



ELK GROVE CONGREGATIONAL Newsletter



Volume 1, Issue 3

April 2014

“What I See...” by Pastor James

I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write in a book what you see..." (Revelation 1:10-11)

Where Do Sermons Come From?

In my 7 and 1/3 years here at EGCC, I calculate that I've delivered about 400 sermons and reflections for worship services. I know that when they're printed out, they make quite a stack of pages that would have to be bound into several books. Where do they all come from? I know I've often wondered that, and I'm sure you may have wondered, too.

Here's my first confession: I don't think I write them. Well...let me explain. Sunday's sermons are almost always based on the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), a set of readings from the Bible that follow a 3-year cycle (focusing on Matthew, Mark, and Luke in turn) that also follows the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Common Time, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Each Sunday in these cycles has its own set of readings from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Epistles (letters). We usually have two of these four readings read in our worship service, and they will

almost always include the Gospel reading.

Before I can take even the first step in sermon writing, I have to focus on who I'm preaching to; this is one of the benefits of having a settled pastor. I get to know you, hear your joys and concerns, and learn about your lives. I get to be involved in the life and vitality of the congregation, and talk about what is going on then and there. I also have to preach in the context of that day. A sermon delivered the day after the Fukushima disaster will be very different from one delivered after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Then comes my first "step" in writing Sunday's sermon. Early in the week, I look up all four of the RCL readings and read them carefully (45). Even though I've preached all three years' of readings at least twice, I read the scriptures again to remind myself of the bigger story, to look for what 'jumps out at me' this time, and to open my heart and mind to what gifts might be in these readings for us on Sunday. Then I let these thoughts percolate, germinate, or whatever it is they do for the next

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“What I See...”

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few days. When I do this, I always find some path to take with the readings; something that is asking to be ‘lifted up’ to the congregation.

During a typical week, around Thursday is when I start working on *Grace Notes* and the bulletin. I have a number of resources I use for prayers, the call to worship, Children’s Time, hymns, and even the communion service. One of my goals is to always have a distinct theme related to the focus scripture to help make worship more memorable, and so each of us can receive the message for the day in a number of different ways. These first steps for worship planning help me gather more ideas and start building ideas for the sermon itself (180).

Around Friday, I will give the chosen scriptures another reading, and I’ll

spend some time in prayer about the message (60). Then if there are some interesting words in the original Greek or Hebrew, I’ll research them to help me understand the different interpretations (60). One last step before actually writing the sermon is to consult some other resources called “commentaries.” Commentaries are articles written by very knowledgeable people about these scriptures, and can help explain the text, their original settings, or their current applications (60). This helps me make sure that I’m on the ‘right track’ with my thinking about the message.

Most often, I’ll do the actual writing on Saturday. Ideally, I start in the morning when my mind is fresh and I’m full of energy. Sometimes, the words and ideas flow quickly and easily, and other times, it seems like it is slow and takes hard work to finish. Most often, I won’t finish until

Saturday evening. (480) Then I get up early Sunday morning to review what I’ve written. I’ll fix my grammar and make it easier to actually say out loud. (60) Then it’s done!

What you see in parentheses is the number of minutes it usually takes for each step. It’s a privilege and an honor for me to do this on a weekly basis for our community. I’m always amazed at how much the Holy Spirit contributes to this process and for that, I’m always grateful. I pray this same Holy Spirit works through these words to inspire and sustain you for the coming week, to help connect you with God in preparation for our eternal rest with God, and to lead us all to work together in loving our neighbor and caring for ‘the least of these.’

Blessed be,

Pastor James



Name Our Newsletter Draws to an End

Well, the votes have come flooding in, and below are the top five vote-getters in our contest. Please select your favorite in this run-off vote, and email your first choice to Roger Tinsman at rtinsman@gmail.com. You’ll see the new name on the masthead of the newsletter next month, along with credit to the member who suggested it!

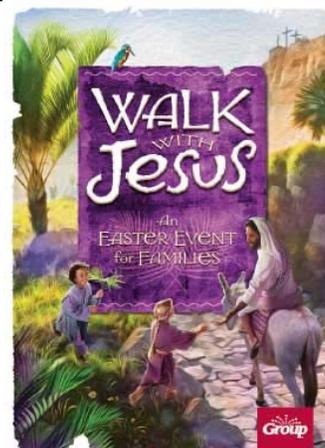
- Congregational Times
- Grace Notes Monthly
- The Good News
- Still Speaking
- Glad Tidings

Walk with Jesus – Saturday, April 19th

Our church is hosting “Walk with Jesus,” which is an engaging, multisensory experience designed for families. Attendees travel together to experience Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, Good Friday, and the Resurrection. Adults engage with their children as they hear about Jesus’ love for them. Please arrive between 10:45 a.m. and noon on Saturday, April 19th for this free event. The journey takes about 90 minutes, and refreshments are provided.

