

SYCAMORE TREE

The Monthly Newsletter of Sycamore Congregational Church, U.C.C

September 2020

Volume 129 Number 9

From our Interim Pastor

Discovering the Divine

A few weeks ago, I attended the Torah study presented at the synagogue where Rich Aptaker is a member. Well, it was amazing! There were so many nuggets that enlightened my understanding of the passages from Deuteronomy. One thing in particular was the presenter's view of Abraham and Moses. Abraham discovered divinity, or God on his own. He was the one who followed his own path and found God. Moses was the one who said, "we can't discover God on our own, so here is the teaching. Do this and do that."



I like to think that we need a combination of both self-discovery through our everyday living and being told what to do. Now, being told what to do is tricky. We can't listen to everyone. Some folks don't have your best interest at heart. Some folks give bad advice. Some people are just some people! How do you know you have discovered God in your experience of life? How do you know someone is telling you to do something that is good for you, edifying for your spirit and bringing you to a closer relationship with God?

A colleague of mine said this all the time, "If it is from God, it must come from a place of love. It must be about love." God is love! I believe that most of us recognize something birthed from love. It builds up and does not tear down. It gives hope. It gives help. It plants a seed of joy deep down in our spirit. Something given in love is from God when it takes you out of your comfort zone, when that zone is no longer serving you, so you can experience a new life of freedom, peace and hope.

No matter which way you go about finding truth in God, keep searching. In the book of Matthew it says, "Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened."

Go and Tell! Seek God. Find God. Know God. It's so good. I am telling you the truth. 😊

Blessings of Peace,
Pastor Celeste



Virtual Wednesday Night Bible Study

By Pastor Celeste Fields

We are using the book, *Using our Outside Voice* by Dr. Greg Carey, Professor of New Testament at Lancaster Theological Seminary. The goal of this study is for you to participate in reasonable conversations about the Bible and its significance.

By the end of this study, you will be able to, take accountability for how you interpret the Bible, have the opportunity to practice public interpretation, understand the various arguments in play in biblical interpretation, weigh the ethical and theological implications of your views, offer informed opinions about the Bible that others can understand and you will acquire basic knowledge to interpret the Bible.

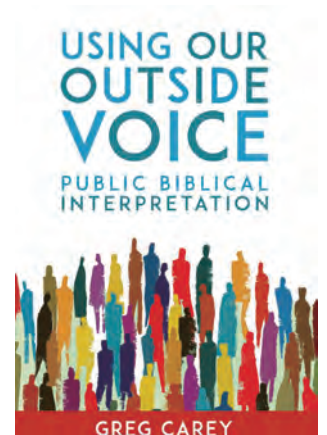
It's a tall order. Let's do it!

Here is the link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82045783209>

Zoom Room 820 478 3209 (September 16th & October 7th)

Wednesday Night Bible Study Class 7:00pm - 8:30pm.



Sermons from Worship Services in August



August 2nd
Pastor Celestine Fields
"Face to Face"
[Voice record](#)



August 16th
Rev. Motomu Ishida
Translator: Chris Yoshii
"Life, directed at others"
「他者に向かう人生」
[Video](#)



August 9th
Rev. Sharon MacArthur
"Reflections on Walking"
[Video](#)



August 23rd
Pastor Celestine Fields
"Be Transformed"
[Video](#)
[Voice record](#)

From the Moderator

by Karen Nishilawa

This month, we have been on a roller coaster of sorts. Pastor Celeste was originally scheduled for knee replacement surgery on August 13th. Then they postponed while Pastor Celeste was to get an additional test/consultation. All ready to go on August 20th, but the wildfires cancelled that one. So now it is another period of waiting and hope. Sooner, rather than later, we pray that Pastor Celeste will get her surgery and relief that she needs.



Sycamore Church has always been a church of compassion, generosity, and community. We are currently focused on supporting the Bay Area Rescue Mission in their work of care for those less fortunate in our community. As COVID-19 continues, more people need services that they provide. Our Sycamore Church family continues to demonstrate our commitment to community by your generous donations. We thank you from the bottoms of our hearts.

In the past, I really wanted to know what we were planning for the next 6 – 12 months. Then COVID-19 happened – so the planning became what are we doing for the next 3 -6 months. As the pandemic wears on, it becomes clear that we cannot plan that far in advance. I was impressed that Yoshimi Kinoshita was going ahead with her plans for the Preschool to reopen this month. Well, COVID-19 continues to rage and reality set in that it would not be SAFE to bring the school back to life. So, planning takes a narrower focus. Can we survive without the rummage sale in May? The Annual Bazaar in September? The fall rummage sale in October? Church Council is a monthly meeting that helps us focus on the month just completed and a look into our short term future. Thanks to Kurt Buss, Silvia Akinaga, Reiko Kamada, Chris Aptaker, David Inada, Darold Davis and the rest of the financial team – your ongoing work keeps the bills paid, and the income deposited to the correct accounts – and Kurt gives us a monthly financial picture of where we stand. I cannot begin to thank everyone for their continued generous support of our Church!

