

# The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista  
United Church of Christ

December 2015

## Melinda's Musings: Glimpses of Unexpected Joy

by Rev. Dr. Melinda V. McLain

*What we do see depends mainly on what we look for . . . In the same field, the farmer will notice the crop, the geologists the fossils, botanists the flowers, artists the coloring sportsmen the cover for the games. Though we may all look at the same things, it does not all follow that we should see them. – John Lubbock (1834-1913), The Beauties of Nature and the Wonders of the World We Live In*



When I am cruising around social media, I am often flabbergasted by the radically divergent ways that different folks describe the same event. This was particularly evident in the aftermath of the Beirut and Paris terror attacks. Some folks looked for who to punish, others looked for who needed help. And of course, some, I'm sure just looked away in disgust thinking that nothing ever changes or makes any difference at all.

What do you notice first? The good . . . the bad . . . the beautiful . . . the details . . . the big picture? Understanding our own biases is an important step on the spiritual journey. Accepting the biases of others also creates the possibility of authentic relationship with those with whom you profoundly disagree.

As we begin our journey through Advent, I invite each of us to take time to notice things in a new way. In particular, I invite us all to look past the commercialism of Christmas to find

the joy of the Christ being born again in us and in our midst.

We are also pregnant with the possibility of a new way of being church. Our conversations about opening a restaurant that would also be the site of our spiritual community could very well take flesh in 2016. This is an exciting time to be together! Come and see what the Spirit is doing within us! Bring your friends and neighbors during this holy season.

## Open Door Interfaith Zen

By Melinda

We have now begun a practice of sitting meditation in the zen style using the sayings of Jesus as zen koans each **Thursday evening from 6-6:45p** in the chancel of the sanctuary. This wonderful form of meditation has been developed by Rev. David Parks-Ramage, pastor of First Congregational UCC, Santa Rosa and you can learn more about it by visiting: [www.opendoorinterfaithzen.com](http://www.opendoorinterfaithzen.com). Sensei David offered a small group training to other UCC churches and **Colleen Rodger, Bonnie Hariton, Joan Thompson eagerly joined Pastor Melinda** in learning how to lead this practice. We have since been blessed by the presence of Rev. Kevin Omi, Senior Pastor of Sycamore UCC and members of his congregation. The practice is simple and deep. Relaxing and yet powerful. No previous experience necessary. We sit in chairs, but do feel free to bring a meditation cushion or sit on the floor. There is no way to do this practice wrong. Do come and give it a try!

## Dancing Lessons

by Tom Emanuel



Joy is the best dancer I have ever known. She dances like everyone's watching, and she cares what you think of her, cares desperately, because she wants nothing more than for you to join her, wants nothing more than for you to clasp her hand in yours and allow the circle-widening rhythms to centripetal-force you together tight.

She does not care, however, how good a dancer *you* are. Professional or dilettante, klutz or cripple, she desires you just as passionately.

To *desire*, however, is not the same as to *need*. Reject her overtures and she'll be heartbroken, sure—and she'll go right on dancing, go right on making her pirouette promiscuous invitations to all comers.

Before you partner up, though, be aware: Joy does not watch her step, and she will not watch yours for you.

I tell you this as one who has taken up the offer time and again, accompanied her to the floor time and again—and fallen flat on my face time and again, unprepared for the complexity of her footwork.

Don't take this as a warning—far from it! Black eyes and bruised shins haven't deterred *me* one bit. I would follow her again in a quarter-note heartbeat, no questions asked. Practice might not make perfect, but it might keep me on my toes a little longer next time.

Until then, I'll be taking lessons and waiting for the tune to come back around.

November 2015  
Berkeley, CA

## News from the Pews



*We love food, so we love our kitchen crew:  
Ken Alborn and Mathilde Hollander!*

**Brian Miller** and **Howard Campbell** were married here at Mira Vista on Saturday, November 28. Best wishes to the happy couple!

**Pastor Melinda** has finally completed a full draft of her libretto for a new opera entitled, *The Broken Land*. Her composer **Sarah Hutchings** is now working on the music. This full-length opera about the American Dust Bowl is based upon Melinda's family history in the Texas panhandle. For more information, go to [www.melindamclain.com](http://www.melindamclain.com).

## December Celebrations



4<sup>th</sup> Sylvia Sugg

9<sup>th</sup> Nancy Lemon

21<sup>st</sup> Matt Kavanaugh-Lynch

30<sup>th</sup> Andrew Noble

30<sup>th</sup> Benjamin Noble



with love from Mira Vista!



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**2015**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<b>1</b> Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10a  Mindfulness Circle @ El Cerrito Royale, 7p	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> Open Door Interfaith Zen, 6p Amazing Graces, 7p	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b> 12n Worship with Holy Communion followed by La Mesa  <small>Second Sunday of Advent</small>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Mira Vista Council @ Mira Vista UCC, 7p	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Open Door Interfaith Zen, 6p Amazing Graces, 7p	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> 12n Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion  <small>Third Sunday of Advent</small>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Mindfulness Circle @ El Cerrito Royale, 7p	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b> Open Door Interfaith Zen, 6p Amazing Graces, 7 pm	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b> 12n Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion  <small>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent</small>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, Special Christmas Fund offering, 8p 		
<b>27</b> 12n Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 		

# Our worship life together . . .

Join us on **Sundays at 12 noon** for our celebration with music and preaching, then stay for lunch because our worship continues as we share food and friendship together at La Mesa. We celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion every First Sunday in the sanctuary and during La Mesa on subsequent Sundays. All are welcome at our table!

Our theme for **Advent is: "Glimpses of Unexpected Joy"**. The Amazing Graces will be singing almost every Sunday and our worship will be rich with meaning and music! Bring your friends and neighbors.

December 6	"Dressed in Glory"	Baruch 5: 1-9
December 12	"Celebrating Jubilee" <i>Special guest preacher: Andrew Hanauer from Jubilee, USA</i>	
December 20	"The Power of Powerlessness" <i>Tom Emanuel preaching</i>	Luke 1: 46b-55
December 24	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	8p
December 27	Singing our Joy! <i>Joint service with Christ Lutheran</i>	11a

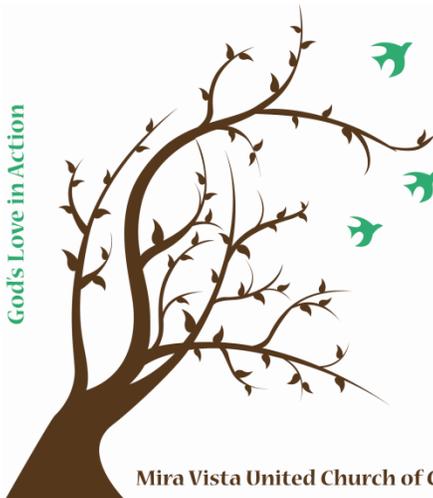


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*The Fellowship Post*

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