

Sierra Christian Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

"If at first you don't succeed, try doing it the way your mom told you to do it from the start."

—more Mother's Day quotes on page 9



A Pastor, a puppy, and 3 beloved members of Sierra Christian, all in the same photo box—Sandy Barry (left), Connie Cole, and Cliff Cole.



We celebrate with Liz 80 good years!



With family and friends around, Liz Throne celebrated her 80th birthday Saturday, April 29, a few days after her actual April 26th birthday. Not only did we learn that her middle name is Ann, we learned that her favorite song is Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah," that she longs to visit Japan, loves tacos, favors the color purple, is a cat person, though dogs run a close second, is more a fan of winter than summer, is more a night person than a day person, prefers books to movies, and, as you can see in the photo, is not opposed to a slice of birthday cake now and then. She is also a good friend, but we knew that already.



Pastor's Pitch: In Honor of Mothers

"Why do I say 'Him'? Is it because for so long men have thought of God as the Father/. Yet he must also be the Mother."

--Robert Nathan, *The Summer Meadows*

Most Sunday mornings, I take a few prayerful moments before worship. I stand outside and marvel at the spiritual might of our property, and if my sermon feels solid in my head and heart, I zero in on the people in my life and send them my love and respect on currents of air, maybe carried on the wings of angels, maybe in the innocent perfect aura of Golden Retriever puppies. I cannot say for sure. On Mother's Day, my thoughts turn especially to the women I know and have known, who have shown me how to be a strong woman, a woman of compassion and worth, some of them so full of hope and thanksgiving I weep, and others crumbling under the weight of unresolved baggage and fear I weep. Sometimes love means weeping.

Women everywhere wake up on Mother's Day with joy, or heartache, some with their love beside them or in the backyard playing with the dogs. Some alone and struggling to make ends meet; some with an aging parent in the next room and others with little ones crawling over them clutching handmade cards and delivering a breakfast only a mother could stomach.

To all of us, I offer The following Mother's Day prayer:

May you know that God is with you if you are like Tamar, struggling with infertility, or a miscarriage.

May you know that God is with you if you are like Rachel, counting the women among your family and friends who year by year and month by month get pregnant, while you wait.

May you know that God is with you if you are like Naomi, and have known the bitter sting of a child's death.

May you know that God is with you if you are like Joseph and Benjamin, and your Mom has died.

May you know that God is with you if your relationship with your Mom was marked by trauma, abuse, or abandonment, or she just couldn't parent you the way you needed.

May you know that God is with you if you've been like Moses' mother and put a child up for adoption, trusting another family to love your child into adulthood.

May you know that God is with you if you've been like Pharaoh's daughter, called to love children who are not yours by birth (and thus the mother who brought that child into your life, even if it is complicated).

May you know that God is with you if you, like many, are watching (or have watched) your mother age and disappear into the long goodbye of dementia or Alzheimer's.

May you know that God is with you if you, like Mary, are pregnant for the very first time and waiting breathlessly for the miracle of your first child.

May you know that God is with you if your children have turned away from you, painfully closing the door on relationship, leaving you holding your broken heart in your hands. And like Hagar, now you are mothering alone.

May you know that God is with you if motherhood is your greatest joy and toughest struggle all rolled into one.

May you know that God is with you if you are watching your child battle substance abuse, a public legal situation, mental illness, or another situation which you can merely watch unfold.

May you know that God is with you if you, like so many women before you, do not wish to be a mother, are



Pastor is the Rev. Christine Pobanz-Hartmire. She reminds us of the beautiful truth that everyone is always welcomed at Jesus' table.

Prayers & Celebrations

- ➡ To all mothers everywhere: Happy Mother's Day. (One day is probably insufficient to celebrate and honor your place in our world!)
- ➡ Prayers for the continued healing and good news from Sandy Barry.
- ➡ Prayers for Cliff Cole as he bounces back from a mini stroke and undergoes tests for some other emerging medical issues.
- ➡ Prayers for Iris Pobanz that she may continue to have good days and recognize the love of her husband, Norm, and family.
- ➡ A celebration of the miraculous might of life, as Pastor Christine, John, and Daven watch those little puppies grow and develop into little dogs. It happens all the time, puppies being born and growing into dogs, but it does not diminish the wonder of it one bit! The mystical, magical breathtaking joy of it, not one bit!
- ➡ Prayers of action for Diane Wilson's medical team to get her scheduled for cataract surgery soon!
- ➡ Happy Birthday to Plato, born May 21, 0428.
- ➡ And while we're at it, happy May birthdays to Pete Seeger (May 3, 1919), Florence Nightengale (May 12, 1820), and Machiavelli (May 3, 1469).
- ➡ Prayers of support and encouragement and continued strength to Pastor Casey Martinez-Tinnin and the Loomis Basin Congregational United Church of Christ. Being in the right, doing the right thing, and openly offering a seat at the table to everyone is not always easy.
- ➡ Deep fountains of love to Pastor Christine. We celebrate her every day!

Some Notes Worth Noting

1. Board of Directors meets monthly now, with the next meeting scheduled for 6:30 pm Wednesday, May 17, on Zoom.
2. Books that Bind meets Thursday, May 18 at 6:30 pm on Zoom. We are reading "The Rose Code," by Kate Quinn.
3. The Men's Fellowship Breakfast will be the first Saturday in May, which happens to be May 6, at 9 am, on Zoom.
4. Senate Bill 4 has made it through the State Senate's Governance and Finance Committee and now faces scrutiny from Appropriations. The bill would enable religious institutions to bypass local zoning ordinances to build affordable housing on their property. This bill is welcome news to Sierra Christian and Christian Church Homes. Its authors hope to have it signed into law for January 2024.
5. The Disciples Pentecost Offering, which supports new church development and planning and sustaining is scheduled for May 21 and May 28.
6. The Multi-Regional Men's Retreat is scheduled for Saturday, July 15 from 1-4 pm, a Zoom event.
7. Summer camps at the Community of the Great Commission are being planned by the Outdoor Ministries Committee. Please put these dates on your personal and church calendars. The dates are: May 16-18, 2023: CGC Workday. June 8-11—Adult Camp; June 18-22—Junior Camp; June 18-24—Chi Rho Camp; June 24-26—JOY Camp; June 25-July 1—CYF Camp
8. Family camping is once again being offered at the Community of the Great Commission camp this summer. Please contact Leanne Stump at leannestump925@gmail.com for details and to schedule dates. Areas available for Family Rentals: Bobbitt cabins \$80/Night (5 available—Sleep 10 each; Claar House \$500/Night (Sleeps 20); Summer cabins \$55/Night (5 available—Sleep 8 each); Tent camping \$40/4 person/site.

A Grandfather, Social Media, and Avoiding Real Life

My best friend from junior and senior high school just became a grandfather for the second time. When I asked him how he felt about this, not to mention the many miles and years since we met in 7th grade, he simply said, “Old and worried.”

It turned out he wasn’t talking about his bad knee and possible knee replacement surgery, nor his sore back or swollen prostate. The worry that had him by the ankles for the longest time about the increasing thickness of his glasses, being bald and 50 pounds heavier than he was when we graduated high school, have been replaced by concern and understandable worry for his grandchildren. Both his daughters, mothers of these grandkids, are schoolteachers, and he hears their stories about how kids nowadays prefer online life to living their real lives because their online lives serve as an intermediary and distraction from what they don’t like about themselves and their world. Online you can mute yourself, render yourself an unperson, don a disguise, remove yourself from existence, and in so doing avoid the pain of being alive.

Sammy wondered how he may have failed his daughters.

“We birth them, clothe them, feed them, send them to school, go to the beach and warn them about waves and the rip tide, but I know I never taught or showed my girls how to deal with the inevitability of sadness and the need to come to terms with themselves.

“I think my timing was pretty good,” he added.

and were able to learn that wherever they go that’s where they are, who they are, and so much of being alive is accepting who you are, even if you may not always like yourself.

“They are old enough to have avoided the 24/7 social media onslaught we see today and were able to learn that wherever they go that’s where they are, who they are, and so much of being alive is accepting who you are, even if you may not always like yourself.

“But what about my grandchildren, Johnny? What if all this online crap gets in the way of that? I mean, you read all the time about kids hooked on social media because there they can pretend they are not who they are, and then get so dang lost they never do figure out who they are and something horrific, tragic,

results.”

He couldn’t see me nodding because we were on an old-fashioned phone call, but I was, because my wife and I have witnessed the addictive power of electronic devices and digital tools first hand—the socially

the potential for addiction undermines free choice and makes sensible use far more difficult. The result is simply that we are raising a generation that develop a deeply unhealthy relationship with these devices and their accompanying apps and use them to avoid real life and feel that they can’t stop.

corrosive might of social media that makes it too easy for kids to hide the selves they don’t love and can’t understand. And that’s by design; these social media apps our young people hide in and behind are designed to compel people to use them irresponsibly. This is why products like cigarettes are heavily regulated by the government; the potential for addiction undermines free choice and makes sensible use far more difficult. The result is simply that we are raising a generation that develop a deeply unhealthy relationship with these devices and their accompanying apps and use them to avoid real life and feel that they can’t stop.

TikTok isn’t just the dangerous because it shortens attention spans and shows kids unachievable lifestyles and promulgates incredibly unhealthy dynamics and mental illness fads. It’s dangerous because it’s so remarkably effective at keeping people from putting the phone down for a while. Same is true of Twitter, Snapchat, and Whatsapp (and, oh, the list goes on).

After thinking about all this at the expense of the work on my desk, I sent Sam an email describing what I would tell my grandchildren if I had any.

“I would pull them aside regularly, I wrote him, and tell them with every ton of love I felt for them: You are you, and you will always be you; we live here, on this planet, in this culture, as this species; you live in the times you live in, and you will never live anywhere else. There’s no escape that reality. The world gets better, and it gets worse. Your life gets easier, and it gets harder. Progress happens. Happiness is possible. But the world is an irredeemably broken place, tragedy,

We are a Movement for Wholeness in a Fragmented World

In the beginning, every church was new. Early disciples came together, sharing all things in common, breaking bread with glad and generous hearts. Jesus sent them out, two by two, not to “plant” churches, but to proclaim good news, to experience the hospitality and wisdom of neighbors.

We believe God is calling the Church back to becoming new... back to who we are: a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

The Pentecost Offering this year, received in congregations on **May 21 and 28**, supports the regional new church movement and New Church Ministry efforts to equip, train, and empower new leaders.

So, thank you. For participating in the new thing God is doing — just as in the beginning.



New General Ministry VP, Chief of Staff, Selected

The Office of General Minister and President is pleased to announce Rev. Yvonne T. Gilmore as the new Vice President and Chief of Staff of the Office of General Ministry and President.

The OGMP provides leadership for the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, and supports the General Minister and President.

Rev. Gilmore leads the development and implementation of the Church Narrative Project, a ministry of the Office of General Minister and President, and serves as a member of the Governance Committee. She recently offered leadership across the Christian Church in her service as Interim Administrative Secretary of the National Convocation and Associate General Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. From 2013-2020, Rev. Gilmore served as Associate Dean of Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago where she also co-taught in the Master of Divinity Arts of Ministry sequence at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago and as project director of the Constructive Theologies Project.

In addition to serving the church through both general ministry and higher education positions, Rev. Gilmore has served as a new church pastor and chaplain. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from The American University, and a Master of Divinity from the University of Chicago Divinity School.

Ever committed to the cultivation of thought leadership and community formation, she co-directs “Living Justice: An Anti-Racist Practicum,” a justice learning and innovation lab that seeks to test out new approaches for connecting transformative Disciples leaders and ideas at Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago.

MOTHERS DAY

(Continued from Page 2)

not married, or in so many other ways do not fit into societal norms.

May you know that God is with you if you see yourself reflected in all, or none of these stories.

This mother's day, wherever and whoever you are, we walk with you. You are loved. You are seen.

You are worthy.

And may you know the deep love without end of our big, wild, beautiful God who is the very best example of a parent that we know.

Amen

(Written by Amy Young; adapted by Heidi Carrington Heath)

Sierra Christian Church Monthly Calendar

May 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 10:30 am Worship	1	2	3 7 pm Prayer Fellowship	4	5	6 9 am Men's Fellowship Breakfast
7 10:30 am Worship	8	9	10 7 pm Prayer Fellowship	11	12	13
14 Mother's Day 10:30 am Worship Zoom Only!	15	16	17 6:30 pm Board of Directors Meeting	18 6:30 pm Books That Bind	19	20
21 10:30 am Worship	22	23	24 7 pm Prayer Fellowship	25	26	27
28 10:30 am Worship	29	30	31 7 pm Prayer Fellowship	1	2	3 9 am Men's Fellowship Breakfast

"The most remarkable thing about my mother is that for thirty years she served the family nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found." - Calvin Trillin

"It is never easy being a mother. If it were easy, fathers would do it."

"The quickest way for a parent to get a child's attention is to sit down and look comfortable." - Lane Olinghouse

"I always say if you aren't yelling at your kids, you're not spending enough time with them." - Reese Witherspoon

"I've conquered a lot of things ... blood clots in my lungs — twice ... knee and foot surgeries ... winning Grand Slams being down match point ... to name just a few, but I found out by far the hardest is figuring out a stroller!" - Serena Williams

The Month of May in U.S. History

May 1	1931	Empire State Building opens	May 10	1924	J.Edgar Hoover appointed head of the FBI. He held the post for 48 years
May 2	1930	President Herbert Hoover says Stock Market crash only a temporary set back.	May 13	1945	Philadelphia Police Dept. drops a bomb from a helicopter onto MOVE's residence, part of a row of tenement apartments.
May 4	1886 1970 2010	Haymarket Square Riot in Chicago Ohio National Guard opens fire on Kent State University protesters, killing 4 students, wounding 10 more Oil reaches Louisiana Coast from Deepwater Horizon drilling disaster	May 14	1948	Israel proclaims itself a free, independent nation
May 5	1891 1925 1961	Carnegie Hall opens in NYC John Scopes arrested for violating Tennessee's Butler Act. He taught evolution. Alan Shepard is the first American in space	May 15	1940	Nylons go on sale for the first time
May 6	1882 1937 1954	Congress passed the Chinese exclusion Act, barring Chinese immigrants from entering the U.S. for 10 years The Hindenburg bursts into flames as it lands in New Jersey. 35 died. Roger Bannister is the first runner to break the 4-minute mile	May 17	1954 1973	U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously in Brown v. Board of Education The Senate Watergate hearings begin.
May 7	1915 1945	A German torpedo sinks the Lusitania, killing 1,200 Germany surrenders in Rheims, France, ending 6 years of World War in Europe	May 18	1980	Mt. St Helens erupts
May 8	1945 1973	VE Day! Battle of Wounded Knee ends	May 20	1927 1961	Charles Lindberg takes off from Long Island for Paris. 33+ hours later he landed. An angry mob of all whites attacked a busload of "freedom riders" in Montgomery, Alabama, setting the bus on fire by throwing a bomb inside then beating the riders when they fled the burning bus. Police were conspicuously absent
May 9	1960 1974 1974	FDA approves "the Pill" Impeachment hearings against Richard Nixon begin Famed rock critic Jon Landau attends a Bruce Springsteen concert and wrote, "I saw rock and roll's future, and its name is Bruce Springsteen."	May 21	1881 1927 1932	American Red Cross founded Lindbergh lands in Paris Amelia Earhart becomes the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean, from Newfoundland to Ireland
May 22	1989	Students occupy Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China. On June 4, at least 241 were killed, 7,000 wounded when the military cleared out the Square	May 25	1953	Oscar Wilde found guilty of gross indecency and sentenced to two years of hard labor.

Please see History, next page

SOCIAL MEDIA

(Continued from page 4)

like beauty, is the endowment of our bodies and our gods and our world, and you will always, always, always be you. You can hide in your room, but you'll still be you. And you'll still be you when you head off to college and make brand new friends, and you'll still be you after you come out to your parents, and you'll still be you after you get that job or that promotion or that raise, and you'll still be you after you lose those last 10 pounds, and you'll still be you after you fall in love, and you'll still be you after the AI revolution or the socialist revolution or the love revolution or any other revolution.

The only sensible path forward is to learn to accept the brokenness of human life, to develop resilience in the face of its petty cruelties, and to learn to live with yourself. Not to love yourself; I mean, if you can love yourself, great, but I am mostly talking about learning to live with myself. The love comes.

Please understand that the anonymity and disconnection of online life directly obstruct that goal.

But, if you don't want to confront your relationship to yourself and the world, no one can really stop you from that choice.

Look, Sammy, I am not one to speak with much authority on this, my history is somewhat dubious when it comes to confronting pain, but the question I am left with as time marches forward, as it does, and technology progresses, as it will, and we are provided with more ways to numb the pain, as we are, and it becomes more and more tempting to abandon resilience and try to avoid all of life's heartache, as we see a generation fall prey to—I am left asking, old friend, isn't it possible that the only real way we can defend our young people—your grandchildren—from harm is to show them how stubborn a companion pain can be and to teach them how to overcome it?"

And love them with everything you've got as they wrestle with choosing who they want to be.

History

(Continued from previous page)

May 25, 1977 The original Star Wars movie opens.

May 27 1937 The Golden Gate Bridge is opened to pedestrian traffic. More than 200,000 people walked across the bridge on opening day.

May 30. 1922. The Lincoln Memorial, built in honor of Abraham Lincoln, is dedicated by William Howard Taft

May 31, 1889 The Johnstown Flood kills more than 2,200 people when South Fork Dam failed. Owners of the dam were never held liable.

"In the midst of hate, I found there was, within me, an invincible love. In the midst of tears, I found there was, within me, an invincible smile. In the midst of chaos, I found there was, within me, an invincible calm. I realized, through it all, that in the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there is something stronger, something better, pushing right back."

—Albert Camus
