

# *WANDERINGS*

*A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose*

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

*March 2008*

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

Communion Sunday - Worship Service 10:30 a.m.,  
Sunday, March 2

The Prayer Group will meet Mondays, March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31  
at 10:30 a.m. in the Choir Room

Church Board – Tuesday, March 11, 7:00 p.m.

The Sandwich Group will meet on Tuesday, March 18,  
at 12:00 in the Pastor's office.

Lenten Soup Suppers and F.A.I.R. Conversations  
Wednesdays, March 5, 12, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Maundy Thursday Seder Meal and Tenebrae  
Thursday, March 20, 6:00 p.m.

Stewards will meet on Tuesday, March 25, at 7:00 p.m.

Jubilee Ringers rehearsal on Sundays, 12:00 p.m.  
Celebration Ringers rehearsal on Thursdays, 6:15 p.m.  
Covenant Choir Rehearsal on Thursdays, 7:30 p.m.

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~

"...Now God said to Abram: 'Go from your country and your family to the land that I will show you...'"  
—Genesis 4:1

During this Lenten season, I am being refreshed through reading the "Still Speaking Devotions" offered almost every day by the UCC. One of the pieces, based on the scripture from Genesis that we heard in worship recently, presents some new and thought-provoking ideas about faith. Written by William Green, author and executive in Local Church Ministries in our national UCC offices in Cleveland, the following just may provide you some valuable bricks to pave your own journey of faith during this season of Lent. Mr. Green writes,

"The Lord tells Abram (later Abraham) to go... God knows where. 'To a land that I will show you.' There 'you will be a blessing'—or, rather, in the original Hebrew he's given a command: 'Be you a blessing.' His example and influence are to be for the good of the whole world. And so Abram set out, not knowing where he was going—and not at all sure of himself, as we soon see.

We have come to associate faith with self-confidence and a good sense of direction, as though it were a prayer-mounted GPS. Instead, it's a way to go amid uncertainty and self-doubt when our direction is unclear and apprehension can run high, as with Abram.

God can't steer a parked car. Moving ahead in faith doesn't mean having a map and knowing the way. It means getting unstuck. Once we start moving, sometimes simply going out on our best hunch, we will be shown where we're meant to go and how to be a blessing, to others and ourselves, too."

His words are similar to part of a meditation I repeat daily as I trek down the mountain to work. "You shall be free...and as a symbol of your freedom you shall shed whatever hinders you..." Sometimes the very thing we most need to shed is our pre-conceived notions about faith, i.e. is it about having a map securely in hand and following someone's pre-set itinerary? Is faith a life-long seeking to align oneself with a plan purportedly conceived (and hidden?) by God? Is faith, as suggested by Bill Green above, more about following a path even in the middle of self-doubt and unclear directions?

Perhaps I'm a bit (overly) sensitive about this whole discussion of faith this year. You see, on Epiphany Sunday, I was nudged to select a little card with "Faith" written on it...and that little card and the Spirit who nudged me have been working on my spirit to ponder faith's meaning and message. What I do know, and even believe, is this: faith is NOT about reciting a list of tenets or ascribing to a long-ago written creedal statement. Faith is NOT something that God intends to use on us like a club, to bruise or inflict guilt or otherwise bring pain to bear on our weary, faith-lacking souls. Faith is much more luring, more like an invitation to a party than a burden to carry. Faith, I am coming to believe, is intended to lighten our journeys, just as it did for good old Abram. Faith is not a spiritual GPS or an old-fashioned map or even a decent compass. Faith is setting out on that proverbial journey of faith...getting unstuck... off the couch...moving...period. Friends, perhaps that is enough faith for this Lenten journey, indeed...

*Blessings,*



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

March 2 – "Sin Exposed" – Communion Sunday and Fourth Sunday in Lent

*Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41*

No, this will not be a laundry list of anyone's public or private transgressions! Yet, today's scriptures suggest that, on the journey of faith, what is hidden is best exposed and what lurks within is best brought out into the open. In Jesus' time, for example, it was thought that if a person had some kind of physical malady, there must be some secret sin that caused it. Jesus refutes this crazy and hurtful notion by healing a blind man on the Sabbath and is nearly killed because of it. Is it the healing itself that causes problems for Jesus or the fact that he dared to shine a light on a notion that everyone was quite comfortable keeping silent? Let's guess together...with a flashlight in one hand...

