

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

February 2009

Contemplative Worship Service and Communion – 8:00 a.m.
Worship Service – 10:30 a.m.
Sundays, February 1, 8, 15 and 22

Communion - Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
Sunday, February 1

The Prayer Group will meet Mondays, February 2, 9, 16 and 23
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 Retreat - Tuesday, February 10,
5:30 p.m. in Covenant Hall

The Sandwich Group will meet on Tuesday, February 17
at 12:00 p.m. in the Pastor's office

Stewards will meet Tuesday, February 24
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.

Middle school and High school youth group
February meetings ~ check www.facebook.com ~ RUCC Youth Group

From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

"I am still learning..."
—Michelangelo

Urban (and ancient!) legend attributes this phrase to the well-known Renaissance painter, poet, sculptor, and architect, Michelangelo. Some sources suggest that he said it in his late-80s. Whether or not Michelangelo ever really repeated this maxim is, to us, unknown and unknowable. What I find intriguing is the possibility that he really did believe that he was still learning—even after having crafted David and Pieta and after having painted the Sistine Chapel Ceiling and completed most of the great works of art for which he is now known. At a time in our lives when most of us would consider our careers over, here is a man who continued the learning process with great apparent passion.

This morning, while preparing to come to the office, I was considering how very long the Epiphany season is this year. Epiphany, you may recall, is the season when we ponder the arrival of light—and especially seek to be attentive to the light of Christ as it dawns on or radiantly illumines each of our souls. Normally Epiphany is squeezed into just a few weeks, but this year, gloriously, it offers us eight full weeks of pondering...that's a lot of illumination!

I began to notice in myself a sort of spiritual "itching"—a desire to "just get on with it..." To leave the pondering and the illumination behind, and move into something more active. Perhaps it's the economy...with more lay-offs and increasing stress in every family with whom I speak. Perhaps it's the occupation in Iraq—indefensible from any moral standpoint. Perhaps it's the continuing bickering on our own Capitol Hill in DC or the immense job ahead of us to rebuild our reputation as a nation among nations in the international family. I don't know the source of the itchiness. I only know that, when I realized we still have a whole other month to be illuminated...well, I wanted to run for cover!

Then I thought of Michelangelo...and that annoying quote we've all seen on any number of t-shirts. And I wondered if he just might have something of substance to say to us on this lengthier-than-normal journey. Perhaps his wisdom might suggest to us that we take it a bit easy. Pace ourselves. Find satisfaction in each job completed, whether it be an easy sketch or a chapel's ceiling. Perhaps this artist, poet, architect, and painter might want to inspire us to survey many topics rather than to obsess on only one. Branch out. See the world...or at least some part of it that is new to you. Read something on a subject you've never yet explored.

In a word or two...keep learning.

Perhaps I shall have to join you in giving thanks for this longer-than-normal illumination season...and perhaps, in the gratitude itself, we shall all quietly step out of the shadows and move boldly into the light of this new day.

Happy Epiphany...still!

Blessings,

Sharon

***“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.

February 1 – Communion Sunday – “Gifts Galore!” – Loring Fiske-Phillips, preacher

Psalm 111; Mark 1:21-28

Newly installed as RUCC President for a second term, Loring will offer the morning message. Born and raised in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), which coincidentally celebrates communion each and every Sunday (and sometimes in between!), Loring has much of value to say about this holy meal. Come to hear...stay to eat!

February 8 – “First Century Health Care”

Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; Mark 1:29-39

The scholars of the Jesus Seminar claim that Jesus’ fame spread like wildfire precisely because he provided healing for those without resources. Thus people traveled for miles to get to this “doctor.” As our nation embarks, again, on the health care discussion, we may find inspiration from this first-century health care plan.

February 15 – “Secrets Not Worth Keeping”

2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 30; Mark 1:40-45

In a rather counterintuitive way, healing and secrecy go hand in hand in today’s passages. A leprous foreigner is made whole through the Hebrew prophet Elisha and is told to keep quiet; Jesus touches a leper with immediate healing and tells him to tell no one; in contrast, the psalmist shouts out praise to God for his/her own healing. It would seem that God’s practice of healing challenges us to keep quiet... or does it?

