

Sierra Christian Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation



"What a wonderful thought it is that some of the best days of our lives haven't even happened yet."

—Anne Frank

"Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right."

—Oprah Winfrey

"I start out with good intentions but by mid-January, the list will be stuck to my cheek because I napped on it as I watched fit people exercise on cable TV."

—Nia Vardalos

"I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something."

— Neil Gaiman

We Are All Just Walking Each Other Home

It has been harder to embrace the New Year than in the past. It may be no more complicated than the lack of sunshine for the past month, but it could also have something to do with when we were acknowledging the 12-year anniversary of the Sandy Hook massacre of school children, Brown University students were being shot and killed during their final exams, and 15 Hannukah celebrants were shot and killed on a beach in Australia, and then a celebrated film director and his wife were stabbed to death in their home. And it could also have been the raw indecency of our president's response to Rob Reiner's murder, allegedly committed by their mentally ill son.

Apparently, I am not the only feeling some reluctance. A friend of my husband's sent him an email describing how some local forest rangers found a woman living in a tent deep in the cold mountain woods near Big Bear Lake, some 6,700 feet above sea level. They removed her from her small tent, took her into custody, and then delivered her to a county-run mental health hospital for the help they believed she needed, presumably because the tiny tent did not contain much to suggest a life prepared for 2026. She explained herself saying, she couldn't think of a better way to avoid 2026 than hiding out in the woods in a tent.

We are all just walking each other home. We look to see who around us most needs help. Often, all we can do is not turn away, and that is so brave and inspiring. It is the definition of community

about what hasn't happened yet, I do. Columbine opened our eyes to a perverse tragedy, and then we got Parkland and Uvalde and scores of other school shootings, which not only left kids across the country feeling helpless and hopeless, but parents and uncles and aunts, too. I did, and I know my friends and husband did, and all I could think to say at the time, and the next time, and the time after that, is what Mr. Rogers advised us: "In the face of tragedy and hopelessness it is best to look to the helpers." Lean on the profound and immediate presence of the first responders, and the people serving them coffee and sandwiches through the night.

It also helps to remind myself so I can remind anyone sitting nearby how we as a people, a community, a nation come together with incredible courage and generosity of spirit in the aftermath of shootings, floods, fires. It helps to remember that grace bats last.

Viktor Frankl, and others, have taught us through their experience and ultimate triumph over life's unavoidable awfulness that there is meaning in the chaos, and even in the ensuing doldrums, although it may take some time to flush it out.

Yes, there is suffering; there is also new life. We learn to dance again, with limps perhaps, but on our feet. That is why people with big hearts show up with almost unfathomable caring and life force—volunteering to clean up beaches after an oil spill or make casseroles for neighbors when they are mourning the loss of a loved one. Stitch by stitch, we patch things together.

We are all just walking each other home. We look to see who around us most needs help. Often, all we can do is not turn away, and that is so brave and inspiring. It is the definition of community. Our church is a prime example--Christmas offering for our church families needing assistance came up with more than \$2,200.

This is something else history continues to remind us. We do what's possible: We grieve for families for whom last month will remain the end of their world. We cry or shut down, we blame, despair, rage, pray. We gather in community. We donate to causes supporting people fighting against institutional cruelty and the fetishized worship of guns. We gasp and gawk, talk, spew, stick together. We make ourselves get up and go for walks.

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.

Some Notes Worth Noting

1. Books That Bind meets Thursday, February 19, at 6:30 pm on Zoom. We are reading "The Paris Library," by Janet Skeslien Charles. Historical fiction, the novel is based on the true story of the American Library in Paris during World War II. Librarian Odile Souchet and her colleagues defy the occupying Nazis by keeping the library open and helping Jewish readers. A parallel storyline takes place in 1983 Montana, where a lonely teenager bonds with an elderly Odilie.
2. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Northern California-Nevada will gather in person April 24-26 at the First Christian Church of Concord to reflect on what it means to be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.
3. Save the Date—The Women's Tri-Regional Retreat will be held May 15-17 at Christ the King Passionist Retreat Center in Citrus Heights. Registration information to come.
4. Due to the New Year weekend, and then the following weekend's camping trip, there will not be a Men's Fellowship this month. We will resume our gathering on Saturday, February 7
5. Work on updating the Sierra Christian Church directory will begin this month. Don't think you have to wait for an invitation—feel free to send any changes you may have to your listing to jhartmire1@mac.com. Here is the link to the most recent version: [Sierra Christian Church Directory](#)
6. Sierra's Board of Directors will meet at 6:30 pm on Zoom on Wednesday, January 21. The agenda and reports will be distributed earlier that week.

