

The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista
United Church of Christ

May 2013

The Peace of God, the Pee of Dog

Since Easter we've heard four *recognition* dramas in which Jesus' followers are challenged to recognize what keeps them from seeing, touching, and recognizing the risen Christ. Remember the fourth one, where Jesus cooks breakfast on the beach by the Sea of Tiberias? The **fish** were the first to recognize Jesus – when Jesus told the disciples to cast their nets they leapt in.

That led me to thinking about recent events of seeing, touching, tasting and recognizing in our community of faith. During Mission 4/1 Earth, we've been planting trees, watering flower seeds, eating a raw-food feast, writing and signing earth advocacy letters, blessing the dirt under our feet and the trees over our heads, and – thanks be to God and our dog lovers – blessing the dogs (and landfill) at Point Isabel Dog Park.

On a warm and sunny Saturday morning, I waited on my knees to offer touch, prayer, and Lourdes-blessed holy water. "We're blessing dogs in honor of Earth Day, if you would like." In this place where dogs meet and play, most humans did like, and almost all the dogs liked. We humans blessed them, prayed for their healing and wholeness, and thanked them for sharing their wisdom with us.

I'm no dog whisperer -- in fact I confessed to our dog people that I needed their help -- but that morning I felt like a dog magnet. I'm sure it was because I was on my knees, but most dogs came right over and greeted me,



leaned on me, pushed under my arms, licked me. I can still feel the warmth and intimacy of the bigger dog bodies on my own; I felt blessed by these dogs, and I felt surrounded, filled, and held by the presence of Christ in these beings.

When we were finished, we sat on the grass sharing our experiences. By this time I had become accustomed to warm dog bodies snuggled up to me; one was at my back. But then I felt an unmistakable warm wetness – "one of them has peed on me!" No, they said, he's just wet from the water. But it *was* pee – *a dog peed on me!* No one has heard of a dog peeing on a human – but I have witnesses.

Someone said maybe the dog wanted to make sure he could find me again – what do I know? I experienced the peace of God among the sun, sky, trees, grass, humans and especially the dogs that morning – and at the end, I also received the pee of dog.

I am certain the dogs, like the fish, were quick to recognize the risen Jesus, quick to recognize what mystics call the body of Christ throughout the entire cosmos. Could this dog have assisted me in discovering this abiding state of blessed connectedness in my own being? I do know that I felt completely included that morning – part of all creation – one with both the peace of God and the pee of dog. Thanks be to God...and dog.

Pastor
Susan

Social Action Team Corner



The Social Action Team is joyfully focused on the UCC's Mission 4/1 Earth from Easter to Pentecost. On April 7, we signed 65 letters to government officials and President Obama advocating for higher standards of earth care and against the Keystone pipeline and other environmental debacles. We held our first, touching (in all meanings) and delightful Dog/Earth Blessing at Pt. Isabel on Saturday, April 20 (see photo). We are continuing to collect pennies for the Penny Pines Project (seedlings for reforestation of burned areas in our national parks).

Each week we weave environmental information and earth blessing activities into the children's time, such as growing flowers from seed together. We enjoyed a fabulous raw food lunch prepared by all of us on April 21. Over lunch on April 28, we will enjoy *Green Fire*, a biography of Aldo Leopold: author of *Sand County Almanac* -- energizer behind U.S. Wilderness Areas and pioneer in ecosystem restoration. We continue to compile a list of personal energy-saving tips. Here are just a few ideas to reach toward:

- Replace paper napkins/paper towels with cloth napkins/rags; use cloth grocery bags
- Use compostable plastic bags for waste baskets and dog/cat litter; pick up trash where you walk
- Install energy efficient windows OR renew caulking around existing windows
- Unplug appliances with "always on" lights when not in use
- Insulate home, use thermal house paint, go solar
- Minimize driving, drive fuel-efficient car; use public transportation, walking, bicycling

- Grow organic fruits/vegetables and share produce; shop at farmers' markets
- Buy used; what you buy new, buy locally

When you read newspapers/media, watch for environmental impact -- pray, write letters, speak up. Remember that whatever kills the bees, kills all of us; understand to your core that we are intimately part of everything that lives or dies. Notice how anything that damages ecosystems damages humans -- most of all people with the fewest resources for recovery.

