

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley — United Church of Christ

Summer 2012

Pastor's Corner



Take It to the Lord in Prayer

For my reflection for this month, I would like to invite us to focus on the people that appear on our prayer list. For the past few months, I have been noticing that this list is growing. More people in our church community

are dealing with illness, recovery from surgeries and declining health. I hope a number of us are praying for those who have requested prayer.

How is it that we offer prayer for those who have requested it? Do we just pray to God naming the people listed? One of the ways I pray for these people is by using a method I learned at a prayer retreat I attended a number of years ago. Allow me to share it with you.

First of all, I find a place where I can be relaxed and comfortable. I usually close my eyes and begin focusing on my breathing, trying to breath in God's good intentions while releasing all the stuff that distracts me from connecting with God. After a few minutes, I try to image the light of God or the light of Christ in my mind. I try to focus on this light being a light of healing and love. Next, I begin to image the person I am praying for, being surrounded by this healing light of God. After a few moments, I commit this person to God and begin to focus on the next person.

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Simple, isn't it? I have discovered that this form of imaging prayer has been helpful to me. It enables me to be more focused and intentional in praying for those I am concerned about. As for the results, well, I leave that to God. I believe and trust God will receive my prayer and bring comfort and healing to those I pray for. I believe more intentional prayer leads to more beneficial results. (At least it won't hurt.) This summer I invite you to take it to the Lord in prayer. May God bless your praying and those you are praying for.

Blessings,
Pastor Rod

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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.

We hope you'll return to us soon!

Moderator's Message



This is our summer edition of the *Kalos* (i.e. combining the months!) I'm thankful **Sue** is on the mend, as my partner pulling the *Kalos* together I sure do miss her talents! After I finish pulling the messages/articles it's off to **Risa** for her magical touch!

Updates from Council

We had a wonderful dinner last month with JV and Vestry. It was a potluck and no one person had to organize it all (so there was a bit of chaos and duplicate foods) but overall it was a great success. The most important part was simply getting together and sharing what each other's groups were focused on, ideas, etc. It was nice to get to know a few new faces too. The food was delicious, conversations delightful, and all in all time well spent. **Brian Bond** from JV also gave us an update on all that JV has been working on this year and a glimpse of what's to come.

Giving Thanks

I have much to be thankful for, as I'm sure many of you have as well. Thankful for our church, it's wonderful members, **Susie, Kristal, Dennis and Rodney**. A special thanks to our members who invest time to help get things done, like our Search Committee, folks who work around the grounds and help spruce up the kitchen, shelter feeding, etc. We are blessed to be among such caring and giving people.

Shalom,
Kathryn McAbee
Moderator

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People in the Pews

Found this article in some of my papers and thought it would be of interest to you:

“A group of professional people posed this question to a group of four to eight-year-olds, “What does love mean?” The answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think:

“When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn’t bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time even when his hands got arthritis too. That’s love”. Rebecca—age eight

“Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well.” Tommy—age six

“You really shouldn’t say ‘I love you’ unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.” Jessica—age eight

Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child. The winner was a four year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman’s yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, “Nothing, I just helped him cry.”

Friends on Our Prayer List

David Dunlap is home and doing quite well following his recent open heart surgery. We pray for continued good results and having **David** and **Gloria** back worshipping with us.

Sue Scuff had knee replacement surgery and we continue to pray she will have a good recovery. She is also facing having the other knee replaced when she recovers from this one. Wishing her well.

Carolyn Crowley doing well after surgery. She had to miss a graduation of one of the grandkids down south and that was a disappointment of course. Look forward to her return to our worship services.

Rae Harris is doing well after her hip surgery. **David** is having difficulties with his health problems and we hold both of them in our thoughts and prayers.

Good News! **Kendrick Hough** just graduated from UC Santa Cruz and we congratulate him and wish him a good future in the days ahead.

Susanna Hough and her longtime boyfriend, **Sean**, were married recently in Yosemite at the Chapel there by the waterfalls. Susanna is working towards an Art History Major. We wish them a wonderful life together as a couple.

