

Sierra Christian Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

By All Means, Let Us Love The World

Last April, our beloved Golden Retriever, Leinani, gave birth to her first litter of puppies. I was in the whelping box with her assisting, though dogs don't need much help, their instincts deeply imbedded in their DNA, like ours are not. My husband, son, and I held these newborn dogs in our hands as Leinani licked them clean and were humbled by the simple splendor of the moment. They were soon squirming on their bellies to find their mama to nurse. We watched them—in a mixture of astonishment, awe, and love—grow from gerbil-looking things to beautiful young dogs with personalities and grandeur all their own, and nine weeks after being born they were all off to their forever homes and now live wonderful lives. The love we felt (and feel) for them spread like the proverbial ripples from a stone tossed in a lake.

I love those little puppies for the miracle they are, for the great, playful, loving dogs they grew to become, and because they serve as a beautiful reminder, a great and powerful reminder, of the incalculably wonderful reasons to love this world of ours. Those puppies continue to be a reoccurring joy, a sustained source and target of love.

In her poem, "First Fall," Maggie Smith, writes, "I'm desperate for you to love the world because I brought you here." As we said goodbye to Leinani's puppies, I found myself standing in front of our home as their families drove away wanting to gather my family and friends close around to join me in a simple prayer: *Love this world, love this world, please let us always love it here.*

I suspect Maggie Smith's poem is a plea as much as anything because there is too much evidence out there that suggests we have either forgotten how, or are too busy to, love the world. Not just each other, but the world, where we stand and lay down at night, and the people we see and have not yet met.

Pastor's Pitch



Sierra Christian Church's pastor is the Rev. Christine Pobanz-Hartmire. Her challenge to us is to embrace, the beautiful truth that everyone is always welcomed at Jesus' table.

Remember Paul's letter to the Ephesians? "*Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.*"

"Watch what God does." Here is what I know about what God does: God loves the world—every blade of grass, every grunt and squeal of creatures, every puppy, every kid who goes to sleep worried about something, every burning bush, every lullaby we sing, and every teenager struggling with issues and pressures that can be staggering and mysterious. All of it, all of us, are held in

God's extravagant, abundant love. Mostly what God does is love you. We keep company with God to learn and live a life of love.

Love never makes us smaller and narrower and lonelier. So, what would it look like to love the world again so much that we are unable to ignore climate change because the world is crying out for us to love her again?

What would it be like to love the world so much that we believe women and protect children?

Please see PITCH, next page

PITCH

(Continued from page 1)

What would it be like to love the world so much that we see the image of God in one another across aisles and streets and political divides and borders and the ones we have been taught to fear and resent?

What would it look like to remember how to love the world again even knowing it may very well break your heart?

Leinani birthed, nursed, loved her puppies with all the forces of nature alive in her genes, knowing in those same genes that in a few short months those puppies would be off on their own journeys of love.

Loving is a worthwhile risk. It's a shot in the dark that illuminates everything, a radical, blessed, and brave act of faith and hope.

In John 3:17, we are told of God's abundant love for the world. *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

I choose to believe that God is desperate for us to love the world in brave and abundant ways, too.

It is love that invites the presence of God. My mother-in-law liked to recite a line from *Les Misérables*: "To love another person is to see the face of God." Love is certainly the one thing that does not separate us from God.

With a welcomed surrendering shake of my head, a bemused smile, I know it also means loving the pencils and markers left on the kitchen table when the school project is done, the rise of steam from the coffee maker in the morning, even loving the way the light in the late afternoon illuminates the paw prints on my recently washed floor—loving it all as holy. Loving, too, but being fully human not necessarily appreciating, my husband's pile of books and papers that tend to pop up throughout the house like mushrooms. Loving the sound of my wind chimes when the wind kicks up, which it has been doing plenty of recently.

