

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley—United Church of Christ

Summer 2017

Interim Reflections

Rev. Dr. Martha "Marty" Williams



In the Spring *Kalos*, I wrote about “sacred conversations” as a key part of moving through the interim time. And we have had some wonderful and lively conversations over these past three months! We have met for “Let’s Talk About. . .” sessions three times. And we have covered a lot of territory. We have gleaned important issues, naming some of the sacred cows and elephants, as well as

looking at issues that are critical to moving forward. We have identified some areas of ministry to build upon, and we had a very positive conversation about worship at CCAV. Whew! Good work CCAV!

As I have listened and been a part of your conversations I see strengths. You:

- You care deeply about and for one another. You have been through ups and downs and challenges and changes and you have hung in with one another.
- You are honest and have clarity about the questions and concerns that need to be addressed as you think about the next faithful thing that God is calling CCAV to do.
- You are a small membership church with a great treasury of gifts and heart and people who show up, reach out, and continue to be faithful witnesses.
- You have a strong and caring leader in your moderator with a strong and supportive Council.
- You have other leaders who give their time in large and small ways.

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I also see challenges ahead. Some of you have expressed concern about the numbers—people to be in leadership, dollars to support and sustain ministry, and the energy to keep things vital and growing. And as a congregation you are wondering what God is envisioning for the next leg of the journey.

That’s about where we ought to be at six months. You are doing the work of reflecting, discerning, continuing the conversations, and continuing to be God’s faithful people right here and right now.

At the end of June, we will have a congregational meeting and review how things are going at the half-way point of the year.

I want to encourage you all to continue your steadfast commitment to this interim time of discernment. I am so very appreciative of your faithfulness and deep and abiding commitment.

Blessings and Peace,
Rev. Marty

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Welcome Visitor!

Whether you're visiting with us because you're looking for a church, or accompanying a friend or family member, we bid you a hearty welcome!

We welcome all who would join us on our journey—for a day, a week or a lifetime—to discover who we are now and who we can become on this road of faith and inquiry.

We embrace our diversity of thought and scriptural understanding. We respect and honor all who seek to be in covenant with us as we share in the joys and responsibilities of our church family.

We are a warm and friendly bunch, but we're not perfect! So, if in our excitement to greet our church family members, we forget our manners, please talk to us, introduce yourself and ask us lots of questions! And if you want to dig deeper and learn more about our church, please visit us at:
www.CongregationalChurchOfAlmadenValley.org.



Moderator's Note

Jan and I spent a weekend in Yosemite at the beginning of May, a tradition for us and one that marks the countdown to the close of the school year and the anticipation of the upcoming lazy days of summer. The weekend was a testament to the changing and unpredictable weather this year: sunny and hot

our first day; chilly, overcast, and rainy our second day; and slightly snowy and very cold our third day. By the time we left Yosemite on Sunday afternoon—our third day there—the weather had once again changed and was becoming sunny and quite warm. Although I feared we might be disappointed in the weekend when we were packing for the unpredictable weather, I could not have been more wrong. Yosemite once again showed us the splendour and glory of nature, even as the weather

changed from day to day, and we were in awe of its beauty, as we are each year.

Such as it is with life sometimes. We fret and worry about the unknown and the unpredictable, only to be pleasantly surprised by the outcome, sometimes very unexpected. As we have begun some of our interim work together this year, I have experienced this a lot. Marty and I (usually more Marty than me, truth be told) plan and prepare for a congregational "Let's Talk About" session, and we both worry a bit about the unknown and the unpredictable—but I have been pleasantly surprised and relieved by the positive outcome each time. As we work with the Council and have discussions with small groups of people and then bring things to the larger congregation, our discussions are always lively, enthusiastic and meaningful. I am always amazed by the love and dedication I see in the members of our little church and in the desire to keep things going. We are small in number and even smaller in energy, yet we somehow always manage to find the dedication and energy to keep things moving. Just when I get most discouraged because it seems that I'm just too tired to take on one more thing, someone always steps up and offers to do something when I least expect it. And, it always warms my heart and gives me the boost I need to keep moving forward.

We really are an amazing group of people with a strong bond: a love for each other, a strong dedication to our church, and a deep love of God. We have lots of work ahead of us, and very few hands to help with the work load; but, I have no doubt that we'll get it done. The outcome is unknown and unpredictable, but I have a feeling that we will all be pleasantly surprised in the end—no matter what the outcome brings—because of our love and dedication to each other and to our church.