It is always so exciting when Sunday comes – we get to see everyone on Zoom! Please join us for worship. We are here for you! Please stay safe, stay healthy, and PRAY that the wildfires are extinguished, that affected people will have the strength to move forward, and that COVID-19 will soon be diminished/eliminated. Please do your part by wearing masks and washing hands. BE SAFE!!



Bazaar Sunday is coming up

by Georgia Fujikawa

Sycamore would hardly be Sycamore without a Bazaar Sunday every September. So this year, when the coronavirus is keeping us all indoors and away from group gatherings, we thought that we would celebrate the tradition in a different way.

On Sunday, September 20, as part of the Zoom worship service at 11:00am, we are going to celebrate Bazaars of the past, and the long history of this event. There have been many changes, and lots of experiments, but also much that has remained solidly in place from the 1960's to now. The history goes back farther than that, but the first picture album I can find is from 1967. The pictures are amazing, the food looks delicious, and the familiar faces are wonderful to see.

The thing that strikes me most though, after going through photo albums spanning many years, is that they all show people having fun. People are smiling and laughing, holding up small children, obviously working very hard but enjoying the experience. I have often thought that the bazaar reveals the soul of Sycamore. It is who we are at our best, and that is reason for celebration. Come join us for the hour.

From Sycamore Christian Preschool

by Yoshimi Kinoshita

The deadline for submission of this newsletter article has passed. I told Reiko that I haven't had any good or exciting news about preschool for the past few weeks so I can't write an article. But one question came up to myself tonight. It was that what I have learned and have continued to learn at the Sycamore Church over the past 15 years. The first is to give life to God, live life to the fullest and use the skills and gifts that I have for those who need them and make an effort to continue to polish them. Second, don't be afraid of death in the life of encounters and parting. To have hope for something that is ahead of death. Third, I realize that I am always loved and encouraged and alive by God, my family and friends.

May God, your love and grace be poured more and more on my friends who are now waiting for the return of his loved ones with great determination and certain hope.



Food Drive

We are continuing to collect non perishable food items for the Bay Area Rescue Mission. Donations may be dropped off at Sycamore Church Tuesday - Thursday from 1:00 - 2:00pm and Friday 1:00 - 3:00pm. Please contact Karen Inouye at 510 237-5676 if you would like someone to pickup your donations at your home. Thank you for your help in our efforts to help those in need.

Conference Delegates

Our Conference, NCNCUCC, is looking for delegates for the Annual Gathering (AG) in October. The delegates are members of NCNCUCC churches who are able to vote on important issues at the AG. Can we get two delegates from Sycamore; one each, Japanese and English speaker to vote our core values? If you are interested, please contact Pastor Celeste by email or text.

Election - Less than 70 days Away!

Former President Obama, Michelle Obama, John Lewis, Jessie Jackson, and Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III all stressed the importance of folks getting out and voting.

With that in mind, we invite you to participate in THE BIG SEND – a virtual “Get Out the Vote” letter writing party sponsored by our Conference. The goal of this non-partisan event is to increase voter turn-out, all across the nation, so the will of the people can prevail.

[To learn more, click here.](#)



Our little girl has arrived!

by Tomoko Fuse-Murao

I'm happy to announce the arrival of my baby, Sumireko Sophia Murao. She arrived at 9:45 am on July 2nd, 2020.

I and my family started to live in Bay Area since last September. This is my first experience to give birth to a baby in the U.S.A. because I delivered my first child in Japan. I was planning to get my parents to come and help us, but the plan fell out due to the spread of COVID19. So, I had many worries about my delivery and postpartum life. At such time, Ms. Akiko Taylor, a wonderful doula, contacted me and supported my delivery, which was really reassuring. After the online session for preparation with Akiko, I have started to think that things will work out!!



On the day of delivery, I got into a panic when labor began. Akiko came all the way, and she encouraged and supported me both physically and spiritually. Finally, I arrived at the hospital; my delivery only took 10 minutes! It was a quick and easy birth!

After discharge from the hospital, I've started my new life with a newborn baby. That was so hard because I have to take care of my older daughter, and I can't control my body the way I imagine. Thanks to my dear Sycamore family, I was able to overcome this tough situation. Especially, I would like to say thank you to everyone who supported the meal-train. My family was helped a lot with wonderful dishes made with love. Thank you very much for your support.

