

Sierra Christian Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation

Week of Compassion Offering, Feb. 15, 22

As a probably unnecessary reminder, Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. It operates year-round to provide disaster response, support refugees, and foster sustainable development worldwide. This year, the offering is on the 15th and 22nd.

On October 29, 2021, Somerset and Dorchester counties experienced Maryland's worst tidal flooding in 50 years—in many places water levels were at or higher than 2012's Hurricane Sandy levels. This depth of flooding created immediate and long-term health threats to flood survivors, and devastating damage to their homes. The rush of bay water carried contaminants and wreaked havoc on plumbing and electrical systems, and left homes vulnerable to black mold and mildew.

The 2021 storm was unnamed and undeclared by federal agencies. It received minimal media coverage. There was no widespread awareness of the flooding, which meant the resources and networks that usually avail themselves at such times were not accessible.

But the Eastern Shore Long-Term Recovery Committee stepped up. Formed after Hurricane Sandy devastated the east coast a few years before, the ESLTRC immediately got busy helping to rebuild 10 destroyed homes before imagining a multitude of ways to respond to, and help, surviving families needing some sort of aid.

Not too long thereafter, Week of Compassion entered into a partnership with ESLTRC to provide salary support for the committee's Disaster Recovery Committee as they launched into a second phase of their recovery and support: tidal flood recovery and mitigation project—to recruit and train 100 volunteers to elevate 100 homes that flooded in 2021 and are most vulnerable should the tidal flooding repeat itself.

The plan is to make the homes healthy and safe, and to “reduce the risk of repetitive damage, provide better stewardship of funding entrusted to us, and improve the quality of life for surviving families,” according to a statement released by the ESLTRC.

Somerset and Dorchester counties are two of the poorest in the state. A great many of their residents live in HUD-owned public housing, and nearly half the 2,500 residents of the town of Crisfield in Somerset County live in supported housing units. This is where ESLTRC's **third phase** kicked in—building new affordable homes on previously abandoned lots and making homes affordable and available to new homeowners.

The Week of Compassion, the church's relief, refugee, and development mission fund, will go a long way in making this happen.

This obvious and challenging intersection of socioeconomic conditions and climate change vulnerability is

where the resources and creativity of Week of Compassion's mission fund come into play, because standing up for and next to climate-vulnerable communities like the Eastern Shore is a shared priority among ecumenical partners and local leaders.





SPECIAL OFFERING 2026
FEBRUARY 15 - 22

As the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Week of Compassion works with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world, with a vision of a world where God's people transform suffering into hope.

We Don't Have to Carry It By Ourselves

So, when my husband asked me the other night as we were listening to a report on the death/murder of Alex Pretti, he asked me, not completely rhetorically, I don't think, "How does someone preach Sunday mornings when all this is going on?" I did a pretty lousy job of responding. I think I said something wise and profound like, "Not sure."

I think I want to take a second shot at his not-so-rhetorical question, if I may.

Do you remember that early video game Tetris? Shapes fall from the top of the screen, and you rotate them, so they fit together. When you get it right, a whole row disappears. It was oddly satisfying.

That is, until it started speeding up. Then the strategies that worked a few rows before were no longer working. The shapes would fall quicker than I could rotate them and so I would either panic and make bad choices and spin them the wrong direction or drop them on the wrong spot—until I was buried under stupidly stacked shapes.

There are moments these days when my phone chimes with a news notification and I feel like I am under assault. It feels as though the news isn't informing us as much as *landing* on us right now.

So maybe serving a heavy world
doesn't mean absorbing its full weight.
Maybe it means setting down what isn't
ours, and lifting the one small, specific
thing that is. Tending a body. Telling a
truth. Making enough soup to feed your-
self—and pouring a little extra into a jar
to drop off for a neighbor.

the generally good people going about their lives everywhere you turn. It is as if we are all being buried under stupidly stacked shapes falling faster than we can manage them. It may feel even heavier for those who came to believe along the way the treacherous lie that if you really love the world you can carry its weight.

None of us can carry it all. And yet each of us can carry a bit. Something. A mountain, or a morsel; a whole community or just a wee corner of the world that fits in our hands. Some tend to carry more than others, but not even they are equipped for all of it—but we are all equipped for *some* of it.

It is not easy to always find the right voice to preach during these messy and tragic days, but I know how imperative it is for my health to hold the space for compassion and love and grace, and I also know that buried beneath the news of the government's blatant daylight murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti is the story of ICE agents setting up one of their staging areas in the parking lot behind a Minneapolis Lutheran church, not realizing the church's quilting group was there that day quilting together. The women confronted them, asking if they were proud of what they were doing, and suggested that, if so, they should go set themselves up in *front of the church* where more people could see them.