Welcome back to **Phyllis Green**. We missed her presence among us on Sundays. She is recovering slowly.

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Missing in the Pews

For those of you who have been apart from us on Sundays, we want you to know WE MISS YOU! You are important to all of us and sharing worship together keeps us connected. You will be welcomed with open arms.

Pastor Rodney gives such wonderful sermons each Sunday, Kristal makes our organ come alive, our fellowship together keeps us connected and caring for each other.

Hope to see you soon—worship time is still 9:00 a.m.!

Dot Allfrey

Christian Education

Know it in your head, stow it in your heart, show it in your life and sow it in the world.

Fall Program

We are making some changes as we go into our fall program for Sunday school. First, we have chosen a different curriculum for the coming year, “Grow, Proclaim, Serve.” We needed to address, “What are our children learning?” There was concern that though the curriculum we were using seemed engaging for students and teachers, it did not provide a solid foundation of the Bible stories and personalities that help children in their faith walk and formation.

New Curriculum

I did take a very hard look at many curriculums. I found good aspects of each, but nothing perfect for us. The one that has been selected does best to accommodate our unique situation of a “One Room School House” and does follow our church year with special lessons for our major feasts and festivals. I hope to supplement this curriculum with some of the aspects of our “learning center approach” that we did like and was engaging for our students. This particular curriculum with its three-year cycle does provide us an opportunity to go to an aged based classroom situation as we grow and still stay on the same learning cycle.

This curriculum does provide a lesson plan and plenty of resources for our teachers to do each Sunday. I will be holding a training session for our teachers in August sometime before we begin Sunday School on September 9th. I hope to have a minimum of six teaching teams and maybe even eight (two teachers working together constitute a team.)

This will mean that teachers will be teaching only six or even four times during the year. If you would consider being on one of our teaching teams this year please call me. I will gladly give you all the help you need to be successful.

Besides organizing for the new school year summer has been busy getting our Sunday school and youth areas set to go for fall. Many hands can make “light work” so if you can, call me and see how you can help us look our best when we start our fall activities.

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Update from Last Month

Our VBS Program for 2012, “Go for the Gold,” is now history and what a great piece of history it is for our churches! Not only did we write our own program which was timely and creative and very well received; we offered extended care for the first time to accommodate working parents. We were absolutely delighted to have 18 children join us this year (three from ECA, three from UCC, and 12 from the community.) Hopefully they will all look forward to what we will offer next year and join us again bringing more friends. Maybe even some will consider joining us during the year. We plan to stay in touch with our new friends/families and keep them apprised of the wonderful opportunities at our churches.

The Olympics and Christian Values

A great deal of thought and research created a wonderful program around the Olympic theme and Christian values with a balance of meaningful worship time, learning centers of science, cooking, music, and storytelling and puppetry, plus games and art.

Olympian Stories

Our featured Olympian stories included Jesse Owens sharing his story and friendship with Luz Long a German as we taught the Great Commandment, “love God, love your neighbor.” The U.S. Hockey Team winning the gold in 1980 gave us the opportunity to focus on team spirit, working as part of a whole for one goal (1 Cor. 12:12–27, one body with many parts.) Lilo Ljubisic gave us a chance to learn “I can do all things

through him who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13) Lilo, a blind athlete, won her gold medals in the shot put and discus in the Paralympics. So on her day we introduced the children to both the Paralympics and the Special Olympics. These are wonderful opportunities for athletes with challenging physical and/or mental abilities. Our last Olympian story was an Australian swimmer, Shane Gould, who taught us how to deal with the disappointment of not winning all the time, but being happy with doing our best. She also reminded us of who we should thank for our special gifts and talents. Shane Gould placed all her medals on the altar of her church giving thanks to God for all He had given her as she retired from swimming competitively at age 16. All their stories are fascinating and can be found online for those of you who want to learn more about them during this Olympic summer.

