The State Of The Church

Treasurer certifies ‘bright and vibrant’ future

Story and Photo by Michael Barber

If gloom is the name of the game, Piedmont Community Church isn’t playing.

While it is true that many churches across the country are closing at alarming rates due to lack of support, what is less known - or even talked about - is the positive financial position in which Piedmont Church finds itself today.

“The future of this church, and its financial condition, is very bright and vibrant,” said Michael Osborn, member of the Board of Trustees and Church Treasurer.

“We’re in a much better position than other churches,” he said. “We’re not frantic. We’re not funding every activity with another fundraising event.

We have fellowship events that are meant just for fellowship, not for fundraising. That is beautiful.”

The Messenger recently sat with Michael Osborn and Trustee Jan Wolfe, both members of the Finance Committee, to discuss the fiscal state of the church.

Jan’s walk with Piedmont Church began in 1986. Her husband, Bruce, was born into the church, becoming a member during confirmation. Jan served twice on the Board of Deacons, has been a member of the Mission Action Team (MAT), served on the Board of Trustees and was twice Treasurer. Jan also sings in the church choir.

Michael, his wife, Gwendolyn, and young children moved from
as both spiritual and practical. “As a church, we are first a spiritual organization,” he said. “But we also live on the physical plane. So we have to contend with fundraising and budgets and the like. The electric company may admire the good things we are doing in God’s name, but they also want their bill to be paid.”

With some pledges for 2019 still outstanding, the most recent Pledge Campaign, Because of You, will celebrate its success with a church-wide gathering on Sunday, January 13 in Guild Hall after worship.

The Endowment Fund will kick off its fundraising campaign this spring, raising awareness by selling courtyard bricks in honor or memory of a loved one.

“When our church is kept in the hearts and minds of those doing estate planning, it is helpful to the long term future of the church,” Michael said.

The Endowment Fund is an interest-bearing account with a current balance of $1.3M. A modest amount, capped at 5% of the value of the average of the last 3 years, may be used to help balance the budget.

Aiding in church sustainability and growth the past three years has been an anonymous grant totalling $1.5M. The money has been used for everything from pipe organ and sanctuary window upgrades to website improvements and staffing to promote the church to the wider community.

“Funding from the anonymous donation does have an end point in fiscal year 2021,” Michael said. “Our question is what does that end point look like and how reliant are we on it, really? Do we have replacement funds, or will we need to make some tough decisions? I would ask that everyone allow the leadership to execute the growth plan as early indications are that it’s working.”

Knowing the grant will expire, members of the Finance Committee have been planning for 3 years to ensure the impact of the grant’s end is minimal.

“Were so fortunate that we’ve had people and families give gifts to the church to allow us to attain a different level,” Jan said. “It would be a shame not to build on the generosity to help us to do that. We’ve increased the vibrancy of the church.”

“I’ve seen a difference in the six years that my family has been here,” Michael said. My children are participating in Sunday School and some day will go to Mexico on our house-building mission. I look at the journey and I see the number of young families participating. These are friendships and relationships that give a perspective of youthfulness.”

“People see Piedmont Church as a place they want to be, and a place they want their children to grow up,” Jan said.

“That makes me so happy.”

“The pledge model is important because it allows lay leaders and staff, who are trying to plan for what we’re going to be doing here, to know what our funding looks like ahead of time.”

- Jan Wolfe
Member, Finance Committee
Behold, I Stand And Knock

Last summer when I was in London I had a chance to visit St. Paul’s Cathedral one of the world’s most magnificent churches.

There’s a painting in the church called The Light of the World by William Holman Hunt one of the great Pre-Raphaelite painters. Jesus is standing there, gently rapping at a door, the door unopened and overgrown with weeds.

A little boy was standing in front of the painting with his father. “Daddy,” he said, “Why don’t they answer the door?”

The father said, “I don’t know why.”

There was a moment’s pause. Then the youngster said, “Maybe they’re making too much noise to hear him knocking.”

And that might be true.

You see, the infinite power of God always moves in silence, like those tides that cleanse our shores and launch our ships pulled by the silent silver moon. The innocent moon, which does nothing but shine, moves all the laboring surges of the world.

When springtime comes, it doesn’t come with banners and with the rolling of drums and the sounding of trumpets.

God moves in quietness.

That’s the reason we best think about him when we look at flowers, or walk in woods at evening, or listen to soft poems or the gentle breezes that blow about high mountains. He is where the least noise is.

