

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley—United Church of Christ

Fall 2014

Pastor's Reflection



Dear members and friends,

As I was preparing to leave for my time to teach with Global Ministries in Thailand in July, I saw Hi Dong Chai's sermon title and scripture for August 10 and longed to be in two places at one time! Yes, his sermon title "I Believe" and the two scriptures from John 3:16 and

Hebrews 11:1–10 made me want to join in and confirm, with him, thoughts about what I believe and why.

My starting place is my connection to the United Church of Christ. Long ago, in Thailand, I found the UCC and came to be part of it in 1986 because of the statements about what we believe and how we practice that belief. I left Southern Baptist life, the church I was born into in the south and received the benefit of a good theological education from, in order to search for a new church home. I left my career as an SBC missionary in Thailand in order to find affirmation in ministry. It was a gift for me to find the UCC as a "place" to call my spiritual home.

This is what I was searching for: The United Church of Christ (UCC) is a distinct and diverse community of Christians that come together as one church to join faith and action. With more than 5,100 churches and 1.1 million members across the U.S., the UCC serves God in the co-creation of a just and sustainable world. The UCC is a church of firsts, a church of extravagant welcome, and a church where "they may all be one" (John 17:21).

As a woman who could be affirmed as an equal in ordained ministry, I can say that this extravagant welcome

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meant much to me! I found a denomination that expressed what I believe. What about you, what has attracted you to the UCC? Why do you find our UCC home, The Congregational Church of Almaden Valley, your faith community of choice?

On June 25, we always mark the beginning of the United Church of Christ with affirmation of our beliefs and the desire to articulate the "why." This past June we had opportunity in worship to affirm these basic beliefs and speak about why they bind us. Here is the short version:

We believe in the triune God.

We believe that each person is unique and valuable.

We believe each person is on a spiritual journey.

We believe that all "baptized" belong body and soul to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We believe that all people are invited to join Christ at Christ's table for the sacrament of Holy Communion.

We believe that our UCC is called to be a united and uniting church.

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We believe God calls us to be servants in the service of others.

We believe in the power of peace.

We are a people of possibility.

You can read more about “what we believe” on the UCC website (ucc.org) but these are the important points. How do we talk about these points and mark them as our starting place for ministry? As we go into the fall season, it is a good to ask what we believe as a church and recommit ourselves to joining together for worship and community.

As we formulate goals for visibility and extravagant welcome, I hope we can talk more on our beliefs and how we connect to our denominational home. When we feel discouraged or disheartened, our beliefs remind us that we are living out Christ’s call to ministry and these beliefs, put into action, always give reason for celebration and joy. They ground us and keep us reminded that we are not alone!

I am grateful for each of you and look forward to seeing you this fall in worship and at other gatherings of our faith community. Thank you for your financial support, your prayers, and your involvement in the life of our congregation. Please remember to send in your “updates” for our new membership directory that we will publish this fall and any other personal info to keep us connected by email or phone.

Thank you for being a church of extravagant welcome. No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you’re welcome here—to explore your faith, to meet new people, and to strengthen your personal relationship with God. We are the UCC and we are dependent on one another to be a loving united and uniting church. May we bring a friend and share the joy of a wonderful church home!

Grace and peace,
Pastor Michele

Postscript: I offer my special words of thanks to those who gave coverage for Sundays when I was in Thailand for the recent study leave and service with Global Ministries: Christina Hutchins, Hi-Dong Chai, Monique Ortiz, Sue Scaff, Kate Flexer, and our Worship Committee: Debbie Bemis, Carla Gerber, Connie Moore, John Hawes, Dot Allfrey, Kathy Kisabeth and all those who served each Sunday! Thank you!

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

Although I am writing this in August, I’d like to remind you to mark your calendar for Sunday November 16th. That will be the date for our Congregational Business meeting. As you know that is the time we will be asking for some enthusiastic folks to volunteer for Council, JV, and Committee openings. It has been a joy and honor to serve on Council with **Debbie, Tom, Sue, Ted, Diane,**

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and **Dave** these past two year. I am pleased that Debbie will be taking over as Moderator for 2015. If you have any questions about helping on a team feel free to contact me or someone already on the team. Tom and the Council will also be sharing a proposed 2015 Budget at this meeting. We have been very fortunate the past two years to remain in the black. We will need your support and vote for the same in 2015. *Please, do plan on attending.*

Audrey has confirmed that our 50th anniversary celebration will be held on August 29–30, 2015. Please, let Audrey know in what way you'd like to help. If you have current contact information for friends and members who have moved away, pass that on to Audrey now. I recall that everyone at our June 22 mid-year meeting raised their right hand to indicate they want to help. Time is drawing near to commit to how you would like to do that! More information will be available as 2015 gets closer.