During our centers and games we reinforced the Christian messages of each day. We also had fun making our own Olympic torches, flags, pictures of ourselves as Olympians (on view in fellowship hall during the week following our VBS) and our very own Olympic team t-shirts stenciling special designs around an Olympic torch. Our outreach project during the week included baking cookies for Montgomery Meals which happened on the Friday of our program. The children made wonderful “God loves you” messages that were packaged with the cookies to be served that evening as dessert. Of course, everything all week, even the circles on which the children wrote their messages highlighted the colors of the Olympic rings, even to our napkins at snack time.

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Many Thanks

It is not possible for me to thank adequately all those that stepped up to help me put all this together and support me all week with endless hours of help and words of encouragement to continue the high energy level necessary to see it all through to its end. First, I owe **Kate** thanks for helping me to believe it was possible to write our own program and give me this creative opportunity. Her wisdom and guidance as we moved through this project were invaluable. Her special gifts and talents to tell stories to children in ways they can relate and lead them in worship were inspirational to all of us who witnessed these special times.

Kate helped me form a creative team which included **Sharon Hall, Wendy Martin, and Kelly Yamanshi**. The five of us met and outlined our scope and theme for the week, planning the daily schedule and organization, and researching appropriate activities for our different centers each day. During our VBS week we were blessed with **Phyllis Chai's** commitment to handle one of our centers offered each day and be extra hands at all our total group times of games and art. **Julia Samuel** joined us to be our younger group's shepherd all week. You may remember her as Gabriel in our Christmas pageant and choreographer of our "bell dance" that the littlest angels did in that pageant. Julia is a natural teacher with great skills in working with young children keeping them interested, involved, and focused. Then just look through this list: **Suzanne and Peter Mayo, Nancy Romer, Maryke Williams,**

Mike Schmidt, Emilie Egger, Alex Alvarado, Nikki DeVelbiss, Gwen Hacker, Josephine Tshibola, and three teens, **Tyler McPherson, Nick Martin, and Daniel Quint**. Two or more of these volunteers joined us each day to lend extra hands for a variety of needs and activities. They were all vital during our snack, game and art time as we managed our five to 11-year-old children through those activities. Then I also had **Bob Green, George Romer, and Mary McPherson** help with special needs and requests before and during our week.

We closed our VBS week with a short presentation featuring our youngest children on our "indestructible children's bells" and our older group on the chimes. The children sang their songs from the week and shared the stories of our Olympians in their own words. After our program for their parents and other visitors we all enjoyed edible Olympic torches. (Maybe we can share our extras some Sunday during the Summer Olympics.)

I know there were many in our church families that prayed for us, for the children, and for our program all week. Thank you for your prayer support. It was important to our success and greatly appreciated.

So now we move on to renovations of our Sunday School and Youth areas preparing for the fall.

In Your Faithful Service,
Susie Ferguson

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Quest

The Quest women's group will resume meeting on Wednesday, September 5, at 9:30 a.m. in the choir room. We'll continue the study of Revelation (Ch. 21–22), using the Horizons study guide written by Rev. Dr. Barbara Rossing. Anyone interested in listening to the audio of Barbara or reading portions of her lessons online may visit the website www.pcusa.org/horizons. After arriving at the website, click on Bible study and then the 2010 "Journeys Through Revelation Apocalyptic Hope for Today". Know that you are welcome to join Quest.

Youth Mission Trip

The youth are back from their mission trip and they want to thank everyone from both congregations who supported them financially, with prayers, and with sock and toiletries, we couldn't have done it without you! The trip was exhausting, rewarding, spiritually uplifting, energizing, heartbreaking, and a truly wonderful experience. The kids made me burst with pride, they worked hard, were warm and gracious with the people they interacted with, and got along famously—even in tight quarters and through a three-day monopoly game. Inge, Laura and I were able to participate fully in the service activities, because the kids were so professional and followed the rules of our host and the different service sites so flawlessly.