Thank you for being a part of my church family. Blessings and joy to each of you!

Debbie Bemis
Moderator

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I was sorry to see Pastor Michele leave us, but I recognized that the calling for her to be a missionary was strong, and her time with us had come to an end. She left us in a good place, I think, and I began to see the opportunities before us. As we experienced different perspectives from different worship leaders after Michele left, I found a renewed sense of meaning at church, especially as we came together to support each other in order to keep our little church moving forward. Then as we read different profiles and talked with interim candidates, I began to get excited about the possibilities before us. I was thrilled when Rev. Marty, with her wealth of experience and skills, accepted the call to be our interim pastor. I look forward to our work with her as she helps us look at our church with fresh eyes, discern what it is we want here in our church community, and dream about what our future can be.

We are blessed with so much here in our little church, not the least of which is the caring and love we have for each other and our community. With that, we can accomplish anything together. Thank you for being a part of my church family.

Blessings and joy to you this holiday season and into the new year.

Debbie Bemis

Steps on Our Interim Journey

In case you were wondering where we are on our interim journey, here are the steps we have taken outlined below:

- In September 2016, the Council met with Rev. Daniel Ross-Jones of the Northern CA/Nevada Conference to discuss our options for the future.
- In October, an interim search committee was formed. This committee consisted largely of Council members who agreed to do this dual role.
- In December 2016, Rev. Marty Williams answered the call to be our Interim Pastor, and she was with us for the Advent season.

- In January, the 2017 Council met for the first time to begin our work together, and Rev. Marty started on her goal to get to know each of us, as well as members of our congregation, on a more intimate basis and get a feel for our strengths as a congregation.
- In February, the Council had its annual retreat, which was led by Rev. Marty and helped to clarify some of what we see as our strengths and areas of concern, which will help to guide and focus our interim work together.
- In March, the Council decided to host several monthly discussion sessions in the coming months in an effort to get input from the entire congregation about CCAV and what we see as our strengths and areas for growth.
- On March 26, we had our first “Let’s Talk About CCAV” session in the fellowship hall after church with the entire congregation was invited to participate. The session was well attended, and the discussion was lively and enthusiastic. The focus of this session was to let the congregation know what we accomplished at the Council retreat and then to start roundtable small group brainstorming sessions together. Small groups were asked to reflect on blessings and gifts of CCAV, challenges and concerns of CCAV, “sacred cows” and “elephants in the room” at CCAV. And then groups were asked to brainstorm ideas in four different areas: 1) ways we could build community within CCAV and our neighborhood community; 2) financial resources we could make available to us; 3) what is important to us in worship; and 4) ways we could we encourage community engagement. We then came together to share ideas of each of the table discussions. In addition, Marty asked us to take a brief survey related to how each of us sees CCAV in relation to specific interim tasks today. The idea is for us to take the same survey again near the end of our interim journey to hopefully see how we have changed after our work together.
- The results of the March 26 session were compiled and discussed with the Council, then were shared with the congregation.

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- A second “Let’s Talk About CCAV” session was held in the fellowship hall after church on April 30. This was a follow up session from the first one, where we had a chance to prioritize things from our brainstorming session in March. The plan was to have each table prioritize activities in the following areas: building and nurturing our CCAV community, fundraising and finances, and community engagement. The task of each table was then to make a plan for how to implement at least one activity for each area. It turned out not to be exactly that way, as people overflowed with ideas and excitement during the discussion, which was heartwarming to witness.
- The results of the second session were then narrowed down in each of the three areas and the presented in poster form to the congregation. The posters are in the fellowship hall during coffee hour each week, and people have been asked to sign up for activities that interest them, that they would like to participate in, and most importantly, that they would be willing to spearhead or be involved in organizing. In this way, we can see concretely where our priorities really are and try to “share the wealth” in our small congregation by having everyone have an opportunity to step up and help plan events and activities for us all to share together.
- May 21 saw the third in our “Let’s Talk About” series. This session focused specifically on Worship and what is important in our worship services for each of us. Members were asked to fill out a worksheet about their feelings related to different aspects of our worship service to help guide their small group discussions. After small group discussions, we came together to share our thoughts about worship—what is important and sacred, ideas for additions, what’s missing or could be changed in worship, etc. These ideas will be tallied and shared with the Council and the congregation. In addition, a small group of folks who are interested in working with Rev. Marty to discuss and develop worship services will be formed and will begin meeting as often Marty deems appropriate.

