

Sierra Christian Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

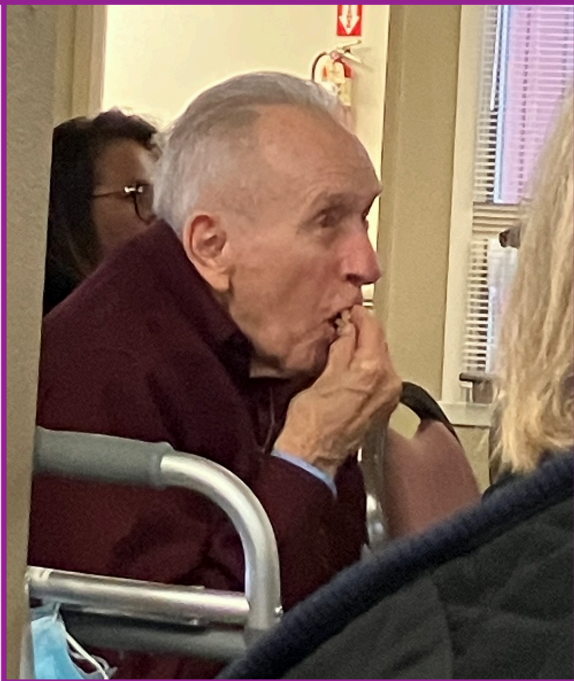
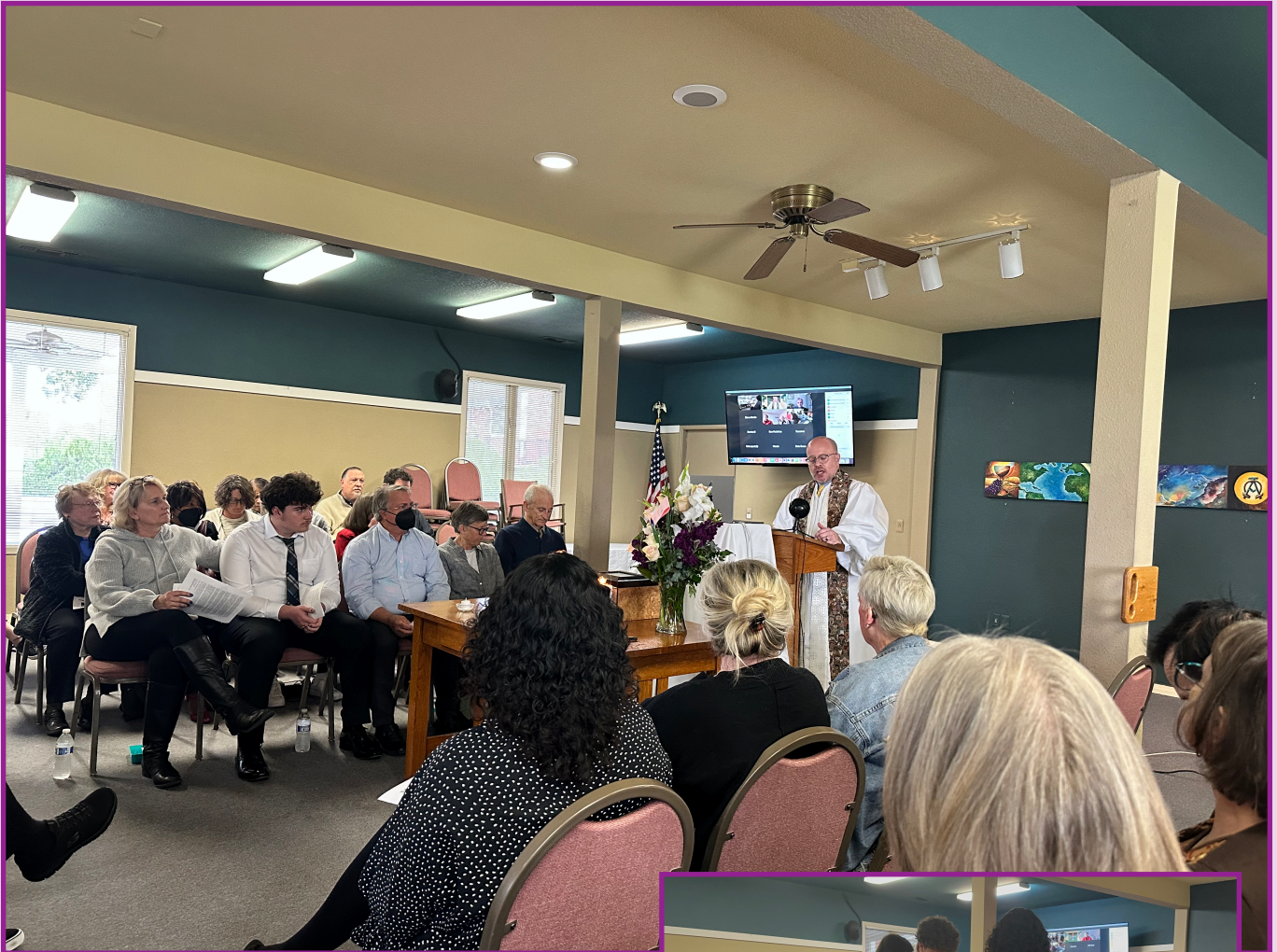
We Worshipped Outside One Week...



