

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

Redlands United Church of Christ An Open and Affirming Church

February 2005

Communion Sunday - Worship Service 10:30 a.m., Sunday, February 6

Wider Ministries meeting following worship service
Sunday, February 6

Stewards will meet following worship service, Sunday February 6

Staff meeting, Monday, February 7, 9:30 a.m.

Church Board will meet Tuesday, February 8, 7:00 p.m.

Ash Wednesday Service ~ Redlands UCC & Mentone UCC
Wednesday, February 9, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. in our sanctuary

Celebration Ringers Rehearsal on Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.
Jubilee Ringers Rehearsal on Sundays, 11:45 a.m.

Covenant Choir Rehearsal on Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.

R.U.C.C. Women's Fellowship, 9:30 a.m.
Wednesday, February 16 (place to be announced)

Middle school youth group (grades 6th-8th) will meet February 6, 13, 20, & 27
(check bulletin for times)

High school youth group (grades 9th-12th) will meet February 6, 13, 20, & 27
(check bulletin for times)



From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

“...But there are also many other things that Jesus did;
if every one of them were written down,
I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”
--the final words of the Gospel according to John

Not everyone likes the gospel of John. Out of sync with the other three gospel accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus, this fourth gospel uses language that is esoteric, metaphors that are unusual, and a foundational Greek theology that is unknown to most of us in the modern world. Biblical scholars are not at all sure that the gospel is worth taking seriously, at least as seriously as the first three more “historical” accounts.

I used to agree. Then I lived through a few personal crises; I walked with people into the valley of the shadow of death; I began paying attention to the world’s people and their situations. And I felt pain—mine and others—which couldn’t be healed with historical accounts of Jesus’ comings and goings. I saw doubts that would never be transformed into faith-filled experiences of the Divine by an intellectual study of scripture. This is not to say that there is no place for the intellect or historical accuracy in our study—heavens no! We come to our spiritual path—to our experience of God, Jesus the Christ, and the Spirit—through the wholistic application of our mind, our body, and our spirit.

It is to say that the gospel according to John offers us a different way to experience the presence of Christ in our midst. In John, Christ is bread to be savored; Christ is water given freely for our survival; Christ is life and light and the best wine the host has to offer. I appreciate the gospel of John because of these metaphors and so many more the author provides us in 25 short pages. Such metaphors nudge us to think beyond the literal and to dream beyond the tangible present moment. And, as we look around at the juxtaposition of the world’s pain and the gospel message of Christ, metaphor will offer us hope to go on living. For when we consider metaphors of everyday living such as bread and water to be reflections of the Divine, then whenever we drink water or eat bread (or even just pass by a bakery shelf at the store and notice the bread waiting there), we are invited to see a glimmer of the Divine presence right where we are.

How about enjoying together a hot bread party for those of us who are questioning the presence of God or Christ or Spirit? I suggest we begin by inviting the gospel of John to host it.

Blessings,



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A Note from Jim Hester

This congregation has been blessed over the years by the presence of a group of faithful, committed folk who have given selflessly for the good of the whole body of God's people at RUCC. One who stands out in that group is Rick Naftzger. He has, without hesitation, used his time, talent, and treasure to serve us. I want personally to thank him for the past three years of leadership and to encourage you to do so as well. I think we are on the verge of moving into exciting new realms of ministry due in no small part to Rick.

I look forward to the next year with a bit of trepidation – how does anyone fill Rick's shoes! – and with great excitement, for I believe that we are at a unique moment in the history of this congregation. We have in place all the elements we need to provide important alternative ministry to the city of Redlands. With Sharon's prophetic guidance and our renewed energy, we can be a witness to the power of the Gospel to confront arrogant imperialism and divisive political ideology with the call for peace with justice, for a society that feeds the hungry, welcomes the marginalized, clothes the needy, provides affordable health care, and addresses crime as a failure of social and economic policy as well as a moral failing. I want us to claim the promise expressed by the prophet Joel, "Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions." In order to fulfill our promise, however, we must believe that the same Spirit that anointed Jesus to "bring good news to the poor...proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19), empowers us to continue that ministry in 2005 and beyond in Redlands.

