

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley—United Church of Christ

Spring 2015

Pastor's Reflection



Dear members and friends,

The book of devotions I turn to most often during the seasons of Lent and Easter is a book written by Joyce Rupp entitled *The Cup of Life; a Guide for Spiritual Growth*. I have read it many times and still find the images easy to connect with and a helpful guide in my desire to

center my life in prayer and discernment. It is designed to be used for six weeks with an aspect of the “cup” as a metaphor for spiritual growth.

The opening dedication in the book is a quote from May Sarton: “This cup holds grief and balm in equal measure, light, darkness. Who drinks from it must change.” Another quote later on the book is from Nancy Wood, “You have many different natures. Light and dark. Kind and mean. Inconsistent and predictable. You’ll never be perfect. But you can be better than you are now. For your own sake, try.”

The cup I usually select to hold when I go through the meditations is my old white mug. It is a very simple cup with little ornamentation or design but it has an appeal. Could it be that I like the reminder that I can design or create something new on the white surface each time I drink from it or that I can imagine a world with possibilities for what our “trying” can accomplish?

I think sometimes I need that “blank” slate, the opportunity to begin again.

What I do know is that the metaphor of a continual filling and emptying of the cup connects me with the transforming power of God to offer possibilities.

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For us as a congregation, the image of the cup (our joint life) may also connect us with our spiritual life and the “possibilities” in store. We have much to offer one another and the communities where we live. Our almost 50 years together tell a story of highs and lows, but, mostly, faithfulness to be the “church” and love each other through the many ups and downs of our journey. Churches everywhere are like this but our focus is on our particular calling and the ways we have responded when we have needed emptying and filling. Can you think of someone you would like to give a personal thanks to as we approach our church anniversary? I hope you will do this.

As I close these words, I remain grateful for your constant, dependable faithfulness to keep trying, to keep emptying and to keep filling the spiritual “cup,” that is our life together. Thank you for allowing good change to fill our cups with God’s goodness and grace again and again. In case I forget, let me thank you for your gifts to our church; the gift of your presence, your financial support, your prayers and most importantly, your leadership in all aspects of church life.

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As we come to the “joy” of Easter may we continue to inspire one another to be compassionate as God is compassionate. May our “cups” hold blessings and may we make sacred this life we share in Christ as the Congregational Church of Almaden Valley, UCC!

In faith and Promise,
Rev. Ann 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.

Moderator’s Note

I am writing this during a time when I have a lot on my plate—so many details in my brain, they are starting to spill out. I am working full time in a very demanding job

that shoulders much responsibility for many people. I am supporting several people on my staff, all of whom are taking care of loved ones who have recently been put on hospice care and are nearing the end of their lives here on earth. I am learning the ropes related to all that is entailed in the moderator position here at church; a position I am honored to have, but one that is not easy. I am dealing with my own personal challenges related to my adult children as well as some in my extended family. I am cleaning house, organizing rooms, planning meals, and getting things ready for lots of family coming in over the weekend. I am working on a million wedding details with more popping up, it seems, every day. And, to top it all off, I am getting married in three days! It is quite stressful and, at times, very difficult; and yet I am excited and happy and am having *no* trouble seeing the big picture, knowing what is important, and setting aside or letting go of what isn’t.

This is not something that I am always able to do, and I sometimes wonder why nothing seems to be fazing me this month, in spite of its busyness and daily challenges. I can only assume it is because I am looking forward to something so significant and meaningful in my life that it is easy for me to stay focused on what is important.

This is my hope for our church this year. It is a year for us to celebrate! We have been a church for 50 years! It is a significant and important milestone, and I am excited and proud to be a part of it. We have a rich history and past to celebrate and honor. And, we have a joyful and exciting present to celebrate and appreciate with many opportunities to become involved. If we look at the big picture and are able to stay focused on that which is important; that is, the life of our church and what we are able to accomplish together, it will be a year of excitement and joyful anticipation.

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As our church and its members age, many worry about our future and what it holds. I submit that if we spend too much time worrying, we miss the joy of the present – and the big picture of what is important. I am honored to be the moderator during this milestone year, and I want us to enjoy it! I want us to honor and celebrate our past, but not dwell on it. I want us to think about and plan for our future, but not worry about it. Rather, I want us to concentrate on our present—where we are right now—and celebrate it with joy.

When your plate is full and the details in your brain are spilling out—when your life is hectic and stressful—and when you start to long for the past and worry about the future of our church, I hope you will pause to remember the big picture, know what is important, and set aside or let go of what isn't. I hope you will look forward to this milestone year that is so significant and meaningful in the life of our church, and that it will be easy for you to stay focused on what is important. I hope you will join me in celebrating our 50 years together with pride, in getting involved in our celebrations and the life of our church now, and in anticipating a meaningful year of joy!

