



The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista
United Church of Christ

January 2014

Pastor's Corner

Over the past month we have been celebrating the stories of Jesus' birth, from the moment the angel appears to Mary right through the magi bringing gifts from the East. How beautiful, creative, and affirming of our own humanity -- a marvelous story! Those drawn by love, shepherds and magi, cross all barriers and boundaries in love.

But how quickly hatred and fear enter the scene: those drawn by fear and hatred tragically cross the boundaries of morality and the borders of justice to annihilate the beings all humans seem to hold sacred: newborn babies. Overnight, a place where all was peaceful and was calm became another tragic story of vulnerability and violence and refugees. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in fear for their lives, crossed boundaries and borders to alight in Egypt.

This is the nature of the world into which Jesus came and still comes. We know wailing and lamentation alongside hopeful longing alongside celebration alongside apathy. Love has arrived *and* is yet to come.

We at Mira Vista UCC are drawn to take risks with and for one another, like Joseph, Mary, and Jesus, like the shepherds, like the magi. We travel beyond our familiar boundaries because we have seen a great light...*and* we are also people who are at times



captured, imprisoned, by our own greed and fear.

Fr. Richard Rohr says: "Our story is not the pleasant parts only. We have the capacity to shine with the light of love *and* to disappear into a dismal slime of selfishness. We are made alive *and* ridiculously threatened by the promise of God-with-us. We are the whole Christmas story, both beautiful and fearful, bright and full of shadow, hidden and revealed."

With this new year we celebrate a symbolic rebirth of time. It's a kind of starting over, a clean slate to begin again. We will continue searching for a new home for our faith community, a place where we can more fully live our public mission of loving God's world, each other and our own selves. We hope God will use our gifts and skills and desires in a brand new way. We hope to travel with love and creativity, never leaving a trail of fear and hatred. We hope that we will be welcomed at the borders and boundaries of our lives, and with joy we hope to open our lives and our doors to fellow travelers.

Our liturgical season, Epiphany, is about beginnings, too, about the beginning of Jesus' human ministry and how he came to let his inner light shine so that anyone who was not blinded by fear could see it. Perhaps our call this particular year is to make our light much more visible, in each of us, in all of us. Any way that we can love and serve God's creation, let's go!

Any way that we can celebrate life and love, let's do it! Any way that we can shed light on our particular manifestation of the Spirit, let's go! Any way that we can breathe and wake and turn it into a song of gratitude, let's go!

As we go forward, remember Marianne Williamson's advice for how to prepare for a new year, or newness of spirit: "forgive everyone; let go of everything; let God take charge." Can I get an amen?

Pastor Susan



Team Update

Bonnie Hariton, Moderator

As you may know, our congregation was interested in purchasing a property on San Pablo Avenue that would fit our needs for worship and office space. However, the sellers insisted on full market value, in "as is" condition, even though parts of the building were unfinished (the heating, the kitchen installation, and an exterior wall, for example). The Home Team and the Council met and decided that the purchase price plus the renovation costs were more than we were willing to pay. At the congregational meeting on December 22, we recommended that we not buy the building. We will continue to look for a place that matches our needs and is within our financial reach.

This search has prompted us to re-examine our resources and our expectations. Each year we are drawing down our proceeds from selling the property on Cutting Avenue to pay part of our operating expenses; the interest we earn on our investment funds does not make up the difference. We are doing our best to be faithful stewards of the time and the money we have, and to ensure the future of this extraordinary faith community. Given what is happening nationally with congregations like ours, however, we do not expect to be able to continue in our current form for decades, whether we buy/lease property or whether we continue exactly as we are. When faith communities can no longer sustain themselves

as they are, they have a few choices: keep the building, let go of the minister; keep the minister, let go of the building; continue as a house church (no paid staff, no building); gift a worthy successor organization with the remaining funds and disband; or go "offroad" with a brand-new idea. All of these options are being tested now in many, many churches.

It is challenging to preside over the end of an era without knowing what happens next -- what communities of faith will look like in the future. What we know is that our God is faithful: there is a way forward for the unique expression of God's love that we are together, even if the form looks radically different than the one we cherish now. Whether our congregation has five or fifteen years in which to change from what we look like now into something we cannot yet predict, we are a creative, innovative, scrappy and active group. We will greet the future of the kingdom of God with love and hope and courage. Join this conversation at our Semi-Annual meeting on January 19.

*We are Living Now
and*

*We are Dying Now
the question is not so much
How LONG will we LIVE
and*

WHEN will we DIE?

*The question is
HOW will we LIVE*

And HOW will we DIE (CHANGE) Gracefully?

NEWS FROM THE PEWS



Note: To protect your privacy, this page of personal information is not posted on our web site

Betty Coates' sister Viola Kersgard died of a heart attack December 6, in the midst of a regular gathering of her dear friends. She was 92. Our sympathy to you, Betty, on the loss of your big sister.

Wilma West is in recovery from a broken hip. Wilma, we are so sorry for this big pain (literally); we all send our blessings and prayers for your speedy recovery.

Wendy, Olivia, and Michael Wisely are heading to Florence for three months, where Wendy is teaching theater. What a wonderful thing for you Wiselys!

God bless you all in this new year as we wonder and wander. Who are we, what are we here for, where are we going? Profound questions to ponder – and yet very, very simple.



\$530

Mira Vista sent \$530 to the food bank; enough to buy 53 bags of groceries! Thank you!

Semi-Annual Meeting & Potluck

On January 19, 2014, we will hold our semi-annual meeting and will elect a Co-Treasurer, Co-Financial Secretary.

Plan to come to the meeting and stay for the Potluck Lunch. See you there!



Happy Birthday

2nd Sara Anduiza

15th Davena Hambrick

16th Margaret Kavanaugh-Lynch

21st Betty Coates

28th Virginia Carrieri



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Mira Vista United Church of Christ

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 Yoga, 9-10:15 am
5 Holy Communion 12 Noon Worship	6 Budget Meeting, 12:30pm in Latifah's Office Yoga, 5:30-6:45pm	7 Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10am Mindfulness group @ Susan's house, 7pm 	8	9 Amazing Graces Meeting, 7pm	10	11 Yoga, 9-10:15 am
12 12 Noon Worship	13 Yoga, 5:30-6:45pm	14	15 Council Meeting @ El Cerrito Royale, 6:45pm	16 Amazing Graces Meeting, 7pm	17	18
19 12 Noon Worship Semi-Annual Meeting & Potluck	20 Yoga, 5:30-6:45pm	21	22	23	24	25 Yoga, 9-10:15 am
26 12 Noon Worship	27 Yoga, 5:30-6:45pm	28	29	30	31 <i>Chinese New Year</i>	

Worship for January 2014

January 5, 2014, 12 noon
Epiphany worship & communion
Beloved Child of God

January 12, 2014, 12 noon
Matthew 3:13-17; Isaiah 42:5-9
With Whom I Am Well Pleased

January 19, 2014, 12 noon
SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING & POTLUCK
Matthew 4:1-11; Psalm 40:1-11
Who Do You Think You Are?

January 26, 2014, 12 noon
Matthew 4:12-23
Follow Me

God has called us creatures of infinite
worth,
who deserve love and respect,
and who are made to care for God's
beloved world.

In this new month of a new year, say to
yourself each day,
hand on heart:

***"I am a beloved child of God,
deserving love and respect;
through me God changes the world."***

Address Change Requested

Dated Material
January 2014