March 9 – "From the Four Winds" – Celtic Sunday and Fifth Sunday in Lent

*Psalms 23; Ezekiel 37:1-14; John 11:1-45; Readings from the Celtic Christian tradition*

Today's messages from scripture and from Celtic life affirm that God has the ability to bring dead bones and apparently-dying organisms back to life. From Ezekiel's valley to the tomb of Lazarus to the mighty oak whose branches promise to bud again, God looks death square in the face and says, "Live!" Perhaps some of our dead and dying places will feel the refreshing breath of God today. Accompanied by inspiring "music of the isles," this unique worship experience is a favorite of RUCC... Bring a friend!

March 16 – "Calling All Donkeys" – Palm Sunday and Sixth Sunday in Lent

*Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29; Matthew 21:1-11*

A familiar scriptural story awaits us this morning, as we seek to accept and to understand yet again that God can find ways to use everyone...Everyone...EVERYONE...to carry the message of Christ on our backs. Beginning outside on the patio (weather permitting), we will process into the sanctuary, singing and smiling, ready to receive what the Spirit offers! And thus continues our journey of faith...these steps with Christ through this week called "holy."

March 20 – Maundy Thursday Seder Meal and Tenebrae – Reservations appreciated!

Beginning at **6:00 pm** in Covenant Hall, we will enjoy the distinctive tastes of the Seder (Passover) meal. The evening continues with a brief Tenebrae (darkness) service in which we hear again Jesus' words and conversations leading up to his death. A moment of hope will sustain us until we re-gather on Easter Sunday. **Please make reservations for this service in the church office.** All ages are welcome!

March 23 – "God's Journey of Faith: From Love...To Love...In Love!" – Easter Sunday

*Jeremiah 31:1-6; John 20:1-18; Gospel of Mary 5:1-10*

We've got the joy, joy, joy, joy...down in our hearts! And up in our minds! And all through our bodies! The Easter morning story—ultimately a story of love—is told through the loving voice of Mary who encourages listeners to love...hard to imagine a more appropriate way to fill that empty tomb than with a life of love. Come for the music, come for the prayers, come to hear the stories of love once again. More importantly, come to experience the new life, the resurrected life, which God has arranged especially for you!

March 30 – "Faith That Shines" – Eastertide - Patrick Ioakimedes, preaching

*1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31*

The open tomb and Mary's joyful and loving faith journey lead us back to where we began this Lenten season: being more attentive to our individual and collective journeys of faith. Having traveled this far, will we resort back to fear-filled living (as did Jesus' disciples by the time night fell on resurrection day)? Will we finally accept the gift God offers of peace and forgiveness? Will our faith shine as we know God better? Film at 11...

Worship will be richer and deeper with your presence. I especially look forward to sharing this Lenten and Easter season with you during our sabbatical year.

## President's Message

I had the pleasure of meeting with both the outgoing and the incoming Boards recently to identify our goals for 2008. We started with an exercise of listing some of the things that make RUCC such a special place. The list flowed like water: hospitality, listening to the Spirit, open to change, feeling at home (family), justice at home and abroad, theological university (ongoing learning encouraged), diversity (“difference not division”), paying attention to scripture, moving from tourist to pilgrim, God rings in your ears here, beauty, faithful all week long, challenge ... What a list of blessings!

From this uplifting beginning, we moved toward setting some broad goals ... challenging but realistic. Again, the Spirit spoke and we felt the following calling to us: 1) Discern and address inter-generational needs; 2) Better use of facilities (scheduling, over-scheduling, storage needs, etc.); 3) Address educational needs (including adequate space for classes); 4) Integrate all areas of church in planning and implementing events and activities; 5) A successful sabbatical experience for pastor and congregation.

