

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

Redlands United Church of Christ *An Open and Affirming Church*

April 2005

Wider Ministries meeting following worship service, Sunday, April 3rd

Church Board will meet Tuesday, April 5, 7:00 p.m.

Staff meeting—Monday, April 11, 11:30 a.m.

“Lectio Group” begins—Monday, April 11, 7:00 p.m., in sanctuary

Knitting Ministry Group meets April 14 & 28, 10:30 a.m.–12:00 noon
in the church office

All Church Retreat at Loch Leven Camp and Conference Center
Friday, April 15 – Sunday, April 17

“Sandwich Group” begins—Tuesday, April 19, 12:00 noon
in the Pastor’s office

RUCC Women’s Fellowship meets—Wednesday, April 20, 9:30 a.m.
at the home of Ruth Moses

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.

Middle school youth group (grades 6th-8th) will meet April 3 & 10, 12:30–2:30 p.m.

High school youth group (grades 9th-12th) will meet April 3 & 10, 2:30–4:30 p.m.

From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

*“No matter who you are, no matter where you are on life’s journey,
you are welcome here...
God is still speaking,”
--UCC advertising campaign*

Thanks to the openness of Ron Buford, creator of the current national UCC advertising campaign, who was able to see the potential of Gracie Allen’s comment to her beloved George Burns—“George, never place a period where God has placed a comma”—our church is growing! Our current covenanting membership is 125 committed persons and there are a growing number of friends who regularly participate and offer their gifts in our community.

I wish that each of you reading this could have been present at our recent orientation for new members and people considering membership. Also around the tables were current officers and leaders from the various areas of church life. Each person was invited to share what draws them (or drew them) to RUCC. The responses were inspiring! Story after Story was told about how welcome they felt here, how important our progressive witness is, how they were held because of our commitment to peace and justice, how the UCC television ads combined with our phenomenal website gave them hope that a church like ours exists and thrives. Not to beat a dead horse, but apparently the message of “all are welcome” is having its positive effect.

Now that our identity as a welcoming, inclusive, progressive Christian community seems in tact, it is time (as our president Jim Hester noted at the last board meeting) for us to get busy. Not busy just for the sake of being busy...you know the old bumper sticker “Jesus is coming...look busy!” But busy with a combination, a blending, of service and spirituality. This is not an easy task to accomplish. In fact, it is not a task at all. Creating the tapestry that includes threads of both service and spirituality is a lifelong journey.

I delight in the many new faces and spirits that are lighting here at RUCC! I am grateful, as we begin our fourth year of ministry together, that we are clearer about our unique witness within the larger faith community. The next step on the journey is to blend what we experience of Spirit with what we know of needs (personal, community, national, global) to continue as a vibrant family of faith. Let’s continue the journey, shall we?

Blessings,

Rev. Graff will be taking her two weeks of study leave for 2005 from April 25th – May 9th to fulfill a lifelong dream of visiting Stonehenge in southern England and to spend some time in Ireland. The focus of her trip will be to experience and study Celtic spirituality...she cannot wait to return and share her learnings! Please keep these travels in your prayers.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A Note from Jim Hester

Some of you have heard me talk about the fact that I am reading a book by Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed entitled, *In Search of Paul*. I haven't quite finished it yet—I got sidetracked for a bit, skimming through a book by the same authors entitled, *Excavating Jesus*—but there are a couple of themes in it that stand out clearly. On the one hand, they make a clear case for the fact that Paul opposed imperial Roman ideology by proclaiming the lordship of Jesus. In the kingdom of God the Roman imperial principles of piety, war, victory and peace were replaced by “faith in the sequence of covenant, nonviolence, justice and peace.” (p. xi) In the community where Jesus is Lord, piety doesn't guarantee military victory that then establishes peace. No, piety works for justice, and justice is the pre-condition for peace.

The other theme has to do with how Christians act. For Paul, the proof of the superiority of Christianity over imperial ideology was in how Christians lived out their faith in the everydayness of life.

For as long as I have been a member of the Redlands United Church of Christ, it has thought of itself as a progressive church. We have tried to be thoughtful about that, as witnessed in the yearlong study we did before voting to become an open and affirming church. We have in recent years taken up matters dealing with just peace, have established a FaithActs Committee, and are selling fair trade items. We are currently studying ways in which we might become involved in parolee rehabilitation.

