

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

December 2009

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

Worship Service – 10:30 a.m.

Sundays, December 6, 13, 20 and 27

Communion - Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, December 13

The Prayer Group will meet Mondays, December 7, 14, 21 and 28
at 10:30 a.m. in the Choir Room

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

Church Board will meet Tuesday, December 8
at 7:00 p.m. in the Church Office

“Feastings” will be held on Friday, December 11, at
7:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall

The Sandwich Group will meet on Tuesday, December 15
at 12:00 p.m. in the Pastor’s office

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service, Thursday, December 24
5:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Stewards meet on Tuesday, December 29
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.
(No rehearsal on December 24 or 31)

Jubilee Ringers rehearsals
Sundays at 12:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

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

From your Pastor and Teacher, Sharon~

“Be still and know that I am God...Be still and know...Be still...Be...”
—from Psalm 46:10

Ha! Whoever wrote that verse obviously never experienced the holiday season! With the lists of things to do, the tasks around the house to be completed, the cleaning, cooking (ok, not for me, but for someone!), the gifts to be purchased, wrapped, and mailed, and on an on... Well, all I can say to the ancient psalmist who urges us to be still is “HA!”

Yet, even as I (and perhaps you, too) laugh in the face of this advice, I wonder about it. Would it be better use of my time (and yours), for example, to sit in my favorite chair with a cup of tea for a few minutes, instead of completing one more thing on that interminable list that itself will be forgotten by next month? Would I become a better person, perhaps, by reading a chapter of a good novel—or even of the Bible, for heaven’s sake!—than by shopping for one more gift for one more person who doesn’t need one more thing? Would the proverbial “meaning of the season” penetrate my soul (and yours) if we were to leave a few emails unanswered for the moment, and instead carve out a few minutes for a quiet walk or a meditative silence?

Thanks to the suggestion of several of you, we have been enjoying a Sunday morning book study on *The Shack*. It is a novel, in more ways than one. In a novel manner, the author tells the story of a man who has a life-altering experience with the trinity...yes, THE trinity! God (who in the story is a black woman named Papa), Jesus (a youngish Jewish man who is a bit self-conscious about his large nose) and Spirit (a rather hard-to-pin-down being that is transparent yet huggable). One of the main points of the novel is just what the ancient psalmist above has suggested. Be still. Be silent. Be. Listen and through that listening, become closer to the Divine...in whatever form She/He takes!

Ah, yes, perhaps the psalmist has a point after all. Silence...blessed silence...joy-filled stillness... Those of you who have, through the years, joined me on silent retreats, know that with silence comes attentiveness of soul. With stillness of body comes presence of mind. It doesn’t have to be days of silence or even hours of stillness. As the ancient commercial for hair-care products used to claim, “just a little dab will do you...!” So it is with silence, with stillness.

Especially during this season, when we are tempted to gauge our actions and plan our schedules around the hype engendered by advertisements and all-things-commercial, perhaps the psalmist is indeed a better friend and guide... perhaps. I’ll give it a try, at least. How about you?

Blessings,



“Be still and know that I am God...Be still and know...Be still...Be...” from Psalm 46:10

Worship Themes for Advent 2009

By Sharon R. Graff

Advent is traditionally a time of thoughtful reflection, a time to consider the effect of light's appearance in the shadows of the world. Derived from the Latin word, *adventus*, meaning “coming towards,” Advent invites us into a four-week season of preparation for Christmas. This year Advent comes at a time of anxiety and hope. Many are struggling and are afraid for the future. For centuries before Christ, people found this season to be an inspiring and hopeful metaphor of the power of light in the world, as they celebrated the return of light through the lengthening of daylight hours. Fast forward several thousand years to our congregation, where Advent is also the time of expressing our promises, our hopes, and our needs, as we complete our annual covenants. During this season, I trust that our worship will nudge us toward the light—toward seeing the light even when we are surrounded by shadows, toward stepping into and dancing in the light, and toward basking in and resting in the light when we are tired. Pace ourselves in the light—during this busy month and in worship together.

