



CONGREGATIONAL TIMES

Newsletter of EGCCUCC



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June 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)

This and That...

Mary Lou introduced me to a very useful word a few years ago – "Olio." It's not the oleo that we use to describe margarine. Olio is simply a miscellaneous collection of things (I suppose a great example would be the junk drawer in the kitchen!) My article this month is olio; a few different thoughts I'd like to share with you (nothing you can cook with, though!)

PRESCHOOL – I'm sure you have been wondering about the status of the preschool we hope to have using our facilities very, very soon. You have probably seen the two classrooms that Jim Addlesperger, Rick Owens, and several others have worked on to make them clean and attractive. They have done an amazing job and unless you saw them in their "before" conditions, it's hard to fully appreciate the current "after" conditions. They have cleaned, painted, removed a million staples, installed carpeting, fixed hardware problems, hung curtains,

added trim and baseboard, removed an old air conditioner (fixing a big hole in the wall in the process), and done some work outdoors. We probably still have more work to do in the playground, but this should be something we can handle in a couple days with help from others.

The other big project has been to prepare a contract/lease. Just like when you go to rent a house or an apartment, there is always the paperwork to sign, which needs to be ready so that deposits can be accepted and spaces reserved for the right tenant. Several of us have been on the taskforce to do just that. We found a basic contract online, and first edited it to fit our facility and location. We knew we wanted an attorney to review it for us to make sure it would do everything we wanted. Our Marshallese friends referred us to an attorney in Auburn, who gave us many good suggestions and revisions – for free! And, as the Holy Spirit would have it, we were referred to a second attorney in San Francisco, who also sent back many valuable suggestions and ideas – for free! By the time you read this, we hope our taskforce

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Council Happenings

- Barbara Russell has been volunteering as our church secretary since Cindy Celey-Butlin left. Recent health issues have forced her to take a leave of absence from her work. We are in need of a few people who can donate some time to work in the office
- The Revitalization Task Force is in the process of forming a Stewardship Committee. They will be responsible for educating the congregation about Stewardship through the sharing of their time, talents, and resources; recommending and supporting fundraising; and organizing the annual Stewardship Drive.
- The draft of a preschool contract has been vetted by an attorney, and is ready to be finalized. The rooms have been completely refurbished, so we will be ready to advertise for a preschool soon.
- The Sacramento LGBT Pride Parade will be help on Saturday, June 14, with members of our church participating. A banner with information about the church is being ordered for this event. Sunday, June 15 has been designated as Pride Worship Sunday. There will be special events to celebrate Pride and our Open and Affirming Statement.
- An updated Covenant with the Marshallese Congregation has been approved by the council, and will be presented to their leadership.
- Mary Richardson Kosko presented a plan to the council to landscape the parsonage front yard in a manner that will decrease the amount of water that is used. She will get trees, plants and groundcover donated, so there will be no cost to the church.

“What I See...”

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will be done with their review, and that it will be approved by the Church Council as “ready to go!”

Our final step will be to advertise the space, show it to prospective preschool owners, and – in God’s grace – have an agreement signed in June (including receipt of deposits to “hold” the space). We’ll keep you all up-to-date on our progress in these final steps of this very big and important project!

SERMON IDEAS – We did this a couple of years ago, and want to do it again! Please give me your sermon requests! I’ll be happy to do a sermon just for you in case you have anything that you’d like to hear about in worship. This could include current issues, questions about the bible, or questions about God and faith. You will find a survey form in your bulletin over the next few Sundays that you can fill out and give to me (or leave in the offering plate). Let’s see what’s on your mind!

REVITALIZATION – We’ve had our last planning and consulting meeting with Pastor Tracy for a while. We may decide to bring her back much later this year for some evaluation and follow-up. In the meantime, we have many ideas,

tasks, and projects ahead of us. Like any journey, we’ll have to figure out some of it as we go. We’ll realize we didn’t pack something we need for the trip. We’ll figure out that we’ve made a wrong turn or two before we reach our destination. The blessing is that when we arrive, we’ll know we did it all together – as a community – and we’ll know ourselves and each other *much* better when we get there.

The “there” we have in mind is our congregation...better. We hope for better and more meaningful worship. We hope for universal involvement in the life of our church. We hope for growth in numbers, budgets, faith, and life. We hope for a significant EGCC-UCC presence in the life and minds of the people of Elk Grove (no longer a secret!). We hope for a new awareness of who we are, and what we can accomplish when we all work together. We hope for new and powerful encounters with our Still-loving, Still-speaking, Still-living God! Won’t you come along?

