FEBRUARY
Volume 21 Number 02

FEBRUARY 7
“We Wait, We Hope, We Stay”
Psalm 147

FEBRUARY 14
“The One Is Shining Forth”
Psalm 50

ASH WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 17
“Shattered”
Matthew 11:28-30

FEBRUARY 21
“Treasure”
Matthew 8:1-4, 16-17

FEBRUARY 28
“Safe Keeping”
Matthew 8:5-13

Register for our Sunday morning worship services (and our Ash Wednesday service) at bit.ly/reg4worship.

Register for our Sunday morning worship services (and our Ash Wednesday service) at

36600 Niles Blvd., Fremont, CA 94536
(510) 797-0895 http://nilesdiscoverychurch.org
The Doctrine of Discovery (DOD) is a Christian doctrine founded on the European Christian idea that non-Christians were not entitled to the land where they lived. Its roots are in a series of papal bulls (decrees) that date back to the 1100s, though the two most important papal bulls are from the 1400s: “Romanus Pontifex” in 1455, granting the Portuguese a monopoly of trade with Africa and authorizing the enslavement of local people, and “Inter Caetera” in 1493, justifying Christian European explorers’ claims on land and waterways they allegedly discovered. The DOD’s impact was the promotion of Christian domination and superiority, and it has been applied in Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas.

On February 13, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., the Northern Lights Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), will spend time in an online setting considering the DOD’s impact on Disciples (especially in the Northern Lights Region) and on the DOC structure and theology. They intend to create a space of accountability to the Native American voice and how that voice is heard when exploring the past, understanding the present, and visioning the future.

To register, go to northernlightsdisciples.org/second-saturdays/.

**Annual Budget Meeting**

A report on the Annual Budget Meeting, held on Sunday, January 31, 2021, will be included in next month’s edition of The Bell.

**Contacting The Staff**

Because of the shelter in place orders, please do not come into the office. You can call the office 510-797-0895 to leave a message for any staff member.

Mikele Kearney’s email is
admin@nilesdiscoverychurch.org

Cecilia Le’s email is
cecilia@nilesdiscoverychurch.org

You are encouraged to use the pastors’ Calendly apps to make an appointment for a phone call or a Zoom meeting if you would like; their contact information is at right.

**Minister in Training**
Maggie Guekguezian
559-801-3937
maggie@nilesdiscoverychurch.org

Pastor Brenda’s mobile
510-828-4107
calendly.com/pastorbrenda
brenda@nilesdiscoverychurch.org

Pastor Jeff’s mobile
510-579-8851
calendly.com/revjss
jeff@nilesdiscoverychurch.org

**Senior Pastor**
Rev. Jeff Spencer

**Associate Pastor**
Rev. Brenda Loreman

**Minister in Training**
Maggie Guekguezian

**Admin**
Mikele Kearny

**Bookkeeper**
Cecilia Le

**Accompanist and Organist**
Jenny Lin
Inquirers Gathering Offered

If you have been considering formally uniting with the church or if you just want more information about the church, please come to our next Inquirers Gathering. The next gathering will be held following worship on Sunday, February 21. We ask participants to stay in the main meeting, rather than going to breakout rooms.

Lenten Worship Series Begins This Month

Although we hardly seem to have finished with Advent and put away the Christmas decorations, the Lenten season and preparations for Easter are just around the corner. This year, Lent begins on February 17 with Ash Wednesday, which we’ll celebrate with a special Zoom worship service (see article on page 5). Lent continues for seven weeks, culminating with the celebration of Easter on April 4.

Our worship series for this year’s season is called “Holy Vessels: We Are Broken; We Are Whole.” The series begins with the belief that each of us is created as a precious and holy vessel of embodied love. It acknowledges that we have been through a harrowing time since last Lent, a time that has shattered our sense of wholeness—in body, mind, and spirit—like a glass vessel fractured into pieces. On each Sunday of Lent we’ll explore the healing narratives of Jesus from the gospel of Matthew, stories that tell of healing for all aspects of our lives: physical, communal, mental, intellectual, and environmental. We’ll see how the stories offer the promise of Divine solidarity with human suffering and remind us that we can begin a journey toward making something beautiful from that which is seemingly broken.