January 19th's worship service was held at and Zoomed from Folsom Lake Campground, site #54. In addition to Leinani and Kailana, there was Liz, Sudan, Diane, Beth, John and Pastor Christine. And the first part of the service was visited by a large red chested hawk, which John is pointing out to the left.



And Then Celebrated Iris Pobanz the Next



Memories were shared, tears shed, candles lit, laughter echoed, and a slide show of Iris Pobanz's life was shown, complete with popcorn and Whoppers, which Iris never watched a movie without.



Kangaroos, Prayer & Ice Cream

The middle of January in my house is filled with tennis. The Australian Open is the first of the four tennis majors of the year and since Melbourne, where it is played, is some 19 hours ahead of us, we are watching live tennis played the next day, and we watch plenty of it. My husband once played a lot of competitive tennis, and he dreams of one year spending the first week of the Open watching the lesser-known best players in the world on the less crowded outer courts play and then spend the next week (or more) exploring Australia. It's at the top of his bucket list. Mine too,

It was discussing our future trip to Australia when John remembered a time years ago, when he was a "Big Brother" to three fatherless boys. He would meet them twice a week and they would wrestle in the park or play basketball or sit and talk about guy stuff. The boys were 5 when he first met them, 9 when he left for college. John shared with me how one evening they were sitting at a picnic bench eating Twinkies after a solid hour of roughhousing in the park when one of the boys said, "You know, sometimes I forget about kangaroos." (The Australia connection you were looking for).

One of the other boys chirped up, "Me, too." John, of course, agreed, acknowledging that maybe too many people forget about them, but that maybe it was okay if we think about them just some of the time. "I'm pretty sure that no one can think about kangaroos all the time," he said.

The third boy said, "I think about ice cream all the time."

"Really?"

"Well, a lot of the time."

But not always. Not all the time. Not ceaselessly.

I love my son all the time, ceaselessly, and my parents, and my husband, even if he is a little weak in the kangaroo department. But what am I to do with Jesus's admonition in [Luke 18:1-8](#) that I need to pray

always and not lose heart—that is, pray without ceasing. If a 6-year-old boy cannot think about kangaroos or ice cream all the time, how are we expected to pray ceaselessly?

While it's tempting to listen to prosperity gospel preachers claim the story of the persistent widow is proof that wealth and creature comforts are a divine right, and all we have to do to get all the cash and prizes we want out of God's divine vending machine is just pester God non-stop, or call the number on the screen because operators are standing by to take your donation. I think we know better.

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.

We stood in a circle Saturday evening holding hands in prayer preparing to share dinner following my mother's Celebration of Life. I cast a quick, appreciative, and loving look around and was reminded in the way such moments can remind us, what prayer is all about. Truly.