Loving the sound of the words "I love you," "I'm sorry," "I miss you," "I choose you." "Can I take your plate for you." Loving, yes, when our other Golden Retriever, Akua, jumps into my lap like he was a 10-pound puppy and not a 70-pound dog.

I encourage us to try and love this moment—any moment—of particular grace, not in spite of all the grief and loss surrounding us but because of it. Love the world now, because wouldn't you know it, Frederick Buechner was spot on when he wrote, "This is the world, beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid."

And let me add, if you need a nudge, I know from experience that a room full of puppies is a great place to start.

Answering Violence With Art

After Salman Rushdie's novel "The Satanic Verses" was published in 1988, the Ayatollah Khomeini issued a "fatwa," a call for his execution because he believed the book, which he had never read, was an insult to Islam and the prophet Mohammad. Thirty-three years later, a 24-year-old man from New Jersey named Hadi Matar rushed onto a stage in upstate New York where Rushdie was speaking on, of all things, writers' safety, and stabbed him more than 15 times. The attack lasted 27 seconds before the man was pulled off the gravely wounded Rushdie.

Rushdie lost an eye in the attack. His left hand was all but maimed, the two stab wounds in his neck were deep but miraculously not fatal, and the scars left from the wild slashing and stabbing to his chest and stomach resemble an elaborate trail map of some

treacherous island inhabited by mysteries and monsters. Thankfully, one doctor told Rushdie, his attacker was rather inept with a knife.

Rushdie's new book, "Knife," is a memoir reflecting on the attack and his recovery from it; it is his response to the attack, answering violence with art.

This is less a book review as much as it is an appreciation of the power of human connections and the love it forges, which Rushdie experienced in a variety of ways, some of which surprised and astounded him, all of which gratified him. Rushdie writes of going out to dinner with his wife on Valentine's Day 2023, the first such outing in the eight months following the attack: "After our encounter with hatred we're cele-

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Prayers & Celebrations

- ▶ Birthday wishes to Mr. Daven Stelter, turning 16 on the 27th.
- ▶ To all fathers everywhere: Happy Father's Day. (Selfish note #1: a most special salute to the my father, Rev. Wayne C. Hartmire, who would have turned 92 on June 5!)
- ▶ Anniversary celebration #6 to Pastor Christine and John on the 9th. (Selfish note #2: John is still getting used to having made the most beautiful decision of my life, marrying her!)
- ▶ Happy Birthday to Jeffrey John Boutwell, turning 11 on June 13.
- ▶ Happy unpacking boxes to Steve and Diane Kindle, who moved into their new home in Weaverville on May 31.

Link to Christian Nationalism's War on Democracy



SAVE THE DATE

Saturday June 8, 2024
10:00 AM PT
online

**“BAD FAITH:
Christian Nationalism's
Unholy War on Democracy”**

fundraiser film screening supporting
delegation to DC Mass Assembly



Spanish subtitles.
Interpretation available on request.
bit.ly/CAPPC_BadFaith060824



Some Notes Worth Noting

1. Books that Bind now meets every other month. The book club will next meet Thursday, June 20 at 6:30 pm on Zoom. We are reading the immensely popular and intriguing 2007 novel, "The Shack," by William P. Young. The book was self-published but became a best seller, having sold a million copies by June 2008. (Sierra Christian screened the 2017 movie in the barn one fine Sunday afternoon)
2. The Men's Fellowship Breakfast is scheduled for Saturday, June 1, at 9 am, on Zoom. The invite will be going out on Thursday.
3. Adult Camp at the Community of the Great Commission is on for June 6-9. This year's theme is Survival of the Kindest, with Rev. May Jacobs as the keynote speaker. Register at [Summer Camps](#)
4. The Disciples' Men's Ministry will be having a live Tri-Regional Retreat starting on June 1 and ending on June 2. Location will be Mills Creek Christian Church in Bakersfield, CA. Please mark your calendars and look for registration information shortly. Rev. Dr. Paul Koch is the keynote speaker.
5. "Love Them Anyway" is the title of a webinar hosted by Kent Keith one June 29, from 1-4 pm. Over the years he has published 15 books about servant leadership, "The Paradoxical Commandments," and finding meaning in life and work. Register at: [Love Them Anyway Webinar](#)
6. Women's Fall Retreat Registration is now open! Register here: <https://ccncn.regfox.com/20240920-womens-fall-retreat>

It is hiatus time. The newsletter staff will be busy camping and paddle boarding the months of July and August. They may return in September if they do not float away once and for all...

