

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

December 2007

Contemplative Worship Service – 8:00 a.m.
Sundays, December 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30

Confirmation Sunday ~ Covenant Sunday ~ Communion Sunday
Worship Service 10:30 a.m., Sunday, December 2

The Prayer Group will meet Mondays, December 3, 10, 17, 24
at 10:30 a.m. in the Choir Room

“First Annual Christmas Workshop” on Sunday, December 9, at
12:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall

Second Annual Alternative Holiday Fair
Sunday, December 9, at noon in Covenant Hall

Church Board will meet Tuesday, December 11, 7:00 p.m.
in the church office

“Feastings” will be held on Friday, December 14, at
7:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall

The Sandwich Group will meet Tuesday, December 18,
at 12:00 p.m. in the Pastor’s office

Brown Bag Lunch and Game Day on Sunday, December 30,
following worship service in Covenant Hall

Celebration Ringers Rehearsal on Thursdays, 6:15 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, Sharon~

“In everything give thanks...”

—1st Thessalonians 5:18

Everything? Everything? In EVERYTHING give thanks? What was the Apostle Paul thinking? Does God really intend for us to give thanks in the midst of global problems of war, famine, cyclones, hurricanes, pandemics, and the like? Are we created as beings who can give thanks while suffering failures, or the pain of unwanted illness, or the grief of loss? I think so. I believe so. And you are the ones who have brought that belief to me.

For these past nearly six years, as you have honored me with your stories—both personal and collective—I have learned that, indeed, we humans are intended to, created to, and in fact can give thanks to God in the midst of every circumstance of life. Be it cancer, or impending death, or the loss of relationship, or the fear of an uncertain future—you and your life stories have taught me that there is always hope. And from that hope comes enough peace to get one through each day.

So what does this have to do with giving thanks? Everything. Everything. EVERYTHING! Perhaps this is something I can teach you as we experience this particular Advent and Christmas together. I have learned that, when we search to find something for which to give thanks and then do just that even when the proverbial “stuff” is hitting that proverbial fan, our spirits are lifted. The pain obviously will not disappear with the utterance of one statement of thanksgiving or of two. I know from my life experience that thanks-giving—intentionally offering a word of thanks each day and for many things—does, over time, change one’s perspective even as it opens us to the movement of the Spirit toward healing.

And, because of you, I dare to believe that our community will be stronger as we give thanks to God together. Specifically, I invite us to give thanks to God for the gifts that Peggy McMeans offered to Redlands UCC as Music Director and Choir Director for over 23 years...and also to give thanks to Peggy directly. Her dedication to the work as vocation inspired many, for as one longtime choir member so aptly put it, “this was never just a job for Peggy.”

As we continue to walk this covenant journey together, let us be mindful of giving thanks to God for the gifts of each day...be they as small as a baby in a manger or as magnificent as a sky full of angelic choirs...for in that spiritual discipline of thanks-giving lies our future.

Blessings,



*"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God;
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God..." 1st John 4:7*

December 2007

The season of Advent, which begins with the first Sunday of December, marks the start of the church year. It is a season that focuses on preparation for the spiritual journey ahead by sitting with the darkness and shadows of the unknown. The Gregorian calendar and the natural lunar/solar cycles assist us with that task, as days grow shorter and nights lengthen. And each year's Advent promises us that, at the end of those long and shadowy days of waiting, there is smiling baby lying in a manger. Come, sisters and brothers, let us journey together, in spirit and in truth.

This year's Advent worship service themes and scriptures originated with a worship task group—Janet Wilson, Jennifer and Dana Hawley-Zechlin, Patrick Ioakimedes, and myself. We hope that this focus on covenant—God's covenant with us and ours with God, including peace, justice, salvation, love, and hope—will reflect the light of this holy season for you!

December 2 - "God's Hope for Peace-filled Hearts" – First Sunday of Advent
Covenant, Confirmation, and Communion Sunday

Psalm 122; Isaiah 2:1-5; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13

On this most celebratory day, we see our youth confirmands make their covenants with RUCC, we hear the words reminding us that bread and cup are for all God's children, and we experience the joy of bringing our own covenants for the community's blessing. Are you wondering about covenanting for this next year? I would be honored to speak with you more...

December 9 – "Dare to Hope for Justice!" – Second Sunday of Advent – Patrick Ioakimedes, preaching

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Matthew 3:1-12

In preparation to celebrate the birth of Christ, we hear from two prophets—one a poet and songwriter and the other a man who lives in the wilderness subsisting off locusts and honey. Both speak to their cultures about justice. Both rail against injustices. Both use metaphoric language to persuade their neighbors that God is always, and will always be, on the side of the lost, the lonely, and the least. And, thankfully, both promise that such a world is not only possible, but is likely with God's presence...