The importance of this stance, of these pragmatic expressions of the principles of progressivism, became clear to me in a recent orientation meeting held for new members and interested others. I sat riveted as person after person stood to describe how they found us and why they continue to come. Over and over again people spoke of feeling welcomed, of being grateful for our open-heartedness and our open-mindedness. Some spoke of being happy that they had found a place where their children could discover faith free of ideology. Others suggested that they felt safe to be who they are and to express their belief without fear of judgment.

We should feel good that we have helped create such an environment, but we should also recognize that there is much more to be done. The Board is doing a great job with planning now; soon we will have objectives in place that will need your time, talent, and treasure. You know, the ironic thing about success is that it inevitably leads to the question, “Okay, but what have you done for me lately?” And that question becomes even more imperative in a time when government funding for humanitarian services is being cut, our mayor wants to get rid of the most progressive police chief we have ever had, and homelessness is on the rise. The list could go on. At the end of this letter to the churches of Galatia, Paul exhorts them thus, “So, let us not be weary in doing what is right...whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all...” So say I.

“Worship God!” (Revelation 19:10)
by Sharon R. Graff
April 2005

“God is still speaking...” This now familiar phrase identifies one of the reasons that the United Church of Christ is considered radically progressive in today’s Christian climate. We believe that God still speaks—through scripture, to be sure, but also through people, ideas, prayer, thoughts, meditation, nature, events, activities, meetings, and yes, also through worship. We believe that God’s word is not static, but dynamic, interactive, and invitational. Perhaps God speaks to you as the community gathers, or laughs, or sings, or prays, or listens, or speaks its faithful and loving words. Perhaps you have been among the 200+ worship participants in these past few months who have been touched by God in worship. If so, you know what Sunday mornings mean in your life. If not, please join in...God is speaking...to you.

April 3 – “Post-Resurrection Peace” – Communion Sunday and Welcoming New Members

John 20:19-31

Continuing the story from John’s gospel begun on Easter Sunday, we hear acknowledgment of faith and doubt, fear and joy, and life laced with peace. In the blush of post-resurrection joy, we’ll also be welcoming several new covenanting members. Many hugs are waiting!

April 10 – Student Intern, Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo, preaching

Acts 2:14a, 36-41; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

What a joy it has been to walk the educational journey with Jeanne this academic year. In this, her third and final sermon here at RUCC, she will share something of the journey of faith traveled by those early disciples who surprisingly found new life "on the road..."

April 17 – A Celebration of Earth Day – WORSHIP BEGINS AT 11:00 AM AT LOCH LEVEN CAMP

This is the weekend of the All-Church Retreat, so we will all meet for worship together in the nearby mountains. Follow Lugonia east until it turns into Highway 38. Take 38 up the mountain to Mountain Home Village (about 10 miles from Redlands). Turn left into Loch Leven Camp and Conference Center and follow the road about ½-mile to the parking lot on the right. If you wish to carpool from the church parking lot, please contact Floyd Orr (793-4751) to arrange rides. **Even if you are not able to attend the retreat, PLEASE COME FOR WORSHIP ON SUNDAY MORNING!!!** It will be worth it...I promise...!

April 24 – “Pilgrimages”

1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14, 27

Travels of the body and journeys of the spirit...we take refreshing trips sometimes without even leaving home. Using Peter’s foundation stones and Jesus’ talk about “the way” as inspiration, we’ll explore our own needs for those regular pilgrimages.

Worship will be richer and deeper with your presence. I especially look forward to beginning this our fourth year together.

Minister – Rev. Dr. Sharon R. Graff
 Choir Director – Peggy McMeans
 Organist & Handbell Director – Kristen Cameron
 Youth Director – Craig Colclough
 Seminary Intern – Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo
 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.

POLICY ON POSSESSION OF KEYS TO THE RUCC PHYSICAL PLANT

(approved by the Board on March 8, 2005)

In addition to paid personnel (the Pastor and other staff), members of the Church Board as defined by the by-laws, and the Assistant Treasurer, other people authorized to have keys shall be those who help maintain the physical plant and respond to emergency situations. (As of March 1, 2005, the latter group includes Richard Hodson, Bill Whitmer, and Charlie Wheeler.) The Board may act to include others as situations warrant.

Any other person currently having a key shall be asked to return it, or sign a statement agreeing to accept any and all liabilities arising from its potential misuse—including failure to lock a door after exiting the property—or loss of the key, the result of which would be agreement to have the building re-keyed.

No keys will be issued to any other person without permission of the Pastor and approval of the Board.

POLICY ON SPECIAL OFFERINGS

(approved by the Board on March 8, 2005)

Given that we as a church cannot possibly know what disasters—local, regional, national or international—may occur during any given fiscal year, and, therefore, cannot build disaster relief funds into our General Fund budget, it shall be the policy of RUCC to allow for two categories of Special Offerings:

1. Four “Special Offerings”^{**} as designated by the denomination and collected by UCC congregations across the country; and,
2. “Disaster Relief Offerings.”

The second category of offerings shall be those that are requested by an Area Leader upon recommendation by his or her committee, and approved by the Church Board, either at a regular meeting or one called for such purpose. Upon approval of a request, the Area Leader shall explain the purpose of the offering during a worship service, with the loose offering for that day be used as the relief offering.

Except for extraordinary circumstances, no more than four (4) disaster relief offerings shall be collected in any fiscal year.

^{**} One Great Hour of Sharing; Neighbors in Need; Christmas Fund; Strengthen the Church

From Jeanne

Recently, during one of my classes at Claremont School of Theology, we were asked to share the type of “spiritual practice” we had focused on during the previous week. Now, of course, the expectation was that we had been trying one of the more recognized practices such as the Examen Prayer, Lectio Divina, Meditation, Centering Prayer, or the like. I caught my breath when I realized I had forgotten to do this “homework” and decided I would just admit that I was too busy with papers, reading, work, and family to find quiet, still time for reflection and prayer.

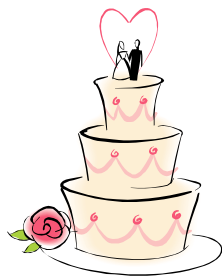
But as my turn to share approached, I realized that I *had* found time to engage in a spiritual practice during the previous week and was just not recognizing it as such. Each day I grabbed quiet time to work on the shawl I am knitting in our knitting ministry group. Since I am not seasoned at this craft (not any other, for that matter) it was important that I direct my entire attention to the process so the shawl didn’t end up with giant holes or wavy borders in areas where they shouldn’t be!

Every time I sat down to knit I found myself entirely focused on the process; the large needles in my hands, moving in and out, wrapping yarn forward and backward, counting: knit, one...two...three...; pearl, one...two...three, and watching with wonder as row upon row added to the body of the shawl. The melodious tapping of the needles, the rhythmic beat of the count, and the visible beauty of the shawl as it came into being was truly a spiritual practice! It was a song I was singing to myself and to the Divine through the movement of my hands. I discovered that these periods of attentiveness were like wellsprings of renewal that soothed my frantic schedule, nurtured creativity, and caused my spirit to reflect from a different perspective. These were times of mini-retreats.

I invite you to ponder your own spiritual practices. Perhaps, like me, you are not even recognizing them! What do you do attentively that soothes, nurtures, and evokes reflection? Maybe it is listening to music or gardening or even washing dishes. I hope you, too, will cultivate some means that will help you slow down and take time to just *be* in the presence of God.

Happy Spring!

Jeanne



Luncheon Wedding Shower

In honor of
Debbie Hurley
Sunday, May 1st
1:00-3:00 p.m.
In Covenant Hall,
Redlands United Church of Christ

RSVP to Margaret Barnett,
Kathie Blakley, or
Valerie Naftzger

BLOOD PRESSURE CLINIC

Blood Pressure Clinic will be Sunday, April 24th, 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, April 20th at 9:30 a.m. at the home of Ruth Moses, 40825 Oregon Trail, Beaumont. Call Ruth at (951) 769-9638) if you need directions to her home.

APRIL WORSHIP LEADERS

- 3 Sandy Peavler
- 10 Michael Dewey
- 17 Worship service at Loch Leven
- 24 Susie Siefert and Jimmy Cox

FFLAG MEETING

Families and 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 the RUCC. For more information, please contact Mary Belle at (909) 795-6369.

OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT CANCER RESEARCH

Two of our members—Deb Austin-Brecher and Sharon Graff—are walking in the Mayor's Midnight Marathon in Anchorage, Alaska this June, and are raising money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society in the process. If you would like to support them and "the cause," please log on to:

<http://www.active.com/donate/tutors>
and use the search drop-down box to contribute.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

I would like to thank several people who provided transportation for me in the past few months—Dee and Sondra Hodson, Betty Jacobs, Carol Buchanan, Mary Fung, Carole Wesson, Rosemary Whitmer, and Hannah. (I hope I didn't miss anyone.) I couldn't have gotten anywhere without you all!!

