WHAT KIND OF CHRISTIAN ARE YOU?

My children have asked me this question many times. It emerges as they try to address what they read and hear on social media, where the opinions shared by those claiming to represent Christians leave a very nebulous picture.

I will say outright that this is not an easy question to answer, particularly due to the enormous divisions that exist within the Christian faith. It feels as though there are new congregations/denominations being started every day, most often because a particular group of people have a different theological or life perspective and decide to go their separate way.

It is no secret that separations such as this have been part of the life of the Jesus movement since its inception, and within the divisions there are more divisions. The Episcopal Church itself has seen its fair share of internal conflicts, division, and defections over the last few decades.

So how do we approach this question? I try to do so with great humility. Here I offer my personal basic thoughts that are not intended to cover everything, but rather to begin a conversation.
MAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Note: For the most up-to-date information and for instructions about how to access livestreamed and Zoomed services please consult the Church website: http://www.stpaulsoakland.org/. To receive an invitation to attend an in-person service, please e-mail the rector: rector@stpaulsoakland.org

SUNDAYS

May 2 – The Fifth Sunday of Easter
Holy Eucharist - 8 a.m., streamed on Facebook.
Morning Prayer in the Courtyard – 9:15 a.m., in person and streamed on Facebook
Sung Eucharist - 10 a.m., streamed on Facebook& Zoom.
Evensong - 4 p.m., streamed on Facebook & Zoom.

May 9 – The Sixth Sunday of Easter – Mother’s Day
Morning Prayer - 8 a.m., streamed on Facebook.
Morning Prayer in the Courtyard – 9:15 a.m., in person and streamed on Facebook.
Sung Matins - 10 a.m. – streamed on Facebook & Zoom.

May 16 – The Seventh Sunday of Easter
Morning Prayer - 8 a.m., streamed.
Morning Prayer in the Courtyard – 9:15 a.m., in person and streamed on Facebook.
Sung Matins - 10 a.m. – streamed on Facebook & Zoom.

May 23 - The Day of Pentecost
Holy Eucharist - 8 a.m., streamed on Facebook.
Festival Eucharist with distribution of Communion - 10 a.m. – in person on the Veterans Building parking lot, streamed to Facebook and YouTube.
Compline - 8 p.m. - streamed on Facebook & Zoom.

May 30 – Trinity Sunday
Holy Eucharist - 8 a.m., streamed.
Morning Prayer in the Courtyard – 9:15 a.m., in person and streamed on Facebook.
Sung Eucharist - 10 a.m. – streamed on Facebook & Zoom.

WEEKDAYS

Tuesdays
Morning Prayer - 10 a.m., Zoom only

Wednesdays
Noonday service – 12:10 p.m., streamed on Facebook

Thursdays
Morning Prayer 10 a.m., in-person in the park

In-Person Church
- Morning Prayer 10am Thursdays, across the street in Lakeside Park.
- Morning Prayer 9:15am Sundays.
In-person with limited attendance, by reservation only. If you didn't receive one, send an email to the rector, rector@stpaulsoakland.org.
Easter 2021 at St. Paul’s
Vestry Report
Erica Terry Derrck Clerk

What follows is a summary of the key decisions made by the Vestry at the March 23, 2021 Vestry meeting which was conducted via zoom.

The Vestry discussed the outcome of a special meeting held to discuss a proposal from Jeanette Dinwiddie-Moore to take on a ministry dedicated to supporting foster youth. Sergio Prieto and Lane Ceric agreed to help support Jeanette in examining the program options before a final decision is made.

Members of the Vestry gave updates and the following decisions were in these areas:

Family and Youth: Will be supporting an Easter Basket give-away and exploring ways to bring children and families together over the summer to support faith formation.

Stewardship: Have thanked all those who pledged and sent a second round of requests to those who have not yet done so. Will be pushing forward additional outreach that focuses not just on gifts of treasure, but also telling the story of gifts of time and talent.

Hospitality: Work is underway to create an automated intake system for new parishioners and visitors so the process is less labor intensive for volunteers.

Communications: The first issue of the Good News under the leadership of Carolyn and Robert Knapp has gone out and the communications committee has been formed to develop processes to enhance communications between the church and congregation.

Finance: Net income gap in February was down $10K more than anticipated driven largely by a $6500 decrease in pledges in January, but the February plate was higher than predicted. The investment portfolio is following the volatility of the market, but this is not of concern as we are long-term investors. At the time of the Vestry meeting the portfolio value was $2.6M. The church submitted documentation to have the PPE loan of almost $55K that was applied for and received in 2020 fully forgiven. The Vestry approved a payment from the school to Fr. Wilson for chaplaincy services.

