

2020

A woman in a maroon vest stands behind a table covered with silver tinsel, decorated with several potted poinsettias. To the right is a decorated Christmas tree. The background features a large brick wall with a tall, narrow window and a large wooden cross. The church interior has a high ceiling with exposed beams and vertical slat walls.

ORINDA COMMUNITY CHURCH  
ANNUAL REPORT

# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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### COMMITTEE & MINISTRY REPORTS

# MINUTES OF THE 81st OCC ANNUAL MEETING

**Sunday, January 26, 2020**

Kathleen Wiegand, Clerk

After refreshments in the narthex, 51 congregational members met in the sanctuary for the Annual Meeting. Moderator Fred Matteson called the meeting to order at 11:25 am.

The minutes of the 80<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, January 27, 2019, were moved and approved.

## **Stewardship Report and Action on the 2020 Church Budget**

**Lani Shepp**

Lani thanked everyone for a very generous stewardship campaign. Current pledges of \$370,728 exceed last year's pledges of \$355,000. The 2020 budget is a deficit budget with no salary increases or raises in expenses for anything except items like medical and property insurance that have to be covered. The budget shows a deficit of \$12,104. We have \$8,483 cash left over from last year so the deficit is really \$3,621. We think we'll be able to make up the deficit during the year.

Lani answered some questions: Several people moved their loose offerings to pledges and that accounts for the differences in loose offerings for 2019/2020. We may try to do a capital campaign at some point instead of trying to raise so much via pledges. We may need to do this to finance our facility expenses. About four percent of the interest from the Endowment Fund can be spent each year (without touching the principal). The Endowment Fund has approved spending up to \$32,000 for 2020 with unused amounts going back into Endowment. The "cut" in M&J monies may be made up by asking Endowment to help fund certain M&J projects. Fred mentioned the budget separates out the core costs that keep us running. For any projects we want to do over the next few years we will need to find funding sources. We need to make sure we have an operating budget but also have an understanding of the costs of our physical plant and the costs of projects our member are passionate about. Those opportunities will always come up and we can't really predict them. So we are looking at the core budget and it's the same as last year's. Tom Norris explained we are trying to repair the broken gas line ourselves to save money. We are also working to improve the sanctuary lights.

*(81st Annual Meeting continued)*

Fred offered some positive reflections: Elizabeth has joined us and we know how valuable she's been to our spiritual life. We've kept our mission budgets intact and continue to be generous as a church. We've accomplished a lot with our music programs and with facility repairs. There's still a lot to be done with our aging facility but we should never give up or get complacent with where we are. There are folks who are still considering increasing their pledges and there is a match of up to \$5,000 from a member for every increased contribution. These extra funds may allow us to do more in 2020. Our TUTH funds are down to very little. Endowment has agreed to fund Leslie's/ Elizabeth's extra weekly hours during Jim's sabbatical. The attendees moved and approved the 2020 budget.

## **Moderator's Report**

### **Fred Matteson**

Fred reflected on the year 1939 when the church was founded and what was happening in the world. It was a horrible time; a hard time to be optimistic. Yet God called a congregation to start a church and here we are, also in a very conflicted time in history. It's a very complicated world out there and it's a good time for us to be doing our missions to help the world. All of us are important and our church continues to be a place where people can come to recharge. The Church is a place of refuge allowing us to take a break from the complications of the world. We've managed to move this church forward despite everything. We've improved the Fellowship Hall and are looking to the future. Work on the upper hillside that is a project of Orinda Senior Housing Foundation continues. Helping provide affordable housing is a core part of our mission and will also provide an annuity for the church. We have bids from appraisers on what the likely church income will be. We'll need to vote to move forward on this project so we can participate in the revenue stream. Fred will continue to be on the OSV Board. OSV has done a lot like repaving the parking lot so they are a very good partner for us. Fred thanked Jim and the Council Members. His time as Moderator was a wonderful experience.

*(81st Annual Meeting continued)*

## **Pastoral Report**

### **Rev Jim Brommers Bergquist**

The most exciting part of 2019 was having Elizabeth join us. We're in a really good spot with the staff we have. Jim continues to listen to what folks want the church to be. He's trying for a lot of variety so everyone has something. He cited some highlights of 2019: Women of Spirit offerings; Endowment funding, Christmas Eve and Easter services; adding midweek Contemplative Services; the work of Tom Norris and others on our church campus; and Jim's weekly Wellness Drop-In at Miramonte High. Jim also cited some goals for the future: determining the best systems and ways to organize the church; honoring the interests, feedback, and styles of worship people bring to Sunday mornings; finding an optimal amount of church events; more support for Leslie, and Children and Youth; and offering a variety of options for members to participate in service opportunities. Jim thanked everyone he's worked with. He's excited and grateful to take his sabbatical.

## **Nomination and Election of Church Leaders**

### **Kurt Sunderbruch**

Kurt has great regard for the efforts of our paid staff as well as our volunteers. We can always use more volunteers and he encouraged everyone to reach out. We focus on things people feel called to do. Come to the Council with a proposal if there's something you want to see the church do. Kurt reviewed the Council members for 2020. He thanked Pastoral Relations, Finance and Stewardship, Buildings and Grounds, and the Endowment Board for all their work. The attendees moved and approved the slate of nominees.

## **Introduction of 2020/2021 Moderator**

### **Fred Matteson**

Fred handed the Moderator job over to Kurt Sunderbruch.

## **Installation of Church Leaders**

### **Rev. Jim Brommers Bergquist**

Jim installed the church leaders and thanked all for their involvement. Following the hymn, Kurt Sunderbruch adjourned the meeting at 12:28 pm.

## **MODERATOR**

### **Kurt Sunderbruch**

As I reach the end of my first year serving as Moderator of the Orinda Community Church, it feels as if the past year has been at least five years long. As is the case for many people, I've gotten tired of hearing the word "unprecedented", and am open to suggestions of a better descriptor of the events of the past year.

At the beginning of 2020, my goals were to keep the church on an even keel, and to support Elizabeth as she stepped in to cover Pastor Jim during his sabbatical, helping to assure that it would be a smooth transition. There is an old joke that goes, "How do you make God laugh? Make plans!"

My phone rang the morning of March 11<sup>th</sup>. It was Elizabeth telling me that the church had been contacted by Contra Costa County Public Health, and that we were being asked to suspend in-person worship services for an indefinite period due to the arrival of the Novel Coronavirus. Any existing plans took a back seat to figuring out how to respond to this new circumstance, a circumstance that none of us had ever encountered. We had many questions and few answers, but it was clear that we needed to find a way to be the church in a new way. Elizabeth and the staff of David, Leslie, Dagmar, and Dion quickly gathered and brainstormed how we would provide physically distanced worship that very Sunday, making it happen through creative collaboration on the part of all the staff that set a standard for sacred and transformative worship services of remarkable beauty even as they had to be experienced individually in our homes.

In short order it became clear that finding a new way to worship was only the beginning. We lost our rental income as our longtime partners, TOPS, and Holden also had to stop meeting. The many organizations that use our campus, including the Boy Scouts, AA, and others also had to stop meeting. It was a confusing time. As we were reeling from all of these "unprecedented" changes we also found out that Jim was hearing a call to the next step in his life and ministry, and we were going to have to navigate that change too.

*(Moderator's Report continued)*

I am deeply and profoundly grateful to wise and supportive counsel of the OCC Council who rose magnificently to the occasion. Without their insight, patience, commitment, and wisdom we could not have come through as we have.

- Anne Barr – Vice-Moderator
- Kathleen Wiegand – Clerk
- Lani Shepp – Treasurer
- Gail Mead
- Bob Winbigler
- Karen Sanford

Another key source of support during this challenging transition has been the Pastoral Relations Committee who supported Elizabeth during these whirlwind changes, and who advised the Council through the process of leadership transition from Jim to Elizabeth.

- Jeane Samuelsen
- Chris Mead
- Craig Taatjes
- Joni Upshaw
- John Thursby

Even after these issues, 2020 wasn't through with us yet. We said goodbye to Pastor Jim in June just as the nation confronted the ongoing specter of racial injustice with protests across the country, including right here in the Bay Area. We had battles with the City of Orinda about water. We were burglarized and lost thousands of dollars' worth of handbells.

In the face of all these challenges, the community around the Orinda Community Church continually came through magnificently. Lani, with the support of Gail Mead and Kathi Kling, has done a superb job of managing our finances. Bill Abriel led us through a successful pledging season. As we suffered revenue loss from our rental partners, you, the members of the Orinda Community Church rose to the occasion with generosity and faith, assuring our financial stability in the face of these many challenges.

*(Moderator's Report continued)*

Let us also celebrate major accomplishments of 2020. The Reverend Elizabeth Robinson accepted our call to become our settled Pastor. Her hard work leading our staff in these times, her deep spiritual and pastoral gifts, and her engaging and thoughtful preaching have been the gifts that keep on giving.

Complementing Elizabeth's efforts, we have also been the beneficiaries of the transcendent worship music brought to us by David Milnes, Nik Nakley, Jesslyn Thomas, and the other soloists. Leslie has worked tirelessly to assure that members' pastoral needs are being met while keeping our youth ministry vibrant.

As a congregation, we have chosen to continue our mission in support of the Orinda Senior Housing Foundation, assuring that affordable senior housing will continue to be available in Orinda.

There is so much for which we can be grateful. The endless work of Tom Norris, John Creech, Mike Kersten, Pete Hardtegen, Les Simmonds, Andy Weber, and more volunteers who lovingly attend to our campus. The work of Gail Mead in leading our fall auction. The leadership of Roger Samuelsen in guiding the search committee that called Elizabeth. The OCC members who serve faithfully on the OSHF board. There is more that I'm sure I've left out. Truly, God is in this place.