The anchoring image for our series, which we’ll be referencing and using in rituals throughout the season, is beach glass. Beach glass begins as something whole and yet discarded. As it is tumbled by the sea, it is broken and polished until it becomes a treasured item. In exploring this symbol of beach glass, we do not embrace the idea that suffering is necessary or God-given, but that suffering is a part of life. When pain comes and brokenness enters our lives, Jesus reaches out to touch us and remind us of the Treasure that we all are—worthy of new life in the midst of hopelessness.

We are hoping that each of you will participate in the rituals we’re planning for the worship services in Lent; in order to do so, you need a piece of beach glass! If you have some already, great; if you need some, we’ll be mailing or delivering glass to anyone who requests it. Go to bit.ly/ashwednesdaysupplies and fill out this form by February 10, and you’ll receive beach glass in time for Lent.

We may be broken, but we are also whole and holy. May this Lenten season remind us of the healing that is available to us.

Borrow a Hymnal

If you would like to borrow a copy of one or both of our hymnals, please contact Val Parker. Hymnals are a great source of spiritual materials. They can be used for singing, of course. They also have prayers and orders of worship, and the hymn lyrics can be read as poetry.
United Church Funds (UCF) is our financial stewardship partner. The Niles Discovery Church Investment and Endowment funds are invested with them.

United Church Funds Mission Statement: “UCF provides socially responsible investment options, aligning to broadly-held Christian values on a variety of environmental, social and governance issues.”

**Current Investment Strategies**

As a responsible investor, UCF works in alignment and covenant with the United Church of Christ, supporting General Synod resolutions and a commitment to redoubling their efforts to address social issues such as the global pandemic, social unrest, calls for racial equality and climate change.

In the past few months, they have joined two investor initiatives aimed at protecting human rights, domestically and abroad, co-filed three shareholder resolutions urging corporate transparency on diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, and strengthened their commitment towards racial equity.

In the past years they took the following actions:

- 1977: Disarmament - General Synod resolves to divest publicly held stock in weapons manufacturing businesses.
- 2013: Climate - General Synod votes to divest from fossil fuels - among other strategies to combat climate change.
- 2020: UCF, in partnership with Climate Action 100+ and ICCR, asked companies to disclose corporate lobbying.

They are continuing to seek goals and lobby efforts in support of the Paris Agreement - net zero emissions by 2050, and design portfolios that emphasize companies with a commitment to a more just and sustainable future.

They Invest in impact first ventures that seek to solve social and environmental problems and divest from companies that fail to respond to dialogue and shareholder resolution.

**An Invitation To Participate In Our Third All-Church-Read**

*Stamped From the Beginning*, by Ibram X. Kendi, has been chosen as our next discussion book by the co-sponsors of the project, the Ministry of Christian Education team and the Daytime Fellowship group. The book is available in a full and a shortened version that might be interesting to young adults, or those with limited reading time. We will read and gather in groups of ten and be guided through a discussion by a facilitator.

Since February is Black History Month, the topic is especially relevant and will coincide with what students may be studying in school. We hope that readers will finish their reading in time to join the discussions the first week in March.

Our nation has been going through a time of intense examination of the topic of white supremacy, and the author contends that we do not understand race and specifically anti-black racism any better now that we did two generations ago. It might be described as willful ignorance of American history, and so this book may be able to fill in some gaps in our education.

Kendi uses Puritan minister Cotton Mather, Thomas Jefferson, abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, activist WEB Du Bois and Angela Davis as our historical guides.

If you want to join a discussion group, contact Marilyn Singer at 510-657-1969 or email her at robertsinger993@comcast.net
Lent arrives a bit early this year, and we’ll begin with a special Ash Wednesday worship service at 7:30 p.m. on February 17 (The Zoom registration for this service is the same for Sunday worship). Because we can’t gather in person and receive the traditional imposition of ashes, we’ll be doing something a bit different for our Ash Wednesday observation this year.