Our Music Search team has been doing an excellent job of finding us a new part-time director. We are fortunate to have such dedicated folks as **Debbie, Tom, and Carolyn**. You all knew that though!

Our Stewardship packets will be coming out and I hope that you will take the time to read and consider how you can help your church. As always, you may return your pledge card and Time and Talent sheet by mailing to the church or placing in the offer plate on Sundays. Details will be in the packet/envelope.

Tom Gerber and Council have been working on getting new information ready for you about how you can contribute to our CCAV Long Term Funding Programs (Endowment and Dedicated Funds). The information will be available to you soon, so watch for it!

I hope you have been to our website lately. Ted has really done an amazing job of making it interesting and informative. You can catch up on Pastor Michele's trip to Thailand! We also have a picture board in Fellowship Hall with email notes from Pastor Michele explaining the pictures she has sent. How exciting for all!!

Hope to see you in church.

Shalom,
Connie

Fall Schedule: Notes from the Pastor

During the fall, we traditionally mark American Indian Ministry Sunday in our United Church of Christ. Look for an observance in worship on September 28. It is part of our Neighbors in Need offering (received on World Communion Sunday, October 5). We give gratitude for the work that continues to be done by the Council for American Indian Ministry of the United Church of Christ, which supports the churches and ministries of American Indians in our denomination.

Here's a Native American Prayer (*Only One Earth*) that expresses our longings:

O Great Spirit, whose breath gives life to the world and whose voice is heard in the soft breeze, we need your strength and wisdom. May we walk in beauty. May our eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.

Make us wise so that we may understand what you have taught us.

Help us learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

Make us always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes so when life fades, as the fading sunset our spirits may come to you without shame. Amen.

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CCAV/ECA Taize Worship Sunday, September 21, 7:00 p.m.—Bring a friend and share this time of contemplative prayer and singing.

Sunday Celebrations

Bring your food donations for Second Harvest Food Bank on Communion Sundays; offering basket will be in worship!

Reminder that our Birthday/Anniversary/Other Blessings are offered in worship on the 4th Sunday of each month! We look forward to marking your special day with you! Offerings given will support the outreach/mission offerings for Innvision and SF Night Ministry.

Round Table Discussions will continue on third Sundays during Coffee Hour. If you have a topic of interest, please let the Pastor know.

September 21 Topic: Phyllis Chai and Bessie Hutchins are our leaders. The topic is Climate Change.

October 19 Topic is the Church Budget.

CCAV Pastor's Study Group—New Adult Study Opportunity: Every first Sunday, beginning October 5th, I invite you to join me (around 10:30 a.m.) for an Adult Faith Study Group experience. I'll "pick" the topic for the day and lead a discussion—something related to "Being a Christian in the 21st Century." Please come and bring a friend!

Christian Education

Sunday School officially begins this month on September 7 with the story of creation. What a great story to begin another year with lots of new creating happening in our programs both on Sunday and with our Fall Festival for

kids. This year we are providing Sunday School curriculum materials for children beginning at age 3 through 5th grade. With a new organization plan we are able to supply appropriate materials and varied experiences for each level. We are thankful to a volunteer staff that makes all this possible. A Sunday School Workshop was held on Saturday, August 23, to get all our teachers and shepherds ready for the year ahead.

Our Fall Festival Week for Kids is full of rich opportunities for children in our neighborhood. We are pleased to welcome many special artists to our program, providing wonderful enrichment experiences in art, drama, music, and cooking. Look at our headliners. We will start the week off with our resident French chef, **Alain Guichard**. We hope to learn a few pointers we will be able to follow in other cooking projects later in the week. **Ruthanne** will be joining us to introduce the children to bells, chimes and even a Celtic harp. When we add that to our own unique "jamming wall" and other instruments we will make that day, we are sure to make a "very joyful noise" praising God. **Sharon Mills** is our headliner for our recycled and nature arts day which will be filled with exciting creations using fabrics and yarn alongside sticks and leaves. Our guest artists and consultants for our ceramic day focus and our painting day have yet to be confirmed at this deadline. Besides our special focus for each day, we will also share a worship experience, great literature stories, construction art, singing, play acting ourselves and with puppets, cooking an afternoon snack, and more. Sounds like lots of fun, don't you agree?

So many exciting things lie ahead for our church and our children. I hope you will want to be a part of this rich blessing as it unfolds for us in the school year.

In your faithful service,
Susie Ferguson

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Gifts of Gratitude for September

Thanks to **Sandie Mueller, Pat McGarvin, Wendy & Ashley Martin** for helping get our props and costume closet and our Sunday School supply closet reorganized & inventoried for Sunday School.

Thanks to **Pat McGarvin** for getting the music desk cleaned and organized for our new music directors.

