

Sierra Christian Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

We Are a People of Faith & Hope With an Occasional Wobble

I am writing this at our kitchen table which has developed a wobble. It comes from where the tabletop's underside fastens to the base, and John has attempted to wedge a quarter into the fault to stabilize it, and when that didn't work, a folded up 3x5 index card. That worked for a spell, but the wobble returned. They usually do if the cause is not confronted straight on. Perhaps this is all to remind me (though I don't think I really need reminding) that the world has felt wobbly these past months. There have been days when doubt and despair have licked at my feet like a flame. While I defiantly refuse to let it burn me, I have not yet found consistent relief from its heat. I know it's there, the relief, but there have been days when it was not as easily available as the fear anxiety, worry and doubt that has threatened, at times, to scorch me.

It is when sitting at this table, no matter its wobble, or in my favorite big chair which does not wobble in the slightest, and pausing, that I am reminded that my life experience, and my faith, provide me with the reprieve and reinforcement—the insight and recognition—I am looking for.



My husband has claimed that in deep times of doubt and fear he has found his way through the miasma with stories. I overheard him telling Daven years ago, that stories are at the heart of what is happening, and those of us who believe in stories have to tell better ones than the bad guys—stories within which people want to do and be better, where they march on against the cold wind and sing in the face of horror until the better day comes.

Here's a story:

As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

"Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; everything will be thrown down...."

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs."

As the story goes, (Mark 13: 1-8) Jesus went on to describe brothers fighting brothers, children turning on parents, and so, like many of the stories in the Bible, it is asking a question I would be happy to duck but know I can't, not if I want to actually deal with this wobbling world we find ourselves in.

What do I rely upon to remain sturdy and standing? What must remain unchanged in order for me to feel hopeful? Asked another way, What are those things that while they stand unchanged, I am good and God is good, but if they fall, I am left with despair, even a sense of fatality and wobbliness?

As it turns out, the questions are not outdated. Jesus happened to be right. Wars happen. There is destruction and famine, pandemics and earthquakes, fake news and shameless liars. There is family trouble and illness, and suddenly one day your back hurts and each step is

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Preparing Locke Hall for Placer Enrichment

With strong backs, some tools, and heaps of willingness, Sierra Christian Church showed up on on August 10 to, essentially, gut Locke Hall and make it ready for Placer Enrichment's upcoming term. Maurine Rollins, Karen and Phil Steinke, Pastor Christine, Daven, John, Liz Throne, and Bob cut up partitions, broke down bookshelves and small chairs, carried out broken toys and long forgotten Sunday School activity folders, and a bunch of miscellaneous items and filled two dumpsters. Take a look...



PITCH

(Continued from page 1)

agony. You tire earlier and easier. The strength of the “readers” you buy at the drug store have to steadily increase. Your baby is suddenly a 16-year-old. All this has happened and will continue to happen; it is real and none of it is an indication that God is absent. And while I am at it, let me say, almost none of it is in our control.

But what about when the thing happens in our life, in our churches, in our society that no amount of Purpose Driven double talk could have prevented? Maybe it is when the large stones of the temples we’ve built to health, wealth and happiness crumble that we should turn to the stories of Jesus even more rigorously. If we do, we might hear him say, “Do not be afraid. These things may rock your world, but they cannot harm your soul. These things may bring suffering, but they need not bring hopelessness.”

Maybe my husband and those of his ilk are right—there may be grace in the timeless transcendence of stories. I mean, it seems there is a sacred story being told at this moment, one we are part of, and while we may have a small role in it, the story itself is very big and very old and has endured for a reason. The story provides perspective.

When I am experiencing a personal and global wobble, I can do that pause thing I mentioned earlier and remember with hope that I am part of an old story, one that starts at the beginning of time, dances joyfully in the present, and bravely reaches into a promised future. It’s the promise that God is not done, and we will not be left alone. This not a naive hope, nor an escapist hope. Rather, it’s the hope of people who have heard the dangerous rumor that there is life beyond death, and hope beyond suffering.

This is not an unprecedented hope, but a tempered one. It springs from the tears and prayers and struggles of our ancestors, those men and women who populate the stories of the Bible—Sarah’s laughter, and Hagar’s wandering, Mary’s labor, and Job’s devotion. What I seek is a hope proven and worn smooth by the tears of our ancestors. That is something I can lean on.

Those who have come before us have *already* lived through pandemics and social upheaval and loss and grief and death and labor pains. Which means we are never alone in our struggles. Not really.