--Peggy McMeans

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 5 Adam Dewey
 10 Galilee Glanville
 Kristen Cameron
 Jay Grayson
 14 Betty Jacobs
 16 Jean Macomber
 19 Hannah McMeans
 Bonnie Pierce
 Dana Hawley-Zechlin
 21 Corey Dickey
 Sally Cummings
 23 Martha Romero
 Patricia Schindler
 24 William Graff
 Miz Becker

PASTOR'S OFFICE HOURS

Our Pastor and Teacher, Sharon R. Graff, is available for appointments, pastoral counseling, meetings, and general conversation on most Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. Evening and weekend appointments are also possible. Generally she is home on Wednesdays preparing the weekly sermon and completing other worship planning. On most weeks, she tries to take some part of Fridays and Saturdays as time off. Please know that she eagerly awaits serving you!

FOREST SERVICE WORKDAY

In observance of Earth Day, the youth and all other RUCC members are invited to participate in a U.S. Forest Service workday on Saturday, April 23rd, in the Big Bear area. Our work might include planting/transplanting, non-native plant eradication, picking up trash, etc. Participants will meet in the church parking lot at 8:00 a.m. to carpool to the worksite. We'll work until 3:00 p.m. (or exhaustion, whichever comes first!) Bring your lunch, water, hat, gloves and sunscreen! If you'd like to help, please see Bob Barton at church, or call him – 794-5867.

**KNITTING MINISTRY GIVES AWAY
FIRST SHAWL**

The first completed shawl was given to a patient with AIDS during a program on Tuesday, March 15th. Several folk from our congregation were present as the leader of the South African AIDS Ministry gratefully received the gift, which had been prayed over by the knitting group the week prior.

This particular group, using our facility for a regional event, had specifically chosen Redlands because it is central in the district represented by Mr. Jerry Lewis. Congressman Lewis is one of the most influential members of the US Congress on matters of fund research and assistance to the international community affected by the AIDS pandemic. We hope that our gift will not only provide warmth and comfort to someone, but that it will also motivate you to write Congressman Lewis and express your desire for him to continue to act with courage and with compassion.

**ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT
POSITION OPEN**

The church board recently received the resignation of Becky Gutierrez, who had served our congregation as Administrative Assistant. We wish Becky the best as she moves on into new adventures.

As a result of this resignation, our congregation has two needs. One, if you are able to volunteer in the church office any weekday morning (9:00-12:00 noon), please contact Rosemary Whitmer soon. Two, if you know of someone who might be interested in this part-time position, please have him/her email a current résumé to pastor@uccredlands.org.

Our Personnel Committee will be serving as the hiring committee, and it is their hope that this position will be filled quickly. Any questions may be directed to Bill Buchanan, Chair of Personnel, or to Rev. Sharon Graff.

TWO NEW GROUPS FORMING

In the “after-Easter respite” and in response to needs expressed in your covenants this year, two new groups will be forming with the initial facilitation of Rev. Graff.

A “Sandwich Group”—for those who find themselves “sandwiched” between the generations in their family (caring for aging parents, grown children, and/or grandchildren)—will meet for supportive conversation on a monthly basis. First gathering will be on Tuesday, April 19th from noon-1:30 p.m. in Sharon’s office at church. Bring a sandwich and your open spirit.

A “Lectio Group”—continuing the experiential reading of scripture begun in our Lenten series—is open to all ages. Young adults are particularly urged to include this new small group as a way of moving deeper spiritually with your sisters and brothers here at RUCC. We will begin meeting weekly on Monday evenings, 7:00-8:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. First gathering will be Monday, April 11th.

Any questions about either of these new small groups may be directed to Rev. Graff in the church office, 793-3520, or by email at pastor@uccredlands.org.

ANNUAL RETREAT FOR LGBT CONCERNS

The annual retreat for the Southern California Nevada Conference Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns will gather at Pilgrim Pines on Friday, May 6th through Sunday, May 8, 2005 for their annual retreat. We will join our friends in the Disciples of Christ GLAD group. For more information, call the UCC Conference Office, (626) 798-8082.

CELEBRATE 100 YEARS OF SERVICE - LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER AND CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL

LLUMC invites you to consider becoming a volunteer to assist with ongoing programs. For additional information, please call LLUMC Volunteer Services at (909) 558-4654, (Somebody Needs You program) or LLUCH Volunteer Services at (909) 558-8022 (Help Us Help Our Kids program).

