



The Chimes

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Modesto Church of the Brethren

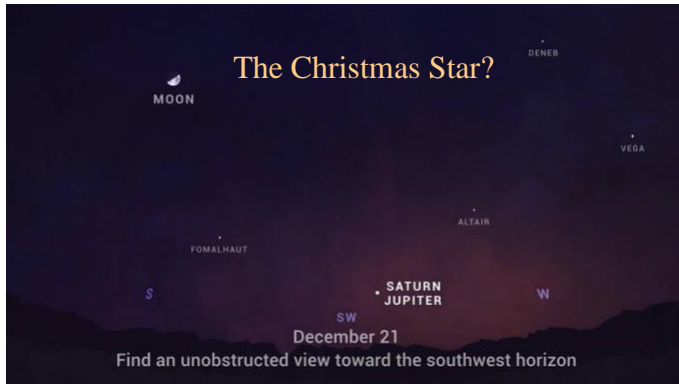
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Pastor: Andrew Sampson

Ministers: Every Member of the Congregation

Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.



Today, December 21, is the first day of winter, also known as the Winter Solstice and called, "The Longest Night," a day when there is the least amount of daylight, hence the name.

Winter can be a difficult time with its seasonal changes - the temperatures are cool, the trees have lost their leaves, and there is less daylight. Christmas can also bring its own troubles for many - the loss of loved ones and separation and distance from family. The pandemic certainly adds its own complexities to this time of the year. We need to be sensitive to others for whom Christmas is not always merry or happy.

However, this year, on the Longest Night comes an unexpected surprise for the non-astronomers among us (myself included)! That is the conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn which will be visible with the naked eye from our location. From Earth, the two planets will appear closer to one another than they have since A.D.1623.

As I looked at the sky Saturday night they had already appeared as one. Alas, fog prevented us from seeing the planets Sunday night.

So, why do I bring this event up? Some are calling the conjunction of these two planets the Christmas Star, as a conjunction of planets may have been what the magi or wise men saw and followed when they came to see Jesus.

Maybe it was and maybe it wasn't. What exactly they saw and followed is not known although there are many theories. Regardless of what they saw, they were inspired and encouraged to follow the star (or planet or comet), and came to see the Holy Family.

Maybe we can use this rare event to inspire and encourage us the midst of a difficult season and year. May we seek to follow Jesus and his example in our lives - feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the imprisoned, as well as seeking justice for the persecuted, giving voice to the voiceless, and breaking down the systems of oppression!

For more information about Jupiter and Saturn check out this article:

<https://www.nasa.gov/feature/the-great-conjunction-of-jupiter-and-saturn/>

*From the
Pastor* 



Please join us for worship on the Modesto Church of the Brethren Facebook page at 11 AM each Sunday.

Christmas Eve Service



Join us on Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24 at 7:30pm for a Zoom service of music from our members. We have been collecting voice and instrumental recordings from "our own" to wish you a very merry Christmas.

Be sure to have a candle with you! We will be lighting our candles together during the service.

The Zoom link will be sent in email this week. We look forward to seeing all of you there.

Blessings from the Worship Committee:
Kim Boardman, Kelly Gepley, Shaun Gepley, Mary Pieczarka, Stephen Reddy and Pastor Andrew Sampson



Gene Palsgrove
November 25, 2019

"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die".
Thomas Campbell



Margaret J. reported the passing of Gail Kristaponis, and sends condolences to Linda B., Gail's cousin.

Mary P. asks for prayers for her son Pete as well as other members of the military who are deployed outside of the U.S.

Allison asks for prayers for herself, and continued prayers for her friends Candice and Brandy. She is thankful for all of our youth leaders for the young children to high school. They did some great activities this week.

Kelly G. has a joy in that she and Shaun had an amazing time with the virtual senior high lock-in, playing games together.

Cheryl M. asks for prayer for her mother Paulette Miller in a nursing home in Ohio with COVID.

Luella and Larry are happy that Larry will start the process for getting a prosthesis this week.

Fran A. asks for prayers for her sister-in-law and niece who have COVID.