We head into 2021 looking to build on our successes, listening for the voice of God to guide us in being the church that serves this community. I pray that we all work together as well as we have this year, and that we pass through these many challenges successfully.

Thank you for your continuing support.



## CLERK'S REPORT

**Kathleen Wiegand**

Membership as recorded on 1/1/20:	197
Membership as recorded on 1/1/21:	189
Baptisms	0
Additions to Congregation in 2020	0
New Members: (Covid-19 year)	0
Losses to Congregation in 2020	8
Transfers	1
Resignations	1
Deaths	6
In Memoriam (Members):	
Helen Clark	
Bob Durham	
Grace Hartdegen	
Michele McInaney	
Ron Skilton	
Betty Ann Williams	

## TREASURER'S REPORT

**Lani Shepp**

2020 has been an exceptionally strange year for everyone and church finances have been impacted in major ways. Thanks to the steadfastness and generosity of our congregation we have come out in good shape and ready to go into 2021.

Highlights of the past year include:

- \*receiving a PPP loan and having that loan forgiven.
- \*major changes in our staffing, both pastoral and support
- \*closure of church facilities and on site activities

As a result our financial picture fluctuated all year. A special appeal went out to members to provide early pledges and extra support. That call was answered very generously and we completed the year on the positive side.

As we approach 2021 preparing a budget has to take into account many unknowns. Two major areas are rentals and what we call loose offerings, Sunday morning offerings. We continue to expect the two schools to rent but there is no plan to have other rentals. Without Sunday services the status of loose offerings is not predictable.

The Finance and Operations Commission and Church Council recommends a budget for 2021 with a small deficit. Generous pledging in the campaign just completed and careful review of all expenses has made this budget possible. Generous support from the Endowment Fund continues to be required to keep this deficit very low.

Our volunteer financial staff is Gail Mead (Financial Secretary-income management), Lani Shepp(Treasurer-Accounts Payable) and Kathi Kling (Assistant Treasurer-Accountant). Many thanks for the hours spent by this staff keeping OCC on the right track financially. All have worked throughout the year, coming to OCC weekly to manage necessary financial business.

Detailed financial information is available on request from the Treasurer.

## ENDOWMENT FUND

### Anne Barr

The Endowment Fund of Orinda Community Church was established in 1984 with initial contributions by members of the church. They had the foresight to create an enduring mechanism to support many non-budgeted items that enhance the activities of the church. The goal of the fund is to continue to grow principal through new gifts while setting aside a portion of each year's income to fund grant requests.

In 2020, the foresight of those members who started the Endowment Board was never more appreciated. As we faced the global pandemic, changes in pastoral leadership, and a very difficult economic situation, OCC had the benefit of endowment to cushion ourselves from the difficult situation. While the Endowment ended up only serving as a backstop to the church, it gave many at OCC the peace of mind that our special community would survive this tough year.

### 2020 Grants

In 2020, the Endowment Fund provided funding to support Pastoral support during Pastor Jim's sabbatical, supported several tree trimming efforts, and installed wifi in Fellowship Hall, the Fireside room, and also installed a camera to watch over the campus when we aren't there. Endowment also provided substantial salary support for our Youth and Children ministries.

### Endowment Fund Growth and Legacy Circle

During 2020, Betty Ann Williams and Beverly Finlayson of the Legacy Circle died, leaving annuities to the endowment fund. The Legacy Circle is an important way you can consider giving to the endowment from your estate. Please see the Legacy Circle Page in the Annual report which lists our current Legacy Circle Members.

*(Endowment Fund continued)*

The assets of the Endowment Fund are invested in United Church Funds, an organization who invests on behalf of the United Church of Christ. Our investments in 2020 mirrored a volatile but still strong stock market increasing our invested assets.

We also often hold real estate assets as our mission is to help fund our Pastor living in the Orinda area. As such, we received ~ \$580,000 in July from our share of the Pastor Jim Bergquist's home sale.

### **Endowment Fund Members**

In 2020, Allison Skidgel, Gail Mead, Andy Weber, Kathi Kling with Anne Barr as Chair serve on Endowment.

Lani Shepp and Elizabeth Robinson serve as ex-officio members.

Our last in person meeting was on March 4 and then we shifted to meet via Zoom.

I appreciate the input and perspectives of each of the members of the Endowment Board.

A copy of the 2020 year-end Endowment Fund financial statement is available from Fund Treasurer, Gail Mead.

## LEGACY CIRCLE

### Anne Barr

The Legacy Circle of Orinda Community Church was established in 2004. Its members have modified their will or trust to leave a bequest to the Church upon their death. If, in the future, we expect the Church to be able to support its physical plant, to provide affordable housing in the Lamorinda area for its ministerial staff, and to support vibrant Church programs, then we must continue to grow the basic Endowment Fund of the Church. Bequests from past members of the Church have been the primary source of funds for the Endowment during its first 30 years. Similarly, future bequests from current members will determine if the Endowment Fund can continue growing and supporting the type of needs described above.

To join the Legacy Circle, you need to set aside some assets in your estate naming Orinda Community Church as the designee. A simple way to join the Legacy Circle is to put Orinda Community Church as a beneficiary or partial beneficiary of your Individual Retirement Account (IRA or similar retirement account).

We are most thankful for the thoughtfulness and generosity of the following Church members who are already members of the Legacy Circle:

- Bill and Vangie Abriel
- Anne Barr and Fred Matteson
- Tom and Sandra Hill
- Hillary and David Hoppock
- Betty Karplus
- Kathi Kling
- Gail and Chris Mead
- Jeanne Milligan
- Roger and Jeane Samuelson
- Katrina Staten
- Frank Baldwin
- Bruce and Trudi Garland
- Peter and Grace Hartdegen
- Margie Hitzl
- Kay and Dalton James
- Elisabeth and Michael Kersten
- Anne and Richard Long
- Lloyd MacDonald
- Elva Rust
- Lani Shepp

*(Legacy Circle continued)*

If you would like more information about the Legacy Circle, or about various methods for leaving a gift to the Church, you are invited to contact Anne Barr or a member of the Endowment Fund Board.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

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## MINISTER'S REPORT

**Rev. Elizabeth Robinson**

Understatement: it's hard to make an adequate report of the year we've just passed through. We went through the loss of our senior pastor and our office manager and the loss of dear members of our congregation. People in our congregation have lived through some terrible losses and challenges. But in the midst of political tumult and a pandemic, the center has held. We are still here and God is with us.

Given the level of adversity we've weathered, I want to start with a short and completely subjective list of the events and encounters I have loved this year: Working with our passionately dedicated staff and council and volunteers. Watching Leslie put together a gorgeous, meaningful children's service and a pageant with our smart, articulate, creative young people. The labyrinth that Leslie O'Brien painted on the upper parking lot. Watching David Milnes and Nik Nackley and Jesslyn Thomas (among others) confer on music and then watching the way they nod and make eye contact after what they've offered in the service absolutely hits the mark. Talking with people in the congregation and getting to know them better—it was particularly fun for me to do short interviews with people and post them on our Eblasts. The cohesion and artistic brio of our writers' group. Watching Lani Shepp lead our Anti-Racist Study Group and hearing all that people had to say. Our just-before-the-pandemic-hit daylong retreat: success! Our advent story hour. I could go on and on—the bible study, women's spirituality, our work and commitment to becoming a Creation Justice Church. Your care and dedication to each other is so in sync with God's grace.

Obviously, this list doesn't begin to cover all that's happened last year, and it makes me very happy to realize that other members of the congregation will have quite different lists of what they found most meaningful. If you read the annual reports from each committee, you will get a deeper sense of all that we've done in the most challenging circumstances. This means that, despite the obstacles, we've stayed dynamic and meaningful as people of faith.



*(Minister's Report continued)*

This is good news, and additionally, though the church has seen real financial challenges, we are reasonably stable. For that, I offer heartfelt thanks to our treasurer, Lani Shepp, and Kathi Kling and Gail Mead for hours of volunteer service (including Gail's work on our auction) as well as our stewardship committee—so ably led by Bill Abriel. Thanks, however, go most especially to *you*, OCC, for your deep commitment to this church and to its mission. Your generosity is not just keeping us afloat, it is propelling us forward.

Kurt Sunderbruch has been a remarkable moderator in crisis, steering us through the pastoral transition and a burglary while always maintaining a vibrant and inquisitive faith. Vice-Moderator Anne Barr is helping us to get wifi throughout the fellowship hall. *All* members of the council—Kathleen Wiegand, Bob Winbigler, Gail Mead, and Lani Shepp—have been heroically generous with time and talents. Mike Kersten takes loving care of our trees. Karen Sanford repaired and painted the benches in the olive grove. Dion waters, cleans, chats with neighborhood dog walkers, and is even our current mail sorter! And what would we ever do without the foundational help of Tom Norris, Pete Hartdegan, and John Creech? Remember those trenches throughout our grounds? Gone! They've all been filled in! (Though I've been notified that there will always be more to do...)

In the absence of time in the sanctuary together, something subtle and powerful is happening on the church campus: it too is a sacred place, and we have been trying to find ways to deepen that. We set up an All Saints/Day of the Dead table near the memorial wall this October. We held a few contemplative services outside in the olive grove until Covid made it unwise to do so. People are always free to walk the labyrinth on the upper parking lot. Over advent, we did our best to decorate inside and out, with a creche on the hillside and at the door of the sanctuary, the camel garlanded in lights in the narthex window, Lani Shepp's radiant displays on the altar, and Robin Holmes's graceful meditative advent candles outside. Currently, Leslie has a series of glass bowls illuminated in her office window, and we have been reaching out to the Orinda community with a series of banners with reflective quotes, both at the base of the hill and at the fellowship hall. If you'd like to reconnect with the church, please know that you are always welcome to wander or simply rest on the campus, and if you'd like to have a moment in prayer, let me or Leslie know and we can meet you (carefully) outside.