At the time of the last delivery, my husband and I lived apart because of our work. So this is the first time for him to live with a newborn baby. My older daughter is taking good care of her little sister, although she got confused with the new surroundings. Our family is enjoying this life with a newborn baby here, far away from home, thanks to the Sycamore family!

This place, Sumireko was born, is special for our family. We have to go back to Japan next year, but we wish that the presence of Sumireko connects our family and Sycamore family and Church ever after.



Let Us Remember in Our Prayers...

Holy Love, Today, we know suffering. We may not understand it, but we know what it feels like, as it a collective suffering. Many feel the pains of shelter in place, and this virus deeper than most. We lift up to you O God, those who are sick. Send your healing. We pray your peace over those who are grieving the death of a loved one. Have mercy. We ask that you supply the needs of all those who have lost employment, have not received unemployment compensation, and/or closed their business. Bless. Give rest to essential workers, doctors, nurses and all those who work that we may be safe. In your great name. Amen!

Acknowledgments for August 1 - August 23, 2020

Sycamore is proud to be a self-supporting church - all operating and ministry expenses are funded by donations from members and friends of Sycamore and from special fundraising efforts. Thank you!

NAMES:

Silvia Akinaga including in
memory of Hisaye Akinaga
Allison Chung
Hiroko Corpuz
Rev. Gayle Dickson
Jan Fabini
Rev. Celestine Fields
Satoko Fogarty
Georgia & Dr. Mark Fujikawa
Mari Hayama
Dr. Harlan & Marilyn Head
Masao Tom Inada
Karen Inouye
Shingo/Reiko Kamada
Roslyn/John Kartychak
Aiko Kobayashi Gray
Nori & Akiko Kobayashi
Kana Lopez

Kathleen/Jimmy Louie
Rev. Sharon MacArthur
Eiko Matsuoka
Martha Matsuoka
Gloria Morita
Karen Nishikawa
Muts & Dr. Philip Nishino
Toom Noble (Noble Family)
Stan & Bea Nomura
Sara Pillow
Hiro Taniguchi
Akiko Taylor
Sherry Watson
Rie Webster
Sumi Wu
Tasha Yorozu & Sam Suttle
Chris Yoshii

Donations were made to the following Funds:

General Fund
General Fund In Lieu of
Bazaar
Nichigobu
Property Maintenance
Property Maintenance for
Kitchen, Parking Lot
upgrades
Bay Area Rescue Mission



Donations can be made online at <https://sycamoreucc.churchcenter.com/giving> or by mailing your checks to Sycamore Church, 1111 Navellier St. El Cerrito, CA 94530

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SYCAMORE TREE



「追い求める生き方」 石田 求

「すべての人との平和を、また聖なる生活を追い求めなさい。」
(ヘブライ人への手紙12章14節)

今年には第二次世界大戦終戦から75年という節目の年を迎えました。各局のテレビ番組でもかつての戦争について放映されていました。戦争を体験された方々は、今でもふとした時に戦場の光景が頭に浮かび、あの悲惨な戦争を繰り返してはならないと口を揃えて語っていました。新たな思いをもって、この先の世界の平和について考えていかなければなりません。

現在の私たちは戦争がないという点においては平和を享受しています。しかし平和というのは戦争がないことだけを指すものではありません。あらゆる問題、課題が私たちの平和を妨げています。平和のために用いられていくように、ますます祈りを厚くしていきたいと思えます。

私たちキリスト者は、神から与えられているものを受けることによって生涯を歩んでいきます。神の愛、救い、永遠のいのち、といったものは私たちの力ではどうすることもできず、ただ神の恵みとして受けることによってしか得られないものです。ただひたすら受けるのみです。受けるということは信仰者の基本的姿勢と言えるでしょう。しかし聖書は、平和というものが自らの手で獲得していく、追い求めていくものであると語ります。

受ける生き方とはキリスト者にとって出発点となるものであると思えます。なんでも自分の力で生きてきたと思っていた生き方から、実は神の恵みのうちに生かされていたことを知る時に、私たちは信仰者としての第一歩を歩み出します。神との関係を生きるために、まず神から多くのものを受けていることを知らなければなりません。しかし、受けていることだけに留まるなら、それは第一歩から進んでいません。神との関係をさらに深めるために、受けることと同時に、追い求める生き方へと進んでいかなければならないのです。

