

The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista United Church of Christ

September 2017

WHY CHURCH? A Millennial Perspective by Tom Emanuel

Here at Mira Vista, we have talked, thought, and prayed a lot about the questions "What is Church? and why is it still important in the 21st century?" as we look to open our cafe *the GOOD table*. It's also a question that interests me rather personally: not only as Mira Vista's new Associate Minister for Worship Arts, but also as a Millennial, as more and more of my peers are simply uninterested in Church or even actively avoid it.

For me, the answer to the "What is Church?" question leads naturally to the answer to "Why is it still important?" As you'll know if you've heard me preach, I'm fond of referencing the earliest Christian communities described in the Acts of the Apostles:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)



Here, I see four essential elements of the early Church: shared life, shared food, shared work, and shared prayer.

- By *shared life* I don't mean that we need to sell all we have and move into a commune together to be Church; it just means that we have a community of people around us who care about us and our joys and sorrows - who *share their lives* with us, and ours with them.
- And there's no better community-builder than *shared food*, as we at Mira Vista know! But food is more important than just as fuel for our physical bodies: the table is the place where we share our stories, where we share what's most important to us.
- *Shared work* to me indicates a sense of a common mission: how do we serve our community and the wider world? (One obvious answer: invite them to eat at the table with us! It's what the Disciples did after all.)
- And finally, there's *shared prayer* - what I like to call "the God factor." Prayer, ritual, worship is what ties it all together, because it reminds us of our shared values and of the One whose love empowers and calls us to love others.

By those standards, I'd say we do a pretty darn good job of being Church at Mira Vista! And it isn't hard to see how *the GOOD table*, new and innovative as it seems, will continue to be Church.

But that question of *Why?* still lingers. My answer: *because the Church meets basic human needs!* We all need caring community. We all need food and fellowship. We all need meaningful work. And I would argue we all need "the God factor." We need not use the word "God" for it - but that sense of awe and wonder, that *transcendence* that reminds us how important every creature, every leaf, every droplet of water in the ocean, truly is, that reminds us of the best in ourselves and calls us to live, do, *be* better.

The trick is--and will continue to be--how can we reach out to those for whom the Church is not already a home? How do we live into the spirit of those early Christian communities, where *anybody* could take a seat at the table, where even the most marginalized, the most hurt by "traditional religion," could feel welcome and beloved, no matter what they believed? Because even if my generation is less and less likely to join traditional church communities, we still have the same, all-too-human physical, relational, and spiritual needs as our spiritual ancestors from 2,000 years ago.

I believe that *the GOOD table* is a step toward just such a Church: one where you can come as you are and go as you please, without feeling like you're being proselytized to. Again I come back to the Acts of the Apostles. The earliest Christians didn't tend to "convert" people by hitting them over the head with theology or convincing them that they were somehow "not enough"; they won them over with food and fellowship, with boundless compassion and a heart for justice, with the shining example of their life together.

It is as Saint Francis is reported to have said, "Preach the Gospel daily - with words only if necessary." In my time at Mira Vista, I have seen a community that does that remarkably well. And so I pray that we may continue to find creative ways of walking our talk, of drawing the circle ever-wider, of *being Church*.

Ongoing Actions to Create *the GOOD table* by Melinda V. McLain

Patsy Severson and I had an extended conversation about marketing for the church and *the GOOD table*. She has agreed to help produce some materials for our ongoing music nights @El Cerrito Natural Grocery. We also made some **preliminary notes for the development of a new website** for the church and a website for *the GOOD table*.

Although the creation of a new website might not be top of the to-do-list, our current website uses flash player and is sadly now appearing only in mobile form on many platforms. The Mira Vista Council has agreed that we don't really need a new "identity", just a new site using current software conventions plus begin to build for *the GOOD table*.

We also are moving in a slightly different direction in our food service model. After conversations with various members and upon the advice of **Derene Allen** from the IgNite Institute at PSR. I propose that we actively seek to **lease/partner/buy a food truck** so that we can pop-up the food idea. Allen says that food trucks run between \$25k and \$35k. This price seems low, but I have no clue.

It may be true that **the truck could take the place of having a kitchen** and give us the flexibility to offer food on occasion and/or take the truck to community events as a way to serve the community and gain customers.