Buildings and Grounds: The church is working with the school to meet new city requirements to upgrade our sewer laterals and put new signage on the building.

In-person Worship: On March 24 the Diocese will provide guidance on how to manage Holy Week services, but the intent is to do an outdoor procession in the Veteran’s Center parking lot and distribute palms on Palm Sunday, and to have an outdoor service with social distancing on Easter on Montecito where a permit has been secured to close the street to vehicular traffic.

Community Gatherings: While shelter in place and social distancing continue, the intent is to create a few Zoom events to bring the congregation together.

AV: The Vestry voted to approve continued work with an outside technical vendor to manage the vendor selection process and value engineer the installation of a new AV system that will enhance the audio for in-person worship and allow more consistent, high quality streaming of services to continue even after in-person worship safely resumes.
From the Senior Warden
Sharon Pilmer

After a year plus of lockdown, we are finally starting to emerge from the restrictions on our way of life and our way of worship. We have, with a great deal of care and planning, worshiped safely in person outdoors, with both regular morning prayer (on Sundays, 9:15 in the courtyard, and Thursdays, 10 am in the park across the street from the church) and our joyful Palm Sunday service in the Veteran’s parking lot – not to mention the fabulous Easter service on the street! Many thanks to those who have made this possible!

As we look forward to returning to indoor worship, perhaps in the next 6-8 weeks, we do so mindful of an ever-changing landscape created by the virus mutations, vaccinations, and our own behaviors. Bishop Marc has advised us to proceed with an abundance of caution out of love and concern for the safety of our communities. The “new normal” will look different than the old normal, and we will need to adapt to a slightly different way of doing things. In addition, each of us has different risk tolerances, depending on vaccination status, underlying health conditions, etc. We ask for your understanding, grace, and kindness as we navigate being together indoors; please respect each other’s needs for physical distancing.

Bishop Marc, in a communication in March to the broader community of the diocese, spoke of the need to have access to the sacrament for all who desire it. He states, “So, in the work of regathering it is simply going to be important to not only follow the safety protocols that have come to us from the state and local health officials, but also to consider closely how to avoid the unintended consequences of creating unequal access to the sacrament. If, for instance, there is a call of a Eucharist for those who have been vaccinated, or for those who can get to the church by driving, we will need to think about those who do not share in those privileges.”

Even as life slowly returns to “normal”, there will be some who may not be able to access worship and the sacrament. One group that comes to mind is our frail elderly population, who may no longer be able to drive or have the capacity to access on-line worship. COVID, the great revealer of what was wrong before the pandemic, has also been the catalyst for a great deal of creativity and positive change. Let us think about how we apply lessons learned during the past year to create greater access for all.

As always, I look forward to your concerns and feedback.

PANTRY OF HOPE
Item of the month

During this time of sheltering in place and physical distancing, we are working on trying to find creative ways to continue the process of serving the needy members of our community.
From the Junior Warden
Scott Buckingham

After a great deal of soul searching, I have decided to step down from Vestry and my position of Junior Warden. It is with sadness that I have come to this decision, but I thank everyone at St. Paul's for the opportunity to serve.

Peace,
Scott Buckingham

On behalf of the St. Paul's Family we thank Scott Buckingham for his service on Vestry and as Junior Warden. At its April meeting, the Vestry appointed Will Cowart as Junior Warden.

Deaneries and the Diocese: Mysteries Revealed
Carolyn Knapp

If you think Bishop Marc has absolute power over the Diocese of California, talk to one of your Deanery delegates. Who are they? In 2020, and, presumably, continuing into 2021: Melanie Blake and Tom McGarrell, delegates, and Jeanette Dinwiddie-Moore and Saundra Anderson, alternates. Look for more about these folks in future editions of The Good News.

Most of the authority in the Diocese ultimately lies in the hands of these delegates when they gather at a yearly meeting, usually in October, called the Diocesan Convention. Each parish gets a proportionate number of representatives, and all resident clergy may vote as well. To keep abreast of developments in the Diocese between conventions and to address more local concerns, the delegates and alternates are organized into “deaneries” that meet approximately quarterly. Our Alameda Deanery has been dormant during the pandemic, but it is expected to revive in the coming months.

