



CONGREGATIONAL TIMES

Newsletter of EGCCUCC



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May 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 Are We in the UCC Universe?

Here's a little quiz to test your knowledge of the UCC:

1. Who is the head of the United Church of Christ?
2. Who is the President of the UCC?
3. Where is the national headquarters for the UCC?
4. Who is our closest UCC neighbor?
5. What are the "roots" of the UCC?

Our congregation is the southern-most congregation in the Sacramento Valley Association (SVA). The SVA covers all of the area from Elk Grove north to the Oregon border, and from Woodland and Weaverville east into northern Nevada, where there are two congregations in Reno. There are 20 UCC congregations in this area, including the newest: The Sacramento Marshallese Ministry.

When we talk about the Spring and Fall Association Gatherings, it is the gathering of these churches for worship, service, and learning.

The SVA is one of six Associations in the Northern California Nevada Conference (NCNC) of the UCC. The others are: the Bay Association, the Golden Gate Association, the Mountain Valley Association, the Santa Clara Association, and the Sequoia Association. The NCNC encompasses the area from Tulare north to the Oregon border, and from the Pacific Ocean east to Reno. Our Conference office is in Hayward. And, yes – there IS a Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC. Like the NCNC, it stretches from the Pacific into Nevada (Las Vegas and the surrounding areas), and from the Mexico border up to the NCNC border.

Both the Association and the Conference have councils and moderators, just like our congregation. One person wisely said, "Congregations congregate...Associations associate...Conferences confer." The same sort of structure works for all of these settings of the UCC!

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Our Newsletter is Officially Named

The name that received the most votes during our "Name the Newsletter" contest can be seen at the top of the front page! *Congregational Times* is the winning entry, and the new name for our newsletter. The name was suggested by Steven Hurley, and won by 25% more votes than the second runner-up, blowing the rest of the competition out of the water! So let's welcome the *Congregational Times*, while we thank everyone who made the many suggestions and let their voices be heard by voting.

Council Happenings

- Portable A-frame church signs were ordered and have been delivered. They will be placed on Elk Grove Boulevard and Elk Grove-Florin Road for Sunday worship and other church activities.
- A Financial Committee has been appointed to provide support for Bryan and Rob, help prioritize financial needs and wants of the church, and work on the church budget. The members of the committee include Bryan Celey-Butlin, Rob Champion, Steven Hurley, and Doris Loughner.
- A preschool draft lease has been prepared by Pastor James and reviewed by a lawyer. Once suggested modifications have been made, we will be ready to advertise the space for a new preschool. The rooms have been restored to rent-ready condition.
- The Covenant between the Marshallese Church and our congregation is up for renewal. Pastor James is preparing an update and detailed Facility Use Guidelines, following Council suggestions.

"What I See..."

(continued from Page 1)

There are 38 conferences in the United Church of Christ which covers all 50 states. Unlike some denominations, the UCC is not global even though we have a global mission presence, teaming up with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in this important work. The national setting of the UCC meets bi-annually at our General Synod. The next one will be June 26th through 30th in Cleveland, Ohio. If you ever want to see the UCC in all of its glory and diversity, this is the place to be!

OK...here are the answers to the quiz:

1. Jesus Christ is the head of the United Church of Christ.
2. The current president and General Minister is Rev. Geoffrey Black.
3. The "home church," as we like to call it, is in Cleveland, Ohio.
4. Our closest UCC neighbor is the Sacramento Marshallese Ministry or Parkside Community

Revitalization Momentum

As our Revitalization work continues, the committee would like to point out a few recent results of our efforts:

1. We have new A-Frame signs for the two main intersections on Sunday mornings.
2. We have new business cards that can be used by everyone to invite friends or strangers to our church.
3. Three separate press announcements have appeared in the *Elk Grove Citizen* this last month about events at our church.
4. As a gift by a member, we are now advertising on the "Places of Worship" page in the *Elk Grove Citizen* for three months.

