



## Pastor's Message

Dear Neighbors in Christ,

I could certainly use a visit from a dear neighbor in a sweater and sneakers who listens deeply and affirms me to my soul, how about you? This fall we are beginning a worship series with the person and persona of Mr. Rogers. I grew up watching his television show in the 80's and I would bet many of us can tell stories of how Mr. Rogers has encouraged us, our children, and/or our grandchildren over the years.

If you are unaware of the Mr. Rogers legacy, well I think you're in for a treat. Mr. Roger's ministry offered quality, affirming, loving programming to generations of children and families. He embodied listening, empathy, and acceptance. He also modeled for adults how we can bring a little imagination (make believe), curiosity, and fun (singing) into our lives and make room for new experiences and people. We will be working from a book, The Mister Rogers Effect, by Dr. Anita Knight Kuhnley, who names seven principles that are foundational to Rogers' work. We will explore these themes during worship and will incorporate music and words from the show.

I invite you to join me/us in worship and during small-group discussion and allow some of his hope and wisdom touch your heart. If there are neighbors you think would appreciate our time together, please invite them along – all are welcome.

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## The SEER September 2021

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Also note that while we begin transitioning to in-person worship, we are working to eventually have an online Sunday presence most if not every week, so neighbors from near and far will be able to participate (at least in part!). Please note our worship schedule for September as we are going to bounce between in-person and online worship. Also, please note that worship will begin at *10 am sharp* starting September 12<sup>th</sup>.

In Christ,

Pastor Diana

## Small Group Discussion

Based on *The Mister Rogers Effect: 7 Secrets to Bringing Out the Best in yourself and Others from America's Beloved Neighbor*.

### Tuesday Evenings

September 14 through end of October (7 weeks)

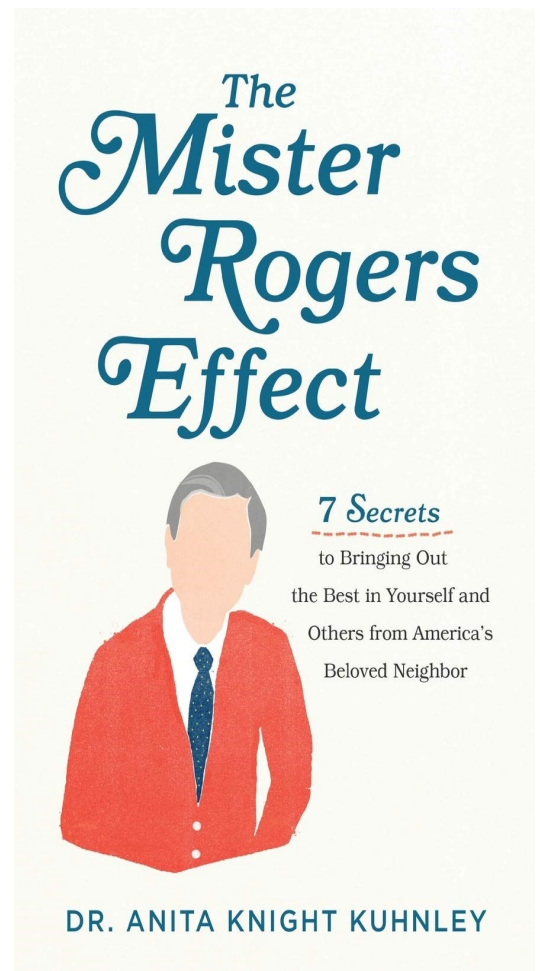
6:30pm (can change depending on participant need)

Join me in the courtyard in-person. Bring a chair (if you're able). Bring dinner if you need it!

\*Second session on Zoom – if there's enough interest... please email Rev. Diana to setup.

We will read one chapter each week so please arrive prepared to offer your own reflection on the reading.

Books can be purchased online (\$12-16), ordered at bookstore, purchased for e-readers, etc. A few copies are in the office (\$12 – supplies are limited) – email the office to reserve.



## Council Highlights August, 2021 (at two meetings!)

Winnie Hogoboom, Clerk

- Approved an all-church picnic in the Robinson/Petersen back yard. Detailed plans were presented for ensuring health protocols.
- Discussed the concerns of our unsheltered neighbors, and established a taskforce to present a plan in the near future.
- Rejoiced in having been able to support four of our youth attending Camp Tamarack this summer by paying half the fees out of our campership fund.
- Approved the Regathering Committee's recommendation, backed by the Worship Team, to hold outside worship in the parking lot. The Worship Team and others will canvass the neighbors to support a permit for using microphones and speakers. Again, health protocols are planned.

## Safe-Regathering Committee Report

August 31, 2021

The SRC regrets to recommend the building remain closed for the time being. Recommending what feels like a step backward weighs heavily on all our hearts as we all truly want to regather and resume socially non-distanced activities. However, the science and the ways the variant is moving through the world gives us cause for concern.

The SRC recommends that the building remain closed to all groups except as needed for worship, service music preparation and building maintenance. Staff and church officers are also allowed inside to carry out their responsibilities. Outdoor worship, as previously described, (masks on, socially distanced, hand sanitizer used) is still our top recommendation. Church and/or user groups that would like to meet outside on our patio without the benefit of bathrooms or church chairs are welcome... we would ask that such interest be cleared with the church office ahead of time.

We will continue to monitor the guidelines established by the county and state to determine if future changes to this policy are recommended.

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## Worship Schedule for September

Due to ongoing concerns for safe regathering, our worship will alternate this month between in-person worship outside in our parking lot and online services on Zoom. We know this is not ideal, and we hope that this will accommodate a variety of needs so that we can all worship together in ways that are safe and healthy for all.