Above all, fall in love with Earth and every day discover new ways to demonstrate your love!

Council Corner

At our Council Meeting in March, we talked



about Rev. Susan's (and Barbara's) upcoming sabbatical. We are happy that Susan will have time to read, meditate, do yoga, go to a family reunion and go camping.

We are also pleased that Rev. Melinda McLain, who we know from her work with us directing the choir (while Amy Ukena was recuperating), will be leading worship while Susan is away. Rev. Melinda will be bringing with her a summer intern, Vic Robinson, a new graduate from PSR and a member of City of Refuge in San Francisco. We are feeling many times blessed!

Along with approving financial reports, we talked about the many activities that various church groups: the Social Action Team (SAT), the Mindfulness Group, the a la Mesa folks, are currently planning. We are also starting a new group, the "Home Team," in which we will begin to explore options for our future as a worshipping community.

Melinda's Coming Back . . .

I am so delighted to return to Mira Vista this



summer as
your **sabbatical
replacement pastor!**

My stint with you last
Advent and Christmas
as your choir director,
and before that as a
guest preacher and
retreat leader, makes

me feel like this summer will be less like
starting a new job and more like an extended
retreat time with dear friends.

Susan tells me that you all sometimes have
a summer "theme" and I have a really rich one
in mind for our time together. I would like to
take some focused time playing in the
intersection of **spirituality and the arts.**

Here's a bit of a preview:

In the book of 2nd Chronicles there is a
remarkable story concerning Jehosophat, a
ruler of ancient Judah. The story tells that
Jehosophat, in consultation with the people
and with God, decided to use the novel
strategy of putting singers - a choir - at the
front of the army to defend against an invasion
by their neighbors. In my mind, I see and even
hear these singers marching towards an army
bent on their destruction, and through the
spiritual power of their singing ending the battle
before it ever began in a conventional sense.
I see them sort of like the front line of civil
rights marches in the south, freedom marches
in South Africa, and in other struggles where
people literally sang themselves free of fear,
thereby disarming those bent upon their
destruction.

Have you, like me, experienced the power
of music (and dance and poetry and sculpture
and painting and . . . you name the
artistic discipline) to deepen your own spiritual
life and broaden your faith? If so, then I invite
you Mira Vistans to join me on an exploration
of the intersection of artistic expression and our
spiritual lives. On Tuesday evenings and in
Sunday worship, we will imagine and

experience for ourselves how the visual and
performing arts affect our spiritual
development. We will gather our favorite
poems, stories, songs, paintings, dances, and
other artistic sources of inspiration and bring
them into conversation with our faith and spirit
to discover new avenues for connecting our
creativity and the divine. And it will be fun for
all ages! ;-)

Another treat for our time this summer will
be the presence of **Vic Robinson as our
summer intern** (see article). I believe you will
enjoy her participation at Mira Vista and I have
no doubt that you Mira Vistans will be a
wonderful community of nurture for her as she
moves towards ordained ministry.

For those of you who don't know me well
(or need to be reminded) I have been serving
this Spring at the Music Director for First
Presbyterian Church of Oakland. I finish there
on May 19 and will gently slide right into place
with you on May 26. I have served five
different churches in our NCNC conference,
including City of Refuge, UCC, San Francisco;
Island United Church, Foster City; Eden,
Hayward; Niles, Fremont; and First
Congregational, Redwood City. I have also
served our UCC national setting as chair of
Evangelism and New Church Development in
Local Church Ministries and on the Executive
Council. For our NCNC Conference, I have
served for six years as co-chair of the
Committee on Ministry, Section B, and in other
roles.