They packed up and left.

So maybe serving a heavy world doesn't mean absorbing its full weight.

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.

I used to be able to take each individual shape (news story) that fell and maybe place it in context, manage the truth of it so I didn't feel buried. And the next one would drop and I'd try and do the same. But now it is falling on us at dizzying, even horrifying, speed and there's just no chance of managing it all.

So, yes, the world feels heavy right now, for pretty much everyone, for pastors, plumbers, politicians, and

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. Men's Fellowship meets Saturday, February 7 at 9 am on Zoom.
5. Work on updating the Sierra Christian Church directory has begun. 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 hold a special meeting this month to discuss a single topic: Cesar Chavez Foundation's enthusiastic plans to develop affordable housing on church grounds. It is scheduled for Wednesday, February 25, 6:30 pm on Zoom.
7. We are searching for church members to meet for lunch on Sunday, March 14 and between bites help develop the church's budget and spending priorities for the coming fiscal year. Let Karen know if you're interested. Uh, please be interested!
8. Birthday wishes to Pam Margo, who celebrates on the 25th!

"What is my purpose in life," I asked
the void

"What if I told you that you fulfilled it
when you took an extra hour to talk to
that kid about what was troubling him?

"Or when you paid for that young
mother's gasoline? Or when you took in
that stray dog and gave him a loving
home. Or when you tied your father's

shoes for him

"Your problem is that you equate your
purpose with goal-based achievement.
The Universe isn't interested in your
achievements—just your heart. When you
choose to act out of kindness, compas-
sion, and love, you are already aligned
with your true purpose.

"No need to look any further."

“A Life Worth Living, A Legacy Worth Giving”

[Register Here](#)

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?

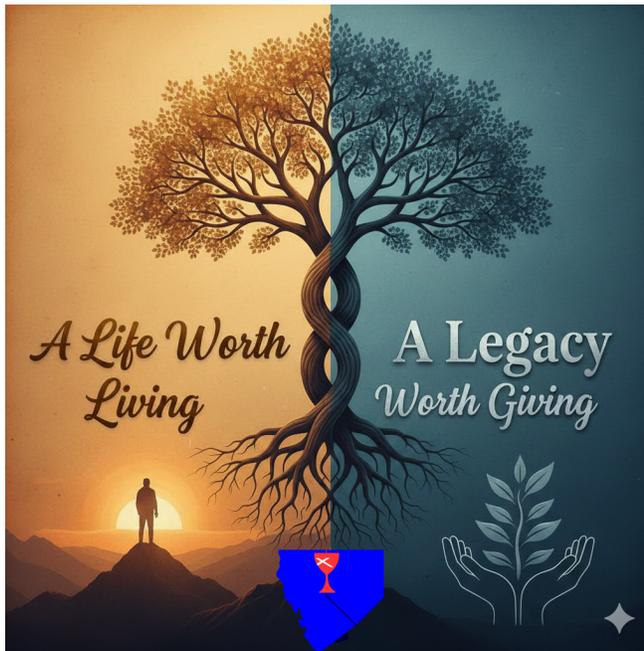
Please come join me and other like-minded friends and spiritual sisters who wish to learn more about this important endeavor – for a Beautiful Act III of our lives.

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

Sponsored by WOMEN’S MINISTRY

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.



PITCH

(Continued page 2)

Maybe it means setting down what isn’t ours, and lifting the one small, specific thing that is. Tending a body. Telling a truth. Making enough soup to feed yourself—and pouring a little extra into a jar to drop off for a neighbor. Showing up to a demonstration on Thursday evenings so our voices can be heard, and we can be seen.

Loving fiercely where your feet actually are. Resisting despair and all its empty promises. Holding a sign.

That won’t save everything. But it will save something. And that is how we keep going. That may be how you deliver a sermon on Sunday and pastor a small church graced with a mighty and bursting heart, so full of love and courage it is.

My family and friends have taught me and lovingly remind me that if we pay attention, God will guide us to know what is ours to do, activists, mothers, lawyers, pastors, teachers, children, and of course, quilters. With bent backs and sore knees, sad hearts, clear eyes and sharp minds, we will know, because, friends, God knows!

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

February 2026

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

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)

April 23, 2026: Clergy Gathering

April 24-25, 2026: Annual Gathering at FCC Concord

Some Brief Remarks on the Notion of Dignity

When the Albanian political philosopher Lea Ypi was growing up, her grandmother, Leman Ypi, would tell her that during her honeymoon—which took place in Italy in 1941, when war raged throughout Europe and at the edges of the Pacific—she was “the happiest person alive.”