My Son Wears A Tutu— And That's How We'll Change the World

My three-and-a-half-year-old son likes to play trucks. He likes to do jigsaw puzzles. He likes to eat plums. And he likes to wear sparkly tutus. If asked, he will say the tutus make him feel beautiful and brave. If asked, he will say there are no rules about what boys can wear or what girls can wear.

My son has worn tutus to church. He has worn tutus to the grocery store. He has worn tutus on the train and in the sandbox. It has been, in our part of the world, a non-issue. We have been asked some well-intentioned questions; we've answered them; it has been fine. It WAS fine, until yesterday.

Yesterday, on our walk to the park, my son and I were accosted by someone who demanded to know why my son was wearing a skirt. We didn't know him, but he appeared to have been watching us for some time.

"I'm just curious," the man said. "Why do you keep doing this to your son?"

He wasn't curious. He didn't want answers. He wanted to make sure we both knew that what my son was doing—what I was ALLOWING him to do—was wrong.

"She shouldn't keep doing this to you," he said. He spoke directly to my son. "You're a boy. She's a bad mommy. It's child abuse."

He took pictures of us, although I asked him not to; he threatened me. "Now everyone will know," he said. "You'll see."

I called the police. They came, they took their report, they complimented the skirt. Still, my son does not feel safe today. He wants to know: "Is the man coming back? The bad man? Is he going to shout more unkind things about my skirt? Is he going to take more pictures?"

I can't say for sure. But I can say this: I will not be intimidated. I will not be made to feel vulnerable or afraid. I will not let angry strangers tell my son what he can or cannot wear.

The world may not love my son for who he is, but I do. I was put on this earth to make sure he knows it. I will shout my love from street corners.

I will defend, shouting, his right to walk down the street in peace, wearing whatever items of clothing he wants to wear.

I will show him, in whatever way I can, that I value the person he is, trust in his vision for himself, and support his choices—no matter what anybody else says, no matter who tries to stop him or how often.

Our family has a motto. The motto is this:

We are loving.

We are kind.

We are determined and persistent.

We are beautiful and brave.

We know who we are. Angry strangers will not change who we are. The world will not change who we are—we will change the world."



—Jen Anderson Shattuck

JUST WOMEN
EMBRACING LIFE

2024 JUST WOMEN BIBLE STUDY



**THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS:
SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH**
MATTHEW 13:16 - 17

PRE-ORDERS

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2024

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Desmond Tutu's Defining Moment

Asked by the BBC to identify a defining moment in his life, Desmond Tutu spoke of the day he and his mother were walking down the street. Tutu was nine years old. A tall white man dressed in a black suit came towards them. In the days of apartheid in South Africa, when a black person and a white person met while walking on a footpath, the black person was expected to step into the gutter to allow the white person to pass and nod their head as a gesture of respect. But this day, before a young Tutu and his mother could step off the sidewalk the white man stepped off the sidewalk and, as they passed, he tipped his hat in a gesture of respect to her!

The white man was Trevor Huddleston, an Anglican priest who was bitterly opposed to apartheid. This moment changed Tutu's life. When his mother told him that Trevor Huddleston had stepped off the sidewalk because he was a "man of God," Tutu found his calling. "When she told me that he was an Anglican priest I decided there and then that I wanted to be an Anglican priest too. And what is more, I wanted to be a man of God" said Tutu.