The Diocese assesses each parish, and, in turn, offers services and programs to the churches. You may have noticed some of them in announcements about retreats and meetings in past newsletters. There is a lot going on, from climate justice and land blessings to in-person summer camps and racial reconciliation initiatives! Check them out by subscribing to DioCal, the weekly Diocesan newsletter: https://diocal.org/connect.
At our recent Vestry meeting we reviewed 1st quarter financials. As you’ll see below, expenses continue to track almost exactly to budget. After a slower-than-desired start in revenue—driven by a smaller number of pledge units—we are seeing growth again due to new pledges. If you need your pledge card, please reach out to our parish administrator at admin@stpaulsoakland.org

Last month, I reported that we had submitted forgiveness documentation for the 2020 Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan of $56K. We recently learned that loan forgiveness was granted. On the balance sheet side, our investment portfolio continues to perform well and over the last several months has held steady at ~$2.3M. As a reminder, it is through our investment portfolio that we support critical capital projects like a new church A/V system; we also access investment funds to cover any losses at year end.

As always, I’m available for your questions or comments at goggins.gregory@gmail.com.

### Stewardship Corner

**Sharon Pilmer**

*A prayer for the stewardship of our community:*

Generous and loving God, we come to you in thanksgiving, knowing that all we are and all that we have is a gift from you. In faith and love, help us to do your will. We are listening. Speak your words into the depth of our souls, that we may hear you clearly.

We offer to you this day all the facets of our lives, whether it be at home, at work, or at school. We seek to be patient, to be merciful, to be generous, to be holy. Give us the wisdom and insight to understand your will for us and the fervor to carry out our good intentions.

We offer our gifts of time, talent and possessions to you as a true act of faith, to reflect our love for you and our neighbors. Help us to reach out to others as you have reached out to us. *Amen.*

Pledging is crucial to the financial health of our parish. Combined with the active stewardship of our talents and time, we make St. Paul’s what it is. This is how our pledging currently stands.
Steps in the ‘long walk to justice’

Jeanette Dinwiddie-Moore, St. Paul’s parishioner, Vice-Chair, Vivian Traylor/Northern California Chapter of UBE, member, the Diocesan Executive Council and African American Commission

Over the last 18 months, we have experienced so many events that we would have never imagined or hoped for in our lifetime, nor wished to be experienced in the lifetime of our children and descendants. We experienced and continue to experience COVID 19, the unwarranted killing of young Black and Brown people by police, the racist attacks on our Asian brothers and sisters, the attempted insurrections at our national and state capitol, and the ongoing attempts to undermine our democracy along with the founding values of this nation. A common thread that runs through these events and acts is the long history of racism that is so embedded in this country. Our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry often refers to this as the ‘long walk to justice’.

In his recent sermon during the service after the George Floyd verdict he stated . . . “It is the long walk that can make you faint, because it’s long,” Curry said, drawing an analogy to the fight against inequality and racial injustice. “It’s not quick success. . . . The struggle continues, but we know now the victory can be won.”

He tied this to the work of the Church and followers of Jesus when he added: “We must continue until no human child of God is treated less than a child of God, until everybody is treated as God’s somebody, until this world and our communities are beloved communities, where there’s plenty good room for all of God’s children,” he said. “This is our work. This is our task. This is our struggle.”

Over the last couple of years, the Episcopal Church at the national and diocesan levels has been looking into how to address the systemic racism that exists in our Church and parishes. On the national level, the Church recently issued its Racial Audit of Leadership Report, which identified nine patterns of racism in church culture. The Church is offering three webinars which will explore the report in more detail and if you are interested you can learn more at: https://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministries/racial-reconciliation/racial-justice-audit/.

At the California diocesan level, many members have participated in the Sacred Ground study groups (see article in this newsletter by the Sacred Ground Alumni). Additionally, at the Diocesan Convention last year the African American Commission and the Union of Black Episcopalians Vivian Traylor/Northern California Chapter held a pre-convention session on Black Voices – Truth Telling and Transformation, the link to the session is https://vimeo.com/469126620.

Recently, I had an opportunity to talk to the St. Paul’s Sacred Ground participants as they explored what will be their next steps in growing and living out their desire to make an impact on racism. One option discussed was the current efforts underway to suppress the right to vote for many Americans. As a result of that discussion, Vivian Traylor/Northern California Chapter of UBE has decided to make this a focal issue for our work this year, and we plan to introduce a resolution at this year’s Diocesan Convention addressing voter suppression.

Using Presiding Bishop’s Curry’s phrase, these are all small Steps in the ‘long walk to justice’
A Perspective on the Movement for Equality
Ayanna Bennett

Dear church family,

As the equity officer for my workplace, I have spent the last two months moving from crisis to crisis. In particular, many of us have had a hard time getting past the Derek Chauvin trial. Even with a guilty verdict, the crime, the trial, and everything since has been traumatic and made the ugly stain of racism even deeper. Despite everything that’s happened, I find myself hopeful for what comes next. As James Baldwin said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” I believe we are, for a moment, facing racism, and I see the impact of that recognition in many ways.

