CROSSROADS

BETHANY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2025

from the pastor...

As we stand three weeks into the liturgical year and on the cusp of the secular new year, I am taking some time to reflect back on the past year and forward to the future. That's not so unique, self (and communal) reflection is a common activity.

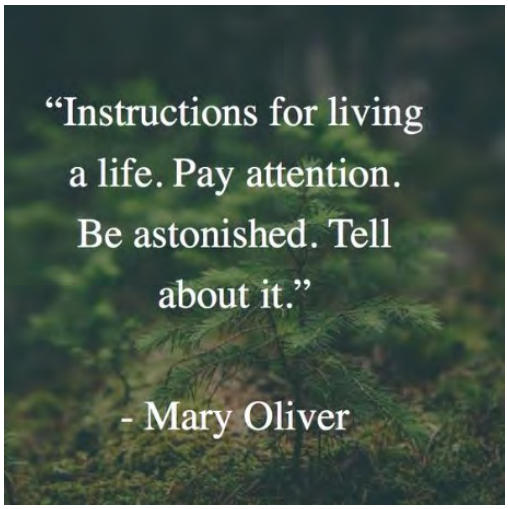
My reflection back reminds me - as I have frequently reminded you - of Mary Oliver's ***Instructions for Living A Life: Pay Attention, Be Astonished, Tell About It.*** We have focused mostly on paying attention over the past year. My intention was to help to train ourselves to see the good in the world. To focus our attention to recognizing God's presence. These days, that seems more easily said than done. Perhaps we can relate with the Psalmist (Psalm 22) who cries out to God, "… why have you forsaken me?"

Now is the time engage ourselves in the second of the instructions, **Be Astonished**. You may remember a few weeks ago, I proclaimed this our Year of Astonishment! I believe that God is ever-present. I also believe that sometimes God's still, small voice is a little too still. A little too small for our all too human ears to hear in the bustle of the everyday busyness of our lives. We need to become **Purveyors of Awe.**

So, with the new year, I am going to lead a new small group, the **Purveyors of Awe** - yes, I am conflating astonishment and awe. We will be using Dr. Marcia McFee's guided study, ***Purveyors of Awe: A Guided Study & Journal.*** I am envisioning a group that would meet weekly to share check-in with each other for encouragement and support, share reflections on readings and ideas and plan monthly(?) **Experiences of Awe.**

If you would like to explore how we can "significantly impact our well-being and perception of the world" reach out and we'll find a suitable time and place to begin our journey.

Love, Pastor Rob



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- San Francisco Night Ministry
- Photo Gallery
- Budget Update
- Upcoming Events
- Birthdays

COMING SOON

Dec 2-23	Advent Book Study
Dec 14	Charge Conference
Dec 21	Blue Christmas Service
Dec 24	Family Christmas Eve Svc.
Jan 2	Ring Out Danger

Join us at Bethany during Advent

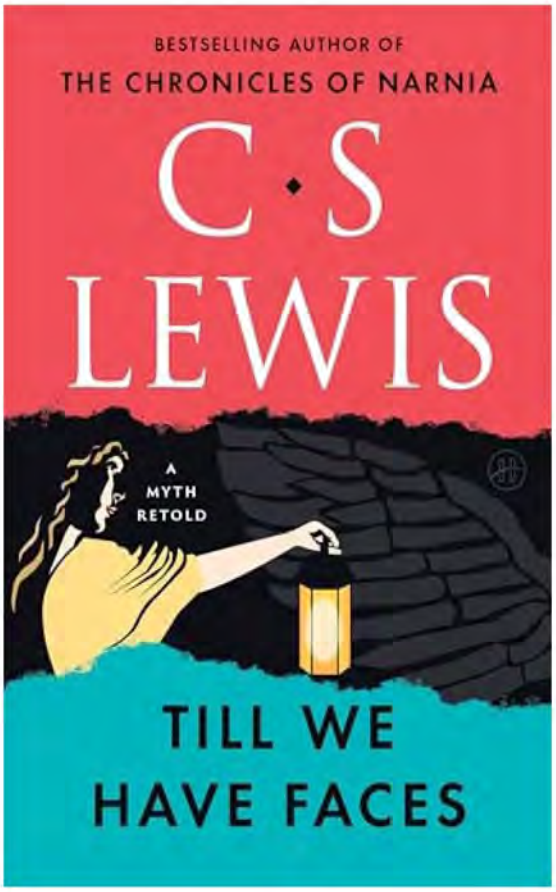
Morning Prayers, Tuesdays & Thursdays in the sanctuary at 8:30 am from December 3rd through December 24th.

