

# KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley — United Church of Christ

March 2013

## Pastor's Note



Dear Members and Friends,

As I prepare this message, I have just eaten a chocolate from a gift from “someone” in our church who gave me an anonymous gift; yes, a small Valentine box of chocolates! They were delicious, so, may I thank the person who gave me

this Valentine treat?

Yes, I know it is the Season of Lent and we may not want to brag on a box of chocolates gracing our Lenten fasts, but it prompted me to want to write about those gifts that are unexpected and, sometimes, undeserved, yet gifts all the same. They are gifts of community, friendship, a spiritual family!

The gospels draw us this season to be thankful for this special gift, the gift of stories of Jesus and his friends. They contain sketches of people like us, like our neighbors, people who wanted and tried to love their human companions on the journey.

Our church is the place where we are thankful for a season of giving thanks for unexpected gifts and, sometimes, undeserved graces. It is a time to give thanks for opportunities to deepen our relationship with our friends and be grateful we may journey with them in this community of faith.

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How grateful we are for the Season of Lent which calls us to focus on spiritual disciplines and to be grateful for friends who share the journey. I'm still getting to know you but one impressive characteristic of this church is the sincere intent to care for one another. I'm grateful for you and the life we share, day to day, week to week and season to season.

As we make our way toward Easter, it is appropriate that we look at our friendships in the church and be grateful they offer guidance on our journey with God. May we reaffirm our mutual journey that brings growth and new experiences of the Divine?

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I like this quote from Madeleine L'Engle: *"I do not think that I will ever reach a stage when I will say, 'This is what I believe. Finished.' What I believe is alive ... and open to growth."*

It is important that we stay committed to be active and open to growth. It is important, especially, at this time, when our church is smaller in number and struggling to maintain a budget to support all we want to do.

Thank you for your gift of being the "church" and being faithful to this new chapter in our lives as the Congregational Church of Almaden Valley, UCC, and as a partner in an exciting Joint Venture. May God bless us this Lenten/Easter season with goodness, grace and unexpected joy.

God's peace,

Rev. Michele Rogers Brigham  
Pastor

## 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](http://www.CongregationalChurchOfAlmadenValley.org).

We hope you'll return to us soon!

## Moderator's Note

Your Council is working on a new church brochure, with the help of **Risa Feely**. We are also working on a CCAV ad to go in the Church Services section of the Almaden, Willow Glen, and Evergreen newspapers soon. We have also been working with the ECA and JV finance committees to reduce costs. It has been an extreme pleasure to work with this team of caring individuals.



Your Worship Committee has also been busy. We have been working with Pastor Michele to make the service flow more easily and to help support the altar displays.

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The latest action that was fully supported by both the Worship Committee and the Council was our church bulletins. In a discussion about the cost of printing in color and ways to save money it was suggested that we just have a black and white cover and that we use a sketch of our church. There was such excitement about this idea and the very next Sunday when I arrived for church, there was our church of 40 years ago on the front! As Pastor Michele said, it is a way to start remembering all the church has been to us as we approach the celebration of our 50th birthday in 2015! I am told there are other pictures of our church that could be used on the front cover of the bulletin. I guess we will have to wait and see.

Shalom  
Connie

### Christian Education

Funny how the Holy Spirit works sometimes, isn't it? I was wandering through the Nursery and Pre-school rooms, the Youth Center, and our Learning/Conference Center checking on progress and being anxious for it all to be done when this scripture was brought to mind:

*And Jesus took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but the one who sent me."*  
Mark 9:36-37

Imagine each time *we welcome and receive the children* who come to us to be in our nursery, to attend our Sunday School, to participate in our youth groups, or just to visit on a Sunday morning, *we welcome and receive the Lord*. What an awesome truth. It certainly gives my heart a quick start each Sunday morning when I greet our children. It certainly gives a special meaning to all we are trying to do as we grow our programs and reach out to families in our community.

