. All ringers who have previously played at OCC, or with any other handbell choir, are invited to join the choir for this winter season. The only requirement is to commit to the dates above. Please let Nancy Thursby know ASAP if you are interested at: nlthursby@comcast.net.

65+ Club

**Aging as a Spiritual Practice -
Lunch Gathering and Discussion,
Wednesday, January 15, 11:30 a.m., Fellowship Hall**

The inevitability of aging, and entering new phases of life, is something that every person faces. Rev. Jim and Rev. Elizabeth will be leading conversations that come out of the book. There are several copies of the book in the church library that you can buy, or pick one up on your favorite device. And sessions will be designed so you can participate even if you haven't read. RSVP to Jim (jim@orindachurch.org) and bring \$ 5 for the lunch.



Ushers and Greeters Needed

**Chili Cook-off and Martin Luther King, Jr.
Observation Event**



About four additional enthusiastic volunteers are needed to join our usher teams for the 2020 calendar year. Youth are especially encouraged to volunteer. Two additional greeters are also needed to focus on welcoming first-time visitors to our worship services. The commitment for both ushers and greeters is for just one Sunday a month. These service opportunities are a great way to meet and serve all who attend our worship services and provide an extravagant welcome to people in the greater committee. If interested, please Mike Kersten at (916) 671-0972 or mikejkersten@aol.com

**Mark your Calendars:
Holden Zumbathon for all Ages
Saturday, February 22 (time tba)**
Come and support this fun(d)raiser.



Coming Soon . . .

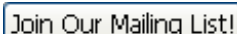


**Mardi Gras Celebration
Sunday, February 23, 5:00 - 7:00
p.m.**

Join us for some cajun cookin' potluck, parade, and fellowship. You'll want to "Bead" there. Contact Leslie O'Brien if you are able to help set up or clean up.

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Sunday, January 19, 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM,



We'll have a chili cook-off, hear stories about working in the Civil Rights era and we'll workshop on how to fight for Civil Rights here and now. Please invite friends.

We are honored to have Stuart House join us for this event. Stuart was a SNCC field secretary devoted to voters' rights in Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement. In 1967, he was arrested in Selma for attempting to register people to vote. Stuart is a great storyteller who exudes warmth and kindness. He has continued to serve people and work for justice throughout his life!

Please reach out to Leslie Darwin O'Brien if you can help with posting flyers around town before the event or if you can help with set up/clean up. 925-285-0996.

**The 81st Annual Meeting
of the Orinda Community Church**



Sunday, January 26 after worship

Staff members, committee and ministry chairs, please email your reports to office@orindachurch.org by **Friday, January 17.**

**Welcome to our New
Members!**

Paula and Tom Beatty

Paula Ansley Beatty was born at Stanford Hospital and Tom Beatty was born in Missoula, Montana. Paula and Tom dated in high school in Mountain View, California. They married in 1973 during their college career at UC Berkeley. Tom attended Georgetown Law in Washington DC where he also clerked for the US Senate and a Federal Judge. Paula put him through school.



They returned to California, and lived in Antioch. Tom was on the City Council and joined a small Walnut Creek law firm. He became managing partner in 1986 until his retirement in 2017. The firm grew to 65 lawyers. Paula

and Tom raised 4 children, Stewart, the executive chef at Postino in Lafayette, Heather, an Oxford Ph.D in Bermuda, Grayson, a front office executive for the Colorado Rockies baseball team, and Jaclyn, a nurse practitioner at Stanford Children's Hospital.

Paula is an accomplished Quilter, and according to both Stewart and Tom, an excellent cook. She has lovingly restored their unique 1873 Victorian farmhouse located near Boundary Oak golf course in Walnut Creek, and is always on the look for appropriate antiques and period decorations. Tom plays a lot of tennis and writes as a hobby, working on a novel. He mediates civil disputes privately and for the court system. Together they have 7 grandchildren all under the age of 8.

Francisco Gamez and Mark Nichols

Francisco Gamez is married to Mark Nichols and they both live in El Sobrante, CA. Francisco is a Bay Area native, but lived in Los Angeles for a number of years before returning to the Bay Area in 2001. He has worked in higher education for over 20 years and has held various administrative and teaching positions at colleges and universities across the State, including University of Redlands, University of Southern California, Stanford University, University of San Francisco, Berkeley City College, and Saint Mary's College. He holds a doctorate in Education specializing in Organizations and Leadership from University of San Francisco, as well as a Master of Public Administration and B.A. in Sociology. In his free time, he loves spending time with his husband and their two rescue dogs and traveling internationally to explore different cultures.

Both Francisco and his husband were directed to OCC by a Google search for affirming and inclusive churches. After exploring a few church options, they enjoyed their initial contact at OCC and found the church community warm and welcoming. They enjoyed the meaningful sermons through a contemporary and social justice lens, as well as the wonderful choir and musicians. Prior to OCC, Francisco grew up with a diverse religious background in the Korean Methodist, Korean Baptist, and Roman Catholic traditions, but took a very long break before deciding to join a community of faith again. Francisco hopes to explore different opportunities to serve within the OCC community and getting to know the members of the congregation.

Mark Nichols and his husband, Francisco Gamez, live in El Sobrante with their two Shih Tzu mixed fur babies. Mark was born in Dallas, Texas where he lived until his family moved to East Texas in 1979. In 1983, he joined the Army and was stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana. He moved to Los Angeles in 1987 before finally settling in the Bay Area in 1990. He has held a variety of positions in different fields, such as Real Estate Taxes and construction-related jobs. He owned a construction

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insert an image

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format image

100 x 100 pixels

company until the economic downturn in 2009. Currently, he is the Facilities Manager at a private Montessori school in Marin County. He and his husband travel whenever possible. He is now in his junior year as he continues to work towards his bachelor's degree in organizational leadership. He obtained his associate's degree in 2018.

Having grown up in Texas, Mark spent his youth going to different Southern Baptist churches. After a long lapse in regular attendance, Mark and Francisco decided to search for a church that fit their values. OCC and its community's faith, mission, and outreach matched their interests.

CCIH January 2020 Opportunities for Involvement



Homework Club Support:

We are looking for compassionate individuals to help in our after-school Homework Club that goes from August through June. We need support at our Pittsburg, Concord, and Pleasant Hill sites. You will provide academic support and mentoring to children from extremely low-income homes in grades K-12.

Commitment is one afternoon per week (Monday-Thursday) for the entire school year. Adults and high school sophomores through seniors are encouraged to apply at www.ccinterfaithhousing.org/volunteer.

Friday Fun Day: We are looking for volunteers to participate in our Friday Fun Day activities coordinated by our wonderful Youth Enrichment Coordinators. Friday Fun Days are every Friday from August to June from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. If you are interested, sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/yb5bjg58>.

Sign up for as many Fridays as you want!

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