



E-Tidings

February 2012



Pastor's Offering: Discernment v. Distraction

Dear Friends,

I have no doubt that there are many of you who were very disturbed by some of the media images of Occupy Oakland protestors shown on local and national news on Saturday and Sunday of last week. I was disturbed as well, but not only by the fact that there is a small splinter group within Occupy Oakland that believes that vandalism and throwing objects at the police is a tactic that furthers the cause of the Occupy Movement.

I was disturbed by the fact that even though there were thousands of peaceful protestors, they did not get media coverage by the mainstream media. I was disturbed by the fact that the primary image beamed across cyberspace was that of a very small group within the splinter group burning an American flag. This act was wrong and it was extremely detrimental to the cause of the Occupy Movement.

I am also disturbed by the videos and first person accounts that I have heard about the ways peaceful protestors (and members of the press and bystanders who were not part of the protest) were "kettled" and corralled by police. Many of the over 300 arrested who responded peacefully were beaten by police without cause and left with welts and bruises. If I had not heard these firsthand stories from people the Interfaith Tent has been connected to, it would be hard to believe these things really happened. (If you would like the links to any of these accounts, please let me know and I will send them to you. Some of the news sources you might also consider checking out online are AlterNet, Democracy Now, or Current T.V.)

Why am I writing about all this in our e-newsletter? Mainly because, as people of faith, part of our calling is to look critically and dig deeper beyond the headline news and to discern the real issues at hand. What I see happening right now is that we are getting distracted from the main issue of whether or not our society is going to allow the rich to keep getting richer and leave the "least of these" behind in the process. Not to mention the fact that if things keep going as they are, there will be more people become a part of the "least of these."

We can't lose sight of this issue and our call as people of faith to address it. The reality is that the Occupy Movement has brought issues of economic inequality to the surface in a way that has not happened in this country in a long time, if ever. My encouragement to you is to find ways to read

and watch beyond the mainstream media headlines and to not dismiss the Occupy Wall Street Movement just yet.

We need to remember that those who are benefiting from the economic disparity that keeps growing, want us to get distracted. They want the media to portray the negative images of Occupy protests and not the positive ones. They want us to believe that the Occupy Movement is causing "class warfare" and "divisiveness" when in fact it is focusing light issues of injustice that some would rather sweep under the carpet. They want the police to be ordered to do whatever is necessary to silence protestors, including those who are peaceful and exercising their constitutional rights of peaceful assembly.

It is important that we continue our Occupy Discussion and keep our eyes focused on the core issues and the many ways that the message of the Occupy Movement has some direct parallels to the message of prophets like Amos and Isaiah, not to mention Jesus of Nazareth. Our next FCCA Occupy Discussion will be on February 26th and we focus our discussion on: Should people of faith get involved in Occupy and what is the role of our faith in our activism?

If anyone would like to have more discussion on this before February 26th please feel free to contact me. We are in a critical time as our nation gets ready to elect its next leader. May we find ways to engage the issues at hand. So far our Occupy Discussions have been a time to understand the diversity of thoughts we bring to the table and to learn from one another. This is what being a faith community is all about.

Many Blessings,

Rev. Laura

THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT AND THE CHURCH:

Is This Real Change and Should the Church Be a Part of it?

The Occupy Movement in Oakland has commanded headlines and generated much controversy. We continue to see disturbing images of riot police, reticent protesters, and beleaguered city officials. But the drama of media headlines often polarizes the conversation and obscures important issues at hand. We invite you to a community forum with religious leaders to dialogue about the purpose and implications of the Occupy Movement, and its role and impact for Oakland. Join us, listen, and share your opinions with our panel: Tuesday, February 14, 10am to Noon at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church, 3701 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland CA - parking available. Please RSVP to Kristi Laughlin: kristi@workingeastbay.org.

NOTE: If you can't attend this . . . join in the FCCA Occupy Discussion on February 26 at 12:15 when we will pick up on this topic of whether people of faith should be involved in the Occupy Movement and what the role of our faith is in our activism.

