



Established 1886

# Keeping in Touch

December 31 2017



2017 is over and done with;  
we can't change it—the best we can do is learn from it.  
2018 holds hope and possibility;  
but we never know from one day to the next  
what may come to pass.

A new year is a good time to reflect and remember these lines  
from the song cycle *Naked Man*,  
premiered by the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus in 1995:

*Take each moment as a gift  
Take each moment as a gift  
Take each moment as a gift;*

*Give it back;  
Give it back—again*

Here's to a blessed new year filled with blessed moments.

First United is a "Reconciling in Christ" (RIC) congregation that has declared that all persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities are equally welcome to join fully in the worship and life of this Christ-centered community.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

December 31, 2017



\* For the following events of 2017 we express Gratitude and offer Thanks:

- **Women who had been harassed and assaulted in the workplace** stood up and spoke up — and, in many cases, were listened to and believed.
- In December, **Australia became the 25th country to achieve marriage equality**, with both houses of the legislature voting overwhelmingly in its favor following a voluntary mail survey that showed clear public support.
- Mattel unveiled **a sporty, hijab-wearing Barbie**, modeled on Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad. Ms. Muhammad, the first Muslim American woman to win an Olympic medal, said that there was no Barbie that looked like her when she was growing up and that she hopes the doll will inspire other girls “to embrace what makes them unique.”
- **Women in Saudi Arabia were granted permission to drive** starting in June.
- On January 24, 2017, **the Cincinnati Zoo welcomed Fiona the Hippo into the world**. Fiona was born six weeks premature, and weighed just 29 pounds at birth. But against tough odds, Fiona survived, making her a fitting avatar for all things good about 2017.
- On August 21, people across the United States got to witness **the first visible solar eclipse since 1979**.
- On December 19, **this happened** in Leicester, UK:



\* The following we hold in our hearts and pray for Relief, Release, Solace, and Comfort:

- anywhere in the world where there is discord, conflict, animosity, and any barriers to peace between nations, tribes, territories, and people

φ If you would like to add someone or something to the prayer list, please contact Orion. φ

Photos from the events honoring  
Pastor Susan's 13 years of ministry to First United on December 10



Thanks to Anders Peterson for providing the photos.

Christmas Eve House Church  
at the home of the Alliston Johnson's.  
Music, storytelling, and scripture  
in a multifaith, multigenerational gathering.



John, Gioia,  
and Nicole  
provide special  
music.



People schmoozing  
at the after-party.



Thanks to Anders Pe-  
tersen for the photos.



2017 was a year of extraordinary events for Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries, not the least of which was the appointment of our friend and colleague Amanda Nelson as Executive Director.

*Amanda reflects in the following excerpt from interMission, ELM's newsletter:*

## Thank You For Being Extraordinary!

by **the Rev. Amanda Nelson**  
ELM Executive Director



2017 has been a year of big changes and big celebrations for Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries.

Our programs continue to grow:

This year we gained 44 new members of Proclaim from Atlanta, Georgia to Regina, Saskatchewan.

33 of our new members are Seminarians.

4 are pastors, 2 deacons, and 5 are either retired or awaiting call.

Overall our membership has reached 283 people - that's 283 LGBTQIA+ leaders of our church publicly witnessing to the transformational love of God and boldly proclaiming the good news of the gospels to communities across our country.

Over 85 volunteers, many of them Proclaim members themselves, help to strengthen our programs by serving as first-call coaches, local contacts, and synod assembly table hosts, to name just a few of the capacities in which they serve.

This year, we said farewell and thank you to Amalia Vagts for her years of dedicated and creative leadership - and welcome to Rev. Amanda Nelson who serves as our new Executive Director

Over 40 individuals and families have joined the ranks of those who support ELM financially - providing gifts annually or monthly to strengthen our ministries and lend their support to gender and sexual minority leaders of the Lutheran Church

Through it all, the gifts you have made of time and finances have been a blessing for many: You've connected new seminarians into the community of Proclaim. You've equipped call committees to open their processes to Gender and Sexual Minorities. You made the 2017 Proclaim Gathering possible and meaningful for the 70 Proclaim members who attended. You've helped to make ELM who we are today - and give us hope for who we can be in the future.

To all of you who have supported ELM this year, we say "Thank you"

- Thank you for your gifts of time.
- Thank you for your financial gifts.
- Thank you for believing in LGBTQIA+ leaders.
- Thank you for being Extraordinary!



"Church Together" A gift from your Synod storytellers/mission interpreters



## **#MeToo and the Bible**

A mentor had told him that once an event or movement hits the headlines, you have a window of 3-4 weeks to address it from a pastoral, faith perspective. So when one victim of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein's sexual assault went public, opening the floodgates for an immediate avalanche of testimony from similarly victimized women, and when he saw friends and parishioners posting #MeToo on Facebook, Pastor Ben Colahan, Faith - Chico, knew he needed to act quickly.

Pr. Ben also knew he is a male who very much needed female partnership in this project. He reached out to several local colleagues, all women: Rabbi Sara Abrams of Congregation Beth Israel, Rev. Loretta Dickerson of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (already a frequent partner with Faith Church), and Dr. Kate McCarthy, professor of religion and gender studies at California State University - Chico. Together they asked, "What does the Bible say about sexual assault - why it happens, how it happens, and how it is dealt with? How were God's people called to respond to sexual assault?" They imagined and planned a public event called "#MeToo and the Bible."

Each of them selected a Bible story and prepared a brief presentation to provoke a conversation about our current cultural situation. The stories chosen were:

1) The rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13) When Amnon, aflame with lust, raped his half sister Tamar, their father, King David, was angry but did not punish Amnon, his first-born son. Two years later Absalom, Tamar's full brother, avenged the injustice and damage done to his sister by killing Amnon. —————→

2) The disobedience of Queen Vashti (Esther 1) On the seventh day of a banquet he gave for his male friends and subjects, Persian King Ahasuerus, by then quite drunk, ordered that Queen Vashti be brought to the banquet wearing nothing but her royal crown, so all the men might see and admire her remarkable beauty. Queen Vashti refused to undergo this humiliation. The king's advisors assured him that if he let Queen Vashti get away with this disobedience, all households would be filled with chaos as wives would be encouraged to similarly disobey their husbands. Queen Vashti was banished forever from the king's presence, and replaced by Esther.

3) King David's "Bathshebagate affair" (2 Samuel 11:1 - 12:25) King David, his lust aroused by the sight of a beautiful woman bathing, learns that she is the wife of one of the king's soldiers, now deployed in battle. Nevertheless, the king sends messengers to bring Bathsheba to his palace, where they have sex. Bathsheba has no safe way to say "no" to the king, so the sex cannot be considered consensual. She becomes pregnant; David attempts a coverup, and, as a last resort, orders Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to be killed. The prophet Nathan, David's friend, risks his position and even his life to speak God's word and call the king to repent of his flagrant abuse of power.

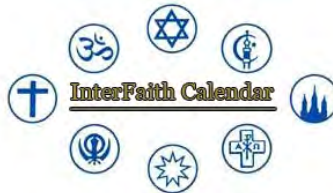
4) Susanna accused and vindicated (apocryphal book of Susanna) Two evil judges, overwhelmed with lust for Joakim's beautiful wife, Susanna, warn her that if she will not consent to having sex with them both, they will accuse her of having adulterous sex with a young neighbor. Aware that the word of a woman would likely not prevail over the testimony of two male judges, and that she is likely to be executed for the false accusation, Susanna nevertheless refuses. The evil judges make their accusation, and the assembly believes them "because they were elders of the people and judges," condemning Susanna to death. But Daniel, stirred up by God's spirit, comes upon the scene and demands an investigation to determine the truth in this "they said, she said" scenario. The clever and skillful investigation reveals that the judges were lying; they are put to death and Susanna is exonerated.

Despite having less than 2 weeks to publicize the event, #MeToo and the Bible, about 60 people came for the presentations and ensuing lively conversation. Pr. Ben reports, "Responses ranged from, 'Thank you for doing this,' to 'Could we please do more on this topic?'" It has now become clear that the issues of sexual assault and harassment will not evaporate from the public consciousness in two or three weeks, and Pr. Ben is hoping the team can offer a follow-up event, perhaps one that asks, "What do healthy relationship dynamics and sexuality look like in the Bible?"

***Do you have a story that you would like to share?  
Send any Church Together story requests  
to [mic@spselca.org](mailto:mic@spselca.org).***



[peaceproject.com](http://peaceproject.com)



## MULTIFAITH RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL OBSERVANCES 2018

FOR A COMPLETE AND INTERACTIVE MULTIFAITH RELIGIOUS CALENDAR,

CLICK HERE:

<http://ucsfspiritcare.org/resources/>



January 10  
David Rohrer

January 15  
Kati Pessner

January 21  
Pam Hargraves

January 23  
Jacob Johnson



Humbly  
welcome  
the word  
that has  
been  
planted  
in you.

