

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

March 2009

Contemplative Worship Service and Communion – 8:00 a.m.
Worship Service – 10:30 a.m.
Sundays, March 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29

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

The Prayer Group will meet Mondays, March 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30
at 10:30 a.m. in the Choir Room

Christian Marriage Equality Committee will meet
Monday, March 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the Church Office

Bible 102 will meet the 3rd and 4th Mondays
7 p.m. in the Church Office

Lenten Soup Suppers and Sacred Conversation on Race
Wednesdays, March 4, 11, 18 and 25, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Church Board will meet Tuesday, March 10
at 7:00 p.m. in the Church Office

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

Stewards will meet Tuesday, March 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.
Jubilee Ringers rehearsal on Sundays, 12:30 p.m.

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

From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

*“And all I have to do is continue trying to be a Christian...”
—Maya Angelou, Letter to My Daughter, “Keep the Faith”*

Being confined to home while ill for a week has its advantages...after the initial surge of relief from antibiotics kicked in, then I was left with hours and hours of time for napping, reading, napping, TV watching, napping, and more reading!

One of the books I read was a recent gift, poet laureate Maya Angelou’s most recent volume titled, “Letter to My Daughter”. Ms. Angelou explains her rationale for writing this particularly personal guidebook:

“I gave birth to one child, a son, but I have thousands of daughters. You are Black and White, Jewish and Muslim, Asian, Spanish-speaking, Native American and Aleut. You are fat and thin and pretty and plain, gay and straight, educated and unlettered, and I am speaking to you all. Here is my offering to you.”

I would add, that her words are equally as appropriate for her brothers and sons. No one of us is excluded from her pearls of universal wisdom.

In the final chapter, titled, “Keep the Faith,” Ms. Angelou writes about being a Christian. Her words have profound meaning for our congregation as we move through this reflective season of Lent. She writes,

“Many things continue to amaze me, even well into my seventh decade. I’m startled or at least taken aback when people walk up to me and without being questioned inform me that they are Christians. My first response is the question “Already?” It seems to me that becoming a Christian is a lifelong endeavor. I believe that is also true for one wanting to become a Buddhist, or a Muslim, a Jew, Jainist, or a Taoist. The persons striving to live their religious beliefs know that the idyllic condition cannot be arrived at and held on to eternally. It is in the search itself that one finds the ecstasy...One of my earliest memories of my grandmother, who was called “Mamma,” is a glimpse of that tall, cinnamon-colored woman with a deep, soft voice, standing thousands of feet up in the air with nothing visible beneath her. Whenever she confronted a challenge, Mamma would clasp her hands behind her back, look up as if she could will herself into the heavens, and draw herself up to her full six-foot height. She would tell her family in particular, and the world in general, “I don’t know how to find the things we need, but I will step out on the word of God. I am trying to be a Christian and I will just step out on the word of God.”...Whenever I began to question whether God exists, I looked up to the sky and surely there, right there, between the sun and moon, stands my grandmother, singing a long meter hymn, a song somewhere between a moan and a lullaby and I know faith is the evidence of things unseen. And all I have to do is continue trying to be a Christian.”

May the journey of “trying to be a Christian” challenge us to grow during this Lenten season, even as it brings us joy and a clearer sense of direction.

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)**

Lent is the fourth season in the church year. Traditionally, it offers us a time of prayer and deep reflection ~ on our own lives, on our values, our use of time, and on the faith that forms us. To deepen the Lenten experience, people will often choose a fast. That is, they will “give up” something for Lent...perhaps soda or alcohol or cigarettes or nail biting or sugar or compulsive spending or any other habitual behavior. This affords the person more time for meditation or prayer or walking or silence or any other spiritually-enriching activity.

Lent is “officially” 40 days in length, corresponding to the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness prior to beginning his public ministry. In point of fact, Lent is 46 days long...with 6 Sundays included. Historically, the Sundays were seen as feast days: days to rejoice in the Spirit as one moved more intentionally through the season, days to, as the psalmist suggests, “bring a gift of laughter, and sing and dance and clap ourselves into God’s presence!”

During this particular Lenten season, we’ll be exploring questions of faith during the Sunday morning worship services. These are drawn from the appointed scriptures and, it is hoped, will help us each deepen our spiritual journey. Through questions and responses, in silence and with conversation, God invites us throughout Lent to come closer...to the Divine...to one another...to oneself... Welcome to Lent!

Wednesday, February 25 – Ash Wednesday – 7:00 pm in our sanctuary

Joel 2:1; Psalm 51:1, 6-8, 10-12; Isaiah 58:3-12; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent by recalling the very first sign of God’s love—the gentle divine touch on our foreheads soiled by a bit of dust from the ground—reminding us that we are made from earth and filled with Spirit. The evening’s scriptures nudge us to pray discreetly and to give secretly, so that justice will realize its quiet revolution throughout the land. Music from the Taizé community in France will guide us as we focus our thoughts and center our prayers.

