

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

March 2006

Ash Wednesday – March 1 at Mentone Congregational Church

Communion Sunday - Worship Service 10:30 a.m., Sunday, March 5

Lenten Soup Suppers, Wednesday, March 8, 15, 22, 29 and April 5th
at 6:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall

Staff meeting, Friday, March 10, 9:00 a.m.

Church Board will meet Tuesday, March 14, 7:00 p.m.

The Sandwich Group will meet Tuesday, March 21, at 12:00 p.m.
in the Pastor's office.

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

Jubilee Ringers Rehearsal on Sundays, 12:00 p.m.

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

R.U.C.C. Men's Fellowship, 8:30 a.m., Sunday, March 26

Middle school and High school youth groups will meet at various times during
March. Please check The View for dates and times.

From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

*“...I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.”
—God, as quoted in Jeremiah 31:3*

Some time ago, one of our members reminded me that many people attend churches because they need to be reminded that God loves them. Yes, I fully agree, and for many years the “one good sermon” I spun so many different ways was that very message of God’s always-present love. Recently I have been thinking about the implications and ramifications of such a regular reminder, and my thoughts have inevitably turned to pragmatic matters. How we treat other people, what we expect of our local and national elected officials, in what directions we allocate our resources of time and money...all of these decisions and more emanate from the love of God for each one of us. Put bluntly (as the Apostle Paul does in many of his NT letters): God loves us...we love ourselves...we love other people. Simple as A, B, C.

Simple? Not really. If it were simple, we would be living in a different world, a world of compassion and justice, of forgiveness rather than vindictiveness, of honoring and appreciating the variety that God and we are creating. Unfortunately, this “love stuff” is not simple at all. It requires intentional work, repeated and conscious effort to accomplish.

The current issue of UCC News (print copies are freely delivered to your mailbox by calling 800.363.0575; online at www.ucc.org) notes two items related to loving God and loving neighbor as self. As you are likely aware, our UCC General Synod voted last summer to support equal marriage, making us the first Christian denomination to stand out on that limb of equality. The ongoing “fallout” includes the following: 49 congregations (less than 1% of the total) have voted to disaffiliate; 23 congregations are newly affiliated and another 42 churches have expressed a firm interest in becoming UCC; 5 once-departed churches have voted to return to the UCC. All of these decisions are based in the Synod’s historic and courageous decision, and they reveal a denomination that is not shying away from the tough, pragmatic stuff of loving God and loving neighbor as self.

Another evidence of our passion for justice and equality was apparent at the Church Board Retreat on February 11th. One of our sister-UCC churches in Pennsylvania is not happy about the equal marriage stand, and sent surveys to each of the UCC congregations nationwide. The survey asks two questions: 1) Should General Synod delegates vote on moral issues? and 2) Did the vote on Marriage Equality Resolution represent your church’s view? The questionnaire itself was a set-up, designed to generate irritation rather than enhance dialogue. However, our creative and loving Board transformed it—as one member noted, “If Synod does not take up these difficult issues, then where in the church will they be discussed?”—our conversation clearly reflected the belief that all are welcome in the UCC, that this stand is not unusual for the UCC, but is an extension of over 400 years of justice witness to which we are also committed locally. To punctuate their point of equality, each board member completed their own questionnaire, signed their name to it—giving our sisters and brothers in PA more than they asked for!

Are loving God and loving neighbor simple to accomplish? Yes, perhaps they are. As simple as stepping out on a limb to include all. Let us continue so to do.

Blessings,



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Last Saturday, the Church Board met for a four hour mini-retreat at the church to share our ideas for the upcoming year. What a talented group of people we have serving on the Board this year! I am truly blessed to have this group to work with – a group that brings new ideas, initiative, enthusiasm, and so much talent to share in service to the church.

The focus of the retreat was finding a guiding vision for the year. We reflected on the RUCC vision statement and what it meant to us and to our areas. We reviewed past goals, objectives, and ideas from prior years and past retreats and noted that many of our past goals had been achieved.

Looking to the future, several common themes emerged. Among them were a strong emphasis on the church as community and family, a desire for more small group activities for both social bonding and spiritual growth, and a continuing need for better communication within the church and with the community. Also discussed were facility space needs for classrooms and storage. Peace and justice issues will continue to be important priorities.

We began discussions on how the areas could work together on church activities to better use our resources.