This is where people of faith are most fortunate. We get to say that our hope is not in the Dow Jones but in the God of Abraham and Sarah; our hope is not in the government but in the God of Isaiah and Mary Magdalene; our hope is not in the multi-national industrial complex but in the God of Teresa of Avila and Theresa of Calcutta. And, just to be clear, our hope is not ever in our ability to be hopeful. It is not in our ability to get anything right whatsoever. Our hope is in the God of Jonah and Moses. Because when the smoke clears, we are a people of a story. And it is through this story that we get to view ourselves and others and even history itself.

When we find ourselves in this big of a story, with one hand reaching back to the hope of the prophets and one hand reaching forward to the promises of God, we can stand firmly in the reality of the present and not have that reality consume us.

Herein lies the greatness and gratitude that come with being people of faith. Even in the midst of political turmoil and division and fear and hate and uncertainty we can stand here in the reality of the present and confess that the story is still being written. The story of God and God’s people is written in the lives of our ancestors, and it is written in our eyes and choices, and in the future of our children and our children’s children. It is being written on the tablets of our broken and healed hearts.

No one gets to scare us into believing something else.

In other words, despite the persistent wobbles in our lives, as people of faith, we still dare to raise our hopes up. We get to stand.

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.

Prayers & Celebrations

- ➔ Pastor Christine turns 58-years-old on the 20th. We should all age so gracefully.
- ➔ Birthday salutations to Constance Cole, also born on September 20. SCC is better because of her.
- ➔ And Sept. 19th birthday wishes to dear friend, Diane Wilson. One of the good ones.
- ➔ Prayers that Susan Lane's living situation finds a happy & safe & comfortable solution.
- ➔ Healing prayers and ongoing appreciation for Joy Reed, who on August 19 was out for a walk when (in her words) she "realized that I was losing it, and remember thinking I need to pitch myself forward into this hedge and not fall back into the street. But the sidewalk is angled and the next thing I knew I was on my back in the street." A neighbor came to her aid and she spent the night at Kaiser. She was home the next day with a few staples and a single stitch in her head, wearing a heart monitor for 30 days because no one is sure what caused the dizziness that led to the fall. But, Joy is quick to add, "I got all the blood out of my clothes. And there was a lot!"
- ➔ Prayers and wishes to Dick Reed, because we care for him so darn much and miss him at the men's fellowship and during Sunday worship. Stay strong!
- ➔ So, with Beth back safe and invigorated from her adventures in Ireland, we have to ask, did she kiss the blarney stone? Not that she needs any help improving her "gift of gab," but we wonder nevertheless. And of course we celebrate her safe return from a most outstanding adventure.

Some Notes Worth Noting

1. **Books that Bind** now meets every other month. The book club will next meet Thursday, October 17, 6:30 pm on Zoom. We are reading "Daughter of Moloka'i" by Alan Brenner. It is his sequel to the immensely popular "Moloka'i," which we also read.
2. The **Men's Fellowship Breakfast** is scheduled for Saturday, September 7, at 9 am, on Zoom. The invite will be going out earlier that week.
3. With the willing and strong backs of Pastor, Christine, John, Daven, Karen and Phil Steinke, Liz Throne, Bob, and Maurine Rollins, Locke Hall has been cleaned out and is readied to welcome **Placer Enrichment**, a supportive community/school offering classes to K-6th graders who are being homeschooled. Sierra Christian will be their second site. (If you ever get the opportunity to observe and marvel at Maurine loading a dumpster, take advantage of it. It's art.) See pics on page 2.
4. **Repairers of the Breach**—"You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in."—Isaiah 58:12. This is the call of the Reconciliation Ministry Special Offering Sundays September 19 and October 6. The donations received will enable the Reconciliation Ministry to "repair the breaches that keep us apart—the sin of racism and oppression." It often translates in community activism.
5. **Women's Fall Retreat Registration** is now open! Register here for the September 20-22 retreat held in Applegate: <https://ccncn.reg-fox.com/20240920-womens-fall-retreat>
6. Speaking of retreats, the **Men's Ministries Regional Retreat** is scheduled for October 25-27. More details to come.
7. **Sierra Christian Board of Directors** is scheduled to meet on Zoom on Wednesday, September 18. Now, depending on the puppy situation here at Golden Alohas, this may be rescheduled at the last moment...

I Worship In A Barn...



I worship in a barn...

No choir loft high
Where noted artists sing;
No lavish raiment
Fit for Queen or King;
Instead, repose
Tired souls to bring —
For God is there!

I worship in a barn...

No stately spires
Rising majestically to the sky;
No marble edifice
To please the passing eye;
No cushioned pews,
No carving rare —
Yet God is there!

I worship in a barn...

No place e'er housed
Those more devout;
No more harassed
By fear or doubt;
All is serene
Within, without —
For God is there!

—Chas. M. Hillman, in dedication to the Church of Vespers, Encino Community Presbyterian Church, which worshipped in the Edward Everett Horton Barn in the San Fernando Valley, 1945

PSR Lecture Series on AI, Christian Nationalism, & Democracy

The Pacific School of Religion's (PSR) 2024 Earl Lecture Series will poke its progressive stick at Artificial Intelligence, Christian Nationalism, and their relational threat to Democracy starting September 17.

Featured speakers include Dr. John Robichaux, Executive Director for UC Berkeley's Coleman Fung Institute, and Dr. Susan Abraham, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of PSR. They will explore the relationship of AI and religion, the risks each poses to democracy, and the potential of both for marginalized and faith-based communities.

The free and public four-week series will be delivered both face-to-face and online and includes lectures and a screening of the documentary film, "Bad Faith: Christian Nationalism's Unholy War on Democracy." Extending the 157-yearlong legacy of PSR's engagement in social justice concerns, this series is a continuation of lectures that have featured

Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Elie Wiesel, and Theodore Roosevelt.

The lecture series is open to the public—either in person or online—at no cost. The links to the 5 sessions are below for registration.

[September 17th: AI and Religion at the Dawn of a New Era](#)

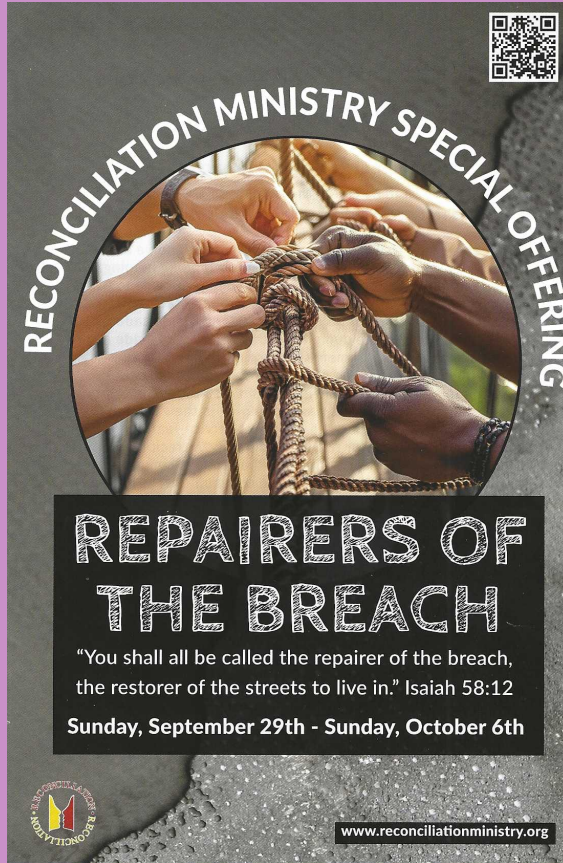
[September 24th: AI and Religion as Technologies of Communal Meaning Making](#)

[September 26th: In-Person Screening: Bad Faith at the Elmwood Theater in Berkeley](#)

[October 1st: What Was Meant for Evil: Making AI and Religion Work for Us](#)

[October 8: Manufacturing Hope: Leveraging Religious and Technological Connectivity to Advance the Common Good](#)

The world will be a lot richer, and much much cuter come the 3rd week of September.