Church...depending on how you define neighbor.

5. Our roots go back to the heart of the Reformation and flow through the Pilgrims, Puritans, German Evangelicals, and our own American-born Christian Churches. For a great short course in the history of the UCC, check out this link:

<http://www.ucc.org/about-us/short-course/>

If your answers to all five questions were correct, then you win a gold star and are a candidate to be our next Moderator! If three or four of your answers were correct, then you are probably good-looking and above average in your UCC-ness. If zero to two answers were correct, then you are invited to sit in on our next round of inquirer's classes, which will be starting very soon, so "stay tuned" for that!

Blessed be,

Pastor James

If you would like to sponsor more months, please contact Steven Hurley.

5. The "Walk with Jesus" event drew members of our congregation, many of our Marshallese friends, and even some non-members of the church from the wider community.
6. We are starting a Finance Committee to advise the Council and lend support to our Treasurer.
7. We are starting a team to work quarterly alongside the Pastor on music selections that will appeal to the widest range of tastes and needs in our congregation, as well as increase the appeal to visitors.

Co-Moderator's Corner by Roger Tinsman

I recently had one of those moments when I said to myself, "Duh!" as in "Why didn't I think of that?" It was during a Revitalization meeting led by Pastor Tracy last month. She shared a fascinating, simple way – a "script" almost - to invite friends and acquaintances to our church. It was so easy, that I just have to share it! Think of all the people you know: friends, service providers, and anyone in your social circle.

1. Ask how their weekend was (instead of just asking how they are).
2. Once they have answered, tell them what a great time you had at church or at a church event.
3. Relate it to something you know they love (e.g., knitting, singing, eating, Bunco, speakers, etc.).
4. Invite them to attend next time we do it. Offer to call and remind them. Offer a ride, if you can.

In conversation, it could go

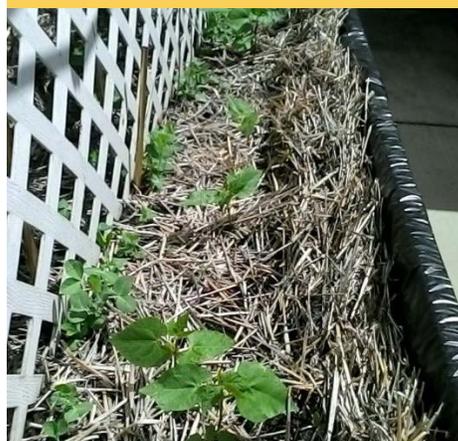
something like this. Let's say that you know your hairdresser likes to take photos. After you have asked about their weekend, say something like, "I had the best time last week because I went to a scrapbooking event at my church, where we made beautiful keepsakes and gifts. I thought of you, and how much you like to take photos of your kids, and thought you might like to come with me next time! What if I give you a call before the next meeting to remind you? I could give you a ride, and there will be snacks and food there too. What do you say?"

Doesn't that sound easy? It's only fear that could hold us back...those big "what-ifs." "What if they say NO?" or "What if they don't like it?," etc. From your friend's perspective, the gift is in your asking, your reaching out, your showing concern and love for them by recognizing what they enjoy. After that, it's up to them to decide how they want to respond. The Bible says, "You do not have, because you do not ask..." (James 4:2b). So, let's start asking!



Help From Congress

Ami Bera, M.D. is Elk Grove's Congressional Representative (CA 07). His staff assistant, Daniel Iritani, attended our 90th Anniversary celebration and presented the church with a certificate of Special Congressional Recognition, which will soon hang at the rear of the sanctuary. On an ongoing basis, Bera's office offers to cut through government red tape, and may be able to help you with backlogged veteran's benefits, Social Security and Medicare issues, stalled passports, and much more. His office has helped recover more than \$1 million for Sacramento County families, and helped more than 1,500 individuals. You may contact him at (916) 635-0505, or for more information, visit <http://bera.house.gov/gethelp>.



