

The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista
United Church of Christ

May 2012

The Way Is Hard, But Clear

Through Lent and now through Easter season we have been preparing ourselves spiritually for new life, for creation, for resurrection.

All of creation is linked with change and movement in the spring. In our fresh-water rivers and creeks salmon are hatching and gathering strength for their huge transition to life in the salt-water ocean. For two to seven years the young salmon swim in schools, eat, and grow in the ocean. Every salmon gathers its life force for the long journey home, back to fresh water, back to the ground of their spawning. This journey may be as long as 2,000 miles upstream to the precise place where they were born.

Here's where it gets really interesting. According to "The Book of Awakening," salmon find their way upstream by bumping repeatedly into blocked pathways until they find where the current is strongest. Wherever the flow of water is clear, unblocked, wherever the current pushes the hardest against them, is the way they must go. **"In the unblocked passage, the way is clear, but hard."**

How do you move past an obstacle you are bumping up against (or avoiding)?

I can spend a lot of time butting up against obstacles, wondering why it's so hard, hoping and wishing and praying that the obstacles will be removed. Yet by this salmon example, bumping up against blocked pathways is not the way forward. Wherever the current is strongest, where I feel the rush of movement – that's the way forward. That's the way of Spirit!



I love the image of still waters as home, and I like to hang out in quiet eddies of rushing creeks, where the resistance is low. I have to hold on pretty hard in my quiet cove, though; the running water moves everything in its path.

Eventually my grip slips, my body crashes forward, and I

get knocked around by the powerful downstream flow, laughing like a loon.

Sometimes in my daily life I may need to power forward, to swim upstream, rather than resting in the quiet pool or tumbling downstream. And when you and I are facing adversities, "the passage of truth comes at us with a powerful momentum because it is clear and unimpeded, and so, **where we sense the rush of truth is where we must give our all.**"

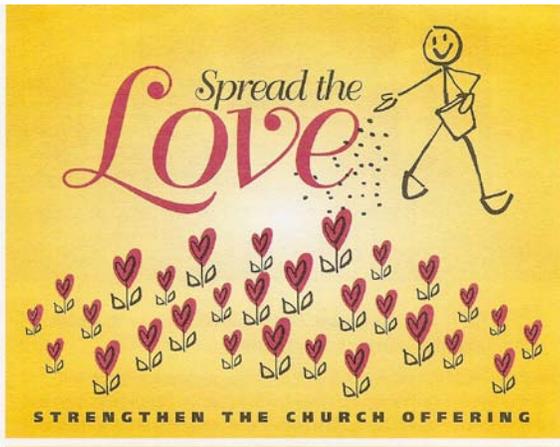
Hiding out where the current is quiet is not the path.

Bumping your head against immovable objects will not lead you upstream into this season of productive change.

Here's the way of healthy resistance: keep on nosing for the unimpeded way and when you find it, work with all the life and strength you have to make it through. In this season, and in all seasons, I hope to be right at your side.

In the struggle,

Pastor
Susan



Strengthen the Church Pentecost Sunday, May 27

Never place a period where God has placed a comma. No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here! These are integral messages of the UCC's extravagant welcome and Stillspeaking Ministry. It is a beacon to people who have been judged, persecuted and excluded by religion, and to others who struggle to find relevancy in religion in our world today. Strengthen the Church funds the Stillspeaking Ministry which spreads the message of inclusion and a religious tradition that honors all aspects of our human experience and celebrates the many ways that experience can be fully lived.

When I was 12 I left religion because it judged and persecuted difference, and rigidly and narrowly defined what goodness was and how it could be lived out in this world. Turns out that was just a comma, just a pause to give me time to discover a religious tradition that said to me, "welcome home, we love you and all of the diverse experience you bring to us, the feast is ready".

Give generously to Strengthen the Church, if you can. And pray furiously, if you will, that the message it helps to send is heard far and wide. Messages save lives too. It saved mine.