Instead of ashes, we’ll be creating a ritual using the four elements: earth, water, air, and fire. To get ready for Ash Wednesday, we’re encouraging everyone to create a worship center with certain items (see photo for an example). In addition to your elements for communion, we would like your worship center to have a small vessel of water, a small bowl of dirt or sand, a candle (wax or electric), and two or three pieces of beach glass (real or manufactured). If you need any of these items (we’re assuming you’ll have vessels and water), please feel free to request them using this form: bit.ly/ashwednesdaysupplies. If you sign up by February 10, we’ll make sure you have what you need to participate in the Ash Wednesday service and in our services for Lent.

Ash Wednesday is a time of naming brokenness. As we enter the season of Lent, we commit to enter also into a season of healing and recovery that requires the naming of what has been shattered as a first step. We take up our responsibility as disciples of Jesus to be the Body of Christ—a body of those who both need healing and offer healing in the world. The promise of Jesus is that he is with us in our weariness and burdens and brokenness. As we move through Lent together, may we name our brokenness and move toward healing.

Keep your Zoom app up-to-date. Zoom keeps adding features to their app. We now have free, fairly accurate closed captioning available. Sound quality has improved. Watch this one-minute video on how to update your Zoom app (if you don’t know how to already): youtu.be/E7zEReVLUBM.

Do you wish the sound quality (especially for the music) was better? Try using external speakers or headphones. The built-in speakers on your computer, tablet, or phone aren’t that great for music.

Having trouble understanding what was said? Make sure you’ve downloaded the latest version of the Zoom app on your device. Then, once you’re in a meeting, click the Closed Captioning button (typically near the “Chat” and “Participants” buttons) and select the option that’s best for you. If closed captioning is on and you find it distracting, click the Closed Captioning button and turn it off.

Please send announcements and articles as you write them to Mikele at admin@nilesdiscoverychurch.org. She will post them on our News blog as she receives them and will submit them for publication in the following issue of The Bell (if appropriate in terms of timing). The deadline for submissions for the March 2021 edition of The Bell is 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 10.

In addition to typical newsletter news, we hope to fill each issue of The Bell with reflections, photographs, poems, and so forth by members and friends of the congregation.
Like every well-functioning family, Niles Discovery Church plans for its future. We make decisions about how to use our resources to be a church that walks the talk to show God’s love. We lean on the Finance Committee to engineer a path to make the process happen financially.

Every year they prepare a budget. They juggle our resources and recommend to the congregation a financial path for that year. The congregation either agrees or amends this budget at the Annual Financial Meeting. The work begins as they watch and work to keep us on track, keeping us a financially responsible church.

They study the spreadsheets every month and monitor the numbers with the treasurer. If something is “out of whack,” they figure out why and see that it is fixed—from a huge water bill that might indicate a leak to a missed insurance payment that needs attention. Their eyes are always on our operation.

They also watch the accounts in the bank and the investment portfolio that contain our savings and our two Endowment Funds. Their commitment to responsibly invest is guided by UCC policies that emphasize the following:

- Divestment from all investments in weapons manufacturing
- Divestment from fossil fuels that can result in net zero emissions by 2050

Our socially conscious Finance Committee works with a financial planner from United Church Funds to ensure that these goals are met. All strategies are used to make our investments “green,” and these clean investments are now financially doing better than fossil fuel stocks. You can be assured that your contributions to our funds and anything you designate as a Legacy in your end-of-life plan, will be handled in a way that is socially responsible and looks to the future as we work to heal the earth.

Many thanks and kudos to the members of our Finance Committee: Beth Rasler, Mike Thomson, Tom Gunnarson, Diane Harvey, Ryan Ramseyer and Carl Nordling. The Green Team and the congregation thank you for your leadership and encourages every friend and member of NDC to follow your lead by being personally responsible in their investing as a way to care for and repair the earth.
February is Black History month. The Ministry of Christian Education (MCE) team thought it important to share some information about racial justice. We saw an article in the October/November issue of AARP: The Magazine, that gives voice to what some Black Americans have said about racial injustice over the years. While some of these calls to action are well known, others might be new. Hopefully reading this article will give us all something to think about, and maybe bring about discussions at home or at school. You can find the article at bit.ly/ExploringRacialIn-Justice.