The other thing you notice about Hunt’s painting is there is no handle on the outside of the door. It can only be opened from the inside. Jesus is content to wait – he never barges into our lives but waits for us to invite him in. And when we do the rewards are great.

“Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” Rev. 3:20

‘The Light of the World’ by William Holman Hunt, now hangs in the Piedmont Church sanctuary.

Celebration Of Giving Set For January

Because of You, the Stewardship Committee would like to show their appreciation for all who participated in the 2019 Pledge Campaign and for those who support our church with their time and financial gifts.

All are invited to join a hosted luncheon on Sunday, January 13, following the 10:30 am service. Let’s celebrate our combined energy, determination and preparedness for the new year.

Contact Michael@PiedmontChurch.org to request your subscription.
NEED A RIDE?

GIVE A RIDE!

Rideshare Ministry Connects Riders, Drivers

We're forming a pool of drivers who would be able to give rides to Piedmont Church to our members who don't drive (occasionally or regularly, one way or both, your choice).

Please contact Linda McClain, lindamcclain@me.com or (510) 220-3111 to join this important ministry.

Put On Your Walking Shoes

The Anglican clergyman William Inge once said that, “religion is a way of walking, not a way of talking.”

I find those words to be both a comfort and a challenge. They’re a comfort in that they remind us as Christians – in addition to whatever else we may be – that when words fail us, faithful actions are what really matter. But they’re also a challenge; for, as we all know, it can be so much easier to talk a big game than to actually get out on the field and do what we say we’re going to do.

I’m especially reminded of this right now, as we leave behind the warmth and comfort of Christmas to step into the challenges and opportunities of the new year. Because, truth is, maybe like you, after all the food and fun and fellowship of the holidays, I’m wondering what kind of shape my legs are in. I mean, wouldn’t life be a lot more fun – and Christianity a whole lot easier – if we could just sit around a roaring fireplace and sing about Jesus? Maybe.

But, that’s just not how it is on the path of discipleship. As Jesus’ own brother James tells us in no uncertain terms, “be doers of the word, and not hearers only (James 1:22).” That is, get out there and walk, don’t just talk.

Well, that’s what we plan to do this coming year at Piedmont Community Church … in all sorts of ways!

This month, the Board of Trustees, the Staff and all of us together will start implementing a number of ideas that arose during our “Growing Engagement” process of the past year. The focus will primarily be in 4 areas:

1. Growth and Connecting – attracting new folks to our church, especially young people and families, and fostering relationships both for newcomers and current members of all ages

2. Congregational Enrichment and Spiritual Growth – enhancing our practice of care for one another and strengthening our sense of what it means to be in community together

3. Outreach and Mission – creating more service opportunities both inside and outside of the church and enabling adults and children to serve together

4. Communication Improvements – developing effective ways for congregants and staff to be informed, to share ideas about new initiatives, and to spread the good news of what God’s doing right here, right now among us.

Stay tuned for the specifics, coming very soon.

The psychologist who came up with the concept of “flow” – and whose name seems to overflow with consonants – Mihaly Czikszentmihalyi, wrote that “Goals transform a random walk into a chase.” Well, the start of 2019 is an exciting time to be part of Piedmont Community Church – where “community” really is our middle name – and where our goal is to chase the vision God has for us.

So, I invite you to get ready, to stretch out your legs, and to put on your walking shoes.

2019 Stewardship Campaign

Our 2019 Stewardship Committee is asking all who have not yet pledged to do so. Pledging provides our church with means to budget for the coming year.

The 2019 campaign, Because of You, recognizes that the many ministries and missions of Piedmont Community Church are possible only with your financial support.

Our pledge is a reflection of God’s blessings to us. By returning a percentage of our income for His work, we express gratitude.

We ask that you prayerfully consider your gift and return your pledge card, or pledge online.

If you did not receive a card by mail, they are available in the narthex. You can also fill out a card online, or set up pledge payments, at PiedmontChurch.org/pledge
Charitable Contribution Strategies and the New Tax Law

**BY JOHN CHIANG**

With the New Tax Law, which was signed into law on December 22, 2017, most taxpayers will claim the Standard Deduction and have lost the benefit of Itemized Deductions. Charitable contributions are still deductible, but in many cases, with the limitations of deductible taxes and mortgage interest, coupled with the elimination of miscellaneous deductions, many will fall below the Standard Deduction amount.