This Month's Journey Groups

Spiritual ... Not Religious Journey Group

Begins Wednesday, February 8th, 6:30 - 8:30 pm @ the home of Nancy Mace The self-description "spiritual not religious" has become a common way for people to describe their yearning for the experiential and expansive aspects of faith and to express their distaste for institutional and dogmatic forms of religion that can stifle the human spirit and lead to exclusive practices. The Spiritual ... Not Religious Journey Group will meet monthly at Nancy Mace's home to share finger foods and focused discussions on the intersections of spirituality and religion in our postmodern world. We will explore the faith journeys of contemporary spiritual leaders as well as our own journeys as we reflect on how we can keep evolving as individuals and as a congregation. To express interest in this group, contact facilitator Nancy Mace at nlmace@comcast.net or 510.814.0218

Faith and Film Journey Group

Friday, February 10th, 6:00 - 9:00 pm @ the home of Mark and Amy Hersman The Faith and Film Journey Group will meet monthly at the Hersman home to share a pizza and view a series of documentary films followed by a focused discussion on the intersections between faith and issues such as Economic Inequality, Healthcare, LGBT rights, War, and other thought provoking topics. We will view a few feature length films as well as episodes of the Cable TV show "30 Days" from acclaimed filmmaker Morgan Spurlock (of Supersize Me fame). To express interest in this group, please contact facilitator Mark Hersman at mark.hersman@gmail.com or 510.749-0299

Spirited Parenting Journey Group

Wednesday, February 22nd, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. @ FCCA with Childcare Parents with children of any age are invited to engage in an online blog forum to surface issues, questions and reflections about the trials and triumphs of parenting as well as our spiritual journeys as individuals and as parents seeking to nurture the spiritual life of our children. In addition to the online forum, we will meet monthly to share a pot luck and group discussion on specific topics that emerge from the online discussion. To express interest in this group, contact facilitator Chelsie Klein at cmklein11@gmail.com or 412.720.9898

Art @ the Crossroads of Spirit and Creativity

***Saturday, February 25th, 11:00 am - 1:00 pm @ K Gallery at Rhythmix
2513 Blanding Ave., Alameda***

We are accustomed to put art into distinct categories of secular and religious. Or we view art as something that we stand back and observe rather than experience and participate in. If we blur these lines and use the more fluid context of "Spirit" suddenly we can engage with artistic expressions and our own creativity in inspiring new ways. This group will meet each month for an immersion experience in a local gallery, museum or art-making space followed by a focused discussion on the intersections between art, spirit, faith and creativity. To express interest in this group, contact facilitator Alexandra Childs at artsheart@earthlink.net or 510.522.4426

Music Touches the Soul Journey Group:

Monday, February 27th, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. @ the home of Janice Peterson

Music touches the soul and stirs the spirit at a deep emotional level whether the music is designated as "sacred" music or not. In this Journey Group we will explore how music touches our souls and inspires our lives whether it be through listening and appreciation, playing an instrument, singing in the shower or reflecting on the message of the lyrics. This group will meet monthly at Janice Peterson's home to share hor d'overes and spend time experiencing and discussing how music intersects with our faith and spirituality. We will also attend a concert or two together as a group. To express interest in this group, contact facilitator Janice Peterson at janyce.peterson@gmail.com or 510.769.6969

February Worship Highlights

Sunday Service of Worship at 10:30 A.M.

February 5

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Be Now OUR Vision

Rev. Laura Rose, preaching

Installation and Blessing of Lay Leaders

Scripture: Acts 11:1-18

Communion Offering: Minister's Discretionary Fund

February 12

Special Guest Preacher

Rev. Wendy Taylor

Author of *No Longer Strangers*

Practice Radical Hospitality

Scripture: Matt. 25:35-37

February 19

Transfiguration Sunday

A Recipe for Wisdom

Honoring African American History

Beth Kromer, preaching

The 40-Day Season of Lent Begins...
*Resurrection in Motion:
Prayer Paths to Hope and Healing*

Wednesday, February 22

Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00 p.m.