That takes us to where we are now. When it is all laid out, you can see how much work we have already done together! Our next steps involve more discussion of the various topics that people identified as being important. These discussions will most likely take several forms—some informal and small, others more formal and will involve the larger congregation. The Council and Rev. Marty will continue to develop ways for us to continue talking together. The outcome of these discussions will help us to clarify who we are, what we want, where we are headed in the future, and how we want to get there. We still have much work to do together, but we have had a tremendous and enthusiastic start. Stay tuned for next steps and mark them on your calendar. Don’t be shy. Please be involved. Let your voice be heard. We want to hear from everyone. If you can’t participate in established discussions but have something you would like to share, please talk with Marty or Debbie—or any member of the Council. Your input is important in our small congregation! It will help to guide our journey and the future of our church!

Respectfully Submitted,
Debbie Bemis

Special Offering *Strengthen the Church*

Our Strengthen the Church offering, one of four yearly special offerings, will be received as we celebrate Pentecost on Sunday June 4, 2017. Strengthen the Church (STC) is a special mission offering to reimagine and build the future of the UCC. Shared at the conference and national levels, STC largely supports youth ministries and full-time leaders for new churches in parts of the country where the UCC voice has not been heard. Together we give, and our giving will plant new churches (such as our congregation once was), awaken new ideas in existing churches and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults.

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Where does the STC offering money go, you may ask?

- To seed brand new churches (such as ours once was) that bring hope to people on the margins who wouldn't set food in church otherwise
- To help established churches begin projects working with refugees and immigrants
- To fund creative ideas experimenting with new ways Christian millennials are gathering, and so much more!

Checks may be made out to "CCAV, UCC" with "STL" in the memo section; offering envelopes will be made available for Sunday June 4, but contributions are gratefully received before or after that date. Watch for more information about the vital work being done in the conference and at the national level with our STC offering.

Update from Joint Venture Board

The JV Board has been productive these past six months. But first who's who on JV:

We said goodbye to the outgoing members (John McPherson, Kathy Mastre, Debra Newcomb, Jan Blake, and Leslie Paxton-Rousseau). We welcomed newcomers (Toh-bee Syn, Don Hall, Bill LaVallee, and Debbie Bemis. Debbie is taking on Secretary role only—not a JV member).

The remaining JV Board serves another year: Jim McPherson (JV President) and Tom Gerber, and I'm on for two more years as the Treasurer.

We are a small but mighty team! MANY THANKS to our outgoing, incoming, and returning JV members!!!

JV has been focused on these items in the past six months:

- Cell Tower project: I am happy to report we have signed off on the final agreement. This has been a multi-year effort primarily led by Jon Mills—with much help from John McPherson as Jon transitioned to his new home in Colorado last year. We are finishing up a few loose ends (paperwork) and will keep the congregation posted on next steps and timing once completed.

- Care and Feeding Instructions/Resources for the maintenance of building and grounds. Led by John McPherson and Tom Gerber to gather the data, assess, and recommend how best to divide and conquer and thus not burn out a single source to manage this (which is what John McPherson was experiencing!) Others also helped John and Tom—lots of smart/skilled folks in our two congregations.
- Handicap seating in the Sanctuary—Jim McPherson's idea and he spearheaded this one on his own. Great work!
- Replacement of the metal roof: John McPherson, Tom Gerber, and Jim McPherson (plus a few others in advisory role) have been leading the effort to get quotes and assess options. We are close to a final quote and hope to be ready to start work mid to late summer—well before the rainy season.

Please let me know if you have any questions about JV activity.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathryn McAbee

Invitation from ECA

Quiet Day—Saturday June 24, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Contemplative prayer is considered to be the pure gift of God. It is a time to open our hearts and minds to Jesus. It invites us into a world where the Spirit dwells beyond thoughts, words or emotions. This Quiet day is an invitation to slow down and just listen to God. Whether you are discerning around a certain issue in your life, or just want to deepen your practice, this day is for all. You are warmly invited to join us as we come together to explore this great tradition of the Church that so many through the ages have found to be at the heart of their experience of God. Whether you have years of experience or have always wanted to learn more, this is the time for you! We will provide plenty of space and alternative activities as well as some structure. If you have any questions, or would like to help with food or other logistics, please contact Andrea Mackenzie at 408-504-2951, or by e-mail at andreashort@yahoo.com.