*(Minister's Report continued)*

You might think it would be difficult to do outreach and justice work when we are all staying at home, but Orinda Community Church has proven otherwise. Great thanks to Nancy Thursby for guiding us into a deeper commitment to responding to the climate crisis and helping us to become a Creation Justice church. We have educated ourselves about the situation of Palestinians in the Holy Land, racial inequality, the ways that both environmental justice and criminal justice disproportionately impact people of color. Our Easter offering helped people in the Bay Area get out from under medical debt through the RIP Medical Debt organization. Importantly, OCC remains a congregation that is deeply committed to seeing that all people are housed. This has been evidenced in our decision to go forward with the hillside project which will offer more housing to low income seniors, our ongoing support and work with Hope Solutions, my work with the housing task force of the Multi-Faith Action Coalition, our ongoing support of families in the Winter Nights Program, and our pledge, through Common Hope, to build a home each year for a family in Guatemala. In the coming year, we will sustain these commitments, and we eagerly anticipate a post-vaccine world in which we can return to the Alameda County Food Bank and begin packing onions and apples again!

I am aware of how isolating this past year has been, especially for people who live alone. Deep gratitude to those of you who have made phone calls or sent cards to each other. For me, this has been a time of spiritual growth. I feel God's presence at work in all those informal exchanges, in putting together weekly contemplative services, and working together with lay readers, David, our musicians, and Leslie to make a moving and meaningful worship service each Sunday. Our Sunday fellowship hour is evolving and solidifying. It means a lot each week to see people there, learn about their lives, and pray together.

Amid the many changes of the year, we have pushed into some new horizons. We have a Covid Advisory Group, now chaired by Mike Kersten. Our searching, sometimes passionate, conversations indicate what is at stake and have sought a balance between offering support for our human and spiritual needs while offering guidance for health safeguards. I am deeply grateful to all who have participated.

*(Minister's Report continued)*

One of the other new elements of our life together is a more pervasive use of technology, especially in the use of Zoom video conferencing. While glitches in any technology—and barriers for users who aren't comfortable with computer use—are always worth considering, it's also apparent that the technology opens doors for those who have mobility challenges, live at a distance, or don't want to drive at night. We filmed and then posted our Christmas service (which, as you know, included magnificent music) and had over 300 observers! We plan to film some services for Lent and Easter as well. Clearly, the technology is significant, and I'm wondering if it would be a good idea for us to form a technology advisory group to consider how we might make ongoing use of these resources even after we are able to meet in person once again.

Speaking of technology, we are updating our website, both as a means of inviting in newcomers and making resources available in an ongoing way for the church community. Thanks to Brian Shepp abetting this effort. Try checking in on the website to see the changes as they proceed. Among other things, we will be adding an "Arts" tab because we'd like to showcase the abundance of creative work that issues forth from this community: music, writing, and so much else.

When the pandemic hit, it was scary and confusing. The first effort of the church was to experiment with ways of keeping the congregation in touch with each other. Text message thread? Didn't ever really get off the ground. Listserv? Proved too clunky. For several months, though, we sent out e-blasts almost every day! And you know what? I found that an exciting demonstration of this congregation's thoughtfulness, faith, and resourcefulness. People contributed photos, artwork, poems, reflections, climate updates, film clips, you name it. This is the spirit in which we go forward: everyone contributing according to their own gifts and commitments, everyone honoring their own resources, and all of us caring for each other and finding our way to new adventures buoyed on God's steadfast love.

My love and gratitude to you,

Elizabeth

## MUSIC REPORT

**David Milnes**

It has been quite a year, as is surely evident throughout this report. Obviously, our splendid choir was forced to disband when in-person worship became impossible in March, which made many of our musicians and congregants very sad. For many, the activity of music is a deeply satisfying spiritual practice as well as a potent way of forging communal ties. Our congregation is extremely musical and we quickly realized that a way would have to be found to keep the spirit of music flowing.

The soloists and I regrouped and immediately started a program of recording church services with Elizabeth each week, for home consumption. Singing is one of the most dangerous things one can do during the time of Covid - studies show that a powerful singer like Jesslyn or Nik can expel air drops over a forty-foot space. The number of participants in our recordings needed to be severely limited, spaced throughout the sanctuary with rigorous social distancing. Almost overnight Nik Nackley learned some digital recording and editing techniques, and we bought equipment and reconfigured the sanctuary for recording.

Our professional music careers at the opera house and in the concert halls where we normally work have ground to a halt, and it has turned out that for the entire year church music-making has been the only artistic outlet available for our deeply expressive musicians. Over these many months they have poured themselves into the church recordings in a way that has moved me to tears week after week. Jesslyn Thomas, Julia Hathaway, Nik Nackley and frequent guests Ann Moss, Fred Matteson, Greg and Judy McCall as well as youth performers Miles McCall and Weston Carpenter have performed an astonishingly wide array of repertoire and styles spanning hundreds of years. We have responded to the equity and justice crisis that has unfolded during this same period by programming dozens of musical selections penned by African-American composers. We have played and sung music by Hildegard of Bingen from as long ago as the 12th century, through the great monuments of the English and German Reformations of the 1500s, to Purcell, Bach, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Brahms, Dvorak, Saint Saëns, Fauré, Strauss, Sibelius, Debussy, Mahler, Rachmaninov, Britten, Ives, Copland, Samuel Barber, Ned Rorem and Jake Heggie, to list only some. We have sung songs by Frank Sinatra, Leonard Bernstein, Jerome Kern, Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Steven Sondheim, Graham Nash, Joni Mitchell, Nina Simone, Bobby McFerrin

*(Music Report continued)*

and (this week) Andra Day, again listing some among many. We have played and sung jazz selections by Duke Ellington, Horace Silver, Miles Davis, Thelonius Monk, Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Joe Sample and Vince Guaraldi.

We are proud of the video of our Christmas Eve service, which can be found on Youtube by typing in Orinda Community Church.

The interaction with our brilliant Pastor Elizabeth Robinson has been integral to the success of the music during these troubling times. She is instinctively attuned to the deeply spiritual dimension of music, making the crafting of coherent church services easy and joy-filled. Elizabeth is able to arrange her messaging, scriptural choices and sermons in ways that are spontaneously interactive and inspiring for the

musicians. The spirit is always with her and it readily connects with everything and everyone around her.

Despite the horrors of the year, I feel that the church is entering a golden period. The virus will end and we will return to in-person worship with purpose and determination. Our programs will come back to full strength, and the lessons we've learned about digital dissemination will be put to good use. Meanwhile, a renewed interest in and thirst for the spiritual dimension of the arts places our programs in a very good position to connect with people - a lot of people. The time has arrived when we can confidently tell everyone we can find that there is something really great happening at the Orinda Community Church - come check it out!

David Milnes

Director of Music since 1998

## COMMUNITY LIFE and YOUTH & WOMEN'S MINISTRIES

Leslie Darwin O'Brien

Loving church family, I am overjoyed to collaborate with Elizabeth and all of you on our faith journey. Thank you for the opportunity to serve. The staff has tried creative programming this year to help us stay connected, both spiritually and emotionally. Some of the programming/activities in which I participated include:

***Day long spiritual retreat*** featuring yoga, guided meditation, mandalas, service, chapel service, and labyrinth walk.

***Children/Youth Service*** at the end of the school year. (The kids are thoughtful, resourceful and authentic, and they feel very loved by our community.)

***Christmas pageant video*** I loved coming up with a short script that would hold up on zoom, delivering costumes, filming the kids, and living with glitter from angel costumes in my car. (Thank you Brian Shepp for the editing!)

***Outdoor decorations and special banners*** - 1. **Apart, But United in Love**, 2. **Love Casts Out Fear** 3. **Black Lives Are Beloved** (We lent this banner to some kids for a BLM rally in Orinda Park!) and 4. **The Light Shines in the Darkness and the Darkness Does Not Overcome It.**

***Parking Lot Concerts and Worship*** at Orinda Senior Village

***Hosting civil rights icon*** Stuart House for a lecture during Black History Month

***Painting an outdoor labyrinth*** in the upper parking lot that anyone can use

***Reading The Grinch for Advent Story Time*** and Carol Singalong

***Mailings, walks and porch visits*** with parishioners

**Writer's Group**

**Reflections for weekly e-mail newsletter**

**Delivering Easter Baskets** (prepared by Danny Cunningham who is a relatively new OCC attender!)

**Time at memorial wall** for loved ones who lost loved ones

**Community support** at memorial for 5 young people killed in Orinda in 2019

**Videos** - one for kids about washing hands and one music video of *It's A Wonderful World* (featuring some of our kids, promoting inclusion)

**Zoom!** Fellowship hour, Kids/Youth gathering, Women of Spirit, Women's Spirituality Group

Here are details about some of our programs:

**Women of Spirit**

Women of Spirit is a monthly gathering of inclusive, curious women seeking connection, shared learning, and growth with other women of diverse faith traditions. It continued to thrive this year, even on zoom. We welcomed women from Chicago, Los Angeles and New York as participants in our gathering. One of the programming chairs wrote, "There IS a remedy for these turbulent, smoky, super blah, what-the-heck-is-next days... and it's called 'getting together with other awesome women to talk openly, and celebrate all that we have in common! Women of Spirit to the rescue!'" WOS has covered many topics including:

How do you nurture your faith?