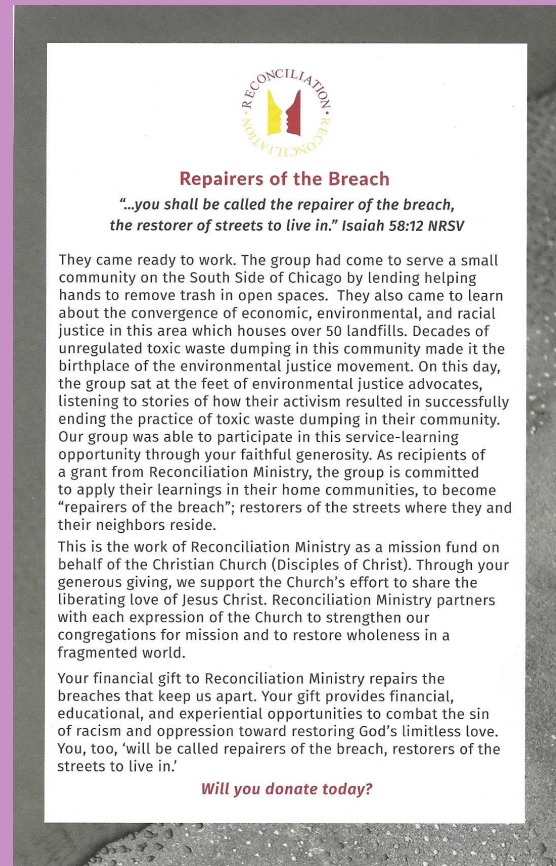
RECONCILIATION MINISTRY SPECIAL OFFERING

REPAIRERS OF THE BREACH

“You shall all be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets to live in.” Isaiah 58:12

Sunday, September 29th - Sunday, October 6th

www.reconciliationministry.org



RECONCILIATION MINISTRY

Repairers of the Breach

“...you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.” Isaiah 58:12 NRSV

They came ready to work. The group had come to serve a small community on the South Side of Chicago by lending helping hands to remove trash in open spaces. They also came to learn about the convergence of economic, environmental, and racial justice in this area which houses over 50 landfills. Decades of unregulated toxic waste dumping in this community made it the birthplace of the environmental justice movement. On this day, the group sat at the feet of environmental justice advocates, listening to stories of how their activism resulted in successfully ending the practice of toxic waste dumping in their community. Our group was able to participate in this service-learning opportunity through your faithful generosity. As recipients of a grant from Reconciliation Ministry, the group is committed to apply their learnings in their home communities, to become “repairers of the breach”; restorers of the streets where they and their neighbors reside.

This is the work of Reconciliation Ministry as a mission fund on behalf of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Through your generous giving, we support the Church’s effort to share the liberating love of Jesus Christ. Reconciliation Ministry partners with each expression of the Church to strengthen our congregations for mission and to restore wholeness in a fragmented world.

Your financial gift to Reconciliation Ministry repairs the breaches that keep us apart. Your gift provides financial, educational, and experiential opportunities to combat the sin of racism and oppression toward restoring God’s limitless love. You, too, ‘will be called repairers of the breach, restorers of the streets to live in.’

Will you donate today?

Help, It All Feels Out of Control

Me: Hey God.

God: Hello, My love.

Me: The world is completely out of control!

God: I know. It's such an adventure, right?

Me: No! It's like being on a runaway train! I need to feel like I am in control of my life.

God: You want to be in control?

Me: Yes!

God: You are living on a spinning wet rock of a planet that resides next to a constantly exploding fireball in the middle of an ever-expanding universe that is filled with mysteries beyond your

wildest imagination.

Me: Um, okay....

God: And on this planet that you are hurtling through the great expanse in - you are coexisting with billions of other people who have free-will and their own experiences that shape their perspectives and beliefs.

Me: Yeah...?

God: And while all this is going on your soul is residing in a physical body that is such a miracle of delicate engineering that at any given moment could produce its last heartbeat.

Me: Right...

God: What is it about your exis-

tence that you think you have any control of?

Me: Um...

God: Come on - you know the answer to this. What can you control?

Me: How kind I am to people?

God: Yep and one other thing.

Me: What's that?

God: How kind you are to yourself. Aside from that - most of everything else is a bit outside of your design.

Me: This is all a bit terrifying...

God: All great adventures are!

—John Roedel

Sierra Christian Represented at the Annual Gathering

Diane Wilson and I attended the 170th Annual Gathering of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California-Nevada last April. The theme for was New Wineskins.: Inspiration, Imagination, Innovation. The scripture texts for the Gathering were Joshua 9.12-14 and Matthew 9.16-18.

The Annual Gathering was a time of worship, workshops, conversation, and dining together. Also, we had a business session to hear ministry reports and take care of the administrative work of the region.

Diane and I arrived in time for lunch on Friday with the folks from Pacific School of Religion. They let me have some of their pizza, even though I went to a different seminary! (I did take a few classes at PSR, which was good enough for a slice or two).

