

Hill 'n Vale

Newsletter of the Tomales and Two Rock Valley Presbyterian Churches

Visit us at tomalespresbyterian.org and tworockvalleypresbyterian.org

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PASTORAL PONDERINGS

Dear Friends in Two Rock and Tomales,

The new year has begun: it's now 2020! This means that we have moved further into the 21st century and are also beginning our 3rd decade in the new century and millennium.

And we have started, again, with "Year A" for our liturgical calendar: on most Sundays, our Gospel Lessons for worship and preaching will be taken from the gospel according to Matthew. This year's focus on Matthew's gospel is an opportunity for us to join the wider Presbyterian Church (USA) in its special emphasis on Matthew 25.

Matthew 25 consists of three sections where Jesus speaks about the coming kingdom of heaven: there is the parable of the wise and foolish bridesmaids (25:1-13), the parable of the talents (25:14-30), and Jesus' saying about a final judgement (25:31-46). This last section is where the famous story of the separation of sheep and goats can be found, as well Jesus' words "I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me" (25:40, 45).

The vision of our denomination to become a "**Matthew 25 Church**" goes back to 2016 and 2018, when the two most recent General Assemblies began urging its member churches, Presbyteries,

and Synods to study Matthew 25 in depth. The hope is that Jesus' words in Matthew 25 will become ever more firmly the foundation of our faith, and of our words and actions in the world. Becoming Matthew 25 churches, according to our General Assemblies, would mean active engagement in our communities to deal with systems and structures in our society that contribute to injustice and that so often affect "the least of these".

Who exactly are "the least of these"? They could be fugitives from violence or tyranny who live as migrants, as was the case with Jesus and his family (Matt 2:13-23). They could be people struggling with poverty and homelessness, who long for deliverance (Matt 5:1-12). They could be groups excluded for racial or other reasons who yearn for acceptance and welcome (Matt 7:1-5).

The point is: if we take seriously what Jesus tells us in Matthew 25, might that strengthen our faith and our churches' witness and vitality? As we focus on Matthew's gospel this coming year, let us explore how we might build on the important work that we are doing in our congregations and communities, and let us figure out how we might join Jesus more fully in His call to show forth more love, justice, and mercy in our world.

Happy new year,

Pastor Cornelia

JOYS TO SHARE

On Friday, December 20, a local shop notified **Two Rock Church member Pat Huber** that the embroidery she had worked on for **26 years** was framed and could be picked up: everything was ready in time for Christmas!



Back in 1994, Pat had seen a lovely embroidery pattern that **depicted the Nativity of the Christ Child**. Consisting of five separate panels, this pattern for tiny cross stitches on white, even-weave linen was so attractive that Pat quickly ordered it, together with a set of five frames for when everything would be completed. And then she began her sewing.

Pat started with the two outside panels, the smallest ones, depicting a camel on one side and a shepherd boy on the other. It took many evenings after her work as a nurse, and many hours on weekends. In the mid-90's, Pat's mother moved in with her and Pat took care of her, leaving little time for her embroidery project.

When her mother passed away in January 1998, Pat took a long break from her sewing, not starting up again until 2005. By then, she was working on the next two panels: two

shepherds and an angel on one side, two kings and an angel on the other.

The middle panel was the biggest, with the most complicated design and the most work. After working on it sporadically, Pat began again in earnest in 2018, spending time on her embroidery every single day. By now, this work had become deeply meaningful to Pat: she loved doing the delicate cross stitches and looked forward to sewing for a bit each evening.

And then it was done, this beautiful piece that Pat had worked on, and prayed over, for so long. With just enough time to have her handiwork placed into their frames, Pat brought the finished piece to church! There it was set up in the Two Rock sanctuary, in time for Christmas Sunday on December 22.

What an amazing piece of art: it shows Pat's creativity, devotion, persistence, and generous spirit; all of it expressed in a five-panel depiction of Jesus' birth. Thank you, Pat, for sharing your treasure with the Two Rock congregation; we love this very special, hand-embroidered Nativity!

Congratulations to Mel Todt and Margaret Todt: their birthdays are just two weeks apart, falling at the end of December and the beginning of January.

Mel was born on December 29, 1937, in Hackensack, NJ. He has two older siblings and a younger sister. When Mel was a toddler, his family moved to Hasbrouck Heights, NJ, about 15 miles from New York City. In the winter, when trees were bare, Mel remembers being able to look at the skyline of NYC from his childhood home.

Hasbrouck Heights is where Mel grew up, went to school, and

graduated from high school in 1955. In March 1956, he joined the Army, did his basic training in New York, and was stationed in Massachusetts, Georgia, Taiwan, and, as of January 1958, at the Two Rock Ranch Station. He served there with the Army Security Agency until February 1959.

When Mel attended worship at Two Rock Church in late January 1958, he met Margaret Mahrt, a choir member and high school senior. And when he got out of the Army a year later, he did not return to New Jersey but looked for a job in the Petaluma area. Beginning in March 1959, Mel worked for Bank of America: in Santa Rosa until 1960, in Vallejo until 1962, in Fairfield until 1969, then in Petaluma for a few years, in San Francisco for ten years, in Concord from 1986 until he retired in 1996. In all, he was with Bank of America for 37 years, starting as a teller and ending up doing administrative work at a main bank location.

After his retirement, Mel attended Empire College and completed a program in bookkeeping. For the next three years, he went to work as a bookkeeper for a company in Petaluma. Since 2000, Mel has been the bookkeeper for Unity Church of Marin; he still works for them three days a week.

Ever since that first visit to Two Rock Church, Mel has been active in the congregation, including as an elder and a choir member. In the early 1990's, he became curator of the church's cemetery and has done much to locate cemetery records and research the history of families buried at Two Rock. In 1995, Mel became church treasurer and still keeps track of the Two Rock, Tomales, and joint budgets today.



Margaret Mahrt Todt was born on January 12, 1941 into a Two Rock family: her mother moved here from Iowa in 1912; her father had immigrated from Bredstedt, Germany, in 1928; and her parents met at the Two Rock Grange.

When Margaret was three months old, her parents moved to their newly purchased chicken ranch on King Road. That was the family's home and business when she and her younger brother grew up, and it is still the place where she and her family reside today. Margaret went to Liberty School, then to junior high school and high school in Petaluma. She graduated in June 1958.

All that next year, Margaret did secretarial work in San Francisco, while also getting to know that nice young Army soldier Mel Todt. The couple married on March 19, 1960, in the Methodist Church in Petaluma, with their guest filling the sanctuary to overflowing.

Margaret and Mel's three children, Ray, Stewart, and Mary Lynn, were born between 1963 and 1967, while the couple lived in Fairfield. The family moved back to Petaluma in 1970, to a home on Olive Street, and the children attended Petaluma schools.

From 1974 to 1984, Margaret offered after-school care: several children would come to the Todt family home each afternoon, until their parents could pick them up in the evening. Margaret watched over these children as well as caring for her own.

In 1985, Margaret began working at the advertising desk of the Argus Courier newspaper; a position she enjoyed greatly and kept for seven years. In July 1992, she started at Farmers' Insurance and is still there, 27 years later.

Margaret grew up in Two Rock Church and has been part of the choir since she was 10 years old.

In the 1970's, at the urging of then-organist Thora Neal, she learned to play the organ, so that she could relieve Thora on occasional Sundays. It was 1972 when Margaret first became chair of Harvest Festival; and since 1985, she helped organize the Turkey Dinner Fundraiser, alongside Thora Neal. When Thora Neal retired as organist in 2008, Margaret stepped in and has been playing organ and piano during worship for the last eleven years. Margaret has also served as Trustee and deacon.

Together, Mel and Margaret enjoy square dancing; they did that for one year in 1961 before their children were born, and then again each week from 1983 until their group folded in 2010. When the children were young, the family often went camping in the northern California redwoods, hitching a trailer to their car to take along everything they needed. They still meet up at Cassini Ranch Campground along the Russian River: Margaret and Mel, their three children, three grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and others from their extended family. Mel and Margaret also love watching the Gaither music program on Friday nights and learning southern gospel music. And for seven years now they have attended the Great Western Fan Fest in Visalia.

Congratulations on your 82nd birthday, Mel; congratulations, on your 79th birthday, Margaret; and double congratulations, Mel and Margaret, on your upcoming 60th wedding anniversary on March 19, 2020. May God continue to bless you richly in the months and years to come!

ANNUAL REPORTS & MEETINGS

The new year has arrived and with it the time for the **annual reports and annual meetings** of our congregations.

Each January, the pastor, clerks-of-session, committee chairs, deacons, and leaders of groups within our churches write their annual reports; these are then compiled and distributed to our congregations prior to the annual meetings.

In 2020, the **annual meeting of the Two Rock congregation** will be held on Sunday, January 26, following worship and a luncheon. The **annual meeting of the Tomales congregation** is scheduled for Sunday, February 2, after worship and coffee hour.

The annual meetings of our churches serve a **threefold purpose**: to receive the annual reports, to elect new church officers (elders, deacons, and financial secretary), and to vote on the pastor's terms-of-call. Everyone is invited to attend the annual meetings, though only members of the congregation may cast a vote.

Following the annual meetings, there will be a **retreat for all officers from both of our churches** at Two Rock Church on Saturday, February 15, from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm.

New church officers will be ordained or installed during worship on Sunday, February 16.

WORSHIP



Please join us
For Sunday Worship

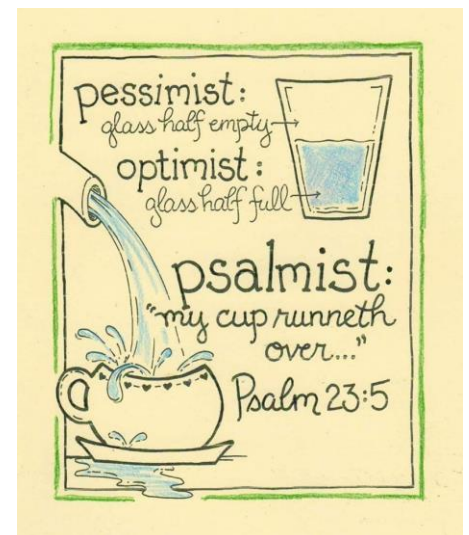
In Tomales at 9:30 am
In Two Rock at 11:00 am

We enjoyed some marvelous worship during Advent, as we prepared for the coming of the Christ Child on Christmas:

† The annual **Choir Concert** was held in the Two Rock sanctuary on Sunday, December 15 at 3 pm. The concert featured 22 singers from Two Rock and Tomales churches, augmented by talented family members. Their singing was accompanied by organ and piano; we had a violin solo and a guitar trio; all of it directed by Kay Fish

† The annual **Candle Light Service** took place in Two Rock on Sunday, December 22 at 7 pm. We heard the Christmas story, a choir anthem, and a solo by Crystal Miller; and we sang lots of Christmas carols, accompanied by piano and organ

† The entire Advent and Christmas season, we enjoyed **beautiful decorations, garlands, trees, and creches in our sanctuaries and fellowship halls**. Thank you, deacons and helpers, for decorating our churches so lovingly.



Here are some worship highlights for January and February:

† **Epiphany of the Lord** on January 5, with star-words for all
† **Baptism of the Lord** on January 12 and renewal of Baptismal Vows for our congregations

† **Rev. Judy Slater will lead worship at Two Rock Church** on February 2, while Pastor Cornelia moderates the annual meeting at Tomales Presbyterian Church

† **Transfiguration of the Lord Sunday** on February 23, leading up to the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, February 26

EDUCATION & LEARNING

☺ What **heartwarming worship we had on December 8** in both of our churches! Each Sunday school presented a **Children's Christmas Pageant** that day, to the great delight of our congregations.

In Tomales, Sunday School teacher Amanda Graves directed Maya, Mickey, and Emma Graves and Tatianna Hernandez in their roles of narrator, Mary, angel, drummer boy, king, and shepherd. In Two Rock, Sunday School teachers Jessica Briggs and Kathy Stroke directed Mary Briggs, Elizabeth, Nathan and Natalie Young, Landon and Evelyn Costa, plus Cliff Stroke and Carl Carter.

While the story of Jesus' birth was read and enacted by our Sunday school cast, the congregation sang many favorite Christmas carols. What joy!

☺ In November, Two Rock Sunday school teachers Kathy

Stroke, Jessica Briggs and their students purchased **two goats from the Presbyterian Giving Catalogue**, to be delivered to needy families in far-away countries. The remainder of the funds that they had raised on Souper-Bowl Sunday 2019, which was \$ 178, was given locally, to **Petaluma People services, for their Meals-on-Wheels program** to older adults.

The **Souper-Bowl Fundraiser** on the first Sunday in February is an event that our Two Rock Sunday School students, their families and their teachers sponsor year after year. That is the one time each year when the congregation is asked to make a donation for their after-church snacks during fellowship time, with all the money raised given to food programs, so that others would have at least a bowl full of warm, nutritious soup.

Please join us on February 2 for worship and fellowship, enjoy hearty soups, and donate funds as you are able. Let's see which food programs our children will support with Souper Bowl Funds in 2020.



☺ Please mark your calendar for our **five-week Lenten Study**. It will be held at Two Rock Church on Monday afternoons, **March 2 through 30**, from 2:30 to 4:00 pm.

MISSION & OUTREACH

Thanksgiving and Christmas are times when our congregations reach

out in special ways to bring hope and joy to our neighbors.

Tomales Presbyterian Church collected non-perishable food in support of local Scout Troop 123 and their **"scouting for food"** program, which happens every November the week before Thanksgiving.

Tomales Church members also donated many unique gifts for the **Holiday Bazaar at Tomales Elementary School**, which Amanda Graves delivered to the school office in early December

In addition, Tomales Church donated \$ 250 to **West Marin Community Services** for their Food-and-Gift program which benefits needy families in West Marin, including Tomales.

Two Rock Valley Presbyterian Church had a **Giving Tree** with the names of 20 children from **Two Rock School**, plus requests for special supplies for six of its classrooms. All presents were collected by December 15 and taken to the school office before the beginning of Christmas vacation. Many thanks, Kathy and Cliff Stroke, for organizing the Giving Tree.

Many thanks also to Nan Leavell for reaching out to the Coast Guard Station, so that Two Rock Church could make Christmas more joyful for our "Coasties". Rev. Lim from the **Coast Guard's Lighthouse Chapel** had asked if the congregation would donate cash or gift cards to stores like Walmart or Target, to benefit several needy families. **A total of \$ 550 were collected** and given to Rev. Lim.

In addition, an eight-people Bible Study, four of whom are members of Two Rock Church, **collected \$130, plus three bags of Christmas chocolates**. That was turned over to Sara Young, the

president of the **Coast Guard Spouses Association**, for the 275 stocking this group was making for Coast Guard Personnel who had to stay on Base over Christmas.

Thank you, everyone who contributed to these collections of money and gifts! You have made a joyous difference in the lives of many neighbors and you have honored the Christ child, who came to bring the gifts of grace and peace to all the world.

PROPERTY & FINANCE

Good news at Tomales Church: **the floor in the narthex, below our belfry, is entirely dry**, in spite of all the wind and rain we have had! We are thankful to Coy Brown Painting Company, which power-washed the belfry, scraped off the old paint, sealed between the wooden boards, then applied new paint; and got it all done by November 26, just before the rains began! May this happy situation continue, may rain no longer come in through the belfry! Plus, in early December Rob Campbell, Carl Carter, and Rob's friend Chuck **repaired one of the storm windows** that had cracked. With ladders, Gorilla tape, and ingenuity, this intrepid team made sure that the window would continue to keep out any moisture. We hope that the repair job will hold through the end of this rainy season.

Good news at Two Rock Church: as of December 2nd, our **propane tank is full** to the brim, and a talented service person from Simpson Sheet Metal traced the intermittent problem we have had with our furnace to a faulty thermostat. He **replaced the**

thermostat, then programmed it, based on when we use our rooms. Everything is working well now, and the building is getting even heat. Many thanks for everyone's patience as we tackled this problem. And a big thank-you to Ben Visser who replaced a cracked drain pipe under one of our bathroom sinks, and did so on December 24! No more puddles, no more problems; thank you, Ben!

CHURCH CARE & FELLOWSHIP

Almost 60 women and girls got together in the Fellowship Hall at Two Rock Church on Saturday, **December 7**. That was the date for the annual **Mother-Daughter-Friends potluck luncheon**, a much-loved gathering at the beginning of Advent.

The event was organized and hosted by Joetta Furrer in honor of her mother, Lea Ray Schultz, and in honor of all the ordinary angels that are part of our lives.

Everyone enjoyed delicious food and lively conversation amidst lovely Christmas decorations.

Many thanks also to the **deacons in Tomales and Two Rock** for the special refreshments that they prepared for coffee hours and receptions during Advent: after the Children's Christmas Pageants in both churches on December 8; after the Two Rock Choir Concert on December 15; and after the Two Rock Candle Light Service on December 22.

SMALL GROUPS AT CHURCH

The Creative Crafts Group continues to meet in **Two Rock** each Tuesday from 9:30 to noon.

For more information, contact Gail Casarotti at 707-762-6931.

The Two Rock Quilting Group will begin meeting again in late February. For information, please contact Judy Burton at 707-762-4966, then joins the quilting ladies on Thursdays from 9:00 to noon.

PRESBYTERY NEWS

† The next **Presbytery Meeting** will be held at Novato Presbyterian Church on Saturday, **February 8, 2020, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm**.

And a final update on the **2019 Pedal for Protein fundraiser**: the P4P riders raised a total of \$ 44,268, all of which will be donated to food pantries within our Presbytery of the Redwoods. Thank you immensely, riders and donors!

COMMUNITY NEWS

Below is a photo of **twelve PG&E trucks congregating at the Two Rock Church parking lot on December 23**, after some line work along Bodega Avenue had been completed. Everyone was glad to be done and ready to celebrate Christmas!



The community is invited to join the **Two Rock Volunteer Fire Department** for their **Potluck Dinner and Annual Meeting**. This event will be held at the Fire Department's Social Hall at 7618 Valley Ford Road, on **Saturday evening, January 25, 2020**. For more information, please speak with Carl Graham.

Two Rock Valley/Tomales
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“ The heavens are telling the glory of God;
And the firmament proclaims God’s handiwork”
Psalm 19:1

2020 Annual Meeting dates:

Two Rock: January 26th

Tomales: February 2nd

Officer Retreat:

Two Rock Church, Saturday, February 15th

Ordination/Installation of Church Officers:

February 16th