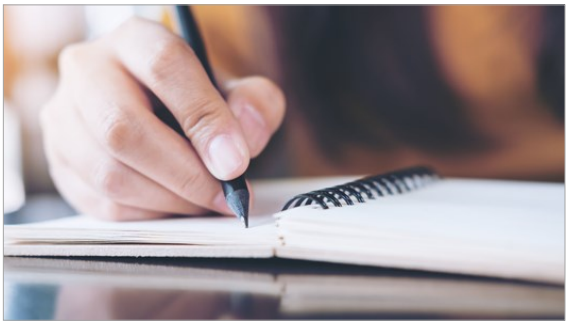
The Cornerstone

Rolling Hills United Methodist Church
26438 Crenshaw Blvd.
Rolling Hills Estates, CA 90274
310-377-6771

January 2021

Bible Study for the Season Following Epiphany

"It Is Written!" – An Overview of the Gospel of Mark
Thursdays at 2:00 p.m. (via Zoom)
January 21, January 28, February 4, February 11



For much of 2021, the gospel reading for our worship services will be a selection from Mark. Gaining a "big picture" overview at the outset will support readers and listeners in their efforts to hear and receive the word of God over the course of the year. April Herron will guide the class. Participants will be asked to spend a modest amount of time engaging with Mark's presentation of the good news outside of class meetings, but no particular study books are required.

Men and women of all ages are welcome. To sign up, please call or email the church office at 310 377 6771; churchoffice@rhumc.org, or contact April@rhumc.org. A Zoom link will be emailed to you in mid-January.

from the pastors *Jonathan Chute*

I am trying not to use the word "unprecedented." It's a perfectly good word. But it's wearing out. Named "Word of the Year" for 2020, I think the award may have gone to its head. It's been seen out later at night than is probably wise, and hanging out with a fast crowd. Some of the threads are getting loose. It could come apart at any time. If I leave it alone for a while, perhaps it will have time to heal. I don't really know whether words can repair themselves. But overuse doesn't help.

Words have power. Some years ago I saw a study in which the participants took a common exam. But just before they went in to the room, they were given a sheet of supposedly random words to look over. Some of the words were, in fact, random. But others had been chosen to see what effect they might have on the test takers.

Mixed in with the others were words like "tired," "sore," "worn," "grey." A second sheet included other words – "bright," "yellow," "sun," "sky." Those who had reviewed the first sheet did not perform as well as the second group. It seemed that the words were like seeds planted in their minds, and when they sprouted they yielded remarkably different results.

Words have power. The children's rhyme says, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." But that's not actually true. The evidence is clear that the words we use shape the experience of those around us, and of ourselves as well.

The Letter of James, likely written in the second half of the 1st Century, understands the destructive power of human speech, likening the tongue to a fire that sets a forest burning. "No one can tame the tongue," the writer observes. It is small in size but great in effect.

It was a member of the British Parliament in 1839 who authored the expression, "The pen is mightier than the sword." Edward Bulwer-Lytton saw that the language we use is a more effective tool for changing the world than violence.

I think the Bible agrees with him. At the beginning of Creation, it was the simple word from God, "Let there be light," that got it all started. God spoke, and it was so. Things happened. A world was born. And then, according to John's gospel, it was the very Word of God who came to be with us on earth – "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

I'm trying to be more careful with words these days. I have received from so many of you words of encouragement, words of grace, words of hope about our lives. As we move together into the new year, I want to give some of them a chance to be this year's "Word of the Year."

Jonathan

April Herron

Dear Friends,

I thought I had become accustomed to leading worship in an empty sanctuary. But the experience of recording our Christmas Eve worship service taught me I was wrong! On December 21, which "stood in" for December 24 so that we would have a service ready to share with you at the right time, I missed the families arriving early to find seats together. I missed the great crowd of joyful, eager faces. I missed the sparkle of garlands and the narthex tree. I missed the excitement that fills the room as we all wait eagerly for the service to begin. Most of all, I missed the sound of many voices raised in singing the familiar Christmas carols. Truthfully, I felt my eyes tear up as Chuck started to sing, "O Come, All Ye Faithful" on our behalf.

But then a wonderful thing happened. I heard with new ears the start of the verse which begins, "Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!" The word choice is interesting because, as the Gospel According to Luke tells it, when the heavenly host suddenly appeared they were already praising God with the exclamation, "Glory to God in the highest heaven!" Yet, in the carol we cherish for this time of year, we exhort the angels to sing, as if they need to be asked or encouraged. Listening to the request from the middle of a pandemic, I was struck by its meaning for this moment. On Christmas of 2020, we really did need to ask the angels to sing!

We needed the choir of angels to sing for us, because we can only sing in isolation right now, not in chorus. We can sing, but not in the same room at the same time. We are striving mightily to keep each other healthy, so we need the angels to sing for us and with us. Thanks to the choir of angels, it turns out we ARE part of a harmonious blend, wherever we are as we worship through our Christmas songs of joy and hope. Thanks to the choir of angels, multi-part songs of praise to God are continuing! As I stood in the empty sanctuary, listening to one voice inviting all of us to Bethlehem, I felt comforted by the conviction that the angels would gladly take up the songs of Christmas and keep them going, for us and for the world.

As 2020 becomes 2021, may the song echo in all of our hearts. "Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be all glory given." In hard times and beautiful times, God is with us.

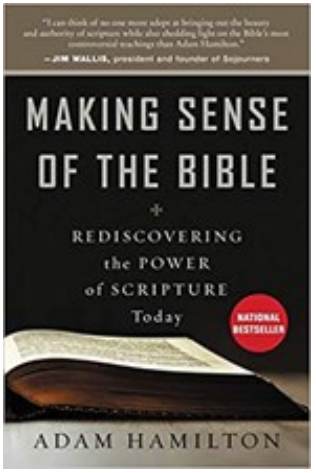
Dwelling with you in God's peace,

April

Christmas Worship

Thank you to our worship committee members who decorated the tree, placed the poinsettias, and watered regularly so that views of our sanctuary would honor God and lift spirits throughout the season.

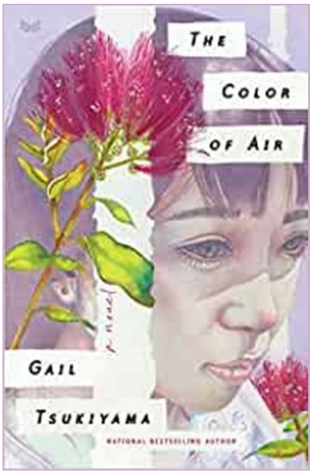
Sunday Bible Study Continues on Zoom by Larry Kittiver



The Pandemic has never stopped the Sunday after service Bible Study. On Zoom every Sunday at 10:00 a.m., we have about 10 attendees from various religious backgrounds, as we wrestle with the words of the Bible (Old and New Testaments) as we deepen our understanding and find meaning and make sense of holy scripture. This Sunday we will be concluding our exciting Advent study using the words of our founder John Wesley. After that we will go back to Adam Hamilton's book *"Making Sense of the Bible"* who will lead us to greater understanding of some of the texts more difficult passages and some of the history behind what we find in scripture.

Email Larry Kittiver at Larry8933@gmail.com to receive an invite and link for this continuing study.

January Book Discussion: *The Color of Air* by Gail Tsukiyama

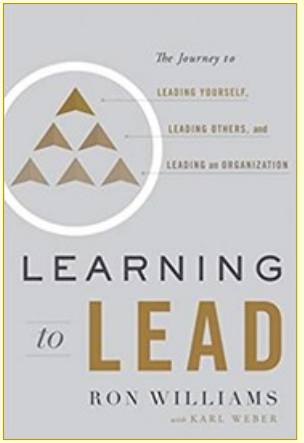


Set in Hilo, on the Big Island of Hawaii, Gail Tsukiyama's most recent novel evokes a sense of place and time with remarkable accuracy. The story focuses on the pursuit of love, family life, and vocational purposes, while also illuminating community dynamics and history. Thus, it offers an opportunity to reflect on how people encouraged, endured, and supported one another at a challenging moment both like and unlike our own. The characters and story are fictional but the social dynamics and volcanic eruptions are not.

The Color of Air was published in 2020. It is Tsukiyama's 8th novel.

Readers will share in conversation about the book on Monday, January 25, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Please let April Herron know, by emailing april@rhumc.org, if you want to receive the link.

Leadership Study Group Forming



What are we learning about leadership as we move through the times, seasons, and circumstances we have been given? Inspired by a book that came to her attention when recommended by someone working in the field of business education, April Herron is extending an open invitation to members and friends of the congregation who may be interested in reading and reflecting upon, *"Learning to Lead"* by Ron Williams. The group would meet three times to focus on the three dimensions of leadership as presented by Williams: leading yourself, leading others, and leading an organization. Participants would be asked to read the relevant sections of the book prior to the class session, and to share in guiding the discussions.