Exploring Racial (In)Justice

By Beth Armstrong for the Ministry of Christian Education

It is the question on everyone's mind: when will I get a coronavirus vaccine? The inoculation has been touted as the key to halting the spread of COVID-19, but the rollout of the vaccine program in California has been infuriatingly slow, with less than one-third of available vaccines in use, according to the latest statistics available.

An "Alameda County Resident Vaccine Notification Form" is now available online for you to fill out. According to the form, "We will notify you when a vaccine is available and send you information with details on location and timing." Fill out the form online at bit.ly/Register4CovidVaccine.

The form asks for details such as your name, age, underlying health conditions, and more. Only the fields with a red asterisk are required.

Fremont Vaccine: Register For Alameda County Notification

A Message From START

Second Saturday Documentary Presents: Incarcerating US

A critical look at the history of the prison system and the ramifications of mass incarceration in the USA

Incarcerating US exposes America’s prison problem and explores ways to unshackle “the land of the free” through vital criminal justice reforms. With 2.3 million people behind bars, the U.S. has the highest prison population rate in the world.

Incarcerating US will be streamed over Zoom on Saturday, February 13, at 1:30 p.m. It will be immediately followed with a discussion, led by Nube Brown and Malik Washington, editors of the San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper (sfbayview.com/). Mr. Washington spent 20 years in prison, so he can give a first-hand view of incarceration. To register for the screening and discussion, please go to bit.ly/SSDSZoom.

Through dramatic first-hand accounts, expert testimony, and shocking statistics, Incarcerating US asks fundamental questions about the prison system in America: What is the purpose of prison? Why did our prison population explode in the 1970s? What can make our justice system more just?

The film begins with a brief overview of U.S. prisons and the flawed policies that fueled unprecedented overincarceration. In many cases, these laws exacerbate problems they were designed to solve. Through both empirical evidence and the eyes of those tragically affected by the system for committing minor crimes, we see the failures of two major initiatives: the War on Drugs and mandatory minimum sentences.

Incarcerating US tells the story of America’s broken criminal justice system through the eyes of those who created it, those who have suffered through it, and those who are fighting to change it. After decades of failures, now is the time to unshackle “the land of the free.”
FEBRUARY SPECIAL OFFERING

BLANKET THE WORLD WITH: LOVE

“And don’t forget to do good and share with those in need.”
– Hebrews 13:16

The February special offering is for Blankets+. This offering goes to Church World Service, our ecumenical partner in coordinating and providing emergency relief globally. Through the Blankets+ offering, you help provide blankets to people who have been displaced from their homes because of natural disaster and violence. Some of the offering is used for other emergency and development programs of Church World Service. This special offering will be received all month.

Imagine your family is forced to leave your home. It’s a dark night, and you’ve been walking on dirt roads for hours. You stop at a registration center, where you receive critical supplies to help your family before continuing your journey. Among those supplies are blankets, a hot meal, emergency food rations, and hygiene. These gifts of hospitality are only possible because congregations like Niles Discovery Church support the CWS Blankets+ Program. Last year, congregational gifts from around the country provided over 100,000 blankets and kits to families impacted by hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding, and other crises (including homelessness and poverty).

Niles Discovery Church receives a special offering each month. With so many possibilities for special giving, you may need to choose which ones are most important to you.

Thank you to everyone that gave so generously to our January Special Offering donated to Tri-City Volunteers.

February Special Offering

REGISTRATION NOW REQUIRED

To enhance the safety of your Zoom experience, we are now requiring advanced registration for Zoom meetings held on the church’s Zoom account. You only need to register once for a repeating event. Find the registration links in the descriptions of the scheduled events.

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Monday Morning Bible study continues on Zoom from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The scripture studied is typically the scripture for the coming Sunday’s worship service. Everyone is welcome. Register at bit.ly/mmbsreg.

DAYTIME FELLOWSHIP GROUP

The Daytime Fellowship meets on the third Monday of the month (which is February 15, this month), Bring your lunch to this monthly Zoom gathering. We share the same meeting link as the Monday Morning Bible Study, so join by registering for the Bible Study (bit.ly/mmbsreg).
I didn’t know how much I felt weighed down until Inauguration Day.