This would be a **major shift in the model** and needs much more work to explore. It has a variety of advantages, including it would allow us to really refine what the food portion of the model will be in partnership with the food truck chef. We could also house the other portions of the model in a smaller building and the renovation would be less expensive.

There are a variety of upsides and downsides toward having a food truck be our kitchen, but it is clearly the best way to **test a menu, location, and the pay-what-you-can/pay-it-forward model.**

And, the **gourmet taco/wraps idea**, however, does lend itself particularly well to a food truck. So, I have begun to think of various “taco” themes that meld spiritual leaders and tacos. Let me know what you think.

Here is an initial taste for sparking conversation with a chef:

Buddha - Fresh veggies in season now.

Gandhi - Dal of the day

Guadalupe - Spicy beans w/cheese and cilantro

Jesus - Fresh fish w/Mediterranean seasoning.

Martin Luther King, Jr. - Chicken tenders w/fresh greens and hot sauce.

Heaven - Dessert of the Day

Everything can be wrapped in small flour or corn tortillas and both the Gandhi and Guadalupe could be served as small bowls for those who are grain-free.

For an average appetite, two tacos or bowls would be sufficient. We would work to a price point of \$4 per item making a regular lunch \$8 and a big lunch \$12.

This sort of menu would be easy for diners to control portions. It is low waste, flexible, and easy to adapt to seasonal food availability. If you have leads on a chef partner and/or truck, do let Melinda or Tom know.



Jess with Lucie. A memorial picnic was held for Jess on Saturday, August 26.

Jess Hardy Sugg was born the day after Christmas, 1931 in Kinston, North Carolina, a small southern farming town. As a boy he helped his grandparents’ harvest tobacco on their farm. He would lead the mule and wagon from the fields to the drying barns. Jess had what seemed like an idyllic childhood. Many friends to play with, swimming in the Neuse River where they often explored a sunken boat, the CSS Ram Neuse, a civil war casualty and Boy Scout outings. His mother taught piano lessons and accompanied silent movies at the local theater. Jess always regretted that he resisted his mother’s urging to learn to play the piano.

As a teenager, Jess and three friends decided to add a couple of years to their birth date to get their driver’s licenses. They lied about their age so they could buy beer. Their scheme went well until they got draft notices. At 16, Jess ended up in the Army, an experience which would shape his life.

After basic training, he was shipped off to Korea and spent 6 months fighting in that conflict. Fort Hood, Texas was his next home where he and other Korean vets recuperated from an exotic flu picked up in Korea. When he was recovered, he was assigned to a medical team. He worked in a dermatology clinic run by a Col. Jackson who was one of Jess’ life mentors. From Fort Hood, Jess went to Germany for two years to help set up an American hospital. This is where he began learning about photography which would become a passion and the entry to a future vocation. After the Army, Jess landed in Philadelphia working for a company that did mapping, and aerial photography.

Jess' path took him through the Bay Area coming and going to Korea. He thought it seemed like a nice place to live. When a job became available in San Francisco at Towill, a civil engineering firm, he jumped at it and got it. He ran their photo lab, for over 40 years.

While in Philadelphia he started ice skating which became a great interest. When he moved to Berkeley, the first thing he did was head to Berkeley Iceland. This is where he developed some wonderful friendships, including the Burwell's who thought of him as the son they never had. They were very close for decades and eventually left their home to Jess and Sylvia when they passed.

Jess met local girl, Sylvia in Berkeley when she was a flight attendant. They actually met at Berkeley Iceland after Sylvia's roommate talked her into taking a class. They married and bought a house in Richmond on Sonoma Street where they lived for 30 years. Catherine, their only daughter grew up there.

Jess was a reserved man but showed his affection for his family by planting beautiful gardens and vegetables, building a magical tree house for Catherine and taking her ice skating. He also took wonderful photos of his family although he rarely allowed himself to be photographed. The family had a VW Westfalia that Jess loved and was the treasured transport to and from cross-country trips, bicycling ventures or to Ashland to see summer Shakespeare. After he retired, Sylvia indulged his strong historical interests and they traveled the south to various sites and to Germany to see the hospital he'd helped establish.