THE LETTER K...

... as in to K (verb) K'ed, K'ing. 1) Baseball: to strike out; (2) to fail, to flunk, to foul up, to fizzle; or (3) to fall short, to fall apart, to fall flat, fall by the sideway or on deaf ears or on hard time or into disrepute or disrepair; (4) to come unglued, come to grief, come to blows, come to nothing; or (5) go to the dogs, go through the roof, go home in a casket, go to hell in a hand basket; or (6) blow your cover, blow your chances, blow your cool, blow your stack, blow the deal, buy the farm, bite the dust; (7) to recollect an oddball notion that may at one time sounded and felt so nonsensically paradoxical that you had to ignore it or defy it or betray it over and over again it for decades before you began to believe that it might possibly be true, which is that (8) to lose your money, your way, your teeth, your health or hair, (9) to lose your home, your grace, your balance, your friends, (10) to lose your happiness, your leisure, your looks and yes, even your memories, your vision, your mind and your faith; (11) in short, as Jesus K. Rist so uncompromisingly put it, to lose your very self (12) for the sake of another is, (13) sweet irony, the only way you're ever going to save it.

“A Life Worth Living, A Legacy Worth Giving”

Sierra Christian Church's Diane Wilson will be presenting a series of workshops on Zoom examining the spiritual legacy we leave behind.

Our Spiritual Legacy is a gift we leave behind after our well-lived lives end on this earth. Together, let's explore Big Life Questions, such as:

How do I summarize my long life in a few words – and spell it out?

How do I plan, create, and “gift” my Spiritual Legacy to family, friends, community, and beyond?

How can my Spiritual Legacy actualize itself in this meaningful time of my life?

Please come join me and other like-minded friends and spiritual sisters who wish to learn more about this important endeavor – for a Beautiful Act III of our lives.

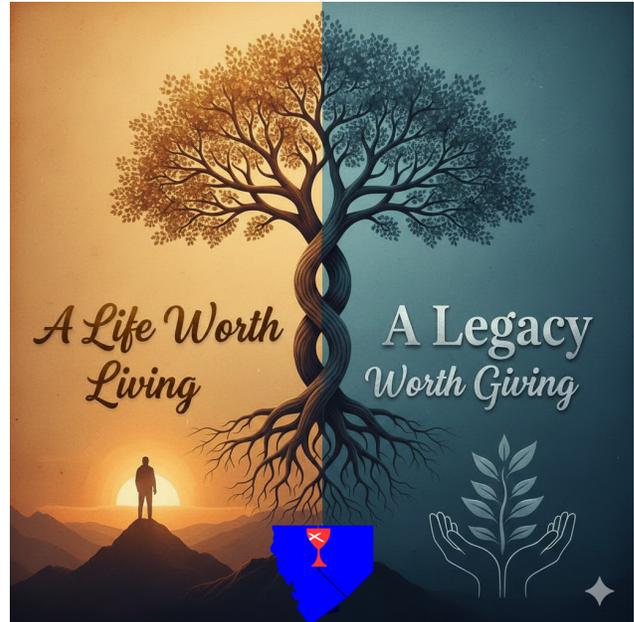
Zoom Presentations will be offered February 3, 10, 17 -- 2026

Sponsored by WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Registration information forthcoming

And, ALL DOC and UCC Women & Friends are welcome

Presenter: Diane Wilson, M.Div., is a Health and Wellness Chaplain, Certified Bereavement Companion, and credentialed Adult and Child Development Educator. She offers workshops and individual support and guidance with life transitions, spiritual growth, and wellness and healing. Diane is a Disciple at Sierra Christian Church in Loomis, a Mom and Grammy, loves Mother Nature, reading, travel, and learning and growing with Spiritual Friends.