What's Coming Up in the Garden? by Mary Richardson

We created a straw bale garden in the first raised bed, and we have been seasoning it to prepare for sowing the tomato, hot pepper, and eggplant seeds (pictured below). The straw is kept wet, and the internal composting is started with an application of pure nitrogen, which in our case, is blood meal. Thanks to the CropMobster™ Elk Grove Community Exchange, the two final straw bales were donated.



Our zucchini has sprouted, and is on its first leaves. We planted three different kinds of seeds, and the ones in the middle seem to be having the best return. We have seen one tiny cucumber sprout; hopefully, there will be more to come.

The third bed has a few potatoes growing, along with the chard. We know that this is a good environment for chard, so we planted three varieties in this bed.

Finally, the 4th and last bed has been seeded with snow peas, shelling peas, and green beans. As you can see, these are the furthest along (pictured right).

Volunteer Spotlight



Steven Hurley is our volunteer Christian Education Leader who has re-started and nurtured our Sunday school program for the past six months. His sense of concern to grow the numbers of young people in our midst led him directly to coordinate the "Walk With Jesus" event. He selected the program and ushered it into being, getting 17 others from our congregation to volunteer to help.

For his day-job, Steven is an entrepreneur who owns a travel website called "Private Shore Trips," and sells private land excursions to cruise ship passengers in over 100 ports and cities, primarily in Europe.

He is the man with the clipboard who gets you to commit to a social event that might otherwise pass you by. He lines up speakers for our Supper Club evenings to add focus and depth to our fellowship. He has organized Bunco nights for everyone's enjoyment. He is head of the Revitalization Task Force, and is not afraid of holding people's feet to the fire to get the best result for our congregation. He is a great organizer, loves this church's acceptance of ALL people, and works to make it all that it can be. Many thanks to Steven for giving his time and energy so freely!

"Walk with Jesus" – A Great Success!

On Easter Saturday, we invited the community to "Walk with Jesus" through an engaging, multisensory experience designed for families. Attendees traveled together and experienced Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, Gethsemane, Good Friday, and the Resurrection. The journey took about 90 minutes, and refreshments were provided.

About 40 attendees were ushered through the experience by

17 volunteers from our congregation, and 12 of them were costumed as Bible characters (see picture below)! It was a large undertaking for a congregation of our size, but well worth it and meaningful to all. A real spirit of volunteerism became evident as people pulled together to loan props, give fabrics, and provide time and talents. Thank you to everyone who made the event such a success!

Our "Walk with Jesus" Team!



A Special "Thank You"

We want to thank everyone who was involved in the "Walk with Jesus" event. A lot of energy, donations, physical labor, and time went into the event. Some of the things involved included: attending planning meetings, making costumes, donating and organizing props, putting together prize bags, setting up each of the five rooms, passing out fliers in the neighborhood, preparing food, working in the kitchen, registering and welcoming guests, memorizing lines, and performing during the event. During the week

of the event, the team worked a combined total of approximately 110 hours. On the day of the event, we had 17 volunteers at the church from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. (some even earlier and/or later). It was a rewarding and fulfilling effort for all of those involved. Some people have already suggested that we make it a yearly event, which we can build upon and become known for in the community. Thanks again to everybody involved!

The Christian Education Team

Upcoming Events

Please mark your calendars for the following May events.

Thursday, May 1 st	NCNC Annual Gathering in Redwood City
Saturday, May 10 th	Scrapbooking, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.
Sunday, May 11 th	Mother's Day, with Potluck after service
Tuesday, May 13 th	Church Council, 7 p.m.
Saturday, May 17 th	Men's Breakfast, 8 a.m.
Monday, May 19 th	Restaurant Fundraiser at <i>Rubio's</i> , 4 to 9 p.m.
Saturday, May 24 th	Revitalization Meetings, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Friday, May 30 th	BUNCO! A night of food and fun, 6 p.m.

Save
the
Date



Easter Sunday 2014



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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.