



The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista
United Church of Christ

November 2014

Melinda's Musings

The great mystic Meister Eckhart once said that if he could only utter one word in prayer it would be "thank you". And indeed, I believe our own prayers would shift dramatically if we focused solely on our gratitude for all the blessings we have received.

Our friends in the African-American church have a tradition that echoes Eckhart's advice. When asked "how are you", the response is: "I'm blessed". Not "busy". Or "tired". Or "hangin' in there". Or "fine". Just "blessed". No matter what our current circumstances might be, we are blessed. And what a blessing to share that insight with our friends, family and even strangers in the elevator!

This month at Mira Vista Church we will have multiple opportunities to celebrate the blessings we have as individuals and as a faith community. This is really important as we move into discernment about our future because we need to know what gifts we can count upon!

Our annual **stewardship season** begins this month and in that process we will have a chance to count the many ways we have been blessed and to offer some measure of our blessings in return. Look for materials from stewardship chair Marilyn Colbert.



On November 11th, we will have a chance to **recycle all our old electronics** properly, so start wiping old hard drives and bring them between now and then to store in Melinda's office.

We begin the **season of Advent** on the last Sunday of the month, November 30th with the theme of "Living in Expectation". I would like to compile a booklet of

meditations, poems, quotes and reflections from the congregation for your devotional use this season. Speak with me if you would like to participate in this project.

Finally, I am beyond grateful to all of you for the beautiful installation service, the stole, and all the fun! It was a great day and a foretaste of the sort of worship we can create together as we lean into the future.

Worship is perfect for me when these words come to mind: moving, heart-rending, joyous, personal, inclusive, surprising, meaningful, mysterious, raucous, and fun. Thank you.

I am so deeply blessed and I thank God for Mira Vista church!

Love and many blessings,
Melinda



The Blessings of Giving

by Melinda V. McLain

Like many of you, I grew up in the church. I was baptized at four weeks, attended Sunday school

and worship, youth group, committee meetings, and I sang in many, many choirs. And in every church I've ever known there was an annual giving event of some sort. Some called it the "annual pledge drive" or "our stewardship campaign". In the church where I was ordained, the Community Church of Mill Valley it was known for many years as the "Christian enlistment society". Ugh. And even though Mira Vista may take a more low-key approach to stewardship, I believe that giving to this community has high-value benefits.

Mira Vista United Church of Christ is a well-managed, yet adventurous community of faith that provides safe haven for people of many perspectives and walks of life. This is an extremely valuable service that cannot be provided by any other organization or non-profit. Being a member or friend of this church is different from simply belonging to a community group or giving to a charity: Mira Vista belongs to you – it is your spiritual home that you will serve, as it will serve you, throughout the transitions of your life.

This congregation is also engaged in the local and broader community in many ways around issues of justice and mercy. Through your giving to Mira Vista and the stewardship of your Social Action Team, you can and have made a difference on issues such as: poverty, injustice, student debt, the environment, and peacemaking. You are also volunteering your time and talents in many ways such as: making warm caps, scarves, and blankets for the homeless, serving lunch at the Souper Center, and through your mission trips to New Orleans.

For those of you who didn't grow up in churches with a tithing practice, the concept of making an annual pledge may seem a bit odd. Tithing, or making an annual pledge in advance, is an ancient practice of the Hebrew people that required each member of the community to dedicate 10% of their crops and goods to God, as the "first fruits" of their productivity.

Over time, this practice has shifted. In my training as a youngster in church, I was handed a dollar to put into the offering plate. When I got into junior high school, I was asked to make my first pledge (from my own money!) and the concept of tithing was explained to us. And in those days, 10% of my allowance somehow was very easy to give, so I began to give 10% of my expected income at the beginning of each month before I spent money on anything else. Over the years, I have not always been as faithful as I was a youth, but in recent years I have recommitted to the practice of tithing as a part of my own path of spiritual growth.

Making a pledge to my local church has led me to think about my life differently. Like most folks in this culture, I was unconsciously measuring my success in terms of my achievements, and to some extent, my possessions. Through my practice of pledging to the church, I have moved towards measuring my value differently. I no longer think of myself in terms of what I have, I think of what I give.

As your new Designated Term Minister, I am excited about the possibilities we have to continue in our spiritual growth while also growing our numbers and influence in the community. So as you consider what amount to pledge this year, I would ask each of you to consider increasing your giving as a sign of your commitment to the future of Mira Vista Church - your spiritual home.