When has someone in your life helped you find hope or reinforced your faith?

When have you felt the power of helping someone?

*(Leslie O'Brien Report continued)*

During 2020, Women of Spirit was inspired by the following speakers and topics (partial list) :

- Eartha Newsong (!!!)** - deep, inclusive faith and experience as a nun/midwife in Pakistan
- Alexandra Stockwell - reconnecting with faith through letter writing
- Gaby Mozee - dumping worries into journal; finding opposites to troubles through mindfulness, yoga, and The Course in Miracles
- Sana Shukairy - delivering a baby during Covid
- Maram Bata - immigrating to America
- Pam Severson - practicing faith through service
- Dvora Citron - deepening of faith and examining the difference between helping and serving

The five founders of Women of Spirit have been thrilled by the number of people who have jumped in. We have 187 people in our Facebook group and typically we have around 60 participants in our gatherings each month. We've welcomed speakers with varying backgrounds including: Sikh, Japanese/Brazilian, Muslim, Church of Jesus Christ of Later Day Saints, and Jewish. I am honored that our church is a founding partner of this dynamic group. Women of Spirit always concludes with us saying, "Salaam, Shalom, Peace." I get goosebumps.

### ***Women's Spirituality Group***

Women's Spirituality Group has provided an intimate, small group experience in which we gather for a time of guided reflection, prayer, and discussion. We met a couple times outside this summer and have joined in zoom for much of the pandemic. We typically meet the third Thursday of the month and I am grateful for the vulnerability shared in this group. This group includes regular attenders of OCC and women from the wider community.

### ***Kids/Tweens/Teens***

I am struck by the confidence, kindness, thoughtfulness and enthusiasm of our young people. I appreciate their involvement, their talents and their curiosity. Their participation in the virtual Children and Youth Service and Christmas Pageant were a highlight for me. *I am grateful that Elizabeth initiated a card writing campaign to the kids.* I've visited them as much as possible on their porches, singing with six kids under nine



*(Leslie O'Brien Report continued)*

in their neighborhood. It was a joy for me to see kids in their “natural habitat.” I feel like I was able to get to know them better than if we'd been at church.

***Thank you!***

Thanks to Justice and Mercy for the grant to launch Saponelle (Soap Sisters), a project in which I'm trying to reduce plastic usage in Contra Costa County by having people bring their own containers to my backyard to fill up with dish and laundry soap. Thank you, Green Team, for this opportunity.

Thank you to Jim and to Dagmar for their service. I love them both and I wish them joy and discovery in their new paths. I am honored and delighted to work with Elizabeth, and am so excited about her leadership, creativity, warmth, compassion, and depth of faith.

**Hopes for the future:**

**I'd like to re-institute JAMM camp (our summer camp), even in the Bernard's back yard.**

**When the world opens up, I'd love to offer many more programs encouraging art, spirituality, and wellness at our beautiful campus.**

**I'd like to continue Time with Children via audio during the worship service and I hope to continue learning from our kids of all ages.**

**I'd like to further explore theologians such as Borg, Bourgeault, Buechner, Held, Lamott, Hanh, Brown, and Merton.**

Thank you again for the honor of serving OCC in a paid capacity. I'm grateful that you have entrusted some of the leadership to me, and I thank you for your love and support.

With love,  
Leslie Darwin O'Brien

## CARETAKER

### Dion Maskaleris

On February 1st, 2021 I will have been at Orinda Community Church for exactly 12 years. I continue to enjoy the physical work and the logistics of planning and communication for maintaining OCC buildings and grounds. I especially enjoy the interactions with Church and community members.

I hope you enjoy the physical and spiritual beauty of our Church as I do more so each year. It is an honor to assist Reverend Elizabeth Robinson, David Milnes, Leslie O'Brien, church volunteers and the whole congregation in the day-to-day work and the forward moving journey of Orinda Community Church.

Though there is less use of buildings during the pandemic there is still some buildings and grounds work including daily virus disinfection. This year implemented and assisted with ongoing grounds work, better heating thermostat procedures and the converting to indoor and outdoor LED lighting. Continuing to work with recycling and composting and most importantly the reuse of materials procedures. Though the price of janitorial supplies have gone up greatly in the last 12 years, I continue to keep costs of supplies as low as possible.

Gladly worked with the Winter Nights Homeless Shelter folks housed in our Fellowship Hall in 2011 for two weeks in November - doing daily cleaning maintenance for our homeless guests. This spring I understand we will have a very limited number of Winter Nights homeless guests of only three or four families for four weeks with the Winter Nights Program staff doing most all of the support work. If I am needed I am glad to be of any support assistance as it is hard work for Winter Nights Program staff to assist homeless and very hard logistical and emotional work for homeless people to live without secure shelter during a pandemic.

I am looking forward to the coming year with I hope pandemic, economic and social healing and more people returning to OCC in person.

In doing the caretaker work for the maintenance of the buildings and grounds, I work also to be of assistance to all Church and community members to create a world where we are all servants and leaders of good works and love.

Dion  
510-619-6088  
24 hour cell

Dionysos Maskaleris

# COMMITTEE AND MINISTRY REPORTS

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## BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

**Tom Norris, Chair**

A HUGE thanks to the amazing crew who are keeping us current on the many fixes and maintenance. These tireless folks are Pete Hartdegen, John Creech, Mike Kersten, Dion Maskaleris, Greg Hartdegen, Kier DeAnda, Mark Nichols, and Les Simmonds. My apologies if I forgot to mention someone. Bob Winbigler would be with us every step if he could arrange it, is always with us in spirit, and ably represents us at Church Council meetings. Thanks, Bob!

In 2020, we worked on two major projects, and pesky maintenance items as numerous as grains of sand in Hawaii. The two dominant ones are:

1. Replacement of almost every foot of buried gas pipe between buildings, about 160 lineal feet. This was the culmination of the second gas leak near the TOPS office. We now have plastic pipe buried two feet deep from near the gas meter at Olive Court to Washington-Mayflower Bldg, and then to Agape Building. Thanks to Karen Sanford and Leslie Darwin and her crew for the nice wood mesh housing around a pipe riser and for painting adjacent pipes. It now looks much better. A seismic safety shutoff valve is next to the gas meter. For the first time in 75 years, we have isolation valves so that furnace supply maintenance and any pipe work can be done without shutting down the whole campus. The final county inspection is pending finishing two pipe supports.
2. Sanctuary lamp replacements. The eight chandeliers have failed repeatedly. We began with removing and analyzing, and deciding to make “all-new“ innards (the “light engines” in trade parlance.) Work was interrupted by urgency of Task 1, above, Covid, and by attention to a controversial water leak that turned out not to be ours-it was actually under Orinda Way. We look forward to reinstalling all chandeliers in two or three months.

*(Buildings and Grounds continued)*

Some other jobs, large and small:

3. Replace/repair a scattering of leaky faucets in most buildings. Thank John and Pete next time you turn a faucet.
4. Replace most outdoor irrigation valves and pipes. Huge job-big thanks due to Pete Hartdegen and John Creech.
5. Cap off several underground gas and water pipes that still had pressure but were not used.
6. Place clean fill and sandy material in gas pipe trenches where concrete was cut away. Again, Joh and Pete.
7. Replace sanctuary and other thermostats to 7-Day types, rather than 5-Day plus weekend. Saves gas, too.
8. Repair kitchen drywall where removed as part of the big under-slab water leak repair. Also install an overhead hatch, and re-plumb a TOPS sink. Thanks, Mark, for that pro drywall and mud work.
9. Buy LED lamps to replace almost all lights on campus.
10. **Quiz:** How many lamps are on the OCC Campus?
11. Installing the overhead florescent lamps in Fellowship Hall and Washington Room, including TOPS, require extensive semi-skilled ladder labor so are not yet done.
12. Monitor outdoor water leaks below sanctuary.
13. In response to a gas smell in the sanctuary furnace room, we replaced all remaining old valves and wiring on the two 1958 big furnaces serving the sanctuary. Thanks, Kier, for a very professional job!
14. In response to Covid 19, change all furnace filters to MERV13, which will filter out most but not all virus-size particles. This is the filter grade now required for most schools. Thanks, John!
15. Nearly complete a list of light bulbs on campus. Thanks, Dion!
16. At the Agape building, monitor storm water seeps and building settlement.
17. Maintain gas valve serving Fireside Room.
18. Keep solar collector reasonably clean, important for function
19. Cap and preserve an abandoned electric conduit going directly from Fellowship Hall at TOPS office to Agape Building so that it is available for any low-voltage use such as communications wiring.

20. Replace two Fellowship Hall roof downspout underground drain pipes. A big hole in these had sent water through a buried electrical conduit and flooded part of Holden! Thanks, Pete!

Safety and reliability items that will reduce future maintenance costs and made last year's projects possible.

21. Near "Bell" sign near Irwin Way, install a water valve so that the Mayflower Building and TOPS garden may be isolated.
22. Clear brush and weeds on lower slope, below Holden parking lot down to Orinda Way. Thanks, Mike!
23. Coordinate tree cutting with our neighbors, Thanks, Mike.
24. Act a communicator with neighbors regarding upper hill trees and brush. Thanks, Bill Abiel!
25. Install gas isolation valves at gas meter, all four risers (where underground pipe pop up to above surface,) Mayflower Building, and two in Fellowship Hall attic above janitorial closet.
26. Remove dying tree in front of TOPS office.
27. Till and smooth soil after all that gas pipe trenching. Thanks, Pete!

Outside services:

28. We didn't have to hire an electrician this year. But the plumbing bills for the gas line work were huge, even though we put most of it in ourselves. PG&E staff were a big help adapting our new system to their gas meter.

