

# The Fellowship Post

## Mira Vista United Church of Christ

March 2017

### Melinda's Musings

***One thing I've found . . . the road rarely rises up to meet you until you've begun walking. – Michelle Jennae***

About 5 years ago, I made an effort to become a long-range walker. I did a half-marathon with a breast cancer group and did another one on my own. I trained in between with 5-9 mile walks all over the City. My personal half-marathon was exceptionally scenic as I walked from our home on Twin Peaks through the Haight, Golden Gate Park, the Presidio, and across the Golden Gate Bridge to Fort Baker in Marin County. What a gorgeous walk! And I felt fit, strong, and healthy.

My career as a long term walker, however, turned out to be short-lived. When I started serving Montclair Presbyterian in 2013, the time I needed to keep up the walking was subsumed by car commuting. At first, I tried to have "walking" meetings and quite a few congregants were game and we did very well with my "walking office hours" in early Fall and late sunsets. But then winter came, and as the daylight waned, it was too hard to schedule these peripatetic meetings and my walking time dwindled. I loved my work, but it was sad to lose this joyful form of exercise.

Since I have been at Mira Vista, I have been looking to find a new path for exercise. Together we tried to make a walking a part of our community through our "Walk to Jerusalem" program as part of "Passport to



Palestine". It didn't work very well because trying to get through rush-hour traffic to meet up in late afternoon was too difficult.

In the past two months, I have shifted away from my old pattern of long-range walking and begun to simply increase my short-term walking by parking far away from appointments and adding 10 or 15 minutes each way and then

going for half hour walks around the neighborhood a couple of days a week. This strategy seems to be working because last week, according to my apple watch, I walked over 15 miles, which is more than a half marathon!

Walking is one of my spiritual practices and I am glad that I have begun to move away from wanting the satisfaction of "big results" and have finally made this practice more a part of everything I do. By making this practice "smaller" and more flexible, I have ensured that the fitness and health I desire will not be so easily derailed. It also means that when we attended the Women's March in January, I had no trouble walking over eight miles that day.

As we begin our journey through Lent, I invite you to consider the "size" of your spiritual practices and think about how well they serve you. These are challenging times and we all need to be in top form with our hearts and spirits well-tended.

This Lent, as we trace the steps of Jesus as he prepared to meet his demise in Jerusalem, we will explore a number of spiritual practices that he taught. As we learn about his practices, we are invited to improve our own practices so that we might be ready for whatever might happen next.

***How ready are you for changes that may come in your life? What needs to change? What resources do you need to feel ready? How can we help one another?***

Love and many blessings,  
Melinda

***the GOOD table Update***  
*by Tom Emanuel*

Phil Porter, cofounder of InterPlay, has a nifty little concept he calls *incrementality*: “Little teeny-tiny steps. It’s the way we get into trouble and the way we get out of trouble.” The idea is that, when you break things down into a series of concrete tasks—when you take things *incrementally*—even the most far-flung goals become a little less far-flung and a little more doable.

That’s definitely the way Mira Vista has been approaching ***the GOOD table***: rather than taking a blind leap into the real estate market, we’ve been trying out “pop-ups” to see how different elements of the “café church” experience might feel in the life of our community right now. The monthly concerts at the El Cerrito Natural Grocery have given us an idea of how ***the GOOD table*** might work as a music venue. Melinda’s weekly office hours at Catahoula Coffee offer a glimpse into how pastoral staff might interact with congregants and visitors to a coffee shop. And this past month, we experimented with integrating writing exercises into our Sunday mornings, borrowing from Marvin K. White’s “Church of the Living Word” worship/workshop (or “workshop”) style.

For four Sundays in February, every service opened with a few lines from the Sufi poet Hafiz. After meditating together on the day’s reading, we then had the opportunity to write our own responses to the fourteenth-century poet’s words and share them in community. We came up with some beautiful reflections – and some bizarre ones! (I still can’t get Dan Hariton’s image of a spandex-clad chicken bouncing up and down on a trampoline out of my head...)

Speaking for myself, getting time to reflect on poetry, then getting to make poetry of my own, and *then* getting to hear the reflections of others, is a deeply prayerful experience. It seemed to have been that for many Mira Vistans as well – indeed, several of you asked me to share the poems I wrote during worship in February. So here they are! As you read them, I invite you to imagine writing “workshops” at ***the GOOD table***, with congregants seated around tables rather than in pews, sharing creativity and community in new and exciting ways...

## March Birthdays

5<sup>th</sup> Patsy Severson  
7<sup>th</sup> Patsy Stubbs  
12<sup>th</sup> Kathe Kiehn



**Happy Birthday to each of you**  
♥ with love from Mira Vista! ♥

## Collection of Poems

by Tom Emanuel

### I. in taberna quando sumus

at roadside en route  
to the Kingdom  
there is a little public house  
where locals and wayfarers  
meet, share pints,  
anecdotes, beds: one  
Yemeni seamstress, *one*  
Cupertino tech baron, one  
Zen Buddhist nun, one  
Czech poet (down-on-his-luck), all  
Housed, all Welcome—on  
one condition only:

nobody pays for their own drink

...

### II. "the words you speak become the house you live in"

the quote is by Hafiz  
and the master speaks the Truth

so: bearing that in mind:  
what of words we tweet?

and likewise: what language  
is White House made of?

in the Name of God  
Compassionate and Merciful

may our Words be an acceptable  
fall-out shelter

should they push the button down

...

### III. the sparrow's reply

in this gravity of darkness  
frail wings are Light  
catching breezes  
illuminating ionospheres of  
Breath.

we need harbor no fear of Earth—  
Love is both the force  
that lifts us up, and the  
Ground  
that catches us  
when we fall.

...

### IV. eschatology

in a rush of wings  
the angel Gabriel appeared to me  
on the road and  
spoke: *hell is running away.*

from what? I asked, and he  
replied: *from that  
which that bids you fly  
instead.*

...

February 2017: (based upon writing prompts  
used in February worship)  
Mira Vista United Church of Christ  
El Cerrito, CA



## Panel Discussion On 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment Documentary



**Sponsored by the League of Women Voters, West Contra Costa County**

### **Special Guests**

**US Congressman Mark DeSaulnier - Senator Nancy Skinner  
Assemblyman Tony Thurmond - Supervisor John Gioia  
Superior Court Judge Diana Becton  
Contra Costa County Public Defender Ali Saidi  
Moderator David Gray**

**When: Saturday, March 4, 2017**

**Where: De Anza High School, Theatre- 5000 Valley View Rd Richmond, CA 94803**

**Time: 9:30am- Door Opens  
10:00am- Film Screening  
11:50am- Panel Discussion**

**There will be time with community based agencies  
Available to provide material about their organizations.**

**Contact:  
Joan Carpenter (510) 932-5354**

# Mira Vista United Church of Christ

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2017

## MARCH

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Ash Wednesday Worship, with Christ Lutheran, 7:30p	2 Community Office Hours with Pastor Melinda each Thursday@Catahoula Coffee, 2-5p  Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	3	4
5 12 Noon Worship & Holy Communion followed by La Mesa with Social Action Team  Live jazz w/ Amy Ukena and Hans Raag @El Cerrito Natural Grocery, 6-8:30p. <i>FREE - invite your friends!</i>	6	7 Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10am 	8	9 Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p  Community Office Hours, 2-5p  Council meeting, Melinda's office, 7p	10	11  Time to Spring Ahead
12 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa  Daylight Savings begins	13	14   Pastor Melinda on retreat at Christ in the Desert March 14-22 →	15 Mindfulness Circle @ El Cerrito Royale, 7p	16 Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	17	18
19 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa with  →	20  The First Day of Spring	21   →	22   →	23 Community Office Hours, 2-5p  Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	24	25
26 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa	27	28	29	30 Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	31	

# 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 our common table, **La Mesa**. Feel free to bring food to share as you are able. We celebrate the sacrament of **Holy Communion every First Sunday**. All are welcome at our table!

March 1	Ash Wednesday Service with Christ Lutheran. Holy Communion and imposition of ashes offered with sung prayer in the style of Taizé.	7:30p
March 5	"In the Wilderness" with Holy Communion. Social Action Team meets during La Mesa	Matthew 4: 1-11
March 12	"Flesh and Spirit"	John 3:1-8
March 19	"The Well of Living Water" Tom Emanuel preaching	John 4: 5-29
March 26	"Unrestrained Lips"	Psalm 40: 5-10

The liturgical season of Lent begins on **March 1, Ash Wednesday**. Our theme of "**Ready, Set, Ready**" will help us focus on our spiritual gifts and strengths in order that we might increase our spiritual stamina and connection with the Divine.

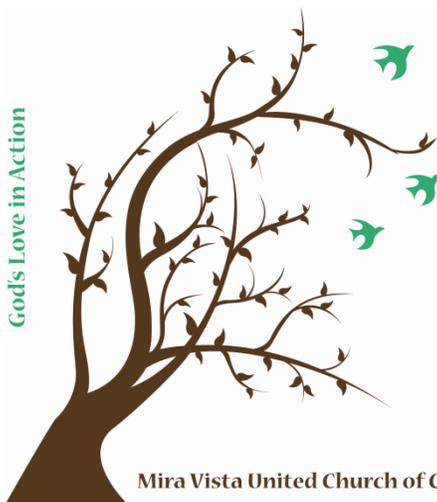
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Address Change Requested

Dated Material  
March 2017

God's Love in Action



Mira Vista United Church of Christ

*The Fellowship Post*

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