



The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista
United Church of Christ

November 2015



Conditions on the Ground:

by Tom Emanuel, Minister-in-Training

It has been such a joy to get to know all of you over my first two months on staff! I have seen a community of warm, deeply spiritual people

who are doing their best to live into their callings as individuals and as a church. I have been especially inspired by our conversations around Cafe Church - so much crackling idea-energy! So many possibilities!

At the same time as we have these conversations, I find myself engaged in a fascinating research project for my History of Christianity course at PSR. During the late 1960s, a group called the **New Seminarian Movement** attempted to completely transform PSR, from school administration to the way classes were taught to student housing arrangements. They were largely unsuccessful, like so many 60's radicals. At the center of their vision was a seminary where spiritual leaders *learned by doing*: learned how to do ministry by *doing* ministry, learned how to live in community by *being* in community, learned how to change the world by *changing their own little world*, to the best of their abilities. (Feel free to ask me about my project - I could, and might just, talk for hours!)

Although the Mira Vista of 2015 is a very different place from the PSR of 1969, I find us asking many of the same questions the New Seminarians were asking: **"What does it mean to live in community?" "How can we best live out our values in the world?" "What will the future of the Church look**

like?" **"Why Church, anyway?"** Suffice it to say, I'm thrilled to continue living into these questions with you this year - I think our answers might end up being as exciting as theirs were!



What is a Teaching Parish Committee?

by Joan Thompson, Vice-Moderator

Have you ever served on a Teaching Parish Committee? If you haven't, here is a "behind the scenes" look at its work. Heinz Lankford, Paul Honigs and I attended an Orientation for Teaching Parish Committee members at PSR. They provided us with an 87-page manual detailing everything we need to know to help Tom Emanuel, our intern.

The purpose of the committee is to provide witness to Tom's ministry and provide feedback. That entails helping him become familiar with the church, and to support him in mutual care and growth. The process is guided by the objectives laid out in his Learning/Serving Covenant, which he developed in conversation with Melinda.

It is a privilege to be part of Tom's formation in ministry. He has so many gifts, many of which we have already experienced: his musical talent; infectious enthusiasm; and his preaching and writing expertise. We look forward to discovering even more of his gifts in the coming months.

Some days after the orientation, PSR held a special liturgy of blessing for all people affiliated with the internship program. The service began with a heartfelt song ("I Choose Love") written after the mass killing of parishioners attending a Bible study in South Carolina, accompanied by liturgical dance depicting the pain of the event and healing

process that ensued. Three former interns presented on their field education experience. This was followed by a mutual blessing ceremony with oil or with water, where interns, pastors and participants were blessed and blessed each other. The liturgy ended with the song "We are Called." The melody and message of which have been imprinted onto my brain ever since I heard it.

We are called to act with justice.
We are called to love tenderly.
We are called to serve one another,
To walk humbly with God.



Vita Contemplativa

by Tom Emanuel

As I sought to die to myself,
a what's-the-buzz-tell-me-what's-a-happenin' fly
interposed itself between the meditation-stillnesses
of my heart
and the backlit dove dive-bombing stained-glass
apostles,
see-Emily-playing football on the quad
while I struggled to focus on concrete-lecture-hall
admonitions
about *Attachment*
and *Emptiness*
and *Jesusfreakingchrist* how am I supposed to pray
with all that noise?

Godforsaken fly—
or God's Anointed One, who has come
to free you from your religion?

Your religion of Right Times and Wrong Times,
your religion of Good Flies and Bad Flies,
your religion of justification by works,
by faith,
by inaction,
by activism,
by contemplation,

by anything but the incomprehensible grace
of simply *Existing Right Now*.

Many thanks, little dude, for
bumble-buzzing me through the glass-frosted
panes of my self-satisfaction,
out into good-and-evil-overcoming Sufic fields.
I might've become one of those forehead-ash-
flaunting hypocrites He railed against
if not for your blue-uncertain stumbling—
a fellow-in-the-grass-narrow scrape.
Phew.



Journey of Hope

by Joan Thompson, Vice
Moderator

One morning, Maria a 13 year old teenager, knew it was time to flee the violence of her homeland in Central America for her own safety. It had come a little too close for comfort. Maria states in her testimony, "We were just about to arrive at the home where we were to meet a group of students preparing for final exams. A motorcycle with two men dressed in black, wearing masks, drove past us twice, and the third time they stopped and pointed a gun at the head of my friend and shot him. They came back again told me I should not say anything to anybody or the same thing would happen to me."

Her parents were already in the U.S., having left a couple of years earlier with her little brother. The family had left her behind with her grandmother, because they did not have enough money to pay a coyote (human smugglers who help refugees cross the U.S. – Mexican border for a hefty price).

She had no problem traveling all the way through Mexico, usually linking up with couples along the way so that immigration would never suspect her as being an immigrant. "During

the whole journey, I was asking God for strength to continue this trip, that God would take good care of my grandma, who was in His hands.” Once she got to the border, she joined with another group to cross the river. After getting across the river, she was met by an immigration official. She was then shuttled from one detention center to another for over 2 weeks, not knowing what would happen next. She cried often and longed to be re-united with her family.

Maria and her mother were introduced to our house church by the pastor of her church. Upon hearing her harrowing passage to an uncertain refuge in the US, our house church accepted her into sanctuary. Sanctuary congregations commit to providing advocacy and support to refugees fleeing persecution and violence in their country. Each sanctuary congregation finds different ways to assist their immigrant family, depending on the family's needs and the congregations' resources.