In 1971, E.B. White was asked by a librarian in Maine to describe to the students in her school what a library can mean

He answered:

A library is many things. It's a place to go, to get in out of the rain. It's a place to go if you want to sit and think. But particularly it is a place where books live, and where you can get in touch with other people, and other thoughts, through books. If you want to find out about something, the information is in the reference books---the dictionaries, the encyclopedias, the atlases. If you like to be told a story, the library is the place to go. Books hold most of the secrets of the world, most of the thoughts that men and women have had. And when you are reading a book, you and the author are alone together---just the two of you. A library is a good place to go when you feel unhappy, for there, in a book, you may find encouragement and comfort. A library is a good place to go when you feel bewildered or undecided, for there, in a book, you may have your question answered. Books are good company, in sad times and happy times, for books are people---people who have managed to stay alive by hiding between the covers of a book.

PITCH

(Continued page 2)

Always after these catastrophic events, we are often gentler, more patient and kind with each other, and that's a small miracle. It means the spirit is at work. For me, that is grace made visible. It doesn't come immediately, or by bumper sticker, and it doesn't always come naturally. What does come naturally is heartbreak, rage, and blame. But love and hope do come when we feel and see with our own eyes that families, towns, nations heal, resurrect. And a surprising joy comes when we participate in that healing.

It takes time. I so hate this and do not agree to this, but have no alternative, because it is truth: it will take time. Time takes time. And in the meantime, as my father-in-law lived, always always always always, we take care of the poor.

Life is much wilder, sweeter, violent, heart-breaking, weirder, richer, more insane, awful, beautiful and profound than we were prepared for as children, or that I fully understand and am comfortable with as a grownup.

I read an essay written by an elementary schoolteacher after the school shooting in Uvalde Texas. He wrote that the only way he felt he could help his students wade through the horror was to spend extra time making art with them, being creative, sending cards to the children and families where the shooting took place, or to their own parents, or anyone they think may have a broken heart. He wrote, "I have to believe that art is the greatest expression of the human spirit; the kids in my class astounded me daily the way they can push through and blow God's resurgent trumpet as if they were Miles Davis."

The paradox is that in the face of our meager efforts, we discover that in the smallest moments of taking in and making beauty, in actively being people of goodness and mercy and outreach, we are saved. We all can be helpers.

Today I woke up and prayed for change and peace and healing and kindness.

In closing, let me share Nadia Boltz-Weber's "collective resolution" for 2026:

- ▶ Whereas we find ourselves in a time in which it is increasingly difficult to see the good in people, and
- ▶ Whereas people suck but are also unspeakably beautiful, and
- ▶ Whereas we all, for reasons of still having ice age brains, are more easily impacted by the negative than the positive even if the latter far outnumbers the former, and
- ▶ Whereas we are exposed to content that rewards the loud, the divisive, and the alarming (even when those things may distort reality), and
- ▶ Whereas we live in an economy in which our attention is our currency, and
- ▶ Whereas we can no longer afford the cynicism about each other which keeps us numb and scrolling, and
- ▶ Whereas we are still hunter gatherers who need each other to survive,
- ▶ Therefore,
- ▶ Be it resolved that:
- ▶ We the people of 2026 will look for beauty.
- ▶ We will write down the good things about each other.
- ▶ We will call our friends just to tell them what we love about them.
- ▶ When it is we who suck, we will admit it and move on.
- ▶ We will refuse to be manipulated into believing that we do not need each other.
- ▶ We choose attention as an act of love—and of resistance.

No Men's Fellowship in January!

Board Meeting on January 21 at 6:30 pm on Zoom!

Foundations for Faith and Ministry

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California-Nevada (CCNC-N) is thrilled to share an exciting update on our upcoming initiative: the Foundations for Faith and Ministries!

Set to launch early 2026, this new Learning Management System (LMS) will be the centralized online venue for high-quality Continuing Education, essential ministerial trainings, and vital faith formation resources across our region and beyond.

We Are Building a Community of Knowledge—And We Need You!