平和は神に支配されることです。言い換えると、神の御心がこの世界に満たされることです。この神の御心を追い求めることが、私たちの次のステップです。神がたくさんの恵みを与えてくださることに感謝しつつ、その与える御心とは何か、を追い求めるのです。受動から能動へ。この信仰者の道のりを日々新たな月も生き抜く者でありたいと思えます。

私にとって大事なことは何？

グレー愛子

今度は山火事。煙臭い空気が家の中まで満ちて頭が痛くなります。でも、自分の家にいられるだけ幸せ。家を失った方、避難している方、消火活動をしている方たちのことを思うと早く鎮火しますようにと祈るだけです。つい先日、大阪の友人のフェイスブックでの投稿にかなりショックを受けました。それは7月にすい臓がんで後1年の命だと医者に告知されたと。自分は十分にしたいことをして来た人生なので治療は緩和治療だけで他の治療は一切しないと公表。今までの出会い、お付き合いを心から感謝します。と。彼女の正直さ、人生への賛歌とも言えるあふれる想いを知ってただただ出会えたことに感謝するのは私の方です。彼女とは一緒にグアテマラに行きました。そして娘の高校卒業の友人との旅で泊めて頂いたり、私も数年前にお邪魔しました。彼女はタイが好きで何度もエイズの子供たちの支援の宿に宿泊、タイ語も勉強してましたね。今、淡々と日々の生活を息子さんとご主人と送っている彼女はクリスチャンではありません。これから痛みがひどくなるだろうけれどあわてないでわかめのように身を浮かばせると言っています。これって神に委ねるってことですね。信仰があっても、同じような状況になったときに彼女のように私は素直に日々を送れるのだろうか疑問です。すべてのことには神様の時があります。それをその時々感謝して彼女のように受け入れられますように、そして彼女の痛みが少しでも和らぎますようにと心から祈ります。コロナ騒ぎの中、自分にとって必要なもの、大事なものの意味を思い知らされた出来事でした。写真は私にとって大切な織ること、そして私なりの人生の賛歌。



幼稚園より

木下佳美

このニュースレターの提出の締め切りが過ぎてしまい、私は礼子先生に、ここ数週間の間、幼稚園のことで良いニュースやイクサイティングなニュースがないから記事が書けないと言いました。けれど、そんな中、私の心を駆け巡ったことは、シカモア教会で過去15年の間に私自身が学んだ事、そして、今も学び続けている事は何だろうかという自分への静かな問いでした。一つ目は、神さまから与えられた命、人生を精一杯に生きる事、自分の持っている技や賜物を必要としている人のために用いて、それを磨き続ける努力をする事。二つ目は、出会いと別れを繰り返す人生に於いて、死というものを恐れない事。死の先にあるものに希望を持つという事。三つ目は、自分はいつも神様や家族、友人に愛されて、励まされて、生きているという事への気づきです。今、大きな覚悟と確かな希望を持って愛する人の帰りを待っている友に、あなたの愛と恵みが益々注がれますように。病と闘っている友に、癒しと平安とあなたの愛が優しく注がれますように。どうか、私たちの愛が友に届きますように。今、この時、一緒にいてください。



産まれました!

村尾(布施)智子

2020年7月2日9時45分、パークレー市のアルタベーツ病院で、第二子を無事に出産しました。名前は、村尾 Sophia 董子です。

私は、昨年9月から夫の留学に帯同してベイエリアに住んでいます。長女(4歳)は、日本で出産したため、今回が初めての海外出産でした。さすがに海外でのワンオペ育児は難しいだろうと、日本の両親に手伝いを頼むことも考えていましたが、コロナの影響で、日米の行き来が事実上できなくなり、私たち家族だけで出産に臨むことになりました。出産はどのように進むだろうか、産後の生活を乗り越えられるだろうか、ぼんやりとした大きな不安を抱えていました。そんな時に、日語部のテイラー明子さんが声をかけてくださり、今回の出産をサポートしていただきました。私の不安を一つ一つクリアにして一緒に解決して下さり、出産が目前に迫ったころには「なるようになる!」という気持ちになれました。

出産当日、実際に陣痛が来ると焦ってパニックになりそうでしたが、明子さんも駆けつけて下さり、病院に行くまでの間、落ち着いて痛みを逃すよう励まし、支えていただきました。そして、病院に着いてからなんと15分で、出産を終えてしまいました。安産でした。

退院後、朝も夜もない新生児との生活が始まりました。おまけに長女のケアもあり、自分の身体も思うように動かないなかでしたが、シカモア教会の皆さんのサポートのおかげで、乗り越えることができています。特に、ミールトレインのご協力をいただき、美味しいお料理を運んでくださった皆さん、余裕が無い生活の中で食事のことを考えなくて良かったうえ、皆さんの愛情あふれる温かいお料理を家族でいただくことができ、本当に助かりました。ありがとうございました。