*A Service of Reflection, Prayer
and Anointing with Ashes*

February 26

First Sunday of Lent

The Wilderness Beckons

Rev. Laura Rose, preaching

Scripture: Luke 4:1

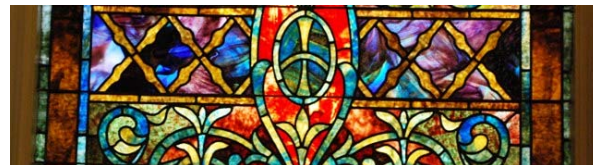
Circle of Prayer

Prayers of Care & Concern for:

Portia Albee
The Borglum Family
Kitty Dankworth
Jeanne Godchaux
Emily Hirst
Mary Lee Kieffer
Craig Long
Millie Mauldin
Shirley Middleton
Ruth Reynolds
Jean Roper
Larry Schulz

Prayers of Sympathy and Comfort for:
Mary Lee Kieffer and Family as they mourn the

February Birthday Blessings



05 Guy Mayes, Jr.
Deg Powers
Jeff Ray
07 Emma Esposito
13 Emily Hirst
15 Marge Schultz
17 Ben Esposito
19 Michelene Esposito
20 Nancy McEachern
23 Doug Henderson
Sven Jensen

loss of Mary Lee's daughter Leslie.

Prayers of Gratitude and Thanksgiving:

for all who served as elected leaders and lay ministry leaders during 2011 and those who fulfilled their three-year terms on: Council -- Rebecca Cone, Ruth Gray, Mike Engler; Nominating Committee -- Pam VandeKamp; Prudential -- Ginny Krutilek and Dan Wilson (not just three years but six years!). Gratitude also for your our 2011 delegates: Angela Borglum, Brad Johnson and Arlette Walls.

Prayers of Gratitude:

for our Budget Committee, our Treasurer Tanya Webb and our Financial Secretary Teri Kennedy for helping to create our 2012 budget. Your ministry is so appreciated!

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

for the generosity of all those who fulfilled their pledges for 2011 or pledged midyear. We finished the year with a surplus - thanks be to God! And Gratitude for all those who made pledges for 2012 increasing our annual pledge amount by approximately \$12,000 from last year.

Lily Rose Julca
27 Patricia Prinz

February

Anniversary Blessings



14 Catherine & Randy Miller

Black History Month

February is Black History month, a time of reflection of history; a tribute to those who have overcome suffering and injustice; and praise for a powerful and sustaining God. The United Church of Christ is offering a beautiful tribute and resource at <http://www.ucc.org/black-history/>

Church Office Notes

All material for the March issue of *E-Tidings* is requested to Neil at neil@fccalameda.org by Monday, February 27. Distribution/ mailing will be on Thursday, March 1.

Our Church's Wider Missions & Outreach Opportunities

Our February 5th Communion Offering will be designated for Our Minister's Discretionary Fund

Our Communion Offering this month will be designated 50% for FCCA's Minister's Discretionary Fund as identified by our Outreach Ministry Team, which affords Pastor Laura the ability to respond to pastoral emergency needs, and 50% will go to supporting Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). OCWM supports the outreach and mission work of the United Church of Christ including our prophetic witness and social justice work at the local, global and national levels as well providing the resources that nurture the vitality of local congregations. We invite as generous a response as you are able. Remember that the **tan envelope** is for your **regular pledge**. Use the **communion envelope** for the **communion offering**. You may also designate on the memo line of your check "**Pledge**" or "**Communion**." If you wish all of your Communion Offering to go the Discretionary Fund, please indicate "**Discretionary Fund Only**."

Midway Shelter Meals

Upcoming Date: Friday, February 17

One of our ongoing ministries is preparing meals for the women and children at Alameda's Midway Shelter. On the third and fifth Friday, and fifth Sunday of the month volunteer chefs from our congregation provide a main course, side dish/salad, fruit/veggie, bread, milk/juice and dessert for 25-30 people. You only have to sign up for one portion of the meal, and one or more people can share a portion of it, to keep expenses and work time down. The sign up sheet is on the board next to the Outreach Ministry table, in the church social hall. If you have questions or would like more information please contact Arlette Walls at arlette.walls@gmail.com or at 814.0194.