So those are the values I advocate. Now comes the hard part, organizing for success. I would like every committee at its first meeting of the year to establish goals and objectives for the year. These should be rather specific and, where appropriate, describe what resources the committee thinks it needs to reach them. The description should also state time-specific targets for achieving them. The agenda for the March meeting of the Board will be devoted to presentation and discussion of these statements. From them I hope to identify a couple of larger, more integrative projects to bring to the church at a special meeting for discussion and action.

Believe me, I have no interest in "re-inventing the wheel." Over the years we have brainstormed a lot of things. What I hope to achieve is excitement and commitment, akin to that of building the church campus, to ministry and outreach and to a long-range plan that will guide our activities beyond my tenure in office.

Let me close by suggesting that our motto for the year be, "This is the year of the Lord's favor." And it can be with your help! AMEN

* * * * *

Minister – Rev. Dr. Sharon R. Graff
 Choir Director – Peggy McMeans
 Organist & Handbell Director – Kristen Cameron
 Youth Director – Craig Colclough
 Seminary Intern – Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo
 Administrative Assistant – Rebecca Gutierrez
 Sunday Child Care – Mariana and Mina Ryan
 Custodian – Jay Grayson
 Church office hours: 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Monday – Friday
 Wanderings is published monthly by R.U.C.C.

“Worship God!” (Revelation 19:10)

By Sharon R. Graff

Worship during this Lenten season is being planned by a group of RUCC folk who accepted an open invitation to work creatively together. Beginning with Ash Wednesday on February 9 (7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary) and continuing through the six Sundays of Lent, we will experience some of the signs of God’s love. The scriptures for the season invite us to explore the theme of God’s presence in a myriad of ways—through our own free will, through risking and trusting, and through keeping our palms up. We also will experience God sitting with us even when we whine and complain, and we will feel God’s breath of life and God’s caring presence in all the quadrants of our lives, including the tombs! Please consider this your personal invitation to be inspired in worship throughout the months of February and March.

February 6 – “The View From the Top” – Communion Sunday

Exodus 24:12-18; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9

Moses climbed Sinai...Jesus climbed “a high mountain”...the author of 2 Peter claims to have climbed “the holy mountain.” On this “pre-Lent” Sunday, we will explore the mountains we climb in our own spiritual lives and be attentive to those whom we meet along the way. No ropes or helmets needed for this climb!

Wednesday, February 9 – Ash Wednesday – 7:00 pm in our sanctuary

Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent with the first sign of God’s love—the gentle divine suggestion that our investments (of time, talent, and treasure) reflect our values and priorities. Music from the Taize community in France will guide us as we focus our thoughts and center our prayers. Our friends from Mentone Community Congregational Church will join us for this service.

February 13 – “Free Will”

Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

Free gifts, free choices, free will, free presence of the Spirit...all this and more await us as signs of God’s love. Today, we’ll explore the “meant to be” theology that seems to cut against the radical notion of free will.

February 20 – “It’s the Evidence...!” – The Rev. Dr. Jon Robertson, guest

Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17

It has been noted that no matter which way he faces, Dr. Jon Robertson will be pleasing to God! For, whether he is conducting the Redlands Symphony Orchestra or preaching an inspiring sermon, Jon works from his heart, soul, and mind. We are honored to welcome him into leadership with us this day.

February 27 – “Helping Us Cry”

Exodus 17:1-17; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11

A typically “low” Sunday in Lent, with scriptures about whiny people and complaining saints, this day offers us a treasure in the trove of God’s love. Come and hear the very good news that, right there in the middle of our difficulties or struggles or doubts, God is present! And, even more than presence, God offers reconciliation and healing to our hurting souls and bodies. We will embody the presence of God by offering each other the exquisitely refreshing gift of washing one another’s hands.

