

Sierra Christian Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Our Table is an Open Table

There is a story I heard years ago about a young pastor who one Sunday took a phone call from a friend, Cheryl, who had gone home to visit her parents in Houston, Texas. Cheryl was crying when she called, nearly hysterical. She had gone to church with her parents and the church would not allow her to take communion, because she had never been formally baptized.

This was the church of her childhood she had rebelled against, rejected for reasons that had probably not been clear to her until maybe this visit to see her parents. The church had a closed communion table. Only certain people could take communion, and over the past several years Cheryl had been attending a church in northern California that centered around the grace of an unapologetically open communion table, and without noticing, it had changed her. Every Sunday she had heard the pastor of this small church say, "We have an *open table*, which means that during communion, everyone *without exception* is invited to come forward at communion and receive the bread and wine, which for us is the body and blood of Christ."

Jesus sat down and ate with sinners, tax collectors, soldiers, sex workers, fisherfolk, and even lawyers, and his last supper was the greatest lesson of all. He broke bread with his friends who were just about to abandon, deny, and betray him. And yet, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to these total screw-ups and said, "This is my body, given for you, whenever you eat of it, do this in remembrance of me." Then he instituted the Eucharist by giving bread and wine to all the people who were just about to totally screw him over.

And now what do some churches do in remembrance of Him? I suspect they think they are standing in God's light by preventing the "wrong people" from receiving the Lord's Supper, since, as the argument seems to go, it is reckless to just feed all who hunger, and the Eucharist is too sacred to just hand it over to anyone.

Maybe, I wonder, if the Eucharist is too sacred to *not* hand it over to anyone.

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.

Please see PITCH, page 2

The newsletter staff will be taking its annual summer break July and August. The next edition, such as it is, will be in September. The staff will most likely still be around, and will, again most likely, see you in the spiritually splendid barn, and on Zoom, when not at a lake somewhere.



PITCH

(Continued from page 1)



You would not know it by our blessed and sacred congregation, small but mighty in the ways that count, but there are churches who believe that because Jesus was baptized only the baptized should receive Communion. First you get baptized, then you can partake in communion, even though Jesus was pretty clear that all were welcomed at his table no matter what, or where they were in life..

The pastor told all this to Cheryl over the phone, reassuring and comforting her, and then asked when she was returning home. The pastor then organized a small group of their mutual friends and met Cheryl at the airport. They stood in a corner of the baggage claim area, holding a sign that simply said, "Cheryl, Child of God." When she came down the escalator they huddled and my friend spoke about how on the night Jesus was betrayed, he gathered his faltering friends for a meal that tasted of freedom, and then my friend handed Cheryl what had been withheld only days before, a piece of bread and a small cup of grape juice.

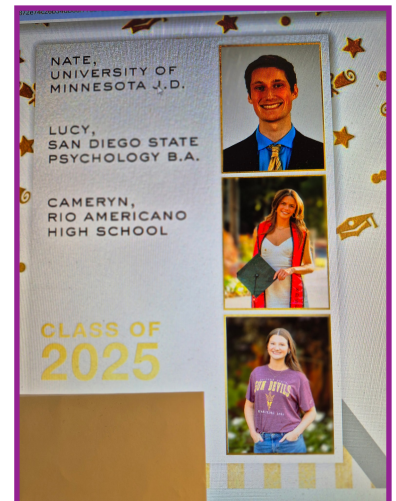
The communion table is not our table. It's God's.

Just ask Kailana!

They're Off To Slay Dragons...