Remember all those whose concerns are too deep for words and those who may not be able to join us online.



MOVIE STEAM LOCOMOTIVE STARS ON RADIO

The most filmed steam engine in history, Sierra #3, is the star of Felton Daniels' most recent episode about Stanislaus County history.

If you are interested in this famous locomotive's past get on board by tuning into the Modesto Peace/Life Center's radio station, KCBP 95.5 FM at any of the following times: Sundays 11 A.M. and 4:30 P.M., Mondays and Thursdays at 9 A.M. and Fridays at 8:30 P.M.



GLIMPSES of BEAUTY

We enjoyed planting some amaryllis bulbs given to us by a dear friend, finding an indoor sunny location for them. Our ritual each morning is to check for signs of new growth in anticipation. Through this Advent season of short days and too long nights, we wait and wonder when the brilliant red blossoms will burst forth...as we also wait and wonder about unanswered questions in our lives: when will the pandemic abate, when will our doses of vaccine come, and what will recent test results reveal?

Over the years we've noticed that there will always be these kinds of questions, and that answers WILL come...but not nearly as soon as we want. In the meantime, we continue to seek doses of courage and patience to help us wait for those elusive answers. During this Advent we are once again waiting, as many others are...for some resolution to these uncertainties.

While we are waiting, Emmanuel WILL still come to us this season as always. Our task is to keep on seeking surprising little glimpses of beauty in the midst of the uncertainties...and find ways to be grateful for the simple blessings of the season: love, joy, peace and hope along our journeys.

~Elaine Forcier



Friends, did you know that Family Promise continues to operate successfully while following pandemic/social distancing guidelines? Here's a quick update on what's happening.

On March 16, families stopped using the church rotation schedule and moved to local motels. Motels are great until they are not! Imagine living in a motel room with your family: it gets ugly very quickly, no storage, no cooking facilities, etc. Of course, motels are also TOO EXPENSIVE; even Motel 6 is \$100 per night. Family Promise has found alternatives, but still needs assistance:

- Some new options include 3 shelter apartments, rented by FP, 1 duplex, and 1 house

- Families still need various kinds of support...food, transportation, housing assistance, etc.
- Some federal funding for assistance has been received
- We are grateful for our wonderful and capable FP staff...Tamra Losinski, Executive Director, 2 case workers, and 1 part-time administrative assistant
- FP staff is currently working with 5 families
- The Day Center is open by appointment only, 1 family per day. Monitoring guests as they search for housing is very different.

Volunteer Opportunities still exist

- Household cleaning items and supplies are on pause for now. Day Center is full, but donations of diapers of various sizes are always needed.
- Furniture delivery - a moving crew, especially for large items would be useful
- Turnover crew - Support is needed for cleaning and restocking the shelter apartments between guests. Hopefully turnover interval will be 30-90 days. Volunteers or sponsorship for cleaning services are welcome options.
- Meal delivery - It's helpful that the shelter apartments have kitchens. Meal gift cards are still needed. Occasionally, FP needs a volunteer to help pick up and deliver a prepared meal.

There is a slim silver lining --- currently there is a moratorium on EVICTIONS, but if and when that is lifted, well, folks will be in trouble. FP affiliates are reopening across the country...some in very unique locations. Can you say empty storefront?

What will Family Promise of Greater Modesto look like in the future? No one knows, but this much is true; since March, Family Promise has helped 10 families find homes! We are glad to help this organization fight homelessness...one family at a time.

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Welcome Statement

Believing that God's unbounded love and grace, as taught by Jesus, are offered to all and meant to be shared and celebrated by all, we embrace persons of every age, race, sexual orientation, ethnic and religious background, physical and mental ability, and economic means as vital and integral members of God's family. As an Open and Affirming congregation we welcome everyone to participate in the life and worship of our church.

Present: Karen Cosner, Linda Hunter, Bill Johnson, Leslie Wilkinson, Edie Ransom, Elaine Forcier, Luella Cole, Jim Costello, Marye Martinez, Jim Martinez, Karleen Daniels, Felton Daniels, Peggy Hoover, Andrew Sampson, Sue Messamer, Jim Boardman, Kim Boardman

Absent: none

1. Opening Devotion: Sharing, Karen Cosner

“Christmas Adventure with Grandma”, entertainment during the pandemic. Santa still exists in us all.