Reports from the Trip

I have reprinted the email "blurbs" that Inge wrote during the week we were gone, as they truly capture the spirit of the week and give those of you who missed them a chance to see what service activities we did. Enjoy!

First eMail

Dear Friends,

In our evening debrief tonight Bonnie described our first day as "full," and she is spot on - hard to believe we've only been here 30 hours!

To catch you up, as briefly as I can:

Last night was mostly procedural, getting the lay of the basement and meeting our host for the week, Lauren, who is a real dynamo. We went to a Vietnamese restaurant for dinner—many of us tried pho or bunh for the first time! After dinner we went on a two hour prayer tour of San Francisco. We couldn't have chosen a more beautiful night—hardly a breeze and a full moon glistening on the bay. We drove through several of the neediest neighborhoods of the city including the Tenderloin and Civic Center areas where we will be doing much of our service. When we came back to our home base in Old Oakland, we quickly assembled about 50 "hygiene kits"—bags filled with socks, toothbrushes and toothpaste, soap, and the like, from your kind donations. These kids are so enthusiastic!

Today we dug in. This morning we headed to the Alameda County Community Food Bank where we, working alongside one other group, packed 16,900 lbs of oranges for distribution—before lunch time! We were given a fascinating tour of their operation and learned that one in six people in Alameda County received from the food bank last year—that is a staggering figure. The food bank is spotless and efficient—for every \$1 donation,, they are able to distribute \$5 worth of food to the needy. They have a full recycling program and compost on site. The tour guide was so

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inspiring, drawing us into how needed the food is and how valuable our efforts were. Some of us were moved to tears. (I'm not saying who).

We had sack lunches at the food bank, sorted more oranges and cauliflower for another couple of hours, and then departed for San Francisco. In the city we divided into two teams and, on foot, delivered hot meals for Project Open Hand. All of the clients live in Single Room Occupant (SRO) hotels in the Tenderloin and are suffering from AIDS or other chronic or terminal health conditions. We walked quite a long way, at city speed, and climbed many many flights of stairs—the elevators in many of the hotels are not safe.

Dinner tonight was at the Home of Chicken and Waffles in Jack London Square—delicious! We pulled the fried chicken off the bone and ate it atop the waffle, drizzled with maple syrup, with a side of grits. All proclaimed it delicious.

After dinner a few of us could have happily collapsed into bed but Lauren had other ideas and we headed out for another prayer tour, this time of Oakland. We drove through, or near, the West Oakland, San Antonio, and Fruitvale neighborhoods, and it was eye-opening. We learned about the incidence of gang violence, drug use, and prostitution in neighborhoods where most residents make far below a living wage. Literacy rates are terribly low and schools struggle to keep good teachers in such challenging conditions.

Throughout both days we stopped regularly to pray for the people we are serving as well as others who serve them such as emergency workers and our partner agencies. Lauren calls on the group for volunteers to lead prayers and we are sincere, but concise.

The kids have finished up their board games and are brushing their teeth in time for lights out—voluntarily! They must be tired.

Many thanks for your continued prayers and support. We are all learning and growing.

Second eMail

Dear Friends,

I'm sorry for the length of last night's message—writing is therapeutic and apparently I needed to vent.

Short and sweet for day two: We spent the morning assembling bags of groceries for needy seniors at Old St. Mary's catholic church in the financial district. Groceries for Seniors distributes food to roughly 1250 seniors each week, year round, with exactly two employees. Everything else is volunteers. It is amazing and we are grateful for all who care for the seniors who are out of sight and too often out of mind.

We spent the afternoon at the after school care program operated by Bay Area Rescue Mission in Richmond. The violence and pain in Richmond are readily apparent, but so are the energy and love invested by so many adults in the community's children.

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Please pray for the people we have served, their communities, and for us. Thank you. We are thinking of you all.

Third eMail

Here's how you know a group of teenagers is both tired and comfortable with each other: at the end of a long day of service and experiential activities, instead of going for a walk through Chinatown, they opt to head back to home base to play board games and hit the hay early.