March 6 – Celtic Sunday and Communion Sunday – “Caring Presence in All Quadrants”

Psalm 23; Readings from the Celtic tradition on the four directions and corresponding elements (earth, air, water, fire, and Spirit)

This will be a very special Sunday of honoring and experiencing our Celtic Christian tradition from the isles of Britain. Ancient (yet surprisingly modern!) readings from the Bible and other sources will join with inspiring music to offer us a unique worship experience. Bring a friend!

March 13 – “Breath of Life”

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; John 11:1-45

Today’s messages from scripture and from life suggest to us that God has the ability to bring dead and dying bones back to life. From Ezekiel’s valley to the tomb of Lazarus, God looks death square in the face and says, “Live!” Perhaps some our dead and dying places will feel the refreshing breath of God today...

March 20 – “Palms Up!” – Palm Sunday

Philippians 2:5-11; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Matthew 21:1-11

Beginning outside on the patio (weather permitting), we will process into the sanctuary, singing and smiling, with our own palms up to receive what the Spirit offers! And thus begins our journey with Christ through this week called “holy.”

March 27 – “A View from the Tomb” – Easter Sunday

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; John 20:1-18; Matthew 28:1-10

The Easter morning stories are told with some consistency in each of the four gospel accounts—and the women disciples figure prominently in all accounts—leading us to wonder and perhaps to believe. Come for the music, come for the prayers, come to hear the stories once again. More importantly, come to experience the new life, the resurrected life, which God has arranged especially for you!

Worship will be richer and deeper with your presence. I especially look forward to sharing this our third Lenten season together.

RUCC 2005 OFFICERS AND AREA LEADERS AND CO-LEADERS

Officers

President: Jim Hester
 Vice President: Bill Buchanan
 Treasurer: Rich Blakley
 Clerk: Rosemary Whitmer

Area Leaders and Co-Leaders

Church Growth and Enrichment: Michael Dewey
 Church Life Co-Leaders: Rosemary Whitmer and Georgia Sforza
 Christian Education Co-Leaders: Andrea Morics and Barbie Fiske-Phillips
 Shepherds Co-Leaders: Carole Wesson and Carol Buchanan
 Health Ministries: Colleen Kintner
 Stewards: D. Hester
 Wider Minister: John Sweeney
 FaithActs: Dianne Landeros
 Worship: Floyd Orr
 Board Advisor/Member at Large: Galilee Glanville

“Simply Divine” Lent 2005

Ash Wednesday, February 9, 7:00-8:00 p.m.
Taize service in the sanctuary with our friends from Mentone UCC

Lenten Soup Suppers
Wednesdays, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
February 23, March 2, March 9, March 16
Covenant Hall
Facilitator: Sharon Graff

Maundy Thursday
March 24, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Soup Supper and Tenebrae Service

For those who enjoy HGTV, you may wonder if we are spending our time in Lent remodeling a room or two. (For those who are not HGTV addicts, the phrase “Simply Divine” is the sign off of a popular home makeover show.) Well, in a way, yes we are. Not a room in our house or apartment or condo, but this season does invite us to remodel something inside of us.

Beginning with Ash Wednesday service—February 9th from 7:00-8:00 p.m.—we will join together in a contemplative worship service, that centers us around scriptures and the music of Taize, looking deeply and honestly and with a lot of love and forgiveness at what is inside us and others who choose to walk this journey. On the other four Wednesday evenings (February 23, March 2, 9, 16), our simple meal of soup and bread will be followed by an equally simple experience of scripture. Using the ancient practice of Lectio Divina (loosely translated from the Latin as “a divine reading of scripture”), we will focus our souls on one of the passages to be read in worship the following Sunday. Through a creative mixture of listening, prayer, silence, and sharing, our experience of the Divine will be enriched...or so goes the theory! You are invited to come and try it on.

On Maundy Thursday, March 24, we will continue the contemplative tenor of Lent with another soup supper (6:00 p.m.), followed by a special tenebrae service in the sanctuary. With choir and congregational singing, instrumental music, thought-provoking scripture readings, and the methodical extinguishing of candles, we will be led into the darkness that precedes any resurrection.