How can you help?

- Invite families to attend – use the flier in the weekly bulletin as an invite
- Volunteer to hang a poster on community bulletin boards (in grocery stores or coffee



houses) – see Steven Hurley

- Volunteer to work in the Walk with Jesus Café - See Linda Addlesperger
- Donate food to be served in the café - See Linda Addlesperger
- Donate or Loan needed items – see your Sunday bulletins



Easter is Coming

Are we going back to that same empty tomb again? He wasn't there last year; what makes us think he will be there this year? Oh yeah, that's the point: to see that he is not there. To remind ourselves once again that he is not dead. He broke the mold. He broke out of the tomb. He broke out into the world. He's out there, somewhere, stirring things up in the world. Sometimes he even stirs things up in the church, though we can be pretty resistant to it.

Where is our proof of the resurrection? Not in a tomb that is

empty, but in lives that are changed and full! That is why we worship on Easter: to celebrate the one who is alive yesterday, today, and forever. To renew in ourselves once again the fullness of the one who gives us life.

Are there other empty tombs that the life has gone out of? That's a question to ask during Lent. Are there things in my life that have become empty tombs? Are there things that used to be a vital part of my life, that now are dull habit? Do they need to be re-enlivened? Or discarded?

Are there empty tombs in the church? Are there things that used to be alive with meaning and now aren't, but we keep doing the same things the same way anyway?

How can we be more alive as a church? That's what the resurrection process is all about. I mean the revitalization process. Or was I right the first time? Either way, it's time to get out of the empty tombs and follow the living Christ into new life. Easter is coming. Let's go!

Easter Sunday Fundraiser Breakfast

The Christian Education team is hosting an Easter Breakfast Fundraiser. The cost is \$10 per adult (children are free). The proceeds of the breakfast are helping fund the "Walk with Jesus" event, so please buy your ticket to support this outreach ministry. You can arrive anytime between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. for breakfast. See Steven Hurley to sign up.

Easter Sunday Egg Hunt

Fun for the kids! An Easter egg hunt on the church property will take place at 9:30 a.m. on Easter Sunday during the pancake breakfast. Bring the kids to eat, and then watch as they enjoy the fun.

Revitalization Continues

In March, volunteers for each of the designated areas of growth met with Pastor Tracy Barnowe to hammer out goals and refine ideas. The energy was high, and even large goals seemed achievable when they were approached in a systematic way.

The process continues as we all move forward, and these same volunteers and newly-interested members decide how to enact the changes and evaluate their impact. Stay tuned as things develop in the months ahead.

feature a speaker from EG PATH.

- Mary Richardson will head up a team to landscape the parsonage front yard to make it more drought-friendly. She is looking for a few gardeners to help, and someone to help develop a design.

Council Happenings

- Jim Addlesperger and Rick Owens have been busy refurbishing the preschool rooms, and preparing the rooms for occupancy. The preliminary draft of a preschool contract has been completed, and is ready to be reviewed by a lawyer. Once this is done, we will be ready to advertise for a new preschool.
- Our financial information can, once again, be found in the Grace Notes. Any questions about our finances can be directed to Rob Champion, Bryan Celey-Butlin, or any member of the council.
- The church directory has been updated, and is available in the church office.
- Steven Hurley introduced a new fundraiser through E-Waste 4 Good. This company will pick up e-waste at your home, recycle it, and give the proceeds to the church.
- Changes have been made to the Supper Club. Dinners will be served at a cost of \$10. The council approved the establishment of a school/camp scholarship fund from money received in excess of the cost of dinner. This month's dinner will

Volunteer Spotlight

Barbara Russell is our volunteer Secretary, who has dedicated herself to filling this need during the past 6 months. Because she does not work at a regular job, she sees this as a way she can give to the church she loves. She is from a Catholic background, but had never really attended church until 4 years ago, when Glenda Feraud (who has attended here since childhood) asked her to come. She's been hooked ever since!

She loves being active, staying connected, and helping people. It keeps her mind young, and satisfies her "geeky" interest in technology! When not serving the church, she is most passionate about her families' genealogy. She loves learning about her family's place in history through to the present day. She has 42 nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews!