December 16 – "Saved Through Relationship" – Third Sunday of Advent

Scriptures TBA

Our children and youth will lead worship through sharing their unique reflections and understandings of the Christmas story in a dramatic and musical manner...you will be inspired, guaranteed!

December 23 – "Bred In Covenant...Bread of Covenant...Food for All!" – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-23; Micah 5:2-5a; Matthew 2:1-11

Bread of tears transforms into bread of life...and Bethlehem becomes the "house of bread" for all people...today's Christmas message is one of hope and joy! From the tiniest of crumbs, through the birth of One promised from long ago, bread and bred commingle to provide nourishment for the whole world. Come, let the message leap into life within you!

December 24 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service – 5:00 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*

Note the new and earlier hour—5:00 pm—so family time can live more conveniently with church family time! Our traditional service of lessons and carols—with lots of singing and twinkling candlelight—will be enhanced this year by simple communion on the patio, reminding us that birth and life offer us countless gifts of nourishment for the journey!

December 30 – "The Covenant Continues...God IS Still Speaking!"

Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Matthew 1:23-25, 2:13-23

Here, through the language of three different dreams, we see Joseph putting his life on hold, following the urging of the Spirit, and becoming a stronger person because of it. Following the Spirit's nudges—be they in prayer, through dreams, as a result of conversations with trusted confidants—will usually lead us into new territory. Are you ready for the journey ahead? Don't worry...Joseph wasn't either! He, and we, only need to take it one step at a time...

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

- Rev. Sharon Graff

A Special Note From the Church President

We enter into December with the sadness of saying good-bye to Peggy Mc Means as she leaves employment as Choir Director of our church. Peggy has offered her musical gifts with love and as an expression of her faith. We are all grateful for all she has given. That she is a friend and part of the church family makes this time especially difficult. Those of us who have worked with her in bringing music to our worship services feel a special closeness with her and will miss her gentle presence. Peggy and her family have been a vital part of our church for many years. We will continue to love and care about them and hope that the friendships continue. We thank Peggy for the many years that she has given to this church and wish her well in the future.

Taylor Ruhl, our very gifted organist, has agreed to take on an expanded role as choir director/ organist. Thank you, Taylor, for your willingness to step in and assume this leadership role. ~ Dianne Landeros

PRESIDENT'S REPORT December, 2007

We are a busy community of faith! The Art Show in October was more successful than ever with record sales of over \$80,000. Congratulations to all who helped with this event, especially the art show committee who have become real pros in putting on a professional, smoothly run event.

The Step by Step community forum held on November 11 was another successful event. There were over 140 community members in attendance. Thank you all for your attendance at this event and for your continuing support. Step by Step is on the map!

On matters of peace and justice, Kathie Blakley is taking the lead in an effort to look at the controversial, difficult and challenging issue of immigration. Those interested in learning more about this and in discussing how we as a church should address this should contact the church office or Kathie Blakely...FaithActs has begun its film series by showing Kilowatt Ours, on how we can reduce our carbon footprint, and Iraq for Sale which addresses the issue of contractors in Iraq. In January, we will be showing Sicko, Michael Moore's film about the healthcare industry... The city recently adopted the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection agreement, which has been adopted by over 600 other cities throughout the country. Your letters and presence at the city council meeting helped to ensure the adoption of this important agreement. Thank you for speaking out and for helping to put the city on the path to going green!

The board has recognized the need to tend to our elderly members more attentively. We are discussing how to do that and would welcome your ideas. Will you please share those ideas with your shepherd or with a board member?

Lastly, remember that covenants are due this month. I hope the recent Area Exploration Fair helped you to decide in which area you would like to covenant. Please prayerfully consider what you can give to the church, both monetarily and in terms of time and talents, and while you're at it, let us know what you need from the church. We're all in this together.

Yours in Christ,
Dianne Landeros, President

Events at RUCC...

Save the date!

1st Annual Christmas Workshop

Please save the day of
Sunday, December 9
for this new RUCC tradition.

Prayer Group

The Prayer Group will meet every Monday morning (except December 24,) 10:30 to 11:30, in the choir room for meditation and silent prayer. All are invited!

Hello from Leah Lane

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Leah Lane I am your new Nursery School Teacher. I have worked in Childcare for many years. I am currently teaching a Two-year-old class at Redlands Kindercare. I enjoy being able to share in the growth and development of your children. I am looking forward to meeting each and every one of you and your children. Regards, Ms. Leah

Alpha Bible Study

The Alpha Bible Study group will meet at the Hurley home on Tuesday, December 4, at 7:00 p.m.