As we looked around our church facility a year ago there were so many places we could see that needed some attention and long overdue TLC. But where did we begin....with our children and youth areas. I think the Lord will bless us abundantly for that decision. And....by the time you are reading this we will probably be "moved into" our newly renovated areas where we can welcome and delight more children in knowing Jesus and His great love for them.

In Your Faithful Service,  
Susie Ferguson  
Director, Christian Education

### Mark Your Calendar

*Installation of Rev. Brigham: May 19th, 3 p.m.*

Please mark your calendar and plan to attend the installation of Rev. Michele Rogers Brigham as Pastor/Teacher of the Congregational Church of Almaden Valley, UCC, by the Santa Clara Association of the Northern California Nevada Conference, UCC. We

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welcome area churches and our neighborhood friends to celebrate our covenant to be pastor and people. The Rev. David Clarke, UCC Minister, and close colleague of Rev. Michele will be our guest preacher.

### *JV Lenten Wednesday Study Group*

This is a five-week Lenten series entitled ‘Who Is My Neighbor?’ We gather for soup at 6:00 p.m. The presentation begins about 6:30, and is finished by 7:30. The first meeting was on Wednesday, February 20th, with ECA and CCAVUCC folks joining for a simple soup supper and a presentation on some of the cultural groups in our local community of Almaden.

The topics are:

- Feb. 20th—Chinese Culture, presented by the San Jose Chinese School (Leland High School)
- Feb. 27th—Iranian Cultures, presented by Sam Sarmecanic
- Mar. 6th—Korean Culture, presented by Hi-Dong Chai of CCAVUCC
- Mar. 13th—Indian Cultures, presented by Saleem Qadir, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
- Mar. 20th—Silicon Valley Tech Culture, presented by Sara Bettencourt Gorman, Yahoo!

### *Lenten Sunday Classes*

On March 3, 10, & 17 after the 11:00 service, Elizabeth Drescher will teach “Being Church in the Land Between Religions: Nones, Spirituality, and Mainline Christianity in the New Media Age.”

Since late 2012, when the Pew Center on Religion in American Life released a study entitled “The Rise of the Nones,” mainstream media outlets have been buzzing about the growing population of the religiously unaffiliated. One in five Americans now identifies as a None. The majority come from Christian backgrounds, with the Episcopal and UCC churches contributing the largest percentage of their membership to the Nones demographic. Clearly, this is a trend that we should be following closely, and Nones are people we need to understand in much greater depth.

Based on more than a year of interviews with Nones across the U.S., Elizabeth Drescher will guide us into reflection and conversation on what the growth of the Nones means to ECA and how we can continue to be in relationship as people explore new ways of making meaning and pursuing self-realization in the world today.

The topics are:

- Session 1—Who are the Nones?
- Session 2—Nones Beyond the Numbers: Listening to the Stories of the Unaffiliated
- Session 3—Making Connections, Sharing Meaning: How Mainline Congregations Can Stay in the Conversation

For more information contact ECA Rector Rev. Katharine Flexer

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### *Holy Week Activities*

March 24th, Palm Sunday, 9 a.m. Worship  
Look for opportunity at coffee hour to “ribbon” cut our newly remodeled building

March 28, Maundy Thursday, 6:30 p.m.  
Tenebrae Service in Fellowship Hall—a light supper precedes reenactment of the Lord’s supper and reading of the passion

March 29th, Good Friday Taize Service, 7:30 p.m.  
Join us for a Joint Venture worship experience in the Taize style in our sanctuary (candles, music and prayers)

March 31st, Easter Sunday  
6 a.m. Easter Sunrise Service at Almaden Park  
9 a.m. Easter Service

### **One Great Hour of Sharing**

Look for One Great Hour of Sharing Mission Moments in worship. Please look for envelopes and give generously to support OGHS on March 10.