Here are some strategies for you to consider:

- For those who are 70-1/2 and over, you are eligible to do a QCD (qualified charitable distribution) – whereby you can distribute up to $100,000 of your annual RMD (required minimum distribution) to the church or other qualified 501(c)(3) public charity, enabling you to avoid paying income taxes on that amount.

- Consider bunching up multi-year charitable contributions into one year, along with your other eligible deductions, to exceed the Standard Deduction amount.

*John Chiang is a CPA and member of the church Finance Committee*

‘Just Breathe’ Classes In Chapel

**BY SARA HIRSCH**

No dogma or agenda and open to everyone in this sweet room in the heart of Piedmont. Find the silence between the noise in this class designed to guide you through silent meditation.

Each class will start with gentle stretches for 15 minutes followed by breathing exercises.

Prepared to meditate, either sitting in a chair or on the floor, the next 20 minutes will be silent.

Bring a sticky mat if you plan to be on the floor (there is carpet in the chapel) and a pillow if you plan to sit on a chair. Tuesdays at 5:30 pm.

A young boy and his parents sing carols at Piedmont Church Wednesday following the city Christmas tree lighting ceremony, which took place across the street. The annual tradition invites the community to join the church choir in song and enjoy treats.
**Piedmont Forum Will Focus On Climate**

**January 13, 5 - 6:30 pm**

Sarah Robinson-Bertoni, Ph.D.
Murdock Room

What is happening now in climate science? How does it affect me? How does it affect people suffering social injustices? How can individuals and institutions respond? What particular role can religions play? What can I do about climate change?

Drawing from fresh research in climate science, comparative religion, and civic engagement, Dr. Sarah Robinson-Bertoni will guide a conversation on actively responding to climate change, providing context in climate realities and in religious environmental ethics.

Combining lecture, reflection and dialogue, this event will provide a forum for informed discernment to generate effective resolutions for the health of our climate, our earth, our homes, and our beloved communities.

Sarah Robinson-Bertoni, Ph.D., writes, publishes, and teaches about religion, environment, and civic engagement. A professor at Santa Clara University, a Jesuit university in the Silicon Valley, she serves as chair of Ecology and Religion for the American Academy of Religion, Western Region. She was co-foundering manager of the summer youth employment program, California Youth Energy Services (CYES), a project of Rising Sun Energy Center. CYES has trained over 1,800 youth, served over 46,000 homes, and offset over 100,000 tons of carbon dioxide. She is editing a book on women's key participation in earth's renewal and flourishing in local-global, religious-ethical contexts. Her most recent publications appear in the book: That All May Flourish: Comparative Religious Environmental Ethics, Laura Hartman, ed. (Oxford University Press, 2018).

**The Month Before Christmas**

■ BY REV. SCOTT KAIL

_Twas the month before Christmas and all through Piedmont Church_  
_Not a creature was stirring on Sunday nights_  
Except the 260 High School students attending Rock  
They gather and enter with clatter and banter  
Enthusiasm and laughter filling the Guild hall  
There is no other place to fit them all  
They listen, they laugh, they talk and they pray  
This is our story from November through May

I Just wanted to pass along the excitement that is our High School ministry these days. We are glad to say that we are reaching so many students in our town and providing a place for them to belong and explore their faith.

Prayers, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the Student Ministries staff and volunteers.

**Tiny Time Commitments**

Many of our volunteer activities take minimal time and effort.

**USHER OR GREET** at the 10:30 am service (simple training sessions available). Check your calendar and sign up after church.

**PROVIDE A MEAL** through our Food Angels for a member going through a difficult time. Contact Linda Rice at ljrice@sbcglobal.net

**HELP IN THE KITCHEN** with our volunteer cooking crew, Loaves and Fishes. Contact Steve Wuebbens at sawuebbens@gmail.com
**Grief Recovery for Widows, Widowers**

If you have experienced the death of a spouse, sharing your experiences during this 10-week class is extremely helpful to your healing process. Find hope, support and successful ways to process this significant life event. Enrollments now being accepted. Pre-registration required. Workbook is $15.

**Refugee Family Update**

**BY LONNIE SIMONSON**

The Yosufzai family are so grateful to Piedmont Church for the many kindnesses shown to them. They constantly refer to the good people of the church. Yusra, the 7 yr old girl has made this greeting card for the “church people.” Her 9-year-old brother, Ismail, has also made cards for us, wishing us Happy Halloween in the past.

