

NEWSLETTER

February 22, 2012

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH of Redwood City



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Open & Affirming
Congregation

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



CALENDAR

Wednesday	Feb 22	12:30pm	ASH WEDNESDAY Service 160 Birch Street
Sunday	Feb 26	4:00pm	Weekly Gathering 160 Birch Street
Tuesday	Feb 28	2:00pm	Craft Group 160 Birch Street
Wednesday	Feb 29	11:00am	Prayer Circle 160 Birch Street
Friday	March 2	WORLD DAY of PRAYER	
Saturday	March 3	NCNC Church Day Details coming soon	
Sunday	March 4	4:00pm	Weekly Gathering Supper 160 Birch Street
Tuesday	March 6	12:30pm	Good Hope Luncheon Millie Cole's 1835 Redwood Avenue
Tuesday	March 6	5:00pm	Hillcrest Ministry Team Meet at Office
Wednesday	March 7	11:00am	Prayer Circle 160 Birch Street
Saturday	March 10	 SPRING FORWARD Set your clocks <u>ahead</u> one hour before you go to bed tonight	

Elizabeth, who was 4 going on 84, was one of the first people I got to know at my first church. Of course, her parents were the ones who served on boards, ferried their little family back and forth to church, and were actual *members*, but as far as Elizabeth was concerned, this church was *her* church, and I was *her* minister. And she was right.

She was one of those children who was both an old soul and still a child; she was in no way a miniature adult, but she seemed to be wise beyond her years. I will never forget the first Lent we spent together. Our congregation had decided to culminate our observance of Lent with a prayer vigil in the days between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. People signed up for 20 minute periods on the calendar in the narthex. For that period of time, each person agreed to hold the community – and the world – in prayer as a way of preparing for the resurrection celebration. The idea was that at any point during the weekend, someone in our community would be in prayer, linking us all together with one another, with God, and with all of humanity. Amazingly enough, the calendar quickly filled up, and as I was reviewing it one day, I saw **ELIZABETH** carefully printed in one of the spaces. Hmmmm..., I thought. How's this going to work?

Well, the day and time she had committed to arrived. She happened to be in the backseat of the family car, headed to Grandma's for Easter. She was adamant that she was going to pray, however, so her mother turned to her at the appointed time and said, "Elizabeth, it's time to pray." "Okay," Elizabeth replied. And in she launched.

“Dear God, thank for loving us so much that you sent us Jesus -- and then killed him. Amen.”

She still had 19 minutes and 45 seconds to go, but her stunned parents decided not to push matters, and let it go.

When her mother shared this story with me later, we both realized how muddled some of our theology can seem when it is articulated so baldly. As adults, we often gloss over the concepts that seem out of touch or inconsistent, but then we forget to articulate what it is we **do** believe in ways that make sense.

We know that God loves us. We know that God sent us Jesus. We know that Jesus’ death and resurrection are the cornerstones of our faith. But how?

Elizabeth’s understanding of Jesus’ death (God loved us so much that somehow he had to kill Jesus) isn’t all that different from some of the pervasive theologies that float around us today. In fact, they even have names, like the doctrine of “substitutionary atonement,” which posits that God required a payment in order to forgive us for our sins. It is rooted in the belief that every person, even a newborn, is so inherently sinful that in order to be brought back to God, someone must be sacrificed, a punishment must be exacted, and so Jesus paid it. It’s an old doctrine, going all the way back to the 4th century, and there are compelling elements to it. But it is not the only theology of Easter, and many Christians throughout the ages have come to a different way of understanding this Mystery.

I believe that the meaning of Jesus' life and death says much more about God's desire to remind us of our inherent goodness than to punish someone for our human sin. Jesus' words continually call us to remember that God dwells in us, that we are loved and cherished, and that even though our frailties and failings cause us and the world much pain, God is always reaching out to bring us closer. Jesus isn't the **payment** made to a vengeful God; he is the **message** from a loving God, **reminding of who were created to be** – and showing us, through his example, how we can live and die in ways that honor that.

"I have come that you may have life, and life abundant," says Jesus in the Gospel of John. We do indeed make mistakes, we are, in fact, sinful – we know that. What we too often forget is the deeper truth: that when God created us all, God saw that it was good, and the light of that goodness was never extinguished. Elizabeth was right about God's love. Let's just make sure she and others who turn to Christianity come to see God's love as reconciling, not punishing. That is our call this season and always.