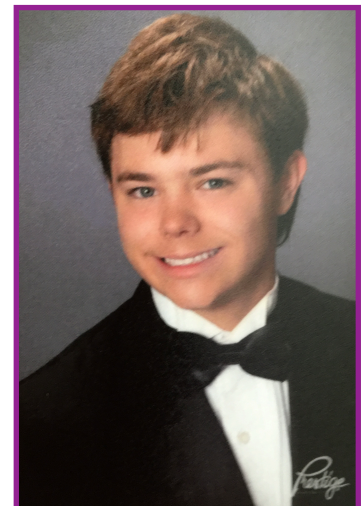
With diplomas in hand, dreams in mind, the future wide open in front of them, we celebrate all who have, or are about to, graduate wherever they are, and have been, matriculating. At left, Cliff Cole's granddaughter, Morgan, graduates high school and prepares to enter Chapman College in the fall. At right, Karen Steinke's triumvirate:



Nate Barry wrapping up law school,



Lucy Prieto graduating from San Diego State, and Cameryn Barry has out away her high school books in favor of what Arizona State will have to offer. Bottom right, Liz Throne's grandson, Zach Throne, has graduated from Del Oro High School; and at left another of Cliff's granddaughters, Elise, has completed her studies at the Air Force Academy and prepares to start her career with the Air Force in Mississippi.



The Un-Christian Part of Christian-Based Films

Maybe the only positive thing I can say about getting into a bicycle accident and sitting around in nauseating pain for more days than is pleasant to remember, is that in the moments when you are not feeling sorry for yourself you tend to think about things you find profoundly interesting but probably aren't.

To wit, curled up in a ball on the sofa a few weeks ago, I was thinking about the comedian Jack Gallagher, a very funny man, who did a show a few years back Christine and I saw at the new B Street Theater. It was about his recovery from a bicycling accident much worse than mine, and how he was instructed by his doctor to lie still in a darkened room and not think about anything, to give his brain a chance to heal.

Now, I had always suspected that my thinking was harmful to my brain, though Gallagher was more focused on how do you not think when told not to think. It seemed to him, and I agree, it is a gilded invitation for the mind to run wild, to think about everything you've ever wanted to think about, stuff you've never thought about before, and of course all the things you have never wanted to think about. I mean, if someone told me not to think of the greatest novel I ever read, I would immediately bring it up in my mind and dissect its wonderment. Told not to think about it means, simply, I would obsess thinking about it.

I thought about how hard I laugh at Jack Gallagher's jokes and delivery, which hurt. Even thinking about laughing was hurting. And then I thought about watching a movie on Netflix, and when scrolling through the options I looked at what "faith-based" films might be interesting, and of course being in a thinking mode started dissecting what it is about the whole Christian-movie genre, aside from the predictable unavoidability of their message, which is almost always the same. And disappointing.

The struggles depicted are almost always individualistic: One person's doubt. One person's prayers. One person's redemption. Kevin Sorbo, TV's Hercules, stars in a host of these films; one in particular is called "What If..." about a man who chose to chase fame and fortune instead of his faith, and then by a stroke of divine, magical movie intervention wakes up one morning after being knocked unconscious in a car accident to be living an

Here are the five highest grossing Christian, faith based films, according to my research (I am omitting "The Passion of the Christ," which would be number one on this list, because, well, it is in a league of its own):

1. **Heaven Is for Real** (2014, Sony/TriStar Pictures) – \$91 million
Theme: A young boy has a near-death experience and when he emerges he claims he visited Heaven and seems to know things only someone who visited Heaven would know.
2. **I Can Only Imagine** (2018, Lionsgate/Roadside Attractions) – \$83 million
Theme: The story behind the hit song by MercyMe, focusing on personal redemption.
3. **War Room** (2015, Affirm Films [Sony]) – \$67 million
Theme: A struggling family meets someone who convinces them that the truest path to happiness, and yes, personal and familial redemption, is through prayer.
4. **Miracles from Heaven** (2016, Affirm Films [Sony]) – \$61 million
Theme: An ill young girl falls out of a tree onto her head, and she wakes with claims she visited heaven here previously incurable disease starts to, well, be cured.
5. **God's Not Dead** (2014 formerly Pure Flix) – \$60 million
Theme: After he refuses to disavow his faith, a devout Christian student must prove the existence of God or else his college philosophy professor will fail him. I am sure he succeeds.

