

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

October 2008

Contemplative Worship Service – 8:00 a.m.

Worship Service – 10:30 a.m.

Sundays, October 5, 12, 19 and 26

Communion Sunday - Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, October 5

The Prayer Group will meet Mondays, October 6, 13, 20 and 27

at 10:30 a.m. in the Choir Room

Bible 102 will meet the 2nd and 4th Mondays

7 p.m. in the CE area

Church Board will meet Tuesday, October 14

at 7:00 p.m. in the church office

The Sandwich Group will meet on Tuesday, October 21

at 12:00 p.m. in the Pastor's office

Stewards will meet on Tuesday, October 28

at 7:00 p.m. in the church office

Celebration Ringers rehearsal on Thursdays, 6:15 p.m.

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

Brown Bag/Game Day

Sunday, October 26 at 12:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall

Middle school and High school youth group

October meetings ~ check www.facebook.com ~ RUCC Youth Group

From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

*“But ask the animals, and they will teach you;
the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.”
—Job 12:7-8*

Several months ago, John and I were invited by our nephew Scott to lead a 2-part workshop on what the Bible says about the environment. This would be part of a weekend EarthFest, held at the Burpee Museum of Natural History in John’s hometown of Rockford, Illinois. Some of you may recall that Scott is himself a budding paleontologist, and he has planned several such weekend events to introduce his midwestern community to all-things-dinosaur. This particular event was to be the first-ever to focus attention on earth, ecology, and the environment. At the time we agreed to be the “resident theologians,” EarthFest (scheduled for the weekend of September 26th) was one of a number of tasks that were lumped into the rather large category of “after sabbatical...”

For the workshop, Scott first told us he wanted a little theology thrown in with a good dose of environmental ethics. Check. Then he told us we’d have an hour each day, for a total of two hours. Check. Then we discovered that we were also to talk about specific scriptural directives regarding caring for the earth. Check (with a sigh of gratitude to all my previous Hebrew and Christian scripture professors!). Finally, just this past week, we learned that the time frame was changing, and we’d actually have 30 minutes one day, and 45 minutes the next. GULP!

The reduced timeframe motivated me to find concise scriptures and relevant theological quotes. I happened upon the two verses quoted above from the book of Job. At first glance, they appear downright Celtic—appreciating the earth and all creation as fellow-travelers—looking to the animals and plants as teachers. The larger context of these two verses, unfortunately, is sarcasm. Job is responding to one of his so-called friends, who has been trying in vain to convince Job that he deserves all the pain and suffering he’s endured. That God is trying to test him. That he just needs to admit his guilt in order to coerce God into restoring his fortunes and his family. Job has had enough of this sad theology. In the verses prior to those quoted above, Job acknowledges that he is a laughingstock in the community. Check. In our two verses above, Job is sarcastically (and rhetorically) admitting that even the animals and plants and fish and birds know that God is, indeed, the source of his suffering. Check and GULP!

God as the source of suffering? We like to think of God as one whose goodness is known through nature—through the song of the birds, the swiftness of the animals, the color and texture of the plants. But here, in the starkness of Job’s depressing life situation, nature (and the God who calls it into being) is not vibrant and life-giving at all. Job’s spirit is in need of someone to blame, and who better to take it, than God? Read the rest of Job’s story, and you will see that he continues his blaming and accusatory stance with God, and that, eventually, God responds with a bit of divine rhetoric and sarcasm.

An interesting story, so relevant to our roller-coaster moments in life: beginning with suffering, acknowledging the presence of God in nature, and finally appreciating the nature of God with us...always... Check!

Blessings,

Sharon

October 2008

October is a “together” month—Worldwide Communion Sunday, the wonderfully creative Art Show weekend, a Sunday to honor ancestors, and this year, a special Sunday to bless our animal companions—each Sunday is a day to be inspired by the power of “together.” When we worship God together we experience the sacred and creative power of community to transform—to transform thoughts, behavioral patterns, even entire paradigms and systems. As a covenant community, we are perhaps more acutely aware of the significance of our gathering times. When we gather, we hear each other’s joys and concerns, and so our community is strengthened. When we are together, we sing songs of praise and hymns of reflection, and so our faith grows. When we gather together, we hear and speak about our experiences of the divine, and so our hope is kindled. Thus we continue the journey—God with us—one step, one prayer, one song, one laugh, one tear, one hug or handshake or smile at a time together.