Alameda Food Bank

Saturday, February 25

We will be joined by Trinity Lutheran Church in Alameda for the 4th Saturday of food distribution for Food Bank clients at the trailer on Thau Way (right off Atlantic and Webster). This will require 7 volunteers each month to help with intake and food distribution directly to clients. We will meet for training from 10:00-11:00 AM, then distribute food from 11:00 A.M.-1:00 P.M., then clean up until 1:15 P.M.. You will be helping people choose their food for the month including perishable and non-perishable items. The Food Bank has seen an increase in need! Please sign up by contacting Beth Kromer at bakromer@comcast.net

UCC TAKE ACTION . . . The UCC Justice & Peace Action Network calls our attention to the reality that it is now almost certain that Congress will fail to act in 2012 to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the law whose most recent troubling version we call "No Child Left Behind." Congressional discussion of the bill has broken down along partisan lines, but more disturbing is that neither party has chosen to address what test scores really reflect: inequality in schools and in children's lives. You are urged to Tell Congress to Address Educational Inequality by logging on to www.ucc.org/justice/public-education, and reading and endorsing the "New Declaration of Opportunity" today.

SAFE CALIFORNIA ACT PETITION ACTION . . . Petitions to get the SAFE California Act on the ballot will be circulated during Fellowship Time the next several Sundays by the Outreach Ministry Team. The SAFE California Act will replace California's death penalty with life without the possibility of parole, saving \$1 billion over the next five years. SAFE California will create the SAFE California Fund which will invest \$100 million of the savings into the budgets of local law enforcement in order to solve more rape and murder cases. For more information or to sign the on-line petition, log on to www.safecalifornia.org.

FCCA Notes of Interest

VALENTINE'S SIT-IN . . . Our YEAH Youth Group will be offering a *Kids' Night In/Parents'*



Night Out Valentine's Day Sit-In by babysitting so parents can have a nice romantic evening out on **Saturday, February 11, 5:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.** in the Gallery. \$30 for the first child/\$10 for each additional child will benefit our Youth Group's upcoming mission trip. Please see the sign up sheet in the social hall or email Moira at YouthMinistries@fccalameda.org.

RAISE \$\$ FOR FCCA WHILE YOU SHOP

By Deborah Dunster

Did you know you can automatically donate to FCCA with your regular purchases? Each year our church budget is the beneficiary of thoughtful members who take a moment to register their credit cards so that a percentage of their purchases goes to the charity of their choice.

Safeway Shoppers: Register your Safeway Club Card with eScrip, www.escrip.com, and designate First Congregational Church, Alameda, as your charity of choice. Note that FCCA gets money only when you physically swipe your Club Card. Keying in your phone number will garner you the supermarket and gasoline discounts, but it won't rack up eScrip points. For your purchases to count for FCCA, you have to swipe your actual Club Card.

eScrip and Credit Cards: You can also register your credit cards with eScrip; some retailers participate.

Cyber Shoppers: When making an online purchase, do it from www.goodsearch.com. First, register yourself (one time only and you're set) and designate First Congregational Church, Alameda, as your charity of choice. (We're already established as an approved charity with GoodSearch.) Simply using this website as your search engine earns us money. For bigger rewards, initiate your shopping from their "shop online" box, which links to major retailers such as Amazon, eBay, Target, Toys R Us, and many more. Last year when I bought a vacuum on eBay, that single purchase earned the church more than \$10. Trinity UCC in Chicago makes thousands of dollars from its members using GoodSearch.com.

On-Going Small Groups for Faith Sharing and Fellowship

Women's Fellowship - Thursday, February 9, 12:00 Noon, Social Hall

All women of the church are invited to attend the monthly salad bar luncheon in the Social Hall. It is a time of fellowship where we share church and Alameda memories, readings, travel stories and other varied programs. The cost is \$3 for those bringing salads or \$5 for those who do not. Barbara Anderson at 865-5856 will take reservations or answer any questions.

[First Congregational Church Alameda](#)
United Church of Christ

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Find us on Facebook 

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey . . . You are welcome here!

Here are a few links connected with our denomination and progressive affiliations which you are invited to explore:

[The United Church of Christ](#)
[The Northern California Nevada Conference](#)
[The Bay Association](#)
[The Center for Progressive Christianity](#)

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