

*Hillcrest  
Congregational  
Church*

**HILLCREST**  
~ **NEWS** ~

A Gathering Place for Faith and Action in the Community  
[www.hillcrestucc.org](http://www.hillcrestucc.org)

JANUARY 2018

**HAPPY \_\_\_\_\_ (Fill in the Blank)**

*The way to fill in the blank at this time of year, of course, is “New Year.” And I’m all for it. I’ve been exchanging Happy New Year’s greetings with family, friends, colleagues and strangers near and far for several days now. And/ but...*

I wonder if we don’t have a more powerful greeting to give each other: Happy Epiphany.

We are about to enter the Epiphany season. The stars of the Epiphany season are often taken to be the three magi. And worthy stars they are. They seek out God’s presence on earth, they even stop to ask directions (how many men could learn from that?!), and they go out of their way (literally) to help protect the threatened child Jesus. We all could learn from them.

There is another star of the Epiphany season. The star. It was the star that led the magi to Jesus, after all. Its light got them through the cold, dark nights and got them across the barren, thankless desert. The light gave them hope and direction when things seemed their darkest.

The season of Epiphany is about light and hope. It’s about the light of Christ, which the star represents. It’s about the light of God’s presence among us. It’s about the light of God’s love and peace and justice which is ever and always working to break in—to break into our world, to break into our own lives.

Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said (and I wish this saying were even more famous and more often remembered and lived by):

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that.  
Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.*

That’s what Epiphany is all about.

That’s what we are all about as Epiphany people.

Darkness and hatred are not hard to find in our world. It pains me to say that, but it’s true. Light and love are not hard to find at Hillcrest. It gladdens me to say that, and it’s true. It’s true about who we are and what we do and why we do it.

Come, celebrate the light! Share the light with us, as Epiphany people.

**HAPPY EPIPHANY**

Blessings,

*Rev. Fred*

### **“Running Life’s Hectic Race……”**

In the world of business and finance, the race is fast. We all play hard and for keeps. We buzz around like hummingbirds managing crises and taking care of business, often without taking time to notice our surroundings. That said, it’s important to remember that life is precious, and there’s a possible marvel around every turn. This past week my wife experienced a seemingly minute, but meaningful life event. It reminded me of the miracle of godwinks, and of keeping balance and perspective in all we do. As for the story. .

My wife runs a design company, which includes utilizing a sizable warehouse for storage of furniture. She’s also an absolute fanatic about birds and the sanctity of nature. Last week, in the midst of her busy day, she received a call from her concerned work colleague informing her that prior to leaving the facility the facility, she had noticed an errant hummingbird that had flown into the warehouse and was stranded. My wife, being the nature advocate, was heartsick, as she realized that it was unlikely to be retrieved, and would probably starve and perish inside the facility. Nevertheless, she knew she had to make an attempt. Therefore, she added a last stop to her schedule that day to return to the warehouse, so as to hang a hummingbird feeder inside the facility in a futile attempt try to save the poor bird.

Arriving at the end of the day with the sugar water mix, she looked around the warehouse, but there was no bird to be found. Disappointed, she finished the task at hand, hanging up feeder, and set about to lock up the facility and end her day.

On her way out, she stopped to pick up her belongings. Out of the corner of her eye and in a dark corner, she saw a crumbled ball of feathers. It was the hummingbird, motionless and with its eyes closed. It had apparently collapsed there, having run out of fuel due to its high metabolism system and the lack of any food source.

Despondent, my wife cradled the lifeless bird in her hands and took it outside the warehouse. Not wanting to face reality, she just couldn’t give up. Resourcefully, she decided to put a drop of the elixir on her finger, and brought it to the hummingbird’s long closed beak. There was no immediate reaction. She repeated the process again and again.

Then a miracle happened . . . After a long period of time, the tiny bird moved slightly. Evidently, the hummingbird had been digesting the small drops. Its recovery continued, eventually opening it eyes while remaining motionless. Trying to remain steady, my wife then continued to feed the hummingbird in that manner.

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(“Race” continued from page 2)

Finally, after about 25 minutes of this routine, the bird started to flutter its wings, continuing to gain velocity. The miracle reached a climax as the bird took flight, heading into the air and out of sight.

As a stroke of luck, my wife's colleague had called her during rescue, and as was able to return to the warehouse in time to capture some amazing pictures at the end of the rescue. Those pictures will frame the memories of that day forever.

For my wife, it was a precious life experience. Touching a hummingbird is extremely rare, but nurturing one back from the brink of death is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. In her subsequent phone call to me, she relayed each touching and detailed piece of the story, her voice cracking often from overwhelming emotion.