Like many, as a child, prayer was the opportunity to promise I'd never to do it (whatever it was) again, or if I could just get that shiny bicycle for my birthday I wouldn't ever again fight with my sister or say a bad word. Then I got older and wondered, sometimes in less than thoughtful ways, if God really answers our prayers, or is that just another myth devised to keep us in line?

When I put my rebellious teenager ways away as much as anyone can, I asked what exactly is an answered prayer? Clearly, it is more complicated than simply getting what

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Pitch

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to ask what exactly, is an *answered* prayer? Do we think an answered prayer means getting what we ask for?

What I know is that in the midst of prayer we have seen cancer defeated and we have seen cancer win. Even in the midst of prayer we've seen the powerful exploit the weak and we've seen the weak rise up. Even in the midst of prayer we've seen teenagers who flourish, and we've seen the sullen reality of addiction steal the joy of youth.

We in recovery are told that we should pray to align our will with God's not God's will with ours. So maybe prayer isn't the way in which we manipulate God. Maybe prayer is simply the posture in which we finally become worn down by God's persistence. By, get this, God's unfathomable love.

Maybe prayer is connecting ourselves to the persistent longing of God.

In this world we live in—a world of Western individualism and alienation, I think prayer is about connection—but not just connection to God. And this is what my glance around the circle at our dining room table Saturday night revealed as clear and obvious as the trays of Italian food awaiting us: Connection to community.

we ask for, otherwise we would all have shiny bicycles, or even a pony. We might do well

To pray for each other is to live not unaffected by what is happening in the blessed and broken and beautiful world in which God has placed us.

Praying without ceasing is not something for me to feel bad about because no way can I succeed at it. I think what Jesus wants us to do is ask others to pray with us, and for us. Praying can be a private affair, but it is also a community event. It's what we do for each other, and it's what we do for the world.

When we pray, we hold ourselves and our loved ones and the world up to God and then we pass it on for the next person to do the same. Maybe prayer is less how we get what we want and more about how God gets what God wants. God was infinitely pleased at our dining room table Saturday night.

I am grateful for prayer, a verb, because prayer is not something we do *instead* of acting. Rather, prayer is action, a brave act we take so our egos can quiet down long enough to know what it is God wants us to do.

For these silken threads of prayer which connect us to God and to one another and even to our enemies are how God is stitching our broken humanity back together. To myself and our community I say, pray without ceasing and do not lose heart. For God has some work that needs to get done.

The kangaroos will be just fine.

Feb Camp Is Here

It's that time again! Feb Camp is here! If you are in high school, please join us at Claar House at the Community the Great Commission Feb 15-17, 2025, for an amazing weekend learning all about how God can transform our lives. Rev Chad Thompson (FCC Selma) will be our keynote speaker. Bring a sleeping bag and pillow, warm clothes, toiletries, and your Bible. Can't wait to see you all there!

[Click here to register...](#)



Why Hurt

February, 2025

Dear Dad,

You've been gone for more than two years now, and I deeply regret that I am only now truly understanding how well you lived your life, how deep was your faith, and because of its depth, how profound and courageous you were. I think I am getting it now, but I wish I could have shared with you that I understood what kind of man you were when you could hear me.

That is not what I want to write to you about today, however. I remember asking you when I was 12 and our all-star team had just lost in extra innings because our manager made a horrible mistake and in doing so embarrassed me like I had never experienced before—asking you why does life have to hurt so much? I was in anguish.

You simply said, and I remember it clearly, your tone, the sky, our dog laying in the sun a few feet away, "Because things matter to you, John

There have been times in my life, Dad, when the hurt felt like it was all there is.

When you died, I would find myself staring into the middle distance for unknown amounts of time, as if there was something a few hundred feet away that held some kind of answer, but none came. Just hurt.

I still struggle with that question—why life hurts so much—but not necessarily because I am hurting these days (I am not), nor because I was taken out of the biggest baseball game of my life up to that point in extra innings because my manager ignored his coaches and sound baseball principles—but because looking back it seems that life can be full of betrayals and losses, a veritable all-you-can-eat buffet of disappointments. Sometimes in other people, sometimes in the world, but mostly in myself. Dad, I *know* life is hard and that it hurts, but I do not, in fact, know *why*.