Blessed be,

Pastor James

Family Night with Sacramento River Cats

You and your family are invited to a River Cats game night! We have a block of seats reserved for Friday, August 1st at 7 p.m., so that we can all sit together for the game. Tickets are \$13.50 per person, and are available on a first come, first serve basis, and you must pay in full to reserve your spots (located in Section 121 on the 3rd baseline, which is shaded in the late afternoon).

Here is a great chance to bring the kids, the grandkids, friends, and

neighbors to a baseball game, all while enjoying the fellowship of your church family at a discounted price!

Call Steven Hurley ((916) 479-5522) to reserve your tickets!



Moderator's Corner by Dick Ober

So one of the little pleasures I enjoy almost daily is the *Cryptoquote* in the newspaper. It's a puzzle where you have to decipher an encoded quotation and author. A recent one was: "Once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you'll start having positive results." (Willie Nelson)

That got me thinking about another quote I like, although I can't tell you who said it: "In the face of uncertainty, there is nothing wrong with hope."

Well, you can hardly be alive these days without feeling some (or a lot of?) uncertainty... and, yes, anxiety. Oh, that reminds me of another one: "Anxiety is inevitable in an age of crisis like ours. Don't make it worse by deceiving yourself and acting as if you were immune to all inner trepidation. God does not ask you not to feel anxious, but to trust in God no matter how you feel." (Thomas Merton)

And "trust" makes me think of Isaiah 40:31. "Those who trust in the Lord will find their strength renewed."

They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow faint."

Are you seeing a pattern here? In the face of uncertainty and anxiety, you can choose to live with negative thoughts, and expect negative results; or you can choose to live with hope, trust, and faith, and expect something else. Does that sound kind of nebulous in the face of the world's realities? The writer of Hebrews didn't think so. "Faith makes us sure of what we hope for and gives us the proof of what we cannot see." (Hebrews 11:1 CEV)

Now you may have been thinking about your own life as you were reading this, which I hope is helpful to you. I, however, was thinking about our church. We are going through a time of transition, renewal, and revitalization. Even when good things are happening, that sort of process is usually accompanied by stress, uncertainty, and anxiety. So as we are going through this together... (reread previous paragraphs).



Our Congregation's Open and Affirming Statement:

It wasn't too long ago that we, as members of this congregation, wrote this official statement. This month we are reaffirming these beautiful truths!

"We, the members of Elk Grove Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, declare ourselves to be an Open and Affirming Church. Following Christ's example, we commit to model a community of faith and spirit that works toward openness and understanding, offering justice, healing, and wholeness of life for ALL people. With God's grace, we seek to be a congregation that includes every person, embracing differences of race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, mental and physical ability, age, and socio-economic background. We welcome all to share in the life of the church, including worship, ministry, membership, leadership, fellowship, and employment."



Elk Grove Congregational Church Celebrates Pride

On Saturday, June 14th, members of our congregation will march in the Sacramento Pride. Gathering begins at 9:30 a.m., and the parade starts at 11 a.m. (this year's parade route is seven city blocks). Immediately following the parade, there is a Pride Festival at Capital Mall. Are you willing to show your support and march in the parade? Contact Steven Hurley for more details.

On Sunday, June 15th, we are offering a 9:00 a.m. film screening of "Fish Out of Water."

This informative, yet very entertaining documentary mixes cartoon, archive film footage, and

modern-day testimonials. It is essential viewing for anyone who is engaged in our national dialogue about faith and homosexuality. Coffee and morning snacks will be provided. Sunday School will still be offered at the same time as the film. Following the film there will be time for discussion, and a special offering will be taken for the UCC Coalition (for LGBT concerns).

10:30 a.m. – Worship Service.

The regular Sunday service will include some elements to help us celebrate Pride and our congregation's Open and Affirming Statement. Hope to see you there!

Revitalization Update

We are now several months into our Revitalization Campaign. Hopefully, you are starting to see some small changes such as the new A-Frame signs located on both Elk Grove Boulevard and Elk Grove-Florin Road every Sunday. We have matching business cards you can use to get the word out, and invite acquaintances and friends to join us.

You may not know this yet, but another result of Revitalization is a new Music Team, which is meeting quarterly to select music for our worship services. The goal is to find the right balance of traditional hymns and more contemporary celebration songs. We've also formed a Finance Committee, which will help the Treasurer and Financial Secretary oversee the budget and make recommendations, when needed, to the Church Council.

Other things have been introduced, such as the return of giving envelopes; passing of the offering plate; and the use of Scripture and "actions we can take" into events, like the Supper Club.

These changes have started, but there are more to come. One of the most important changes will be forming a Stewardship Committee. Some people think that Stewardship is just a fancy Church-word for money! But, it is really about being responsible for something you've been given control over. This new committee will help the congregation become better stewards of our personal health, the well-being of our precious earth as well as our finances, and much more.