Thank you.
Barbara



Council Corner - April, 2012

- ❖ The personnel committee is looking for a Sunday School teacher to start in the fall. Do you know anyone that may be interested? Please contact Bonnie or Susan. They are looking for a child care provider too!
- ❖ We are losing our beloved Diane to retirement! Although she is looking forward to more free time, she will be so missed.
- ❖ Please contact a council member if you are interested in helping to secure the sound system after services.
- ❖ Chris will be leading a session on Death Penalty Education on May 6th, specifically a discussion of practical ideas of what we can do. Hope you can attend!

May Celebrations

- 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



Anniversaries

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



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



Mira Vista UCC Volunteers at: WriterCoach Connection

With a small core staff, hundreds of skilled community volunteers, and the avid support of school administrators and educators, since 2001 **WriterCoach Connection** has brought one-on-one writing support to thousands of middle- and high-school students at all skill levels.

This year more than 500 coaches are working with some 2,000 students in Berkeley, Oakland, El Cerrito, and Albany, and next year, planning to add Richmond. Two coaches from our own Mira Vista UCC community, **Christie Monson** and **Pastor Susan Meeter**, became acquainted through the WriterCoach training at ECHS. Talk to either of them if you are thinking of joining in.

To ensure our continued success, and to celebrate the words we love, WriterCoach Connection will hold our **4th annual**

Read-and-Write-a-thon

Saturday, May 19, 2012

8:00am - 6:00p

Martin Luther King Middle School

1781 Rose St., Berkeley (near Hopkins and MLK Jr. Way)

Non-stop poetry, prose, drama, and fiction will share the stage for 10 consecutive hours as an ever-changing cast of writing coaches and students read from books of their choice – imagine the variety! You are invited to drop in at any time on Saturday May 19 to listen in.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to this terrific volunteer coaching program, please write a check to "CAFL" ("RWAT" on memo line) and mail it to:

Community Alliance for Learning
Read-and-Write-a-thon
PO Box 6098
Albany, CA 94706

If you would like to donate online, go to <http://www.writercoachconnection.org>, and also see a variety of interesting stories, photos, and videos about the program.



MIRA VISTA HELPS FUND NEW FAMILY VIOLENCE APPELLATE PROJECT

Nancy Lemon and three of her current and former law students are co-founding a new non-profit agency called Family Violence Appellate Project. Their mission is to ensure the safety and well-being of survivors of domestic violence and their children by helping survivors of domestic violence obtain effective representation when they appeal their cases.

Shockingly, in a great number of cases family law judges are ordering children into unsafe situations, where they are in the custody of an abusive parent. A large percentage of people who abuse their partners also abuse their children, or abuse the next partner in front of the children. This is emotionally and physically traumatic for the children, of course, and in the worst cases can result in the abusive parent killing the children.

The Family Violence Appellate Project will find, train, and work with lawyers to take on these cases for free in order to get them reversed by the higher courts. They will educate family law lawyers and parents who represent themselves on ways to avoid such decisions at the trial courts and how to create a good record in case the decision goes the wrong way and needs to be appealed. They hope to train judges about the impact on children of witnessing domestic violence and why they should not be ordered into these situations. The Project will involve and educate law students to become the next generation of advocates on behalf of domestic violence survivors and their children.

The founders are very grateful to Mira Vista UCC for your large donation; we still need to raise more funds before we can officially begin. For more information or to donate: talk to Nancy, email her at nlemon@berkeley.edu, or check out the website: www.fvaplaw.org. Thanks for your interest!

May 2012



Dear Mira Vistans,

As we continue to celebrate the Easter Season this year, I am reminded of Psalm 100, where the poet exhorts us to:



*Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.
Serve the LORD with gladness:
come before His presence with singing.
Know ye that the LORD is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves;*

*We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.
Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise:*

*Be thankful unto Him, and bless his name.
For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations.*

When I read this psalm, sometimes it's the first two lines that I need to hear. Sometimes it's the 3rd line that jumps out at me. Sometimes it's the last. And sometimes it's the whole verse.