Dr. Angeliqye Jordan Byrd, Director of Commu-

nications for the Disciples, led a 3-hour workshop on Friday on the Phygital Church, a resource to help clergy understand the various aspects of social media, the platforms available, social media metrics, content, and more. Jordan-Byrd encouraged clergy to utilize the digital space to assist with accomplishing church goals. In doing so, The Phygital Church provides a road map for helping churches create social media strategies for Social Ministry. She urges clergy to be intentional about utilizing social media and have a strategy to make Disciples.

Rev. Dr. Kelly Colwell, Co-Senior Minister of First Congregational Church, Berkeley, was our preacher for the worship services. She spoke on the theme and suggested that the “way we’ve always done it” is putting old ideas into new wineskins.

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Because We Just Finished the Summer Olympics, a Story

Kenyan runner Abel Mutai, was just a few feet from winning the 2012 Burlada Cross race in the city of Navarra, Spain when he became confused with the signage and stopped, thinking he had completed the race. A Spanish runner, Ivan Fernandez, was



right behind him and realize what was happening. He started shouting at the Kenyan to continue running. Mutai didn't know Spanish and didn't understand. Understanding Mutai's confusion, Fernandez pushed Mutai to victory.

After the race, a journalist pressed Fernandez. "Why did you do that?" He asked,

Ivan replied, "My dream is that someday we can have a

kind of community life where we push and help each other to win."

The journalist wasn't satisfied. "But why did you let the Kenyan win?" he insisted.

Ivan replied, "I didn't let him win, he was going to win. The race was his."

The journalist continued. "But you could have won!"

Ivan looked at him and replied, "But what would be the merit of my victory? What would be the honor in that medal? What would my mother think of that?"

Sierra Christian Church Monthly Calendar

September 2024

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--------|---------|--|----------|--------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 9 am Men's Fellowship Breakfast |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 6:30 pm Board of Directors Meeting | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 Reconciliation Ministry Special Offering 10:30 am Worship | 30 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

GATHERING

(Continued from page 7)

Workshops: Part one

- ▶ Walking the Labyrinth.
- ▶ What's New?
- ▶ Now What?

Workshops: Part Two

- ▶ The Church has Left the Building
- ▶ Creating Additional Streams of Income for Min

istry:

- ▶ An Introduction to Planned Giving
- ▶ Aging Gracefully
New Wine in New Wineskins: Navigating Change and Decolonizing Church for a Relevant Tomorrow
- ▶ The Benefits of hosting Bereavement Groups for your church and community

—Liz Throne

What Happened In September in California's History

September 1, 1846—The Donner Party, 87 people in 23 wagons, ran out of water on their third day crossing the Great Salt Lake Desert. The Reed family oxen ran off at night and weren't found so the Reeds had to walk.

September 1, 1942--A Sacramento federal judge in upheld the wartime detention of Japanese-Americans as well as Japanese nationals. More than 10,000 people were forced from their homes and kept in primitive, remote camps in California and other states during World War II.

September 1, 1946—San Francisco 49ers played their first home game at Kezar Stadium before a crowd of 45,000. They beat the Chicago Rockets, 34-14.

September 1, 1979—A Los Angeles court ordered Clayton Moore to stop wearing his Lone Ranger mask. For years after "The Lone Ranger" (1949-1957), he made appearances wearing his costume. After the court order, he replaced the mask with similar-looking sunglasses. He counter-sued and won the right to wear his original costume.

September 1 2005,—The California Senate approved a bill to legalize same-sex marriage. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed it 5 days later.

September 2, 1863—The first railroad and ferry link between San Francisco and Oakland began operations.

September 2, 1969—The first Internet message was sent to UCLA from Bolt Beranek and Newman Corp. in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

September 3, 1913—The Oakland, Antioch and Eastern Railway began operating an electric train from Oakland to Sacramento; the Comet in the morning and Meteor in the afternoon.

September 3, 2013—Siskiyou County supervisors voted 4-1 to secede from the rest of the state. They hoped to revitalize the 1941 regional independence movement to form the new state of Jefferson

September 4, 1951—President Harry Truman made the first transcontinental television speech, broadcast from a conference in San Francisco. He formally accepted the treaty ended America's post-World War II occupation of Japan.

September 5, 1878—Clara Foltz passed the Universi-

ty of California bar exam to become the first female lawyer on the West Coast. She and Laura de Force Gordon applied to Hastings College of the Law. They were denied admission because of their gender. So Foltz and Gordon sued, argued their own case and won admission. The Criminal Courts Building in downtown Los Angeles was renamed the Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center in 2002.