 It's time to
"Fall Back!"
Daylight Savings Time
Ends Sunday at 2am

The Homeless receive gifts from Betty Coates



The project was started a couple of years ago by Amy, she taught us to make hats. Many of us had yarn waiting to be used. It was very successful. We did nothing last year, but last fall I found some yarn waiting to be used. When it ran out somehow more appeared. I like to have my hands busy when I'm sitting still.

Yesterday I delivered 90 hats to be passed to the homeless.

Thank you Betty Coates for this awesome gift. You are truly a blessing to the recipients of those hats and a blessing to us as well.

November Celebration

Birthdays

10th Heinz Lankford

10th Jeanette Smith

13th Amy Ukena

19th Matilde Hollander

24th Maddie Kavanaugh-Lynch

25th Elise Hariton

28th Maria Lewis

*Happy Birthday to each of you
with love from*



Melinda's Installation, Sunday, October 26



Melinda's Installation, Sunday, October 26

“Take time, slow down, be still, be awake to the Divine mystery that looks so common and so ordinary, yet is wondrously present.”

- Edward Hays



Advent is upon us! I love the anticipatory and deep feeling within me during the season of Advent, and the connection music holds within that season. Many families use Advent calendars with their children; in my household that continues even through adulthood. Have you ever considered a musical Advent devotional? I have tried for several years to sing (or read) a different Advent hymn/song each day during Advent. I've also tried singing a different Advent hymn each week; but singing the week's hymn every day. It is far easier to come up with four Advent hymns than the one-a-day idea, but either idea keeps the season in the forefront of one's being.

The choir is beginning to gear up for Advent by the time you read this. We will work on music that anticipates the coming and helps us to de-stress and center.

In preparation for Advent, the choir will sing a version of the song, Holy, Holy, Holy, written by Gary Oliver, but arranged by Keith Christopher. Keith Christopher has received annual awards for his publications from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers since 1992. In 1999, he received the Gold Record Award for the song, "A Merry Christmas with Brass," and in 2003, he received a Dove Award for the choral collection, "More Songs for Praise and Worship." What is stunning is the fact that he hails from Nashville, spent a lot of time in church choirs, but his musical roots go back to Texas, where he grew up playing trumpet in band and singing in a church youth choir. He studied theory, composition and conducting in college, and went on to compose countless pieces in many different musical styles and genres. Holy, Holy, Holy is one of the simpler examples of his arrangements of existing music.

Simple, yes, but lovely. The Amazing Graces, through their song, made the words of this piece, that in some ways seem so "ordinary" – become "wondrously present" – even as the coming of the season of Advent. We hope you enjoy it.

-Cindy

Melinda's Installation, Sunday, October 26





Mira Vista United Church of Christ

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2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Holy Communion 12 Noon Worship 	3	4	5 Leaders' Circle @ Namaste, 12:30 pm,	6 Amazing Graces Choir Rehearsal, 7pm	7	8
9 12 Noon Worship	10	11 E-Waste collection @ Mira Vista UCC Council meeting, El Cerrito Royale, 6:45 pm 	12	13 Amazing Graces Choir Rehearsal, 7pm	14	15
16 12 Noon Worship Steward Sunday	17	18 Mindfulness Circle @ Patsy Stubbs home, 7:30 pm	19	20 Amazing Graces Choir Rehearsal, 7pm	21	22
23 12 Noon Worship	24	25	26	27 	28	29
30 12 Noon Worship  First Sunday of Advent	31					

Our worship life together . . .

Join us on Sundays at 12 noon for our celebration with music and preaching and then stay for lunch because our worship continues as we share food and fellowship together

As we close out the season of Pentecost, we continue to explore the fascinating point of view of the community that produced the Gospel of Matthew.

Sunday, November 2, Matthew 23: 1-12 "Trimming the Fringe"
All Saints Sunday/Dia de Los Muertos and Holy Communion

Sunday, November 9, Matthew 25: 1-13 "Let Your Light So Shine"

Sunday, November 16, Matthew 25: 14-30 "The One Parable Business Plan"

Sunday, November 23, Matthew 25: 31-46 "Thank God for Goats!"
Service of Thanksgiving

Sunday, November 30, Mark 13: 24-37 "Even the Angels . . ."
1st Sunday of Advent

Our theme for Advent is "Living in Expectation". During this holiday season we expect many things and many things will happen in our community and throughout the world. But what do we expect from our relationship with God? How is God still speaking to us? Are we listening? Do speak with Pastor Melinda if you would like to share a reflection, poem, drawing etc. for our Advent devotional booklet.

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Address Change Requested

Dated Material
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God's Love in Action



Mira Vista United Church of Christ

The Fellowship Post

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