2. Approval of Agenda, no changes

3. Approval of November 9, 2020 minutes: as amended, M/S/P: Bill Johnson, Elaine Forcier

4. Treasurer’s report for November: Motion to Approve: M/S/P-LindaHunter, Marye Martinez

Witness Outreach budget has been paid!!! Estimates that we will fund the final budget.

5. Report on progress of Back Property Use committee, Felton Daniels, Andrew Sampson

Felton reported that the committee has met several times and looked at numerous possibilities in addition to the original proposal. The committee has not determined a specific direction at this time. Family Promise is interested in working with us. PSWD has small amounts of grant money. Housing Authority is not viable. We will have to work closely with neighbors. Many, many questions still remain.

Andrew stated that this plan is going to take longer than anticipated to get going. Site control seems to be a foreseeable issue. Money is a question. Committee has met approximately once every few weeks; continue to seek out people from whom to learn about this process. Talking with City Ministries soon.

Board member questions and discussion concerning this issue.

Side note: Blueprints for the church building are currently being electronically scanned and will be returned soon.

6. Report on District Conference experience, Andrew Sampson, Kim Boardman

Kim participated in several insight sessions and the business session. Andrew participated in business. Karleen commented from the perspective of the Program Committee: far greater attendance, far less cost, participation from home was better for many. Felton mentioned that the social times were appreciated.

7. Commission reports

a. Christian Education, Karleen Daniels

-notecards were given to children to write/decorate and mail to others

-family hot chocolate and singing event for December

-Rachel Duenas has agreed to join the commission as an appointee

b. Moderator, Linda Hunter

-Council meeting on January 31, 2021

c. Building and Grounds, Bill Johnson

-looking at the format of the new commission

d. Deacons, Marye Martinez

-orientation with Fran Adkins and Monique Sanders

-Prayers for the Sesser’s who are in recovery from Covid

e. Personnel, Bill Johnson

-no report

f. Fellowship and Rec, Sue Messamer

-no report

g. Stewardship, Jim Martinez

-PayPal has been effective; Andrew to continue to talk it up in worship announcements

-Some solar loans are being paid off

-Jim Boardman is new money counter

-All outreach is paid; \$20,000 still needed to fund full budget

h. Pastor, Andrew Sampson

-each commission will have a gmail address and shared drive to share info easier among groups

-concerns about modcob emails becoming very confused when adding additional messages to emails

i. Witness, Jim Costello

-no report

-question: Did serving at the shelter go smoothly? Yes.

j. Worship and Spiritual Life, Elaine Forcier

-Messenger subscriptions are up for renewal

-Appreciation for worships and Advent materials

k. Member at Large, Felton Daniels

-People want to meet in-person! Zoom gatherings are appreciated

8. Other:

a. Report from Matt Robertson of Floodjay Productions for Worship and Spiritual Life Commission: Digital streaming of video/audio in sanctuary

-attachment for estimate is available in the Board minutes binder; ask Jill.

b. Discussion/questions included:

1. Clarification that the quote from Floodjay does not include the \$750 for cable company to run network line + access point \$611.34 (Circuit Savers)
2. Karleen: This whole process is for at-church recording; this doesn't apply to our current on-line process, correct?
3. Kim: Floodjay was asked to address the live streaming and recording of worship elements on church campus
4. Bill: Can we look at other churches with similar systems? Matt suggested visiting Modesto Covenant Church
5. Elaine: PSWD has \$2,500 grant funds for a streaming system. There are some funds available within church monies.
6. Suggestion to continue research and postpone vote until next board meeting.

9. Next Board meeting will be on Saturday Jan 16th immediately following the Board Reorganization Gathering (BRG) held that morning.

10. Our next Council meeting will be at noon on Sunday January 31st following church by zoom.

11. Adjournment at 8:32pm

Respectfully submitted by Kim Boardman, Church Clerk