After her arrival in Oakland, Maria had her asylum hearing. She was to report back to federal court to hear the decision regarding her request for asylum. Maria's mother had asked me to accompany her and Maria to the court hearing and translate for her. I asked Glenda, a sanctuary activist for many years, to join us. We didn't know what to expect. It got off to an inauspicious start when I was not allowed to pass security because I did not have my ID with me. Maria's mother and I sat outside of security, while Maria (who had an official letter), and Glenda were allowed to go up to the courtroom. They were given a number and asked to wait.

In the meantime, Maria's mother and I were wondering what was happening, but comforted by the fact that Glenda was with her. Soon, Maria's number was called. She was told that only she could come up to a window, since Glenda had not come as a translator. Maria was told that her asylum application was approved. She could now get a social security number and begin the road toward citizenship. Hope is alive and well.

Maria stated in her testimony: “I want you to understand why we immigrate to this country. We don't just come in order to make our lives easier. No, it is hard for us to leave

our countries, but we know that it is for our own good, to save our own lives. We don't want you to judge us negatively. Everyone has a tragic story like I have. We immigrate because of the gangs, of drugs, of kidnappings, of rapes. Please don't judge us if you don't know us, because no one knows what we feel inside.”

The concept of sanctuary is rooted in biblical tradition where communities of faith have provided safety and respite to people who have been cast out by society. The Sanctuary Movement began in the 1980s and helped convince the U.S. government to recognize the refugee status of Central American fleeing death squads. The Sanctuary Movement has become re-invigorated with the influx of teens fleeing gang violence in their country, by policies to force local police to serve as immigration enforcement officers, and by our elected leaders failing to address the issue of immigration reform.

November Celebrations

Birthdays



10th Heinz Lankford
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 Mira Vista!





**Melinda's Musings:
The Gift of Presence**

by Pastor Melinda

This year, as we make our pledges of financial support for Mira Vista Church, I invite all of us to think about what gifts we have received that mean the most. For me, the greatest gifts usually arrive in the form of presence. Don't get me wrong, I like getting things in pretty packages, but I love the gift of time with friends and family so much more.

During our move, SO many of you also helped by simply showing up: to work in the yard, recycle nasty things from the shed, provide groceries, move clothes upstairs, and in so many other ways. Colleen and I are beyond grateful for all the gifts you have given us during this time of transition.

When we give to the church, we are also funding a ministry of presence. When I am out and about in the community, just the *idea* of this church is often a blessing and your gifts to this church make that possible. But of course, we are more than an idea. On Sundays when we gather, we provide spiritual shelter for one another and we are prepared and able to welcome others amongst us too. In the Mindfulness Circle and in our mission work, we provide presence among the hungry and the needy, in body and spirit.

Thank you in advance for your wonderful gifts!



News from the Pews

Ardith Hayes and Ruthann Clark were recently featured in the Oberlin College alumni magazine. Check out the great photo and quote from Ardith on our bulletin board in the social hall.

Nancy Lemon was honored by Berkeley Law as a "Law Pioneer" for teaching a practicum in domestic violence issues for 25 years. Congratulations!

The memorial service for **Alice Parks** will be **Saturday, November 7th at 10:30 a.m.** The Amazing Graces will sing and there will be a finger food reception following. If you wish to help with the service let Pastor Melinda know.

Amy Ukena is now retired, but not retiring! She plans to enjoy having more time to devote to singing, music, and community projects.

Our pianist, **Ray Capiral** is now working at Avenue Yarns on Solano Avenue in Albany. Congrats on a new gig that fits with your passion for knitting!

Colleen Rodger and Melinda V. McLain are now planning a housewarming and Advent party for **Saturday, December 5th, from 10-4.** Come celebrate our new home in El Sobrante and the gifts of the season! No presents - only your presence - is requested.

All Church Retreat

Saturday, November 21
10-3p
Colleen and Melinda's
in El Sobrante

Mira Vista

United Church of Christ

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2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 12 noon Worship & Holy Communion; Feast of All Souls & All Saints, followed by La Mesa Social Action Table	2	3 Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10 am Mindfulness Circle @ El Cerrito Royale, 7 pm	4	5 Amazing Graces, 7 pm	6	7 Memorial Service for Alice Parks, 10:30 am
8 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion	9	10 Council meeting @ Melinda's office, 7 pm	11 	12 Amazing Graces, 7 pm	13	14
15 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion Stewardship Sunday	16	17 Mindfulness Circle @ El Cerrito Royale, 7 pm	18	19 Amazing Graces, 7 pm	20	21 All Church retreat @ Melinda & Colleen's in El Sobrante, 10 am – 3 pm, lunch included
22 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion	23	24	25	26 	27	28
29 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion	30					

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 La Mesa. We celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion every First Sunday in the sanctuary and during La Mesa on subsequent Sundays. All are welcome at our table!*

*The **Amazing Graces** plan to sing on **November 8th and 22nd.***

November 1	“From Generation to Generation” <i>Celebration of All Souls and All Saints</i>	Psalm 146
November 8	“Birthpangs”	Mark 13: 1-8
November 15	“The Mighty Mite” <i>Stewardship Sunday</i>	Mark 12: 38-44
November 22	“Consider the Lillies” <i>Celebration of Thanksgiving, Tom Emanuel preaching</i>	Matthew 6:25-34

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Address Change Requested

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