I live in San Francisco just above the
Castro on Twin Peaks with my wife Colleen,
two parakeets named Tucker and Scout, and
the occasional presence of two God dogs:
Charlie and Sugar. For those who may not
have my personal contact information at your
fingertips, **my email address**
is: revmelinda@me.com and my cell
number is: [415-378-3193](tel:415-378-3193). As your part-time
pastor, I will plan to be **in El Cerrito at the**
church on Tuesday afternoons and in the
evening for our study group. I will of course
also be **with you on Sundays** for worship,
meetings, and visitation. I am also happy to

schedule other times as needed for conversation, meetings, art outings (?), and pastoral care in whatever locations are convenient for you. I am looking forward to our time together!

Vic Robinson, Summer Intern



I am a member of City of Refuge, UCC in San Francisco and will receive my M. Div from Pacific School of Religion (PSR) in May and will begin a chaplaincy residency at

St. Francis Memorial Hospital in San Francisco this September.

I serve on the Board of Directors of the Golden Gate Association and as the seminarian representative to the Committee on Ministry (COM A) of the Northern California Nevada Conference. I am originally from New Jersey and arrived here in the Bay Area 13 years ago via Boston, MA and Olympia, WA. Currently my partner Julie and I live in San Leandro along with our rambunctious Staffordshire terrier, Belle Starr.

Some of my interests and hobbies include: pleasure reading (when I have time), gardening, board games, especially Trivial Pursuit, theater, listening to live music, usually at Yoshi's and Cal Performances. I have not had the opportunity to attend the opera in the past few years due to school but love it, the symphony, dance performances, movies especially classic films, sports, plays, writing and a good chat.

I am interested in traditional as well as contemporary forms of worship and believe that prayer is the language with which we talk with God. I also believe in working for justice and peace as well as the eradication of poverty and food scarcity. I believe that one cannot purport to love God and not work toward justice for all of God's people.

Strengthen the Church May 5, 2013

Four times a year our United Church of Christ asks all her congregations to join hands in special offerings to support projects we do together -- locally, nationally, and globally. It's one of the ways we multiply and unify our efforts on behalf of this hurting world.



This year's annual UCC Strengthen the Church offering is coming up on Sunday, May 5. Strengthen the Church provides support for our own local and national infrastructures that enable us to be a church together. Funds are used to promote the planting of new churches, to awaken new ideas in existing churches, and to develop the spiritual life of our youth and young adults.

We know Jesus didn't ask anybody to start a church -- he asked us to love each other. We earth creatures respond to his invitation by making sacred covenants with each other, by sharing earth's generosity and abundance, and by eating and drinking together in his name. That's what we call sacred community -- church.

If you know me at all, you know I'm not big on evangelism. But wouldn't it be sad if someone who desperately *wanted* a community and an experience of spiritual awakenings like I have at Mira Vista, didn't have that in their life just because they didn't know we were here or because our sister churches and ministries did not exist in various parts of the world?

As I'm finishing this article two days after the Boston Marathon bombing, it is that much more urgent to me that our spiritual communities are visible and that our covenant invitations are clear and far reaching. Please consider making a donation to Strengthen the Church on Sunday, May 5, to help make it so.

*Peace,
Barbara Cook*



Notes from the Music Stand

Dear Mira Vistans,

This month has been a time of reflection, action, acceptance, and renewal, as we consider Easter and the Earth. Changes are all around us, as Spring comes again.

The Amazing Graces sang beautifully this past Sunday (April 21st). We sang Richard Smallwood's inspiring anthem, "Total Praise." We lifted the roof off! Next up we will sing on Pentecost, on May 19th.

Now, in the 2nd of a series about noted hymnwriters, is a bit about the Rev. Charles Albert Tindley. Most of this information came from Wikipedia; check out this link:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Albert_Tindley

Rev. Charles Albert Tindley

Often referred to as "The Prince of Preachers," Charles Tindley educated himself, became a minister and founded one of the largest Methodist congregations serving the African-American community on the East Coast of the United States.