After decades of dogged, mostly unseen community organizing, the nation is talking about police reform in a way that it has not for decades – and perhaps never has. There is now a recognition that police violence is an issue for everyone to solve, not just the people suffering under its boot. What changes are acceptable to talk about, what seems possible now, are things that would have sounded confusing or even outlandish only a decade ago— police policy, training and budgets are all suddenly public concerns.

Above all, this trial has been a revelation to many in how anti-blackness underlies so many of the inequities we see. Watching friends, family and strangers desperately try to "humanize" a human being who had done nothing to lose his claim on humanity. Witnessing the unwarranted fear of a Black man that the jury, and perhaps we in the public, are all just presumed to understand and share. These are the same perceptions that lead to unequal treatment by police and courts, selection biases in hiring, inadequate resources in communities, and unequal quality of education and healthcare.

As I hear my friends and colleagues having conversations I know we would not have had 10 years ago, I look forward to a future where talk turns to action. Because that is the change I’ve been praying for.

In solidarity, Ayanna

Note from the editors: Ayanna Bennett is a Saint Paul’s parishioner and a physician leader in the health department.

The Musical Works of Frederic Chopin
John Prescott, PhD, Musicologist and Lecturer — May 25, 2021, 1:30 - 4:00pm

Few composers are as intimately associated with a particular instrument as Chopin is with the piano. This mini-course will explore the life and work of this icon of nineteenth century music. We will listen to his music as recorded by pianists over the past century. We will learn how his music shaped and was shaped by technical developments of the piano during his lifetime.

We will explore how Chopin was viewed in his lifetime and after. We will also discuss the important role that his self-conscious Polish nationalism played in his life and work. No previous musical experience is necessary.

Please click here to register: https://www.campusce.net/sfsu/course/course.aspx?C=733&pc=118&mc=&sc=
Local Music Events in May
Victoria Larson

May Workshops by Kitka Artists
Check out more events on their website and on their Facebook page. Sign up for their mailing list on their home page. Support Kitka Women's Vocal Ensemble with a donation.

During these times of Covid 19, we encourage everyone to take advantage of the live streams, recordings, lectures, and other offerings by our outstanding local musicians. Search for your favorites online to watch and contribute, as you are able. A few upcoming events are listed on the concerts page on our website.

Nina Nana Nini O: A Lullaby Workshop
Briget Boyle
May 2, 2021, 10:30am - 11:30am
In honor of Mother's Day, Briget Boyle will teach "Kenge Djepi". Kitka learned this sweet lullaby learned from the great Albanian singer Merita Halili, and recorded it on the 2009 album, Cradle Songs.

LEARN MORE AND PURCHASE TICKETS

LEILI: A Persian Lullaby Workshop
Mahsa & Marjan Vahdat
May 8 and May 9, 2021, 12:00pm – 2:00pm
Renowned Iranian vocalists, cultural activists, and master teachers lead two Mother's Day weekend workshops exploring Persian lullabies.

LEARN MORE AND PURCHASE TICKETS

The Poetic Voice: A Persian Singing Workshop
Mahsa & Marjan Vahdat
May 22, 2021, 12:00pm – 2:00pm
Mahsa Vahdat leads a series of inclusive virtual workshops exploring freedom of vocal expression inspired by Persian poetic verses.

LEARN MORE AND PURCHASE TICKETS

Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir
Eric Tuan, Artistic Director —piedmontchoirs.org
Kinder and Training Department Spring Recital
Saturday, May 8 - 4:00PM YouTube Premiere

Watch our Kinder and Training Department singers blossom with confidence from their year of singing in the choirs. The program features virtual choir performances from our six Kinder and Training Department ensembles. They will delight the audience with their genuine joy in singing.

The Good News
During these times of Covid 19, we encourage everyone to take advantage of the live streams, recordings, lectures, and other offerings by our outstanding local musicians. Search for your favorites online to watch and contribute, as you are able. A few upcoming events are listed on the concerts page on our website.

Victoria Larson

The Good News
Father Junípero Serra was born on Mallorca, Balearic Islands, in 1713. He became a Franciscan friar at age 17 and then a priest at 24. He went to Mexico as a missionary and was there when the Jesuits were expelled in 1767. Taking up the work of the now deserted Jesuit missions in Baja California, the Franciscan friar went there from Mexico City and proceeded to push the mission series north to San Diego. Emissary Franciscans then founded 21 California missions, including Mission San Francisco de Asís in 1776. The window commemorates Serra’s visit to this mission, commonly called Mission Dolores for the nearby creek, Arroyo de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, on October 1, 1777. The plaque under the window is incorrect. Father Serra did not found Mission San Francisco. Two of his confreres founded the mission a year before his visit. Father Serra came once again, in 1781. He died in 1784, was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1988, and canonized by Pope Francis in 2015.