As I look back on that day, although I wasn't there that day, hearing the story of my wife's tale and in seeing the pictures, it touched me immensely. I know I often move too fast, not taking time to notice little things along the way. Her story reminded me that life is amazing, and even in the small miracles of nature, we can find wonder and awe. Of course, we continue to focus on our business and strive for success, but we can also enjoy the scenery along the way. There is much to see!

Thank you Rob Duysen for sending this in to us. This article appeared in the Salus newsletter.



**HILLCREST CHURCH COUNCIL FORMALLY ENDORSES  
OUR MINISTER-IN-TRAINING, David Kuechle,  
to begin the process for Ordination in the United Church of Christ**

At the Church Council meeting on Dec. 12, 2017, the Church Council affirmed its support for Hillcrest member and Minister-in-Training David Kuechle to become a "Member In Discernment." What that means is that David may now begin the formal process toward ordination for ministry in our denomination, the United Church of Christ. The next step will be for the Northern California Nevada Conference's Committee on Ministry to act on Hillcrest's recommendation and recognize David as a Member in Discernment. That will happen, we hope, within a few months as David meets other requirements of that Committee.

Our thanks to the Church Council AND to David as he continues to serve us and the Gospel, and to move toward ordination.

### **What is a "call" to ministry?**

When Christians talk about a "call," we mean that God is calling us—in our mind and heart—to take an action or make a choice with our lives. The Latin word for "call"—*vocatio*—is the root of a word often used to describe a call that leads us into a way of life: a "vocation." A call to ministry includes the community's recognition of and calling forth gifts for ministry.

One of the distinguishing aspects of ministry in the United Church of Christ is the affirmation that ministerial leadership is always defined by an ongoing sacred covenant among the minister, the congregation and the denomination; thus ministry is more communal than individual, and the call to authorized ministry is always discerned with others. A great theologian from the early days of the United Church of Christ, H. Richard Niebuhr, identified four aspects of a vocation.

1. The call to be a Christian is the beginning of any call to ministry, including yours.
2. The secret call between God and you, when you feel an inward invitation to become a minister.
3. The providential call when you recognize that God has given you specific gifts--intellectual, spiritual, psychological, and moral--that God wants you to use in ministry.
4. The ecclesiastical call (from the Greek word *ekklesios*, meaning church or assembly) when the community affirms your call, helps you prepare for ministry, and then ordains or commissions you for that ministry.



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST



# January 2018 Hillcrest Church



	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	9:30 am—Education/Activity Hour for Adults & Church School 10:30 am -Worship service *Childcare available both hours.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	9:30 am Education Hour 9:45 am Chancel Choir Reh. (Sanc) 1-4 Korean Church	8	12 Noon Fellowship of Prayer (Parlor) 7 pm Council Meeting	Office Closes at Noon 6 pm Worship/Music (Rm 16)	8:30 am Upper Room	12	13
14	9:15 am Extended Choir Reh. 9:30 a.m. Education hour 11:45 am Book Group (R 16) 12 noon "News" deadline 1-4 pm Korean Church	15  Office Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	16 12:00 Fell. of Prayer (Parlor)	17 Office Closes at Noon 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary)	18 8:30 am Upper Room	19	20 9 am-noon—Food and Clothing Room open
21	9:30 am Education Hour 9:45 am Chancel Choir Reh. (Sanc) 1-4 pm Korean Church 7:30 pm Taizé at Church of the	22	23 12 pm Fell. Of Prayer (Parlor)	24 Office Closes at Noon	25 8:30 am Upper Room	26	27 2 pm Memorial service for Frank Como (Sanc)
28	9:15 am Extended Choir Reh. 9:30 am Education hour Congregational Meeting following worship service	29	30 12 pm Fell. Of Prayer (Parlor)	31 Office Closes at Noon 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal (Sanctuary)			

**ADULT EDUCATION**

**Sundays at 9:30 in the Fellowship Hall**

*Do Not Be Afraid:  
Defeating Fear with Hope, Peace, Love, Joy and a  
Wholehearted Life*

These days much of our politics, media, and even economy is fear-based. This series, which has been developed in conjunction with our Advent Worship theme, "Angels Among us," is about hearing and living the angels' message: "Do Not Be Afraid." It draws on Advent bible lessons from the Gospels and prophets, features video segments by author, researcher, and social work professor, Brene Brown, and includes discussion based on our own life experiences. Come join us and build and celebrate a life of Love and Joy in a world too often given over to fear.



