

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

January 2009

Contemplative Worship Service and Communion – 8:00 a.m.

Worship Service – 10:30 a.m.

Sundays, January 4, 11, 18 and 25

Communion - Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, January 4

The Prayer Group will meet Mondays, December 5, 12, 19 and 26
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, January 13

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

The Sandwich Group will meet on Tuesday, January 20

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

Stewards will meet twice in January. Tuesdays, January 6 and January 27

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.

Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 25 at 12:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall

Middle school and High school youth group

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

From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

*“...The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;
and the favor of God was upon him...”
—From Luke 2:40*

If there is any one verse that cryptically describes the liturgical season of Epiphany, it is this one from the gospel according to Luke. In one short passage, we move quickly from the shepherds' fields and magi's visit to a view of Jesus as a blossoming young man. No toddler Jesus. No young child on his first day of Sabbath school. No Jesus playing games with his neighborhood friends. These years in Jesus' life between infancy and 12, and then again from 12 to about 30, are accurately referred to by scholars as “the lost years.” Theories abound as to what Jesus was up to during those periods of time. Was he learning his father Joseph's carpenter trade? Was he, in the supposed absence of his father, financially supporting his mother, brothers, and sisters? Was he traveling the world—learning various mystical religions practiced in the first century of the Common Era? Simple truth: we do not know. What we do know, is that the church, in its earnest desire to focus on the life of the historical Jesus, created an entire season of the church year to do just that.

That season is now upon us...and it is called “Epiphany.” From the Latin *epiphania*, the word means “an appearance or manifestation” usually of a divine being. Epiphany can also be translated as “to show,” referring to a sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something; a revealing moment; an intuitive grasp of reality through something usually simple and striking (to quote Merriam-Webster). Thus Epiphany is something that both a) happens to us, and b) happens in us. We experience “Epiphany the Season” as we learn about the teachings and life and purposes of Jesus of Nazareth. AND we experience “Epiphany the Transformation” as we recognize its gifts within and for ourselves.

Let me be less obtuse! Every year, for the past few years, we here at Redlands UCC, have each selected an Epiphany word on the first Sunday of the new year...Epiphany Sunday. That word may be “love” or “patience” or “adventure” or “trust” or “relaxation” or “prayer” or any one of a number of descriptive lessons of the Spirit. On that Sunday—this year, January 4th—and for several Sundays throughout the Epiphany Season, the selection of that word inevitably is accompanied by a glimmer of wonder written on your face. I delight in hearing throughout the year of how that word—that special Epiphany word—works on you and through you and in you to bring about some helpful change. My word for 2008 was “beauty” and I can assure you that, during this sabbatical year just passed and thanks to the focus brought by that Epiphany word, my spirit has been repeatedly blessed by the beauty of Ireland, Scotland, Stonehenge, the Domehome where I live, and in the lives and spirits of you, my beloved sisters and brothers in faith!

As I write this article at our geodesic domehome in Angelus Oaks, I am looking out the window onto the breathtaking results of the latest winter storm. The sun is shining (finally and thankfully!) and its rays are accentuating the ice particles that have formed on the ends of the needles on a nearby pine tree. The overall effect is sparkling, radiant, and light-giving in and of itself. The needles covered with icy glow, create a sort of halo around their respective branches.

I believe Epiphany can be like that. The glow from the manger reaches through the life and ministry of the One we call Christ, and reaches all the way to each one of us, surrounding us and illuminating our spirits with its sparkling and revealing messages. Come to church during Epiphany...a special word awaits your touch.

Blessings,

Sharon

2009 Covenants...Gratefully Being Received...Still!

If you are intending to covenant with Redlands UCC in membership for calendar year 2009 please know that the leaders mightily appreciate receiving your covenants soon! We are a church community that bases our programs and ministry on the Spirit's nudges through the covenants; we are also a small business that needs to plan a responsible budget for our life together. And your voice is a necessary part of that covenantal journey! Covenants that are written may be turned in anytime, by placing them on the altar in worship or in the pastor's office during the week. Covenants may also be conveyed verbally by making an appointment with the pastor. THANKS!

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL LUNCHEON MEETING

SUNDAY ~ JANUARY 25th ~ NOON

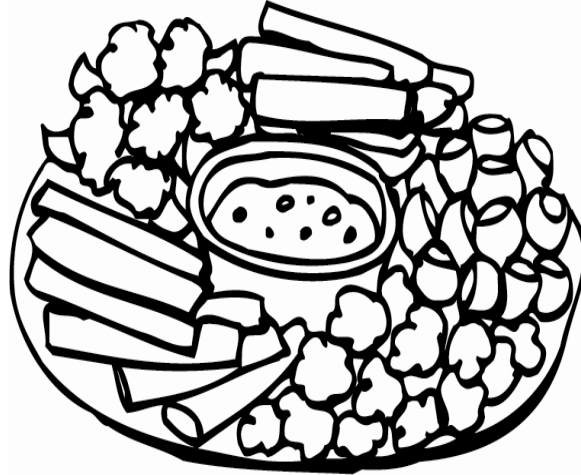
Save the date and plan to participate!