FILMS

(Continued from page 3)

entirely different life, that of a minister in a small unnamed town where everyone seems to know everyone and who makes the best apple pie, with a wife and a couple of kids. In this new living he comes to recognize just how shallow and empty his life had been, and that real joy, the kind you carry around in private comfort and elation and is recognizable and infectious, is where the real fortune can be found. He comes to understand this just in time to wake up in a hospital bed, again by divine magical movie intervention, back as the guy from his previous shallow life. Of course, he tracks down the woman he left way back when (who happened to be the wife in his magi-

coach's faith in God overcoming all manner of hardship and leading his underdogs to a state title.

Instead of societal change, we get sanitized morality tales. So, if one life means everything, what must community mean?

There's no sense in these movies that faith can disrupt systems, transform communities, dismantle oppression, and change history. Instead, Christianity becomes a misinterpreted tool for self-help, the New Testament the first self-help primer. I did not find any faith-based movies telling the story about Christianity becoming a catapult for justice, for freedom, about it being a love that overturns tables. Which is too bad, because that would be a faith-based movie I would

What if Christian films were bold enough to preach liberation? Imagine stories that tell the tale of communities fighting against systemic oppression, depicting faith as a catalyst for social change, and Christianity as a collective journey toward justice and equality.

cal life) who is still single and stinging from his rejection years before, and we are left to know what will happen next.

I love a good redemption story as much as the next fellow, but ultimately Christianity, as Jesus showed, is about community. At least that's how I choose to see Jesus's ministry. I also understand how one person's redemption makes for a good, heart-warming story. Like anyone, I would like to be redeemed in a 90-minute fairy tale. But what about the redemption of a people, about the tilting at the windmills of structural injustice? What about racism, poverty, mass incarceration, political corruption? Where are the Christian-based films tackling those situations? I have to believe that Jesus was not killed because he made someone feel better about themselves. He challenged a system. He attacked a system.

So, with these Christian-based movies, instead of collective liberation, we get a story about a football

watch, because Jesus is more than a way toward self-improvement. He is about setting the captives free. Every last one of us.

There's nothing terribly wrong with the movies listed above. They just miss the point. They tend to emphasize personal faith and morality, not paying much attention to systemic issues or collective social justice themes, and if I continue thinking about it, I may come up with a theory about why—why this genre tends to focus on personal salvation rather than communal transformation.

What if Christian films were bold enough to preach liberation? Imagine stories that tell the tale of communities fighting against systemic oppression, depicting faith as a catalyst for social change, and Christianity as a collective journey toward justice and equality.



I suppose, this piece is yet another reason why I should not be getting into bicycle accidents.

--John Hartmire

Some Notes Worth Noting


1. Birthday wishes to Mr. Daven Stelter, turning 17 on the 27th.
2. There will be a congregational meeting to approve the 2025-2026 church budget following worship on Sunday, June 22.
3. To all fathers everywhere: Happy Father's Day. (Selfish note #1: a most special salute to the memory and love of my father, Rev. Wayne C. Hartmire, who would have turned 93 on June 5!)
4. Woo Hoo! Wedding anniversary celebration #7 to Pastor Christine and John on the 9th. (Selfish note #2: John is still getting used to having made the most beautiful decision of his life, marrying her!)
5. Happy Birthday to Jeffrey John Boutwell, turning 12 on June 13.
6. The monthly men's fellowship will be happening on Saturday, June 14 this month. . John will be camping the first weekend of the month and will hopefully not have any access to the cyber world.

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND
2025 PENTECOST OFFERING
SUNDAYS JUNE 1 & JUNE 8

IMAGINATION FREEDOM INNOVATION UNITY CREATIVITY

COMMUNITY SPIRITUALITY JUSTICE TRAIN EQUIP ASSIST



NEW CHURCH MINISTRY

THE 2025 PENTECOST OFFERING IS A SPECIAL OFFERING
IN SUPPORT OF THE NEW CHURCH MOVEMENT IN YOUR REGION
AND ACROSS THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

CCNC-N Women's Ministries
invites you to Save The Date!

