

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

December 2006

Covenant Sunday - Worship Service 10:30 a.m.,
Sunday, December 5

The Prayer Group will meet Mondays, December 4, 11, and 18
at 10:30 a.m. in the Choir Room

Church Board will meet Tuesday, December 12, 7:00 p.m.
in the church office.

Feastings – Friday, December 15, 7:00 p.m.

Gingerbread Houses with Helen Arth on Sunday, December 17,
in Covenant Hall following worship service.

Christmas Eve Services

Sunday, December 24, 10:30 a.m. a Service of Peace

Sunday, December 24, 7:00 p.m. Candlelight Service

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.

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

From Your Pastor and Teacher...

*“...and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”
—from Luke 1:23*

I love the Christmas season! I love the color and the carols. I love the way that people smile more broadly and laugh more heartily. I love the generosity that appears like a brilliant star in the night. I love Christmas Pageants and choir programs and lighting the Advent candles in preparation. I even love decorating (most years, at least!), and often keep the red and green up long past the season’s natural ending (last year our decorations stayed up until Easter, but that’s another story for another day...!).

I also become melancholy at Christmastime. I worry about those who have no families and no food. I become aware that the days literally are shorter, leaving less time to do more things. I miss those whose presence is no longer part of the family traditions of Christmas Eve and Christmas Morning. I, like many of you, become weary and short of energy as I try to prop up long-standing traditions single-handedly. This was laughingly apparent to me a few years ago, when I was talking with our son on the phone about whether or not to buy and decorate a tree for the holidays. In preparation for his holiday visit, I was remembering how much Will enjoyed stringing the lights and hanging the ornaments when he was a young child. Wanting to recapture that magic, I asked if he would like to repeat the tradition again. In amazement, our now young-adult son responded, “Mom, you live in the middle of a forest, why would you want to decorate a tree?!” How right he was!

This season invites each of us to ponder, like Mary. It invites us to sing like the angels. It invites us to walk in faith, like the shepherds and the magi. Nowhere in the holiday scripture message are we implored to over-schedule or over-burden ourselves. Nowhere are we nudged to fill every minute of every day with some extra task or some self-imposed expectation. This may sound crazy, but I encourage us this season, as individuals and as a community of faith, to relax. Yes, RELAX! Relax and enjoy the moments that we live together. Relax and enjoy the preparation for various programs. Relax and enjoy the mistakes and the miracles, for with Emmanuel, God with us, we will experience both. Let us relax and enjoy it all...God is with us!

Blessings,



“Make us to know your ways, O God...teach us your paths...” Psalm 25:4
December 2006

Worship is seasonal—that is, our services follow a spiritual cycle based on seasons of the church year. December is the end of the traditional calendar year, yet it also marks the beginning of our spiritual year and its first season: Advent. Traditionally, Advent is a time of thoughtful reflection, a time to consider the effect of light’s appearance in the shadows of the world, and a time to await the arrival of light embodied in a tiny baby born in a stable. For centuries before Christ, people found this season to be an inspiring metaphor of the power of light in the world, as they celebrated the return of light through the lengthening of daylight hours. 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 offer our annual written covenants. During this season, I trust that our worship will nudge us toward the light—toward seeing the light even when we are surrounded by shadows, toward stepping into and dancing in the light, and toward basking in and resting in the light when we are tired. My best advice for this busy season: Pace yourselves in the light, my friends—during this entire month and as we worship together on Sundays!

December 3 - “Love” – Covenant and Communion Sunday; Welcoming New Members

Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

Our annual walk through Advent begins with branches shooting up out of the ground, bringing surprises to each step! And Jesus speaks of a tree as a sign of God’s presence—Emmanuel—a word which literally means “God With Us.” On this most inspiring day we are nourished for the journey ahead: new members will be welcomed, and all are invited to bring forward your covenants and receive communion. In preparation for today’s service, each of us is invited to hear the Spirit’s voice, and to consider what we believe and how we want to live out those beliefs in this faith community during 2007. **Bring your 2007 covenant to place on the altar**, and together, God’s many loving beginnings will be experienced!

December 10 – “Hope”

Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 1:67-79; Luke 3:1-6

Hope is often understood as a prelude to the real deal, yet in today’s scriptures, hope IS the real deal! Are you a hopeful person? If so, chances are your spirit will sing along with today’s scripture readings. If, on the other hand, your glass is always half empty (if it has anything in it at all...) then perhaps you will most benefit from some new spins on hope. Either way, you are invited and welcome.