The weight lifted as the 46th President was sworn into office.

I felt physically lighter. I cried Tears of relief. Tears of relief!

The Tears of relief ran down my smiling face. Relieved of the weight, I did not know I held. Relief!

With this relief, I feel hopeful. Relief and Hope fill my soul. Relief & Hope!

Relief and hope that money & lies are no longer the gods in power.

Relief & Hope that someone in power cares about our ailing earth.

Relief & hope that a woman of color holds the office of Vice President.

Relief & hope that ALL people are equal. ALL people will be treated equally no matter what. Equal no matter what!

Relief & Hope that this pandemic will be taken seriously.

Relief & hope that the deaths from this pandemic mean something.

Relief & hope that I will be able to see my family and friends once again.

Relief & hope for the feeling of warmth wrapping around me as I embrace loved ones that I haven’t seen in almost a year.

Relief & hope that respect, kindness and love will prevail.

Relief & Hope
Prayers for These People and Their Families

Bonnie Rankin; Priscilla Taylor’s friend, John Lehrack; Rich Gallegos’ mother, Esther; Joy Barnitz’s dear friend Rev. Jeffrey Cheifetz; Mary Thomson;
Cindy Corey; Helen Boyer’s sister-in-law, Marjorie Boyer;
Keith Moody; Randy Fewel and her family as they grieve the death of her mother, Patricia Fewel, on September 30;
Helen Boyer; the family of Cecile Litherland, who died on August 20.
Karen McCreedy; the family of Leeann Patterson (who died in mid-December) and all supporters of the Christian Counseling Center of San Jose;
JoAn Parker; Judy Hollowell and her family as they grieve the death of John Hollowell on January 18; Rich Gallegos and his family as they grieve the death of his aunt
Charlie Smith; Nena, who died on Thanksgiving evening from COVID-19;
Bill Cutler; the family of Leann Patterson (who died in mid-December) and all supporters of the Christian Counseling Center of San Jose;
Judi Eaton; John Zlatnik and his family as they grieve the death of his brother-in-law on December 15;
Grace Rankin; the family of Bridget Lucey-Cose’s co-worker, Will;
Becky Moreno; Sharon Yool’s daughter; Michael Thomson;
Isabel Moreno; Alison Kieft’s friend, Judy Huff;
Nancy Attinger; Alison Kieft’s sister-in-law, Debbie Thompson;
Diana Roeding; Alison Kieft’s friend undergoing cancer treatment;
Charlotte O’Donnell; Grace Rankin’s brother, Jim Carstairs;
Penn Boyer; Katy Wharton’s mother;
Isaiah Espinoza-Carter; Janet Butcher;
Diane Kindle; William “Butch” Butcher;
Sandra Frisbey; Carol Easter’s daughter, Allison;
Doug Swint’s mother, Geraldine; Carol Easter’s mother, Barbara;
Priscilla Taylor’s father-in-law, Maria Garnica’s brother, Victor Garnica;
Steve Taylor, and mother-in-law, Suzy Mahusay’s sister, Jo Carroll.
Angie Taylor;
Priscilla Taylor’s friend, John Lehrack; Grace Rankin’s sister, Marjorie Fremont’s daughter, Lisa;
Rich Gallegos’ mother, Esther; Barbara P. King’s son, Jason King;
Joy Barnitz’s dear friend Rev. Jeffrey Cheifetz; Cindy Sojourner’s friend Saemi’s brother Don Ladue;
Marjorie Fremont’s daughter, Lisa; Priscilla Taylor’s friend, Lana Artemoff; Associate Conference Minister Rev. Davena Jones;
Cindy Sojourner’s friend Saemi’s brother Don Ladue; Karen and Keith Moody’s friend, Jerry Miller;
Rich Gallegos’ mother, Esther; Sandra Wong’s friend, Nichelle; the sister of a CleanStart client;
Joy Barnitz’s friend, Polly Baxter; the family of Leann Patterson (who died in mid-December) and all supporters of the Christian Counseling Center of San Jose; Joy Barnitz’s friend, Polly Baxter;
Susie Claxton’s sister, Caroline; the family of Leeann Patterson (who died in mid-December) and all supporters of the Christian Counseling Center of San Jose;
Becky Moreno’s brother-in-law, Vince; the family of Leeann Patterson (who died in mid-December) and all supporters of the Christian Counseling Center of San Jose;
Bee Newell’s nephew, Matt Hovland; the family of Leeann Patterson (who died in mid-December) and all supporters of the Christian Counseling Center of San Jose;
the family of Cecile Litherland, who died on August 20.