Throughout his life, Jess was fascinated by and sustained by literature and history. His childhood roots created a strong interest in civil war history in particular. He read constantly and was not afraid of diving deep. He would type meaningful passages or prose and kept them on his desk to refer to. Jess was known as a serious man but his granddaughter Lucia brought out a lighter side in him. She called him Pop Pops and a mutual adoration was present. Lucia brought much light and affection to him and she was always very concerned about his well-being.

Welcome New Members: Niels Teunis and Rev. Angela Jernigan

Angela Jernigan is married to **Niels Teunis** and together **they are raising Angela's daughter Leah**. Angela is an **ordained UCC minister who works as a community based pastor** for parents and children through classes,



coaching and community events. Also a life long artist, Angela teaches classes and camps for girls, using art, play and connection to support their sense of personal power, connection to other girls and to a greater spirit of creativity.

Niels Teunis is an anthropologist and has worked on four different continents. He has observed and participated in family life in Europe, Africa, The Americas and Papua New Guinea, earning his doctorate from



Northwestern University in the process. He has been a children's advocate, playmate, clown comforter, advisor and

friend. He's taught college students, made theatre, camped all over California, lived in 120° temperatures, and taught parenting classes. To some he's better known as Mr. Angela Jernigan and he's Leah's favorite punching bag. A graduate of the Pacific School of Religion, he will start a **residency in Clinical Pastoral Education at John Muir Health** in Concord, this September 5.

Welcome Angela and Niels!

September Celebrations

Birthdays

8th Carol Kiehn
21st Iris Ridgway
23rd Elisabeth Severson



Anniversaries

18th Joan Thompson & Ken Alborn
20th Ruth Ann Clark & Ardith Hayes
24th Melinda McLain & Colleen Rodger
25th Kathe Kiehn & Heinz Lankford



Mira Vista United Church of Christ

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

2017

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 12n Worship with Holy Communion followed by Social Action Team @ La Mesa	4  LABOR DAY	5 Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10a 	6 Mindfulness Circle @ El Cerrito Royale, 7p	7 Community Office Hours with Pastor Melinda each Thursday @Catahoula Coffee, 2-5p Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	8 Pastor Melinda in Texas September 8-12 →	9
10 12n Worship followed by La Mesa Tom Emanuel preaching <hr/>	11	12 <hr/>	13	14 Community office Hours, 2-5p Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p Council meeting, 7p	15	16
17 12n Worship followed by La Mesa Sycamore UCC Bazaar, 12-5p	18	19	20 Mindfulness Circle @ El Cerrito Royale, 7p	21 Community office Hours, 2-5p Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	22 	23
24 12n Worship followed by La Mesa	25	26	27	28 Community office Hours, 2-5p Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	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!

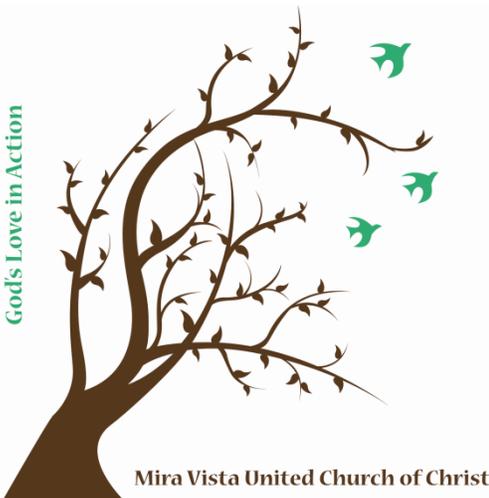
Sept 3	"The Golden Rule XP" <i>Social Action Team meets during La Mesa</i>	Romans 12: 9-21
Sept 10	"The Law of Love" <i>Tom Emanuel preaching</i>	Romans 13: 8-14
Sept 17	"No Dog in the Fight"	Romans 14: 1-8
Sept 24	"Alt Economic Reality"	Matthew 20: 1-16
Oct 1	"The Mind of Christ"	Philippians 2: 1-8

**Mark your calendars now to attend a picnic worship in
Bonnie and Dan Hariton's beautiful garden on Sunday October 8.**

Mira Vista United Church of Christ
780 Ashbury Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530

Address Change Requested

Dated Material
September 2017



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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. Dr. Melinda V. McLain, pastor
melinda@miravistaucc.org