Pending:

29. Finish covering one gas pipe and one water pipe hole in ground (Christy boxes.)
30. Tackle failing windows that have or are developing have dry rot.
31. Continue monitoring water pipe leaks below sanctuary
32. Coordinate with Boy Scout Troop 237 on narthex patio bench/retaining wall repairs.
33. Develop a plan of attack for settling of Agape west end. The settlement totals several inches, is visibly stretching the building (apparent in Agape Hallway overhead beam), and totals at least 6 inches at the far corner of the covered walkway nearest the big Sequoia tree.
34. Plan on future Sanctuary and Holden furnace replacements.

35. Make digital backup copies of the architectural drawings of the entire campus.

**Quiz Answer:** Regarding the number of light bulbs on our campus. I really don't know. I quit after a couple of hundred. Actually, Dion did a great job of listing each bulb type for the entire campus and sent me a nice Word listing. My Excel from his list has 710 regular lights. I think that the total is maybe around 740, including exit sign lights. Thank you, Dion!

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH COMMITTEE

Members:

Amy Parlett,  
Ann Sherpick,  
Allison Skidgel  
Robin Weber  
with Leslie O'Brien as staff representation

Like many areas of life in the year 2020, the Covid pandemic put quite a hold on the Children and Youth Committee. During this time of distance and sheltering in place the committee did not meet and as such do not have much to report for the year (sadly).

The one bright spot came from efforts by Leslie O'Brien as she singlehandedly arranged porch visits with children and youth as well as put together a virtual Christmas pageant. Thank you, Leslie!

With a new year upon us, I as the chair, plan to regroup our committee through zoom until we can again meet in person.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amy Parlett



## ENGAGEMENT AND NOMINATIONS

### Anne Barr

The volunteers who engage to help Orinda Community Church contribute their energy, skills and passion to make it a very special place. Thanks to all of you dedicated individuals who are serving on our various committees and ministries. This year, the volunteers have been called upon to help move our church to a virtual format and keep our spirit alive. This pivot to a new way of interacting has been demanding and at times required more of our faithful volunteers than in years past. It has also been challenging to recruit new members to the committees when we aren't interacting in person. As I put together the list of nominations and appointments this year, we are renewing the terms of all who want to serve and we are adding a few new members. We hope that later this year we will be again able to meet in person and enjoy our worship, our mission, and the fellowship of our people. We always need more volunteers and I believe you will find the connection to OCC deepen as you give of your talents. Please feel free to reach out to me as Vice Moderator [annebarr119@gmail.com](mailto:annebarr119@gmail.com), or to clergy or any of our ministry or committee chairs to volunteer. As I have found out, you will receive way more than you give by being more involved.

### COUNCIL

(Two-year terms)

Moderator*	Kurt Sunderbruch	2022
Vice-Moderator*	Anne Barr	2022
Treasurer*	Lani Shepp	2022
Clerk*	Kathleen Wiegand	2022

At-Large Members (Three year terms, staggered)

Mitch Breitwieser	2024
Gail Mead	2024
Bob Winbigler	2022

*(Engagement and Nominations continued)*

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL**

(Appointed by Moderator with Council approval) [2 year terms]

**Engagement**

Anne Barr	2022
[open]	2023

**Pastoral Relations**

Jeanne Samuelsen (chair)	2022
Craig Taatjes	2022
Chris Mead	2022
Joan Upshaw	2021

**Staffing**

Greg McCall	2022
Chris Mead	2021
Robin Holmes	2022

**Governance**

Kurt Sunderbruch (chair)	2022
Gail Mead	2022
Craig Taatjes	2022
Roger Samuelsen	2022

**Finance and Stewardship**

Craig Taatjes (chair)	2022
Bill Abriel (Stewardship)	2022
Fred Matteson	2022
Kathi Kling (ex officio)	
Gail Mead (ex officio)	
Lani Shepp (ex officio)	

**Buildings and Grounds (indefinite terms)**

Tom Norris (chair)  
 Andy Weber  
 Mike Kersten  
 Bill Abriel  
 Dion Maskeleris  
 John Creech  
 Peter Hartdegen  
 Les Simmons

*(Engagement and Nominations continued)*

## **OFFICERS AND DELEGATES**

(Appointed by the Moderator with Council approval)

Financial Secretary*	Gail Mead
Accounting/Asst. Treasurer	Kathi Kling
Accounts Payable	Lani Shepp
Historian	Joy Elkinton-Walker “emeritus”
Delegates to NCNC UCC Conference and Bay Association	John and Nancy Thursby

\* Elected position

## **MINISTRIES**

### **Children Youth and Families (updated)**

Amy Parlett (chair)	2022
Robin Weber	2022
Alison Skidgel	2022
Ann Sherpick	2022

### **Mercy and Justice**

(Distributed leadership – no chair)

Eartha Newsong	2022
Karen Sanford	2022
Nancy Thursby	2022
Jan Rosenfeld	2022
Elizabeth Robinson (ex officio)*	

### **Lifelong Learning and Spirituality**

Mike Kersten (chair)	2022
Karl Schonborn	2022
In Suk Kim-Andersen	2022
Gail Mead	2022
Bob Steiner	2022
Joy Elkinton-Walker	2022
Mitch Brietweiser	2022
Elizabeth Robinson (ex officio)*	

*(Engagement and Nominations continued)*

**Worship and Music**

Bill Abriel (chair)	2022
Nik Nackley	2022
Bob Winbigler	2022
Mike Kersten	2022
Sabine Hathaway	2022
Kathi Kling	2022
Kurt Sunderbruch	2021
David Milnes (ex officio)	

**Care and Fellowship**

Vangie Abriel (chair)	2022
Nancy Petersen	2022
Leslie Schonborn	2022

**ENDOWMENT FUND BOARD**

(self-electing with approval of Council) [5 year terms]

Anne Barr (chair)	2025
Andy Weber	2024
Gail Mead	2021
Alison Skidgel	2023
Kathi Kling	2022
Lani Shepp (ex officio)	
Elizabeth Robinson (ex-officio)	

**ORINDA SENIOR VILLAGE BOARD**

(OCC members appointed by Moderator with Council approval) [3 year terms]

**OCC Members**

Fred Matteson	2023
Lee Cruise	2024
Gwen McNeilus	2021
John Thursby	2023
Chris Mead	2023

**Community Members**

David Cronin	2023
Bonnie Cassriel	2024
Victoria Smith (President)	2021
Catherine Cutler	2021

## LIFELONG LEARNING and SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Ministry Membership: Mitch Breitwieser, Joy Elkinton-Walker, In Suk Kim-Andersen, Karl Schonborn, Katrina Staten, Robert Steiner, Mike Kersten (Chair)

Ex Officio Member: Elizabeth Robinson.

### 2020 Activities Sponsored and/or Supported

(Note: Beginning March 15, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, previously scheduled activities were either canceled, suspended, postponed or went online through email links, including Zoom meetings):

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Observation Event featuring Stuart House, a former Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) field secretary, who was devoted to voters' rights in Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's. the event included a chili supper. (Jan. 19)
- Exploration of the Spiritual Classics (Part 1). Mitch Breitwieser led a discussion of the writings of Henri Nouwen (1932-1996). (Feb. 2)
- Conclusion of book group meetings on "Aging as a Spiritual Practice" by Lewis Richmond led by Pastor Elizabeth. Last meeting held Feb. 19.
- Spirituality and Art (Part 2). Karen Sanford talked about and involved us in her work creating ceramics. (March 1)
- Lenten Spiritual Retreat led by Pastor Elizabeth and Leslie O'Brien offered yoga, plenty of silence, walking the labyrinth, a short contemplative service, centering prayer and creative/reflective activity along with a light lunch. (March 7)
- Weekly Centering Prayer: Tuesdays at 9 a.m. in the chapel (suspended March 15).
- Weekly Contemplative Worship Services: Wednesdays at 7 p.m. in the chapel (converted to email and online links on March 15).
- Blessing of the Animals: April 21 (online photos).
- Bible Study on the book of Acts led by Kurt Sunderbruch: April 16 to December 31, Thursdays at 11 a.m. (via Zoom).

- Book Group on “Cathedral on Fire,” a church handbook for the climate crisis by Brooks Berndt led by Nancy Thursday: June 30 to August 7, Tuesdays at 3-4:30 p.m. (via Zoom).
- Anti-Racism Book Group on “So You Want to Talk About Racism” by Ijeoma Oluo led by Lani Shepp: Aug. 31 to Nov. 2, Mondays at 7 p.m. (via Zoom). This book program included appearances by (1) Rev. Sophia Jackson, moderator of the Bay Association of the NDNC of the UCC, together with Porshe Taylor, a criminal law reform advocate from Oakland, on systemic racism in criminal law enforcement and mass incarceration (Sept. 28 and Oct. 5), (2) Daryl Davis, an Afro-American R&B and blues musician, author and actor who, beginning in the 1980’s, sought out, engaged and befriended Ku Klux Klan members, including imperial wizards and dragons, and convinced many to leave and renounce the KKK (YouTube video of Whittier College lecture) (Nov. 9 and 23), and (3) Steven Schmitt, son of OCC member Lee Cruise, who talked about his experiences working as a social worker in California and Oregon prison facilities and the role of race in those experiences (Nov. 16).
- Advent Story Hour (via Zoom): “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry read by Kurt Sunderbruch (Dec. 2), “The Velveteen Rabbit” by Margery Williams read by Elizabeth Robinson (Dec. 9), “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” by Dr. Suess read by Leslie O’Brien (Dec. 16), and “The Night Before Christmas” by Clement Clarke Moore read by Mary and Owen Volmer (Dec. 23).
- New Bible Study of “The First Paul: Reclaiming Radical Visionary Behind the Church’s Conservative Icon” by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. Led by Kurt Sunderbruch on Thursdays at 2 p.m. beginning January 21 (via Zoom). To be followed by a study of the Pauline Epistles, beginning with Thessalonians.