October 5 – “Just a Bunch of Grapes” – Worldwide Communion Sunday and Welcoming New Members

Isaiah 5:1-7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; Matthew 21:33-46

While our world news is dominated by factions and fighting, while our governments seem to prefer operating out of and generating fear among their citizens, God seems obsessed with bringing disparate parties together at common meals. Children and adults, humans and the rest of creation, females and males, God sees no partiality and offers no isolation of one from the other. Scripture is annoyingly persistent in presenting the whole of creation as just that, WHOLE, connected, intertwined. Today, of all days in the Christian calendar, is a microcosm of that connectedness, as we focus the lens of faith on the table in which millions of Christians share the same meal on the same day. A place will be set for you—be here! We will be welcoming several friends as new covenanting members during the morning worship service and also receiving the annual Neighbors in Need offering. ***You are invited to bring an item from another country to place on the altar for the morning service.***

October 12 – “Four-Legged Teachers” – Blessings of Our Animal Companions

Exodus 32:1-14; Psalm 23; John 10:1-10

For several years now, our body has been asking for a special service where our animal companions would be welcomed and receive blessing. Chances are, with our creative group, the humans will also receive a blessing or two from the animals! Come to share this two-way blessing street, as God speaks this morning through all of us animals! Be sure to bring your special (well-behaved, secured!) animal companions! If your animal companion is not able to join us for this service, please bring their picture or a stuffed animal to represent your animal companion. Beginning inside for singing, we will move outside for blessing.

October 19 – “For Heaven’s Sake!”

Genesis 1 & 2, selections; John 10:10; John 15:11; 2 John 4-6

Art, for Heaven’s Sake...and for ours...and for others, too! Our facilities and gardens are overflowing with creativity this weekend, so it only seems right that worship also focuses on the creative, the gifts, and the joy that emanates from our Creator God. What is your master piece—your creative work into which you have poured much energy? We all have one—perhaps it is a poem, a letter, a clay sculpture, or a child all grown up. Let us join together to thank God for all the Master’s-Pieces of this special day!

October 26 – Day of the Dead – “Circles, and Dolmens, and Cairns, Oh My!”

Isaiah 61:1-3 (litany inserted in bulletin); Romans 8:9-11, 31-39; Matthew 11:28-30

Once again, we honor the presence of God in the lives of our dearly departed loved ones. In the tradition of Reformation Sunday, All Hallows’ Eve, Samhein, Halloween, and Dias de los Muertos, we will honor those who have already crossed over. So many traditions claim this as a very special day in the cycle of the year, a day when the spirits of those passed away seem mysteriously closer, a day of giving thanks for those who paved the way for our lives. As we fondly remember what we learned from them and loved about them, this is a day to speak of death, not as the end, but as yet another beginning with God. With song and through prayer, we shall gently place these loved ones on the sacred altar, asking the Divine to continue blessing our lives through their influence. Playing and praying will be intertwined in this service, as they are in life and in death. Come to celebrate life!

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

—Sharon R. Graff

President's Message

It reminded me of the Great Hall at Hogwarts. The familiar space had been magically transformed into a feasting room, complete with a huge wall-to-wall table, colorful tablecloths, and sumptuous food and drink spread from corner to corner. Even Dumbeldore gazed upon us from the doorway.

Opening session at the familiar School of Witchcraft and Wizardry? Nope. This was the scene in the church office as we welcomed more than a dozen fascinating individuals to learn more about membership at Redlands UCC. Hosted by the gracious Church Life and Church Growth Areas, I sat spellbound as I learned about these charming people, their spiritual journeys and what motivated them to come to RUCC. And I'm not just referring to the newcomers! I was equally captivated by the stories from the various church board members present, Pastor Sharon, and even my own recollections.

This was one of the highlights of my experience so far as President. Our Great Hall rang with the sounds of "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here." The journeys were varied, the motivations were diverse, and the love and acceptance were solid as a Rock. You won't be surprised to learn that a common thread running through the stories around the table involved people. People who invited someone to join them at church, people who noticed that someone was new and welcomed them warmly, people who were role models and lived the values prevalent in this church. Just like in the familiar rhyme, we opened the doors and saw all the people.

On October 5th, we will welcome many of these newer folks into covenantal membership with RUCC. Probably not all ... membership may not be part of their current place on the journey. This may not be the place their hearts align with. Our community is like a V-formation of birds flying along. People join in, take turns sharing in leadership, find comfort in the flock, and sometimes even take off to fly along a different path.

In the coming weeks, take time to get to know our fellow travelers. Learn what winds are beneath their wings. Feel what subtle shifts in direction our new flock might be taking. And, as you feel their heartbeat next to yours, gaze out at the horizon and the wide open sky above, and be open to the unlimited opportunities that await us all.

With optimism and hope,
Loring Fiske-Phillips

Events at RUCC...

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!

First Friday Film

Join us on Friday, October 3 at 7:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall to view the documentary, *Hacking Democracy*. Electronic voting machines count about 87% of the votes cast in America today. But are they reliable? Are they safe from tampering? From a current congressional hearing to persistent media reports that suggest misuse of data and even outright fraud, concerns over the integrity of electronic voting are growing by the day. And if the voting process is not secure, neither is America's democracy. The timely, cautionary documentary *Hacking Democracy* exposes gaping holes in the security of America's electronic voting system.