February 22 – “The WOW Factor”

2 Kings 2:1-15; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Mark 9:2-9

If the disciples of Elisha and Jesus had spent more time faithfully and carefully reading their psalms, they might not have been so shocked when their master teachers turned on the wow factor! God’s dramatic flair is clear throughout scripture, but seldom is it more theatrical than in today’s stories. With their whirlwinds and parting waters, their chariots and horses of fire, their dazzling clothes and dead men talking, well, they make quite a sight. They also invite us to ponder just who is this God we serve?

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

When Sharon and I presented the "Looking Ahead to 2009" segment of the Annual Meeting on January 25th, I started with the statement "We have an exciting, Spirit-filled year of growth and opportunity ahead of us at Redlands United Church of Christ!" I had written that the night before without any idea of what an exciting, spirit-filled event the Annual Meeting itself was going to be!

Redlands UCC is ready to take on some big challenges in 2009 and the Annual Meeting was the culmination of weeks of conversation to decide what the year will look like. There were numerous meetings with Personnel, Stewards, the Church Board, Shepherds and their flocks, and open congregational meetings. Some folks might call those efforts "planning" but it was not so much a planning effort as it was a discerning effort. And really, not so much a discerning effort as it was a contemplative effort. It's almost like our congregation already knew what it wants to do, no, *needs* to do in 2009 and just needed to sit with that for a while.

We have set in motion an ambitious plan that, among other things, will bring us an Associate Pastor and begin providing health and retirement options for our greater-than-halftime employees. We are going to be challenged logistically and financially to bring this to fruition. But, at every meeting leading up to the Annual Meeting, I heard time and again that we *can* do it; we *must* do it. There was no doubt in any of those voices, only resolve.

It was that resolve, that confidence, that willingness to take on and accomplish difficult goals that permeated the Annual Meeting. Everyone looked at the chart that showed the difference between projected income and projected expenses and voted. The chorus of "ayes" was strong, resolute, confident, optimistic, and ready to accomplish that which we all knew we needed. Not someone else's plan for us; not a straw proposal put together by a committee; not a pie-in-the-sky hopeful dream; but rather, a fundamental expression of *who we are*. It's a roadmap to a place we are all familiar with, and a place we can get to with our eyes closed: our home.

This *is* an exciting, Spirit-filled time and as RUCC turns the page for the 34th time to a new chapter, we are warmed by the memory of the many pages that have gone before. The story is new yet ancient. It is invigorating yet comforting. It is challenging yet supportive. And, as our lives become the words on the pages, together, we seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.

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!

Alpha Bible Study

Alpha Bible Study Group will meet on Tuesday, February 3rd at the home of Galilee Glanville and on February 17th at the home of Dorothy Landeros. All are welcome!

Naftzger/Sforza Shepherd Group

The Naftzger/Sforza Shepherd Group will meet Sunday, February 8, at 12:00 p.m. for a salad potluck. It will be held at Eric and Valerie's home, 660 Walnut Avenue, Redlands.

Col. Ann Wright

Col. Ann Wright will be speaking on Tuesday, February 17 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Ann is a retired US Diplomat and 29 year Army Veteran who resigned the day we first bombed Iraq. She coauthored the book "Dissent: Voices of Conscience". Please come and invite friends.

First Friday Film

February 6, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. "Crossing Arizona" examines the crisis through the eyes of those directly affected by it. Humanitarian groups place water stations in the desert in an attempt to save lives. Farmers who depend on the illegal work force face each day with the fear that they may lose their workers to a border patrol sweep. Minutemen, an armed citizen patrol group taking border security into their own hands. As up to date as the nightly news, but far more in-depth, "Crossing Arizona" reveals the surprising political stances people take when immigration and border policy fails everyone.

