



The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista
United Church of Christ

June 2010

Pastor's Corner

In South India, everyday life is infused and intertwined with sacredness. There are indeed special times, such as Pongol, a four-day January harvest festival, when many South Indians make pilgrimages to sacred sites and perform *pujas*, special offerings and rituals in temples. During Pongol, working cattle and oxen are adorned with bells and painted with red polka dots; their horns are wrapped in red yarn.

But sacred ritual isn't just for temples and festivals; every act of life is sacred and is marked with ritual. In every village men and women on their way to work say prayers, light lamps, and make offerings to deities who protect them or their village. Tiny clay lamps filled with ghee are placed outside and in one's home, in or outside one's place of work, near every deity, in every niche, at every shrine, in and around every temple.

Buildings housing cattle are painted in bold red and white stripes denoting the sacredness of the space. When I walk into a traditional South Indian village before dawn in search of a cup of tea, I see a woman creating a new rice powder kollam in the dark street before her house, perhaps her first sacred act of the day.

Kollam designs are in front of every home and business, made fresh every day; every girlchild learns how to make these geometric or flower designs with powder sifted between thumb and finger. First the street is swept, then splashed with antiseptic cow urine or dung water. Insects who eat the rice flour designs will bless the house. Guests walk over



the designs in mutual blessing as they enter the home or business. For the Pongol harvest festival in January, brilliant colors are added to the rice powder. (See photos on next page.)

Dozens of time each day in South India, we greeted people with a bow, hands meeting over our hearts,

saying "Vanekum" (hello) or "Namasté." The gesture and "Namaste" honor the sacred flame in each person.

What is sacred where we live? One constantly hears the exclamation "Oh Gawd, oh Gawd, oh Gawd." This phrase expresses disgust or amazement, profanity rather than a sacred utterance.

Do we have sacred times, sacred rituals or gestures in the US?

Surely sunset is a sacred time for us. Wherever sun sets behind a vista, people are watching -- sometimes dozens or hundreds who have gathered specially and specifically to watch the sun drop from view. I experience this as a mass vespers service, a time of hush, of awe, of gratitude.

How about taking an oath with one's hand on a Bible when installed in office or as a witness -- is this a sacred act? We are bound to tell the truth or to work for the public, but we do not pledge faith in a higher power.

What are your prayer rituals or sacred acts? What is holy for you? Do holy acts happen only in church on Sunday? Is God present in your life at any time or place other than on Sunday morning?

Namasté,

Pastor Susan

School Kollam Welcomes Guests



Temple Kollam with Monkey



Kollam



Daily
House
Blessing

Pongol Kollam at Hotel

Ananda Ashram employee demonstrates



Daily Kollam





New Orleans 2010

We had another successful trip to New Orleans. Seven of us went May 1 through May 8. As Nancy Lemon said it was like taking a family trip with the Haritons. Nancy & I went with Bonnie, Dan, and Eliot along with Dan's cousin Serban and his wife Jeanette. The first two days we worked with members of an Ohio group removing an old roof and then putting on a new one. It was very labor intensive but rewarding to see what could be done in two days. The next three days took the seven of us plus Kelly, a man who was volunteering for three weeks, to another location where we did multiple tasks. Nancy and Bonnie sanded and stained new kitchen cabinets, Dan; Eliot & Serban hung a door and helped Kelly build an odd shaped closet. The taping of wall boards had not been done properly by a contractor so that had to be redone. Jeanette and I spent most of our time painting molding that would be used in the house we were working at and also for the house across the street. The Ohio group was putting hardwood floors down in the house across the street. Eliot went over and helped with that project also. He was a terrific worker and he cooked three or four meals for us!

We worked hard but also had some fun starting with the day we arrived which happened to be Eliot's birthday. Eliot picked the restaurant and we took him to the French Quarter for dinner. Sunday we went to church at Little Farms, Nancy & Bonnie sang in the choir. After church we went to the Jazz Festival listening to music, eating and enjoying each

other's company. Wednesday afternoon we took our lunch and visited Common Ground Relief. We stopped after work one day to visit a book store. Pralines were on our list to buy for family & friends and we found there was a store not far from our second work site so on Friday after work we headed there. The owner was delightful and not only did we all buy a supply of pralines but stayed and had snow cones and when the owner learned we needed to stop and buy lettuce for our dinner she went in the back and brought out lettuce and a delicious bean salad. Life was good. Our trip was good. Maybe you will join us next time? We have reservations for March 19 – March 26, 2011, probably for the last time. According to Alan Coe at the Disaster Relief office in New Orleans UCC money will run out by the end of 2011.

By Sylvia Sugg



Mira Vista

Semi-Annual Meeting

June 13, 2010 – 12 noon

Combined worship and
semi-annual
congregational meeting
followed by potluck lunch

At the meeting, we will:

- Receive Council Reports
- Nomination/Election & Installation of Officers & Council Members for 2010-2011
- Report & Discussion of El Cerrito Housing
- Pastor's Annual Report
- Update of 60th Anniversary

See you there!



From the Music Stand

Dear Friends;

June marks the end of the choir season at MVUCC, and also the end of music leading until September. The music we have created has been a constant outpouring of grace, growth, power, and love, and I pray this will continue over the summer as well. Pastor Susan and I have talked often of the power of your faith and how it propels us to give of ourselves in the best ways we know how.

So what will you do this summer? I will be going to a drum class in the Oakland hills once or twice during the summer. There is a women's drum weekend in Petaluma that I am thinking about, as are others at MVUCC. In mid-June, I will head to CT to visit family. I will attend other churches in our own area to see how they "do church." (One of the great things about this job is that going to church is doing research as well as worshipping.) And I will daydream about ways to bring The Word and The Note together in worship in meaningful ways.

During the summer, I pray that we will each find ways to sing with, to, and for each other... and always with the knowledge that God loves the music we make and the love we have inside.

Thank you, Mira Vista and especially Susan, Wendy, and the Amazing Graces, for "pouring your love on your people". You have blessed us all.

Have a wonderful summer!

In peace,
Amy



Annual Gathering of the Northern California Nevada Conference

Bonnie Hariton and Sylvia Sugg attended the annual gathering on May 14th & 15th. It was a wonderful experience joining 470 other UCC folks for this occasion. The theme was *A Wonderful Harmony: Transforming Lives, Churches, Communities*. We worshipped together, sang together, ate together. There were interesting workshops to attend and of course a business meeting. We voted to continue sacred conversations on race and to reaffirm marriage equality. We voted to accept the budget as presented.

Bonnie and Sylvia really enjoyed representing Mira Vista as your delegates and would recommend to all to consider going to the meeting next year. It is located in a beautiful setting in Pacific Grove. Barbara, Susan, Bonnie & Sylvia found time to go on a walk on a boardwalk alongside the ocean. It's beautiful. The drive is between 2 and 2 1/2 hours from the Bay Area so you could even go down for one day. The meetings were upbeat and energetic and fun.

By Sylvia Sugg



June Celebrations

Birthdays

- 9th Cristina McCue
- 12th Olivia Wisely
- 19th Alicia Romo
- 21st Alice Parks
- 28th Wendy Wisely



Anniversaries

- 7th Diane and Connor Gass
- 17th Susan and Barbara

*Best wishes to each of you with
love from Mira Vista!*



***Yoga for all levels and
bodies.....six week series
beginning June...strengthen
your body and help the
homeless***

Fee: Donation only (suggested donation \$10.00 per class)

Proceeds go to help buy food for the Richmond Souper Center, a shelter for the homeless

Location: Social Hall at **Christ Lutheran/Mira Vista UCC church**, 780 Ashbury Ave, El Cerrito. Enter through double doors at back of parking lot and turn right into social hall.

Class focus: To gradually begin to build strength and flexibility in your body through a series of beginning level Yoga poses with suggested modifications as needed.

Preparation: Wear loose fitting clothes that you can easily move in. Consider light weight sweat pants and tee shirt. Mats and blankets will be provided and other props as needed. May bring your own mat and blanket.

Instructor: Patsy Stubbs RYT
(Registered Yoga Teacher)
Contact: 510-237-6535 or cell:
510-367-6523



Saturday, 6/5: 9 am-10:15 am
Monday, 6/7: 7 p.m. -8:15 p.m.
Saturday, 6/12: 9a.m.-10:15 a.m.
Monday, 6/14: 7 p.m.-8:15 p.m.
Saturday, 6/19: NO CLASS
Monday, 6/21: 7 p.m.-8:15 p.m.
Saturday, 6/26: 9 a.m.-10:15 a.m.
Monday, 6/28: 7 p.m.-8:15 p.m.
Saturday, 7/3: 9 a.m.-10:15 a.m.
Monday, 7/5: 7 p.m.-8:15 p.m.
Saturday, 7/10: 9 a.m.-10:15 a.m.
Monday, 7/12: 7 p.m.-8:15 p.m.
Saturday, 7/17: 9 a.m.-10:15 a.m.





News from the pews

Pastor Susan highly recommends **Elizabeth Claman's** new book, "Identity Blues." The plot is a page turner, the characters real and loveable. You can pick it up on Amazon or directly from **Elizabeth**. Congratulations, author!

Pastor Susan asks for healing prayers for this stressful time in the life of her daughter **Lucia**, who is on disability leave hoping to heal a ruptured disc. In her twenties she was diagnosed with Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy, and her symptoms require defibrillator implant surgery on June 17.

Patsy Stubbs has taken a part-time job inspecting surgery centers. Beginning in June she is offering a series of yoga classes as a benefit for GRIP's Souper Center. Do your body good and support social justice simultaneously! Your entire donation will go to support GRIP. See the flyer for details.

Patsy Severson is happy to be back at work full-time on a project – Green Axle Solutions.

Bonnie Hariton, Sylvia Sugg, Pastor Susan, and **Barbara Cook** attended the Annual Gathering at Asilomar of our northern California/Nevada church conference. It was fun and inspiring, perhaps most of all singing with hundreds of your tribe and experiencing the youth and young adult energy. You go, NCNC!

Adelle Lemon has been struggling with a debilitating health condition that has weakened her strength just lately. Pray for her.

Wendy Mahoney travelled to North Carolina to be with her recently widowed mother over Wendy's birthday weekend. We offer prayers for this family.

Keeping in touch

Congratulations to our church custodian, **Alicia Romo**, who reports that two of her daughters, **Cecilia** and **Cristina**, have new babies. **Cecilia** and her husband are opening a small restaurant in San Francisco.

Congratulations also to **Felicity Wright**, who has accepted a call to The Park Church, a UCC church in Elmira, New York, historic church of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mark

Twain. You can ask her all about this exciting new transition in her life when she leads worship on June 6. (Pastor Susan will be at Tiburon UCC that morning, baptizing her goddaughter, Ellis Jane Reichert Morrison.)

Ardith Hayes and **Ruth Ann Clark** vacationed in California in May and worshipped with us twice. Thanks be to God for old friends.



by Cathy Noble, Clerk

At our Council meeting on May 12, discussed further the upcoming Semi-Annual Meeting in June and the progress our upcoming 60th anniversary celebration in October as well as the following:

- Have you thought more about being on the Council? Officers are needed for the upcoming 2010/2011 year. Won't you consider offering your skills and interests? Volunteers are most encouraged!
- How are you doing with your pledge this year? As of April 30th, 29% has been received, a bit short of the 33% we should be at.
- The June Semi-annual meeting is June 13th. We are looking forward to seeing you there!
- Good News! The George Marks Children's Hospice is NOT closing. Right now, they are providing outpatient services and will be opening in-patient services in the near future!!
- The LGBT parade coming up on June 27th!
- The Latina Center will be celebrating their 10th Anniversary this summer.

Council Meetings are always lively and deal with much more than is mentioned above. Please let Diane know if you would like to read the complete Minutes.



Mira Vista United Church of Christ

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10 am	2	3	4	5 Yoga, 9-10:15 am
6 HOLY COMMUNION 12 Noon	7 Yoga, 7-8:15 pm	8 Bible Study, 1:30 pm Pastoral Care Team, 12 noon	9 Council meeting @ Pastor Susan's house, 7 pm	10	11 Breakfast at Carrow's Restaurant, 8:30 am	12 Yoga, 9-10:15 am Gay Prom, 7 pm
13 12 Noon Worship Semi-annual meeting (potluck)	14 Yoga, 7-8:15 pm	15 3 rd Tues Bible Study with Christ Lutheran, 1:00 pm	16 Worship committee @ Pastor Susan's house, 7 pm	17	18	19
20 12 Noon Worship 	21 Yoga, 7-8:15 pm 	22 Bible Study, 1:30 pm	23	24	25 Breakfast at Carrow's Restaurant, 8:30 am	26 Yoga, 9-10:15 am Living the Questions, 10:30 am
27 12 Noon Worship SF Gay PRIDE Parade	28 Yoga, 7-8:15 pm	29 Bible Study, 1:30 pm	30			

WORSHIP IN JUNE: welcome home!

Hear this ground-zero testimony to the Christian faith: *We have been reconciled, restored, so that we may ourselves become reconcilers and repairers of the breach – going and telling what God has done for us.*

In June we will look together at our longings for reconciliation and restoration. How does it happen? What do we have to do? How do we respond? How can we pass from a life of bondage to a life of liberation? And how can we tell what God has done for us?

Our stories are about people on their last nerve, people in desperate, drowning messes, people who are up to their eyebrows in alienation and loss. Each human being finds a place back at the Welcome Table.

Come join for the casual worship of summertime, in which we sing our favorite hymns, leave our worries at the altar, and walk together on the journey of renewal and recommitment to love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with our God.

June 6, 2010, 12 noon
Holy Communion
Rev. Felicity Wright, presiding
1 Kings 17:8-24
Restored to life

June 13, 2010, 12 noon
Semi-annual meeting
Luke 7:36-8:3
Restored to community

June 20, 2010
1st Kings 19:1-15a
Restored to the Holy

June 27, 2010
Galatians 5:1, 13-25
Restored to freedom

The Fellowship Post
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Address Change Requested

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