Nargis and Hares, mother and father of the Yosufzai family, have friends who tell them that they are so fortunate to know the church people who have given them so much help and encouragement. Nargis and Hares know that this is true and express their gratitude and thanks.

Hares is still working at the Shell station on Grand Avenue and is a trusted and valued worker. Nargis attends ESL classes and is delighted that she can go to school here in America. She completed sixth grade in Afghanistan before having to stop because it wasn’t safe for her to attend classes after that. She is learning English quickly, and of course, the children are learning English very quickly at school and often speak English at home. Their mother has to ask them to speak in Dari when they go beyond her understanding of the language.

Many church members have been great to help the family, especially with rides to the dentist and other medical appointments. Thank you to all!

**MONTH OF SUNDAYS**

Each Sunday, we gather to celebrate our faith and our friendships during worship at 9 and 10:30 am.

**January 6**  
Dr. William McNabb preaching  
THE STAGES OF OUR LIVES  
Part 1 – CHILDHOOD

**January 13**  
Dr. William McNabb preaching  
THE STAGES OF OUR LIVES  
Part 2 – ADOLESCENCE: THE VALLEY OF TRANSITION

**January 20**  
Dr. William McNabb preaching  
THE STAGES OF OUR LIVES  
Part 3 – ADULTHOOD: UP AND DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

**January 27**  
Dr. William McNabb preaching  
THE STAGES OF OUR LIVES  
Part 4 – SENIOR ADULTHOOD: FOCUS ON BEING

**SUNDAY SCHOOL**

In January we will study the following lessons in Children’s Sunday School:

**January 6**  
David is Kind to Mephibosheth  
(2 Samuel 9) God is kind, so we’re kind.

**January 13**  
God Provides Food for Elijah  
(1 Kings 17:1-6) God is our provider, so we depend on Him.

**January 20**  
A Widow Shares Her Last Bread  
(1 Kings 17:8-16) God is generous, so we are generous.

**January 27**  
God is Faithful to Nehemiah  
(Nehemiah 1-2) God is faithful, so we are faithful.

Contact Leslie Quantz with questions at Leslie@PiedmontChurch.org or (510) 547-5700 ext.109
**JANUARY CALENDAR**

**Wednesday, January 2**
Coffee and Conversation for Seniors, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Guild Parlor

**Saturday, January 5**
Volunteer to Serve Lunch with CityTeam (ages 12 and over), 11 am – 2 pm, 722 Washington St., Oakland
Volunteer to Serve Dinner with CityTeam (ages 14 and over), 5 - 7 pm, 722 Washington St., Oakland

**Sunday, January 6**
Communion Sunday

**Monday, January 7**
Needles and Hooks Shared Interest Group, 2 - 4 pm, Guild Parlor

**Friday, January 11**
KIDZ Club, 3:30 pm, Youth Room

**Sunday, January 13**
Piedmont Community Forum, 5 - 6:30 pm, Murdock Room

**Monday, January 14**
Needles and Hooks Shared Interest Group, 2 - 4 pm, Guild Parlor
Board of Trustees, 7 pm, Guild Parlor

**Wednesday, January 16**
Coffee and Conversation for Seniors, 9:30 - 11:30 am, Guild Parlor

**Monday, January 21**
Needles and Hooks Shared Interest Group, 2 - 4 pm, Guild Parlor

**Monday, January 21**
MAT, 7 pm, Staff Workroom

**Monday, January 28**
Board of Christian Education, 6:45 pm, Guild Parlor

**RECURRING EVENTS**

**Sundays**
Children’s Sunday School, 10:30 am, CE Building
Journey (formerly known as High School Sunday School), 10:30 am, Youth Room
Rock, 5 pm, Youth Room

**Mondays**
Piedmont Gardens Bible Study, 10 am, Piedmont Gardens
Spiritual Formation Group, 4:30 pm, Guild Parlor

**Tuesdays**
Rock Pizza Lunch, Youth Room
Just Breathe, 5:30 pm, Chapel
Handbells, 6:30 pm, Clara Barton Room
Small Group Bible Study, 7 pm, home of Bob and Judy Wright (510) 325-3083 or Dottie Hutch (203) 500-9097

**Wednesdays**
LiveWire, 2:15 – 3:30 pm, Youth Room
Chancel Choir, 7:30 pm, Lindamood Choir Room

**Thursdays**
Women’s Bible Study, 10 am, Guild Parlor
Walking Together, 7 pm, Guild Parlor

**Saturdays**
Men’s Bible Study, 7:30 am, Founders’ Room