All Who Are Caring for Sick, Frail, and/or Elderly Family Members.

Peace Throughout the Earth, Offering Thanks for All Who Through Non-Violent Methods Are Bringing God’s Compassion and Justice to the World.

For Teachers Who Are Facing All Kinds of Professional Uncertainties, Teaching Stresses, and a Dangerous Virus, and for All Their Students.

People Around the World Coping with the Aftermath of Natural Disasters, Many of Which Were Made Worse by Climate Change.

The Leaders of Our Congregation.

A reminder about this prayer list:
If you have a prayer request that you’d like added to this list (or removed) please let Pastor Jeff know.
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<th>Sunday</th>
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<td>11:30a-12:30p Bible Study</td>
<td>12p-5p CleanStart Mobile Hygiene Unit</td>
<td>10a-12p Retirement Reinvention Group</td>
<td>1p-2p Interfaith Harmony Day</td>
<td>4p-6p Facilities Cleaning</td>
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<td>12p-5p CleanStart Mobile Hygiene Unit</td>
<td>3p-3:30p Zoom with the Kids</td>
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<td>7:30p-9:30p Ministry Team Meetings</td>
<td>3:30p-4:30p Green Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>9a-9:50a Adult Sunday School</td>
<td>11:30a-12:30p Bible Study</td>
<td>10a-12p GNV-Board of Directors Meeting</td>
<td>11:15a-12:15p START Meeting</td>
<td>7:15p-8:15p Thursday Evening Drop-in</td>
<td>1:30p-3p Second Saturday Documentary Series</td>
<td>4p-6p Facilities Cleaning</td>
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<td>10a-11a Worship</td>
<td>12p-5p CleanStart Mobile Hygiene Unit</td>
<td>12p-5p CleanStart Mobile Hygiene Unit</td>
<td>1p-2p GNV: Online Gathering</td>
<td>5:30p-6:30p SSDS Producers Meeting</td>
<td>4p-6p Facilities Cleaning</td>
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<td>7p-8:30p Ministry of Evangelism Team</td>
<td>3p-3:30p Zoom with the Kids</td>
<td>8p-8:30p Bell Deadline</td>
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<td>7:30p-9p Finance Committee</td>
<td>5:30p-6:30p SSDS Producers Meeting</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9a-9:50a Adult Sunday School</td>
<td>Presidents' Day - office closed</td>
<td>12p-5p CleanStart Mobile Hygiene Unit</td>
<td>10a-12p Retirement Reinvention Group</td>
<td>7:15p-8:15p Thursday Evening Drop-in</td>
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<td>10a-11a Worship</td>
<td>11:30a-12:30p Bible Study</td>
<td>3p-3:30p Zoom with the Kids</td>
<td>10a-12p Retirement Reinvention Group</td>
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<td>12p-5p CleanStart Mobile Hygiene Unit</td>
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<td>7:30p-2p Daytime Fellowship</td>
<td>7:30p-8:30p Ash Wednesday Worship</td>
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<td>7:15p-9:15p Cabinet</td>
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<td>10a-11a Worship</td>
<td>12p-5p CleanStart Mobile Hygiene Unit</td>
<td>1p-2:30p Cyber Geezers</td>
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<td>11:30a-12:30p Inquirers Gathering</td>
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<td>7:30p-9p Care Team meeting</td>
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<tr>
<th>28</th>
<th>Notes: Almost all gatherings are held on Zoom. The main exception is the CleanStart Mobile Hygiene Unit, which uses the large parking lot</th>
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<td></td>
<td>9a-9:50a Adult Sunday School</td>
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THE BELL IS FIRST CLASS

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