November 29 – “Human BEing” – First Sunday of Advent

Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

Our annual walk through Advent begins with branches shooting up out of the ground, so you'd better watch where you step! Jesus speaks of a tree as a sign of God's presence—Emmanuel. And we are urged to be more than to do: to be alert...to be strong, to be loving and joyful and prayerful. BEing just may save us...from ourselves!

December 6 – “I Believe...” Covenant/Confirmation Sunday and Second Sunday of Advent

Baruch 5:1-9; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:7-18

On this most inspiring day, our confirmands will share as they are confirmed. In preparation for this service, each of us is invited by God to consider what we believe and how we want to live out those beliefs in this faith community during 2010. Bring your covenant to place on the altar, and together God's many blessings will be experienced!

December 13 – “...Help My Unbelief” – Third Sunday of Advent – Communion Sunday

Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-9; Luke 3:7-18

Frederick Buechner has written, “doubt is the ants in the pants of faith.” Certainly, that coin of faith has two sides—belief and unbelief. Today, we'll hear some scriptures that seem to understand that not every moment of every day will be a moment of belief, and we may even find some handles to hold onto when such moments occur.

December 20 – “Celebrate With Laughter!” – Fourth Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5a; Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-35; 2:1-7, 8-15 and Matthew 2:1-2

Once again, our children and youth will joyfully and playfully lead us in worship with a creative and thoughtful rendering of the Christmas story, complete with costumes and characterizations. Enjoy the story through the eyes of the young ~ Come early and bring a friend!

December 27 – “Two Little Boys”

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Luke 2:41-52

Christmas is intended to turn our expectations upside down, and perhaps, if we didn't already know so much of the story, we'd be as surprised as those shepherds and temple leaders who saw a baby, a small boy, and wondered if God had lost a mind somewhere! God tends to do some of the best work through the littlest and the least. Perhaps, in this new year to come, even through you and I!

President's Message

I must begin by saying that this is not really a "President's Message"...it's more of a "First Lady's Missive" (to use our government's phraseology). For RUCC's president, Loring Fiske-Phillips, is currently on his way to Newark, NJ to care for my brother, Ben who was unexpectedly admitted to a hospital on November 30th. (Ben was on his way to a pilgrimage to the Middle East. You might remember Ben from our Visioning Day earlier this year.) Since Loring's the one traveling across country and doing the hospital care, I agreed to pick up some of his tasks here at home. One of the tasks that he couldn't complete was writing this column for the newsletter.

Loring's willingness to be the one to do the family's caretaking of Ben reminded me of some of the stories I got to hear this Sunday in the videotaping of the founding members of the congregation. The nineteen founders who were present shared stories of coming together for both celebration and support in the early days of this congregation. They talked about sitting vigil with a dying member; they shared story after story of work projects and ministry through their hands and they talked about the importance of community. They talked about their faith journey and how what brought them together in the beginning was the belief that God was calling them to be a part of a larger church than just one congregation – that the United Church of Christ was following Christ's call to work toward justice and equality in the world – and that they wanted to follow that call also.

As they shared, I was touched by the depth and caring they showed for one another and for the amazing congregation they gave birth to. I know that for most of them it was their understanding of Christ's model in the world that persuaded them to take the leap of faith to begin RUCC. It is that same understanding that has guided them to build and nurture this congregation for over three decades. And one of the most amazing things, in my opinion, is that they have truly welcomed in each of us and allowed us to be full participants in the congregation's journey. They have unselfishly followed their guiding beliefs that God continues to speak to and through us, and that all are welcome.

I know that if Loring were writing this he would agree with me that it is the beliefs and actions of this congregation, that follow so closely the model of the Christ that empowers him to fly cross-country to care for his brother.