### *From Phyllis Chai*

On Sunday March 10, we will receive our annual **One Great Hour of Sharing** offering. The theme of this year’s offering is: “Sharing Brings Joy” and the guiding scriptural passage is Paul’s letter, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. Paul encouraged the believers in giving their gifts to those who were not in the faith and who they did not know. He ended his letter by saying their giving would

be seen as an expression of thanks to God. Over the last year, the resources shared through the **One Great Hour of Sharing** offering, brought joy to every corner of the world, including here in the United States. Our gifts proved that our United Church of Christ cares for people in their time of need. Thousands of people were given hope and resources that changed their lives for the better.

As we consider our offering to **One Great Hour of Sharing** this year, let us keep in mind the joy that giving brings to us, to the recipient, and to God. Paul encourages us to give eagerly, generously and cheerfully. May the joy we find in giving result in changed lives and hearts!

### **Things That Shape Who We Are**

*I believe we have moments in our lives which forever shape our character—who we are, how we think about things, and what are our values. As an exercise, I spent some time a few years ago developing a list of things that had happened to me, good and bad, (mostly painfully bad mistakes) which made me who I am and what I believe. This is one of a couple dozen key moments.*

In 1955, I was sent to live with my grandparents in Alabama. I rode a Bluebird Bus to get to my 9th grade class at Phillips High School in Birmingham from Mama and Papa’s modest rural house. Bluebird Bus was a private company, which operated school- bus like buses. Many of the riders were black housemaids commuting to and from work from the rural outskirts of Birmingham and beyond.

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The pre-Rosa Parks seating protocol worked like this: black people had to sit from the rear towards the front, e.g., if the bus was filled half with white people and half black people, the rear half would be all black, the front half all white. Or, if the bus was  $\frac{3}{4}$  black and  $\frac{1}{4}$  white, they still filled all black from the rear.

If all the bus seats were filled, and the bus stopped to pick up more riders, things got confusing. If a black person boarded, they stood all the way in the rear. But, if the new rider was white, the black passenger sitting in the front-most black row had to give their seat to the newly boarded white person, and that became a white seat. Black people always stood so white people could sit. Two black people might have to stand so one white person could sit because white people and black people were not allowed to sit together. Tired, older black ladies who may have been on their feet all day were expected to “show respect” by standing for a frequently long time so white school kids could sit down.

*Coming back to Birmingham from Japan, as I had, after living with multi-racial kids on an Army base, segregation suddenly seemed strange and unfair. I understood military “segregation” where rank protocol was observed. (I socialized with black Col. Evans daughter, Violet because my dad was a Commander, and that was ok. But I had to be cautious about socializing with white Dexter Jones because his Dad was a Second Class Petty Officer and could not socialize with our family. His dad was enlisted, mine was an officer, and fraternization was discouraged. In fact, for our fathers, fraternization violated military law. All Military kids understood that (not that we liked it).*

One afternoon, because of a heavy rainstorm, I caught the bus on the street next to the High School instead of walking the several blocks to the terminal. This meant I would be boarding a full bus. As expected, when I got on, there was only one seat left. I saw a black lady was sitting next to the window in that otherwise vacant school bus bench seat. As I hurried back to sit down, the bus began to move and the lady began getting up so she could walk to the back and stand as required. But I motioned for her to stay seated instead.

I sat down next to her sideways, my back to her, with my feet in the aisle.

The bus got noticeably quiet. Then, I saw that the (white) driver was looking up and glaring at me through the mirror. I wasn't sure what was wrong. We traveled several blocks more, then the bus swerved over to the curb and stopped suddenly. The driver, a little wiry middle aged white guy, jumped out of his seat and ran back towards me. Saying nothing, he angrily grabbed the back of my jacket collar and yanked me to the front of the bus. I tried to cooperate, but was also trying not to drop my usual 4 to 6 books carried under my right arm on top of my three ring binder.