May it be so.

Kim





*Saturday, March 17
8:00 pm*

*Sunday, March 18
4:00 pm*

*Transfiguration Episcopal Church
39th and Alameda
San Mateo*

*Tickets \$20 in advance at 650-574-6210
\$25 at the door*



LENTEN DEVOTIONALS

Still a few left...

This little book of daily devotionals asks you to **take your old idea of Lent and give it up!** It will not ask you to give up chocolate or pepperoni on your pizza. It will invite you instead to re-think the Lenten themes of **sacrifice**, **repentance** and **renewal** in some new and unexpected ways.

Stop by the Church Office to pick up a free copy or call 369-0344 for free delivery.

Lenten Services (every Wednesday):



Palo Alto UCC	1985 Louis Road, Palo Alto	7:30pm
San Mateo UCC	225 Tilton, San Mateo	TBD
Foster City UCC	1130 Balclutha, Foster City	TBD



CRAFT GROUP CARDS

Our Craft Group is selling their lovely cards to raise funds for their next Casa de Redwood project.

\$2 each or 3 for \$5

Stop by the office or take a look after our Sunday Gathering

This donation was collected by the ladies of Good Hope Colony:



THANK YOU FOR
MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

February 9, 2012

Redwood City First Congregational Church
160 Birch St # B
Redwood City, CA 94062-1307

Dear Friend,

On behalf of The Salvation Army and those we serve, please accept our thanks for your heartfelt gift of \$173.00 which we received on December 31, 2011. It will be used for the cause that you have chosen.

We want you to know how grateful we are for your support. As you know, The Salvation Army relies on friends like yourself, who share our commitment to doing the most good for the needy. You are our partners in the daily miracles we witness as men, women, and children who come to us for assistance transform their lives.

Thank you again for placing your confidence in The Salvation Army. If you are interested in knowing more about our services or to make contribution to benefit your community, please use the reply form provided for your convenience.

Blessings to you,

Captains Andres & Maria Espinoza
Corps Officers

PULL for RONALD McDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES

Recycled beverage tabs help support our local Ronald McDonald House® program. Bring your tabs to the Church Office and add them to our collection to help provide a "home-away-from-home" for families of seriously ill children being treated at nearby hospitals.



We did it !

Thanks to your generous donations
we raised enough money to purchase
another case of Bibles
for the boys at Hillcrest

Thank you !



Happy Birthday

Henry Frye

February 27

Jay Selby

February 28



Prayers of gratitude and thanksgiving for Connie Wolff as she recovers from successful surgery which revealed that she is now 'cancer free'!

Pray for steadfast determination for Henry Frye as he adjusts to his new living situation.

Pray for strength and courage for Sharon Evans (Aunt of Rob Lyman) and her family as she deals with potential health issues.

Prayers of love and support for Susie Ennis as she prepares for her move to Texas.

Joy and thanksgiving for Thea Nilsson (daughter of Pastor Kim and Alan) as she embraces her promotion at Microsoft.



Ongoing Prayer Needs

Little Jack	Pat Moore	Larry Kopecky
Annette Howitt	Bob & June Bury	Kathleen Mahany
Lois Dittrich	Christiane Streeter	Julie Strauss
Phyllis Happ	Bruce Holcomb	Bob Uhlenberg
Carole Tomkins	Lucy Walker	Kathy Kessler
Peggy Newman	Alan Nilsson	Kim Smith-Nilsson
Wanda Davison	Joann Brown	Barbara Ellington
Sally Tanouye	Gary Dawson	Ana Stenzel
George Swierczynski	Henry Frye	Margaret Cassetta



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Annette Howitt
Kathleen Mahany
Peggy Smullin*

*Office hours vary so please
call ahead to make
an appointment*

From *Daily Guideposts*
via Annette Howitt

WACKY WARNING LABELS

On a carpenter's electric drill:
Not to be used as a dental drill.

On a hair dryer:
Do not use in the shower.

On a Batman costume:
This cape does not give wearer the
ability to fly.

On a child's car seat:
Remove child before folding.

On a blanket:
Not to be used as protection from
a tornado.

On a cartridge for a laser printer:
Do not eat toner.

On a novelty rock garden:
Eating rocks may lead to
broken teeth.

On a bottle of dog shampoo:
Caution: The contents of this bottle
should not be fed to fish.