~ Nominating 2009 Officers and Leaders ~

~ Discussion and adopting the 2009 Church Budget ~

~ Recognizing special leaders in 2008 ~

FUN, FOOD, FRIENDSHIP...we promise!



Worship Themes for Epiphany 2009

*“On your feet now—applaud God!
Bring a gift of laughter, sing yourselves into God’s presence...”
—From Psalm 100:2 (The Message Bible)*

Welcome to Epiphany! This liturgical season is squeezed in-between the well-known seasons of Advent/Christmas in December and the season of Lent that later prepares us for Holy Week and Easter. The two “bookends” of Epiphany are both preparatory seasons, in that they are designed to be reflective, quiet, and spiritually inward-looking. They prepare us first for the birth of Christ and later for his death and resurrection. Two dramatic moments in a life that, otherwise, might have been forgotten by history. Epiphany is that in-between time...that time in which we gaze again upon the ministry and teachings of Christ, but in an abbreviated, almost punctuated format. In these two months—January and February—we see Jesus bounding here and traveling there, healing and teaching, moving, always moving. You are invited, busy people that you are, to travel with Jesus as your Epiphany companion. Special Note: the worship themes for January 4, 11, and 25 are “liberated” (!) from the book, *Love and Death*, by Forrest Church. Their author is, as of this writing, living with a very aggressive form of cancer, and (as pastor of All Souls Church in NYC for the past 30 years) has much to say about conscious and intentional living.

January 4 – “Want What You Have” – Communion Sunday

Jeremiah 31:7-14; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:10-18

Our focus today will be on the first of the three parts of this “mantra for life” developed by Dr. Forrest Church of All Souls Church in New York City: wanting what we have. When viewed through the lens of the scriptures, it is clear that what we have from God is grace. Graceful leading. Graceful giving. Graceful forgiving. Graceful knowledge. Yet Dr. Church also speaks quite practically and tangibly about the “stuff” of our lives—houses, cars, relationships, toys, accumulated wealth—the whole grace-full bag of it. As has become our practice, Epiphany words will be distributed for your choosing today (see pastor’s article for a brief reminder of their purpose). A great way to start the New Year!

January 11 – “Do What You Can”

Genesis 1:1-5; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

Three distinct stories—creation, an early church membership campaign, and the baptism of Jesus—with four unique main characters: God, Paul the Apostle, John the Baptizer, and Jesus of Nazareth; that’s what today’s scriptures offer us. Together they invite us to explore the second part of the “mantra for life” by seeing that, even the main characters in holy scripture are limited in what they can do. Perhaps in their stories we can find hope for our own?

January 18 – Honoring of the Vision of Martin Luther King, Jr. – Rev. John Walsh, preaching

1 Samuel 3:1-10; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51

On this annual national celebration of the birthday of The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., our scriptures each point to the challenge we believers face when faced with the telling of difficult news. Can we learn to move beyond our concern about consequences, as did Samuel, Paul, Jesus, and Martin, and communicate our progressive faith with honesty and forthrightness? Our resident college chaplain, John Walsh, will help us.

January 25 – “Be Who You Are”

Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Mark 1:14-20

As we explore the third part of the “mantra for life,” we will find help from Jonah, God, Jesus, and a few of the first called disciples. Perhaps we will find that being who we are is much more than an ad slogan or a new-age quip. Perhaps it is exactly what God intended from the first word of creation.

Worship will be deeper and richer with your presence as we experience together the Spirit’s movement among us.

—Sharon R. Graff

President's Message

New Year's resolutions are a lot more fun to make than they are to keep. If that weren't the case, fitness centers would have to charge \$5,000 a year to the people who actually use them.

In some ways, the thought process to developing resolutions is similar to developing covenants. That is, they both require thinking about what changes and opportunities the new year can offer. But are they the same thing? I don't think so.

Resolutions are brought about in solitude. They are a result of a conversation with oneself. Covenants are developed from a conversation with God, a power higher than ourselves.

Resolutions require personal willpower. They rely mainly on our internal fortitude. Covenants are strengthened from beyond ourselves. They are empowered by God and by our faith community.

Resolutions are important. They are things that matter in our daily lives. Covenants transcend our daily lives and are important to our souls. They are part of the fabric of our lives.

As 2009 unfolds, I urge us to hold our covenants in the same sacred place as when we were developing them. They were forged from holy materials and they will be kept strong from the same power that guided us when we were co-creating them. Our covenant community will grow from the individual and collective promises that keep us together. And the fabric that is woven from so many parts will create a sacred work of art.

Happy New Year!

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!

Shepherd Leaders Meeting

The Shepherd leaders will meet on Sunday, January 4th at 12:00 p.m. in the Church Office.

UCC 101

UCC 101 will meet January 11th at 1:00 p.m. in the Church Office.

