

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

November 2005

Communion Sunday – All Saints Day, Sunday, November 6th

Celebration Ringers rehearsal on Thursdays, November 3rd, 10th, and 17th
at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary.

Jubilee Ringers rehearsal on Sundays, November 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th
at 12:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

Covenant Choir Rehearsal on Thursdays, November 3rd, 10th, and 17th
at 7:30 p.m.

The Scrapbooking Group will meet on Monday, November 7th at 12:00 p.m. at the home of
Dianne Landeros.

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

Sandwich Group will meet on Tuesday, November 15th at 12:00 p.m. in the office.

The Jr. and Sr. High Youth Groups will be meeting at various times during the month of
November. Please check The View for dates and times.

The office will be closed Thursday, November 24th and Friday, November 25th
in observance of Thanksgiving.

From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

“It is solved by walking...”

—From Grace Cathedral, about the labyrinth

Five members of our congregation have just returned from successfully completing the Nike Women’s Half Marathon in San Francisco which financially supported The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s mission of finding a cure for blood-related cancers. Several others in our congregation are in training for other marathons and half-marathons in the future. Congrats to these and the thousands of people whose tired feet and fatigued bodies attest to the truth that “it is solved by walking...”

While in San Francisco this past weekend, we took advantage of the opportunity to stop by Grace Cathedral—now world-famous for its commitment to the revitalization of the labyrinth as a tool of Christian meditation, prayer, and transformation. In the gift shop, there were for sale small handcrafted pewter pocket tokens with a ¾” diameter Chartres labyrinth melded onto a piece of shell. The shell has long been a Christian symbol for pilgrimage. The paper enclosed with the token informs, “...the ridges in the shell represent the hills and valleys that a pilgrim walks, as those who walk the labyrinth are pilgrims on a spiritual quest.”

Our congregation was founded on the significant metaphors of “journey,” “pilgrimage,” and “spiritual quest.” Hence the newsletter’s name “Wanderings,” reminiscent of those pilgrims throughout history who have wandered into the loving arms of the Divine. We continue to be a body that anticipates the journey, which welcomes the co-traveler, that is attentive to the movement of the Divine in our midst, and which faithfully follows the nudges God provides moment-by-moment.

As I reflect on the marathon and walking urges that have gripped many in our flock (including me!) and as I anticipate these next two months of “covenant season” in the life of our church, it seems to me that there are many similarities between the two, including:

- Covenanting is a “step at a time” process
- Covenanting begins with a single step—writing your spiritual truth
- Covenanting is more about the journey than the destination
- Covenanting invites us to be aware of and honor our co-travelers, without having the weight of agreement on our shoulders
- Covenanting focuses us—spiritually, physically, mentally—on the singular task of faithfully walking the path with God and with others
- Covenanting—with its inherent level of commitment—will offer us opportunities to be in partnership with God and our church
- Covenanting offers us a depth of spiritual attentiveness, so that we will more easily notice the divine surprises when they occur!

Our annual covenanting process offers each one of us (me included!) an opportunity to reflect upon who we are as spiritual beings. Through thinking about and preparing our covenants, we can remember the highlights of our spiritual journey thus far, even as we imagine where we would like to travel with God in this next year. Covenanting is NOT about determining who is “in” and who is “out”. Covenanting is NOT about joining a club. At its fundamental level, covenanting IS about consciously and intentionally joining the journey along with our co-travelers here at Redlands United Church of Christ. Covenanting IS about imagining how our spiritual growth will be enhanced this coming year through offering ourselves in various areas of service.

Imagine yourself as a participant on this spiritual journey, this pilgrimage offered through covenanting. Where will you walk with God this next year?

Blessings



“Worship God!” (Revelation 19:10)

By Sharon R. Graff

November 2005

A busy month liturgically speaking, November moves us from Saints to King Christ to the anticipation of a baby in a manger bed. Quite a range! Your body and soul are invited to join with others in our community of faith as we both celebrate the present and anticipate the gift.

November 6 - “Praising, Parentage, and Peacemaking” – All Saints Day and Communion Sunday

Revelation 7:9-17; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

Today is Part II following up from last Sunday. Honoring death as a portal, a door, naturally leads to giving thanks for the life into which God calls us to live as saints. What constitutes a “saint?” What do saints do all day? Today’s scriptures, honoring All Saints Day in the Christian calendar, inspire these questions and invite our reflection. A celebratory day in which we just may learn something about our own ministries...

November 13 – “Covenants Horizontal and Vertical”

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25; Matthew 25:1-13

The season of covenant writing is upon us! Covenant writing is a spiritual discipline, an invitation from your church to express your faith and your faith’s needs. Today, we’ll look at the covenant Joshua made with his family in faith, while we also consider our covenants with God and one another.

November 20 – “Follow the Leader”

Ezekiel 34:11-16; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:14-29

The Christian journey of faith is much more than a childhood game, yet that familiar game does provide an apt metaphor of our relationship with Jesus the Christ. He is leader, model, brother, savior, friend, companion, and so much more. In the Christian calendar, Advent (which begins next Sunday and from which the entire liturgical year springs) is preceded by honoring the reign of Christ, so that we enter the birth season acknowledging who it is we are following...today... each day...

November 27 is the First Sunday of Advent and will be included in the December newsletter...stay tuned...the holidays are upon us!



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

October proved to be a very active and exciting time for RUCC. We were pleased to welcome Taylor Ruhl as our new organist/accompanist and he was well received by the congregation.

The Annual Art for Heaven's Sake three-day event benefited the artists as well as the church. I was pleased that the RUCC proceeds this year will help rebuild Jean Lafitte, a small Redlands adopted sister city of 2,500 in Louisiana. To me this is UCC spirit in action!

The Parolee Transition Project sponsored its first hands on workshop for the "Build a Bike" program to help provide transportation for parolees. The Redlands Police and Corrections Team (PACT) had parolees work on their bicycles along with RUCC volunteers. Be sure to contact Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo or Dianne Landeros if you'd like to participate in this new ministry for RUCC.

Have you seen the new wall and door to the nursery in the Christian Education area? This is practical and attractive addition in my opinion.

It was an honor and joy as your official RUCC delegate, to attend the Eastern Association of the SCNC UCC Saturday, October 29 at the First Congregational United Church of Christ in San Bernardino. This was a special worship service that celebrated the justice ministry both locally and globally. There was plenty of Spirit-filled music, praying, and preaching with broad participation from other congregations. What fun and inspiration!

The Shepherds began distributing covenants Sunday, October 30 and I hope you will give serious, prayerful consideration to ways of serving our church in 2006. I urge you to complete your covenant in a timely manner. It's important for good planning.

I am nearing the conclusion of my term of office as your Interim President. Please consider assuming this leadership role as RUCC President next year.

Have a very Happy Thanksgiving!

Bill Buchanan

Getting to Know You...

After graduation from Redlands High School many Redlands youth leave here for college or other reasons, perhaps thinking it will be forever. But sometimes, many years later, just as the swallows return to Capistrano, many find their way back. Many of us charter members of RUCC had watched Paul and Sondra Hodson grow up and become charter members with us.

Paul left Redlands in 1979 to live in Mission Hills in the San Fernando valley where he worked as a technician for a Mercedes Benz dealer. While there, he met and married Connie. After ten years they moved to Las Vegas where he again worked in Mercedes Benz shops until starting his own general auto repair shop, "My Mechanic." While in Las Vegas, they thoroughly explored Nevada and became what they call a "ghostowner." 2001 was a sad time when he lost his wife Connie. Paul's spare time is spent on a Busman's Holiday doing any type of electronic or mechanical "stuff." And after only a few months of being back in Redlands, Paul has joined the bell choir, the Covenant choir, been worship leader, and can be seen often working both inside and on the grounds of the church. I'm not sure he even went home the days before and during the art show. I think we have a clone of dad, Richard!

- Betty Jacobs

Step By Step
An Update
By Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo

Step by Step we are gathering and building resources in the community of Redlands to assist individuals on parole towards successful and productive reintegration. Of the 342 individuals on parole within our city, 120 are participating in the PACT program sponsored by Redlands police department and the parole department. These 120 individuals are the ones who will benefit from Step by Step as they work to turn their lives around so they will not return to prison. Faced with multiple obstacles and a recidivism rate of up to 82% the re-entry process is daunting. Upon their release they are given \$200 and 24 hours to return to the community of their last residence where they must check in with their parole agent. Some may have been in prison for 10 years or more and return to a very different world challenged by advanced technology, sky-rocketing housing and transportation costs, and scarce felon-friendly employers. These difficulties can seem overwhelming and drive people right back to the situations where they got into trouble the first time.

But that is where Step by Step comes in. Working to relieve some of the pressure and pull to return to the old way of life we are creating a coalition of churches and organizations to offer support and tools so new lives can be built. Step by Step is working to break the “in and out” cycle of prison. Your help is greatly appreciated and continues to be needed.

Please consider attending these two upcoming events:

1) On Sunday, November 6th following the worship service, there will be a speaker and meeting to begin working with the “Get on the Bus” program. This project organizes and provides rides and supervision for children to visit, on the Friday before Mother’s Day, their own mothers who are in prison. For the majority of these kids this will be the only time they visit their moms during the entire year. The speaker will tell us about the program and ways we can begin to help.

2) On Saturday, November 12th the 4th Annual Restorative Justice Conference will be held at Redlands Police Department at 30 Cajon St. from 8:30 to 3:30 p.m. The topic for this conference is “Prisoner Re-Entry: The Challenge and Creative Community Response.” Pre-registration before Nov. 4th is \$20 or \$25 on the day of the conference. If you are interested email me at amrucc@yahoo.com or give me a call at 909- 647-7877.

Step by Step we are making a difference in the lives of individuals and in the building of our community. Thank you for participating!

Church Women United

On Saturday, November 19th at Church Women United will host the State Meeting right here in Redlands at the First Baptist Church. The guest speaker will be Rev. Douglas Smith of Church World Service. He will give an update on the Katrina Recovery and Rebuilding Operation. There will also be exhibits of recovery work in many countries throughout the world. A catered dinner will follow. The cost is \$7.00. Please join us for this wonderful opportunity. Reservations can be made with Mary Jane Auerbacher at 792-8546.

Art for Heaven's Sake!

A big thank you to all who helped to make Art for Heaven's Sake! a huge success. Despite a small fright from the weather, the show was the most successful ever. The show grossed over \$72,000 which is about 10% better than we've ever done! This success is certainly due to the dedication of the Art Show Committee and the hours of support from members and friends of our church.

Soon we will begin planning for next year's show. New committee members are always welcome so when you write your covenant, consider joining us in making the 2006 show even more successful.

Sondra Hodson

NOVEMBER WORSHIP LEADERS

6	Julie Phillip
13	Luther Austin-Brecher
20	Jacob Fiske-Phillips
27	Beth Kolpien

November Birthdays

1	Janet Greenfield
5	Morris Cantley
10	Duncan Campbell
12	Jill Kirchner Mike Moran
16	Carole Wesson
23	Luther Austin-Brecher
26	William Badgley

Feastings

It is time to add RUCC's special holiday tradition to your calendar! The Covenant Choir and Handbell Choir will present their annual "Feastings" event on Friday, December 9 at 7:00 PM. This is a time for you to sit back and be served an elegant meal, be entertained by the choir and musicians, and revel in the spirit and music of the Christmas season.

This year our evening will focus on music and traditions we have never specifically featured before: our very own American customs. There are traditions near and dear to many of us that may have had some origin in another country but have developed into something uniquely American. Among others, one of these is the heartwarming activity that continues in some homes and families today: gathering around a piano to sing Christmas carols.

On Feastings night we will honor and follow this special tradition because we are now focused on the piano for another reason. Our musicians, and many members of our congregation, would like to see the purchase of a grand piano for our sanctuary in the near future. We have a fund in our budget, which has been so designated, and we look to substantially add to this endeavor. To that end, all proceeds from our evening will go to this special fund.

Our dinner will be prepared by a local caterer and served to you by our choir members. The menu offered will be a twist on that most favorite of meals, a sumptuous turkey dinner with variations. We will gather at the Wassail Bowl at 7:00 PM, then will be seated and served at 7:30. Tickets are priced at \$23.00 for adults and \$13.00 for children 10 and under. Tickets will be available and may be purchased after church on Sunday, November 13, 20, and 27 and December 4. Reservations may also be made with Renee during office hours through December 5. Childcare will be provided if needed--please specify when making reservations. Join us for this festive occasion!

The United Church of Christ in American History

How much do you know about the role the United Church of Christ has played in American history?

Today's United Church of Christ is the result of a 1957 merger between American Protestant denominations with rich histories of their own: the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church.

In the month of November, we can look back and celebrate these historic events:

- Lemuel Haynes is the first African American ordained by a Protestant denomination (1785). On this date in November, 1780, he is licensed to preach. He becomes a world-renowned preacher and writer.
- Seeking spiritual freedom, forebears of the United Church of Christ leave Europe for the New World. Later generations know them as the Pilgrims. Their pastor, John Robinson, urges them as they depart to keep their minds and hearts open to new ways. God, he says, "has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy Word." On this day in 1620, their ship, the Mayflower, made first landfall after a 66-day voyage.

God is still speaking,



Covenants: Blessing and Bane!

By Sharon R. Graff

(This article is edited and reprinted from November 2004 Wanderings.)

Since I began serving as your Pastor and Teacher in April 2002 and even during my initial conversations with the Search Committee, the topic of “covenant” has been the center of many lively discussions! My rather unscientific research with members and friends of Redlands United Church of Christ has netted a diversity of opinion about the form of covenant (no surprise!) as well as a remarkable agreement on the function of covenant.

The comments that follow represent the diversity of opinion about our process of covenanting derived from several pastoral conversations with over 60 people who are members and friends of RUCC:

- writing a covenant, however long or short, however complicated or simple, is an effective way of clarifying one’s own thoughts and beliefs, and therefore should be required (unless one is physically or mentally unable so to do)
- it is not necessary for covenants to be in writing (covenants may be expressed verbally or artistically, such as through painting, music, etc.)
- from the founding pastor onward, it has been the norm for covenants to be written; however, each pastor has also received verbal covenants from those who were opposed to writing their covenant
- making a written commitment is too binding, too concrete, and appears inflexible
- the whole covenant process needs to be thrown out; it inhibits the growth of RUCC; we must be open to alternative forms of expressing membership
- the annual covenant may be expressed to the shepherd leader
- the annual covenant is to be conveyed only to the senior minister

By contrast to these divergent and sometimes contradictory opinions, the most repeated shared understandings I have heard are that:

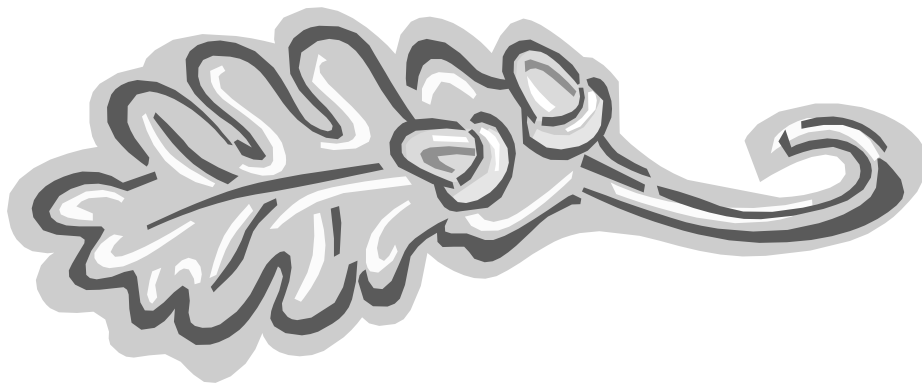
- Covenanting is an essential part of the life and ministry of RUCC because it both creates and nurtures in members a deeper, unique level of commitment.
- The annual practice and discipline of covenanting holds us together as community; it gives us a way of annually assessing and reaffirming our relationship with one another and our relationship with the divine.
- The common practice of putting a covenant in writing has been suspended through the years both for those physically or mentally unable to complete a written covenant, and for those who just do not want to commit their covenant to writing. Most, but not all, people with whom I’ve talked agree that this flexibility is a positive reflection of our general flexibility on most matters of faith and practice.

I heartily concur with each of these shared understandings, and I want to add one of my own. Written covenant statements—of whatever length—provide me with invaluable information that helps me be a more effective pastor for you. I can better serve you by knowing something of your growth, struggles, hopes, and needs, and together we can better serve the God we love. From a practical standpoint, my own preference is for our annual covenants to be in writing. Those who, for a variety of reasons, cannot or do not wish to write their covenant, are welcome to talk confidentially with me about their intended commitments, and I will take notes that they can sign. Pragmatically, such a written document makes it possible to plan a budget, to select leaders, to create an accurate and informational membership directory, and to pastorally interpret the direction of the church body.

In addition to these rather practical matters of “running the church”, I believe that there is great spiritual value in written covenants. In writing an annual covenant (of whatever length or content) and in the thoughts, prayers, and quiet reflections that precede such writing, a person participates in important spiritual disciplines that provide creative and dynamic ways of learning about oneself in relationship to this particular faith community and to God. For those reasons, I join you in writing an annual covenant.

Though the 28 years of this congregation’s life has not brought agreement on a specific form of the covenant, there is widespread agreement that our annual covenanting functions to make this faith community stronger, more cohesive, and more committed to God and to one another.

November is the month for covenant writing. Your covenant form is available from your shepherd leader. If you are not in a shepherd group, and want to covenant, please contact Renee in the church office and a form will be mailed to you. Please complete your covenant form prayerfully. Bring it with you to worship on **Sunday, December 4—Covenant Sunday—and we will bless the covenants on the altar.** And remember my office is open for any conversation you wish or need about covenanting.



November Scripture Readings

November 6: All Saints Day and Communion Sunday – *Revelation 7:9-17; 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12*
November 13 *Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25; Matthew 25:1-13*
November 20: *Ezekiel 34:11-16; Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:14-29*
November 27: *November 27 is the First Sunday of Advent and will be included in the December newsletter...stay tuned...they holidays are upon us!*

Minister – Rev. Dr. Sharon R. Graff
Associate Minister of Outreach – Pastor Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo
Choir Director – Peggy McMeans
Organist – Dr. Taylor Ruhl
Handbell Director – Dennis Wolbert
Youth Director – Craig Colclough
Sunday Child Care – Mariana and Mina Ryan
Administrative Assistant – Renee Chavez
Custodian – Jay Grayson
Church office hours: 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Monday – Friday
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