We had another productive day—this morning we worked at the San Francisco Food Bank sorting oranges (again—tired of oranges!) and packaging oats from enormous bales into exactly-one-pound-not-an-ounce-more packs. This afternoon we drove to the Tenderloin where we were divided into two groups, instructed to assume typical homeless personas (Vietnam vet, single mother, teen runaway), and given a set of tasks. We had to feed our group and at least one stranger on an \$8 budget, find housing and food resources, identify possibly employment, and engage people we met with a series of questions about the city—its best aspects and biggest problems. It took each group two hours and several miles to reach the same conclusion that good old peanut butter sandwiches were our best bet (oh, and .26 worth of damaged peaches from the farmer's market for dessert). The dollar store seemed like an option at first but we had no dishes or heat. Even fast food is expensive (not to mention unhealthy). We briefly considered 10 lbs of fruit but decided that it mightn't be the best plan for our bellies. 'Nuff said.

We hit the public library and city hall to research our food and shelter options and were dismayed to find that with teen kids (boys, in particular) our family housing options were quite limited. Guys like ours would likely have had to go, alone, to the men's shelter—a scary thought indeed.

Our interviews of the locals were well received and interesting, and each group was able to distribute half of its sandwich stash to homeless and poor people we met on the street. It was challenging for this group of busy people to accomplish all tasks and then be stuck with no money, no cell phones, and no cars, for two more hours. A couple of the kids looked around at all the homeless folks sleeping on the plaza and followed suit. The pace of homeless life (from this brief glimpse) is very slow. We found it frustrating.

It was our free evening so we had dinner in North Beach, a delicious pasta feast. We're back home, taking shower shifts and playing Monopoly.

I'm pleased to report that there have no differences of opinion, we are all well rested and gracious at all times. Heh.

Thank you for your messages of support, both email and text. We'll read them all to the kids tonight before bed.

Fourth eMail

So we blinked, and it is our last night here. We are all sad and yet ready to come home.

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We spent yesterday morning in the Mission District of SF, charged with striking up conversations with locals and finding a way we could meet the need(s) of one or more of them. We walked the whole district and eventually met woman with developmental disabilities whose rent had just been raised from \$300 to \$450/month. The kids took her grocery shopping, bought her a solar calculator so she could keep track of bills and groceries, and walked her back to her apartment.

We ate lunch at the north vista point of the Golden Gate Bridge, then took a silent prayer walk on the bridge, where we concentrated our prayers on the newest residents of the city, those who had come to the US and to San Francisco seek a better life for themselves and their families.

From there we went to Agesong, a senior residence in Hayes Valley. Our boys joined the men's group meeting, and the girl's joined the ladies', and all enjoyed sharing stories with one another. You will have to ask the kids about some of the stories they heard about the wars, first cars, and feminism. Residents of Agesong generally have dementia or have had a stroke, so the kids learned a bit about patience and about the vulnerability of these seniors. I was afraid the kids might find the senior home less interesting than some of the edgier experiences they've had, but they were genuinely moved by the connections they made. The seniors loved having the the youth and their fresh ears, too.

We spent the whole day at one agency today, working in the classrooms at St. Anthony's Day Home in the Acorn projects in West Oakland. St. Anthony's has offered low income child care for over 100 years! The

facility is spotless and colorful, it purely feels happy. I would have loved to send my kids to a preschool like that.

Time for worship and tamale night, so I'm going to run. More later?

Much love from all of us!

So that's it for the "blurbs"—hope you enjoyed them! We ask you to pray for the cities of Oakland, Richmond, San Francisco and our city of San Jose...there is so much need out there, and we have so much! Find a way to share with someone who needs it, or volunteer yourself...say the Lord made you do it!