As I look around the sanctuary on Sunday morning, there are more and more new and unfamiliar faces and they're wonderful to see. Our message of the radical inclusiveness of God's all encompassing love is resonating with many people. But with so many new folks, I suspect that this is why there is a desire for increased fellowship, a chance to get to know each other better, and in smaller groups. Perhaps we need this first before we continue on our spiritual journey together.

As we continue to clarify our vision and goals for the year, we invite your ideas. What kind of small groups would you like to see? Groups organized for social outings? Small dinner groups? More bible study groups? Let your area leaders know. And take advantage of the fellowship time after Sunday services to get acquainted with each other.

As our vision, our goals, and our plans for the year take shape, I will share those with you.

Dianne Landeros

President

“Day by Day, they spent much time together in Worship...” Acts 2:46
—Sharon R. Graff

Worship during this Lenten season is being planned by a group of RUCC folk who covenanted to create special seasonal worship experiences. Beginning on March 5 and continuing through the six Sundays of Lent, we will explore various pathways—paths we walk in solitude, paths shared with others, and paths upon which we clearly sense the Spirit of God joining us. The scriptures for the season invite us to explore the theme of God’s presence on the pathway in a myriad of ways—through covenant, through honesty, through risking and trusting, and through keeping our hearts open. Please consider this your personal invitation to be inspired on your own pathway throughout the months of March and April.

March 5 – “Stumbling on the Path” – Communion Sunday

Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

A beautiful rainbow at the end of the flood, and Noah was soon too drunk to notice. Jesus comes out of the water, hears a magnificent voice calling him into ministry, and the others experience only what seems to them like a thunderous noise. Sometimes we are so distracted, ill, self-focused, or otherwise occupied that God’s in-breaking is all but lost on us. Today, we begin Lent by looking at those stumbling-times, and at God’s never-ceasing invitations to open up hearts, souls, bodies, and minds.

March 12 – Celtic Sunday – “The Natural Path”

Psalm 19:1-6; Prayers from the Celtic Christian tradition

This will be a very special Sunday of honoring and experiencing the Celtic Christian prayer tradition from the isles of Britain. For those ancient Celts, there was no time and no experience outside the realm of communication with the Divine...and we shall pray with them this day. Ancient (yet surprisingly modern!) readings from the Bible and other prayer sources will join with inspiring music to offer us a unique worship experience. Bring a friend!

March 19 – “Distractions on the Path”

Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19:7-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

What distracts you on the path of faith? Rules? Money? Conflicts with self and others? Confusion or uncertainty that immobilizes you? Be assured, you are not alone! Our scriptural siblings also were distracted...on a regular basis. Yet, somehow, they managed to be found and redirected by a persistent God, and so will you. Come and see for yourself.

March 26 – “Paths Through the Darkness”

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

Wandering and complaining in the deserted wilderness, the chosen ones still cried out to God. When painfully reminded of personal wrongdoing, the psalmist still claims that God’s love endures forever. And in the most unlikely of places—death, grave mistakes, and even in football stadiums—God’s love for all people finds a way of being proclaimed. Like a beacon in the darkest tunnel, the radical love of God shines a way through—come and follow.

Worship is richer and deeper with your presence. I look forward to sharing these times with you.

Lenten Soup Suppers and Discussion – Wednesdays ~ March 8th to April 5th
6:00 – 8:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall

If grace is true and if God is love, what does that mean for our lives? What could that mean for our church and our ministry? We will discuss these questions during Lent, using as resources the books by Philip Gulley and James Mulholland: *If Grace is True: Why God Will Save Every Person* and *If God is Love: Rediscovering Grace in an Ungracious World*. All are invited to come and enjoy the fellowship and learning that occur when we gather. Child-care will be provided. Any questions, contact Rev.Graff. PS: Please bring your own table service, soup bowl, and “ugly mug” for a beverage...all will be filled!

“Get On the Bus” Update
from Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo

Where has the time gone? It is March already and there are only 2 ½ months until the annual “Get on the Bus” program. We are anxiously awaiting word about the number of children we will be sending from San Bernardino county to visit their mothers in prison on the Friday before Mother’s Day. In the meantime we are busy organizing the details and logistics of such an ambitious undertaking. Under the skilled leadership of Lashawn Lee committees have been formed to handle food arrangements, collection of teddy bears and activity kits, a send-off program, and publicity/fundraising throughout the county. Lashawn is also hard at work contacting other churches in the community to enlist their help and support. The greatest need right now is for sponsors who would be willing to make contact with the children’s families in order to help them complete all the necessary paperwork. Without proper documentation (birth certificates, etc.) the children will not be allowed inside the prisons.

