

Sierra Christian Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

The Endless Possible Explained (Oh, Not Really Explained as Much as Shared)

The last few weeks have been especially worth experiencing. Not that I would do them over, but the days have been populated with the accelerating hope of a puppy recovering from surgery, a son groping through the soul's marshes trying to find his way, a friend from my husband's past finally succumbing to cancer after holding it off for 15 years, and the gruesome, shocking, murder of a colleague who helped so many die peacefully with loved ones by their side dying alone, brutally, far from home. As it so often seems, there was joy and there was heartache, blows

A Quote About the Significance of Easter

As long as we are on earth, the love that unites us will bring us suffering by our very contact with one another, because this love is the resetting of a body of broken bones. Even saints cannot live with saints on this earth without some anguish, without some pain at the differences that come between them. There are two things which we can do about the pain of disunion with each other. We can love or we can hate. Hate recoils from the sacrifice and the sorrow that are the price of the resetting of bones. It refuses the pain of reunion.

—Thomas Merton

and defeat, great hope for the future and grand reminders of the past.

I mean, it has been hard to look ahead, but my husband—bless him—reminded me that it is time for another church newsletter. This one, he suggested, should say something about Easter, since it is in a few weeks. Ever reflective, I think he tried to give me a jumpstart on this here Pastor's Pitch by recalling how as a child he would overhear the Presbyterians his parents used to hang out with describe Easter as the granddaddy of Christian holidays.

John said he never understood that kind of thinking back then. Christmas was always *the day* for him. Still is, I think.

But Easter does have this resurrection thing going for it, and whether you actually believe Jesus rose from the dead and stepped out of his cave or not, it is certainly a day to

celebrate renewal and reunion, love, hope, and joy. So, in the spirit of love, hope, and joy, let me focus on things that make me grin and dance, that let me sometimes see the web and weave of the merciful, the endless possible, the incomprehensible, inexhaustible, inexplicable yes!

Here goes:

The way the sun crawls over the rim of the world every morning like a

Pastor's Pitch



Sierra Christian Church's pastor is the Rev. Christine Pobanz-Hartmire. Her challenge to us is to embrace, the beautiful truth that everyone is always welcomed at Jesus' table.

Pitch

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child's face rising beaming from a pool like one big smile, and the way jays hop and starlings do that amazing synchronized swirling dance in the air, and bees inspect and birds probe and swifts chatter, and the way the young mother at the bus stop has her infant swaddled and huddled against her chest like a blinking extra heart, and the way a very large woman wears the tiniest shorts and crop top with a care-less airy pride that makes me so happy I can hardly squeak, and the way seals peer at you owlshly from the surf like rubbery grandfathers, and the way people sometimes lean eagerly face-first into the future, and the way infants finally discover to their absolute agogishment that those fists swooping by like tiny fleshy comets are theirs, and the way my son used to sleep with his right leg hanging over the side of his bed like an oar no matter how many times I folded him back into the boat of the bed, and the way the refrigerator hums to itself in two different keys, and the way birds arrange themselves sometimes on telephone lines like the notes of a song I don't know yet.

The way your arm goes all totally nonchalant when you are driving through summer with the window down, and the way people touch each other's forearms when they are scared, or sad, and the way every once in a while someone you hardly know says something so piercingly honest that you want to just kneel down right there in the grocery store near the carrots, and the way little children fall asleep with their mouths open like fish, and the way sometimes just a sidelong glance from someone you love makes you all shaky for a second before you can get your mask back on, and the way some people when they laugh tilt their heads way back like they need more room for all the hilarity in their mouths, and the way hawks and eagles always look so annoyed, and the way people shuffle daintily on icy pavements, and the way Sierra Christian smells dense with hope and sweet with love, and the way faces curve around the mouth and eyes according to how many times they have smiled over the years, and the way people fall asleep in chairs by the fire and snap awake startled and amazed, unsure, just for a second, what planet they might be on, which is a question we should probably all ask far more often than we do.

Look, I know very well that brooding, misshapen evil is everywhere, in the brightest houses and the most cheerful denials, in what we do and what we have failed to do, and I know all too well that the story of the world is entropy, things fly apart, we sicken, we fail, we grow weary, we lose loved ones, we are hammered and hounded by loss and accidents and tragedies.

But I also know, with all my heart, that we are carved of immense confusing holiness; that the whole point for us is grace under duress; and that you either take a flying leap at nonsensical illogical unreasonable ideas like marriage and recovery and democracy and divinity, or you huddle behind the wall.

I believe that the coolest things there are cannot be measured, calibrated, calculated, gauged, weighed, or understood except sometimes by having a child patiently explain it to you, which is another thing that should happen far more often to us all.

In short, I believe in believing, which doesn't make much sense, but it gives me hope and fills me with joy nevertheless. I think Jesus is okay with that.