*We had to buy our books and it was important to keep them in good shape so we could sell them back for a good price in order to buy next semesters books. I used book covers on all my books. I sometimes bought poor condition books because that was what I could afford, and besides, they looked new with my book covers installed. Still, I treasured my brand new Latin book and my new brand new History book*

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*and wanted to keep them. They were a part of my resolve to study hard and make all A's so I could go to college. My loose leaf binder was well organized and I had a quiet dedicated place to do my homework in the front bedroom. I was enjoying becoming an academic success.*

The driver half-dragged me, even though I was trying to cooperate. When we got to the front of the bus, he quickly opened the door with the big chrome handle and aimed me down the steep two or three steps. He had pulled me in front of the door by now and was hurriedly pushing me down the stairs towards the curb. I was trying to keep my balance while holding my books under my right arm.

As I got part way down, he booted me in the back with his shoe, kicking me down the last couple of steps and off the bus. I went flying face first into the street. My books were scattered in the gutter, which was a muddy creek. I gathered my ruined wet books and notebook together. The bus was gone.

I walked back in the rain past the High School thinking all the way down to the bus terminal, thoroughly wet, as were my books. I thought over and over about what happened and what I had done that was so wrong.

*How could it be right to make a poor old lady give me her seat?*

*Even if she was black?*

*How did THAT make it fair?*

James Carville said in a similar racial incident, when he was my same age in Louisiana: "I'm right, and

they're wrong" referring to segregation. I thought the same thing that afternoon. I was right, they were wrong; I knew it no matter what my deeply religious relatives said. I never forgot it. Rosa Parks must have thought the same thing a few months later in Montgomery.

Mike Moore

## Gifts of Gratitude

Thanks to **Alex Alvarado, Kelli Casale, Phyllis Chai, Gwen Hacker, Wendy Martin, Ann Mayers, Leslie Rousseau, & Kelly Yamanishi** for teaching and shepherding our children in Sunday School during February.

Thanks to **Ruthanne**, our Bell Choir Director, and her mother for joining **Francie Kerr, Gayle Byers, Maryke Williams, and Rae Harris** and the special music they offered us on Ash Wednesday.

Susie Ferguson

## Thank You from the Kitchen

- Refrigerator—donated by Joan Okamura in memory of husband, Dick
- Microwave and electric tea kettles—donated by Linda and Sam Sarmacanic
- Cuisinart—donated by Marilyn Wendt
- Cutting boards—donated by Maryke and Robin Williams and Susanne and Arnold Moore

Amy Griffith

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## Book Group

The Book Group will meet at Suzanne Mayo's on Wednesday, March 20th, at 7:30 p.m. Audrey Wiedrick is hosting. The book is *In the Garden of Beasts* by Eric Lawson. Everyone is invited.

## Living History Days



The poster is a vertical, ornate scroll with a decorative border. At the top, it reads "Living History Days". Below this, the text describes the event: "Join costumed staff & docents and visit Casa Grande's Victorian Era. We will have local artists on display as well. Families will have the chance to make a seasonal craft to bring home with them." The dates "11:00pm to 3:00pm", "Saturday, February 9th", and "Saturday, March 16th" are listed. There are two small illustrations: a red heart with a white pattern and a green hat. At the bottom, the location "Casa Grande/New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum" is given, along with the address "21350 Almaden Road, San Jose, CA 95120" and phone number "408-323-1107". Logos for "SANTA CLARA COUNTY PARKS" and the website "www.parkhere.org" are at the very bottom.

Living History Days

Join costumed staff & docents and visit Casa Grande's Victorian Era. We will have local artists on display as well.

Families will have the chance to make a seasonal craft to bring home with them.

11:00pm to 3:00pm

Saturday, February 9th

Saturday, March 16th

Casa Grande/New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum

21350 Almaden Road  
San Jose, CA 95120  
408-323-1107

SANTA CLARA COUNTY PARKS

www.parkhere.org

Mary Moran

## 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](mailto:kalos@ccavucc.org). *Kalos* editors are **Sue Scaff**, **Connie Moore** and **Risa Feely**.

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