Sundays, November 30, December 7, 14, 21: During Advent, with Cynthia Campbell's ***Christmas in the Four Gospel Homes,*** we will tour each of the four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) imagined as a house with different defining characteristics to give us insight into the life of Jesus.

Tuesdays, December 2, 9, 16, 23 at 6pm: Advent book group studying C.S. Lewis' ***Till We Have Faces***.

Sunday, December 21, at 5pm: We'll have a Blue Christmas service. If you're not familiar, a Blue Christmas service acknowledges & makes space for those who find the holiday season difficult due to grief, loss, loneliness, or other struggles. These services provide a space for quiet reflection, prayer, community, acknowledging that sorrow and joy can coexist & that God's presence is found in times of hardship.

Wednesday, December 24, at 4pm: We celebrate the birth of Jesus with our Family Christmas Eve Service. **It's About Jesus!**



Advent Book Group

Tuesdays - December 2, 9, 16, 23
@6:00pm

A retelling of the ancient Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche. The novel is a deep exploration of themes including love (both possessive human love and divine love), jealousy, self-deception, faith, and the nature of the divine. The title's meaning is found in the idea that humans cannot truly understand or "meet" the divine until they shed their self-deception and see themselves as they truly are—until "we have faces."

A PEEK AT RECENT ACTIVITIES IN THE BETHANY COMMUNITY!

PHOTO GALLERY

HAPPY (LITURGICAL) NEW YEAR!

November 23rd, we celebrated the start of New Church Year, with the start of Advent.

ALWAYS TOGETHER: WORLD AIDS DAY 2025

December 1st, Pastor Rob attended *"Always Together: World AIDS Day 2025"* at the AIDS Memorial Grove in Golden Gate Park.

January 4th - San Francisco Night Ministry

Join us for coffee, conversation and connections on Sunday, January 4th.

Every other month, we are asked to help prepare bag lunches, distributed at the San Francisco Night Ministry's Open Cathedral Sunday worship service. And we have said yes! We have bought ingredients, made sandwiches and assembled the lunches. We have felt personally rewarded by providing needed food and by working with other Bethany members.

On Sunday, January 4, a representative from San Francisco Night Ministry will join us during worship so we can learn more about Night Ministry's programs and how we can deepen our ministry to the people they serve. A program of the Stewardship Committee, this special service will include an interactive presentation, time to talk with others at your table, and—to fuel your thoughts—coffee and pastries.

The committee hopes you will plan to be there with your questions and ideas.

BUDGET UPDATE

by Steve Wereb, Treasurer

Through November, we received $107,950 in donations and $159,650 in rental income for a total of $267,600. Donations for the year are running behind budget. Our expenses through November were $245,468. However, we have only made $2,203 in repairs versus the annual repair budget of $25,640. We have also increased our Reserves by $1,500.

Also included below is giving information. The distribution of pledges is shown below. Overall, our total average pledge amount is $5,932 per person. Total donations through November have been $107,950 across 51 people (for both pledgers and non-pledging donors) which results in an average gift of $2,117 person. Our available cash on November 30th was $136,327.

Thank you for your generosity and support.