Happy Easter.

CGC WORK DAYS MAY 29-31, 2025

The Disciples's Community of the Great Commission needs work before the summer camp season begins. Volunteers and friends are being asked to prep the Bobbitt & Holland Areas before the kids and adults descend on the camp for all the adventures and peace and possibilities that await them.

Work begins on Thursday, May 29, mid morning, and concludes on Saturday afternoon, May 31.

Meals offered Thursday dinner thru Saturday lunch. The cost is \$5/meal, and there are no lodging fees. Bring your sleeping bag and work gloves. Folks will be staying in Claar House.

Please RSVP to Tina Heck at tinasueheck@uccr.org or 530-265-6636.

COMMUNITY LABYRINTH WALK

Celebrating the Spring Equinox – Renewal, e' Rejuvenation

Led by Diane Wilson, and hosted by Sierra Christian Church, because that is where the labyrinth is, the Spring renewal was celebrated and honored on March 23rd following worship. A Labyrinth is a divine imprint found in many cultural and religious traditions in various forms around the world. It provides a prescribed path for contemplative meditation and movement toward the center – of oneself, the Universe, or The Divine. The Path includes Remembering, Releasing, Receiving, and Resolve.





A centuries-old tradition, the labyrinth journey is an ancient contemplative practice to be shared with friends, neighbors, community, or in the blessed company of no one but yourself and God.



The Splendid Wisdom of Kids: Thoughts on Love

A group of professional people with apparently little else to do one day, posed a question to a group of 4- to 8-year-olds. They asked, "What does love mean?" Here is what they heard:

- ▶ "When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore... So, my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."
— Rebecca - age 8
 - ▶ "When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth."
— Billy - age 4
 - ▶ "Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other."
— Karl - age 5
 - ▶ "Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs."
— Chrissy - age 6
 - ▶ "Love is what makes you smile when you're tired."
— Terri - age 4
 - ▶ "Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK."
— Danny - age 8
 - ▶ "Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and just listen."
— Bobby - age 7
 - ▶ "If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend you hate."
— Nikka - age 6
 - ▶ "Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day."
— Noelle - age 7
 - ▶ "Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well."
— Tommy - age 6
- "During my piano recital, I was on a stage, and I was scared. I looked at all the people watching me and saw my daddy waving and smiling. He was the only one doing that. I wasn't scared anymore."
— Cindy - age 8
- "My mommy loves me more than anybody. You don't see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night."
— Clare - age 6
- ▶ "Love is when Mommy gives Daddy the best piece of chicken."
— Elaine - age 5
 - ▶ "Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford."
— Chris - age 7
 - ▶ "Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day."
— Mary - age 4
 - ▶ "I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones."
— Lauren - age 4
 - ▶ "When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you." (what an image!)
— Karen - age 7
 - ▶ "Love is when Mommy sees Daddy on the toilet, and she doesn't think it's gross..." — Mark - age 6

Study

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▶“You really shouldn’t say “I love you” unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.” — Jessica - age 8

▶And one last one comes from a four-year-old child whose next-door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife.

Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman’s yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, “Nothing, I just helped him cry.”

The problem is, we look for someone to grow old together, while the secret is to find someone to stay a child with! (Charles Bukowski)

Women’s Ministry Council Launching Newsletter

The Regional Women's Ministry Council is looking to restart a quarterly newsletter. CCNC-N Women's Newsletter & More. Anyone and everyone is welcome to sign up for the newsletter - the more the merrier!

If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact Shannon Kitchens at:
shannonkitchens@gmail.com.

Books That Bind Meets in April

Sierra Christian’s book Club, Books That Bind, next meets April 17 to discuss their latest reading, “The Violin Conspiracy,” a novel by Brendan Slocumb. It is a story about great musical talent, racism, the theft of a Stradivarius, and the mystery surrounding it. Pick it up and join us on our Zoom site for a delightful evening of conversation, that sometimes even centers on the book we are reading.

April 2025 CCNC-N Disaster Recovery Mission Trip

This year, the CCNC Disaster Recovery effort will focus on Scotts Valley, CA to help the CZU lightning complex fire victims. “The CZU inferno destroyed about 700 homes in Santa Cruz County. Of those, 127 residences have been rebuilt and another 134 are under construction,

(<https://www.govtech.com/em/disaster/residents-struggle-to-recover-from-2020-santa-cruz-mountains-fire>).

The team will be working with The Santa Cruz Long Term Recovery Group (<https://www.sccltrg.org/>). They have indicated there will be a home that needs to be demolished, some brush removal on property that the residents are not currently living on, and some rebuilding projects too. Housing will be at a church in Scotts Valley (bring your air mattress).