**Events Postponed in March 2020 to be rescheduled hopefully in 2021:**

- Middle Eastern Dinner and Forum on Paths to Peace in Palestine with Ellen Brotsky of Jewish Voices for Peace and Rev. Dr. John Anderson, Co-Moderator of the Israel Palestine Mission Networks of the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- Congregant Faith Journey with Judy and Greg McCall.
- Spirituality and Art (Part 3). Dance with Genia Simpson.

- Exploration of the Spiritual Classics (Part 2). Discussion of writings of St. John of the Cross led by Mitch Breitwieser.
- Talk on cannabinoids led by In Suk Kim-Andersen.

**2021 Goals:**

- When safe, appropriate and feasible, schedule the postponed activities listed above.
- Continue weekly contemplative and centering prayer.
- Continue book group meetings, including the weekly Anti-Racism Study Group (Mondays) and the Bible Study Group (Thursdays).
- Another congregant faith journey presentation.
- Two faith formation programs (e.g., centering prayer, healing prayer, labyrinth walk, “Two Popes” movie discussion).
- Half or all day retreat.
- Update on UCC happenings.

## MERCY & JUSTICE MINISTRY

**Nancy Thursby**

### **The Mission of the Mercy & Justice Ministry**

- To promote mercy and justice according to the tenets of the United Church of Christ.
- To provide current, reputable information about organizations doing mercy and justice work so the church may donate funds wisely.
- To provide ongoing information to the congregation about local service opportunities.
- To provide church sponsored service trips locally, nationally and internationally.

### **Local Mission Opportunities**

These had to be abandoned when the shelter in place was instituted. Before that happened:

- ✓ Alameda Food Bank service days continued to be held until the shelter in place.
- ✓ Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity: M & J continued to work with Bnai Tikvah to help accompany an immigrant and support his family. The family has gotten on its feet and the father is able to provide his own lawyer.
- ✓ M & J sponsored a second hour in February with Rev. Sophia Jackson, Moderator of the Bay Association of the UCC, who spoke on mass incarceration. M & J, in coordination with the racism study led by Lani Shepp, hosted a zoom second hour on the racism evident in incarceration with Rev. Sophia and Portia Taylor, Director of From Inside Out, as guests.
- ✓ Elizabeth continued to teach poetry writing to homeless seniors at St. Mary's Center in Oakland until the shelter in place.



- ✓ OCC participated in the Contra Costa Interfaith Housing (now Hope Solutions) Backpack Project again during July.
- ✓ Elizabeth has continued to attend meetings of the Housing Task Force of the Multi-Faith Housing Committee.
- ✓ Orinda Community Church participated in Winter Nights in November 2019. This program, chaired by Lani Shepp, serves homeless families. Due to the pandemic, OCC's next opportunity to participate will be in 2021. The Christmas offering, 2020, was designated for this program.
- ✓ M & J again participated in the Hope Solutions Christmas gift program helping six families to have a merry Christmas.

### **Mission Trips**

Mercy & Justice has developed a three-year rotation for mission trips: international, national, and local. 2020 was supposed to be a year for an international trip but these plans had to be abandoned due to the pandemic.

### **Common Hope Guatemala (Roger Samuelson, Chair)**

This organization builds houses for the poor in Guatemala. M & J sponsored a trip to Guatemala with this organization in 2017. M & J has partnered with organization.

The church hosted Teresa Bettman, Outreach and Partnership Manager of Common Hope at a Fellowship Hour on September 13, 2020 to talk about Common Hope and to promote its fundraising event, "Sponsorpalooza." Congregation members logged onto the Common Hope site to sponsor a child.

### **MISSION GIVING**

#### **Planned Annual Giving**

As usual, M & J supported Hope Solutions and Holden High School. No support was given to Orinda Senior Village this year because it was determined that OSV has its own emergency fund.

*(Mercy and Justice Ministry continued)*

### **Discretionary Giving**

This year M & J dispersed its discretionary funds to the following organizations:

- Alameda County and Contra Costa and Solano County Food Banks
- The Generosity Challenge, an M & J program of providing grants to congregation members for their own mission work. Leslie O'Brien was the only applicant and M & J gave her a grant to start up Soap Sisters, a program to reduce the amount of plastic purchased when purchasing dish and laundry soaps.
- The church hosted guest speakers Sophia Jackson and Portia Taylor to talk about incarceration reform. Rev. Jackson was paid a fee but Portia was not, so M & J made a donation to her organization, From Inside Out.
- Restore the Delta is an organization that is trying to restore/preserve the Sacramento River delta.

### **Financial Assistance**

Our church continues to assist anonymously those in our community who are in need, especially at this time.

### **All-Church Offerings**

- The Easter Offering was donated to the RIP Medical Debt, a program to help those affected by the pandemic to pay medical bills. Rev. Nate Klug at the Kensington Church suggested this program to us.
- The Souper Bowl and Christmas Offerings were designated for Winter Nights
- The One Great Hour of Sharing and Neighbors in Need UCC Offerings were not promoted this year.

### **M & J Ministry Members**

Eartha Newsong, Janet Rosefield, Karen Sanford, Facilitator, and Nancy Thursby, Secretary, with much support from Rev. Elizabeth and Leslie O'Brien.

## **GREEN TEAM**

### **A SUB-COMMITTEE OF MERCY & JUSTICE**

**Nancy Thursby, Facilitator**

#### **The Green Team Mission Statement:**

- To be personally committed to be stewards of God's creation,
- To explore with the congregation the theological basis for the care of creation,
- To inform the congregation on matters of environmental concern,
- To involve the congregation in taking action within the local and broader communities, and
- To partner with other environmental groups and organizations.

2020 started out like any other year. Green Team had many plans - to continue working toward becoming a Creation Justice Church and to participate in Interfaith Power & Light's Faith Climate Action Week for Earth Day.

#### **Before the pandemic hit:**

- The team hosted a second hour showing of the Interfaith Power & Light film, *The Human Element*. The film was organized around five elements - water, air, fire, earth, and humans, emphasizing the impact of humans on the other four.
- Also in February, the team brought its newly written Church Climate Covenant to Church Council, where it was affirmed. A special congregational meeting to vote on the covenant was tentatively set for some time in late May, early June.
- Pastor Elizabeth shared a project that a friend had created in Boulder – Environmental Stations of the Cross. After getting permission to use the idea, Pastor Elizabeth and Leslie O'Brien created our own stations, using artwork created by the children. These were displayed outside and inside the sanctuary during Lent. They will be used again in 2021.

- Plans were made to participate in IPL Faith Climate Action Week. During Fellowship Hour, the team was to host a table at which congregants could sign a pledge to be a “Faith Climate Voter.”
- The idea of planting a tree in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day or a xeriscape plant was discussed but was put on hold until after the pipes could be fixed and the holes covered.
- Many community events were scheduled for Earth Day, which the team was going to publicize and support, but all were eventually canceled due to the pandemic.
- A speaker from Restore the Delta was scheduled for June 28<sup>th</sup> but due to some personal problems the speaker, needed to be postpone. The team hopes to host this by zoom some time in 2021.

**During the pandemic:**

- Creation continued to be part of the weekly-recorded worship service. Thanks to Pastor Elizabeth, sermons, prayers, and liturgies have continued to include concern for Creation. During each week in Advent, one of the elements of creation, water, air, fire, and earth was featured.
- IPL suggested that congregations use whatever social media they can to celebrate Faith Climate Action Week. The team began submitting eblasts, and eventually Faith Climate Friday was established; the Friday eblasts were dedicated to climate issues.
- Using Faith Climate Friday as a platform, the team encouraged congregants to become Faith Climate Voters by signing the pledge online.
- The team sponsored a zoom book study on the UCC climate action book, *Cathedral on Fire: A Church Handbook for the Climate Crisis*, by Rev. Brooks Berndt during July and August. Weekly Faith Climate Friday articles reported on each session.
-

*(Green Team continued)*

**Becoming a Creation Justice Church:**

- A series of Faith Climate Friday articles was published in May explaining in detail the Becoming A Creation Justice Church steps and the team's progress toward this goal.
- A special congregational meeting was held on October 25, 2020 to consider the Church Climate Covenant and to vote to become a Creation Justice Church. Over 60 members attended and voted unanimously to become a Creation Justice Church.
- The team prepared the application and sent it to the national UCC Environmental Ministries in November. At this writing, we are waiting to hear whether our application has been accepted.
- The team will continue to work during 2021 within the four dimensions of a Creation Justice Church – Theology and Worship, Institutional Life and Practice, Circles of Awareness and Advocacy, and Connections to a Broader Movement.

**Active members during 2020:** Robin Holmes, Dottie Hutch, Gail Mead, Eartha Newsong, Mark Nichols, Leslie O'Brien, Bob Orr, Jan Rosefield, and Nancy Thursby, Facilitator. All are welcome to join us. To attend our zoom meetings and/or join our Green Enthusiasts email group contact Nancy Thursby at: [nlthursby@comcast.net](mailto:nlthursby@comcast.net)

## PASTORAL RELATIONS

### Jeane Samuelson

The purpose of the PRC is to facilitate, build, and maintain relationships and communication between clergy and lay leadership and members of the church, and to evaluate the performance of ministers and communicate its evaluations to the Council.