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Hold the Date!

Sunday, July 2nd

On July 2, 2017, ECA and CCAV will celebrate the July 4th holiday together.

We will hold a joint service at 10 a.m., and then share in a fun outdoor barbeque and picnic. Special music is being planned along with a wonderful service. Watch for more details about what to bring!

Calendar

Quest—The Quest ladies group meets in the choir room on Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. You are cordially invited to join the group, which has been reading the book *Choose Life!* By Beverly Breakey. The last meeting before our summer break will be on Wednesday, June 21. We will start up again on Wednesday, September 9. For questions, contact Phyllis Chai at (408) 226-7150.

Please know that you are always welcome and do not need a book in order to join us.

Debbie

Outreach

Mission Programs

Shelter Feeding

Our congregation continues to serve the evening meal on the third Tuesday of each month at two downtown LifeMoves (formerly InnVision) homeless shelters. Two of our congregants are needed to serve the meal at JSI (Julian St. Inn), a women and men's shelter, while

only one needs to go to Georgia Travis (formerly Commercial Street Inn), the shelter for women and children. We are grateful for the continued faithful commitment of our volunteers and for Loaves and Fishes which provides the meal. Too, we are thankful for our members who continue to prepare banana jell-0 for the dessert most months, and for those who donate various food items and/or monetary contributions. For questions or to volunteer, please contact Phyllis Chai at (408) 226-7150.

Second Harvest Food Bank

On Communion Sunday, the first Sunday of each month, there is a picnic basket in front of our altar, to receive non-perishable food items in unbreakable containers, which afterward is placed in the bin in the downstairs hallway outside the choir room, to be periodically picked up by Second Harvest Food Bank for folks in need.

Contributions also may be put in the bins anytime and are much appreciated. Hunger does not take a vacation in the summertime! Any checks may be made out to CCAV,UCC, with "Second Harvest Food Bank" in the memo section.

San Francisco Night Ministry

See the red collection box in the Narthex to donate ADULT size new or "like new" clothing, and especially warm socks, gloves, caps/hats/scarves and "sweats". Rev. Monique Ortiz, a member of our congregation and an Associate Night Minister, is very grateful for our donations which she gives to needy homeless folks to whom she ministers.

Phyllis Chai

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***Kalos* Publication**

Please remember you may take a copy of our *Kalos* Newsletter home each month if you are not reading on line. It is located along with other UCC info on the wall to the left of the sanctuary entrance.

Kalos appears on the CCAVUCC website and in a few printed copies for those who request a mailing. If you would like *Kalos* to be sent to your home, please contact Kathryn McAbee (kathryn.mcabee@hpe.com or 203-4794).

We encourage you to share stories and inspirations in our newsletter! Tell us about your experiences, your reflections, your hopes for the church, anything of interest to the community that you would like to share. Send us images, poems, links for our Inspiration section. We want to hear from you!

To submit an article, send it by the 15th of the month to kalos@ccavucc.org. *Kalos* editors are Kathryn McAbee and Risa Feely.

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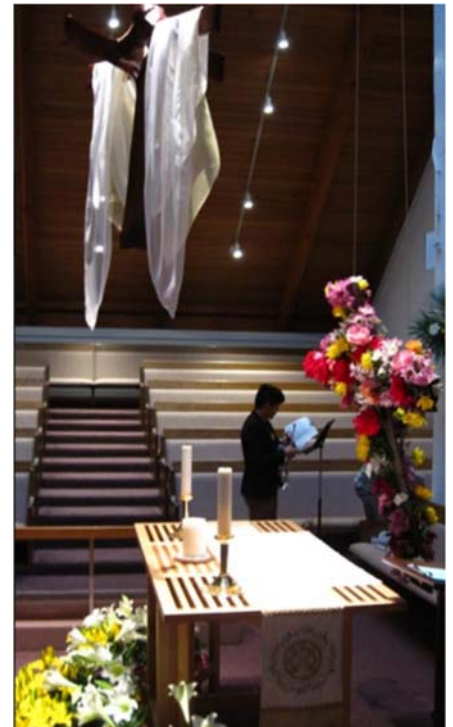
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Our Tradition

Easter Service Flower Cross

These photos were taken by Bart Smith. Thank you, Bart!



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