Fall Retreat
Which Way is Up: Do
Not Let Your Hearts Be
Troubled

 **October 31 -**
November 2,

 **Christ the King**
Passionist Retreat
Center

Speaker
Rev. Dr. Boyung Lee



Stay Tuned At:
ccncn.org

Congregational Meeting on Sunday, June 22, following worship.

The agenda is the church's 2025-2026 operating budget.

All are encouraged to stay around and stay online for the brief meeting.

Sierra Christian Church Monthly Calendar

June 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 10:30 am Worship	9 Pastor Christine's 7th wedding. anniversary	10	11	12	13	14 9 am Men's Fellow- ship Breakfast
15 Father's Day	16	17	18	19 Books That Bind, 6:30 pm on Zoom	20	21
22 10:30 am Worship Congregational meeting to follow	23	24	25 Board of Directors 6:30 pm Zoom	26	27 Daven Stelter's 17th birthday!	28
29 10:30 am Worship	30					

List & Links of Regional Events

June 23-28: [Global Women's Assembly for Climate Justice](#)

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

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

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

November 7-9, 2025: [Fall Fest](#)

Some Significant June Dates in History

June 1, 1858--California Central Railroad groundbreaking took place in Sacramento. By October 13, 1861 the railroad connected Lincoln to the Sacramento Valley Railroad at Folsom Junction.

June 1, 1927--The Delta King steamboat made its debut voyage from San Francisco to Sacramento. The Delta Queen, its twin, followed the next day. The 81-mile trip took nearly all night.

June 1, 1992--Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer were nominated to U.S. Senate seats, making California the first state to have two women in the U.S. Senate.

June 2, 1999 -St. Ignatius College Preparatory School in San Francisco announced plans to accept young women beginning in the Fall of 1999.

June 3, 1913--San Francisco retired the last horse-drawn streetcar, more than 20 years after the introduction of electric streetcars.

June 3, 1956--Santa Cruz city authorities announced a total ban on rock & roll at public gatherings, calling the music "Detrimental to both the health and morals of our youth and community."

June 4, 1849--The USS Panama anchored in San Francisco Bay. There were already about 200 deserted ships in the harbor because their crews had abandoned them for the gold fields.

June 4, 1863--One man was killed and another died of wounds a few days later in a shootout over eggs on the Farallon Islands. Eggs, valuable in San Francisco, were free for gathering on the islands off the coast. David Batchelder and 27 armed men sailed there to harvest them, challenging the Egg Co. for the business.

June 4, 1999--Senators Diane Feinstein of California and Harry Reid of Nevada announced the Lake Tahoe Restoration Act. It authorized \$300 million over 10 years to restore the lake's water.

June 4, 2010--John Wooden, college basketball's legendary coach, died in Los Angeles at age 99. The "Wizard of Westwood" built one of the greatest dynasties in all of sports at UCLA and was one of the most revered coaches ever.

June 4, 1989 — The Chinese government ordered its troops to open fire on unarmed protesters in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. The protest had started on April 16 as about 1,000 students marched to mourn the death of Hu Yaobang, a pro-reform leader within the Chinese government. Despite government warnings, pro-reform and pro-democracy demonstrations continued for a month drawing ever-larger crowds of young people, eventually totaling over a million persons. On May 13, three thousand students began an eight-day hunger strike. The government imposed martial law on May 20 and brought in troops. On June 2, in their first clash with the People's Army, demonstrators turned back an advance of unarmed troops. However, in the pre-dawn hours of June 4, the People's Army, using tanks, machine-guns, clubs and tear gas, opened fire on the unarmed protesters. Armored personnel carriers then rolled into the square crushing students still sleeping in their tents. The Chinese government later claimed only 300 died in the attack. U.S. estimates put the toll at over 3,000. Following the massacre, over 1,600 demonstrators were rounded up and jailed, with 27 being executed.