With Gratitude,
Barbie 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

We will meet at the home of Gal Glanville on Tuesday, December 1 and at the home of on Tuesday, December 15 at the home of Dr. Allan Wolpe at 230 E. Fern, Redlands. We meet at 7:30 p.m. All are welcome!

Caroling and Cookie Party

Come join us for an evening of old fashioned Christmas Caroling and Cookie Decorating! Christian Education and Church Life are co-hosting the 1st annual "Caroling and Cookie Party" on Friday December 18th at 6:30pm. We'll gather in Covenant Hall to run through a few familiar Christmas Carols before going door-to-door around our church neighborhood. When we're done we'll all enjoy decorating cookies and sharing coffee, tea, or hot cocoa!

This is an all-church event and we are encouraging families to come out together. Bring your favorite cookie decoration and one can of frosting if you're able to. If you need any further information or would like to donate some pre-baked sugar or gingerbread cookies, please see Jennifer Hawley-Zechlin or Pam Dunn.

Christmas Stockings for Step by Step Parolees & Their Families

Once again, along with other SBS organizations, we'll be sharing our holiday joys with some of our parolees and their loved ones. We'll be stuffing stockings with small new gifts for each family member, plus putting together a gift box for each family with items like decorations, fleece throws, and homemade goodies. In addition, we'll give each family a Stater Bros. gift card and each individual a Target gift card. Soon you'll see a Christmas tree with 10 name tags for each child and adult for stocking stuffer gifts, and tags with dollar amounts for Stater Bros. and Target gift cards. We typically spend a morning or afternoon putting the stockings and boxes together. It's a lot of fun and children are welcome to join in. As we get detailed family information and dates from the PACT officers, we'll post updates in the View. In the meantime, you can find a list of suggested stocking stuffer gifts in the narthex. If you'd like to buy some generic men's and women's gifts or gift cards before the tree goes up, you'll have a head start.

Please contact Rosemary (645-2229, Alaska1471@verizon.net) or at Beki (798-5899, redlandszoo@yahoo.com) for more info.

**December
Worship Leaders**

- 6 Debbie Gerberich &
Sandy Peavler
- 13 Kristi Campbell
- 20 Meagher Family
- 27

December Birthdays

- 2 Dennis Wolbert
- 3 Richard Hodson
Bill Whitmer
- 4 Pat Meagher
- 6 Bryan Favreau-Sorvillo
- 10 Jackson Shamp
- 11 Lillian Norton-Brainerd
- 13 Ofelia Morales
- 14 Emily Barton
Wayne Milloy
- 15 Trish Edwards
- 18 Craig Wesson
- 19 Jerry McBurney
- 21 Phil McMeans
Kimberly Arth
- 22 Lisa Brandt
- 23 Eleanor Ruiz
- 25 Nathan Campbell
- 28 Janet Wilson
Jim Gilman
- 29 Reid Norton-Brainerd
- 30 Omar Moran

...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.

The Sounds of Christmas

St. John's Lutheran Church will present the annual The Sounds of Christmas concert. St. John's 70-voice adult choir will present the Christmas story in word and song. The sanctuary is located at 185 S. Center Street in downtown Orange. There is no charge, but a freewill offering will be taken. Saturday, December 12 at 4:00 and 7:00 p.m.



December Scripture Readings

- 6** *Baruch 5:1-9; Philippians 1:3-11; Luke 3:7-18*
13 *Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-9; Luke 3:7-18*
20 *Micah 5:2-5a; Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-35; 2:1-7, 8-15 and Matthew 2:1-2*
27 *1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Luke 2:41-52*

Minister – Rev. Dr. Sharon R. Graff
Associate Minister – Rev. Leif Lind
Seminary Intern – Jen Neibling
Organist/Choir Director – Dr. Taylor Ruhl
Handbell Director – Craig Colclough
Youth Director – Craig Colclough
Interim Education Director – Jennifer Hawley-Zechlin
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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