September 5, 1957—Viking Press published Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. The Beatnik adventure partly set in California describes the cross-country adventures of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty. Kerouac typed the book on a long roll of paper in three weeks of 1951.

September 5, 1975—Charles Manson family member Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme attempted to assassinate U.S. President Gerald Ford in Sacramento. Her gun failed to fire, no one was injured and Ford continued walking to the California state house.

September 6 1876,—The Southern Pacific railroad line opened from San Francisco to Los Angeles, connecting Los Angeles to the transcontinental railroad.

September 6, 1936—Some 60,000 workers marched in the San Francisco Labor Day parade as around 250,000 spectators watched.

September 9, 1965—Sandy Koufax, the Los Angeles Dodgers Hall of Fame pitcher, became the sixth pitcher of the modern era, the eighth in history, to throw a perfect game. It was the first by a left-hander since 1880, a 1-0 victory over the Chicago Cubs. He struck out the last 6 hitters he faced.

September 11, 1812—The Russian-American Company established a fort on the Sonoma coast as a southern outpost to support Russia's North American colonies. Today Fort Ross is a California State Historic Park.

September 11, 1972—BART, Bay Area Rapid Transit, opened its first line. The 26-mile track ran from Oakland to Fremont. Today BART operates five routes on 104 miles of track, with 44 stations in four counties.

September 12, 1910—Alice Stebbins Wells became the first policewoman in the U.S. when the Los Angeles Police swore her in. She was given a badge, assigned a telephone call box, handed a rule book and

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HISTORY

(Continued from page 8)

first aid book. She founded the International Policewomen's Association and traveled throughout North America to promote female officers.

September 12, 1970—Dr. Timothy Leary, professor and LSD guru, escaped from prison in San Luis Obispo. He was in on marijuana-related charges. When he got to prison, he was given psychological tests administered to all inmates to determine appropriate prison location and work details. Because he wrote some of the tests, Leary was able to easily manipulate his responses to get assigned to work as a gardener in a low-security prison.

September 12, 2008—A Union Pacific freight train crashed into a Metrolink commuter train, killing some 25 people. The Chatsworth wreck in was the deadliest U.S. passenger train accident in 15 years. Officials learned that the passenger train engineer, who died in the crash, was sending a text message and failed to stop at a red light just before the collision.

September 13, 1913— The temperature in San Francisco reached a record 101 degrees.

September 14, 1961—San Francisco Police Department vice squad San Francisco Police raided the Tay-Bush Inn and arrested 103 people. All but 14 were men accused of dancing together and kissing. Charges were dropped against 101 of them.

September 18, 1975—Patty Hearst was arrested after a year on the FBI Most Wanted List. The 19-year-old newspaper heiress was kidnapped from her Berkeley apartment by the Symbionese Liberation Army, a revolutionary group. She was brainwashed then joined them in a bank robbery. Hearst was found guilty and imprisoned for almost two years before her sentence was commuted by President Jimmy Carter.

September 23, 1962—“The Jetsons”, an animated Hanna-Barbera cartoon series about a Space Age family, premiered. It was the first ABC-TV color program.

September 24, 1871—Three escaped convicts and lawmen shot it out at a lake in Mono County. Today Convict Lake is a popular recreation spot.—Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove became the first California State Park.

September 24, 1991—Theodor Seuss Geisel, known as Dr. Seuss, died in La Jolla at age 87.

September 25, 1890—Sequoia National Park, famous for its old enormous trees, opened. It includes Mount Whitney, which at 14,505 feet is the highest point in the lower 48 states. It borders Kings Canyon National Park so together they are known as the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, and they are magnificent—no better place for a 10-year-old's first all day hike with his dad.

Kentucky's Forward Thinking Gov. Happens to be a Disciple

Presidents James A. Garfield, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Ronald Reagan were members of the Disciples of Christ. And so is current Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear, a lifelong member of the Disciples of Christ, and, one of the men who was on Kamala Harris's VP short list. At a recent prayer breakfast he left little doubt about his faith when reflecting on the state's recent spate of natural disasters.

“We experience God in our response to human tragedy and suffering,” he said. Adding, “What unites us is our belief everyone is our neighbor, and that our faith should inspire us to serve them and care for them,” he said.

When he addressed the Disciples' General Assembly last year in Louisville, he spoke simply of his vision for unity despite the divisiveness splitting this country down the middle.

“I have faith in God. I have faith in us. In this most divisive time, I believe that love will win.”

