



# The Fellowship Post

## Mira Vista

### United Church of Christ

November 2009

#### Commitment

For many years I've dreamed of traveling to India, but never planned to go. The opportunity would have to fall from the sky, heaven-sent.

Then seven years ago my daughter gave me a book about India and a travel journal. "Mom," she said, "all it takes to get there is a plane ride!"

A few years later Barbara gave me a map of India and more books. Maybe I would get there – someday.

Two years ago I planned a 2010 sabbatical pilgrimage in South India, staying primarily at ashrams whose focus is interspirituality – Christian/Buddhist, Christian/Hindu – visiting temples and sites in Tamil Nadu. Shantivanam, "forest of peace," has long called me. It was the home of Dom Bede Griffiths, a monk, spiritual leader, writer, and contemplative. I chose for a guide an Australian who worked and prayed with Griffiths for decades.

But before we were absolutely committed to going to India in January of 2010, every setback seemed a sign that we should not go. When I wasn't fully committed, it was easy to be deflected from my dream.

Then Mira Vista's Council encouraged me to reconsider India and committed their support. So Barbara and I committed to go and really worked hard to reduced our expenses to save for our trip. We even uncovered money: a \$2,000 city rebate for our sewer repair.

On the other hand we've had lots of breakdowns, including my car. A plumber advised replacing our water pipes. Our computer consultant said it was time for a new



laptop. We did only what we had to. We were committed.

Our guide wavered for weeks between cancelling the trip and significantly raising the prices; too few people had signed on. He designed a lesser tour with cheaper hotels and fewer side trips. We were committed.

When we bought our plane tickets, the prices had gone up \$700. The plane was crowded; we couldn't get the seat arrangement we wanted. Reviews described Cathay's new seat design as uncomfortable on long flights. We were committed.

Paying the guide in Australian dollars meant paying 1/3 more, because of unfavorable changes in the US dollar since May. We were committed.

A wall collapsed under our guide and injured his back severely, requiring surgery. He would no longer be going, but his even more qualified friend who had just decided to join us would be taking over. We were *still* committed.

We're trying South Indian recipes; we're reading fiction, histories, guidebooks, and mythology of South India; we're watching films and documentaries; we're studying and practicing meditation. We're committed!

What a difference commitment makes! Any of these obstacles could have been enough for us to back off. We value listening for the Spirit's movement, and we're moved by the needs of people around us; that often leads to changes in plans. But once we were committed, hand to plow/not looking back, we interpreted every difficulty as an obstacle, not a stop sign.

Life-changing commitment like this demands care with discernment. We want our

gifts and attention directed to a worthy purpose. But given a commitment that unites our desires with God's desire for the world, our power to accomplish our goal grows almost unimaginably. This is not because God removes all the stones in our path; rather it is the power of focused commitment.

I look forward to talking with you when I return about what we might build together, given deep commitment, given passion.

W. H. Murray in *The Scottish Himalaya Expedition*, 1951, wrote: "We had definitely committed ourselves and were halfway out of our ruts. We had put down our passage money--booked a sailing to Bombay. This may sound too simple, but is great in consequence. Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it.

Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!"

--Still committed, *Pastor Susan*



## Welcome Rev. Katie

Bonnie Hariton, Sylvia Sugg, and I had the pleasure of interviewing the candidates for Sabbatical Leave Pastor and we are pleased to announce that Reverend

Katie Morrison will be at the helm whilst Pastor Susan and Barbara are sojourning through Southern India. Katie greatly impressed us with her energy, light and joy. She has lots of fun ideas of ways we all may be able to follow Susan and Barbara on their adventures, while having our own spiritual "summer camp" here at home. Her experience is broad and fascinating from being a seminary intern with the City of Refuge in San Francisco to Interim Youth Minister for Piedmont Community Church, and most recently as Associate Pastor for the Orinda Community Church.

As an extra special bonus, she also has a beautiful new baby who is guaranteed to elicit lots of "oohs" and "ahhs."