December 17 – “Joy”

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-11; John 1:1-14

Once again, our children and youth will joyfully and playfully lead us in worship with creative and thoughtful renderings of the Christmas story, complete with costumes and characterizations! This is an annual service not to be missed ~ Come early and bring a friend!

December 24 – “Peace”

Micah 5:2-4; John 14:27; Ephesians 2:14-15; Other peace readings from around the world.

Of all the four traditional themes of Advent—love, hope, joy, and peace—it is peace which often seems to elude us. With wars, famines, and mental and physical diseases, peace may feel out of our realm of influence and certainly beyond our scope of personal experience. Yet spiritual folk from Thich Nhat Hanh to Jesus himself suggest that each of God’s beloved children deserves the right to live in peace. We will pray prayers of peace from around the world, and offer blessings for those who will be journeying in the upcoming week to New Orleans to live out the actions that create peace on this earth. This service will quietly confirm your right to live and breathe and walk in peace. Come and pray that you may so do...one step at a time.

December 24 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Lessons and Carols – 7:00 pm

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-11; John 1:1-14

A simple, meaningful, musical, and scriptural retelling of the holy story— Emmanuel—God is with us!

December 31 – The Bridge Between New Orleans and Redlands

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

As several members and friends work to muck out homes in New Orleans, the congregation will hear their words from afar...mixed with words of scripture...God is still speaking!

Worship will be richer and deeper with your presence. Come and be refreshed for the journey ahead...

—Rev. Dr. Sharon R. Graff

Covenant Update

As of October 31, 2006 - General Fund

Pledged	\$128,754.00
Received	<u>\$118,999.42</u>
Under	- 9,754.58

Some thoughts on the holidays from Jeanne:

*Her name is Mary,
She's due any day.
She works at McDonald's
For minimum pay.
She has other children ...
One, two, and three.
She's tired, she's broke,
She has no time that's free.*

*Her kids won't have Christmas,
There's no money to spare,
She's too proud to ask
With no family to care.
She's struggled to learn
How to clean and to cook,
She raised her siblings,
And did what it took
To finish her schooling,
Get her GED.
It's been a hard life;
She's barely twenty!*

*So, I'm caught in a dilemma,
You are my friend.
It's Christmas, I'm shopping,
With little to spend.
We've had a great year,
Good times --- you and me,
And there's much for us both
Under our tree.
I can't spend the money
To buy you more stuff,
When Mary and her kids
Have it so tough.*

*I bought you this candle,
And gave her the rest.
I fretted and stewed,
But thought it was best
To do it this way.
I know you won't mind
Because you are loving,
And thoughtful and kind!*

*Please light this candle
Each day as you pray,
And think of this girl
Who's not far away.
She needs more than money,
She needs someone to care,
To know that she matters,
Though life is unfair.
So I've given her you,
Through your gift from me.
And all through this year,
'Neath her Christmas tree,
She'll know with her heart
That someone is there,
Holding her up
In Spirit-filled prayer.
Merry Christmas, my friend,
I hope this will do.
Thanks from Mary and her kids.
Love from me --- just for you!*

*(Mrs Janet Hitchcock
published in "Women's Uncommon
Prayers" 2000).*

Thanks to all who joined in the Spirit of celebration at our November Alternative Christmas Fair. FaithActs raised close to \$3000 to help people in need all around the world. And there is still time to use your holiday shopping dollars to support the "Mary's" in our community and beyond. We will once again be collecting locally for families in need who have a member on parole. Please watch the View for additional information about the SBS Christmas Stocking project. If you would like to "buy gifts" from organizations with a national or international outreach and don't know where to look, contact me at amrucc@yahoo.com or leave a message with Renee and I will be happy to offer suggestions! May the gifts of love, hope, joy, and peace carry you through the busy days ahead. May we all hold each other in Spirit-filled prayer! – Jeanne



Volunteers are always welcome to support the meals program for people with AIDS at First Congregational United Church of Christ in San Bernardino. Some cook a main dish, side dish, or dessert to serve 20 people, and bring it in on Thursday or Friday before 8 a.m. You can call Millie Thomson at 885-4789 if you'd like to sign up to cook something. Or, you can come on Friday mornings between 7:30 and 9:00 a.m. to help package the meals and cook or assemble the remaining dishes. The volunteers meet in the church kitchen off the parking lot every Friday morning, 3041 N. Sierra Way, San Bernardino.