長女の出産後、私達夫婦は仕事の関係で夫が単身赴任で離れて暮らしていました。なので、夫にとっては、赤ちゃんが四六時中いる生活は初めてです。また、長女も初めは環境の変化に戸惑ったようですが、とても妹をかわいがって世話してくれています。こうして、異国の地で、次女の子育てを家族で楽しめているのも、シカモアファミリーの支えのおかげと、心から感謝しています。董子が産まれたこの地は、私達にとっても特別な場所です。私達は来年日本に帰国する予定ですが、董子の存在が、私達家族とシカモアファミリー、そして教会を末永く繋いでくれることを願っています。

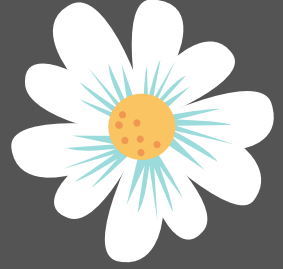


☆ズンバ教室☆

今まで月曜日に行っていたズンバ教室が火曜日の朝10時半に移行しました。教会メンバーの小林章子さんが担当してくれています。ズームを通して行っているのでお時間のある方は是非ご参加ください。Zoomのリンクは下記の通りです。

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82880251961>

- 9月6日(日) 日語部礼拝3:00pm
- 9月12日(土) 一麦会 5:30 (Zoomより。参加希望者はお問い合わせください。)
- 9月13日(日) 日語部礼拝3:00pm
- 9月20日(日) バザーサンデー合同礼拝11:00 am
日語部バイブルスタディー 4:00pm
- 9月27日(日) 教会役員会 12:00 pm
日語部礼拝3:00pm



*現在日語部牧師不在及び、教会が閉じているため全ての礼拝はZoomより行っています。Zoomミーティングは下記のリンクよりお入りいただけます。

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/611700303>

～シカモア組合教会集会案内～

- ◇日語部礼拝: 毎週日曜日午後3時
- ◇英語部礼拝: 毎週日曜日午前11時
- ◇聖書研究会: 毎月第3日曜日午後4時
- ◇Worship Night: 休み中
- ◇友の会: 休み中

*教会が閉じているので全ての行事は基本的にお休みかZoomより行っています。

質問がある方は日語部議長の吉井クリス、
(chris@yoshii.me)

または教会までお問い合わせください。

tel: 510-525-0727

email: sycamoreoffice22@gmail.com

- ◇映画上映会: 毎週水曜日午後6時半
Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87524001783>
Meeting ID: 875 2400 1783
- ◇ズンバ教室: 毎週火曜日午前10時半
- ◇お散歩会: 随時
- ◇絵本を読む会: 随時
- ◇Sycamore FC: 随時
- ◇Praise Hula 随時





Sycamore Congregational Church, U.C.C.

"Embracing Japanese Culture, Language, and Christian Faith"

Interim Minister/Eigo Language Pastor

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Newsletter Editor

Chieko O'Dea and Reiko Kamada

*The Sycamore Tree is published on the **last Thursday** of each month. Articles are welcomed. The deadline for articles is seven days before publication and are included as space allows.*

For address changes, call 510-525-0727
e-mail: sycamoreoffice22@gmail.com
Website: www.sycamoreucc.org

*We are Sycamore United Church of Christ...
Rooted in a legacy of Japanese ministries;
Rejoicing in the gospel and worship;
Reaching out to all people*

Live Streaming for

- English or Joint Worship Service

<https://zoom.us/j/252245482> ID: 252 245 482

- Japanese Worship Service

<https://zoom.us/j/611700303> ID: 611 700 303

- Tuesday Zumba class

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82880251961> ID:828 8025 1961

- Wednesday Night Bible Study

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82045783209> ID:820 4578 3209

- Giving to Sycamore Church

<https://sycamoreucc.churchcenter.com/giving>

Sycamore Christian Preschool

The preschool is currently closed.
For more information, please contact the school.
sycamore.c.preschool@gmail.com.

Sunday Morning Schedule

*Please see the Virtual Worship Schedule.
Regular scheduling will resume at a later date.*

Virtual Worship Schedule

Sun, September 6, 11:00 am
English Worship Service

Sun, September 13, 11:00 am
English Worship Service

Sun, September 20, 3:00 pm
Communion Sunday Joint Worship Service

Sun, September 27, 11:00 am
Memorial Sunday English Worship Service

<https://zoom.us/j/252245482>
Meeting ID: 252 245 482
Phone Number: 1 408-638-0968