The week runs from 5:00 on Sunday, April 13th, through 10:00 on Saturday, the 19th. You do not have to stay for the whole week but can come for just the days you are able to be there. The cost is \$30 per day, or \$180 for those who are staying the entire week (Sunday through Saturday). This is inclusive of food, housing, laundry, and transportation to and from the work sites. You will be responsible for getting yourself to the provided lodging. There is some scholarship assistance available.

Please [register](#) by April 4th so we can plan for meals and housing. We have a limit of 18 persons per day. We will be in contact with you after you register to give you more details.

If you have any questions please contact Lou Ann Hughes: loualoui@hotmail.com.

Some Notes Worth Noting

1. Continued to prayers to Maurine and Jack Rollins. May they feel better, stronger, and more stable. Maurine is a great and valued member of our book club, Books That Bind.
2. Cliff Cole has a birthday on April 24!
3. April 12 is Gabby Hines' birthday!
4. April 26 is Liz Throne's birthday!
5. Celebration and woof woofs for Gaye Wilhelm, who, one year ago this month, welcomed 5-year-old Brodie into her life. A Golden Retriever-Terrier mix, both dog and Gaye are overjoyed with each other, as long as Gaye's arm holds out that is. Apparently, Brodie remains unrelenting in his passion for chasing a ball.
6. Books That Bind gathers on Zoom on April 17 at 6:30 pm to discuss, among other things, the novel, "The Violin Conspiracy," by Brendan Slocumb.
7. A note of disbelieving sadness and unwavering support and ongoing prayers for Pastor Christine and her colleagues at Sutter Hospice. On March 23, Pastor Christine's colleague at Sutter Hospice, Andreea Mottram, a social worker known for her compassion and energy, was murdered while in Utah visiting her daughter. There are two persons of interest who are in the wind. They were, police believe, acquainted with Andreea. The Sutter hospice team has been rocked, Christine along with them.
8. Placer Enrichment is extending their use of Locke Hall, and increasing classes to 4x/week.

National Call to Action for Faith Communities

Entering the fourth month of 2025 there is a mounting fear that the direction this country is headed is threatening the fundamental freedoms this multi-faith democracy of ours has enjoyed and for so very often taken for granted. History has shown, during times such as these, faith communities have a role to play—either in their acquiescent silence or firm resistance.



Members of Sierra Christian Church are asked to [Join us for this critical webinar](#) to explore how Americans of diverse faiths and beliefs can mobilize for the nationwide Hands Off!

National Day of Action is scheduled for Saturday, April 5. Together with leaders from MoveOn, Indivisible, and other key organizations, the discussion will focus on the proven power of faith-based activism in countering extremism, defending justice, and inspiring collective action.

Summer Camp Registrations Now Open

Registration for the CCNC-N 2025 Summer camps at the Community of the Great Commission is now open.



To register, [click here](#).

Sierra Christian Church Monthly Calendar

April 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5 9 am Men's Fellowship Breakfast
6 10:30 am Worship	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 Palm Sunday 10:30 am Worship	14	15	16	17 Books That Bind 6:30 pm on Zoom	18	19
20 Easter Sunday 10:30 am Worship	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 10:30 am Worship	28	29	30			

List & Links of Regional Events

April 13, 2025: [2025 Disaster Recovery Mission Trip](#)

April 25, 2025: [171st CCNC-N Annual Gathering](#)

May 29, 2025 [CGC Workdays May 2025](#)

July 12, 2025: [2025 General Assembly](#)

October 10, 2025: [Men's Ministries Retreat](#)

October 17, 2025: [Women's Fall Retreat](#)

A Few Historical Dates in April

Some Significant April Dates in History

April 1, 1850—Sacramento's population was estimated to be 150.

April 1, 1976—Apple Inc. of Cupertino was formed by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne. They incorporated on January 3, 1977. Wonder what happened to them?

April 1, 2002—A San Francisco Court of Appeals ordered the U.S. government to pay millions of dollars in disability benefits to Vietnam veterans with prostate cancer, who were exposed to Agent Orange.

April 2, 1902—Tally's Electric Theatre, the first full-time movie theater in the U.S, opened in Los Angeles.

April 2, 1993—Ellie Nesler shot and killed Daniel Driver in a Jamestown, courtroom. Driver had been accused of molesting her son and three other boys. Nesler was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

April 2, 1994—Preston Tate was shot and killed by guards during an allegedly staged fight at the Corcoran State Prison. The fights, organized by the prison staff for gambling and entertainment purposes apparently, pitted inmates against each other in gladiator-style events.

April 3, 1981—Osborne 1, the first successful portable computer, was unveiled at the West Coast Computer Faire in San Francisco.

April 4, 1850—Fire burned Sacramento. Eight buildings on Front Street were destroyed in 30 minutes. Some \$100,000 in merchandise was lost at a time when the population was around 150.