We welcome her to the Mira Vista family!

by Wendy Wisely



**December 20, Sunday**, we will celebrate a post-worship **Christmas Tea & Sendoff** for Barbara and Susan celebrating Susan's sabbatical leave. Her literal last Sunday will be December 27. Details to follow!

On **January 3, Sunday**, we will celebrate over a potluck **Welcome Lunch** for **Rev. Katie Morrison**, our sabbatical replacement pastor. You'll have a chance to meet her and perhaps her family in December; January 3 is the formal beginning for our sabbatical sojourn with Rev. Katie.

### CHRISTMAS GIFTS

*Love came down at Christmas, love all lovely, love divine; love was born at Christmas; star and angels gave the sign. Love shall be our token; love be yours and love be mine; love to God and neighbor, love for plea and gift and sign.* (Christina Rosetti)

Two ways to Love from your heart this Christmas:

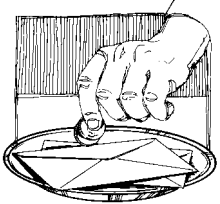
- New tube socks for Rev. Thom Longino's street parishioners with San Francisco Night Ministry.
- Grocery gift cards for The Latina Center's struggling families.

Details to follow in the December newsletter!



## Stewardship Sunday November 8

**S**unday, November 8, is Stewardship Sunday. You may already have returned your pledge card in the envelope that came with a recent letter from Susan and me. (If you didn't get the letter or the pledge card, please call Diane at 526-0110.) You are invited to bring your pledge card to church on November 8. Whichever path you take, you are blessed and you are a blessing.



### A TIME FOR GIVING

Do you remember the Beatles song, "I only give you my number; I only give you my situation," Abbey Road, side two? The number this month is the amount of your pledge. So, the question is, "What is your situation?" In the year to come, do you expect less income or more people in your household? Have your expenses gone up while income remained the same? Did you get a cost of living increase or another kind of raise? Has your gratitude increased? Have your financial or spiritual priorities changed?

Like you, Mira Vista is struggling with moving toward a balanced budget. Pledges are the key to planning what we have to work with for 2010.

Deciding how much to pledge is a spiritual practice. Indeed, all of our actions around money become our "practice," shaping our character and psyche, even our frame for experiencing the world around us. Please take prayerful attention with this important choice.

Once you review your "situation" and decide on your "number," you are ready to make your pledge. If your situation changes, you can modify your pledge.

As you make your pledge and each time during the year when you write a check to Mira Vista, let it be a moment of gratitude for your blessings and a moment of joy for supporting our precious church and its work in the world.

--Iris Ridgway, Stewardship Councilor



## NEWS FROM THE PEWS

*Note to readers: What with planning for my sabbatical replacement, managing our fall/winter priorities and recent illness, I may have missed some of your news. Please forgive me...and do email or write out your news, so we have it for the POST. – Pastor Susan*

**Sylvia Sugg's** sister, **Judith Howe**, "went to sleep in Christ," as her Orthodox priests say, after a long illness. **Sylvia** was at her side, as always. **Judy** and all of us had hoped and prayed that she would make it through the worst phases; **Sylvia** cared for **Judy** in her home until near the end, when many complications and the complexities of her medical care required hospitalization. The exquisite and comforting funeral services on Monday evening and Tuesday morning were attended by many loving people; friends and family of **Sylvia** and sister **Judith**, who was a beloved event coordinator at Oakland's Greek Orthodox Cathedral for 30 years. Truly a delightful, generous woman with deeply committed family and friends. Rest in peace.

**Miriam Wong** (by email) greets us from Peru, where she is visiting family.



## KEEPING IN TOUCH

**Rev. Shirlee Bromley's** brother, **Bill**, has died, and we offer our condolences to **Shirlee**

and to her wife, **Ellen Webster**. They were very involved in his care, traveling to Reno to be with him in his final illness. May he rest in peace.

We express great gratitude to **Michael Ozenberger**, faithful reader of the POST and faithful donator to all of our causes, for his thoughtful monthly notes about our news.