Shalom,
Bonnie

Outreach

Beneficio Coffee—More Than Fair Trade

Beneficio Coffee is still being sold for \$10.50 per 12 oz. bag. Beneficio is served at our Joint Venture fellowship ("coffee") hours. On hot summer days Beneficio can be very refreshing when served ice cold. And though we are told that Beneficio need not be refrigerated or frozen because of its high degree of freshness, one loyal customer does freeze the coffee with satisfying results. If you don't want to chance the risk of running out of Beneficio between orders, try buying an extra bag to freeze.

To place an order please contact Phyllis Chai at hidong@pacbell.net or 408-226-7150.

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Thank you for your support of Beneficio and the small farmers of Costa Rica and their families.

Upcoming Events

San Jose Pride Festival

From August 17–19 in downtown San Jose will be the annual San Jose Pride Festival. A number of our church members have gone in past years, and have appreciated and enjoyed the experience. Some of us attended the Rainbow Women's Chorus concert in June and were filled with joy from seeing the happy faces and hearing the heavenly music. An active ECA member sings with the group, and will volunteer at the chorus booth during the Pride Festival. What fun it would be for a CCAV,UCC group to go together in August to the festival.

Bike and Build

Two years ago our Joint Venture Churches hosted a group of young people overnight, biking from Charleston, South Carolina to Santa Cruz, CA, and helping to build houses along the way. Those of us who participated in that hosting experience no doubt remember it well. Because of the group's positive feedback of the time with us, we were invited to do it again this year. Great thanks goes to Rev. Kate Flexer who became excited about the idea, and to Jon Mills of ECA who "answered the call" to head up the arrangements to make another stay with us possible. The group will set out on their journey on Thursday May 24, and expect to arrive at our church (most likely coming down Camden Ave. from the west as most of them did last time, except the ones who thought it would be a short

cut to travel over Mt. Hamilton) by 4 p.m. on Saturday, August 11, the last night of their trip. It would be fun to have a welcoming group, even on W. Camden, as the bikers wind up their day's ride. Jon expects that there will be a barbecue supper and a pancake breakfast for the group before they head out to Santa Cruz on the last leg of their journey. If you feel able, and called to help in any way with the hosting (including someone who would stay in the church overnight with the group), please contact Jon at: jmills@relypsa.com or 408-316-0182.

Pastoral Search Committee

It has been such a joy working with this team on your Search Committee. We are very busy reviewing several pastoral profiles and are fortunate to have some interesting candidates. Right now, we're at the reading and discussing stage. Our plan is to keep you updated in the *Kalos*.

Shalom
Connie

Special to the Kalos: My First Baseball Glove

By Dave Crowley

The year was 1944 and I was 10 years old. I started playing baseball regularly, but I didn't have a baseball glove. I recall that I used an old glove with some padding in it to cover my right hand. Since I needed a glove for my right hand, that fact made me a "lefty" and all the harder to find as a piece of sports equipment during the war years.

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With WWII at its height, finding things like baseball gloves were difficult, especially for lefties. But my father persisted and found a glove at a hardware store in Cambridge, MA right next door to a Sears store. I recall he paid upwards of \$20 for the glove—the only one there—and it was an autograph model with Bob Feller’s name on it. Feller was a famous pitcher for the Cleveland Indians back then and later became a Baseball Hall of Famer.

I don’t know what happened to the glove in later years, but a few years ago while attending a San Jose Giants game with Carolyn, I overheard some young guys sitting next to us commenting on some “old baseball player” signing autographs in the stadium lobby.

They said his name was “Feller.” I jumped up and told Carolyn I’d be right back. A few minutes later I met Bob Feller and told him my glove story. He laughed when I told him I saw him beat the Red Sox too many times. He gave me an autographed photo of himself pitching in New York in 1937. He signed it “Best Wishes Dave from Bob Feller, Hall of Fame 1962.”

When we were parting his last words to me were “My wife’s a Red Sox fan, too!” Ah memories.

Kalos Publication

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 Sue Scaff (sscaff@sbcglobal.net or 960-4452).

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 **Sue Scaff**, **Kathryn McAbee** and **Risa Feely**.

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