September 5	Labor Day Worship on Zoom at 10:30
September 12	Parking Lot In-Person Worship at 10:00 (new time!)
September 19	Worship on Zoom at 10:00
September 26	Parking Lot In-Person Worship at 10:00



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## Outreach News

Ruth Tucker Bogart

### Haiti Relief

There is so much pain in the world – but we can do a small part toward relief for Haiti.

UCC is stepping up to the plate for Haiti once again:

<https://www.ucc.org/ucc-haiti-appeal/>.

You can donate in several ways:

- Donate directly through the link on the above site.
- Write a check to the church with Haiti in the memo line.
- Donate via the Givelify app – be sure to designate Haiti as the recipient.

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## Financial Report

Kathy Johnson, Secretary

Our love for and commitment to our church has been evident in the online attendance and the wonderful turnout for the picnic and first in-person worship since March 2020. There's plenty of financial evidence as well, partly in the fact that most members are keeping up with their pledges or even exceeding them.

If you aren't sure of the status of your pledge and aren't using the Breeze database, feel free to contact the Financial Secretary at [fkathj@sonic.net](mailto:fkathj@sonic.net) or by phone at 707-292-8684. She will be very happy to hear from you and to provide you with details.

As of July 31, we had received \$86,228 toward operations; total pledged for the year was \$128,596.

In addition, there was \$8,260 donated toward all Missions: FISH, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, the school supplies drive, and our general Missions.

During that time we also received \$715 toward the virtual plate which goes into the general fund.

You can always find ways to donate at our website: <https://fcsr.org/giving/>

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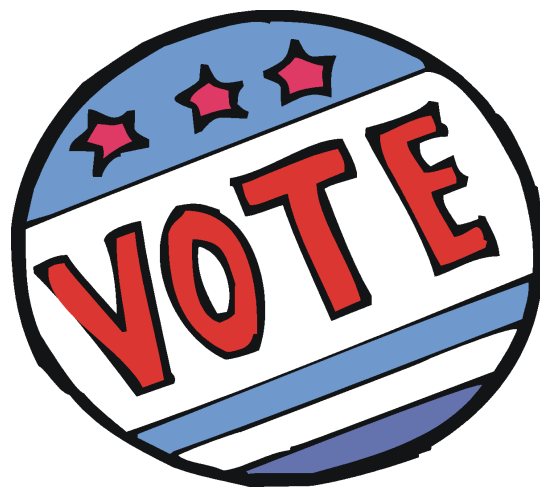
### Message from the Church Office Administrator

#### A Little Switch in Office-Open Days

The office will be open on Monday,  
September 13 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

It will be closed on Tuesday,  
September 14

Paddy will be working as a polling  
clerk that day. She will be back in the  
office that week on Thursday.



## **“I just had to know it is real”**

*The following story comes from First Congregational United Church of Christ Santa Rosa’s story team. Our goal is to publish stories that help us get to know each other better and to live into our church’s mission, which is to make God’s love visible.*

During the AIDS crisis, I worked as a receptionist in a church whose main ministry was to the Lesbian and Gay community.

One afternoon the phone rang and a young woman excitedly said, “I just saw on television someone say that God loves gay people. I watched to the end of the show and they gave this phone number. Is that true? Does God love gay people?”

As we talked, I discovered that she had grown up in the most anti-gay church in Sacramento. She had fallen in love and after much personal anguish had joined the woman she loved in Santa Cruz. Every day her mother called and begged her to “come back home and live a Godly life.” Eventually she gave in. The mother won.

That afternoon she had been lying on the couch of her mother's house, mindlessly flipping the TV remote from one channel to the next. She was trying to make up her mind about how she was going to commit suicide.

She happened to hit the Comcast Access channel during the broadcast of our Sunday service – at the moment when the pastor said, “God loves gay people.” We spent some time discussing the six Bible verses that people typically use to condemn gay people. She had read them many times and could quote all of them from memory.

She calmed down as we talked and eventually the phone call ended.

Five minutes later she called again wanting to know if anyone would be at the church at six o'clock that evening. All of her family was working, and she would not have access to a car until then. I promised her that I had a key and would wait for her.

At six o'clock she knocked on the church door. I opened it, and she barely acknowledged me, walking past me and putting both hands on the wall and pushing as if she could push the wall over. I gave her

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the nickel tour and we ended up in the sanctuary. She put her hands on the back of a pew, knelt and ran her hands over the carpet. She looked up at me with tears streaming down her face and said, "I just had to know it is real."

Churches wound people every day. At my church today – First Congregational United Church of Christ Santa Rosa, we aim to convey the message that there is a place where wounded people can come, look at the rainbow stained glass window in the sanctuary, and put their hands on the wall and know, "It is real."



Photo: Wikipedia

Every week we reiterate our pledge with these words: "No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." To a stranger or visitor, and to each other, that is our commitment today.

We hang banners on our church that say to the stranger, "Our commitment is ongoing, this month, next month."

Having a stained-glass rainbow in our sanctuary – though it was created before the Gay Pride movement, says to the stranger, "Our commitment is for as long as this church exists, forever."



- 9/11 Bill Gibson
- Rachel Kau Taylor
- 9/12 Rebecca Kendall
- 9/16 Delores Seymour
- 9/20 Kathy Johnson
- 9/27 Joan Robinson

## A Tale of Two Pianos

Do you remember that we had two pianos in Friendship Hall? An older upright that had been moved from the Choir Room when it was transformed into the Sunday School room, and the newer one, donated by deceased long-time member LaVerna Brown. The older one was put up 'for sale' for free, and we were pleased when the first person to respond was Rebecca Kendall, saying she wants the whole family to learn how to play. Two days later, it was in the Kendall home.

Hmm...will we hear a recital in 2022?



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PLEASE  
PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE