

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

December 2005

Sunday, December 4th, COVENANT and CONFIRMATION SUNDAY

Adult Sunday School with Rev. Dr. Al Sproull continues on Sunday, December 4th, 11th, and 18th at 9:00 a.m. in Covenant Hall.

The Covenant Choir and Handbell Choirs will present their annual "Feastings" event on Friday, December 9 at 7:00 PM.

RUCC Men's Fellowship meets Sunday, December 11th, at 8:30 a.m.

Wider Ministries meeting following worship service, Sunday, December 11th, in the pastor's office.

Church Board will meet Tuesday, December 13th, 7:00 p.m.

"Sandwich Group" meets Tuesday, December 20th, 12:00 noon in the Pastor's office.

Celebration Ringers rehearsal on Thursdays, 6:30 p.m.

Jubilee Ringers rehearsal on Sundays, at 12:00 p.m.

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

Middle school and High school youth groups will meet at various times during the month of December. Please check The View for dates and times.

From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

*"But you, dear friends,
carefully build yourselves up in this most holy faith
by praying in the Holy Spirit,
staying right at the center of God's love,
keeping your arms open and outstretched,
waiting for the mercy of our Master, Jesus Christ..."*
--Jude 21

Once again, the Church is somewhat behind popular culture when it comes to the celebration of Christmas. While stores began to display the red and green decorations before Halloween, the Church includes a long four-week season of waiting prior to the gift being received. While the "musak" plays out carols in businesses, elevators, and on radio stations, the Church traditionally waits till December 25th to even begin singing the Christmas carols extolling the joy of the birth.

The brief letter entitled Jude and quoted above is the next to the last book in the Christian scriptures. The author's words are relevant to our Advent journey, for they focus on the positive aspects of waiting—self-care, praying, centering in God's love, and keeping ourselves vulnerable to receive as well as ready to serve. Perhaps those "spiritual disciplines" are just the antidote we need during this time of Advent waiting. Taking care of self instead of pouring out our energy in trying to meet the expectations of others, enjoying quiet times of meditation and prayer in the midst of the chaos of holiday noise, grounding ourselves in love rather than in revenge, opening our arms and our hearts instead of cocooning ourselves in old behavioral patterns. I invite you, even as I promise to join you in this Advent waiting, to try on a new holiday behavior called "waiting" as it is described in the little book of Jude.

Welcome to this Advent journey...let us walk it in love!

Blessings,



**Special Holiday Worship Schedule
PLEASE NOTE THE DIFFERENCES!**

**Saturday, December 24th, 7:00 pm
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols
in the Sanctuary**

**Sunday, December 25th
NO MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE**

so that you may enjoy Christmas morning rituals with your family.

6:00 PM – GATHER IN COVENANT HALL FOR INFORMAL SHARING AND WORSHIP

At the suggestion of our Worship Area, we'll sing, pray, light candles of hope for the new year, and enjoy our extended church family.

All are welcome!

**If you need a ride to this evening service,
please contact your shepherd or the church office.**

Sunday, January 1st, 10:30 am
NEW YEARS MORNING POTLUCK BRUNCH AND WORSHIP
Again, with the calendar inviting us to “think outside the box,”
you are invited to bring your favorite brunch food or beverage,
and gather in Covenant Hall for eating, singing, praying,
and sharing the first Communion Meal of 2006.

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Rose Parade Overnight!
Sunday, January 1st – Monday, January 2nd

The Christian Church in Pasadena makes their building available to those who want to get a great seat for the Rose Parade, which this year, is being held on January 2nd. If you and/or your family would like to go, please sign up with Renee in the Church Office. There is a minimal fee for parking and to cover breakfast expenses, and we sleep on the floor in sleeping bags. Two years ago, this was a blast, as we played games until late into the night, enjoyed front row seats at the parade, and had a wonderful time getting to know one another better! Let Renee know by December 15th, as reservations must be confirmed. Thanks!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The holiday season is once again with us. It begins slowly. Nature treats us with invigorating clear crisp air, plenty of sunshine, and yes, even an array of colorful leaves, depending on where you are in Southern California. You can't help feeling refreshed after the receding memory of those very hot summer days.

We are then pleasantly caught up in the almost inescapable quickening pace of activities that can bring us joy through sheer anticipation. Thanksgiving and Christmas are indeed the annual milestones of both gratitude and supreme celebration.

Oh yes, just like clockwork, nostalgic thoughts abound at this time of year. You too? Good! Most winters for me growing up near Chicago meant plenty of snow, ice skating on the Fox river, sledding, temps often hovering near and dipping below zero, warm fires, eggnog, snowmen, attempted igloos, Christmas music, and above all, the special times with family, relatives, and friends. Of course, I never had to contend with the rather harsh driving conditions as a kid.