Summary of Donations

Budgeted Giving for 2025 ==> $137,270

Actual Giving thru 11/30/25 ==> $107,950

Left to Go ==>$29,320

Actual vs. Budget	Actuals thru 11/30/25	Budget for 2025	Actual vs. Budget
Donations	$ 107,950	$ 137,270	$ (29,320)
Rent	159,650	169,797	(10,147)
Total Income	267,600	307,067	(39,467)
Staff & Programs	118,237	139,417	(21,180)
Tithe	22,000	30,707	(8,707)
Building Costs	103,028	117,774	(14,746)
Building Repairs	2,203	25,640	(23,437)
Total Operating Costs	245,468	313,538	(68,070)
			-
Increase to Reserves	(1,500)	(6,000)	4,500
Net Result	**$ 20,632**	**$ (12,471)**	**$ 33,103**

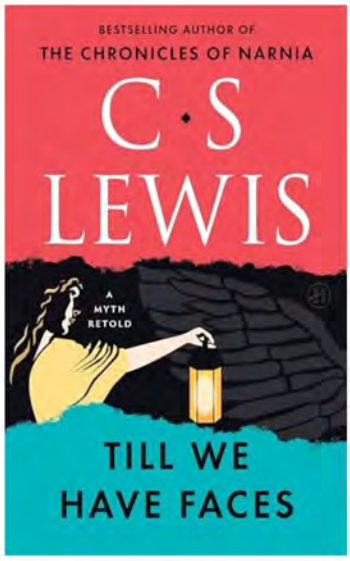
Cash Balances at 11/30/25	
Operating Cash	$ 136,327
Trustee Cash Reserves	$ 41,724
Memorials	$ 11,759

Distribution of Pledges			
Gift Amount	Number of Households	Pledge Amount	%
$1 to $2,500	9	$ 12,744	11%
$2,501 to $6,000	4	$ 18,400	16%
$6,001 to $9,999	3	$ 23,500	20%
$10,000 & Above	4	$ 64,000	54%
Total	20	$ 118,644	100%
Average/person		$ 5,932	

YTD Donations Received		%
YTD pledges received	$ 73,599	68%
YTD other donations	$ 34,351	32%
Total donations	$ 107,950	100%
Total number of givers	51	
Average gift/giver	$ 2,117	

UPCOMING EVENTS

Annual Charge Conference, Sunday, December 14th at 12:30 pm –
Our Charge Conference this year is December 14th at 12:30 pm. This is a meeting of the church members to vote on official church matters.



Advent Book Group–starting Tuesday, Dec 2nd
Tuesday evenings at 6 pm in December (Dec 2, 9, 16, 23), we'll be having a book group on C.S. Lewis ***"Till We Have Faces."*** A retelling of the ancient Greek myth of Cupid and Psyche. The novel is a deep exploration of themes including love (both possessive human love and divine love), jealousy, self-deception, faith, and the nature of the divine. Contact Pastor Rob for more information.

Jan. 2nd @ 9:30 am, every 1st Friday of the month, we ring our bells in solidarity with ***Ring Out Danger: People of Faith Opposed to Gun Violence*** (**https://ringoutdanger.org**). Please join us, in front of Bethany, no ringing experience is required.

Bible Study

Wednesdays 3-4pm on zoom. Join to discuss the scripture for the coming Sunday. All are welcome. Email Marilyn for more info mherand@sbcglobal.net

Small Groups – Sign-up at bethanysf.org

Group options: -2nd Saturdays each month @ 8:30am -2nd Wednesdays each month @ 7pm

CONTACT US

If you have articles, photos or announcements that you would like to share, please contact us!

Bethany United Methodist Church
1270 Sanchez St., San Francisco, CA 94114
(415) 647-8393
bethanysfoffice@gmail.com

Find us online at **www.bethanysf.org**
FB **@bethanyumcsf** and IG **@bethany_umc_sf**

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

6: Dona Malan

7: Dominic Bannister