Finally, we looked at each Area in the church and how each could be part of making these church-wide goals happen. We came up with a great list of ways to work together from Celtic influences in worship, to lay training in pastoral care, to a “grandparents” tea. Over the next month, each Area will be looking at how they can make this vision come alive during the year.

Everyone is needed as part of this process! If you are an Area member, please work with your Area leader to develop a plan that is specific, realistic and attainable. If you are one of the many people who covenanted for activities and events, please talk to the Area leader about how your time and talent can contribute toward one or more of the above goals. And for everyone, please contemplate, pray and especially, listen. Be open to the still, small voice calling us to God's will. It's going to be an exciting year at Redlands United Church of Christ and each one of us is going to be right in the thick of it!

With optimism and hope,

Loring Fiske-Phillips  
President

## **RUCC SABBATICAL**

As most of you know, our senior minister, Rev. Sharon Graff, will be on sabbatical leave May 13, 2008 to August 13, 2008. What most of the RUCC does not fully understand is that we will also be on sabbatical leave at the same time. This will be a time for rest, renewal and study for the church just as it will be for Sharon. Few of us in the RUCC have ever experienced or been offered the opportunity for a sabbatical leave. We know of college professors who have been on sabbatical leave and that is about the extent of our knowledge. When Sharon was negotiating her Call agreement with the search committee, one of the items was a sabbatical leave which is becoming the standard for UCC ministers. The sabbatical grant committee, in the process of writing a proposal for the Lilly Foundation for Sharon, became very much aware that the sabbatical leave was also for the congregation and this was part of the grant proposal. This is much different than for most institutions who grant sabbaticals.

During the church's sabbatical, most of the regular functions, i.e., worship, pastoral care, weddings, memorial services, etc., will continue. This, also, will be a time for rest, renewal and journeying on our pilgrimage. The regular functions will continue under the leadership which we have elected. The special sabbatical activities will be managed and coordinated by the sabbatical committee which has been appointed by the Church Board. The members are Sally Cummings, Barbie Fiske-Phillips, Kristi Campbell, Bill Maury-Holmes and Eric Naftzger, Chairperson. The committee will report to the Church Board regularly and will be using Sharon and Sally Burton as special advisors. Several ideas about the church's sabbatical leave came out of the grant process and the members are excited to pull it all together and begin soon. If you have questions or ideas about this process, feel free to contact any of the committee members or the Church Board members.

## **DONATIONS**

When you are making your cheerful donations, please remember that all checks and cash that are not designated will be deposited to the General Fund. If you wish to give to a special fund, please write that in on the memo line on your checks or put it in one of the white pew envelopes and check the appropriate box. Separate envelopes are usually in the Sunday bulletin for the four special offerings such as the One Great Hour of Sharing on March 2, 2008. Cash collected on the first Sunday, (Communion Sunday) will be deposited to the Pastor's Fund.

Many have asked me about the Minister's Sabbatical Fund. Before the need became widely known, more than \$3,000 was donated. Since the need for this "love Offering" has become commonly known, a few more thousands have been donated. More is still needed to keep from dipping into the Reserve Fund. If you do wish to donate, please remember to note that on the memo line of your check or on the white pew envelope that the offering is for the Sabbatical. Thank you for your help.

Eric Naftzger, Financial Secretary

## Lenten Series

### F.A.I.R. Conversations (Faith And Immigration Reform)

Wednesdays, March 5, 12

6:00-8:00 p.m.