2020 was a busy year for PRC. Early in 2020 we helped Pastor Jim focus on his plans for a 3-month sabbatical. His proposal was to split his sabbatical time - first February 17 - April 7, then a month in the Fall for more travel. He considered starting with some travel, interviews and maybe podcasts on areas of interest to him - especially Youth Wellness, and then from home, reading and writing. We encouraged him to use his time to step back and look at his life path and ask where God was calling him. We also encouraged him to meet with Pastor Elizabeth and other staff to discuss jobs and responsibilities and to set up guest preachers during his absence. At the same time we met with Elizabeth, supporting her as she assumed leadership as Acting Pastor. We also met with Leslie and David in support of their important ministries.

Jim departed on February 17<sup>th</sup>, and within a month Covid hit and everything changed. Our meetings were facilitated by Zoom as we supported Elizabeth and staff in their unprecedented job of creating virtual OCC. Daily Eblasts brought Holy Spirit, beauty and information into our quarantined lives, and Sunday services became weekly recordings that lifted our spirits.

Jim returned home to quarantine with his family and continued his sabbatical, deciding, given the pandemic and changed church landscape, with Elizabeth doing so well at the helm, that he would finish his sabbatical at home, rather than wait until Fall.

By May, Jim told us he had discerned a new call in his heart – that God was calling him toward Youth involvement and that he would be leaving OCC after 6 years and would be moving to Santa Barbara with his family.

*(Pastoral Relations continued)*

With gratitude, sadness and well wishes, OCC bid Jim a virtual farewell. PRC turned to supporting Elizabeth as Acting Pastor with Leslie stepping up to half-time to assist her. In December, after a thorough Search Committee process, including evaluation of a survey of the congregation, OCC called Elizabeth Robinson to be our Senior Pastor.

How blessed we are to have had her in place to lead us so creatively and caringly through these challenging times.

Finally, we are grateful for the creative service of Francisco Gamez, who stepped down from PRC this year, and we warmly welcome John Thursby.

We hope you will always feel free to contact any one of us with your comments and suggestions.

Chris Mead  
Jeane Samuelsen, Chair  
Craig Taatjes  
John Thursby  
Joan Upshaw

## FINANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

Craig Taatjes (chair)

Bill Abriel (stewardship chair)

Gail Mead (Financial Secretary)

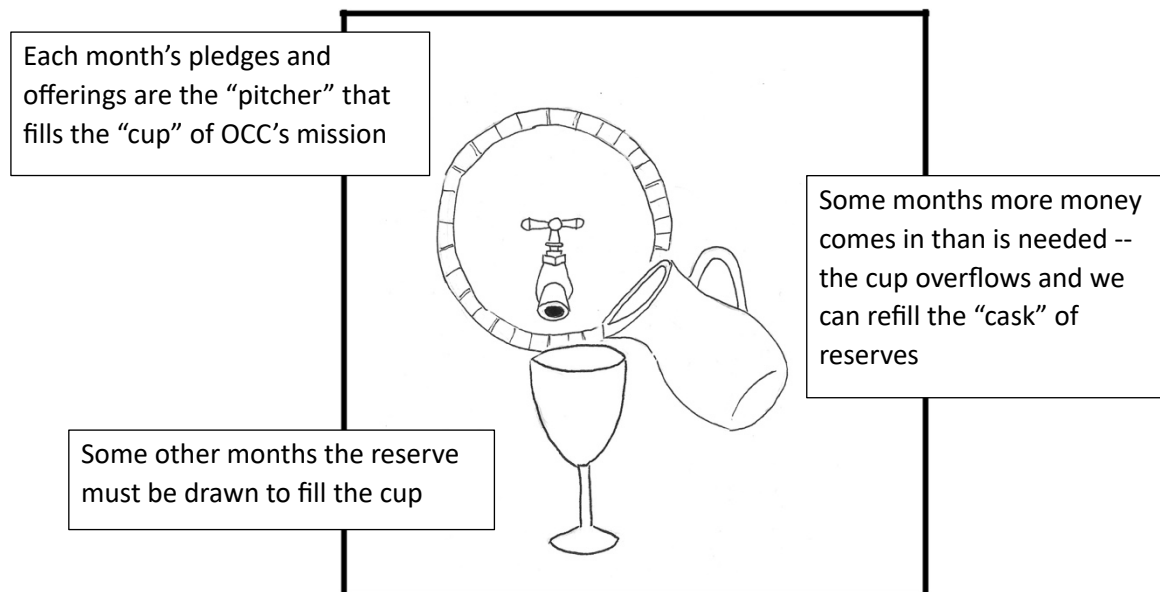
Betty Karplus,

Lani Shepp (Treasurer) (Ex Officio)

Kathi Kling (Asst. Treasurer) (Ex Officio)

The finance and stewardship committee works to maintain the financial operations of the church through development of the annual budget, administration of licensing or leasing agreements for the use of Church property, design and management of stewardship and fundraising campaigns. The Finance and Stewardship Committee also provides oversight of the Staffing and Personnel Committee.

During the year the Committee watches the flow of funds from income to reserves to operations, as offerings and pledge fulfillment bring money in to balance ongoing expenditures:





*(Finance and Stewardship continued)*

In 2020, the Finance and Stewardship committee has responded to the dramatic changes in our church and our world. The departure of our senior pastor Jim Bergquist, the interim with an acting pastor, and the call of Elizabeth Robinson to be our settled senior pastor changed the financial picture of the church; the COVID restrictions reduced our cash offerings and the loss of facility rental income challenged our cash flow. In those difficult and fearful times, we were able to draw on the federal paycheck protection program, the backing of our endowment board, OCC's savings, and the steadfast support of our members to maintain operations. Our OCC community has held each other in care and fellowship.

Pledges make up about 70% of our revenue. The 2021 stewardship drive was carried out in the middle of the COVID pandemic when we could not physically meet together. The congregation responded as usual with tremendous generosity, showing that even when we are distant we are tied by God's love and our commitment to doing God's work. Thank you to all of you for helping support OCC's mission.

## SEWING CIRCLE

### Kathleen Wiegand

We were very busy this past year:

- We donated 30 quilts to CEID (Center for Early Intervention on Deafness) in Berkeley. Each December Santa distributes our quilts to the children at their annual Christmas party. We were very busy this past year: CEID is very appreciative and often sends us pictures of the children with their quilts. It is a remarkable place doing wonderful things for the children in their care.
- We sold quilts and donated \$270 towards the OCC auction proceeds.
- Due to Covid-19, we were unable to teach a sewing class to Holden High students or donate a Christmas tree to the Orinda Women's Club for their annual Festival of Trees fundraiser. But we hope to return to these activities when it's safe to do so.

A big "thank you" to all of you for supporting the Sewing Circle. Your quilt purchases and sponsorship donations help the Sewing Circle to buy essential quilt supplies so we can continue making the quilts. We look forward to having you visit us in the sewing room when it's safe to do so.

Kathleen Wiegand

Melody Ferreira

Karen Norris

Barbara Beck

Paula Beatty

## HANDBELL CHOIR

**Nancy Thursby, Director**

On February 2, 2020 the Handbell Choir played “Day by Day,” arranged for handbells by Sandra Eithun. It is Swedish Christian hymn written in 1865 by Lina Sandell (1832 - 1903) several years after she had witnessed the tragic drowning death of her father. The melody was written by Oscar Ahnfelt (1813-1882) and is called “Blott En Dag.”

<https://youtu.be/QY67M6PqFuw>

(Thanks to Gene Friedman for the video)

1. Day by day and with each passing moment,  
Strength I find to meet my trials here;  
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,  
I've no cause for worry or for fear.  
He whose heart is kind beyond all measure  
Gives unto each day what He deems best--  
Lovingly, it's part of pain and pleasure,  
Mingling toil with peace and rest.
  
2. Ev'ry day the Lord Himself is near me  
With a special mercy for each hour;  
All my cares He fain would bear, and cheer me,  
He whose name is Counselor and Pow'r.  
The protection of His child and treasure  
Is a charge that on Himself He laid;  
"As thy days, thy strength shall be in measure,"  
This the pledge to me He made.
  
3. Help me then in eve'ry tribulation  
So to trust Thy promises, O Lord,  
That I lose not faith's sweet consolation  
Offered me within Thy holy Word.  
Help me, Lord, when toil and trouble meeting,  
E'er to take, as from a father's hand,  
One by one, the days, the moments fleeting,  
Till I reach the promised land.

*(Handbell Choir continued)*

The choir then began rehearsing to play “All Glory Laud and Honor” arranged for handbells by Cynthia Dobrinski at Easter time. The tune and lyrics were written by St. Theodulph (9<sup>th</sup> century.) He was brought to France by Charlemagne and became Bishop of Orleans but was later imprisoned by Charlemagne’s successor. According to legend, he was released when the King, Louis the Pious, heard him sing this hymn from prison.

It is based on Matthew 21:8-9:

“A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and followed were shouting,

‘Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

It was translated by John Mason Neale in 1854 and is Hymn #216 in the New Century Hymnal.

But, after two rehearsals, the pandemic shelter-in-place order was made, and rehearsals had to be suspended.

On September 8<sup>th</sup> many of the church’s precious handbells, purchased in 1977-78 and played by many forefathers and foremothers of the church, were stolen. Luckily the thieves were probably only interested in the bronze and did not take the chimes. So, on September 15<sup>th</sup> the choir began rehearsing chime quartets in groups of no more than four ringers and one director outside while it was warm and light enough and then later in the Narthex. As the pandemic peaked again, the choir moved back outside and rehearsed in the courtyard in front of the sanctuary using our book lights, following all health department guidelines for pandemic safety. In early December, as the pandemic raged, rehearsals were suspended again.