**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**

A Congregational Meeting will be held **Sunday, January 28, 2018** in the Sanctuary. The purpose of the meeting is to approve the final budget for 2018. Copies of the budget will be available one week prior.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

It doesn't seem possible but plans are underway for services on **Ash Wednesday, February 14, 2018.**

There will be two services:  
**2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.**

Easter falls on April 1st this year.



**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS**

Monday -Friday **9 a.m.-12 noon;**  
**1 p.m.-2:30 p.m.**

(Closed for lunch 12-1 p.m.)

**The office is now closed at noon  
on Wednesdays.**

**Church Office Phone (925) 689-8260**

**Website: [www.hillcrestucc.org](http://www.hillcrestucc.org)**

**Food Room Hours:**

Mon., Wed., Fri. 9 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.  
(925) 686-3663

No appointment needed. I.D. required.

**Clothing Room Hours:**

Mon., Wed. & Fri. 9:00 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.  
(no appointment needed)

**Jim Flagstead's Hours:**

Financial Secretary  
Mon. & Thurs. 9:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.



**IN THE HILLCREST SPOTLIGHT**



**CONCERNS**

Carol Albright  
Ryan Anderson  
Web Beadle  
Lynne Beller  
Robin Welles Brunner  
Mitsuka Bude  
Bob Cameron  
Debra Cass  
Kylie Chen  
Cara Clark  
Nancy Hammill  
Grant Hawkes  
Scarlett Henley  
Soonhee Kim  
Charley Lamb  
Sharon Lind  
Shirley Malcolm  
Alix Sahlin  
Dorothy Smith  
Larry Smythe  
Dana Sparks  
Cecille Stoddard  
Eric Sundin  
Martha Vivrette  
John Welles

**HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL**

Bob Wooldridge  
Web Beadle  
Norm Inkster  
Larry Smythe

**HOSPITALIZED**

Eric Sundin

**We remember friends and members in residential and continual care:**

Lyle Palmer  
Mary Rinehart  
Shirley Ronzone  
Bettie Ryan  
Jan Smiley  
Betty Soreide  
Mercia Stewart

**\*\*Please help us keep these lists updated. If you do not see a name you expected to see, let us know. And, if you know of name(s) that can be removed, please contact us at the Church office.**

**CONGRATULATIONS**

Congratulations to **Christopher Sasaki** who graduated on December 16, 2017 from Landmark College in Putney, Vermont. His proud parents are Ruth and Dennis Sasaki.



**IN SYMPATHY**

Our sympathy and prayers go out to Isabelle Murphy and family. Isabelle's son, Rick, passed away recently.

Our prayers and sympathy go out to the family of Frank Como who died recently. A memorial service will be held at Hillcrest Church on January 27th at 2 p.m.



Hillcrest Congregational Church *NEWS*  
United Church of Christ  
404 Gregory Lane  
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

MAILED: January 5, 2018



## **8 Hillcrest Congregational Church NEWS January 2018**

### **Hillcrest Book Club**

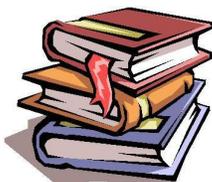
This novel, "The Dust That Falls From Dreams" by Louis de Bernieres, is a look into English life in the period before, during and after the First World War. It also illuminates the timeless ways in which men and women carry profound loss alongside indelible hope.

The selection for February is "The Red Notebook" by Antoine Laurain. This is an uplifting and charming story of two lonely souls finding each other through the mystery of a stolen handbag in Paris.

**JANUARY 14** "THE DUST THAT FALLS FROM DREAMS"

**FEBRUARY 11** "THE RED NOTEBOOK"

Join us in Room 16 after church to discuss and share our opinions on our book selections.



### **Hillcrest Congregational Church United Church of Christ**

404 Gregory Lane Pleasant Hill, CA 94523  
Phone: 925-689-8260

Website: [www.hillcrestucc.org](http://www.hillcrestucc.org)

Senior Minister: Rev. Dr. Fred Weidmann

Minister-in-Training: David Kuechle

Accompanist & Choir Dir. : Joshua Feltman

Children & Youth Ministries: Mya Terry

Nursery Coordinator: Shelby Pickett

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### **Worship Service:**

**9:30** Education Hour

**10:30 a.m.** Worship and Church School  
Childcare available beginning at 9:30 a.m.

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Deadline for the next *NEWS* is **Sunday, January 14, 2018 at NOON.**

Please e-mail all articles to:  
[hillcrestucc@att.net](mailto:hillcrestucc@att.net) or put them in the news folder in the "News" office box — include the source of the article and your phone number.