The success of the Learning Management System depends on the diverse talents and expertise within our community. We are actively seeking passionate ministers, educators, and lay leaders to partner with us as workshop facilitators.

This is a unique opportunity to share your gifts in areas such as:

- Required Ministerial Training (e.g., Boundaries, Anti-Racism)
- Core Faith Formation and Biblical Studies
- Essential Skills for Ministry and Pastoral Care
- Professional Development and Congregational Leadership
- Justice, Mission, and Outreach

How to Express Your Interest

If you feel called to share your knowledge and expertise in an accessible online format, please take the first step by completing our brief Facilitator Interest Registration Form below:

 [Facilitator Interest Registration](#) – Fill out form

What Happens After You Register?

1. **Personal Outreach:** A member of the CCNC-N team will contact you to discuss your availability, expertise, and proposed workshop ideas.
2. **Essential Training:** We will provide you with free, comprehensive training to prepare you to effectively use the platform and design engaging virtual workshops.

We are excited about this initiative to enrich the ministry and faith life of our region and look forward to partnering with you!

Thank you for your interest in sharing your gifts and knowledge with the CCNC-N community through the new Learning Management System! This form is the first step to becoming a recognized facilitator in our new online educational system.

By registering, you are expressing your interest to lead workshops, seminars, or trainings.

What Happens Next?

1. **Registration Confirmation:** Once your interest form is submitted, you will receive more detailed information about the Learning Management System platform and our content requirements.
2. **Personalized Outreach:** A member of the CCNC-N team will reach out to schedule a meeting with you to discuss your availability, expertise, and proposed workshop ideas.
3. **Essential Training:** We are committed to setting you up for success! We will provide essential, no-cost training to prepare you to use the online platform effectively and design engaging virtual workshops.

Sierra Christian Church Monthly Calendar

January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Feb 1	2	3	4	1/1/2026 Welcome to 2026!	2	3
4 10:30 am Worship	5	6	7	8	9	10 9 am Men's Fellowship Breakfast
11 10:30 am Worship	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 10:30 am Worship	19	20	21 Board of Directors meets at 6:30 pm on Zoom	22	23	24
25 10:30 am Worship	26	27	28	29	30	31

List & Links of Regional Events

February 3, 10, 17, 2026: A Life Worth Living, A Legacy Worth Giving

February 28, 2026: Anti-Racism Training (Save the Date)

May 15-17, 2026: Women's Tri-Regional Gathering (Save the Date)

"For the Time Being"

Well, so that is that. Now we must dismantle the tree,
 Putting the decorations back into their cardboard boxes —Some have got broken — and carrying them up to the attic.
 The holly and the mistletoe must be taken down and burnt,
 And the children got ready for school.

There are enough
 Left-overs to do, warmed-up, for the rest of the week —
 Not that we have much appetite, having drunk such a lot,
 Stayed up so late, attempted — quite unsuccessfully
 —To love all of our relatives, and in general
 Grossly overestimated our powers.

Once again
 As in previous years we have seen the actual Vision and failed
 To do more than entertain it as an agreeable Possibility, once again we have sent Him away,
 Begging though to remain His disobedient servant,
 The promising child who cannot keep His word for long.
 The Christmas Feast is already a fading memory,
 And already the mind begins to be vaguely aware
 Of an unpleasant whiff of apprehension at the thought
 Of Lent and Good Friday which cannot, after all, now
 Be very far off.

But, for the time being, here we all are,
 Back in the moderate Aristotelian city
 Of darning and the Eight-Fifteen, where Euclid's geometry
 And Newton's mechanics would account for our experience,
 And the kitchen table exists because I scrub it. It seems to have shrunk during the holidays. The streets
 Are much narrower than we remembered; we had forgotten

The office was as depressing as this.

To those who have seen
 The Child, however dimly, however incredulously,
 The Time Being is, in a sense, the most trying time of all.
 For the innocent children who whispered so excitedly
 Outside the locked door where they knew the presents to be
 Grew up when it opened. Now, recollecting that moment
 We can repress the joy, but the guilt remains conscious;
 Remembering the stable where for once in our lives
 Everything became a You and nothing was an It.