March 1 – “Let Us Begin” – Eric Naftzger, preaching – Communion Sunday/First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

On this first Sunday of Lent, one of our lay preachers from sabbatical season last year will be offering God’s message. Eric Naftzger is one of the founders of RUCC and has, for many years, utilized the season of Lent to deepen his own spirituality. Come and hear what the Spirit has to say to us through Eric!

March 8 – “What’s In a Name?” – Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Mark 8:31-38

By what name shall we be called?

March 15 – “Jesus Was a Redhead!” – Celtic Sunday/Third Sunday in Lent

Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; John 2:13-22; Readings from the Carmina Gadelica

How shall we be known?

Accompanied by inspiring “music of the isles,” this unique worship experience is a favorite of RUCC... Bring a friend!

March 22 – “Antidotes” – Fourth Sunday in Lent

Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-21

How shall we be healed?

March 29 – “Broken Covenants” – Immigration Sunday and Fifth Sunday in Lent

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 119:9-16; John 12:20-26

How do we repair the breach?

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

I received a reminder this week about a stance that was taken several years ago by Redlands United Church of Christ. While looking through some papers, Mary Belle Carter came across the decision to become a "Just Peace Church." I hadn't even heard about the term, much less that RUCC had decided to embrace it (although I'm not surprised!). Thank goodness for the Internet...

At the 1985 General Synod, a pronouncement was adopted affirming the United Church of Christ as a Just Peace Church and defined that as the "interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence" and stated its opposition to the institution of war. The term "Just Peace" came from a statement made in 1971 by the second president of the UCC, Robert Moss: "We now need to put as much effort into defining a just peace as we have done in the past in defining a just war."

The pronouncement went on to give the Biblical and theological foundations for Just Peace:

A Just Peace is grounded in God's activity in creation. Creation shows the desire of God to sustain the world and not destroy. The creation anticipates what is to come: the history-long relationship between God and humanity and the coming vision of shalom.

Just Peace is grounded in covenant relationship. God creates and calls us into covenant, God's gift of friendship: "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezekiel 37:26). When God's abiding presence is embraced, human well-being results, or Shalom, which can be translated Just Peace.

A Just Peace is grounded in the reconciling activity of Jesus Christ. Human sin is the rejection of the covenant of friendship with God and one another and the creation and perpetuation of structures of evil. Through God's own suffering love in the cross, the power of these structures has been broken and the possibility for relationship restored.

A Just Peace is grounded in the presence of the Holy Spirit. God sends the Holy Spirit to continue the struggle to overcome the powers ranged against human bonding. Thus, our hope for a Just Peace does not rest on human efforts alone, but on God's promise that we will "have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

A Just Peace is grounded in the community of reconciliation: the Just Peace Church. Jesus, who is our peace (Ephesians 2:14), performed signs of forgiveness and healing and made manifest that God's reign is for those who are in need. The church is a continuation of that servant manifestation. As a Just Peace Church, we embody a Christ fully engaged in human events. The church is thus a real countervailing power to those forces that divide, that perpetuate human enmity and injustice, and that destroy.

Just Peace is grounded in hope. Shalom is the vision that pulls all creation toward a time when weapons are swept off the earth and all creatures lie down together without fear; where all have their own fig tree and dwell secure from want. As Christians, we offer this conviction to the world: Peace is possible.

After reading this, I understand exactly why RUCC would adopt such a stance for our local church. It fits in perfectly with our vision of service to the community, taking stands on important political topics, our involvement in immigration issues, our commitment to the environment, our work for marriage equality, and many others.

Today, more than ever, we need to promote peace in our world and in our community. Together, we will show by our beliefs, our actions, and our very lives, that peace is indeed possible.

With optimism and hope,
Loring Fiske-Phillips

P.S. To learn more, visit the Justice and Witness Ministries section of the national UCC website: <http://www.ucc.org/justice/> where you can also sign up for weekly Justice and Peace Action Alerts.

**Lenten Soup Suppers and Sacred Conversation on Race ~ Wednesday
evenings in March (4th, 11th, 18th, 25th) ~
6:00-8:00 pm**

Please join us in Covenant Hall for this year's Lenten series - a 4-week "Sacred Conversation on Race." Inspired by last year's General Synod call for all local UCC congregations to have conversations on race, Keith Osajima will guide us on our journey. Each week, we will look at different facets of how race and racism affects our lives. By listening to each other's stories, we will build a collective knowledge about how race works, grounded in the wisdom of our experiences, struggles and triumphs. This knowledge will, in turn, help us to build community and think about how we as individuals and a church want to move forward. All youth and adults are welcome to participate in this discussion--child care for young children will be provided. Keith Osajima is Professor and Director of the Race and Ethnic Studies Program at the University of Redlands. He has over 20 years of experience leading students, faculty and community members in conversations on race.

Please plan to arrive at 6:00 pm each evening to delight in a delicious soup supper (soup is provided by our generous shepherd groups). Please bring your own tableware and reusable dish, plate, and cup. These evenings--March 4, 11, 18, 25--are a great way to get to know other RUCC'ers!