If you think you might have a few hours to spare please give Lashawn a call at 909-793-4489. If you would prefer to co-sponsor with someone, that can be worked out as well. There will be a sponsor training session this month (date to be determined) to insure that you have all the tools needed to carry out the task.

Exciting things are happening with Step by Step. At the end of January, we invited representatives from all the churches in Redlands to an informational luncheon about the needs of individuals on parole in our city. We were happy that representatives from 11 groups/congregations attended. The program included speakers from the police department as well as information about the work we are doing through RUCC. Dianne Landeros and Bettye Wheeler served up a delicious lunch that received rave reviews from all the participants. A special thank you to Dianne, Bettye, and all their helpers!

We continue to need supplies for the hygiene kits which have been well received. They are made available once a month to all on parole through the Redlands police department. A list of items and the collection basket are in the gathering area so feel free to drop things off as you collect them. Thank you for supporting this on-going project!

Wishing you all a warm and refreshing Spring!
Jeanne

Getting to Know You...

In the year 1999 we were really missing two of our flock. No, they weren't lost sheep. They left for the higher altitude of Big Bear. But now they've come down from the mountain to be with us again.

Charter members, Ken and Janie Hurley are happily getting settled into their Sun Lakes home. Janie has retired, but Ken is still with the Sheriff's Department. Ken was born in Iowa City, Iowa and you'd never know it to look at him now but he was born quite prematurely. After his father was out of World War II service they lived in several states. When he eventually became an engineer at San Bernardino Aerospace, they moved to Redlands. Ken was twelve and attended Cope Middle School and Redlands High School. He was active in DeMolay and was seldom without a job of some sort. During and after high school he worked at everyone's then favorite hardware store, Carlson's. After high school it was Valley College and then off to the College of Idaho for a degree in Business and Marketing. And "wow" he was voted most popular male student at the University! A couple of summers were spent in Sitka, Alaska working in the salmon cold storage business. He left Redlands to begin using his business skills at Glendale Savings.

Janie was born in Los Angeles where her family lived until her father died when she was six and she, her brother and mother moved to Glendale. Her mom was a secretary to Mr. Baskin of Baskin & Robbins for twenty five years. Yes, they did get ice cream – but only at half price. Janie had a happy life and school life in Glendale. Active in high school and to almost equal Ken's "most popular" title she was a Sophomore Princess. After high school, she worked two years at the Broadway Department Store. But it was her job in the Loan Department at Glendale Federal that brought her together with Ken. After two years of dating they married, moved to Redlands, and had Debbie and Kelly.

Ken and Janie came to the Congregational Church the same year Bruce Van Blair became the Minister. Without Bruce there would be no RUCC. He was our guiding light and inspiration for the five years he was with us. Janie worked ten years at Smiley Elementary, Redlands High, and East Valley. And she was a wonderful secretary for RUCC for five years when our Rich Blakley was Minister. Ken and Janie love camping and began in a tent but have graduated to a trailer. Janie sews and enjoys decorating. When Redlands Federal closed, Ken began work as a Sheriff's Deputy. When he retires in a few years the trailer will head out often. For twenty years Ken has headed out-often in strange hours-as a member of the Search and Rescue Team.
A warm welcome back.

Betty Jacobs

Events at RUCC...

Blood Pressure Clinic

Blood Pressure Clinic will be Sunday, March 26, 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 Men's Fellowship

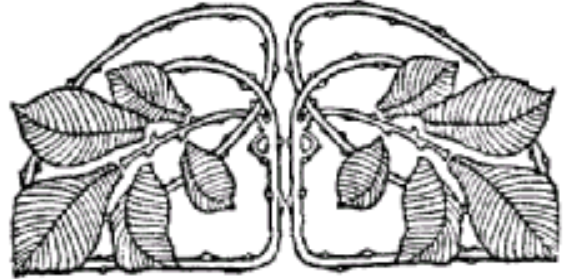
The monthly meeting of the Men's Fellowship group will take place Sunday, March 26th at 8:30 a.m. in the church office. For further information, please call Sheldon Montgomery at 794-3822 or Vern Jones at (951) 927-8325.

Ordination Celebration

Does 30 years seem like a long time? It does for Richard Blakley as well. Richard was ordained in our church 30 years ago. Our RUCC church will be celebrating the Rev. Richard Blakley's 30 years as a Minister of the United Church of Christ on Sunday, May 7, 2006. We hope that you can join us in Worship Service that morning, and for a luncheon that will follow. The only gift will be a Memory Book which we will be assembling in a 9"x11" page format. Please plan to join us!