Alpha Bible Study

Alpha Bible Study Group is meeting again, now that the vacations are over. We will try to keep it on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. We will continue to discuss the Gospel of Luke. Newcomers are very welcome!

OCTOBER WORSHIP LEADERS

5	Floyd Orr
12	Charlie Wheeler
19	Sarah Fiske-Phillips
26	Janet Wilson

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

1	Douglas Ray Childers-Benz
2	Doug Macomber
3	Colleen Kintner
4	Noah Sforza
5	Genevieve Wolbert
6	Lauren Barton
7	Karlene Tripp
11	Eric Naftzger
12	Dianne Landeros
13	Kathie Blakley D. Hester Dazore' Bradford
14	Jolene Tripp
17	Jo Anna Grant
18	Denise Cain
21	Beth Kolpien
23	Fred Nicoloff
24	Loren Barnett Thomas Miller
26	Joanna Schroeder
27	Mina Ryan
28	Lisa Arth Loring Fiske-Phillips Austin Shamp
29	Whitney Sforza
30	Lora Hall Rick Sforza

STEP BY STEP

A COMMUNITY REENTRY COALITION

To help our parolees reenter our community in Redlands, we are starting a new project at this time, assisting children of parolees by providing school supplies to be used at home or at school. We depend on donations to achieve this goal, and would very much appreciate any of the following items:

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Pencils
Erasers
Rulers
Crayons
Markers
Colored pencils
Pencil sharpeners
Glue sticks
Scissors
Pads of lined paper
Pads of unlined paper
Tissues
Back packs

SECONDARY SCHOOL

Lined or graph paper
Pencils/extra lead
Erasers
Pens
Notebooks
Binders/folders/tab dividers
Crayons/colored pencils
Calculator
Protractors
Compasses
Rulers
Pocket English dictionaries
English to language dictionaries
Tissues
Back packs

For more information or if you need something to be picked up, please call Peggy Power at 909-792-9676. Please leave a message and I will return your call.

Save the date – Make a joyful noise! Come for a multigenerational and multicultural day at The Congregational Christian, UCC at 15750 Los Altos Dr., Hacienda Heights. Saturday, November 1, 2008. Registration begins at 9:00 a.m. If you would like to purchase lunch it is \$10. Please RSVP to Jeanne Halverson at (909)445-9144 (Please call in RSVP by Oct. 24) **ALSO: Ecclesiastical Council** for Mr. Lenny Anderson. All are welcome!

...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

The CWU will meet on Friday, October 3 at the First Baptist Church at 51 W. Olive Avenue in Redlands. The topic will be "Human Trafficking." Guest speaker will be Mrs. Vi Wiant. Bring a friend!

Installation of the Rev. Loletta M. Barrett

The Eastern Association of the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ in cooperation with Bloomington Congregational UCC invite your presence and prayers as we celebrate the service of Installation of Bloomington's Pastor and Teacher, Rev. Loletta M. Barrett and confirmation of our Covenant of Ministry. To be held on Sunday, October 29, 2008 at 3:00 p.m. Bloomington Congregational UCC, 18490 Santa Ana Avenue, Bloomington, CA. You are requested to RSVP by October 15, 2008 at the church voice mail at 909-877-0341.

The Bible: Balm or Bomb?

A retreat led by The Rev. Dr. Robert Moore, National President, Disciplined Order of Christ. Professor Emeritus, New Testament & Theology, Asbury College. October 10-12, 2008. Mission San Luis Rey, Oceanside, California. A Ministry of the Disciplined Order of Christ, Western Region. Will God's written word contribute to peace or inflame holy war? Abraham and Sarah's faith and their holy books shape the future of the violent Middle East and the faith of a majority of the world's people. **Rev. Dr. Professor Robert Moore**, national President of the Disciplined Order of Christ will respond to the question: **The Bible: Balm or Bomb?** Dr. Moore is Professor Emeritus of New Testament and Theology at Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky. Registration information is available in the church office.

Keyboard Spectacular

Sunday, October 12 at 7:00 p.m., St. John's Lutheran Church will present a Keyboard Spectacular! Renee Cahill, William Heidi, Ellen Kim, Charles Raasch and Elisa Schaffer will present pieces on the harpsichord, organ and piano. The sanctuary is located at 185 S. Center Street in downtown Orange. There is no charge, but a freewill offering will be taken.

October Scripture Readings

October 5: *Isaiah 5:1-7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; Matthew 21:33-46*
 October 12: *Exodus 32:1-14; Psalm 23; John 10:1-*
 October 19: *Genesis 1 & 2, selections; John 10:10; John 15:11, 2 John 4-6*
 October 26: *Isaiah 61:1-3; Romans 8:9-11, 31-39; Matthew 11:28-30*

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
 Sunday Child Care – Leah Lane
 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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