Decades later, Ypi wondered how Leman, “no fascist apologist,” had managed to experience joy amid so much devastation—not just in the midst of war but also years later, when her family was persecuted in Albania during the reign of the Stalinist Enver Hoxha. “Indignity,” Ypi’s latest book, is devoted to the question of how her grandmother weathered her tumultuous life—a capability that, Ypi learns, was deeply tied to a sense of dignity. Ypi shared some thoughts on a book about dignity that played a part in her exploration of the topic. She wrote:

“Immanuel Kant’s “*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*” is one of my favorites for a combination of personal and philosophical reasons. I was brought up in Albania by my grandmother, who was born in Salonica (as Thessaloniki was known when it was part of the Ottoman Empire).

"For Alex Jeffrey Pretti"
Murdered by I.C.E. January 24, 2026
by Amanda Gorman

We wake with
no words, just woe
& wound. Our own country shoot
ing us in the back is not just brutal
ity; it's jarring betrayal; not enforcement,
but execution. A message: Love your people & you
will die. Yet our greatest threat isn't the outsiders
among us, but those among us who never look
within. Fear not the those without papers, but those
without conscience. Know that to care intensively,
united, is to carry both pain-dark horror for today
& a profound, daring hope for tomorrow. We can feel
we have nothing to give, & still believe this world wait
ing, trembling to change. If we cannot find words, may
we find the will; if we ever lose hope, may we never lose our
humanity. The only undying thing is mercy, the courage to open
ourselves like doors, hug our neighbor,
& save one more bright, impossible life.

“She lived through the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, fascism, Nazism, communism and the post-communist years, and yet always insisted that even though she lost so much—wealth, status, connections—she never lost her dignity.

“Dignity, she would say, is connected to our capacity to do the right thing, to a moral dimension of freedom.

“Kant’s “*Groundwork*” helped explain this intuition to me. In the book, Kant reflects on the source of moral duties and suggests that what is distinctive about humans, compared with other species, is our capacity to take a critical distance from our immediate passions and inclinations. We can reflect on how these things affect others, and how they contribute to a purposeful life in which other people are not treated as mere means to an end, but as beings with inner worth.

“It is a view that connects dignity to moral will, and that explains how people can find resources to resist even when enduring extreme hardship.”

We did not ask for this room or this music. We were invited in. Therefore, because the dark surrounds us, let us turn our faces to the light. Let us endure hardship to be grateful for plenty. We have been given pain to be astounded by joy. We have been given life to deny death. We did not ask for this room or this music. But because we are here, let us dance.

Some “Different” February Dates in History

The month of February is named after the Latin term *februa*, which refers to "purification" or "to cleanse". It was named after the Februalia festival held around the 15th (full moon), a festival of purification and atonement, originally to honor the god *Terminus* and later to prepare for spring

February 1, 1855 — California's first railroad was built from Sacramento to Folsom, California. This 22-mile (35 km) line was meant to take advantage of the prosperous gold diggings in Placerville, California but it was completed at about the same time (February 1856) as the mining near there came to an end.

February 1, 1939 — Some 4,00 prisoners at San Quentin Prison went on a hunger strike to protest extended solitary confinement and the prison food.

February 1, 2003 — The Space Shuttle *Columbia* disintegrated during re-entry over Texas, killing all seven crew members. This event had significant impact on California's space industry, as many of the crew members were associated with the state's NASA centers.

February 1, 1978 — First U.S. postage stamp to honor a black woman, Harriet Tubman, was issued.

February 2, 1811 — Russian settlers established Ft. Ross on the Sonoma coast. It was a base for fur hunters and a warm weather supplier for the Russian colonies in Alaska. Colonists included 25 Russians and some 80 Aleut Indians. Today Fort Ross is a State Historic Park.

February 2, 1848 — The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, formally ending the Mexican American War. 25,000 Mexicans and 12,000 Americans died in the 17-month old conflict. The U.S. acquired California, Texas, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and part of Colorado.

February 2, 1934 — The San Francisco Police Commission issued regulations for dance nightclubs that included a rule against black and white people dancing together.

February 2, 2006 — Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, in Livermore, announced plans to install machine guns to deter terrorists. They would fire 4,000 rounds a minute with a range of nearly a mile.

February 3, 1870 - The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, guaranteeing the right of citizens to vote, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

February 3, 1857 — The Bee, a Sacramento newspaper, debuted. Now, it is known as the Sacramento Bee.

February 3, 2006 — PG&E agreed to pay \$295 million to settle lawsuits over drinking wells polluted with the toxic chemical chromium.