On May 24th, there were two final Revitalization meetings (Community Outreach and Worship), so there are bound to be even more new things resulting
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Water Stewardship and the Parsonage by Mary Richardson

It all started when Jim Addlesperger put all of those unusable carpet squares into the recycle bin...

At the April Supper Club, our speaker Ellen Carlsen from the Elk Grove Water District talked about lawn irrigation and water consumption. Lawns account for 60% of domestic water use, and the water district is asking its customers in this drought year to lower their usage by 20%. If we replace a water-thirsty lawn with low-water-usage landscaping, that would represent one third of the lawn water use at the Parsonage. We can reduce watering on the back lawn, but the front lawn is part of the face we show to the world, and we want it to show our welcome and hospitality. A dead lawn is not so welcoming.

The day following the Supper Club, RoseMary and I went on the Greener Gardens tour. We met Roxanne at the park where the Water District hosted myriad booths with water-wise plants and practices. RoseMary and I then set out to view 10 water-wise landscapes in the Elk Grove area. Each garden had an information sheet with a photograph, and the plants and trees were identified. We also took three backyard tours. We learned that there are many ways to create a water-wise landscape plan.

Our challenge now is to design something that will use available resources, and not be a burden on our budget. SMUD has a free tree program, so I researched the trees they offer. I also used a several websites, including [Elk Grove Greener Gardens](#), [EcoLandscape California](#) (which offers landscape

designs), the [UC Davis Arboretum](#), [Green Acres](#), [SMUD](#); as well as the handouts from [River-Friendly Landscaping](#) and the [Elk Grove Rain Garden](#). We recently made a trip to the Big Oak Nursery on Grant Line to look at the trees which we have selected.

We have a multi-stage plan. First, we will plant the trees. There will be four trees, so this will take a whole crew on one Saturday. We will need to collect free mulch from the Elk Grove Water Service, so please save any mulch and dirt bags you may have. If anyone has a truck, a tarp, and the time during the week...that would make the job a lot easier. We are replacing the lawn in stages, using newspaper as a weed barrier, and adding mulch as a top dressing.

Back to those carpet squares. You may see the carpet squares on the front lawn – these hold the newspapers in place until we can get the free mulch. Part of this plan involves leaving the grass in place, so the topsoil remains. However, the grass must die so it doesn't come through the mulch in time. We have plants – irises and day lilies – for the major landscape details. When we are planting, we could use donations of a Russian Sage, an English Lavender, and a landscape rock or two.

Our goal is to transform the front yard of the parsonage into a water-wise and beautiful greeting to those who come down Melrose Avenue and to our church. We can then show our friends and neighbors our commitment to earth stewardship and love of God's creation.



Giving Tree

We are still collecting food items, toiletries, kitchen goods, children's books, and clothing of all kinds for the Elk Grove Food Bank. Please remember to bring your contributions to the Fellowship Hall Giving Tree! Let your love for the less fortunate keep bearing fruit.



Revitalization Update (continued from Page 4)

from the Revitalization process. In April, we learned that the UCC Grant process is changing, and they will not be issuing any grant funds this fall (the cycle we were trying to be a part of). The next grants issued will come in the Winter/Spring of 2015. It is possible that the rules or application process may continue to change between now and then, so we are looking into this, and

awaiting additional news. The Task Force has always had a mantra that we are NOT doing this for the funds. We are in this process to try to revitalize our current congregation, and to grow our membership. In fact, most of the ideas which have come up from this process are free to us! Thanks to everyone who have participated.

Upcoming Events

Please mark your calendars for the following June events.

Sunday, June 8 th	Recognition Sunday
Tuesday, June 10 th	Church Council, 7 p.m.
Saturday, June 14 th	Sacramento Pride Day, see article (page 3)
Sunday, June 15 th	Father's Day and Pride service, see article (page 3)
Tuesday, June 17 th	Restaurant Fundraiser at <i>Macaroni Grill</i> , 4 to 9 p.m.
Saturday, June 21 st	Men's Breakfast, 8 a.m.
Saturday, June 21 st	Stewardship Committee First Meeting, 9 a.m.

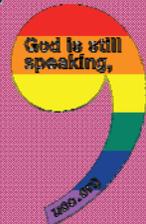
June Birthdays

June 5th – Katelynn Knaak, June 12th – Eleazar Palisoc

June Anniversaries

June 12th – John and Lesley Lindley, June 13th – Pastor James and Mary Richardson Kosko
June 17th – Steven Hurley and Roger Tinsman

Save
the
Date



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ELK GROVE, CA 95624

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ELK GROVE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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.