So last year when she set out for a 5-month road trip, with nothing but a dream to see God's country with her dog Violet by her side, she knew she'd be back! Usually highly-organized, she let herself wander where The Spirit led, sought out long-lost relatives, and loved every bit of it!

Many thanks to Barbara, who personifies what a spirit of giving entails!



A New Season for Our Garden of Love

by Mary Richardson

Last year, our Garden of Love produced over 20 produce boxes of organic chard for the Food Bank. These boxes were first fruits; undamaged and beautiful whole leaves. While we also grew hot peppers, tomatoes, beans, and red peppers, the chard was, by far, the most abundant crop. We have learned that our garden supports chard, and so this year, we will again plant an entire bed of chard, by seed, as we did last year. We will also include kale to see how that crop fares.

We are preparing our beds for this year's sewing and planting. This year, we intend to plant tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant in Bed 1; carrots, basil, and lettuce in Bed 2; kale and chard in Bed 3; and snow peas and beans in Bed 4. We learned last year that pole beans are not happy in these beds, but the *haricots verts* variety of bush beans thrives in our environment.

We are also learning what grows well from seed, and what needs to be a starter plant. Sometimes, when we plant our personal gardens, we have a plant or half a package of seeds left. If this happens to you, please let the Garden Team know. We will be adding to the garden over the next 2 months, so your abundance

can translate into our abundance for the Food Bank and for our congregations.

We can also use bags of compost, manure, top dressing, and garden soil. We have compost bins, but they supply only a small portion of the compost needed. We found last year that straw mulch is the best, and half a small bale covered all of the beds. We need 6 bales of straw to start the garden. We will use the straw bales as the base of the gardens in the beds, in a variation of straw bale gardening.

If you love to garden; if you are just getting the itch for the first time, or if you are willing to tend and water, there is room for you to participate on the Garden Team. Join us, and together we will learn about growing food here at EGCCUCC. Our Garden Team includes Roxanne and Marty Fisk, RoseMary Fowler, and Mary Richardson. Our beds were built and set up by Rick Owens, Rob and Ron Strom, Mary Kay Hosmann Rose, The Boy Scouts of Troop 288, Roxanne and Marty Fisk, Irene Johnson, Lucy Smoot, and the EGAct community. There is a place for you, too. See you in the Garden!



Electronic Waste Fundraising Opportunity

We can be paid by the pound for any electronic waste we might have. Visit eWaste4good's web site at www.ewaste4good.com, or call 1-800-317-3112 and arrange a pick-up of your e-waste. A check will be sent to the church each month for any items picked up, and recycled according to California law. If an item is not on their list, just call and ask about it! Here is their list of what they do pick up (working or not):

- Televisions
- Video Games
- Computer Monitors
- Computers
- Fax Machines
- Calculators
- Desktop Copiers
- Cell Phones
- Telephones
- Printers
- Vacuum Cleaners
- Speakers

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Electronic Waste Fundraising Opportunity

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- Keyboards
- Scanners
- Mice
- Laptops
- Networking Equipment
- Power Tools
- Misc. Wires and Cords
- Small Appliances
- Household Phones
- Stereo Systems
- Medical Equipment
- And Much More!



Upcoming Events

Please mark your calendars for the following April events.

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| Wednesday, April 2 nd | Lenten Study each Wednesday, 7 p.m., through April 16 th |
| Saturday, April 5 th | SVA Spring Gathering in Redding |
| Tuesday, April 8 th | Church Council, 7 p.m. |
| Saturday, April 12 th | Scrapbooking, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. |
| Sunday, April 13 th | Potluck Fellowship after service |
| Friday, April 18 th | Evening service at Pioneer UCC, 7 p.m. |
| Saturday, April 19 th | "Walk With Jesus" family event, 10:45 a.m. to noon |
| Sunday, April 20 th | Easter breakfast and egg hunt before worship |
| Friday, April 25 th | Supper Club, speaker from Water District |
| Sunday, April 27 th | Deacons meet after worship |
| Monday, April 28 th | Restaurant Fundraiser at <i>The Habit</i> , 4 to 9 p.m. |



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ELK GROVE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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ELK GROVE, CA 95624



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An Open and Affirming Congregation of the
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

9624 Melrose Avenue, Elk Grove, CA 95624

www.elkgroveucc.org

Office phone: (916) 685-4825 and e-mail: egccucc@yahoo.com

Office Hours: 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Tuesday-Friday (please call ahead, just in case)

Sunday School: All ages, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Sunday Choir Practice: 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Wednesday Prayer Circle, Knitting Ministry: 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday Bible Study: 7:00 p.m.