Debbie Bemis

Calendar

Worship—Holy Week 2015

March 29, Palm Sunday—Palm procession and readings for Palm Sunday

April 2, Maundy Thursday—6:30 p.m. Light supper and celebration of Holy Communion with Maundy Thursday readings (CCAV and ECA share this service)

April 3, Good Friday—7 p.m. Ecumenical Good Friday worship (CCAV and ECA share this service)

April 5, Easter Sunday—9 a.m. Worship and communion. Please bring a flower for the Easter cross that we'll raise in the worship service.

Note: We thank those serving on our Worship Committee for their contributions and planning for our weekly worship services and our special services. Thank you to Carla Gerber (Chair), Kelly Yamanishi, Kathryn McAbee, Connie Moore, Debbie Bemis, Dot Allfrey, Kathy Kisabeth, and John Hawes for their guidance and input. We meet every two months; please speak to a person on the committee with your thoughts and ideas.

Events

First Sundays Book Study—March–May, 10:30–11:30 a.m. following worship/coffee hour. The book is *Credo* by William Sloane Coffin. Join us for reading and conversation on different topics and how they relate to our faith. No pre-read necessary! Pastor Michele has a few extra books in case you'd like to purchase (around \$5/copy)

Bridge Group—JV bridge group will meet the last Wednesday of the month, 2:00 p.m., in the youth center (old Fellowship Hall). All levels are welcome. There is a table for everyone. Anyone interested in learning please join us. Bring a friend. For information contact Amy Griffith at (408) 268-0920 or amy-g@pacbell.net

Recognition

Congratulations to Jan Blake and Debbie Bemis on the occasion of their marriage on Saturday, February 14, 2015, at our church. We rejoice with them and continue to surround them with our love and support.

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Outreach

Shelter Feeling

Our congregation continues to serve the evening meal on the third Tuesday of each month at two downtown InnVision (IVSN) homeless shelters (Julian St. Inn/JSI, for people with mental health challenges or chronic mental illness, and Commercial St. Inn/CSI for women and children). Two of our volunteers are needed to serve the meal at JSI, while only one need go to CSI, where a resident who sets up the meal also serves. We are grateful for the continued faithful commitment by our volunteers and for Loaves and Fishes which provides the meal. Too, we are thankful for our members who continue to prepare banana jell-O for the dessert most months.

San Francisco Night Ministry and Santa Clara County Jail Ministry

See the "red" collection box near the literature rack in the church Narthex to donate ADULT size new or "like new"/warm socks, gloves, caps/hats/scarves and "sweats" (those without pockets can be given to folks being released from the jail). It's expected that any other donated "seasonal" adult size clothing will be taken periodically to the Jail Re-entry Center. Questions? Speak to Phyllis Chai. We are very appreciative for the many donations which have been placed in "the box"!

Second Harvest Food Bank

Very gratefully and finally, the overflowing "Second Harvest" bin was picked up and swapped for an empty one. Contributions are always appreciated; on each Communion (first of the month) Sunday donations may be placed in the picnic basket by our altar. Any checks may be made out to "AVUCC" with "Second Harvest Food Bank" in the memo section.

One Great Hour of Sharing

On Sunday March 15, we will have the dedication of our annual One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering. The theme scripture for this year's offering is 2 Corinthians 8:13–15 (relating to the sharing of one's abundance with those in need). Our gifts to OGHS extend care to God's people in North America and around the world, and supports disaster, refugee and development actions. We send our offering to our NCNC (Conference) office which allocates a portion for local needs, and the remainder is forwarded to our national UCC office for distribution.

Checks may be made out to "AVUCC" with "OGHS" in the memo section.

Strengthen the Church

"Strengthen the Church" is one of our four annual Special Offerings. The dedication of this offering will happen on Pentecost Sunday, May 17. Our gifts support church growth and leadership development in the conferences and through the national offices of Local Church Ministries.

Our own congregation received such needed support from our wider United Church of Christ when we first organized.

As is the case with all our offerings, checks may be made out to "AVUCC," and with "STC" in the memo section.

Crop Walk

The annual South Bay CROP Hunger Walk will take place on Sunday April 19, in downtown San Jose. CROP stands for "Community Responding to Overcome Poverty." Church World Service (CWS) is the sponsoring organization of the CROP Walks, and it works with the UCC in helping to meet poverty needs worldwide. Kathryn McAbee graciously agreed to again set up an online

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web site where our church members can donate to this worthy cause. Kathy Kisabeth for many years headed up our congregation's participation in the Walk, securing pledges from our congregants, and walking herself with her beloved dog. It's a fun walk, not to mention being healthy, as long or as short as one chooses, with a refreshing treat at the end, all while helping to ease the burden of those less fortunate. Think about taking the Light Rail downtown, and joining in the feel good experience!