## ON THE SCHEDULE REFRESHMENTS



Worship

Willing to help?  
Contact Orion at  
[orion@fulc.com](mailto:orion@fulc.com)



# San Francisco Interfaith Council

*Celebrating our diverse faiths & spiritual traditions  
Bringing people together to build understanding  
Serving our community*

Michael G. Pappas, M.Div., Executive Director • [mgpappas@sfinterfaithcouncil.org](mailto:mgpappas@sfinterfaithcouncil.org)  
P.O. Box 29055 • San Francisco, CA 94129 415.474.1321  
[www.sfinterfaithcouncil.org](http://www.sfinterfaithcouncil.org)

## San Francisco Religious Leaders Mourn the Death of Mayor Edwin M. Lee

December 12, 2017 - San Francisco



*Photo by Bill Wilson*

In this season, when many religious faiths anticipate the hope of new light and life, we, the religious leaders of San Francisco, pause to offer prayers of new light and life for Mayor Edwin M. Lee, who passed away early this morning. We extend heartfelt sympathies to his wife Anita and their daughters Tania and Brianna.

A great friend, supporter and partner of San Francisco's religious community, Mayor Lee always sought the counsel of and engaged faith leaders in responding to our City's challenges of homelessness, housing affordability, civil, human and immigrant rights, as well championing efforts to protect our most vulnerable residents. His decades of service, tireless efforts to better life for all of our residents and love for San Francisco are his precious legacy.

At this most difficult time, Clergy are asked to remember Mayor Lee at their worship services as well as to lift up in prayer our Acting Mayor London Breed and our City of San Francisco.

May the memories of times shared with Mayor Lee bring strength and comfort to us all and to our City.

Kaushik Roy, *Chair, San Francisco Interfaith Council*  
Rita R. Semel, *Past Chair, San Francisco Interfaith Council*  
Michael G. Pappas, *Executive Director, San Francisco Interfaith Council*



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*Celebrating our diverse faiths & spiritual traditions  
Bringing people together to build understanding  
Serving our community*

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## **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Interfaith Activities**

Monday, January 15, 2018

11:00 am (March/Parade)

From Caltrain Depot at 4<sup>th</sup> and Townsend

### ***"The Urgency of Now"***

"We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there "is" such a thing as being too late.

This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and postive action."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

The San Francisco Interfaith Council invites faith leaders and their congregants to join in the 2018 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebrations to be held on Monday, January 15, 2018 at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Gardens. The 2018 March/Parade will begin promptly at 11:00 am (arrive early) from the Caltrain Depot at 4<sup>th</sup> and Townsend. Once the March/Parade arrives at the Yerba Buena Gardens, the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Interfaith Commemoration Ceremony will commence.

A host of other activities and programs that will take place to mark the occasion may be found on the San Francisco Interfaith Council partner organization's website:

<http://norcalmlkfoundation.org/Events.html>



### Coming Events (this week and beyond):

#### *Christmas/Epiphany Schedule*



#### **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 5:00 PM**

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS LESSONS AND CAROLS

ZOOMChurch—details to be provided

#### **THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 7:30-9:00 PM**

MIDDLE CIRCLE MEDITATION NIGHT  
(PERSONAL & SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION EAST BAY)

at Tayo & Femi, 3860 MLK Jr. Way, Unit 511,  
Oakland, CA

#### **SUNDAY, JANUARY 7, 10:00 AM**

HOUSE CHURCH—EPIPHANY

at home of Dana & Sophia McDonald

#### **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 7:00 PM**

REFLECTING TOGETHER ON SACRED TEXTS—INTERFAITH DISCUSSION SERIES  
at St. Cyprian's downstairs

#### **SUNDAY, JANUARY 14, 5:00 PM**

ZOOMCHURCH—2ND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Links to be provided.

#### **FOR FULL DETAILS**

on all events, go to [www.fulc.com](http://www.fulc.com), & click on Calendar

#### Sunday Worship

5:00 p.m. at

St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church  
2097 Turk Street @ Lyon

Church Offices at

2097 Turk Street @ Lyon

Mailing Address:

1388 Haight St., #180

San Francisco, CA 94117

Phone: (415) 359-1025

For information visit our website:

[www.fulc.com](http://www.fulc.com)

email: [info@fulc.com](mailto:info@fulc.com)

currently in Interim Pastor

status

email: [info@fulc.com](mailto:info@fulc.com)

Anders Peterson,

Mission Developer

[anders@middlecircle.org](mailto:anders@middlecircle.org)

Orion Pitts

Music Director &

Office Administrator

[orion@fulc.com](mailto:orion@fulc.com)

#### **NOTE:**

**Deadline for submission**  
of all information or items in  
*Keeping in Touch* is

**Wednesday at 12 noon**

of the week of publication.  
Items submitted after this time

#### **Assistance Policy**

First United's policy is to help people by finding services when possible, and will provide gift cards for specific financial needs. All requests for help must go to Pastor Susan. Please do not ask members for money,