# Thanksgiving



## November's Notes

Dearest Friends,

As I write this, October is winding down into November. We do indeed live in a beautiful part of God's earth. The warmth of the sun, the changing colors on the hills in Wildcat Canyon, the mild nights with just a hint of frost – this is a blessed place, to be sure!

The Amazing Graces have added a song to their repertoire called, "Come, Come, Whoever You Are". Two of our members got to talking and discovered that the composer, Dale Zola, lives in the area. So, Nancy Lemon put her detective cap on and tracked her down. The result of her sleuthing led to Dale's coming to rehearsal Sunday morning to hear us sing her song. It was a thrill for us all! Thank you, Nancy and Nan! Dale has written many songs and rounds, and I look forward to learning more about the music and her journey.

### ALICE PARKER WORKSHOP

On November 6-8, some of us will be going to a workshop conducted by Alice Parker, arranger/composer, who among many other things was the long-time collaborator/for Robert Show. Shaw was arguably the pre-eminent choral director in the US, and spawned many of today's



most prestigious choirs and choir directors. I am truly excited about being able to attend one of Ms. Parkers' workshops. They are widely touted as being fun, informative and useful, especially for church choir directors, and this one is called "Singing Our Faith." I hope to bring back to you some ways to do this more fully.

Advent begins Nov. 29<sup>th</sup>, so look forward to much singing, instrumental-ing (new word!), rejoicing, and preparing for this blessed Season. Meighan Pritchard will be coming to bless us with her music right at the beginning of the season, so don't miss a single Sunday in Advent. There's no telling what will be happening!

*Each of us has the right and the responsibility to assess the roads which lie ahead and those over which we have traveled, and if the future road looms ominous or unpromising, and the road back uninviting, then we need to gather our resolve and carrying only the necessary baggage, step off that road into another direction. If the new choice is also unpalatable, without embarrassment, we must be ready to change that one as well. ~ Maya Angelou  
And let all God's people shout, "AMEN!"*

- Amy



**Womansong Circle**  
**Womansong Circle** invites all women to a warm and welcoming evening of song and community on **Friday, November 13, at 7:15 pm** in the **Small Assembly of First Congregational Church of Berkeley**. This monthly circle is led by song leader and singer **Betsy Rose**. Special guest song leader for November will be **Carol Swann**, a gifted leader of Balkan-style singing and international song. Join in chants, rounds, contemporary songs, and improvisations. All voices welcome. Lyrics are provided. No singing or music reading skills needed. Suggested donation \$15.

**Lay Theological Day**  
Join **Dr. Jeffrey Kuan**, Associate Professor of Old Testament, and **Katy Valentine**, PhD Candidate in Biblical Studies for **Lay Theological Day** on **Saturday, November 7, 10 am–3 pm** (lunch provided), at **Eden UCC Church**, 21455 Birch St., Hayward, CA 94541. They will explore the Advent narratives in Isaiah 7–9 and Luke 1–2. \$30.



ENTER GOD'S GATES WITH THANKSGIVING

## Meet a treasured member



**Patsy Severson**

Patsy Severson's parents both grew up on farms in the Midwest. Patsy enjoyed visiting her grandparents' farms with her family when she was growing up. Patsy's father, Carroll, was a mechanical engineer. He loved airplanes and spent his career working on them and on "classified" projects. He called himself a "paper-pusher."

Patsy's parents met at a "mixer" in the student union at Iowa State, which both were attending. Her mother, Catharine, loves to remember "some enchanted evening" when they first saw each other "across a crowded room." Patsy's mother had four careers: county home extension agent, homemaker, teacher's aid, and special education teacher and tutor.

Patsy's parents moved a lot when she was small. She was born in Ohio and lived in Indiana, Georgia, and for a year in Southern California. She and her three siblings were born in four different states.

When Patsy was between 3rd and 4th grade, her family moved to Palo Alto. She went to Reed College in Portland, Oregon where she met Stan, also a student. Her first impression of him was that he talked a lot, which is similar to his mother's first impression of his father. Stan graduated from Reed a year ahead of Patsy and went to graduate school at the University of Chicago. After she graduated Patsy and Stan were married, and she followed him to Chicago for 4 years until he finished. They moved to Hayward, then Oakland, then El Cerrito where they now live.