Huddleston later became a mentor to Desmond Tutu and his commitment to the equality of all human beings due to their creation in God's image became a key force in Tutu's opposition to apartheid.

So today's prayer is a simple one, but not really. It is praying that we can all strive to be "people of God" who are willing to "step off the sidewalk" and "tip our hat" to our sisters and brothers, particularly those on the margins. May it be so...



Sierra Christian Church Monthly Calendar

June 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30						1 9 am Men's Fellowship Breakfast
2 10:30 am Worship Rev. Ken Raidy at Pulpit	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16 Father's Day! 10:30 am Worship	17	18	19	20 Books That Bind 6:30 pm on Zoom	21	22
23 10:30 am Worship	24	25	26	27	28	29

“I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain.”

— *James Baldwin*

What Happened In June in California's History

June 1, 1858--California Central Railroad ground-breaking took place in Sacramento. By October 13, 1861 the railroad connected Lincoln to the Sacramento Valley Railroad at Folsom Junction.

June 1, 1927--The Delta King steamboat made its debut voyage from San Francisco to Sacramento. The Delta Queen, its twin, followed the next day. The 81-mile trip took nearly all night.

June 2, 1873 --Construction began on Clay Street in San Francisco for the world's first cable railroad. The line was completed and ready for a trial run on August 2, 1873

June 1, 1992--Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer were nominated to U.S. Senate seats, making California the first state to have two women in the U.S. Senate.

June 3, 1913--San Francisco retired the last horse-drawn streetcar, more than 20 years after the introduction of electric streetcars.

June 3, 1956--Santa Cruz city authorities announced a total ban on rock & roll at public gatherings, calling the music "Detrimental to both the health and morals of our youth and community."

June 4, 1849--The USS Panama anchored in San Francisco Bay. There were already about 200 deserted ships in the harbor because their crews had abandoned them for the gold fields.

June 4, 1863--One man was killed and another died of wounds a few days later in a shootout over eggs on the Farallon Islands. Eggs, valuable in San Francisco, were free for gathering on the islands off the coast. David Batchelder and 27 armed men sailed there to harvest them, challenging the Egg Co. for the business.

June 4, 1972--Angela Davis, political activist, professor and author, was acquitted of killing a white guard. She was arrested, charged, tried and acquitted of conspiracy in the armed take-over of a Marin County courtroom, in which four persons died in 1970.

June 4, 1999--Senators Diane Feinstein of California and Harry Reid of Nevada announced the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act. It authorized \$300 million over 10 years to restore the lake's water.

June 4, 2010--John Wooden, college basketball's legendary coach, died in Los Angeles at age 99.

The "Wizard of Westwood" built one of the greatest dynasties in all of sports at UCLA and was one of the most revered coaches ever.

June 5, 1959--Forty San Francisco Bay Area teachers, accused of being Communists, were subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

June 5, 1968--Robert F. Kennedy, U.S. presidential candidate, was shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, by Sirhan Sirhan, a Palestinian. Kennedy died the next day.

June 5, 1981--Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that five people in Los Angeles had a rare form of pneumonia seen only in patients with weakened immune systems. Those turned out to be the first recognized cases of AIDS.

June 5, 2009--Raymond Lee Oyler, a 38-year-old convicted arsonist, was sentenced to death for starting the 2006 Esperanza wildfire, west of Palm Springs. Five federal firefighters died defending a rural home from raging, wind-driven flames. The wind-fueled, arson-set fire burned 41,173 acres

June 6, 1850--Levi Strauss made his first pair of sturdy pants for sale to gold miners. Today Levi Strauss & Co. is the world's largest brand-name apparel manufacturer.

June 6, 1978 --The passage of Proposition 13 cut California property taxes by 57%, beginning a downward trend in state budgets. Spending for California public schools, which during the 1960s ranked among the top nationally fell to 50th in 2014.