MARCH WORSHIP LEADERS

5	Charlie Wheeler
12	Janet Wilson
19	Lauren Barton
26	Kathie Blakley



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

2	Seth Wacks Jessica Woods
6	Linnie Dunn
10	Margaret Barnett
13	Fred Arth
14	Jane Hurley
15	Timothy Blakley Karen Walsh Sandy Peavler
18	William Wesson
20	Sally Burton
21	John Walsh
22	Craig Colclough
23	Sussan Ehteshami Paul Macomber
24	Kathleen Fox
25	Ruth Durrant
26	Dorothy Landeros
29	Ken Hurley Soroosh Ehteshami Avery Osajima

PLEASE NOTE:

The previously announced date for the ALL CHURCH RETREAT at Pilgrim Pines has been changed to Friday, April 21- Sunday, April 23. This is the weekend immediately following Easter--it is hoped that this is a more convenient time for our church family to gather on the mountain for fun, food, fellowship, and getting to know one another better! If you have questions, please contact Floyd Orr.

Got Anger? Meditate!

Kelsang Rak-ma, Resident Teacher at the Dharmachakra Buddhist Center, will teach meditation classes, Wednesday evenings, at 7:00 p.m. The classes will be based on a Buddhist poem from the 8th century AD called "Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life." Chapter six of the poem is dedicated to the discussion of anger – what it is, why we are attracted to it, how it doesn't really help us, and how to deal with it in an effective way. The classes are open to people of all faiths and belief (or non-belief!) systems.

World Class Rummage Sale!

(With your help)

When: Saturday, April 1, 2006
from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Where: RUCC Covenant Hall
What: Clean Rummage (almost anything)
Why: Community Service

Needed:

Workers to help in setting up from Monday March 27th through Saturday, April 1st. Come when you can, leave when you must.

Transportation:

Yours primarily, mine if necessary (we can arrange for pick up and moving of large objects.)

Please make plans now to participate in this annual RUCC community event! For further information please call Sheldon Montgomery at 794-3822 or the church office at 793-3520.

...and around town

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.

Church Women United

Church Women United will meet Friday, March 3rd, at 10:00 a.m., at the Mentone Congregational Church, 1205 Beryl Ave., Mentone. The meeting is being coordinated by Carmen J. Ivory and will celebrate "World Day of Prayer" with the theme of "Signs of the Times." A salad luncheon will follow. Please bring a salad or a donation of \$3.00 and bring a friend.

Redlands Area Interfaith Council

The Redlands Area Interfaith Council will meet on Wednesday, March 22, at 7:15 p.m., at the First Methodist Church for a forum dealing with parolee re-entry. All are welcome!

Mayor's Prayer Breakfast

Please reserve Thursday, May 4th for the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast. The breakfast will be held at 7:30 a.m. at the Orton Center, University of Redlands. The theme for the breakfast will be "A Community Prepared." For further information, please contact Gal Glanville.

Citizen's Action for Peace

Citizens Action for Peace will continue their Film and Speaker Series on Sunday, March 12th at 1:00 p.m. at RUCC with the Academy Award winning film "The Fog of War." One of the best pictures of the year, the film presents a whole new story about Robert McNamara.



SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPEALIDOCIOUS!!! Whew! Thinking that Dorothy Landeros' clever poem shared during worship was the extent of the low-keyed birthday acknowledgement, I was totally speechless on Sunday, the 5th of February, when Taylor began merging the Time of Reflection into Disney-themed music, when the Choir began singing that popular Mary Poppins song, when the congregation broke forth into laughter and smiles, and when golden ears and colorful balloons finally alerted me to the fact that there was a party happening! One wave after another of love and joy washed over me as I opened your generous gifts and cards, indulged in the delicious potato-bar luncheon, and soaked up the golden ambiance. So far, this 50-stuff is pretty good! Special thanks to Deb Austin-Brecher, to Beth Kolpien's Church Life committee, and to all who made my 50th-birthday celebration such a very special surprise! I cannot fully express what your love means to me, but please know that my heart, mind, and spirit are soooo very thankful to be right here with each one of you. Blessings and many, many thanks!
Your Pastor and Teacher (the now-officially-old!) Sharon

March Scripture Readings

March 5: *Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15*
March 12: *Psalm 19:1-6 and Prayers from the Celtic Christian tradition*
March 19: *Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19:7-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22*
March 26: *Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21*

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