NINTH ANNUAL MAYOR’S PRAYER BREAKFAST

The Redlands Area Interfaith Council cordially invites you to the Ninth Annual Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast to be held **Thursday, May 5th at 7:30 a.m.** at the Orton Center, University of Redlands, 1200 E. Colton Avenue, Redlands.

This is a marvelous opportunity to join together as a community, to meet and give thanks. With our country facing many challenges, we welcome the opportunity to bring together people who disagree about many things but share a strong desire for peace in families, communities, neighborhoods, countries and in the world. Join with us in celebration of this National Day of Prayer.

Please respond to the church office on or before **April 29, 2005** to make a reservation. The cost is \$12.00 for adults, and \$6.00 for children under 12 years, payable at the door.

All Church Retreat
 Friday-Sunday
 April 15-17, 2005
 Retreat begins: Friday, 7:00 pm
 Retreat ends: Sunday noon
 Worship Service for entire congregation: Sunday, 11:00 am
 Loch Leven Camp and Conference Center
 36910 Mill Creek Road
 Mentone, California

“ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY”

For all ages!

This retreat will be FUN, with lots of time and activities to help us all
 become better acquainted.

Mark Rowland of Peak Performance in Big Bear will facilitate the program on Saturday. Mark has over 30 years of experience in helping groups learn more about each other through their participation in various group-building games and activities. His well-planned programs are for all ages and all physical abilities. In other words, we will learn and grow by HAVING FUN!

Friday evening will begin with informal activities to help us “break the ice.” We’ll enjoy a talent show on Saturday evening, and participate in an inspiring worship service on Sunday morning.

Four meals and two nights lodging costs \$100/adult; \$75/young person (ages 12-18 years); \$50 for children (ages 4-12 years), with a \$250 maximum per family. Part-time rates and financial assistance available. Lodging at the camp includes 10 semi-private suites with adjoining bathrooms. Other lodging is in dormitory-style cabins. You need to bring: sleeping bag, pillow, warm casual clothing, closed-toed shoes, towels, toiletries, a bit of food and drink to share on Friday evening, and an open spirit. REGISTER BY COMPLETING A FORM AVAILABLE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE.

PLEASE NOTE: THERE WILL BE NO WORSHIP SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY ON SUNDAY, APRIL 17TH. OUR WORSHIP WILL BE AT CAMP, AND ALL ARE INVITED TO TAKE THE SHORT 20-MINUTE DRIVE UP THE MOUNTAIN TO JOIN IN! Rides will be available from our church parking lot. Please contact Floyd Orr to arrange carpools and shuttles.

Dream Workshop

The unconscious is where God first touches us, and a careful listening to our dreams is a way to listen to God—Morton Kelsey

A dream that has not been interpreted is like a letter that has not been opened—
Talmud

A dream is an image of our spiritual condition—Marion Woodman

Why come to a dream workshop?

Dreams are facts! They exist! Dreams have a religious function!

Biblical stories tell us that God sometimes communicated with people in their dreams. The Bible knew, but some of us have forgotten that dreams and their interpretations can heal the sick soul.

Psychology also recognizes the importance of dreams. A dream reveals a psychic structure. Like an x-ray allows us to look into our physical structure, so a dream allows us to look into our human psyche.

A dream is a symbol of an inner drama. A dream is a natural and necessary expression of life force. A dream can assist the dreamer with problem solving, inspire artistic expression, shed light on psychological development, offer spiritual deepening and be used for healing. These treasures given to us by the unconscious like unexpected gifts cast to the shore by the sea, can help individuals understand themselves, their motivations, their wishes and their choices.

A six-week workshop will offer participants the opportunity to learn how to access the meaning of their dreams and utilize them to more fully develop their relationships with themselves, others, and God. Participants should be recording their dreams in a journal; bring them to this workshop as material to discuss.

Diane Eller—Boyko LCSW is a psychotherapist in Redlands. She is on staff at the Christian Counseling Service and has a private practice in Redlands. She has had experience with teaching and analyzing dreams for over ten years.

Dates: Tuesday evenings, 7:00-9:00 p.m., April 12, 19, 26, May 3, 17, 24
Location: Redlands United Church of Christ
Cost: \$50 per person for the series, payable to RUCC

Please plan to attend all six sessions. Any questions may be directed to Diane Eller-Boyko at (909) 793-1078, or call the church office, (909) 793-3520.

April Scripture Readings

April 3: *John 20:19-31*
April 10: *Acts 2:14a, 36-41; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35*
April 17: **All-Church Retreat, Loch Leven Camp**
April 24: *1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14, 27*



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