June 10, 1971--Federal marshals, FBI agents and special forces swarmed Alcatraz Island and removed the Native American occupiers: five women, four children and six unarmed men.

June 13, 2008--Some 2,800 firefighters fought the Humboldt Fire in Butte County. 9,000 residents fled as fire covered 23,000 acres. It destroyed 74 homes and damaged 20 more in Paradise before it was brought under control a few days later.

June 16, 1929--Otto Funk, 62, ended his walk from New York to San Francisco. He traveled 4,165 miles in 183 days. Known as the "Walking Fiddler," he fiddled every step of the way.

June 20, 1853--Henry

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HISTORY

(Continued from page 7)

Durant, Congregational minister, began Contra Costa Academy in Oakland as a private school for boys. In 1855, the school was chartered as the College of California, which eventually became UC Berkeley.

June 22, 1851--San Francisco burned for the sixth time in two years. As before, it was set on purpose. Sea-breezes quickly spread the flames. City Hall burned, a \$3 million loss, and the Jenny Lind Theater burned for the sixth time. San Franciscans rebuilt with water tanks on many roofs and began to organize a fire department.

June 27, 1933--California voters repealed Prohibition by a margin of over 75%. During Prohibition, grape juice came with a "warning" that if the juice sat for a specified amount of time, it would become alcoholic. California's grape production quadrupled during Prohibition.

June 27, 1996--Cubby Broccoli, film producer, died in Beverly Hills at age 87. He was best known as co-producer of many of the James Bond films. His Italian ancestors invented broccoli by crossing Italian rabe with cauliflower.

June 28, 1846--A U.S. military detachment near San Rafael was approached by three unarmed Mexicans, Jose de los Reyes Berryessa and brothers Francisco and Ramon de Haro. Kit Carson asked Captain John Fremont if he should take them prisoners. Fremont answered that he had no room for prisoners, so Carson shot the men dead and left their bodies where they fell.

June 28, 1978 --The U.S. Supreme Court ordered UC Berkeley medical school to admit Allan Bakke, a white man. He claimed his denial was based on racial quotas and sued on the basis of discrimination.

June 30, 1864--Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove became the first California State Park. When President Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant Act, it became the first protected wild land in the U.S..

KNIFE

(Continued from page 2)

brating the survival of love. Love was the healing force."

I have never had a global hit put out on me, nor have I had to be moved in secret from hospital to rehab center to a clandestine residence, with hired security and police clearing the path and scouring the destination. I haven't published 15 novels or been awarded the Booker Prize for one of them. But I have been scared and isolated, and I have been emboldened and strengthened, supported and loved, pulled from the brink by friends and family, and so I understand the mettle with which love can cloak us, the power with which it can heal us, the force it has to push us in the right direction.

Aside from "Knife," I have not read any of Rushdie's books from beginning to end. I put down "The Satanic Verses" a few hundred pages in hopeful that I would pick it up again someday. I haven't. I checked out "Midnight Children" from the library a few years ago but never got around to reading it before it was due. I think I will try again.

My struggle with his writing does not detract from the fact that Rushdie is a storyteller, and this is an important distinction, because he believes, as do I, that it is the telling of stories that can carry us forward in a bad time.

"Writers own the future," he wrote. "We must work to overcome the false narratives of tyrants, populists, and fools by telling better stories than they do, stories within which people want to live.

"Because art challenges orthodoxy. Art is not luxury. It stands at the essence of our humanity, and it asks for no special protection, except the right to exist. It accepts argument, criticism, even rejection. It does not accept violence. And in the end, it outlasts those who oppress it."

Rushdie has, thus far, outlasted the Fatwa, outlasted a New Jersey man who somehow thought he was doing God's work by stabbing a man he did not know 15 times. In doing so, Rushdie has written a small piece of art that tells an important but familiar story about, in essence, the healing, uniting, inspiring power of love. Love is a force, he recognizes, that can move mountains and change the world.

—John Hartmire