Serra’s canonization touched off long-held animosities arising from the ill-treatment of Native Americans at the missions. Hostile groups accused him of directing and approving the enslavement of those natives. Defenders said he personally never abused natives, had good evangelizing intentions, and protected the natives from even worse treatment at the hands of the Spanish military government. Whatever his personal responsibility, for many he has become the symbol of the missions as places of abuse of Native Americans, seizure of their lands, and destruction of their culture.

In the quatrefoil, Father Serra and another friar stand before indigenous people. The original San Francisco mission buildings lie in the background. The friars are teaching the Native Americans who kneel. Clockwise from the upper right are: cross in circle crown; the Franciscan Order’s coat of arms—Christ's right hand with the nail wound and Francis' left hand with the stigmata wound, both in front of a cross; mission bell on a staff (a sign of El Camino Real-The King's Highway connecting missions up and down the California coast); and crown, probably of the Spanish king. The text on the glass reads: “Founding of San Francisco Mission by Junípero Serra 1776.” The text on the plaque below states: “In loving memory of Elizabeth Hemster Huie 1876 -1941.”

The Cummings Studio of San Francisco created this window in 1942. It is dedicated to Elizabeth Hemster Huie, wife of Edward Mercer Huie (1871-1910). Nothing more is known of this couple.
Rector’s message

From the Front Page

I believe that a first century Rabbi named Jesus is the expected Messiah promised to the people of Israel. I do not know everything about him, but I do profess that he is God and exists in a way that I cannot explain by using scientific theories, though I believe in science. I believe that the Covenant we call New does not eliminate, but rather extends the Covenant God made with Jacob.

I am the type of Christian that hungers for truth, knowing that I possess it only in glimpses and that its wholeness lies beyond the comprehension of my human mind. This wholeness continues being revealed to us, not only to people of faith but to all humanity.

As I declared at my ordination, according to the rite set forth in the BCP, I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation. This declaration is a mouthful, even for those of us who say it on the day we are ordained. However, I am the type of Christian who will not use the Bible as a tool of repression of God’s people. It was given to us as a means for edification, hope and renewal, not for tearing down and marginalization. Yes, the Bible can sometimes present some teachings that are exceedingly difficult to believe or even repeat in polite company, but they are given to us so we can understand how people of a different era and cultural and societal norms lived in relationship with God. We are invited to study them and translate them to our realities.

I am the type of Christian who recognizes how little I am before God but living into how great I am called to be through the empowerment that comes from God’s grace and love.

I pray that every human soul can live into the fullness of God’s love for us.

Sacred Ground

 tended to be the dominant one, politically and culturally, in much of the United States. As members showed up for our group, however, we realized that we reflected the diversity of St. Paul’s itself. This diversity was shown in the facilitators: Rev. Anne Jensen, Fr. Mauricio Wilson, and Indira Balkissoon. For our group, this felt like a good way to proceed and as the sessions unfolded, we continued to believe that that was a good decision. (This decision might be reflected in further discussions later by individual participant.)

The curriculum is both broad and deep, covering a great deal of ground historically, culturally, and politically, involving marginalized groups from Native Americans to Asian Americans, the latter unit coinciding, unfortunately, with the latest attacks on AAPI. All of us learned something; all of us had a chance to speak, both to reflect our own experiences of marginalization or worse and also to reflect what we felt were gaps in our own knowledge and experiences.

Perhaps not surprisingly, we often felt that we were all up against a common invisible enemy, one which kept rigid discriminatory structures in place against our wills. We also looked together at the church’s role in these structures, often as a complicit player, sometimes as proponent of oppression, and thankfully, more recently on the side of liberation.

The “place” that the curriculum creates is an interesting one in which we were encouraged and allowed to respond not only intellectually, but also from a heart space.
From the Editors:

Watch for news on these fronts next month!

St. Paul’s is 150 years young in 2021. Easter has always been at the center of our worship. Here we are at Easter 1874 in our first church at Twelfth near Franklin. Our rector, the Rev. Charles Taylor, stands at right.

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Newsletter contributors sought

We are interested in hearing from writers and photographers; please email us if you would like to donate your talents. The deadline for each edition is the 25th of the month previous to publication. Please send your submissions of no more than 400 words to csknapp@earthlink.net