If you would like to participate, please send an email to April@rhumc.org. Dates and times of gatherings will be established according to the availability schedule of the participants.

A Year of Gratitude by Kathy Platnick & Kim Hall

We know that 2020 will go down as a difficult and challenging year for all. But in the midst of lockdowns, economic destruction and a global pandemic, the people of RHUMC have embodied the values of Jesus with amazing generosity.

The Missions Committee began the year with a food drive in February for the homeless population served by St. Paul's UMC. You responded by providing over 300 bags of food.

In August, we elected to continue our focus on the homeless. We hosted a webinar on the homeless crisis in our own communities of the beach cities and the San Pedro/Harbor area. Following that, we launched a drive to collect underwear and socks for the currently homeless and new household items for those leaving homelessness behind. Again, RHUMC responded with amazing generosity. We collected around $5,000 in goods and cash to provide needed support.

Then in November we found a way to continue with our annual Mission Fiesta Sunday recognizing the work of Heifer International, Habitat for Humanity and the four missionaries supported by RHUMC. Even though we could not meet in person and missed Fletcher Larson's pickles, our congregation again made a difference. Total donations for Mission Fiesta Sunday came to over $21,000.

Lastly, we continued our long tradition of providing toys and gift certificates for the families served by Toberman Neighborhood Center. This year's Trek to the Tree resulted in the donation of over 160 gift cards and a plethora of toys.

Thank you to each of you for giving. We are grateful for your generosity and your Christian spirit.

Bell Ringing for the Salvation Army in 2020 by Roxanne Morse

As with all things 2020, bell-ringing was different, as expected! Because of health concerns, our volunteer numbers were down. At the last minute Vons said that we couldn't ring our bells and sing in front of their store, as dictated by corporate memo. But that is not to say we did not do a bit of good.

A stalwart group of volunteers did some ringing at Whole Foods in Redondo Beach which is just a few short miles north. We covered as many evenings as we could. The evenings were incredibly mild and it was a wind-free spot! Because of the generosity of our congregation and our community, our little kettle brought in almost $1400! The donations of friends and supporters of the Army made a big difference. As always, the Redondo Beach Corps is so grateful to our little band of ringers who serve each year for the benefit of our community. In 2020 there were so many needs to be filled by the Army and we did a very respectable job. Many people said they had not seen many bell-ringers this season and so I pass along to our ringers….you know who you are….a big thank you for spreading the joy of giving during the holidays of 2020.

Altar Flowers

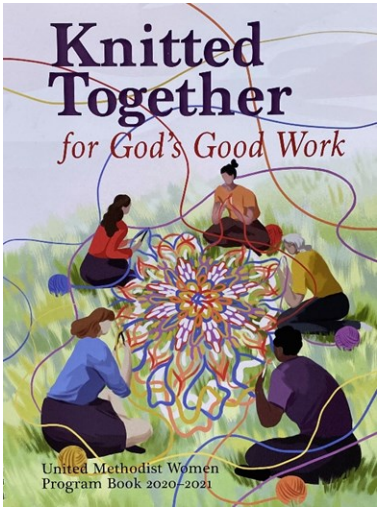
The new flower chart for 2021 has arrived! Sign up early to ensure you get your favorite date to honor, celebrate, or remember that someone special! You can do so by calling or emailing the church office (310-377-6771 or churchoffice@rhumc.org) or signing up the next time you're in the church entry way.

Flower arrangements cost $45. Please make checks payable to RHUMC with a notation on the memo line of altar flowers.

Words of Appreciation from Evelyn Chikahisa

My family and I wish to express our appreciation to Jonathan, April and our RHUMC family for their heartfelt words of comfort and gifts of support during our recent loss. Gratefully, Evelyn

Sister Circle Sharing by Susan Deo



Sister Circle has been meeting monthly over Zoom during the pandemic. We have had guest speakers and programs of various kinds led by members and we all enjoy catching up on what is happening in our lives and those of our families. This fall we tried two monthly lessons from the 2020/2021 UMW Program Book, Knitted Together for God's Good Work. We really enjoyed the lessons, which included scripture, a hymn, discussion questions and activities. The October lesson, Righteousness Flows like a Stream, centered on how climate change affects women and children, especially as it concerns water. We created a collage of pictures showing some of what water means to us: the ocean, waterfalls, fresh water, conserving water. Here is a photo of our collage, the background being a shawl created by our Shawl Ministry. We plan to do more of these monthly lessons in 2021! If you would like more information about our group, contact Susan Deo at nasdeo76@gmail.com.