I've yet to come across an explanation for "why does life have to hurt so much" that does not sound cruel, facile, self-serving, or simply delusional. And frankly, Dad, the more I think about it, the more it seems to me no one really knows, and if they say they do it's only to sell you a utopia, a narcotic, or a red four-wheel drive pickup. I've fallen for all of those at one time or another

and can report back that none of them help.

So, I think you were right in what you didn't say that day. The fact is that life just hurts. No one gets out of here unscathed. And maybe there is no satisfying "why" to be found no matter how much we grope around for one.

But I also remember other things you have shared and written over the years, and they help. Sort of.

Some hurts are optional. Like, the awful feeling I get when I continue to take things personally that have nothing to do with me. My corrosively stubborn unwillingness to accept that what happened in the past is unchangeable. My disappointment when someone doesn't meet an unspoken expectation *I* have of them. The betrayal I feel when I allow myself to be hurt by the same person over and over because I won't accept who they are. **And not to mention** every single time I compare myself to someone else.

I remember you telling me after Cesar pulled his unimaginable, insane, betrayal of you which some of your friends went along with it, and after you had time to piece your life back together up here in Sacramento, that if nothing hurt in life, we'd be boring as hell. We would not be very compassionate, you said, and art would be pointless, and we wouldn't be nearly as funny.

I also learned from your life, Dad, that the experience of being hurt sharpens your awareness of small kindnesses and little mercies, rather than obstructing them, and that love, when offered, feels all the more precious and worthy of cherishing because our hearts have known its opposite. And when the hurt is institutional in nature, we are then provided the opportunity to be good people and stand up to it.

I don't know Dad, maybe the focus needs to be not on why life hurts, but on how we don't let it have the final word.

Love,

Your Son

Editor's Note: The author used to write letters to his father every month about all sorts of things. He still does, only he no longer knows where to send them.

Some Notes Worth Noting

1. Love and prayers to Norm Pobanz and his family, working through their grief and loss at the passing of Iris Pobanz, wife, mother, grandmother, friend.
2. Books that Bind now meets every other month. The book club will next meet Thursday, February 13th at 6:30 pm on Zoom. We are reading, "The Mystery of Mrs. Christie," by Marie Benedict
3. The Men's Fellowship Breakfast is scheduled for Saturday, February 1, at 9 am, on Zoom. (What are the odds this newsletter will be out before then?). In March, the fellowship will be on, you guessed, Saturday, March 1. This newsletter will be out before then, we promise.
4. CCNC-N Regional Disaster Recovery Mission Trip from April 13 to 19, 2025. It will most likely be spent in Northern California assisting the many victims of our state's wildfires. More details forthcoming.
5. The 2025 Annual Gathering will take place at the First Christian Church in Chico, on April 26-6, 2025.
6. Birthday wishes to Pam Margo, who celebrates on the 25th!
7. Prayers for unbridled and delighted success and insight for Daven Stelter as he embarks on his journey of healing, discovery, and insight at Muir Woods in Petaluma.

Annual Gathering Call for Workshop Proposals

The 171st Annual Gathering of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Northern California-Nevada is in the planning stages.

Scheduled to be held the weekend of April 25-26, 2025, at the First Christian Church of Chico, this year's theme is "Connect 4"—that is, an exploration of strategic thinking, making connections, and creating ministries focused on empowerment and vigilance.

Workshop proposals aligning with the "Connect 4" theme are being sought. Bear in mind, the theme is based on the classic game, emphasizing the importance of practice, strategic thinking, and making meaningful connections. Workshops should also incorporate self-care strategies to help participants manage stressors associated with discussing challenging topics and navigating change.