Phyllis Chai

PS: [Click here to view the team page for Congregational Church of Almaden Valley](http://hunger.cwsglobal.org/site/TR?team_id=116232&pg=team&fr_id=20483&et=sarIbOu5A6hmvSq5pv-eYA&s_tafId=141634)

If the text above does not appear as a clickable link, you can visit the web address by copying and pasting the below URL into your web browser:

http://hunger.cwsglobal.org/site/TR?team_id=116232&pg=team&fr_id=20483&et=sarIbOu5A6hmvSq5pv-eYA&s_tafId=141634

Christian Education

Annual Report for 2014

We are growing a wonderful and exciting reputation in our neighborhood for creative and meaningful programs for children. We offered two very exciting weeks in 2014, Sparks Fly, our VBS program in June, and our Fall Festival for Kids, during the fall school break. Both were extremely well attended and received rave reviews. These two programs introduced our church to 30 families outside our current church families and to a total of 46 children. We did in fact have to turn some families away due to limitations of space and staffing. Early registration is becoming important and necessary to guarantee space in these programs.

Our Sunday School roster right now has eight students who participate on a regular basis. In our current church family we have another three students of Sunday School

age who we may see on occasion. Our program is pre-school through 5th grade. Look at our great list of teachers who serve these children: Alex Alvarado, Kelli Casale, Elizabeth Cihon, Debbie Estill, Wendy Martin, Ann Mayers, Sandie Mueller, Dana Renfand, Leslie Rousseau, and Kelly Yamanishi. These are all gifted and talented women who each contribute unique and special talents to our Sunday School program. Currently, we are holding one class each week with two teachers to meet our Safe Church requirements for children. Our average attendance this fall has been six children on Sundays.

In August of 2014 a workshop was held for our teachers to prepare them for our new program planning for the year and to discuss teaching techniques, developmental differences in children, and the resources on hand at our church. Our teachers are dedicated and committed and attend these to be as best prepared as they can be for our children. To help make their commitments manageable I do try to keep their classroom environments stimulating and updated with appropriate resources ready for them on any given Sunday. In 2015 I hope to mentor a group of volunteers to take over some of these specific management tasks to free my time for additional creative endeavors for our church.

Another new aspect to our program added this year was Children's Chapel. This program was introduced during the summer program and then carried on into the fall. During the summer we followed the lectionary for Chapel, while in the fall the lessons were from the Sunday School curriculum. We are grateful to Betty Consorte who has made all our altar linens to match the church seasons and to Dom Consorte who made our altar cross. Other needs for our chapel and altar were donated by the Fergusons.

I believe there is an exciting future ahead for our church with children and families. I look forward to how the Holy Spirit will lead us into it.

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February Note

This New Year, 2015, is starting right off with some exciting things happening in our Christian Education Program at ECA. First, we changed the start time for Sunday School to coincide with the service start time of 10:30 a.m. This is better for our families & their children for two reasons. One, parents don't have to come extra early for Sunday School and then have to hang around waiting for church to begin. And two, we don't exhaust our children's attention time & energy levels before they enter our worship service. As always we are trying to better our program to meet the needs of our families and we will evaluate this plan in May to see if we should continue with this format. Something else exciting this year is our Celebrations around the World, a cultural enrichment week we have planned for this month during the San Jose Unified School District winter break. Our lineup of activities is very exciting with cooking, drama and art on the schedule for every morning and more fun choices in the afternoon. Each day we have selected a theme and culture to explore. We begin on Tuesday, February 17, with Mardi Gras. We are hoping many of our families will come back that night to enjoy pancakes with us and our youth. On Wednesday, February 18, we will take a look at life for Sarah Yar Jacobs, our little girl the Sunday School children are helping send to school in Nairobi, Africa. On Thursday that week we will celebrate Chinese New Year with dragons, red envelopes, fried rice, dumplings, oranges and more. We will finish our week with our first ever Snow Day. Surely after studying Inuit life during the day the children will be happy their lives are pretty easy just playing in the snow. Let's all pray for cold, clear weather so our snow experience will be the best.

This year to complement our Sunday programs and try to reach out to many more families in our neighborhood we are starting a Saturday evening worship experience. By the time you read this newsletter we will have tried our

first one. At this writing it is taking shape under an umbrella of lots of prayer. We plan to try this quarterly to start and create as we go following the desires of those who attend and how the Holy Spirit may move us forward. Yes, I believe exciting times are in our future.

March Note

It's the eve of our *Celebrations around the World for Kids* when this article is due. So all I really know, as of this writing, is that we are set to go with four special days for 26 children ranging in age from five to 10 years old with 15 fabulous volunteers ready to help with the day to day activities. We are planning morning activities each day to include cooking, drama/storytelling and art. In the afternoon we have some choice time of centers, an outreach project for each day and sometimes something else really special planned. That's where the children will find donut making, tai chi, and of course, our igloo and snow for Friday.