Their daughter, Elisabeth, was born in 1982 and graduated from Oberlin College. She is now the office manager for a small law firm in Seattle.

When Patsy was growing up, she attended a Methodist church. In Georgia everyone went to both Sunday school and the church service. She could read the words to the hymns but not the music and wondered how her mother knew what to sing. When the family moved to Palo Alto, they attended a big church with several choirs, and she joined the youth choir. She was also confirmed there – the curriculum having been developed by the minister's wife. The church had a vibrant youth program that included people from other churches. At Reed she sang in a Unitarian church choir for two years. It was very special as they sang a variety of music, including Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*. Patsy feels her "bedrock of faith" comes from her mother and her many church experiences.

As Elisabeth was growing up, Patsy wanted her to have a grounding in church. Patsy was working at UC Berkeley at the time and was chatting with Bonnie Hariton about a church for Elisabeth. Patsy mentioned a church on Cutting she drove by every day, and Bonnie said she attended the church and it was great. So Patsy went one Sunday and was greeted by Genevieve Chase with a big hug. Christina Hutchins was the minister, the sermon was great, and Patsy enjoyed the music. So she gave Elisabeth the option of going with her the next Sunday, and Elisabeth enjoyed it also. Patsy joined in 1993 and was happy when the church became Open and Affirming.

She quickly became active and felt that Mira Vista nurtured Elisabeth while her own spirituality was growing. Patsy was church clerk from 1994 to 1995, then vice moderator, then a year as moderator, then off for a year, and then treasurer for 4 years ending in 2002 followed by more time off. She became moderator again when Mira Vista was grappling with important concerns about our church. The church made the decision to sell



## Council Corner

by Cathy Noble, Clerk

*(Patsy bio continued)*

the building while Patsy was moderator, and then Ardith was moderator during the move. Then Patsy was moderator for the next one and one-half years.

Patsy was elected to the GRIP board in 2008 and was elected treasurer at her first board meeting. Her term on the GRIP board continues to the end of 2010.

Patsy gets her accounting knowledge from having written a general ledger interface program in the mid-1980s and the specifications for the general ledger interface from the central accounts receivable system at UC Berkeley in the early 1990s.

Patsy had the good fortune to fall into work that suits her. She was a systems and procedures analyst at U.S. Leasing when she got the opportunity to become a programmer. Several years later she became a manager at U.S. Leasing. She met Bonnie when they worked together at UC Berkeley in the early 1990s. Since then she worked for a software vendor, a consulting firm, Charles Schwab & Co., and UC San Francisco. Now she is back to consulting. She is fond of saying that she is lucky to have a job that pays her to “be nosy in her neighbor’s business and help them improve how they work.”

As a hobby Patsy makes bead jewelry. She started in high school and rediscovered it as an adult with Elisabeth and with a friend who enjoyed it. Patsy loves to read. When growing up her interest was in fiction, but now she likes non-fiction. She mostly reads spirituality books, computer magazines, and newspapers. She enjoyed reading children’s books with Elisabeth. She sewed before Elisabeth was born and was a member of the Mira Vista quilting group. Patsy enjoys playing her guitar – she used to play in church sometimes.

Thank you, Patsy, for sharing your experience and gifts, your time and treasure with our beloved congregation.

by Virginia Carrieri

At our October Council meeting we made more preparations for Susan’s upcoming sabbatical, which happens in January, February, and March 2010. We have chosen a pastor to be with us during that time: Rev. Katie Morrison. She has excellent preaching, pastoral care, and administrative skills. She and her partner, Curran Reichert, also have a new baby girl, Ellie. So our congregation will be blessed several times over! A Pastoral Relations Committee is being formed to be of help to Katie. We are also forming a Pastoral Care Team, to provide mutual support for the many people in our congregation with care-giving responsibilities. 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.