Also, tutors or reading partners are always welcome at the Afterschool Homework Center. Our center is open Monday-Thursday from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., and walk-in volunteers are always welcome, either once or regularly. Our director, Sarah Darter, is happy to answer any questions you may have. You can contact her at 886-4911 x104.

Family Services

Family Service Association continues to serve low-income and homeless families in our community. For most it is the basic needs in life they come for; food, clothing, housing support, medical assistance, educational training programs. Using a case management based system we help families toward stability and greater self-sufficiency.

While our new facility is designed to provide these services efficiently we can do it without the support of volunteers. The success of our daily operations is dependent on people who give their time to help us sort, organize, distribute, feed, and care for the families we serve. There are volunteer opportunities in our distribution center, support programs, and group projects. All it takes is a smile and a desire to help make a difference. Please call 793-2673 for further information.

New Orleans Work Camp

If you are considering volunteering for the HillTop Rescue and Relief opportunity in New Orleans check out their website at www.HilltopRescue.org for detailed information and photos. Work camp dates are December 8-18; December 27-January 8. **The final sign-up day is Sunday, December 3.** You are invited to participate during any of these dates for the full 10 days or any portion that you are able. Thanks to the generosity of Art for Heaven Sake, RUCC will be able to provide for plane fare and meals (as needed) for those wishing to participate. There is a sign-up list in the Gathering Area or you can contact Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo at amrucc@yahoo.com for details.

Women of Faith

We have so much to be grateful for! I am thankful for each of you for your time, donations, and overwhelming spirit of service. Our next work day will be Thursday, December 14, at 12:00 p.m. as we continue to assemble Parolee Hygiene Kits and Birthing Kits for midwives in Afghanistan. For further information please contact Jean Arnott at (909) 794-0456 or by email at jeanarnott@gmail.com.

Events at RUCC...

Step by Step Stockings!

Once again this year we will be collecting stocking stuffers for our families on parole.

Please watch the View for upcoming details.

Many Thanks!

Many thanks to the staff of the **Frugal Frigate Bookstore** and its owner, Brad Hundman, for their generous donation of prizes to last month's **Harry Potter Party**. We received a beautiful gift bag with Golden Snitch keychains and Harry Potter stickers, which we used as the Grand Prize for the winning House at the end of the night.

The party was a lot of fun. Gryffindor was the big winner at the end of the night, but it's safe to say that all the houses, perhaps Slytherin in particular, would love a rematch. Many thanks to all who helped with the festivities. – *Andrea Morics*

RUCC All-Church Fellowship

The monthly meeting of the RUCC All-Church Fellowship group will take place Sunday, January 28, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. in Covenant Hall. They will continue to discuss the book "A Purpose Driven Life."

Meditations to heal the Body & Mind

Kelsang Rak-ma, Resident Teacher at the Dharmachakra Buddhist Center, will teach *5 Secrets of Successful Meditators* on Saturday, December 6, at 10:00 a.m. Join us for this half day course on Buddha's advice to help us increase our ability to concentrate successfully. The class fee is \$25. However, no one will be turned away for inability to pay.

Prayer Group

The Prayer Group will meet every Monday morning, 10:30 to 11:30, in the choir room. The first twenty minutes will be beginner/refresher workshop time followed by meditation and silent prayer. All are invited!

Poinsettia's Are Coming



Order forms for Christmas poinsettias will be available in the worship bulletin starting Sunday, December 3 or in the church office.

Employment Opportunity - Education Director

Redlands United Church of Christ , Part time position – 10 hours per week. Must be available to work from 9:00 A.M. to noon each Sunday. Desirable qualifications would be experience with children's programs. Fax resume to (909) 793-5418 or call (909) 798-4501.

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 15 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.

Our program this year, *Twas the Night*, will feature the beloved poem by Clement C. Moore, and a musical setting of it, as well as handbell selections and special numbers by choir members.

Our dinner, prepared by a local caterer, will be served to you by our choir members. The menu remains to be announced! 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 Sundays, December 4 and 10. Reservations may also be made with Renee during office hours through December 12. Childcare will be provided if needed--please specify when making reservations. Join us for this festive occasion!



Gingerbread Houses with Helen Arth

Please join Helen on Sunday, December 17, following worship service for the delicious holiday tradition of making gingerbread houses.