Thanks to **Kelly Yamanishi** and her company for doing our Fall Festival Banner and graphics.

Thanks to the following teachers and shepherds committed to volunteering in our Sunday School program for this fall: **Alex Alvarado, Kelli Casale, Elizabeth Cihon, Debbie Estill, Wendy Martin, Ann Mayers, Sandie Mueller, Dana Renfand, Leslie Rousseau & Kelly Yamanishi.**

Susie Ferguson

Outreach/Missions

Neighbors in Need: On Sunday October 5, we will receive our annual Neighbors in Need (NIN) offering. This special offering supports the ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One third of the NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM), and two thirds of the offering is used by the UCC'S Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. Let us please consider prayerfully what we may be led to share with those in need.

Backpacks/School Supplies: The Outreach team at its previous meeting decided to support the giving of backpacks/school supplies for the upcoming school year to children at the InnVision Commercial Street Inn to which our congregation takes dinner monthly. InnVision is very grateful for our sharing!

San Francisco Night Ministry: Our red labeled box in the narthex continues to receive new or almost new clothing items which can be shared with folks who participate in the San Francisco Night Ministry programs/services. Thank you for your generosity!

Second Harvest Food Bank Bin: On Communion Sunday, the first Sunday of each month, we are asked to bring cans, etc. of food to add to the Second Harvest Food Bank bin in the downstairs hallway of our church. Please be aware that outdated items cannot be used. Checks made out to Second Harvest Food Bank (and in the memo section, Congregational Church of Almaden member) also welcome; Phyllis Chai has envelopes for mailing and they may also be found in the wall rack in the narthex. Thank you for your much needed contributions.

Shelter Feeding: On the second Tuesday of each month a dedicated team of volunteers from our congregation shops, cooks, and serves the dinner for two downtown InnVision homeless shelters, Commercial Street Inn (CSI), for women and children, and Julian Street Inn, for chronically mentally ill folks. On the previous Sunday after our service, banana Jell-O is prepared by some of these same folks, as well others generous with their time and talent. The residents of the two Inns are always very thankful and express their gratitude for the tasty meal. Donations of cookies are always welcome to add a welcome treat to the dinner. Checks may also be contributed, written to AVUCC with Shelter Feeding in the memo section. Contributions from the Headlight Polishing events have also been most welcome!

Outreach/Missions Team Meeting: The next meeting of the Outreach/Missions Team will be in Rev. Michele's office (or the choir room if the group is too large) on Sunday September 28, following our coffee/fellowship hour. All are welcome who have an interest in Outreach/Missions and who wish to share

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thoughts and ideas/help make decisions for our congregation's Outreach/Mission involvement during the next quarter.

Pastor Michele's Work in Thailand

August 4

Hi Everyone (CCAV Council and other family/friends)

Hope everyone is well there! I write with a little update about how the last few days have gone.

We are doing fine here in Bangkok at the Church of Christ of Thailand (CCT) office, where I write from. I have a desk on 3rd floor in the office of ecumenical relationships. There are about 10 people who work in the office. Rev. Dr. Sharon Bryant is the director of this office; she's a Presbyterian missionary I work with and the person who is allowing me to stay in her home in the city (a great gift to me as a volunteer!).

On Sunday, August 3, I went for an early morning walk before church and took a few pictures around the area where I am living. A Buddhist monk was receiving food and giving a blessing to a couple (around 7 a.m.). He allowed me to take a picture. Around 9:15 a.m. we went to worship at a large Chinese-Thai Christian Church called "Sanam Luang." The service was in Thai and Chinese. There was an English interpreter for those who could not speak Thai or Chinese.

Sharon and I have been working on the presentation for seminars we will be teaching in about 4 schools in the country; our travels begin on August 15. We are also preparing for a retreat for CCT volunteers teaching English that will take place in Tranh, southern Thailand August 16–22.

This is the time we celebrate the Queen's birthday so there is much preparation for this celebration on August 12. I'll have a short break and visit a long time Thai friend who lives in Ban Chang near Rayong. Yes, such a delight to be here and experience the Thai culture/way of life! I'm so grateful for the opportunity. Thank you!



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August 12

Hi everyone...let me add these photos, pictures of The Church of Christ in Thailand. The cross is a prominent symbol in this area and the staff in the building is preparing for the Queen's birthday celebration next week, August 12 and a city picture from roof of our building (11th Floor). And, I have added a picture of a very exclusive shopping center near our building, Siam Paragon. Yes, the

old and the new blended here plus many faiths living side by side. Over the long weekend ahead, I don't have CCT responsibilities so I'll be traveling to Ban Chang (near Rayong) to visit my Thai friend (she is a Christian pastor and Martha's god mother.)

Sa wat dii....Blessings,
Ann Michele



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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 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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