

WANDERINGS

A newsletter for people on a journey together with a purpose

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

February 2010

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

Worship Service – 10:30 a.m.

Sundays, February 7, 14, 21 and 28

Communion - Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, February 7

The Prayer Group will meet Mondays, February 1, 8, 15 and 22
at 10:30 a.m. in the Choir Room

Christians for Equality Committee will meet
Monday, February 1 at 7:00 p.m. in the Church Office

First Friday Film will meet
Friday, February 5 at 7:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall

Church Board Retreat on Tuesday, February 9
at 5:30 p.m. in Covenant Hall

The Sandwich Group will meet on Tuesday, February 16
at 12:00 p.m. in the Pastor's office

Stewards meet on Tuesday, February 23
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 rehearsals
Sundays at 12:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary

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

From your (other) pastor and teacher, Leif:

**“So again Jesus said to them,
‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep...
I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...
I know my own and my own know me.’” John 10:7, 11, 14**

According to the dictionary, a pastor is someone who exercises spiritual guidance over a church or congregation. The root of the word comes from *pastoris*, “a shepherd” (cf. Beethoven’s *Pastoral Symphony*, etc.).

When asked for a popular definition of the word, 45% of online voters chose the term *shepherd* as best describing the work of a pastor.

While not perhaps the most dignified of professions, being a shepherd certainly beats the alternative of being a sheep! Sheep are notorious (I am told, by relatives who own these animals) for being slow-witted and for blindly following a leader wherever he/she/it may lead.

This last Sunday (January 31), I was privileged to experience the thrill and fulfillment of my installation service at Redlands UCC. After the high of such an experience it would perhaps be understandable for a pastor to somehow feel that being the “shepherd of the flock” entitles one to feelings of uniqueness and “specialness”, verging on the border of better-than-thou.

But, as Sharon so (tactfully!) pointed out in her address at that meeting, being the pastor of a congregation does not entitle one to feel that she/he is “*the Shepherd*”. There is, after all, only one rightful Shepherd of God’s flock, found in the life and example of Jesus the Christ. The best that pastors can hope to do is to be helpful in pointing the flock to the principles taught by the true Shepherd.

Which brings me to that other word used to describe our profession — “minister”. And this word, perhaps, signifies in a more satisfactory manner our true calling. For a minister is, after all, another word for servant. We are called to serve, not to take personal credit.

Perhaps the promise I made on installation Sunday best sums up my hopes and aspirations for service to this congregation: “I am willing, and I promise to serve this church faithfully, preaching and teaching the word of God, administering the sacraments, and fulfilling the pastoral office, according to the faith and order of the United Church of Christ.”

For that, after all, is the work of a minister.

In Christian faith, hope, and love.

Leif

Worship Themes for Epiphany 2010

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

This month we conclude the season of Epiphany and begin the higher-profile season of Lent. While Epiphany brings enlightenment and an emphasis on story—most especially a punctuated form of the Jesus story—the season of Lent invites us to walk more reflectively with Jesus during the weeks leading up to the cross and empty tomb. For some, Lent is a time of sacrifice, of giving up something so as to experience a shadow of the sufferings of Jesus. During our Lenten worship services, rather than giving up something, we will focus together on adding something. That “something” is prayer! Read on...

February 7 – Communion Sunday – Loring Fiske-Phillips, preacher

Isaiah 6:1-8, Psalm 138; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11

Newly installed as RUCC President for a third 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 14 – “Beyond the Veil”

Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36

In our day, it is common to speak of “the veil” as that invisible demarcation between the physical and the spiritual worlds, between earth and heaven, if you will. Brides, of course, also wear veils to keep alive the mystery of their beauty. Interesting that Moses wears one in today’s story, and the author of 2 Corinthians invites 1st century believers to remove the veil, i.e. to speak boldly from their faith. What of veils? Perhaps it is time to move beyond them to the life they seek to cover...

Wednesday, February 17 – The Beginning of Lent – 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.