Second Sundays At Two

Sunday, January 10, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

~ presents ~

Trio Céleste

Cellist	*Pianist*	*Violinist*
Ross Gasworth	***Kevin Kwan Loucks***	***Iryna Krechkovsky***

Hailed as "a first-class ensemble" *(Orange County Register),* "unfailingly stylish" *(The Strad),* "technically dazzling" *(Long Beach Gazette),* "flawless" *(New York Concert Review),* and "the epitome of what chamber musicians should be" *(Palm Beach Daily News),* Trio Céleste has firmly established itself as one of the most dynamic chamber music ensembles on the classical music scene today.

Streamed over the Internet

Check the concert announcement at
www.RHUMC.org
for the link to the recital

Youth Ministries

IGNITE SPRING KICK OFF

January 20, 2021 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
RHUMC's mid-week youth ministry resumes for the spring semester. Youth will play "get to know you" games via zoom. For the link to join, please contact Kristin.

CONFIRMATION 2021

Youth 9th grade through 12th grade are invited to attend an informational meeting, Sunday, January 24, 2021 at 11:30 a.m. via Zoom. Please contact Kristin if you are interested in participating in the confirmation classes this spring.

When the county's COVID19 cases decrease we will resume our in-person, socially distanced, small group youth gatherings. However, for the month of January youth programming will be completely online.

Kristin Reksc, Director of Youth Ministries
Cell phone: 562-234-0161
Kristin@rhumc.org

Stay connected on social media
Facebook page: facebook.com/groups/RHyouth
Instagram: rhumcyouth_
Text Reminders: send keyword "RHUMCyouth" to 33222

Preschool News

1. We are getting ready for our much anticipated "snow days." Our snow days will be held on both Tuesday and Wednesday, January 12 and 13. Then we will follow with registration come February for the new 2021-2022 school year. For church members, registration dates will be posted in the February Cornerstone and posted to the website.

2. Thursday on the Town: **Thursday, January 14**, at Shakey's Pizza Parlor, 3615 Pacific Coast Highway, Torrance (11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.) 310-373-0740 - 25% of your check will be donated back to our preschool. Families need to remember to put their receipt in the box which are collected in order to count, group RHUMPS.

Children's Ministry

Bee on the lookout early February for our Valentines Care Package notice!

Let us know if you have a special person in your life that might be away at college, a homebound person, or someone who might really benefit from a lovely package made by the children of the church.

More info coming soon!

In this continued time of physical distancing, our Children's Ministry wants to make sure your children have all the resources they need to continuing learning about the Bible from home.

We continue to have our video posted on the church website each Sunday morning for you to see. Along with the video posting, we are emailing our church families (at their request) activity pages to go along with the video.

The option to pick up a monthly folder including activity pages and crafts is also available at the end of each month. If you wish to have this available to you, please email debra@rhumc.org.

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Change Service Requested

SAVE OUR PLANET!

Have your Cornerstone sent via email; it's easy, just call the church office at 310-377-6771. You can also view the Cornerstone on the church website at www.rhumc.org

Senior Pastor	Jonathan Chute	Associate Pastor	April Herron
Senior Pastor Emeritus	Martha Rowlett	Music Director	Chuck Dickerson
Preschool Director	Myra Ghabrial	Organist/Pianist	Althea Waites
Parish Nurse	Annette Matsuda	3rd Service Music	Paula Kuno
Children's Ministry Dir.	Debra DeLuca	Exec. Asst. to Pastor	Roksolana Vecerek
Youth Ministry Director	Kristin Reksc	Church Office Admin.	Peggy Roulette
Kid Zone Director	Gabby Palacios	Custodian	Miguel Portillo
Treasurer	John Fitzgerald		
Church Business Mgr.	Nicole Lowery Zakman		

Church Office Phone	310-377-6771	Resident Bishop	Grant J. Hagiya
Fax Line	310-544-4123	District Superintendent	Mark Nakagawa
Web Site	www.rhumc.org		

SUNDAY WORSHIP HOURS
8:30 & 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
CHURCH OFFICE HOURS
Monday – Friday 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Next Cornerstone deadline is January 29
www.rhumc.org