

## FAITH IN COMMUNITY



### *Scripture:*

### **Psalm 138**

<sup>1</sup>I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; <sup>2</sup>I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything. <sup>3</sup>On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul.

<sup>4</sup>All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth.

<sup>5</sup>They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD. <sup>6</sup>For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away.

<sup>7</sup>Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me. <sup>8</sup>The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

### **Luke 11:1-13**

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” <sup>2</sup>He said to them, “When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. <sup>3</sup>Give us each day our daily bread. <sup>4</sup>And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.”

<sup>5</sup>And he said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup>for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing

to set before him.’ <sup>7</sup>And he answers from within, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’ <sup>8</sup>I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

<sup>9</sup>“So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>11</sup>Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup>Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

### **This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



*The photos on page one were taken during the time our church was a shelter from the wildfires in October 2017. The bottom left photo is a circle of shelter-mates listening intently to the voice of Pat Kerrigan on KSRO describing the progress with fire containment and evacuations. Top left is the sun obscured by all the smoke above our preschool and roses. Top right: Nancy Nelle and Nate Scoble provided soothing music. Bottom right: Guy Cottle and Norm Smith barbecue ribs that were sent from the Redwood Empire Food Bank to feed evacuees.*

It is an honor to have Pat Kerrigan as our guest inspirational speaker today. She is a third-generation San Franciscan, who came to Sonoma County in 1980 and began her broadcasting career at a top-40 station. When the wildfires hit the North Bay in October 2017, Pat was in the KSRO studio for twenty-four days on the air. She was the voice of Sonoma County when most other modes of communication were unavailable.



### **FAITH IN COMMUNITY**

To Pastor Cindy, we stand with you as you have the courage to sit with your mom as she gets ready to leave this earth.

Thank you for inviting me into this beautiful church to talk about something that’s near and dear to my heart: faith in community.

Faith is a living, breathing, constantly evolving thing. When present, it fills us with comfort and a loving knowledge that everything will be okay. When absent, it lands us on our knees in the middle of the night wondering, “Why have you forsaken me?”

People of faith have a thousand ways to reach out to the God of their choice, but what about reaching out to the community we’ve chosen? It’s tough to get up when we’re on our knees, but so much easier when there is another hand to grasp ours and help us to our feet!

Faith in our community requires exercise, like any other muscle in our body; if you don’t use it, you lose it. Faith relies on our memory and our experience, and we are lucky enough to have many examples to fall back on and to be inspired by.

## SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

When we awoke to the horrors of September 11th, 2001, we were all frozen in shock and fear, and then we got busy. Although the attack fell on the shore opposite ours, Sonoma County residents gathered at the Luther Burbank Center for an event to honor those who had fallen. Thousands of us came to grieve together, create a twenty-five-foot banner with words of solace and love to send to our neighbors in New York, and to re-discover our community.

We connected to people we passed on the street: remember? We made sure that when we asked another person "How're you doing," we generally cared about the answer. We were exercising our faith in community.

Now, let's get real. As the emergency fades, so does our commitment to exercise that faith in each other. Human nature, I suppose. It's very tough to keep up, but we file it away; it becomes part of our reference bank, because we know another day will come when we need to access those tangible examples of faith.

## OCTOBER 8, 2017

For many of us, that day came on October 8th of 2017, when it seemed the gates of hell itself had opened and was threatening to drag us in against our will.

One-hundred thousand of us evacuated, looking for a safe corner in Sonoma County to rest. Seventy-five-hundred homes and structures were lost, and twenty-four souls in our community alone were no longer here to relish the acts of faith that were about to come.

I was on the air for twenty-four consecutive days after the fires broke out. It gave me a unique window into the shock and awe of the devastation, and the evolution that took us from dire straits to hope and faith in our community.

## FOURTEEN THOUSAND CALLS

**Everyone has a favorite number, right? Mine is fourteen thousand. Fourteen thousand is the number of calls received by the Volunteer Center within the first week of the fires. These were not calls asking for help. These were callers who offered to help. These were citizens, community members, affected by the fires directly or not, who said, "What can I do?"**

We were raised up by the chants of hundreds who lined the streets at the fairgrounds as the change of shift brought yet another fleet of first responders heading toward the danger areas. "Thank you!" "We appreciate you." "We've got your backs."

Our faith in community showed itself on banners reaching across freeway overpasses and on signs tacked onto telephone poles. I'd heard about one that said "KSRO: the voices of our angels." It was the singular most humbling moment of my life.

## CHEERS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Our community of a quarter-million people began to grow. Three hundred fifty law enforcement and fire agencies from outside Sonoma County came to help us fight the good fight. We cheered them and prayed for their safety as well as our own.

In my temporary home, a motel on Santa Rosa Avenue, a group of six firefighters from Contra Costa County were staying in the room next door. One day, I heard the sound of familiar music outdoors. When I went to investigate, I saw those six firefighters; they were not resting in between shifts but

spending their off-duty time exercising near the pool. They were doing the kind of exercise that would put most of us in the hospital in traction. They were readying themselves for the next battle, all to the soundtrack of Top Gun.

I remember thanking God for them, and for the moment of levity I had watching them go for it while listening to the song “Danger Zone.” Faith being restored.

### **A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE**

Less than three weeks after the fires, Senator Mike McGuire asked me to be a part of “A Day of Remembrance,” the first time our community could come together in a singular place to find faith and re-discover each other.

I was grateful for the national leaders that showed up that day, and I was grateful for the moment they left. Why? Because I knew at the end of the day, it would be up to us, this resilient, remarkable community, who would be responsible for the recovery of our friends and neighbors and this place we call home. We were exercising faith, and the muscle was getting stronger with each passing day.

### **LET’S REMEMBER**

To this day, even as we celebrate the rebuilding of Sonoma County, let’s remember those still struck by the devastation, those within two months of the second anniversary of the fires, still deciding whether they can stay, or they must go. And let’s reach out to them.

Sometimes, as faithful human beings, we look across our borders at those in need, so many of them, and we wonder: how can we affect something so big, so invasive, so far-reaching? We can affect the world when we begin at home. We exercise faith here first, for one another, so that we are armed with the kind of love that will stretch beyond our borders.

### **EXERCISE FAITH**

We acknowledge the homeless, we don’t just walk by. We take notice of the church-goer next to us, and if we see distress, we offer a hand up. Do not belittle the power of our outstretched arms. The love and faith we are able to show will certainly change the lives of those we touch, and countless other lives we may never know about.

It’s contagious, this faith in community. Sometimes, it’s as simple as having faith in the faith we share. And often it is about recognizing when our faith is shaky, when it needs to be exercised. When there is a break between disasters is when we go to work.

### **COULD YOU USE A LITTLE MORE FAITH?**

But Lord, we get tired. The path to consistent faith in each other makes us bone-tired weary. Is there anyone here whose faith in community could use a shot in the arm, who needs a reminder about what faith in each other looks like? Raise your hand if you could use just a little more faith.

Then let’s take advantage of this moment, this gathering at this church on this day. Will you join me in the exercise of faith in one another? Then stand with me now as we celebrate the wealth of love between us.

(The congregation stood with Pat Kerrigan and we all joyfully danced together to end the service.)



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