Inman/Hurley Shepherd Group

The Inman/Hurley Shepherd group will meet following 10:30 a.m. worship service on Sunday, December 2 for a potluck and gift exchange.

Variety Show

Would you like to be the “coordinator” for the 3rd Annual Intergenerational Variety Show? I did this in 2006 with “Farmer Brown Goes to Town,” and 2007 with “Attic Antics.” Now it’s time for someone else to have fun with this. I’ll be glad to let you know how I put it together with no rehearsals. Just put this on your covenant, or let Rev. Graff know.
~ *Mary Belle Carter*

Benefits of Being a Shepherd or Co-Shepherd

1. Gain a sense of “family” relationships; connections
2. Sharpening ones awareness of people’s needs
3. Learning people’s histories
4. Discover people’s talents
5. Focusing beyond ourselves
6. Sharing ideas with others who care
7. Initiate communication with others
8. Having fun, fellowship and food
9. Training and leadership
10. Sense of “Response-Ability” and responsibility

Consider being a Shepherd or Co-Shepherd for 2008, and write it in your Covenant!

DECEMBER WORSHIP LEADERS

- 2 Phil and Carol Robb
- 9 Sunday School Children
- 16 Youth Pageant
- 23 The Arth Family
- 24
- 30 Janelle Bradford and Jolene Tripp

Poinsettia's Are Coming



Order forms for Christmas poinsettias will be available in the worship bulletin starting Sunday, December 2 or in the church office.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Dennis Wolbert
- 3 Richard Hodson
Bill Whitmer
- 10 Jackson Shamp
- 13 Ofelia Morales
- 14 Emily Barton
Wayne Milloy
- 15 Trish Edwards
- 18 Craig Wesson
- 21 Phil McMeans
Kimberly Arth
- 22 Lisa Brandt
- 23 Eleanor Ruiz
- 25 Nathan Campbell
- 28 Janet Wilson
- 30 Omar Moran

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 14, 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 will be *Christmas Around the World* and will feature songs from other lands as well as tidbits of customs and traditions. Come and see and hear how many languages the choir can sing! You may even want to join them in singing! There will also be 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 will include a traditional American holiday meal, and this year we will offer a vegetarian alternative. 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 \$15.00 for children 10 and under. Tickets will be available from choir member Valerie Naftzger, and may be purchased after church on Sundays, December 2 and 9. Reservations may also be made with Renee during office hours through December 11. Childcare will be provided if needed. Please specify this, and/or vegetarian meal choice when making reservations. Join us for this festive occasion!

...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 be celebrating Christmas at the Central City Lutheran Mission, 1354 N. G Street, San Bernardino on December 7, at 10:00 a.m. Donations of children's clothes (ages 6 and up) are welcome. Lunch will be served.



Meditation Room

The University of Redlands has dedicated a new Meditation Room. The room, in Larsen 210, is open to all to enjoy a space of silence. Open meditation hours and the location can be found on the poster on the church bulletin board or at the U of R website www.redlands.edu.

SCNCUCC Announces Interim Conference Minister

The Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman, ending her term as Conference Minister in the Illinois Conference, has been called as the Interim Conference Minister of the Southern California Nevada Conference. At the November meeting of the Conference Board of Directors, Jane's call was affirmed. Jane will bring a wealth of gifts, skills and experience to our Conference.

Rev. Hoffman graduated from Eden Theological Seminary. She began her ministry in the local church setting, serving two churches in Missouri. Jane then moved to Association Ministry in the Ohio Conference. She became Conference Minister in the Illinois Conference in 2000. Rev. Hoffman has been a member of Trinity United Church of Christ, the home church of Barack Obama, in Chicago. She will take her place in our Conference sometime in February. Dan and Jane will remain until a brief time before Jane Fisler Hoffman is in place. The celebration to honor the Conference Ministry of Dan and Jane will be on Saturday, December 8, at 1:30 p.m. at First Congregational Church Long Beach, 241 Cedar Ave.

December Scripture Readings

December 2: *Psalm 122; Isaiah 2:1-5; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13*

December 9: *Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Matthew 3:1-12*

December 16: *TBA*

December 23: *Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-23; Micah 5:2-5a; Matthew 2:1-11*

December 24: *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*

December 30: *Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Matthew 1:23-25, 2:13-23*

Minister – Rev. Dr. Sharon R. Graff

Organist/Choir Director – Dr. Taylor Ruhl

Handbell Director – Craig Colclough

Youth Director – Craig Colclough

Administrative Assistant – Renee Chavez

Seminary Intern – Patrick Ioakimedes

Sunday Child Care – Leah Lane

Custodian – Jay Grayson

Church office hours: 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Monday – Friday

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