*(Handbell Choir continued)*

The pieces played were from two packets of quartets, "Porta-Hymn Supplement I and Porta-Carol Four Supplement" from Robert Groth Publications. Each quartet group played two pieces from each collection. The choir recorded the pieces, and the worship committee used the recordings in the recorded church services. The pieces played in the fall from the Porta-Hymn packet were "Sweet Hour of Prayer," "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," "Amazing Grace," and "Come Ye Thankful People Come." The Christmas season pieces played from the Porta-Carol Four packet were "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "Coventry Carol," "The First Noel," and "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear."

Insurance will cover the loss of the bells and the choir is anxious to begin again. Choir members this year were Kelly Connolly, Connie Doty, Peter Hartdegen, Robin Holmes, Kathi Kling, Cheryl MacDonald, Gail Mead, Ellen Prater, and Kathleen Wiegand. Anyone interested in joining us, should watch the Neighbor for an announcement of when rehearsals will begin again. Contact Nancy Thursby at: [nlthursby@comcast.net](mailto:nlthursby@comcast.net)

## HOLDEN HIGH SCHOOL

### Abby Tuttle

Holden is a private, non-profit, WASC-accredited high school that has been addressing the needs of teenagers since 1969. Our student body comprises a max of 40 students in grades nine through twelve with a student-teacher ratio of 5:1 or smaller. Students graduate from Holden with academic confidence and intellectual curiosity, the ability to advocate for themselves, a strong sense of community, a passion for learning, and solid plans for their futures. Students come from all over the Bay Area and reflect its diversity. This year marks our 50th year in the lower level of the Orinda Community Church, and our 51st year in existence!

In early March, we hosted a visiting committee from WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) to renew our accreditation. The findings of the committee were that: Holden's staff maintains a safe, nurturing environment that is student centered, we have a comprehensive student support system that includes the families and fosters personal and academic growth, and that we have a flexible program that meets the individual needs of all students. Areas of focus going forward include A) maintaining financial stability through consistent enrollment and increasing other revenue streams like fundraising; B) a focused school wide professional development plan linked to the schoolwide learner outcomes and supporting the infusion of technology; and C) a stronger emphasis on parent community building and increased parent participation. In July we were granted with another six-year accreditation status with a mid-cycle visit in three years. This is the best possible accreditation we could have received and reflects how well we are serving our students.

The impact of the pandemic in mid-March was profound at Holden as it was worldwide. Our staff quickly moved to distance learning and worked tirelessly to learn new digital platforms to support our teens and their families. We explored federal aid options including payroll protection and loans. We prepared for the possibility of a hybrid schedule at Holden for the fall and limited our enrollment to  $\frac{2}{3}$  capacity. We installed conference cameras, re-organized classrooms to allow for physical distancing, created a one way hallway, and hired a janitorial team to sanitize the school daily. Our staff created school supply bags to go home to families. Based on guidance from the CDC, California Department of Education, and the County Health Department, we created rules and policies to allow campus to re-open for the students and staff who felt safe

*(Holden High School continued)*

returning. We were able to open October 22nd with small groups of students on campus 2 days a week. We had to close for some planned power outages, and then decided to remain closed after Thanksgiving through the end of 2020 based on Contra Costa's purple tier status. We are strictly offering distance learning until we are out of the stay-at-home order and both Alameda and Contra Costa counties are out of the purple tier.

In June we held individual graduation ceremonies over Zoom, the silver lining of which was that family members across the country were able to log on and participate. We are delighted to report that ten students graduated from our full program last year. As usual, this group of Holden graduates took many paths from here including working in retail, producing music, selling crafts on Etsy, taking a gap year, and taking online community college classes, and attending Southern Oregon University.

In response to the killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter Movement, Holden renewed its commitment to fight racism. We formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee that began meeting monthly in the fall and are working to address bias in our community with regular training for both staff and students.

Holden students participated in field trips and events prior to closure including a Diablo Valley College scavenger hunt and several basketball games with other independent schools. Holden students participated in a mosaic project in Orinda this fall.

Throughout the year students presented grade level projects. 9th and 10th graders completed community service projects including protesting police violence, poll observation work, and stocking food pantries, 10th graders completed interest projects involving a variety of student passions such as painting, digital art, and volunteering at preschools. 11th graders completed jobs and internships. 12th graders completed transition projects exploring post high school options including jobs, internships, creative and independent living skills, vocational schools, colleges, and scholarships.

We are so grateful to have been able to retain our entire staff from the 2019-2020 school year for the 2020-21 year. We also welcomed Nora Orton and Chelsie Crilly to our MFT internship program fall of 2020.

Decades of careful planning and spending have given us some financial stability during these trying times but we have still had to freeze some staff pay and reduce staff hours because we are operating with a much smaller school than normal. As always, we are

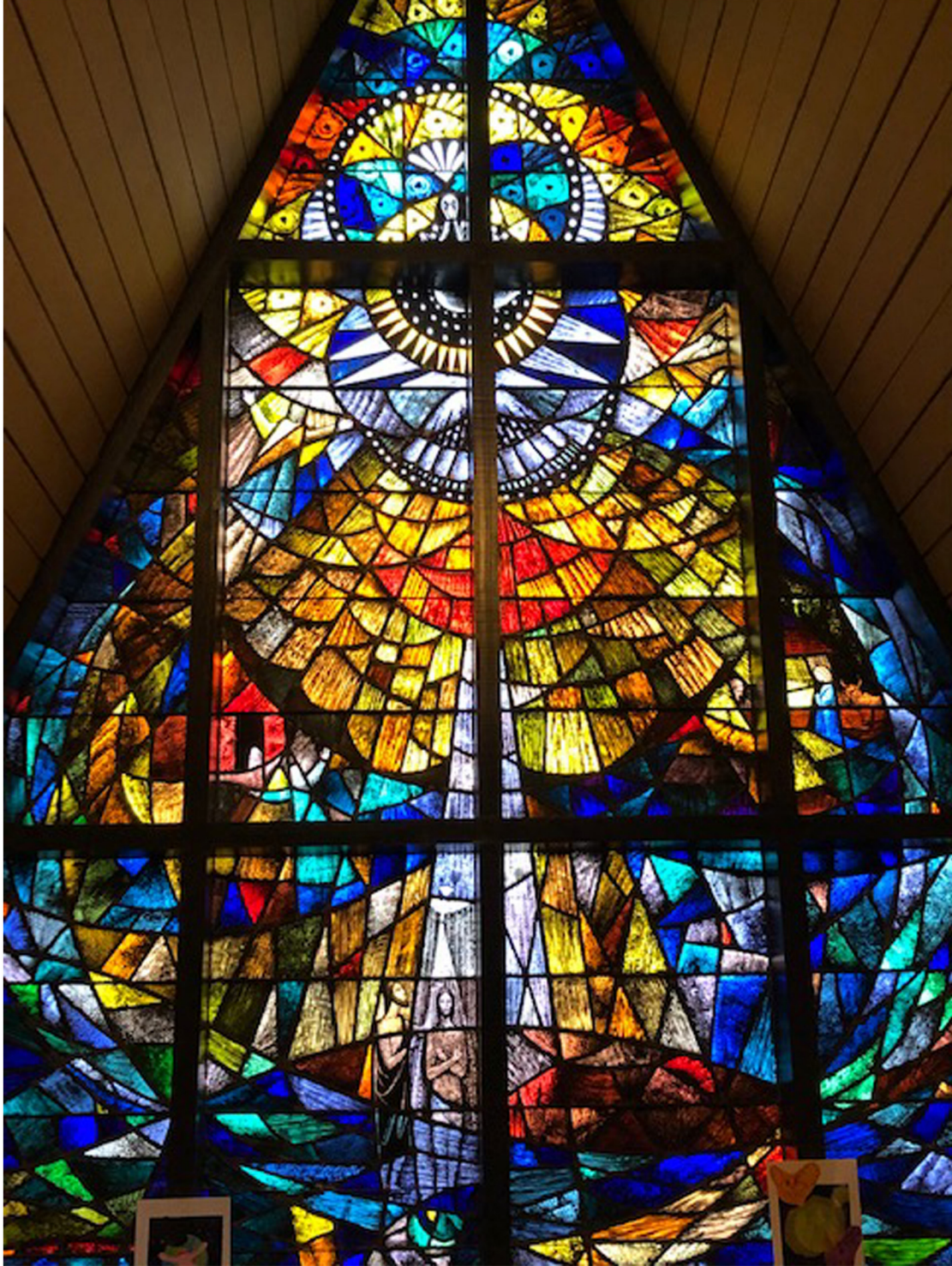
*(Holden High School continued)*

working hard to recruit families who would be a good fit for our small nurturing program. If you know of a young person whose needs would be met by one of our unique and innovative programs, please refer them to us.

Holden is eternally grateful for the generosity of the Orinda Community Church in supporting our mission. We will miss those OCC staff who have left / retired including the Rev. Jim Brommers Bergquist and Dagmar Slovak, both of whom were great supporters of our program. We would also like to thank the Rev. Elizabeth Robinson, staff Dion Maskaleris, members and volunteers John Creech, Pete Hartdegen, Dalton and Kay James, Les Simmonds, Andy Weber, Tom Norris, Chris Mead, Leslie O'Brian, The OCC Sewing Circle, Mission and Outreach, and, last but certainly not least, members of the OCC who serve (or have served) on our board: Lani Shepp, Gail Mead, Lee Cruise, Elisabeth Kersten, Kay Norman, and Joyce Crawford. We could not be the school we are today without you!



design by Brian Shepp



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