Covenant Hall

**Lenten Soup Suppers welcome All to be Nourished!** Wednesday evenings – March 5 and 12 – 6:00-8:00 p.m. – Covenant Hall. Our Lenten Series will focus on Immigration. Following a delicious soup supper organized by the Shepherd Groups, the discussion will provide a historical, economic, political and social look at the topic of Immigration and will try to tie the issue in with the scriptures. Ed Gomez, RUCC church member and Professor of History at Valley College will be our major presenter. This is an attempt to open up discussion and provide for both intellectual and spiritual growth, on the issue. Please come join us in this important endeavor...bring your soup bowl, silverware and your open spirit. For additional information, contact Sharon Graff, Kathie or Rich Blakley, or Ed Gomez. **All are welcome!**

\* \* \* \* \*

**Another opportunity to study ONA ‘hot buttons’ scriptures** "...the Bible supplies no real basis for the condemnation of homosexuality..." Thus begins Daniel Helminiak's concise presentation of hot-button biblical texts often used to hurt gay and lesbian people. All are invited to a 3-week Bible study in which we will dive deeply into the biblical message--literally and metaphorically--to learn how we can confidently counter such bigotry in our lives. Texts that will guide us are *What the Bible REALLY Says About Homosexuality*, by Daniel Helminiak, and *Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches*, edited by Walter Wink. Both texts are available online, and copies of Wink's book will be available at our first session. **All are welcome** to this series--**Sunday evening, March 2**, from **6:30-8:00 pm** in the **church office**. Facilitators are Rev. John Walsh (Chaplain at the University of Redlands and professor of religion) and Rev. Dr. Sharon Graff. Bring a Bible...and a friend!

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**March 20 – Maundy Thursday Seder Meal and Tenebrae – Reservations appreciated!** Beginning at 6:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall, we will enjoy the distinctive tastes of the Seder (Passover) meal. The evening continues with a brief Tenebrae (darkness) service in which we hear again Jesus' words and conversations leading up to his death. A moment of hope will sustain us until we re-gather on Easter Sunday. **Please make reservations for this service in the church office.** Please RSVP by March 17. All ages are welcome!

## **Sharing Resources, Changing Lives**

One Great Hour of Sharing will be celebrated on Sunday, March 2 by the congregations of the United Church of Christ, along with congregations in eight other denominations.

Your gift on March 2 will offer hope and well-being to people all around the world, helping them to make vital basic improvements in their lives, to overcome poverty, illiteracy, illness, and the dangers of wars and disasters.

This year's theme is "Sharing Resources, Changing Lives." The monetary resources we share will change the lives of people facing violence in Sudan, people suffering from AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, people reeling from devastation in Indonesia, people starving in poverty in India, and people recovering from various disasters around the United States. Sharing our resources really changes lives in more than 80 countries, as the United Church of Christ works with highly effective local mission partners, Church World Service, and Action by Churches Together. UCC Refugee Ministries is totally supported by our annual offering.

On Sunday March 2, bring your offering with you to church. Make checks payable to "Redlands United Church of Christ," and include "One Great Hour of Sharing" on the check's memo line. If you contribute in cash, put it in a special marked offering envelope. If you are unable to be at church on March 2, just mail your gift to the church office. Members of our congregation contributed \$896 in 2006, and \$1,313 in 2007. Our sisters and brothers, who are in desperate need, implore us to open our hearts with even greater generosity in 2008.

## *Events at RUCC...*

First Friday Films  
presents  
"For the Bible Tells Me So"

March 7 at 7:00 p.m.

Can the love between two people ever be an abomination? Is the chasm separating homosexuals and Christianity too wide to cross? How can the Bible be used to justify hate? These are the questions at the heart of Daniel Karlake's documentary film.

### **Prayer Group**

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

### **Meditations to heal the Body & Mind**

Meditation classes will continue on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall. The fee is \$10 per class or five classes for \$40. You can join any classes you like; you don't have to join at the beginning of a series.

### **Citizens' Action for Peace**

Citizens' Action for Peace addresses The Military Recruitment of Youth with a viewing of "Before You Enlist!" on

Sunday, March 9, at 1:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall.

**Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 12:00 p.m.** The Naftzger/Sforza Shepherd group will meet at the Naftzger's home, 660 Walnut Avenue, Redlands.

**All are invited to the Marriage of Aurea Nunez and Ofelia Morales.** Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 p.m. in the RUCC Sanctuary. Auri and Ofe have been part of this family of faith for several years, and now they invite the congregation to celebrate with them as they commit to live together in love for the rest of their lives! All are invited!