February 21 – First Sunday of Lent – Jen Neibling, preaching

We welcome to the pulpit our seminary intern, Jen! This will be a first for her, and we look forward to her thoughtful message.

February 28 – Second Sunday of Lent – “Teach Us To Pray...”

Many of you wrote in your 2010 covenants that you would like to strengthen your prayer life, and in response, the remainder of our Lenten worship services will be dedicated to learning more about the so-called “Lord’s Prayer.” We pray it each Sunday, maybe a bit by rote...we turn to it in times of sickness and stress...we find comfort in it’s familiarity... Now we shall spend time, together, meditating upon it’s meaning for us 21st century Christians.

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

The month of January is often a month of new beginnings. A new year gives many of us the sense that everything can begin anew! This January at Redlands United Church of Christ was no exception and what a beginning it was!

The annual meeting was full of celebration of the accomplishments of the last twelve months and hope for the coming twelve. The list of events, challenges, joys, successes, groups, and gatherings seemed to go on forever! It never ceases to amaze me how much such a small and mighty congregation can do! Mahatma Gandhi has been quoted as saying, "The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems." I think RUCC has a keen sense of that difference and have strived to make it as small a gap as possible. We know that God acts through us to accomplish wondrous works and we made our hands, feet, hearts and minds available to the Holy Spirit.

We also elected a new board to help facilitate the efforts of the church and provide leadership in each of the Areas: Worship, Stewards, Church Growth, Education, Church Life, Shepherds, and Wider Ministries. Each area has a long list of volunteers that will take on new challenges with hope and energy. If you have been around here for long, you know that the network of leaders and followers is very fluid. There is very little "org chart" hierarchy as countless people see what needs to be done and follow the callings of the Spirit. Sometimes that means that things can quickly change directions. Plans may slow down or even stop based on the collective interpretations of God's nudging. I don't believe I've ever heard an RUCC'r utter the church-numbing phrases "We've never done it that way before," nor "We've always done it that way."

Here are some of the ideas that have already surfaced about possibilities and opportunities for 2010:

Many are hearing a call toward addressing building needs as we continue to explore what physical space we need for our ministry. Our building already is home to many community organizations and was designed and consecrated to provide a ministry of shelter and welcome to groups that often cannot find space elsewhere. We will also be looking into a new organ to replace the one that has served us well for many years but is nearing the point of being un-repairable.

We are exploring options to help solve local hunger problems. A group has already asked the board to approve the formal initiation of a pilot program to address this ongoing need right here in our own community.

This summer, we will take our first Thin Places tour. Thin Places are those places on earth where the Divine is especially present and able to be experienced. A group will be touring Stonehenge and the Isle of Iona, where they will be part of a program of work and study of Celtic spirituality and prayer.

2010 will bring the first federal court ruling on the constitutionality of Prop 8, legislation on health care, immigration reform, and many other opportunities for our church to be involved in ensuring that our laws are fair and inclusive. Our church and our denomination have a long history of ensuring political and social justice, knowing that the weak and oppressed were the ones that Jesus reached out to and the ones that God asks us to help bring into full citizenship.

Where will you be twelve months from now? Who will you be? I hope you will be a traveler on the journey with Redlands UCC. In the words of the hymn by Julian Rush, "In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways, who will lead the pilgrim people wandering their separate ways? God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar, we your people, ours the journey now and ever more."

With optimism and hope,
Loring Fiske-Phillips

Intern's Message

Five months ago, I walked into RUCC's worship service for the first time. I'm still amazed at how welcoming you were to this stranger. Although I had visited on weekdays to meet with Sharon, Leif, and the personnel committee, the bus schedules were such that a Sunday visit was not an option. In the way these things usually work out, I was finally able to buy a car just in time for the first Sunday of fall semester; and so on that first day I had never met most of you. Yet you welcomed me as if I was an old friend, or at least an old friend's daughter.

You have been patient and gracious with an intern still learning pretty much everything. When I read so quietly and quickly that I doubt many people could understand, you were patient and not a single person ever said a cruel word. On the contrary, several made a point of suggesting ways to do better next time, others found something good to praise even in those first weeks, and others offered a friendly face when I looked out at the congregation. When I first stood at the door and wished that the earth would rise up and swallow me, you were kind.