Hymn Sing

Save the date! Feb. 22 at 2:00 p.m. Please join our brothers and sisters from FCUCC in San Bernardino and Mentone UCC as we gather in the RUCC Sanctuary to experience the Divine through music in a good old-fashioned hymn sing. Plan for about 60 minutes of singing followed by treats and fellowship in Covenant Hall.

SING!

New singers are always welcome in the Covenant Choir. Please think about joining. See Taylor Ruhl, our music director, for more details. Rehearsals are Thursday at 7:30 p.m.

Romero Center

The RUCC Immigration Committee is planning a one-day Immersion Trip to the Mexican Border at San Ysidro through our Conference's Romero Center. The trip will be on Feb. 28, 2009. The one-day fee is \$55, and scholarship help is available. If you're interested, please contact Ed Gomez or Rev. Graff for more information and details (and scholarship help). It will be a great experience!

Simplify...Simplify...Simplify

In an effort to follow her own good advice and simplify life in this new year, Rev. Dr. Sharon Graff will be ending her use of the domehome account and using her pastor email account exclusively. Please continue to write to her spouse John Sweeney at domehome8@verizon.net and to Sharon at pastor@uccredlands.org. Thanks!

Panera!

How great to have one right here in Redlands and another nearby in San Bernardino. When you buy Panera scrip in Covenant Hall after church, 10% comes back to benefit our music program. Thanks for your support!



Christian Marriage Equality... advocacy based on the teachings of Christ

RUCC has a new committee! The Christian Marriage Equality committee was formed to continue the momentum and generous advocacy on behalf of GLBT folks who want to marry, which was begun in our pre-election phonebanking. Many in the wider community became aware of Redlands UCC during the Fall campaign. Our leadership in the arena of marriage equality is needed as a loving alternative within the Christian family, and this committee is seeking to offer programs, structure, educational opportunities, and action to help the wider community recognize that marriage equality emanates from a thoughtful reading of scripture and a loving relationship with our God. In other words, Marriage Equality is very Christian! Meetings are the first Monday of each month, beginning at 7:00 pm, in the church office. All are welcome! If you have any questions or would like to join the committee, please contact Beth Kolpien at 909-335-9505 or by email at bbkolpien@aol.com.

Feastings Meeting

Our meeting has been rescheduled to Sunday, March 1 at 2:00 p.m., in Covenant Hall. If you love the church's annual musical Christmas program "Feastings," OR if you have an opinion about Feastings (re food, theme, length, etc.), OR if you have an idea or two to improve Feastings, OR simply want to attend another church meeting ☺ then this invitation is for you! We'll meet to discuss and debrief this past Feastings' program, dream about future Feastings' programs, and generally recap and look forward. All ideas are welcome! All opinions considered! No decisions required! We will meet in the church office. Questions? Feel free to contact Rev. Graff.

Coming in March

The RUCC Annual Rummage Sale

Saturday, March 7 from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Please bring your treasures to the church beginning Monday, March 2 to Thursday, March 5.

Please contact Opal Inman at 307-0859 for further information or if you would like to volunteer to help.



Thank You

Sincere and heartfelt thank yous to our Church Family and friends for all of the physical help, support, and prayers we have experienced through my recent ankle catastrophe! I am well on the road to recovery, and becoming more agile and stronger every day. We literally don't know what we would have done without you. Love and thanks to ALL of you who have helped and cared in so many ways, Kathie and Rich Blakley.

FEBRUARY WORSHIP LEADERS

- 1 Susi Jacobsen
- 8 Colleen Kintner
- 15 John Sweeney
- 22 Janet Wilson

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 7 Sharon Graff
Ben Meagher
- 10 Tera Favreau-Sorvillo
- 12 Paul Romano
Jacob McMeans
Bailey Dickey
- 15 James Hester
Amanda Colclough
- 16 Deb Austin-Brecher
- 18 Carole Beswick
Andrea Morics
- 22 Maryann Stanson
- 23 Sarah Schuiling
- 26 Paul Burton
- 28 Kent Taylor

...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, February 6, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at the First Lutheran Church. The topic will be "Experience on: Trip to the Holy Land".

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.