These Lenten evenings are for all ages—from older elementary children to older adults and all in between. Childcare will be provided for the youngest among us, so all will have a place. Please bring your open spirit, a bowl and spoon for soup, and a cup for something to drink. If you need transportation, please contact your shepherd or the church office.

Wherever you are on life’s journey...you are welcome here.

MEMORIAL FUND SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Attending college this semester? Working toward a professional certificate? If so, you may be eligible to apply for a scholarship for a reimbursement toward the purchase price of your textbooks.

A scholarship up to a reimbursement of \$300 per calendar year is available to those in our church family who are actively pursuing an academic degree or professional certification. To qualify, the applicant needs to meet the following requirements:

- A minimum GPA of 3.0 from either the most recent semester of college attended or high school graduating GPA
- A photocopy of the most recent transcript
- Class(es) enrolled in must be contributing toward an academic degree or professional certification
- Applicant shall have been actively involved in the Redlands UCC for a minimum of two years
- Receipts from the purchase of textbook(s) for the current semester

Previous recipients of a scholarship last year are eligible to apply again for the 2005 calendar year. Application forms are available in the church office.

BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC

Blood Pressure Clinic will be Sunday, February 27, following the worship service. Come in for a check up before you have your coffee. The blood pressure clinic will be held in Covenant Hall.

RUCC WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

RUCC Women's Fellowship will meet on Wednesday, February 16 at 9:30 a.m. Place to be announced in the bulletin.

ADULT EDUCATION CLASS LED BY JIM HESTER

For five Sundays, beginning January 30, Jim Hester will lead a review and discussion of Elaine Pagel's book, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (NY: Vintage Books, 2003). Copies of the book can be purchased through the church office. Please call Becky to reserve a copy (it is also available at Barnes and Noble).

The class will meet at 9:00 a.m. in Covenant Hall. Please try to have the first chapter read by our first meeting.

RUMMAGE SALE

The RUCC rummage sale is coming soon!! Mark your calendar...Saturday, March 5th at 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Jeff and Lani Nicholson are the chairpersons for the rummage sale this year. Please contact Jeff and Lani at 790-3828 if you have large items for the rummage sale.

You may bring small items to the church anytime, but would prefer that most items be brought in Tuesday (March 1) through Thursday (March 3) before the sale.

Church Women President,
Opal Inman

FEBRUARY WORSHIP LEADERS

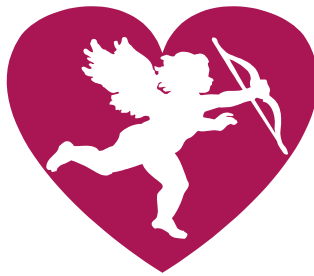
6	Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo
13	Jeff Nicholson
20	Floyd Orr
27	Jessica Woods

FFLAG MEETING

Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (FFLAG) meet on the first Wednesday of every month at the First United Methodist Church on the corner of Cajon and Olive at 7:30 p.m. Mary Belle Carter represents RUCC. For more information please contact Mary Belle at (909) 795-6369.

February/March Scripture Readings

February 6: *Exodus 24:12-18; 2 Peter 1:15-21; Matthew 17:1-9*
 February 9: *Psalm 51:1-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21*
 February 13: *Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11*
 February 20: *Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17*
 February 27: *Exodus 17:1-17; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11*
 Celtic Sunday, March 6: *Psalm 23; Readings from the Celtic tradition on the four directions
 and corresponding elements (earth, air, water, fire, and Spirit)*
 March 13: *Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; John 11:1-45*
 Palm Sunday, March 20: *Philippians 2:5-11, 19-29; Psalm 118:1-2; Matthew 21:1-11*
 Easter Sunday, March 27: *Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; John 20:1-18; Matthew 28:1-10*



***Happy Valentine's Day!
 From the Staff of RUCC***

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