And craving the sensation but ignoring the cause,
 We look round for something, no matter what, to inhibit
 Our self-reflection, and the obvious thing for that purpose
 Would be some great suffering. So, once we have met the Son,
 We are tempted ever after to pray to the Father;
 "Lead us into temptation and evil for our sake."

They will come, all right, don't worry; probably in a form
 That we do not expect, and certainly with a force
 More dreadful than we can imagine.

In the meantime
 There are bills to be paid, machines to keep in repair,
 Irregular verbs to learn, the Time Being to redeem
 From insignificance. The happy morning is over,
 The night of agony still to come; the time is noon:
 When the Spirit must practice his scales of rejoicing
 Without even a hostile audience, and the Soul endure
 A silence that is neither for nor against her faith
 That God's Will will be done, That, in spite of her prayers,
 God will cheat no one, not even the world of its triumph.

—W.H. Auden

Outside my window, whoever is in charge of such things has arranged for a gentle rain, and it looks like the invisible has a little light in it today.

Some “Different” January Dates in History

There’s this about January: January derives its name from the Roman God, Janus, the two-faced god of doorways, transitions, and new beginnings. It used to be called Wolfmonth, because hungry wolves roamed for food. January is the coldest month in the Northern Hemisphere. In the Southern Hemisphere January is the warmest month of the year. **Australia here we come!**

January 1, 1863 — The Emancipation Proclamation was made by Abraham Lincoln 1863. It freed all Confederate slaves, and had followed from the statements he made after 1862's Battle of Antietam.

January 1, 1892 — Ellis Island located in Upper New York Bay, starts as an Immigration gateway into the United States replacing Castle Garden Immigration Depot in lower Manhattan which had processed over 8 million immigrants into the country. It operated in this role for more than 50 years closing in 1954 having processed more than 12 million immigrants into the United States. Did You Know over 100 million Americans - one third of the population - can trace their ancestry to the immigrants who first arrived in America at Ellis Island.

January ?, 1924— While working as a short-order cook at his father’s roadside stand, The Rite Spot, 16-year-old Lionel Sternberger added a slice of American cheese to a hamburger. It appeared on the menu as the "Aristocratic Burger: the Original Hamburger with Cheese" and cost \$0.15.

January 1, 1934— The Island of Alcatraz (The Rock) is turned into a federal prison, some of the most hardened criminals are sent to Alcatraz over the next few years.

January 3, 1959 — Alaska became the 49th state of the United States of America.

January 3, 1996— National Fruitcake Toss Day is founded.

January 4, 1896— Pasadena hosted the state’s first car race, a novelty event featuring primitive gasoline-powered vehicles that fascinated massive crowds

January 4, 1923 — A surprise attack by members of the Ku Klux Klan on a black residential area of Rosewood, Florida left 8 people dead. Over the next few

days, the all-black town of Rosewood, a north Florida community of 120 people, was burned to the ground.

January 4, 1849 — The first newspaper The California Star, was published in Yerba Buena. It later became The Alta California and became the first daily newspaper in California. Mark Twain wrote for it. The paper folded on June 2, 1891.

January 5, 1933 — Construction began on the Golden Gate Bridge from the Marin shore. The bridge cost \$1.3 million less than the \$35 million budgeted and completed ahead of schedule in April 1937.

January 8, 1863 — The Central Pacific Railroad broke ground in Sacramento. That was the first step in the 1,907-mile long Transcontinental Railroad, completed on May 10, 1869.

January 8, 1908 — President Theodore Roosevelt established Muir Woods National Monument as a unit of the National Park Service. It protects one of the few old growth Coast Redwood forests left in the San Francisco Bay Area.

January 9, 1908 — President Theodore Roosevelt established Muir Woods National Monument as a unit of the National Park Service. It protects one of the few old growth Coast Redwood forests left in the San Francisco Bay Area.