My nephew, Nick Catino, is graduating in May with a Master's in Music. His thesis title is, "What Makes a Song Work?" Musicians use all sorts of technical language to explain this, and try to pinpoint exactly what it is that makes a song memorable. In the end, though, they will admit that there is something ineffable and sacred in the way that notes, silence, and intention play through a song. A song works because of all of these things, plus something more – that might be called grace, or the Holy Spirit.

When our congregation sings a favorite hymn, or the Amazing Graces sing an anthem, or Margaret plays a solo, there is something sacred in the very act of making music. It is a time when we stop everything, and just *create*. We may have sung an anthem a thousand times, but every time we sing it, it's different.

Thoughts, emotions, images run through our brains as we sing, changing the sounds we make. The breath we use to sing allows new breath in and old breath out. It refreshes us and makes us more truly together when we stop.

The act of singing itself opens up our hearts, and deepens our connection to each other and to God. Have you ever noticed how singing is an act of faith? You open your mouth and you have faith that sound will come out. (Notice we are NOT judging the kind of sound that comes out. God doesn't care.) We create music because we are God's creatures and we are thankful for all that has been done for us. And as we sing, we lift each other up closer to the Light of God's presence.

What better way to celebrate Easter, new life, the Resurrection, new hope, than by making music? I can't think of one.

May this month be filled with music in your spirit.

In harmony,
Amy Ukena
Music Director

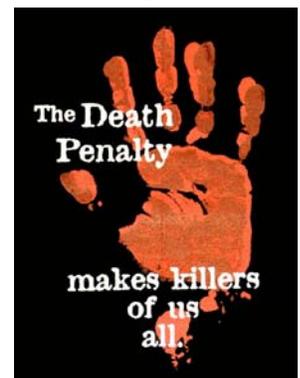
DEATH PENALTY DISCUSSION

On May 6th, after church, Chris will lead a seminar/workshop on the death penalty. Chris will share why it's a faith issue for him. Others are invited to share their position.

We will look at the death penalty issue and the California ballot initiative.

Please join us to discuss this timely issue.

The Social Action Team





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 No Yoga Amazing Graces rehearsal, 7:30 pm	4	5 No Yoga  Cinco de Mayo
6 HOLY COMMUNION 12 Noon Death Penalty Education via Chris	7 No Yoga	8 Bible Study, 1:30 pm Council meeting, 7 pm	9	10 No Yoga Amazing Graces rehearsal, 7:30 pm Susan on Study leave thru May 16	11	12 No Yoga
13 12 Noon Worship  HAPPY Mother's DAY	14 No Yoga	15 3 rd Tues Bible Study with Christ Lutheran, 1:00 pm	16	17 No Yoga Amazing Graces rehearsal, 7:30 pm	18 Chris Hockley MIT review @ PSR, 10 am	19 No Yoga Media training meeting, 11 am
20 12 Noon Worship	21 Yoga, 7-8:15 pm	22 Bible Study, 1:30 pm	23	24 No Yoga Amazing Graces rehearsal, 7:30 pm	25 Social Action Team potluck @ Elizabeth's, 6 pm	26 Yoga, 9-10:15 am
27 12 Noon Worship Strengthen the Church Special Mission Offering Farewell to Chris Hockley	28 Yoga, 7-8:15 pm  Memorial Day	29 Bible Study, 1:30 pm	30	31 Yoga, 6-7:15 pm Amazing Graces rehearsal, 7:30 pm		



May Worship

May 6, 2012, 12 noon
COMMUNION SUNDAY

John 15:1-8

Jesus is like a vine...and we are like branches.

What to prune, what to prune....

BEAR MUCH FRUIT!

May 13, 2012, 12 noon

MOTHER'S DAY

Galatians 5:22-26

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

May 20, 2012, 12 noon

Acts 18:1-11

SEEDLESS FRUIT

May 27, 2012, 12 noon

PENTECOST SUNDAY – wear RED!

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

VARIETIES OF FRUIT; ONE SPIRIT

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Address Change Requested

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