Presently, the holiday season at RUCC gives me every reason to be very optimistic about our church family, where we are in our journey of faith, and the direction we are going in the near future. More church related activities and events mean an increased need to maintain good communication. We need to minimize possible conflict of scheduled times by remembering to clear all intended times with Renee in the office, in addition to “signing up” on the office calendar. Care in doing this is the proverbial “ounce of prevention.”

I'm eagerly looking forward to our special holiday tradition of “Feastings” on Friday, December 9 at 7:00 P.M. This year it will focus on music and traditions that make up our own American customs. The Covenant Choir and Handbell Choirs will serve an elegant dinner and entertain all with spirited Christmas season music.

I hope you have been successful in making your commitment to RUCC through the covenanting process.

Have a very Merry and Joyful Christmas!
Bill Buchanan

“Day by Day, they spent much time together in Worship...”

Acts 2:46

By Sharon R. Graff

Advent is traditionally a time of thoughtful reflection, a time of waiting expectantly for the promised new life to appear. For centuries before Christ, the reality of light returning to the earth and of lengthening days in the midst of winter, have symbolized the promise of the loving presence of the Divine with the people. Fast forward several thousand years to our congregation, where Advent is also the time of expressing our promises, our hopes, and our needs, as we write our annual covenants. During this season of Advent, I trust that our worship will lovingly nudge us toward the Creator, the Christ, and the Spirit—toward seeing the light of God’s love even when we are surrounded by shadows. I urge us to sit within the Divine light of love—during this month and in worship together—for it is from basking in the loving light that growth occurs. Our worship themes for Advent are:

November 27 – “All in Good Season” – First Sunday of Advent

Psalm 80:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

God brought a vine out of Egypt...the early Christian community is enriched and strengthened by a faithful God...and Jesus promises that the answers to all our questions about the future will be as clear as a fig tree changing seasons. So, as we begin this busy, overscheduled, shoehorn-in-one-more-party time of year, there is no time (or reason!) to fret. The promises of God are as certain as one season gently making way for the next.

December 4 – “Cead Mile Failte” – Confirmation/Covenant/Communion Sunday; Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

On this most inspiring day we are nourished for the journey ahead: several of our young people will confirm their faith, and all are invited to bring forward your covenants and receive communion. The Celts have a wonderful saying that loosely translates, “One Hundred Thousand Welcomes!” In preparation for this service, each of us are invited by God to hear the Spirit’s welcoming voice, and to consider what we believe and how we want to live out those beliefs in this faith community during 2006. Bring your covenant to place on the altar, and be prepared to welcome and to be welcomed!

December 11 – “Planting Peace” – Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Peace surprises us in so many ways and forms... The message of peace emanates from God yet it is surprisingly up to us to communicate it. Today we hear about two prophets and a teacher who offer seeds of peace to us for our planting...bring a shovel, there’s work to be done!

December 18 – “Born in Bethlehem” – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

Today, our congregation’s children and youth reprise their dramatic, humorous—and oh-so-relevant!—presentation of the Christmas story. Special appearances by the wise guys, the shepherds, the angels, and, of course Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, will inspire us with the truth of this ancient narrative. Come and enjoy the story through the eyes, and the words, of youth!

December 24 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Lessons and Carols, 7:00 p.m.

The evening sparkles with twinkling candles and the joyful message of Christ’s birth. Come and experience the magic of new life through scripture, poetry, and music.

December 25 – Christmas Evening Family Gathering, 6:00 p.m.

Isaiah 52:7-9a; John 1:1-14

Enjoy the morning and afternoon with your family, then come to church in the early evening to extend the joy of Christmas with your church family. We will experience a very informal service with much laughter, sharing of stories, and lighting our own Christmas candles of hope, joy, peace, and love.

January 1 – “Growing in Wisdom” – First Communion of the New Year

Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

Let's gather at 10:30 am in Covenant Hall for New Year's Brunch, and as we eat together, we will hear scriptures, sing songs, and share sacred food... A great way to begin a new year!

Getting to Know You.... by Betty Jacobs and Jan McNeilly

When interviewing people, I'm forever amazed at the variety of interests represented in our church. A popular saying when I was a child was, "Ain't nature wonderful." To that I add "Ain't people wonderful!" If you have your blood pressure taken monthly, at our blood pressure clinic, you've met Jan McNeilly. You've also seen her in the soprano section of the choir.

Jan's early years were spent in the upstate New York small town of Hornell. In high school her musical abilities were revealed in the band, orchestra, chorus and in her church choir.

Post high school Jan attended and graduated from Alfred University School of Nursing. As I got to this part of the interview and Jan began telling of her many life experiences, I realized I couldn't possibly get it all down on paper quickly enough so she volunteered to summarize it on paper for me. The following is the summary in her own words for which I thank her.

