

The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista
United Church of Christ

November 2016

How DO We Gather? Thoughts on Alternative Ministries

by Tom Emanuel

As I write this reflection, I am seated at the corner table of my favorite coffee shop: Brewed Awakening, just around the corner from the Pacific School of Religion campus. When I walk in, my favorite baristas, Colin and Dean, greet me by name and have my order rung up for me before I even reach the counter. I'm here to meet a classmate from a course I helped organize, Alternative Futures in Ministry, which is exploring innovative and entrepreneurial forms of ministry in the Bay Area.

While I wait for her to arrive, my neighbor Dylan, a senior in English at UC Berkeley, sees me through the window and swings in to say hello.

"Hey man," I say, "you coming to our 'Open Mic Spirituality' gathering here on November 4?"
"Yeah man, count me in!" Dylan replies. "I'd love to play a classical guitar piece – does that count as 'spiritual' enough?"

"Absolutely," I say back, and add his name to the night's list of performers as he continues on his way to Cal Campus.

For many people my age, a coffee shop like Brewed Awakening is as close to "Church" as we're likely to get. According to a 2014 study by the Pew Research Group, only half of Millennials say they believe in God, and barely



a quarter of us attend church services every week.

That doesn't mean we're less spiritual than previous generations though – it just means we're not going to traditional churches anymore to feed our spiritual hunger.

Over the past several years, Angie Thurston and Casper ter Kuile, two seminarians at Harvard Divinity School, have been studying Millennial practices and communities

and publishing their findings as part of the How We Gather Project. Their work looks especially at how so-called "secular" organizations meet Millennials' spiritual needs, with case studies ranging from The Sanctuaries (a multi-racial performing arts collective in Washington, D.C.) to Camp Grounded (a summer camp for adults in rural Texas) to CrossFit, of all things!

Man, if you can get your spiritual needs met at the gym, why would you bother with church on Sunday morning?

Millennials' insight that spiritual community is completely possible outside the walls of a traditional church building isn't exactly new though. And if I've ever found a congregation of non-Millennials that understands this, it's Mira Vista. I love to tell my friends how, when one of our congregants' old church refused to let the Black Panthers use the church basement for their Free Breakfast program, she and her friends left and founded a justice-minded house church of their own! We understand that living out the Good News of God's Love *necessarily* drives us to transcend

the structures, physical and otherwise, that have too often kept others out.

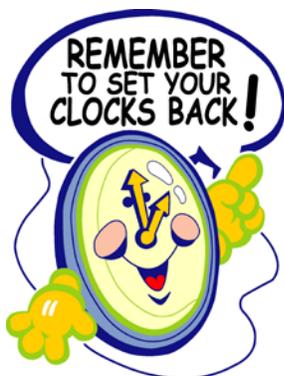
The trick, of course, is that no matter how well places like Camp Grounded or CrossFit (or Brewed Awakening) might meet many of our community and meaning-making needs, they lack that elusive “bigger picture” piece, what Thurston and ter Kuile call *Something More*: “the power of being together and part of a greater whole... the ‘common thread,’ the ‘collective well-being,’ and the ‘circle that encompasses us all’” – what we in the Church refer to as *God!*

That’s why, in addition to studying secular organizations, the How We Gather Project also looks at communities in existing traditions—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist—that are moving beyond traditional structures and traditional language to meet Millennials where they are... including a couple other Café Churches!

For me, when I think about the future of Mira Vista’s Café Church, I’m heartened to remember that there are faithful folk all over the country who are experimenting with living out their values in new ways and building contemporary forms of spiritual community – and that this kind of experimentation is in Mira Vista’s communal DNA.

We aren’t alone!

And *that* fact, perhaps more than anything, is what gives me hope that one day soon I’ll be able to set up shop in the corner of a certain coffee shop on San Pablo Avenue and write another reflection like this one...



Good Work, Good Times, and the Good Cup @The Good Table

by Rev. Dr. Melinda V. McLain

Reserve your evenings for each first Sunday of the month for **The Good Table** live music at the **El Cerrito Natural Grocery Annex** beginning with **Amy Ukena and Hans Raag** on **Sunday, November 6 @6pm**. These “pop-up” music events will not only be fun, but will give us a chance to build a customer base for our café. So invite your friends and neighbors and plan to be there each month.

We are busy designing marketing materials and customer interest surveys so that we can use these monthly events to further test, develop, and build customers for our café. **Amy Ukena, Tom Emanuel, and Melinda** are already hard at work on this project and would welcome your help. November 6th will be a “soft opening”, mostly to get the logistics correct, and then in December we plan to have the data capture working well.

On **Saturday, Nov. 12th**, we will gather for a day-long retreat at Colleen and Melinda’s in El Sobrante to work to look at our evolving business plan for **The Good Table: feeding body, mind, and spirit**. As of this writing, our café church dream is continuing to form and take shape.

Last month’s article covered the “top-line” commitments to a triple-bottom line that will require our new venture to offer **social benefit** and **spiritual development** while being **economically sustainable**.

With the help of **Patsy Severson** and **Kathe Kiehn**, Melinda has been working on a staffing model that would provide **good jobs** and adequate coverage for the enterprise. This puts significant stress on the economic bottom line, so the business plan needs more income streams to meet the goal of sustainability.

An intriguing potential income stream would be to create **co-working space**. There are a variety of models for this business including a

monthly membership, hourly fees, and/or flat fees for specific uses.

A monthly membership at the corporate chain **WeWork** starts @\$300 per month for simple access to open space with added fees for private lockers, private offices, and add-on fees for conference and meeting space. WeWork also offers mail and phone service plus storage for packages driving a monthly membership up considerably.