Tindley was a noted songwriter and composer of gospel hymns. His composition "I'll Overcome Someday" is credited by some observers to be the basis for the U.S. civil rights anthem, "We Shall Overcome." Tindley's song, "I'll Overcome Someday," had been brought to the Highlander Folk School in the 1930s by tobacco workers from Charleston, South Carolina. In 1947, Zilphia Horton, cultural worker and educator, taught the song at the school, where others heard it. They altered Tindley's refrain "I'll Overcome Someday" to "We Shall Overcome" and the song was slowed down to be sung as a marching hymn.

Here is a very short list of some of Rev. Tindley's most-loved hymns:

I'll Overcome Some Day

Leave It There

Lord Will Make the Way, The

Stand by Me

Storm Is Passing Over, The

We'll Understand It Better By and By

Rev. Tindley's witness both musically and corporally are a true testament to his faith and his community. May we find courage and sustenance in his work.

In harmony,
Amy

May Celebrations

Birthdays

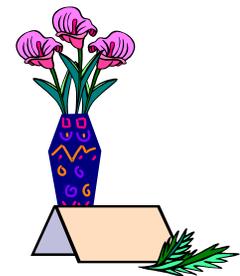
- 1st Eliot Hariton
- 4th Rev. Katie Morrison
- 7th Marilyn Colbert
- 12th Mhel Kavanaugh Lynch
- 15th Pastor Belinda Thomas
- 22nd Wendy Mahoney
- 23rd Beth Koutz
- 29th Ken Alborn



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

Anniversaries

- 22nd Betty & Howard Coates
- 26th Nancy Lemon & Blaine Devine





Mira Vista United Church of Christ

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Amazing Graces, 7pm <i>NCNC UCC Annual Gathering</i>	3	4 Yoga, 9-10:15 am
5 Noon Worship  <i>Holy Communion & Blessing of Rainbow Scarves</i> Strengthen the Church Offering	6 Yoga, 5:30–6:45pm	7 Mira Vista prepares lunch, Souper Center, 10am  Pastor Susan at IRG Retreat	8	9 Amazing Graces, 7pm	10	11 Yoga, 9-10:15 am
12 Noon Worship <i>Rev Maria Grace Presiding</i> Pastor Susan at IRG Retreat	13 Yoga, 5:30–6:45pm	14 Bible Study, 1pm	15 Council Meeting, 7pm	16 Amazing Graces, 7pm	17	18 Yoga, 9-10:15 am
19 Noon Worship <i>Pentecost Celebration & Baptism</i>	20 Yoga, 5:30–6:45pm	21	22 Home Team @ Pastor Susan's	23	24	25 Yoga, 9-10:15 am Pastor Susan on Sabbatical
26 Noon Worship <i>Rev Melinda McLain Presiding</i>	27 Memorial Day Pastor Susan on Sabbatical	28	29	30 Amazing Graces Tentative	31	

Worship for May 2013

May 5, 2013, 12 noon
**Holy Communion &
Blessing of Rainbow Scarves**
John 14:23-29
Holy Spirit Creation

May 19, 2013, 12 noon
Pentecost; Holy Baptism
Acts 2:1-12;
Romans 8:14-17
Holy Spirit Adoption

May 12, 2013, 12 noon
Mother's Day
Genesis 3:16; John 15:1-12
O Mother Love
Rev. Dr. Maria Grace presiding

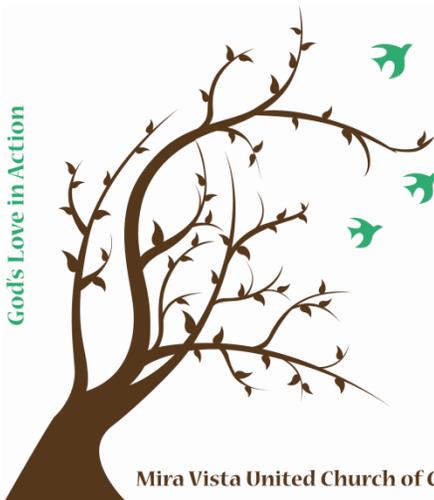
May 26, 2013, 12 noon
Rev. Dr. Melinda McLain presiding
Spirit and the Arts summer series begins



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780 Ashbury Avenue
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Address Change Requested

Dated Material
May 2013



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