"Many years after graduating from Alfred University I completed the Pediatric Nurse Practitioner program at USC. In my professional career I have been a School Nurse and Nurse Practitioner in a Child Health and Disability Prevention Program in San Jose, CA. I loved examining kids and counseling them and their parents. The most interesting thing I ever did was to be a volunteer Nurse Practitioner in a medical clinic in the northeast highlands of Guatemala for two months. This clinic served the indigenous Mayan people. I also served with the Red Cross Disaster Health Services after hurricanes and tornadoes in Puerto Rico, North Carolina and Arkansas.

I have lived in many states – Washington, California and Nevada and have always been an outdoor person who hiked and backpacked all over. My favorite thing is bicycling. This year was the first time I went on organized trips. In April, I went to Holland and Belgium on a flower barge and bike trip. And in September, I went to Vancouver Island, B.C. on an elderhostel biking trip. The hardest thing I ever did was to climb Mount Shasta. I was tired for two weeks afterwards!

I have two sons, Colin, an engineer for Chevron Overseas Petroleum who travels the world, and Daniel a mortgage broker in Orange County."

You Don't Want to Miss the Alternate Christmas Fair on Dec 4th!

Sunday, December 4th will be a busy day around RUCC! Besides being Covenant Sunday, Confirmation Day, and Communion Sunday there will also be opportunity after service to participate in and support the self-help efforts of impoverished people from around the world. You can shop for Christmas gifts crafted by women and men dependent on the sale of their arts for income to support their families and provide basic necessities such as food and shelter. These items are sold through the non-profit organization "Third World Gifts and Handarts"(TWGH) which is located in Orange County and has been working for 30 years to bring fairness and balance to international trade and marketing.

TWGH was one of the very first fair-trade organizations, a movement that began in the 1970's and has since spread out across the world. Its purpose is to offer a tangible means of addressing the devastating crush multinational corporations have on those who make the goods they sell to produce exorbitant and exclusive profits ... profits that are not shared with the workers. You may be familiar with the old bumper sticker, "People not Profit" and that is the work of TWGH which supports craft producers who establish their own wages/prices and determine their own working conditions. Most often it is women who participate since they make up the largest numbers of individuals living in poverty around the world. Relying on traditional and indigenous skills they are able to utilize their creative talents while they attend to the necessary day-to-day responsibilities of caring for children and family. Their remarkable determination and hard work shines through each and every piece they create.

You will be delighted by a beautiful array of baskets, carvings, jewelry, clothing, household items and Christmas décor with the assurance that your purchase will provide meaningful and dignified employment as well as much needed income to families struggling to survive under desperate conditions.

So don't miss browsing and shopping in Covenant Hall after the service. I look forward to seeing you there!

Jeanne



A Big THANK YOU from Christian Education

The Christian Education committee would like to thank all who have recently donated books, toys, art supplies, or items for the nursery. These things are greatly appreciated!

In the future, when you donate, please either leave a note on the items or contact Andrea Morics at 794-0536 or Barbie Fiske-Phillips at 798-6111. We would love to thank you personally and we also need to make sure the items belong to us and not to the Indonesian Church.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Dennis Wolbert
- 3 Richard Hodson
Bill Whitmer
- 9 Briano Planeta
- 13 Ofelia Morales
- 14 Emily Barton
Wayne Milloy
- 18 Craig Wesson
- 21 Phil McMeans
Kimberly Arth
- 23 Eleanor Ruiz
- 25 Nathan Campbell
- 30 Omar Moran

DECEMBER WORSHIP LEADERS

- 4 Don Kleckner
- 11 Shirley Marks & The Sforza
Family
- 18 Sandy Peavler – Debbie
Gerberich & Family
- 24 Sally Cummings
- 25 Michael & Lisa Dewey

Psalm 23

God, My shepherd!

I don't need a thing.

You have given me beds in lush meadows,
you find me quiet pools to drink from.

True to your word,

you let me catch my breath

and send me in the right direction.

Even when the way goes through Death Valley,
I'm not afraid when you walk at my side.

Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel
secure.

You serve me a six course dinner
right in front of my enemies.

You revive my drooping head;

my cup brims with blessing.

Your beauty and love chase after me
every day of my life.

I'm back home in the house of God for the rest of
my life.



Advent Scripture Readings

November 27: *Psalms 80:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37*
December 4: *Isaiah 40:1-11; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8*
December 11: *Isaiah 61:1-4; 8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28*
December 18: *Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38*
December 25: *Isaiah 52:7-9a; John 1:1-14*

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
WANDERINGS is published monthly by R.U.C.C.



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