Workshop Guidelines:

- Duration: 90 minutes

- Content: Should focus on topics and empowerment
- Self-Care: Include tips and promoting well-being
- Q&A Session: Conclude with a question-and-answer segment



Submission Details

The deadline for workshop proposals is January 31st. Creativity, thoughtfulness, and depth that will engage and challenge participants, as well as foster a spirit of collaboration and growth.

For more information or to submit your innovative and enriching proposals, please contact Rev. Dr. Monica Cross.

Join us in Chico as we come together to connect, empower, and grow as a community of faith. Let's make this Annual Gathering a memorable and transformative experience for all!

Sierra Christian Church Monthly Calendar

February 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1 9 am Men's Fellowship Breakfast
2 Groundhog Day 10:30 am Worship	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 10:30 am Worship	10	11	12	13 Books That Bind 6:30 pm	14	15
16 10:30 am Worship	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 10:30 am Worship	24	25	26	27	28	1

List & Links of Regional Events

- January 25, 2025: **Pain in the Pews**
- Feb. 15, 2025: **From Burnout to Motivation**
- February 15, 2025: **Feb Camp 2025**
- March 1, 2025: **Anti-Racism Training**
- March 8, 2025: **Women's Spring Renewal 2025**
- Apr 13, 2025: **Disaster Recovery Mission Trip**
- April 25, 2025: **171st CCNC-N Annual Gathering**
- October 17, 2025: **Women's Fall Retreat**

The Sierra Christian Church directory will actually be updated this month. We have received some edits and deletions.

Are there more?

Here is a link to the directory:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/18HRln-MF7K1Gm-gYUduJGkVmGGKhM2f-DU/view?usp=share link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/18HRln-MF7K1Gm-gYUduJGkVmGGKhM2f-DU/view?usp=share_link)

A Few Historical Dates in February

February 1, 1855 — California's first railroad was built from Sacramento to Folsom, California starting in February 1855. This 22-mile (35 km) line was meant to take advantage of the prosperous gold diggings in Placerville, California but it was completed at about the same time (February 1856) as the mining near there came to an end.

February 1, 1939 — Some 4,00 prisoners at San Quentin Prison went on a hunger strike to protest extended solitary confinement and the prison food.

February 1, 2003 — The Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated during re-entry over Texas, killing all seven crew members. This event had significant impact on California's space industry, as many of the crew members were associated with the state's NASA centers.

February 1, 1978 — First U.S. postage stamp to honor a black woman, Harriet Tubman, was issued.

February 2, 1811 — Russian settlers established Ft. Ross on the Sonoma coast. It was a base for fur hunters and a warm weather supplier for the Russian colonies in Alaska. Colonists included 25 Russians and some 80 Aleut Indians. Today Fort Ross is a State Historic Park.

February 2, 1848 — The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, formally ending the Mexican American War. 25,000 Mexicans and 12,000 Americans died in the 17-month old conflict. The U.S. acquired California, Texas, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and part of Colorado.

February 2, 1934 — The San Francisco Police Commission issued regulations for dance nightclubs that included a rule against black and white people dancing together.

February 2, 2006 — Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, in Livermore, announced plans to install machine guns to deter terrorists. They would fire 4,000 rounds a minute with a range of nearly a mile.

February 3, 1870 - The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, guaranteeing the right of citizens to vote, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

February 3, 1857 — The Bee, a Sacramento newspaper, debuted. Now, it is known as the Sacramento Bee.

February 3, 2006 — PG&E agreed to pay \$295 million to settle lawsuits over drinking wells polluted with the toxic chemical chromium.

February 4, 1851 — The first baseball game was played in San Francisco. A newspaper report read, "A game of base ball was played upon the Plaza yesterday afternoon by a number of the sporting gentleman about town."

February 4, 1913 — Rosa Parks, "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement," was born. Her arrest after refusing to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, sparked a boycott of the bus system, which eventually led to the Supreme Court decision to integrate buses.