As I look at what I've written, it reminds me of the I Corinthians passage Sharon read this past Sunday. This congregation has consistently been patient and kind to me, and has never been arrogant or rude. Thank you for acting in such a loving way. There's a consistency in caring for one another, welcoming and caring for new seminary interns, and caring for people "out there" by taking kids to see their imprisoned moms or donating to help those in Haiti. You are an amazing group of people, and I'm honored to have the chance to learn from you.

This next semester I will be trying more difficult tasks, including preaching and leading a few weeks of Sunday school. I am grateful that I can count on your patience and kindness, and, as I look forward to this next semester, hope that it will be a good experience for us all.

Jen Neibling, Seminary Intern

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!

Wider Ministries Meeting

Wider Ministries Committee will meet on Sunday, February 14 at 12:15 p.m. in the C.E. Area.

Alpha Bible Study

We will meet at the home of Julie Phillip on Tuesday, February 16 at 7:30 p.m.

Orr Shepherd Group

The February meeting for the Orr Shepherd Group will be at the home of Floyd and Jean Orr on Sunday, February 21 after church in Highland. Details to follow.

Naftzger/Sforza Shepherd Group

The Naftzger/Sforza Shepherd Group will be meeting on Sunday, February 28 at 12:30 p.m., at the home of Eric and Valerie Naftzger at 660 Walnut Avenue, Redlands.

Up For Adoption

Now that the rain is over, weeds abound. We need volunteers to adopt a small area to keep the grounds neat and tidy. Please see the chart in Covenant Hall.

All Church Work Day

Saturday, March 20, 8:30 – 12:00 p.m., there will be an all church clean up day. Bring your favorite gardening tools to spruce up the grounds before Easter. All are welcome!

Lenten Series @ RUCC

Each year during Lent we meet on Wednesday evenings for a simple soup supper and a relevant discussion. These special times have made lasting memories and this year you are invited to participate! Beginning on Wednesday, February 24, and continuing on March 3, 10, 17, 24, we will gather in Covenant Hall at 6:00 pm for soup supper prepared by our various Shepherd Flocks. Bring your own table service and bowl to save our earth! Discussion will begin about 6:45 pm and conclude at 8:00 pm. All ages are welcome! Child/Nursery care is provided. Topic of discussion TBA...please watch the View for specifics...

Annual Rummage Sale

Saturday, March 6, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in Covenant Hall. Please do not bring televisions. Bring your items to Covenant Hall from Monday, March 1 through Thursday, March 4.

Correction to the Church Directory

Jane Macrorie (562) 480-2840

Writing the Sacred

Journaling, Psalm Writing & Poem-making Workshop. Ray McGinnis is a poet and psalm enthusiast and has written in journals all his life. He has taught over 9000 people how to write prayers, poetry and autobiographies, all the while guiding them to bring their whole heart, mind and spirit to the process. Come play with words.

Date: Friday, February 26
Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Location: Redlands UCC
Cost: \$15.00
To register call 909-793-3520

February Worship Leaders

7	Pat Meagher
14	Floyd Orr
21	Susi Jacobsen
28	Jim Gilman

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 Donna Rushe
20	Renae Wiedlin
26	Paul Burton
27	Jessica Belmonte

...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.

Music for a Winter's Afternoon

Fundraiser for Step by Step, a coalition for the positive re-entry of parolees into Redlands. Sunday, February 21st at 3:00 p.m. The Fox Event Center at 123 Cajon Street, Redlands. The Dan Murphy Jazz Band. Minimum donation of \$10/person is suggested.

February Scripture Readings

February 7	<i>Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 138; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11</i>
February 14	<i>Exodus 34:29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2; Luke 9:28-36</i>
February 17	<i>Joel 2:1; Psalm 51:1, 6-8, 10-12; Isaiah 58:3-12; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21</i>
February 21	
February 28	

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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