These special weeks that we have done have introduced us to wonderful new families in our neighborhood. Some are members of other churches, some are other religions, and some are looking and seeking. In our programs we try to be inviting and welcoming and hospitable to all. We try to live out and share God's love with all that cross our paths. We will continue to reach out to all these new families as we move forward to our next weeklong program in June, our VBS, June 15–19. We will also continue to be in touch with these families inviting them to our Saturday evening family services.

Sunday School continues every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. We have nine dedicated volunteers to teach and shepherd our classes. If we could have a couple more individuals to be willing to shepherd (that's to assist the main teacher) it would make the numbers of Sundays to volunteer even more manageable for those helping. Please consider if this

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is something you would like to do for our church and let me hear from you. We have delightful children in Sunday School for you to get to know.

In your faithful service,
Susie Ferguson

Spiritual Exercises

Spiritual Exercise for Lent and Easter

Please take this “prayer” from the book, *The Cup of Our Life*, with you during Lent and Easter; select a “favorite” cup and pray this prayer each day allowing your cup to be a “blessing cup.” May it inspire you to be a blessing and receive blessings from others.

Gifts to God

Tie a ribbon of remembrance around my heart, so that I can often recall those sacred places where you have made yourself known in the hidden recesses of my life.

Stir up my memory-cup, let me look deeply within it, seeing all the people and events that have led me to you. Refresh the photographs of my mind where the vivid traces of your love are etched in our relationship, and marked upon my memory.

As I gaze into my personal history unlock the storage spaces of my soul, reveal the truth of your bountiful love, fill my heart with awe and gratitude.

God of Beauty, the blessing of your loveliness astounds my being, the power of your presence enriches my every moment.

Blessed are you. Blessed are you. Amen.

Community Reading

This “Reading on Community” was shared in the past but I’d like to share again as we celebrate our 50th year! We pray we may, indeed, be a place for God’s community to be celebrated. The reading is called “Love in Action,” and it is by Parker Palmer.

Community reminds us that we are called to love, for community is a product of love in action and not of simple self-interest. Community can break our egos open to the experience of God who cannot be contained by our conceptions. Community will teach us that our grip on truth is fragile and incomplete, that we need many ears to hear the fullness of God’s word for our lives. And the disappointment of community life can be transformed by our discovery that the only dependable power for life lies beyond all human structures and relationships.

In this religious grounding lies the only real hedge against the risk of disappointment in seeking community. That risk can be borne only if it is not community one seeks, but truth, light, God. Do not commit yourself to community, but commit yourself to God; in that commitment you will find yourself drawn into community. (A Place Called Community, by Parker J. Palmer, Pendle Hill Pamphlet)

Pastor Michele

50 Years of Faith, Fellowship and Family!

This is our 50th anniversary celebration! We have been together for and accomplished a lot in 50 years, and we have much to celebrate!

Do you want to know what we have planned for the year?

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Do you want to know how you can be involved in the planning?

Do you want to know how you can help?

There will be lots of opportunities!

We have formed an Anniversary Committee, and we are looking for volunteers to join us. Our task is to find ways to celebrate our past and make this milestone year one to remember. Kelly Yamanishi has volunteered to be on this committee and is in the process of developing a logo that we will be using throughout the year to mark its significance. It is an opportunity to be visible, to shout out the fact that we are 50 years old, to remind ourselves of all we have accomplished in the past 50 years, and to brag about the impact our church activities, as well as some of our members, have had on the community. We have much to share, but we will need your help, your memories, your pictures, and your brains to help us capture it all.

We are in the planning stages now, and we would love your support and input. Our small committee currently consists of Kelly Yamanishi, Diane Hawes, and Debbie Bemis. Debbie will be setting up our first committee meeting in early March so that we can get things in motion for this very special year. If you would like to join us, please let any of the three of us know. We welcome you and would appreciate your help! Come on board and help us make this a year to remember!

Debbie Bemis

Birthdays for March, April and May

Athena Ballek	3/11
Kristie Bemis	3/17
Connie Moore	3/26
Bart Smith	4/4
Dot Allfrey	4/10

Tami Nieders	4/10
Carla Gerber	4/14
Rae Harris	4/22
Judy Martin	5/2
Mike Moore	5/4
Tyra Tenger	5/8
Kathy Kisabeth	5/8
Alison Yamanishi	5/8
Hannah Yamanishi	5/11
Jan Blake	5/13
Dennis Elliott	5/20
Barbara Alumbaugh	5/22
Tom Gerber	5/28
Bessie Hutchins	5/30

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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