Come Hear "The Pitch"

Sunday, January 11th at 12:15 pm. You've seen it before. An organization appoints a long range planning committee that comes up with a report showing where the organization will be in one year, five years, ten years. What programs it will offer, what staffing it needs, etc. Well, in typical fashion, RUCC is not going to do standard long range planning (do we do anything in the "usual" way?). We have the framework for a committee that's interested in managing our future, not necessarily planning it. We are a community that loves to take up projects that grab our hearts. Our dynamic congregation sees a need and sets out to meet it with

enthusiasm that is contagious enough to be successful. However, since that's our culture, there are things we can do now that will empower our success in the future. For example, what resources would be helpful to take advantage of service opportunities? What money, space and people do we need to act nimbly when progressive needs capture our hearts? It's been said that luck is the intersection of planning and opportunity. This committee is basically going to make some luck! Sound like something you'd like to be involved in? Please join us for further discussion on January 11th at 1pm. We're calling it "The Pitch" because it's an idea at this point. Who knows where it will lead? Be there ... and be a part of it!

JANUARY WORSHIP LEADERS

4	Floyd Orr
11	Karen Walsh
18	Gavin Thrasher
25	Rosemary Tuohy

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1	Mahshid Ehteshami
11	Maryanne Ashton
12	Brad Beswick Richard Blakley
13	Tammy Benz-Blumberg
16	Christine Nicoloff
21	Evan Hughes
23	Ty Schuiling
29	Jacob Fiske-Phillips

Immigration Forum

The topic of immigration in our country is a complex one. An Immigration Steering Committee has invited local UCC churches to participate in meetings at Redlands United Church of Christ over the past several months as a response to a charge from the greater United Church of Christ to prayerfully consider immigration issues in our country. Goals of the steering committee have included providing materials and educational opportunities so that our congregations can become more educated about immigration issues.

Another goal is an eventual joint trip to Centro Romero (www.theromero.com), located on the US-Mexican border, for a one day, or three day immersion experience. The trips provide people with an opportunity to examine and struggle with questions related to immigration policy, free trade (NAFTA), labor conditions, human rights, environmental and health issues, US Mexican relations, and the connections between economic structures, poverty, and environmental destruction. There are also two upcoming events that you are invited to attend:

On **Sunday, January 11th at 2:00 pm**, lawyer **Eileen Chun-Fruto** will speak at **First Congregational United Church of Christ, San Bernardino**. Ms. Chun-Fruto works at

Fong and Chun, LLP. It is a law firm in the Hollywood area of Los Angeles that is devoted exclusively to the practice of immigration and nationality law. She will give us an overview of the sorts of complicated struggles that immigrants face in navigating the steps required to obtain immigrant visas. We will be inviting people from other area UCC churches and we hope you will plan to be there to hear Ms. Chun-Fruto speak. It promises to be very enlightening and interesting.

And, here at **Redlands United Church of Christ**, there will be a screening of "Under the Same Moon" on **Friday, January 16th at 7:00 PM in Covenant Hall**. The movie tells the story of a woman, working illegally in the United States in order to make a better life for her nine year old son. The son misses his mother and stows away on a van that is heading for the border. The journey turns treacherous when the little boy becomes separated from his smugglers. These two events promise to give our congregations an opportunity to learn and dialogue together about these important issues.

Those who participated in our Lenten Series this past year asked for more education around these complex issues of immigration. Please support the work of the Immigration Task Group with your participation!

...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.

Faith and Film Class

The course is offered by Peace & Faith in conjunction with the Whitehead International Film Festival and is presented by Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki. January 16-19, 2009. Cost \$300 (\$250 P&F members) Includes admission to all films, opening reception/dinner, 2 other dinners. For more information call 909.447.2559 Website is www.processandfaith.org. E-mail: office@procesandfaith.org

Church Vitality 2009

The 2009 Church Vitality Event's theme is "Worshiping into your Church's Future", and will focus on the imaginative new ways UCC churches are reaching new people in SCNC and elsewhere. The 2009 Vitality Event will also offer workshops on related subjects and other forms of worship from SCNC churches. The event is scheduled **January 30 & 31, 2009** at the Ontario Airport Marriott

Hotel. For more information go to <http://scncucc.org/ChurchVitality/ChurchVitality2009.htm>

Jesus Seminar on the Road

Archaeology & the Origins of Christianity. Presented by Milton C. Moreland & Jonathan L. Reed. March 6-7, 2009. All events at: Irvine United Congregational Church. Registration Fee: All sessions: Pre-registration (by Feb. 13, 2009) \$60. Registration (after Feb 13, 2009) \$75. Additional family member \$50. Single Sessions: Friday evening lecture \$20. Saturday morning workshop \$30. Saturday afternoon workshop \$30. For information contact: Westar Institute (877) 523-3545.

Call to 27th General Synod

The 27th General Synod of the United Church of Christ will convene Friday afternoon, June 26, 2009 in Grand Rapids, Michigan and will adjourn at the close of business on Tuesday evening, June 30. The theme for this year's Synod will be "Immerse Yourself!" Guest registration opens in December and there will be instructions for registering on the website at this time. Please join us in Grand Rapids and "immerse yourself!"

January Scripture Readings

January 4: *Jeremiah 31:7-14; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:10-18*
 January 11: *Genesis 1:1-5; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11*
 January 18: *1 Samuel 3:1-10; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51*
 January 25: *Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Mark 1:14-20*

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
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Pastor Emeritus – Rev. Richard Blakley



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