### NOVEMBER CELEBRATION

#### Birthdays



10<sup>th</sup> Heinz Lankford

13<sup>th</sup> Amy Ukena

25<sup>th</sup> Elise Hariton

30<sup>th</sup> Heather Koshinsky

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

*The Fellowship Post*  
Editor: Diane Young  
published monthly by

**Mira Vista**  
**United Church of Christ**  
*An Open and Affirming  
Congregation*

780 Ashbury Avenue  
El Cerrito, CA 94530  
(510) 526-0110

office@miravistaucc.org  
www.miravistaucc.org

Rev. Susan Meeter, pastor  
revmeeter@miravistaucc.org



# Mira Vista United Church of Christ

780 Ashbury Ave., El Cerrito, CA 94530  
 phone: (510) 526-0110 fax: (510) 526-0110  
 email: office@miravistaucc.org  
 website: www.miravistaucc.org

**November 2009**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> HOLY COMMUNION Worship Service 12 Noon Cultural Justice meeting, 1:30-3:00 pm 	<b>2</b> Yoga, 7-8:15 pm	<b>3</b>  <b>Election Day</b> Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10 am <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">UCC ministers' retreat at San Damiano</div>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Amazing Graces rehearsal, 7:30 pm	<b>6</b> Breakfast at Carrow's Restaurant, 8:30 am <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; text-align: center;">Alice Parker workshop thru November 8</div>	<b>7</b> Yoga, 9-10:15 am
<b>8</b> 12 Noon Worship Stewardship Sunday, celebration potluck to follow service	<b>9</b> Yoga, 7-8:15 pm	<b>10</b> Bible Study, 1:30 pm	<b>11</b>  <b>Veterans Day</b> Personnel committee, 2 pm Budget committee, 3 pm	<b>12</b> Amazing Graces rehearsal, 7:30 pm	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Yoga, 9-10:15 am Living the Questions, 10:30-12:30 pm
<b>15</b> 12 Noon Worship Good News team meets, 2-3 pm	<b>16</b> Yoga, 7-8:15 pm	<b>17</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday Bible Study with Christ Lutheran, 1 pm	<b>18</b> Council meeting, Pastor Susan's house, 7 pm	<b>19</b> Amazing Graces rehearsal, 7:30 pm	<b>20</b> Breakfast at Carrow's Restaurant, 8:30 am	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> 12 Noon Worship Thanksgiving Sunday 	<b>23</b> Yoga, 7-8:15 pm	<b>24</b> Bible Study, 1:30 pm	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>  <b>Thanksgiving</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> 12 Noon Worship <b>1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of ADVENT</b> 	<b>30</b> Yoga, 7-8:15 pm					

## November Worship Services

November 1, 2009, 12 noon

### Holy Communion

The Book of Ruth: *Choosing Hope*

November 8, 2009, 12 noon

### Stewardship Celebration & Potluck Feast!

The Book of Ruth: *Seeds of the Great Feast*

November 15, 2009, 12 noon

1 Samuel 2:1-10: *Hannah's Song*

November 22, 2009, 12 noon

### Thanksgiving Sunday

Joel 2:21-24; Matthew 6:25-33

*Life as a Lily*

November 29, 2009, 12 noon

### FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Luke 21:25-36

Pestilence vs. Health: *The Great Healer Is Near*



Our worship services in November will point us toward the fullness and abundance found when we live in God. Daily we renew our lives in the light of Christ's love – shedding the flatness, poverty and panic pushed by commercial interests.

On November 29 we begin afresh with the year of Luke -- and the first Sunday of Advent. Our worship team has planned an Advent to feed you in this season of waning daylight. As you enter, your eyes seek out an unfolding scene of paradise: God's creation. During Advent we will drag the world's **Four Great Afflictions** out of our closets, putting up hope and life in their place. We will look forward to Christmas Eve, when Jesus the Christ brings us the great gift of love, love that enlivens the seeds of healing, peace, abundance and liberation that we now hold.

\*\*\*\*\*



*No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!*