February 4, 1851 — The first baseball game was played in San Francisco. A newspaper report read, “A game of base ball was played upon the Plaza yesterday afternoon by a number of the sporting gentleman about town.”

February 4, 1913 — Rosa Parks, “Mother of the Civil Rights Movement,” was born. Her arrest after refusing to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, sparked a boycott of the bus system, which eventually led to the Supreme Court decision to integrate buses.

February 5, 1697 — The Spanish king authorized the Jesuits to establish missions in Baja and Alta California

February 6, 1988 — San Francisco Mayor Jerry Brown left for Manila to sign agreements with Mayor Alfredo Lim for workshops on AIDS, student exchange programs and celebrate 100 years of Philippine independence.

February 7, 2012 — The 9th Circuit Court in California struck down the ban on gay marriage passed by voters, ruling it violated the constitutional rights of gay Californians.

February 9, 1964 — Seventy-three million Americans tuned into the Ed Sullivan Show to watch four young men from Liverpool appear for the very first time — The Beatles.

February 9, 1961 — President Kennedy asked Congress to approve a health insurance program (the Medicare Program) for 14.2 million Americans 65 or older, financed by an increase in Social Security taxes.

Please see HISTORY, Next Page

HISTORY

(Continued from previous page)

February 11, 1966 – Willie Mays, San Francisco Giants outfielder, signed his highest contract to date; \$130,000 per year.

February 12, 1935 – USS Macon, one of the largest U.S. Navy helium airships, crashed off the coast of Big Sur and sank. Most of the crew were saved. The place where it wrecked is a National Historic Place.

February 12, 2004 – Gavin Newsom, newly elected San Francisco mayor, instructed city clerks to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

February 11, 1990 – In South Africa, Nelson Mandela, at age 71, was released from prison after serving 27 years of a life sentence on charges of attempting to overthrow the apartheid government. In April 1994, he was elected president in the first all-race elections.

February 13, 1913 – The Owens Valley water was officially diverted into the Los Angeles Aqueduct, a major moment in the "California Water Wars."

February 13, 1945 - During World War II in Europe, British and American planes began massive bombing raids on Dresden, Germany. A four-day firestorm erupted that was visible for 200 miles and engulfed the historic old city, killing an estimated 135,000 German civilians. A prisoner of war in Dresden at the time of the bombing, Kurt Vonnegut hid in a meat locker in a slaughterhouse and later wrote about the experience (sort of) in his novel, "Slaughterhouse-Five."

February 13, 1850 – The California state legislature officially incorporated the city of Sacramento, making it the state capital.

February 14, 1844 – Exploring the trail to California, John Frémont first saw Lake Tahoe from a peak in the Carson Range to the east. He reached Sutter's Fort in March.

February 15, 1564 – Astronomer and physicist Galileo Galilei was born in Pisa, Italy. He was the first astronomer to use a telescope and advanced the theory that the sun, not the earth, was the center of the solar system. A discovery that cost him dearly.

February 17, 1995 – National Random Acts of Kindness Day is first celebrated.

February 18, 1072 – The California Supreme Court declared the death penalty cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the state constitution. One hundred and seven inmates were taken off death row and re-sentenced.

February 20, 1971 – Astronaut Scott Carpenter began living on the ocean floor for 30 days off the coast of La Jolla.

February 20, 2004 – Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger directed immediate legal steps to stop San Francisco from granting marriage licenses to gay couples.

February 20, 1991 – The "World's Tallest Thermometer" was unveiled in Baker, CA, to celebrate a 1913 record heatwave. On July 10 temperature reached 134 degrees. Honest!

February 21, 1965 – Former Black Muslim leader Malcolm X (1925-1965) was shot and killed while delivering a speech in a ballroom in New York City.

February 22, 2017 – National California Day is first celebrated. A day to celebrate and honor the history, culture, climate, and achievements of the 31st State.

February 24 – It's National Tortilla Chip Day, celebrating the snack invented in a Los Angeles deli in the 1940s.

February 26, 1860 – White settlers murdered some 60 women, children and elder Wiyot Indians on an island near Eureka. Bret Harte, then a local newspaper reporter, fed the story to San Francisco newspapers.

February 28, 1954 – American molecular biologists James D. Watson and Francis H.C. Crick discover the double-helix structure of DNA, the molecule that contains the human genes, in a Cambridge University laboratory. It won them the Nobel Prize.

February 29, 1692 – Three women – Sarah Good, Sarah Osborne, and Tituba – were accused of witchcraft, marking the beginning of the Salem Witch Trials in Salem Village, colonial Massachusetts. The Salem witch trials led to the execution of 20 "witches," with more dying in prison before and after the trial.