April 5, 1880—Stockton authorized a tax to establish a public library. It opened in two upstairs rooms at the corner of Main and San Joaquin in 1881. In 1906 2,362 people had library cards and that May they borrowed 4969 items, including 847 children's books.

April 5, 1941—Horse-drawn streetcars on Castro and Fillmore Streets in San Francisco were replaced by buses.

April 6, 1847—Ojai Rancho was deeded. The 17,717-acre Mexican land grant in present day Ventura County included what became Ojai in 1917

April 6, 1987—Al Campanis, Los Angeles Dodgers executive, said on television while being interviewed by Ted Koppel, that blacks "may not have some of the necessities" to hold managerial jobs in major-league baseball. Koppel gave him several opportunities to correct himself because Campanis was known to be at times clumsy with language. But he stood by his comments. He was fired two days later. Several years later, Campanis said that while it was brutal for him personally, that night on Koppel's show ended up doing great good for baseball.

April 7, 1911—The San Francisco Police Board examined nine Mission saloon keepers who were cited for selling liquor to women decoys.

April 9, 1981—A last second starter, Fernando Valenzuela, Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher, shut out the Houston Astros 2-0 on opening day in his rookie year. In his first 8 starts of his rookie year, he went 8-0, with 7 complete games, 5 shutouts and 4 earned runs surrendered in 72 innings, Fernandomania was born.

April 11, 1976—The original Apple Computer, later known as the Apple I, was released. Designed and hand-built by Steve Wozniak, it was demonstrated in July at the Homebrew Computer Club in Palo Alto.

April 11, 2008—Haight Ashbury Food Program in San Francisco closed their soup kitchen due to reduced grants and donations. It served as many as 450 people a day for some 25 years.

April 15, 1910—San Francisco Police arrested Kitty Plunket, known as Jolly Trixie, for being deformed and exhibiting her deformity in a show house.

April 16, 2005—Marla Ruzicka, 28-year-old founder of Campaign for In-

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HISTORY

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nocent Victims of Conflict, died in a car bombing in Iraq. She had been there on and off since the March 2003 invasion began. The California-based group went door-to-door to identify civilian casualties.

April 18, 1906— The Great San Francisco Earthquake and Fire struck, killing some 3,000 people and destroying more than 80% of the city; one of the largest natural disasters in U.S. history.

April 22, 1984— Ansel Adams, photographer, died in Monterey at age 82. He was famous for his photographs of Yosemite Valley. Adams redefined the artistic standards and possibilities of landscape photography.

April 23, 1969— Sirhan Sirhan was sentenced to death for the assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles on June 5, 1968. He has been denied parole 13 times.

April 24, 1908— Mr. and Mrs Jacob Murdock left Los Angeles driving their Packard on the first cross-country car trip. There were no gas stations so, in most cases, the fuel was purchased at department stores or mechanical workshops where it was stored in sealed canisters. They reached New York City in 32 days, 5 hours and 25 minutes.

April 24, 1995— Gilbert Murray, 47-year-old California Forestry Association president, was killed by a mail bomb at his Sacramento headquarters. The bomb was from the Unabomber.

April 28, 1850— Grace Episcopal Church of San Francisco was organized as a parish by the first regularly appointed Episcopal missionary to California. Today Grace Cathedral is an international pilgrimage center for church-goers and visitors.

Living a Virtuous Life

For my 15th birthday, my best friend Sam gave me a sign that fit perfectly over my bedroom door. It was rectangular in shape, made of cardboard, but made to look like a well-crafted handmade wood sign—the kind you might buy from a vendor up at Apple Hill. Its single word painted on in such a way that it appeared to have been burned into the wood was “Virtue.” Sam’s mom joked that he had to look it up after he bought it to know what it meant, which in light of what is going on around us may be something we all ought to do: “Virtue: moral excellence; goodness; righteousness.”

With that in mind, along with the disarray that seems to take on a heightened depth and disquiet almost daily, it struck me that there is something more to do than simply increasing my blood pressure medicine dose. That is when I saw a clip on the news of a young college student speaking at a rally on a midwest campus, imploring the several dozen students listening to instead of growing frustrated and despairing at the world’s many rages, try instead to cultivate virtue. She said virtue is an old-fashioned word for character and good moral standards, and it holds up well.

Virtue may be at a premium in our elected officials at all levels: Money, power, fame, and fear have eclipsed the call to serve the public and do what is best for democracy, and we may not be able to control the river of ridiculousness flowing from the White House and beyond, nor embolden the anemic diatribe coming from the left, but we absolutely can become the type of people who love our neighbors well and take our civic responsibilities seriously. We can stand up by being better.

To make a better world, maybe we need to become better people, she said. Maybe it will require us to become virtuous people to create a virtuous world.

I miss being an idealistic and optimistic college student with a long life in front of me. The notion of everything, including virtue, seemed so much more possible back then.

--John Hartmire