Workshop in San Francisco offers the hourly approach by charging \$2-3 per hour for a dedicated spot for working such as a comfy chair with a swing over desk, tables with ergonomic office chairs and a regular table and for an additional fee, a bank of large monitors. The working space has hi-speed wifi and plugs for each spot. Additionally, there are small sound proof rooms for making phone calls and conference rooms that can be rented for additional fees. Workshop is also a coffee shop/café offering the usual fare of sandwiches, pastries, coffee, wine, and beer with “free” tables in the café area and ordinary free wifi that is not hi-speed. Each space can be reserved via their app in advance for a discount. Like many café’s they have reloadable cards to make payment simple.

Adding **Good Work** space in the café model could also provide administrative space for café staff and could potentially happen in the same space as other programming. The nearest co-working space in our area is WeWork Berkeley. Melinda is continuing to investigate this part of the business and if you’d like to go on a co-working field trip, let her know!

All along, we have thought that evening offerings in the café could include live music, poetry, drama, and other arts offerings. While this would not likely be a significant income stream for the café beyond food and beverage sales, the space could also be made **available for private parties** such as birthdays, bar and bat mitzvahs, anniversary, retirement, and wedding parties. This type of use is, of course, nothing new for a church, but because the

space could also offer catering, it could be a significant income stream that would also offer additional employment for event catering staff. Having **Good Times** @the Good Table seems to be an obvious - and enjoyable - potential income stream.

Brady Morales-Woolery, Tom Emanuel, and Melinda continue their search for the best **coffee shop** ideas. One really terrific idea is to have honor-system drip coffee urns. These provide a quick to-go cup for busy people and a **Good Cup** at a pay-what-you-can price. An **Angel Cup** is a pay-it-forward cup and a **Saintly Cup** is a pay-it-forward for many cup. Harried mothers can grab a quick to-go and seniors with more time can buy coffee at a price that is reasonable and attractive and then hang out to chat with friends.

The next step in our group process will be an **All-Day Retreat on Saturday, November 12th**. On that day, we will seriously ponder the business plan and make a decision as to whether we are ready to begin to look at real estate options. We will **meet at Colleen and Melinda’s home in El Sobrante from 10a - 4p with lunch provided**. Do mark your calendars now for this important day of discernment and decision.



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



Hear ye! Hear ye!
Announcing the
Mira Vista Christmas Choir!!!

Come out and join me as I put together a Christmas Choir for Mira Vista this year. Anyone who wants to sing is more than welcome to join us as we explore music of the season. .

I'm sooo excited to be doing this! Ray will accompany us and I guarantee we will sing some really great tunes. Come join us for the birth of the Mira Vista Christmas Choir!

We will rehearse after church (@1:45) to 3 pm, starting Nov. 27th. I'm planning on our singing in church on Dec. 18th (last Sunday in Advent) and at the Christmas Eve service on the 24th.

Don't be shy! Don't be scared! Come and SING with us as we find new ways to "magnify the Lord!"

And on that note (ahem...), I wish you a blessed month! See ya on the 27th!

Amy

The Joy
of CHRISTMAS
CELEBRATE THE SEASON

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United Church of Christ

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2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10a 	2 Mindfulness Circle @ El Cerrito Royale, 7p	3 Open Door Interfaith Zen, 6p	4 Yoga, 10a-11a	5 
6 12n Worship with Holy Communion followed by Social Action Team @ La Mesa All Saints Day	7	8 	9	10 Open Door Interfaith Zen, 6p Council meeting, 7p	11 Yoga, 10a-11a 	12 Mira Vista All Day Retreat, 10a-4p
13 12n Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion	14	15	16 Mindfulness Circle @ El Cerrito Royale, 7p	17 Open Door Interfaith Zen, 6p	18 Yoga, 10a-11a	19
20 12n Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion Tom Emanuel, preaching	21	22	23	24 	25 Yoga, 10a-11a	26
27 12n Worship followed by La Mesa with Holy Communion 	28	29	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 our common table, **La Mesa**. Feel free to bring food to share as you are able. We celebrate the sacrament of **Holy Communion every First Sunday**. All are welcome at our table!

November 6 "Angels and Saints" Luke 20: 34-38
All Saints Day and the building of the Ofrenda

Bring photos and mementos of your loved ones who have died to share on our altar.

November 13 "The Nature Channel" Isaiah 65: 17-25

November 20 "Looking for the Good" Philippians 4: 4-9
Tom Emanuel preaching; Thanksgiving Sunday

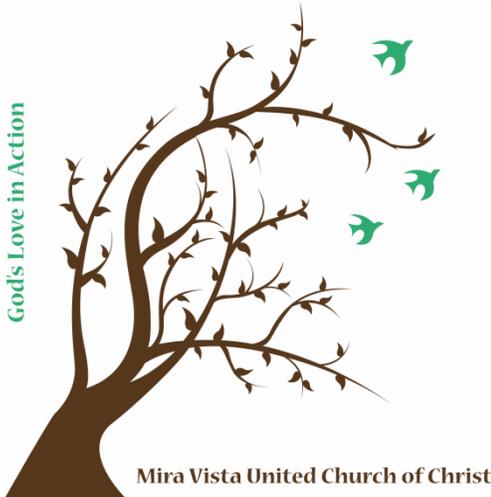
November 27 "Farming Peace" Isaiah 2: 1-5
First Sunday of Advent - Lighting the Candle of Peace

December 4 "Regenerative Hope" Isaiah 11: 1-3a
Second Sunday of Advent - Lighting the Candle of Hope

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Address Change Requested

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