January 9, 2007 — Apple forever changes the world with the introduction of the iPhone

January 10, 1862 — Gov. Leland Stanford traveled the six blocks from the governor’s mansion to the State Capitol by rowboat for his Jan. 10, 1862, inauguration ceremony. After several weeks of heavy rains, the Sacramento River rose more than 22 feet and the city was under water. The American River, near Folsom, rose more than 60 feet. Trees were filled with people clinging to branches. More than than 4,000 Californians — 1% of the state’s population — were killed in the flood. A quarter of the state’s cattle drowned. And there was more than \$100 million in damages; the equivalent of several billion in 2026 dollars. One observer noted, the only land that could be seen were the Sierra Mountains in the east.

Please see HISTORY, Next Page

HISTORY

(Continued from previous page)

that ran aground near Humboldt Bay. It succeeded in rescuing 421 sailors and 17 officers but itself was run aground attempting to reflect the sub. The submarine was saved but the rescue ship was lost

January 14, 1967—The Human Be-In in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park marked the beginning of the Summer of Love. Some 20,000 people attended.

January 14, 2009—First ever National Dress Up Your Pet Day. For some reason, it is now an annual commemorative day.

January 15, 1891—Biddy Mason died a wealthy woman in Los Angeles at age 72. She was brought to California as a slave but fought for freedom in court. Auntie Mason, as she was known, was one of the first African American land owners in L.A., founded a traveler's aid center, an elementary school for black children and the city's first black church. Biddy Mason Day is celebrated on November 16.

January 15, 1967—The Green Bay Packers defeated the Kansas City Chiefs, 35–10, in the first Super Bowl. It was played in the Los Angeles Coliseum and not televised live in the L.A. area.

January 16, 1844—John Frémont and Kit Carson followed the Truckee River up into the Sierras. They were the first Americans to see Lake Tahoe. Three years later, Frémont was appointed California's military governor following the end of the Mexican American War.

January 17, 1994—A 6.7 magnitude earthquake struck Northridge, in the San Fernando region of Los Angeles. Fifty-seven people were killed, some 5,000 injured. Property damage was more than \$20 billion, making it one of the costliest natural disasters in U.S. history.

January 17, 2006—Clarence Ray Allen, the oldest inmate on California's death row,, was executed on his 76th birthday. People argued that putting to death an elderly, blind, wheelchair-bound man was cruel and unusual punishment. They may have had a point.

January 18, 1779—Peter Roget is born. A physician, he is best known for the 1852 publishing of Ro-

January 13, 1916—The U.S.S. Milwaukee sailed to rescue a U.S. submarine

get's Thesaurus. This date is now celebrated, feted, honored, lionized, esteemed, remembered, cherished as National Thesaurus Day.

January 22, 1849—Three robbers were hanged at Dry Diggins, later known as Hangtown. Today it's called Placerville. The stump of the original hanging tree, it's said, is in the cellar of The Hangman's Tree bar.

January 22, 1984—Apple Computers television commercial for the new Macintosh computer was broadcast only one time; during the Super Bowl. It became one of the most successful American television commercials of all time, an advertising masterpiece. See it here: <https://youtu.be/2zfqw8nhUwA>. P.S. The Raiders beat the Washington Redskins in the Super Bowl 38-9.

January 23, 1957—Inventor Walter Morrison sold the rights to his flying disc to the Wham-O Toy Company of Woodland Hills, which later renamed it the Frisbee. His business began by selling "Flyin' Cake Pans" on the beaches of Santa Monica. (We heard the Frisbee had some success.)

January 24, 2011—California Supreme Court ruled that cities and counties do not have to consult with unions before laying off workers to save money.

January 25, 2012—Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords officially resigned from the US House of Representatives in order to complete her recovery after being shot by a gunman in January of 2011.

January 26, 1929—Frances Orlando, 19, who lived as a man, was arrested in San Francisco for dressing in men's clothing.

January 27, 1945—Allied troops liberated Auschwitz in Poland. They found warehouses full of the belongings, including over 40,000 pairs of shoes and 88 lbs of eyeglasses.

January 27—Declared National Chocolate Day.

January 28, 1983—National Kazoo Day is celebrated for the first time—founded by Chaplin Willard Rahn of the Joyful Noise Kazoo Band. It is now an annual celebration of "joyful noise."

January 31, 1950—President Truman approved U.S. development of the hydrogen bomb, a weapon potentially 1,000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb.