

# CONTACT

January 13, 2016  
Montclair Presbyterian Church

## FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN

On Sunday, Talitha preached a sermon on baptism in honor of "Baptism of our Lord Sunday," a little known church festival that follows epiphany each year. Each January, when I hear the story of Jesus' baptism, I know that Christmas is finally over. It's a bittersweet annual moment made somewhat easier at Montclair Presbyterian Church by the presence of the Pacific Boychoir, who generally give us a final Yuletide serenade on the second Sunday in January.

But I hope the mystery, joy, hope, and peace of Christmas will abide all the year round that that each day, Jesus will be born anew in the Bethlehem of each heart. To that end, I'll leave you with a poem that may be familiar to you: "When the Song of the Angels is Stilled," by the pastor, theologian and civil rights hero, Howard Thurman.

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and the princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among people,  
To make music in the heart.

Peace, Ben

## TALITHA'S TAKE

I had a lot of fun preaching this Sunday! During [my sermon](#), I enjoyed walking up and down amongst the tables, hearing your thoughtful contributions to the conversation, and seeing you in a new light. Not to mention, sprinkling everyone with water in remembrance of baptism. For those who weren't there, one thing we did was to reflect on what new names God might give us, and some extraverted (or maybe just brave?) souls shared their names by creating new nametags. I loved this because I could see you differently, as your best selves, in the light of God's love. And I also loved the idea that those who chose NOT to share with a nametag must be walking around with some wonderful secrets!

I mused, at one point during the sermon, how nice it could be if we had visible signs of our baptismal identity, like an "organic" sticker on an avocado or an embroidered "I belong to God" headband to wear for all to see. I imagined that it could help us all in our efforts to respect and be kind to one another. Two thoughts were shared with me promptly after the service, and both are worth sharing. One - quite lighthearted - here's [a link to the delightful story](#) of a girl who puzzles her mom with a green blob and its secret meaning. It's a two-minute read. Read it!

And two - "It's a hijab!"

Yes. While the reasons why some Muslim women wear hijab are very complex and filled with cultural and political factors, I think it is so helpful to take this view, and even to extend it to any of the other external religious signs we might see. If we see a person wearing a hijab -- or yarmulke or crucifix or fringes -- we can make the effort to see those symbols as saying "I belong to God." Of course, we'd be well off making that effort to see the Divine in everyone, all the time, but for those of us who need reminders, consider this a cue.

And speaking of cues, I wanted to share a tiny baptism-related cue that I've found helpful in my daily life. I've been looking for ways to pray more (yup, even pastors find it hard!) and a friend gave me this wonderful suggestion. Have a simple prayer - no more than a sentence or two - to say when you wash your hands. Hand-washing is a frequent and usually private activity, and it is easy enough that you can slip some words through your mind as the water slips over your hands. How about remembering "I belong to God" each time?

I give thanks that as Presbyterians we only celebrate two sacraments - baptism and communion - and that they are so blessedly simple. Every day we eat, drink, and wash. May your day be infused with holiness, and may you remember God's love for yourself and everyone you meet.

Every Blessing,  
Talitha

## Coming Soon!

**WOMEN'S COFFEE AND CONVERSATION** – Saturday January 16, 10am-Noon.

To anyone who has identified, does or will identify as a woman - join us this Saturday, Jan. 16, for Coffee & Conversation, 10am-Noon in the Family Room. There's no need to sign up. Let's talk about our concepts of God and Jesus. Whatever those concepts are (or aren't), this should be a lively discussion. Feel free to bring a snack to share or just yourself. All are welcome as we deepen our sense of community. If you need child care please confirm with Jan Stites. Thanks.

**REGISTRATION - Spring 2016 Small Groups & Adult Education**

Registration for Family Life Small Groups and Adult Education will continue on both Sunday, January 17 & 24 at Family Hour. These classes and groups are great opportunities for you to learn more, have fun, & get to know other MPC folk! There was a date change for Ben's art class, so please download the [most recent brochures here](#).



**TAIZÉ MEDITATION SERVICE** - Wednesday, January 20, 7-8pm in the Sanctuary. The theme will be "True Compassion." The new year is a good time to get centered in the sacred present and renew your perspective by experiencing with others the readings, prayer, silence, and Taizé's evocative music and meditative singing. For child care (available upon request), contact the church office by January 15.

# Digging Deeper...

## PER CAPITA

The Per Capita apportionment (what it costs to be Presbyterian) per person is \$35.15 this year. The money that we contribute is divided between General Assembly, Synod of the Pacific and the San Francisco Presbytery. If you would like to contribute toward our cost per member, please do so by writing a check to the church and designating it "Per Capita" on the memo line. Thank you!

## MPC DIRECTORY - UPDATES and PHOTOS

We will be taking photos for the MPC Directory in the Sanctuary again this Sunday, January 17. Please give us a few minutes to set up, then come to the registration table to check your information sheet, and move on to have your portrait taken by one of our 'photo pros'! We're looking to have a final session in February - details to come.

## JANUARY FILM SALON – Saturday, January 30<sup>th</sup> at 6:15pm

Last month's film salon was canceled so we are once again showing Harold and Maude (1971, 91 min). This film stars Budd Cort and the always irrepressible and funny Ruth Gordon. Cat Stevens (now known as Yusuf Islam) provides the memorable musical score and many scenes were shot in Santa Cruz and along the coastal highway. Thornhill Room, 6:15 for 6:30P showing, Saturday, January 30. Bring snacks that you'd like to share!



## 2016 SPRING WOMEN'S RETREAT

Save the date -- Saturday, March 12, 2016, from 9:00 am to 3:30 pm at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church in Lafayette. Join us for a day of sharing our lives with the theme "Yesterday's journey, tomorrow's path: whose footprints are those in the sand?" The retreat will feature Dolores Nice-Siegenthaler, who earned a Master of Divinity degree from the San Francisco Theological Seminary with an emphasis on Spiritual Direction. Registration will begin in February -- watch for more specifics.

## Notes from the Family

### DRIVERS NEEDED

The youth group will be helping the Irwin/Moser family move on Saturday, 1-5pm, carpooling from MPC. Please RSVP to Talitha if you can come and help. We especially need parents and drivers!

## Praying and Celebrating

### CELEBRATION CALENDAR:

Sunday, January 17 – Ben is preaching on "Water of Ignorance, Wine of Redemption"

Sunday, January 24 - Ben is preaching on the "Body Politic"

Sunday, January 31 – Ben is preaching on the theme of "Courage"

Sunday, February 7 – Ben is preaching on "Beauty v. The NFL"

**THE POWER OF PRAYER:** Each Sunday, as we share our prayers, the whole community commits to keep them in our hearts and carry them through the week, in love and concern. And on Tuesday mornings, your staff (Ben, Talitha and Shane) will pray again for any prayer requests made known to us. Do feel free to email, text, or call any one of us with prayer requests, and make it clear if you **do not want us** to share the request in the Praying and Celebrating section in Contact.

**WE PRAY FOR:**

The victims and responders to the avalanche in France  
Peace around our world, especially those places threatened by terrorism and instability  
More rain and an end to our drought  
The leaders of our country  
All who are ill

**WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR:**

A new home for the Irvin family as they move this weekend  
The beautiful music of the Pacific Boychoir  
All who surround and care for other members of our church family  
Rain!  
The knowledge that we belong to God

**If you have additional prayer requests that you would like included in Contact or during the Sunday Celebration prayer time, do feel free to contact Pastor Ben, [ben@mpcfamily.org](mailto:ben@mpcfamily.org).**

**DEADLINES:** To submit announcements for the Bulletin and Contact, please send them to [office@mpcfamily.org](mailto:office@mpcfamily.org). The deadline for Contact is **Tuesdays at Noon**, and the deadline for the Bulletin is **Wednesdays at 3pm**.

**MPC Calendar:**

<http://www.mpcffamily.org/getting-involved/calendar/>

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**MONTCLAIR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

5701 Thornhill Drive, Oakland, California 94611, (510) 339-1131

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00am-4:00pm

Rev. Ben Daniel, Pastor, Office hours Monday - Thursday, 10am -4pm (*Friday is his day off*)

Rev. Talitha Phillips, Associate Pastor, Office hours Monday - Thursday, 10am-4pm (*Friday is her day off*)

Shane Brodie, Administrative Assistant, Office hours Monday - Friday, 8am-4pm

Kim Rankin: Music Director and Marcia Roy: Organist

Gil & Maria Chiguila: Caretaker and Janitor

Rev. John Hadsell: Theologian in Residence

Rev. Kathy Ray: Parish Associate

Allen Todd, Brad Hestir, Linda Spencer, & Adrian Santos - Sound Technicians