DECEMBER WORSHIP LEADERS

- 3 Fiske-Phillips Family
- 10 Bettye Wheeler and Family
- 17 Barb Lord, Heidi Malone, and Emma Malone Lord
- 24 Janet Wilson
- 24 Heather and Eric Shamp Family
- 31 Beth Kolpien

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
- 22 Lisa Brandt
- 23 Eleanor Ruiz
- 25 Nathan Campbell
- 28 Janet Wilson
- 30 Omar Moran

...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, December 1, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. at the Family Service Association, 612 Lawton Street, Redlands, for their annual Christmas meeting and donation of toys, stocking stuffers, and decorations for families. A Christmas shop tour will be included. Please join us!

At the Getty Center

Opening in October, *The Gospels in Medieval Manuscript Illumination*. Through the Middle Ages the New Testament's Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were considered of paramount importance. This exhibition explores the major forms of illustration associated with the Gospels. The exhibition complements the exhibition *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai* opening in November. Further information can be found at www.getty.edu.

YMCA Holiday Home Tour

This holiday season the YMCA of the East Valley hosts a spectacular tour of the most unique homes in Redlands. All proceeds benefit Y's Legal Aid Program. In addition, unique handcrafted items and baked goods are available as part of the Craft Boutique and Pantry. The tour begins promptly at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, December 3. Tickets may be purchased online at www.ymcaeastvalley.org or through the mail.

Dead Sea Scrolls

The San Diego Natural History Museum, in partnership with The Israel Antiquities Authority, will bring a number of authentic Dead Sea Scrolls to San Diego. The exhibit will open June 29, 2007 and run through December 31 of that year. The exhibition will include lectures, films and audio tours, and is timed to coincide with the 2007 conference of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature which will be held in San Diego. Learn more about this historic exhibit and other offerings at the Natural History museum by going to www.sdnhm.org and clicking on "Exhibits."

Getting to Know You...

by Betty Jacobs

Perhaps, because in his early years he grew up soaking up Florida sunshine, Jake Spoor can be found Sunday mornings basking in California sunshine in the back pew by the south window.

Born in Ft. Wayne, Indiana his family soon moved to Orlando where his dad was an engineer for the Cape Kennedy Space program. His mom was an RN and still is. His dad is now retired.

While living in Coco Beach, and several other Florida towns, he enjoyed the life of a young “beach bum.” Despite the pleasures of beaches and palm trees (and Florida bugs) his most enjoyable years were spent in Tucson where the family moved when he was in fourth grade. In his senior year they moved from cactus country to the palm trees of California in Upland.

While in high school, Jake was on the YMCA swim team and swam competitively. At Cal Poly, Pomona, he was in the School of Business as an Accounting major and worked his way through college at General Dynamics. During his college days Jake rented a house in Diamond Bar and eventually bought it. He lived there from 1989 to 2003 when he moved to Highland.

Jake enjoys working in his yard and goes to the gym several times a week. That’s to keep in shape for his most enjoyable times spent hiking and camping. He belongs to a hiking group of professional men and women. And, he camps and hikes with friends in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Baja, and Colorado.

Before 911 he traveled to London, Frankfurt, Paris and Amsterdam where his roots are. Each year the family gathers in Florida for a reunion. Back to Highland – Jake is a member of the Board of Directors for the Highland Chamber of Commerce and was recently elected President. Something I wish I’d done from the beginning and that he has done is collect Starbucks coffee cups. He has close to 100! How he finds time to work I don’t know but he works at the Employment and Training Agency of the City of San Bernardino.

Jake’s UCC interest comes from his aunt, the Reverend Jane Spoor, a Pastor in Ft. Wayne.

In the Small World Department....

It turns out that Don Hines, of last month’s article, and Margaret Barnett grew up on the same street a few houses away from each other in Colton.

December Scripture Readings

December 3:	<i>Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36</i>
December 10:	<i>Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 1:67-79; Luke 3:1-6</i>
December 17:	<i>Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-11; John 1:1-14</i>
December 24:	<i>Micah 5:2-4; John 14:27; Ephesians 2:14-15; and other peace readings.</i>
December 24:	<i>Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 2:8-20; Matthew 2:1-11; John 1:1-14</i>
December 31:	<i>1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52</i>

Minister – Rev. Dr. Sharon R. Graff
Associate Minister of Outreach – Rev. 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 – Youth Volunteers
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.



Redlands United Church of Christ
168 Bellevue Avenue
Redlands, CA 92373-4978
(909) 793-3520 Fax: (909) 793-5418
E-mails: pastor@uccredlands.org
office@uccredlands.org
youth@uccredlands.org
Web site: www.uccredlands.org