February 5, 1697 — The Spanish king authorized the Jesuits to establish missions in Baja and Alta California

February 6, 1891 — The Dalton Gang, brothers Bob, Grat and Bill, committed their first train robbery. They tried but failed to rob a Southern Pacific train in Alila, near Earlimart (north of Delano in the San Joaquin Valley), so they returned to Oklahoma, joined with their younger brother Emmett and began a series robberies. After Emmett got out of prison, he moved to Los Angeles and went into the real estate business.

February 6, 1988 — San Francisco Mayor Jerry Brown left for Manila to sign agreements with Mayor Alfredo Lim for workshops on AIDS, student exchange programs and celebrate 100 years of Philippine independence.

February 7, 2012 — The 9th Circuit Court in California struck down the ban on gay marriage passed by voters, ruling it violated the constitutional rights of gay Californians.

February 9, 1964 — Seventy-three million Americans tuned into the Ed Sullivan Show to watch four young men from Liverpool appear for the very first time — The Beatles.

February 9, 1961 — President Kennedy asked Congress to approve a health

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HISTORY

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insurance program (the Medicare Program) for 14.2 million Americans 65 or older, financed by an increase in Social Security taxes.

February 11, 1966—Willie Mays, San Francisco Giants outfielder, signed his highest contract to date; \$130,000 per year.

February 12, 1935—USS Macon, one of the largest U.S. Navy helium airships, crashed off the coast of Big Sur and sank. Most of the crew were saved. The place it wrecked is a National Historic Place.

February 12, 2004—Gavin Newsom, newly elected San Francisco mayor, instructed city clerks to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

February 11, 1990—In South Africa, Nelson Mandela, at age 71, was released from prison after serving 27 years of a life sentence on charges of attempting to overthrow the apartheid government. In April 1994, he was elected president in the first all-race elections.

February 13, 1945 - During World War II in Europe, British and American planes began massive bombing raids on Dresden, Germany. A four-day firestorm erupted that was visible for 200 miles and engulfed the historic old city, killing an estimated 135,000 German civilians. A prisoner of war in Dresden at the time of the bombing, Kurt Vonnegut hid in a meat locker in a slaughterhouse and later wrote about the experience (sort of) in his novel, "Slaughterhouse-Five."

February 13, 1850—The California state legislature officially incorporated the city of Sacramento, making it the state capital.

February 14, 1844—Exploring the trail to California, John Frémont first saw Lake Tahoe from a peak in the Carson Range to the east. He reached Sutter's Fort in March.

February 15, 1564—Astronomer and physicist Galileo Galilei was born in Pisa, Italy. He was the first astronomer to use a telescope and advanced the theory that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the solar system. A discovery that cost him dearly.

February 16, 600—The Black Plague was sweeping through Europe and Pope Gregory the Great declared that the proper response to someone sneezing should be 'God Bless You'. He issued a papal edict that ordered everyone within earshot of a sneeze to immediately say the short, three word prayer asking God for his blessing upon the unfortunate person.

February 18, 1072 – The California Supreme Court declared the death penalty cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the state constitution. One hundred and seven inmates were taken off death row and re-sentenced.

February 19, 1942—Internment of Japanese Americans began after President Franklin Roosevelt issued an Executive Order requiring those living on the Pacific coast to report for relocation. Over 110,000 persons were forced to shut down their businesses, sell their property, quit school, and herded relocation centers.

February 20, 2004—Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger directed immediate legal steps to stop San Francisco from granting marriage licenses to gay couples.

February 21, 1965 — Former Black Muslim leader Malcolm X (1925-1965) was shot and killed while delivering a speech in a ballroom in New York City.

February 26, 1860 – White settlers murdered some 60 women, children and elder Wiyot Indians on an island near Eureka. Bret Harte, then a local newspaper reporter, fed the story to San Francisco newspapers.

February 28, 1954—American molecular biologists James D. Watson and Francis H.C. Crick discover the double-helix structure of DNA, the molecule that contains the human genes, in a Cambridge University laboratory.

February 29, 1692—Three women – Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and Tituba – were accused of witchcraft, marking the beginning of the Salem Witch Trials in Salem Village, colonial Massachusetts. The Salem witch trials led to the execution of 20 "witches," with more dying in prison before and after the trial.