**RUCC Book of the Year** Extra! Extra! Get your free copy today. It's hot off the press and available in the gathering area or church office – the 2008 edition of the RUCC Directory. Check out the new officers and area leaders, the members of your Shepherd group and make sure your name, address and birthday is listed correctly. Please report any errors or omissions to the church office.

**Shepherd Groups Welcome All!** All individuals and families are invited to be part of a Shepherd group. If you would like to be included in one of these small, informal groups, please contact Shepherd Co-leaders Carol Buchanan or Sally Cummings.

## MARCH WORSHIP LEADERS

- 2 Floyd Orr
- 9 Denise Cain
- 16 Carla Becerril
- 23
- 30 Loring Fiske-Phillips



## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Seth Wacks  
Jessica Woods
- 6 Linnie Dunn
- 10 Margaret Barnett
- 13 Fred Arth
- 14 Jane Hurley  
Timothy Blakley
- 15 Karen Walsh  
Sandy Peavler  
Pat Kramer
- 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
- 28 Gavin Thrasher
- 29 Ken Hurley  
Soroosh Ehteshami  
Avery Osajima
- 30 Emma Malonelord

## *...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.

### **Installation Service of Rev. Jeanne**

**Favreau-Sorvillo** - The Rev. Jeanne Favreau-Sorvillo will be installed as Pastor on Sunday March 2nd, 3:00pm at Diamond Bar United Church of Christ, 2335 S. Diamond Bar Blvd, Diamond Bar, CA 91765. Color of the day is red ... and if desired, bring a non-perishable food item for their local food bank. All are welcome and heartily invited to attend! Carpooling anyone?

### **Church Women United**

Church Women United, celebrating **World Day of Prayer Theme: "God's Wisdom Provides New Understanding"** on March 7, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 1 W. Olive Avenue, Redlands. Salad Luncheon. Bring a salad or a donation of \$3.00. Bring a friend.

### **Chapman University**

Chapman University Founders Day Celebration will be on March 8, 2008. The guest speakers will be Todd Adams and Mary Donovan Turner. As always, Founders Day will be a great time to celebrate Chapman's dynamic Disciple-

related heritage and will include a chance to meet all the wonderful DOC students. Registration fees are \$30 per person. For further information please call (714) 997-6760 or at [www.chapman.edu](http://www.chapman.edu)

### **Christian Counseling Service**

Christian Counseling Service needs your help, by being the first caring face or voice people meet as they come in to our agency. We are looking for individuals who can greet incoming families and direct incoming calls. Please call 793-1078 for further information

### **Intimate Opera Company presents**

**Gilbert & Sullivan's The Mikado.** Set in the fictional town of Titipu, in a fictional Japan...Staged in the style of a 1940's movie musical with Amanda Colclough as "Peep Bo". For locations, dates, prices and ticket information, please contact Amanda Colclough at [amandacolclough@msn.com](mailto:amandacolclough@msn.com)

**For Sale:** 1998 Saturn station wagon, \$3,000. Please contact Jane Arnegard at (909) 792-2780

Dear Friends,

There is no way we can adequately thank this wonderful congregation for your outpouring of love and support following Don's death. We have been showered with prayers, cards, phone calls, food and the lovely reception.

Don loved you all and often said to me "I'm so glad we found this church". Our whole family agrees.

With our love to you all,

Jane Arnegard and family

### **March Scripture Readings**

March 2:                    *Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41*  
March 9:                    *Psalms 23; Ezekiel 37:1-14; John 11:1-45;*  
                                  *Readings from the Celtic Christian tradition*  
March 16:                   *Psalms 118:1-2, 19-29; Matthew 21:1-11*  
March 23 :                 *Jeremiah 31:1-6; John 20:1-18; Gospel of Mary 5:1-10*  
March 30:                 *1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31*

Minister – Rev. Dr. Sharon R. Graff  
Organist/Choir Director – Dr. Taylor Ruhl  
Handbell Director – Craig Colclough  
Youth Director – Craig Colclough  
Education Director – Amanda Colclough  
Administrative Assistant – Carla Becerril  
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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