Little Brown Church of Sunol Supports Family in Need
By Barbara Egbert

The Little Brown Church of Sunol, a small congregation in Alameda County, is continuing its support of families in need despite being unable to hold worship services due to the pandemic.

LBC, as its members refer to it, has a tradition of providing Christmas gifts and groceries to the families of students who attend the local K-8 school (Sunol Glen School) and who qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches – the standard definition of poverty. Everything is done anonymously – only the minister, the Rev. Mary P. Conant, knows the identities of the recipients. Church members do the shopping for children identified only by age, gender, clothing sizes, and gift preferences.

This year, under the unusual circumstances affecting everybody in California, LBC and the school decided to focus on just one family which was in severe need of help. In just a few weeks, this tiny congregation raised more than $1,200 in donations, lined up two volunteers to purchase clothing online, designated one person to wrap and store the gifts, and arranged to help with food and utility payments.

LBC stopped holding in-person worship services in its 135-year-old church last March. Since then, an email with the sermon, links to music, quotations, and guest blogs, poetry, and videos has gone out every Sunday despite power outages and wildfire evacuations. The church leadership hopes to resume in-person services in the next few months. But clearly, the congregation’s sense of community is thriving even now.