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!

Interested in History?

We will be meeting on Wednesday mornings in the month of March to research and write the RUCC Church history. Contact Kathie Blakley for more information.

Baked Potato Lunch

Following the Celtic Service on March 15, plan on staying for a baked potato lunch hosted by Church Life and the Wesson Shepherd Group. Please RSVP to your Shepherd leader by Wednesday, March 11, so we will be sure to have plenty of spuds for all.

Annual Rummage Sale

Saturday, March 7 from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. Preparation for the RUCC Rummage Sale begins Tuesday, March 3. Rummage will be accepted at Covenant Hall from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. We **are not** accepting any large furniture. Volunteers are also needed to prepare rummage for the sale.

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

Get On The Bus – Family Contact Training

Anyone interested in volunteering to visit families participating in Get on the Bus is invited to a training session on Tuesday, March 3, at RUCC in the CE area at 7:00 p.m. Family Contact volunteers will work in pairs to arrange visits with the families to make sure paperwork is in order for the prison visit in May. We have a few families as far away as Victorville and Indio, so we eagerly seek people willing to go that extra mile. We have 18 families interested in participating, for a total of 50 children!

If you are interested in being a Family Contact volunteer but cannot make the March 3 meeting, please let us know and we'll be happy to set up an individual meeting time with you. And as always, if you want to help in another capacity, do let us know!

Heather heather_king@redlands.edu, 307-6510) or Marybeth Maury-Holmes (mauryholmes@yahoo.com)

Celtic Prayer Retreat

Saturday, March 21 – 9:00 am-2:00 pm. All youth and adults are welcome to participate in a half-day prayer retreat, led by Rev. Graff, that will highlight the prayer experiences of the Christian Celts. We'll use prayers from the *Carmina Gadelica* and enjoy the beautiful RUCC gardens while we pray.

Grief Group

With several folk in our body experiencing the pain of loss, it seems that it is time again to gather together for support and companionship on the grief journey. Soon, we'll be starting another Good Grief Support Group to help those who are currently experiencing loss--the loss that accompanies the deaths of loved ones, and the loss that morphs into grief with traumatic changes in employment, in relationship, in health, or in residence. Grief takes many forms and travels various pathways...always it can be helpful to talk about your grief in a compassionate setting and to know that you are not alone. Rev. Graff will be facilitating another grief group for anyone who would like to join. This will be a short-term series of 6 or 8 sessions, and a closed group--meaning that after the first two sessions, the group's membership will remain as is for the duration of the series. If this sounds helpful and/or relevant to your current journey, please contact Rev. Graff soon, and let her know what meeting days and times are possible for you.

Change in E-mail address

Gal Glanville: glanvillegal@aol.com

Ushers Needed

We are in need of some ready souls who are willing to take the offering, and at times pass communion, for the 10:30 service. We will have a sign-up sheet at church for the next few Sundays. It would be helpful if you would volunteer for particular Sundays, or for a month at a time, however a willingness to be "stand-by" is also helpful. There are (as always!!) no age, gender or other such requirements. All you need is a willingness to serve - training will be provided. To sign up, please see Barbie Fiske-Phillips or call Carla at the church office. If you have questions about the duties, please see Bill Whitmer at the sanctuary door.



MARCH WORSHIP LEADERS

- 1 Junior High Class
- 8 Floyd Orr
- 15 Nathan Campbell
- 22 Sandy Peavler
- 29 Barbie Fiske-Phillips, Rich Blakley and Kathie Blakley

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 2 Seth Wacks
Jessica Woods
- 6 Linnie Dunn
- 9 Richard Becerril
- 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



Irish Blessings

A Wish for a Friend

Wishing you a rainbow for sunlight after showers – Miles and miles of Irish smiles. For golden happy happy hours – Shamrocks at your doorway. For luck and laughter too, and a host of friends that never ends. Each day your whole life through!

An Irish Prayer

May God give you...
For every storm, a rainbow,
For every tear, a smile,
For every care, a promise,
And a blessing in each trial.
For every problem life sends,
A faithful friend to share,
For every sigh, a sweet song,
And an answer for each prayer.

An Old Irish Blessing

May love and laughter light your days,
and warm your heart and home.
May good and faithful friends be
yours, wherever you may roam.
May peace and plenty bless your
world with joy that long endures.
May all life's passing seasons bring
the best to you and yours!



...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, March 6, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. at the University Methodist Church at 940 E. Colton Ave., Redlands. We will celebrate World Day of Prayer. We will have a salad luncheon.

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.

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.



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 24 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.

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!"

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

March Scripture Readings

March 1:	<i>Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15</i>
March 8:	<i>Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Mark 8:31-38</i>
March 15:	<i>Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; John 2:13-22; Readings from the Carmina Gadelica</i>
March 22:	<i>Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-21</i>
March 29:	<i>Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 119:9-16; John 12:20-26</i>

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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