June 5, 1959--Forty San Francisco Bay Area teachers, accused of being Communists, were subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee.

June 5, 1968--Robert F. Kennedy, U.S. presidential candidate, was shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles, by Sirhan Sirhan, a Palestinian. Kennedy died the next day.

June 5, 1981--Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that five people in Los Angeles had a rare form of pneumonia seen only in patients with weakened immune systems. Those turned out to be the first recognized cases of AIDS.

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HISTORY

(Continued from previous page)

June 5, 2009—Raymond Lee Oyler, a 38-year-old convicted arsonist, was sentenced to death for starting the 2006 Esperanza wildfire, west of Palm Springs. Five federal firefighters died defending a rural home from raging, wind-driven flames. The wind-fueled, arson-set fire burned 41,173 acres

June 6, 1850--Levi Strauss made his first pair of sturdy pants for sale to gold miners. Today Levi Strauss & Co. is the world's largest brand-name apparel manufacturer.

June 6, 1978—The passage of Proposition 13 cut California property taxes by 57%, beginning a downward trend in state budgets. Spending for California public schools, which during the 1960s ranked among the top nationally fell to 50th in 2014.

June 10, 1971—Federal marshals, FBI agents and special forces swarmed Alcatraz Island and removed the Native American occupiers: five women, four children and six unarmed men.

June 12, 1963—Civil rights leader Medgar Evers was assassinated in Jackson, Mississippi, by a rifle bullet from an ambush.

June 13, 2008--Some 2,800 firefighters fought the Humboldt Fire in Butte County. 9,000 residents fled as fire covered 23,000 acres. It destroyed 74 homes and damaged 20 more in Paradise before it was brought under control a few days later.

June 16, 1929—Otto Funk, 62, ended his walk from New York to San Francisco. He traveled 4,165 miles in 183 days. Known as the "Walking Fiddler," he fiddled every step of the way.

June 20, 1853—Henry Durant, Congregational minister, began Contra Costa Academy in Oakland as a private school for boys. In 1855, the school was chartered as the College of California, which eventually became UC Berkeley.

June 21, 1964—Three white civil rights workers - James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner - left Meridian, Mississippi, at 9 a.m. to investigate a church burning. They were expected back by 4 p.m. When they failed to return, a search was begun. Their murdered bodies were discovered on August 4th.

June 22, 1851—San Francisco burned for the sixth time in two years. As before, it was set on purpose. Sea-breezes quickly spread the flames. City Hall burned, a \$3 million loss, and the Jenny Lind Theater burned for the sixth time. San Franciscans rebuilt with water tanks on many roofs and began to organize a fire department.

June 27, 1933—California voters repealed Prohibition by a margin of over 75%. During Prohibition, grape juice came with a "warning" that if the juice sat for a specified amount of time, it would become alcoholic. California's grape production quadrupled during Prohibition.

June 27, 1996—Cubby Broccoli, film producer, died in Beverly Hills at age 87. He was best known as co-producer of many of the James Bond films. His Italian ancestors invented broccoli by crossing Italian rabe with cauliflower.

June 28, 1846—A U.S. military detachment near San Rafael was approached by three unarmed Mexicans, Jose de los Reyes Berryessa and brothers Francisco and Ramon de Haro. Kit Carson asked Captain John Fremont if he should take them prisoners. Fremont answered that he had no room for prisoners, so Carson shot the men dead and left their bodies where they fell.

June 28, 1978—The U.S. Supreme Court ordered UC Berkeley medical school to admit Allan Bakke, a white man. He claimed his denial was based on racial quotas and sued on the basis of discrimination.

June 30, 1864--Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove became the first California State Park. When President Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant Act, it became the first protected wild land in the U.S.

June 30, 1971 - The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was enacted, granting the right to vote in all federal, state and local elections to American citizens 18 years or older. The U.S. thus gained an additional 11 million voters. The minimum voting age in most states had been 21.