St. John's Lutheran Church Concert Series

Sunday, February 8 at 7:00 p.m. St. John's Lutheran Church will present the California Baptist University Women's Chorus – New Song. Dr. Al Clifft directs this talented group of 80 women. The ensemble provides a fresh and exciting approach to music in a variety of styles. This concert is the seventh in St. John's 2008-2009 Concert Series.

The sanctuary is located at 185 S. Center Street in downtown Orange. There is no charge, but a freewill offering will be taken. Childcare is available for children under age 5. For more information, please call (714) 228-4400.

Women of Faith

For the new year, our Women of Faith workdays will be held only on the 2nd Thursday of each month. The times will be the same. 11:00 am to 8 pm. (Some come earlier – that's ok.) So, be sure to mark it clearly on your calendar and come when you can! We'd so love to have you!

If you have any questions, please call Jean Arnott 909 794-0456.

Awaiting Judgment

Irvine United Congregational Church and University Synagogue present: The play Awaiting Judgment on Sunday, February 8, 2009, 5-7 p.m. Cost \$12 (pre-sale) \$15 (at the door) \$10 for students with I.D. The price includes a light meal.

This play imagines a conversation between Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King, Jr., in which they two 20th century theological scholars and activists examine one another's actions and explore the decisions that led to their martyrdom.

The playwright, Rev. Art Cribbs, will lead a discussion about the play afterwards. Rev. Dr. Paul Tellstrom & Rabbi Arnie Rachlis will hold this event and participate in the discussion as well. Childcare will be provided.

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!"

The First Annual Romero Lecture

"The Politics of Crossing Borders, Borderlands, Culture and Traditions" is the theme of the first Annual Romero Lecture Series, an event examining issues concerning the civic activism role of the church in the United States and in the world. The keynote speaker is Robert C. Orr, Assistant Secretary General for Strategic Planning and Policy Coordination in the Executive Office of the Secretary General, United Nations. Mr. Orr's responsibilities include advising the Secretary General on a full range of strategic issues, running the Secretary General's Policy Committee.

The Romero Lecture Series will be held on April 17, 2009, at Chula Vista Community Congregational Church located at 276 F Street, Chula Vista. A series of Faith and Praxis. Contact SCNC at 626-798-8082.



Telling Our Stories

Irvine United Congregational Church & University Synagogue present Helen Prejean. May 31, 2009 at 2 p.m. Irvine United Congregational Church. Helen Prejean, C.S.J., is a writer, speaker and community organizer who has lived and worked in Louisiana all her life. She has lectured extensively on the subject of capital punishment and has appeared on ABC World News tonight, 60 minutes, BBC World Service radio, and an NBC special series on the death penalty.

Her articles have appeared in many publications, including the San Francisco Chronicle and the Baltimore Sun. She is a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille, which she joined in 1957. Sister Helen currently chairs the Board of Directors of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. Special Luncheon at 12:30 p.m. – limited seating – cost \$25. Please contact Robinmarie McClements, Director of Christian Education, I.U.C.C. 949-733-0220

Women's Spirituality Retreat

May 1-3, 2009 – U.C.C. Women's Spirituality Retreat "Speaking and Listening from the Heart". Join us for a weekend full of spirituality and rejuvenation. Express your truth in loving and respectful ways! Practice the healing ministry of empathic listening. Rev. Terry LaPage will offer tools from her community ministry of Nonviolent Communication to help build connection with self, others and God.

Cost is \$110.00. The weekend rates include sleeping accommodations, four meals, snacks and program activities. Please reserve by April 24th to avoid the late fee of \$10 per person. There is also an optional massage which is \$30 minute massage for 30.00 and 60 minutes for \$60.00. Please pay for massages separately by check or cash. Questions? Contact (909) 797-1821.

February Scripture Readings

February 1: *Psalm 111; Mark 1:21-28*
 February 8: *Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; Mark 1:29-39*
 February 15: *2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 30; Mark 1:40-45*
 February 22: *2 Kings 2:1-15; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Mark 9:2-9*

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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