

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley—United Church of Christ

Fall 2016

Pastor's Reflection



Dear members and friends,

After much prayer and discernment, I will be leaving my duties as your pastor at the end of September and beginning new work as a teacher at Christian University in Thailand (October, 2016). My last Sunday to lead worship will be on September 18 at our 9 a.m. service; it will include a Service of

Farewell led by the Northern CA/NV Conference staff.

I have treasured this time to be your part time pastor, the opportunity to experience life in northern California, and to serve with lay and clergy members of our Northern CA/NV Conference in ministry. I will miss each of you and I offer my gratitude for your support and care for me in my almost four years here in ministry with you.

I cherish your prayers for me as I return to Thailand where I served as a missionary from 1982-1986; yes, I feel my return is a renewal of my call to ministry with the Thai people. It is a joy that I have been appointed as a Global Associate with Global Ministries with this call to serve Christian University.

Again, thank you for the special times we have shared and know of my prayers for you in the transition time. Our Church Council will be working with an NCNC staff person to provide a smooth transition for days ahead with new pastoral leadership. How grateful we are for their dedication and commitment to lead you, trusting in the Spirit's guidance.

My new address in Thailand:
Rev. Dr. Ann M. Rogers Brigham
Program of International Studies
Christian University of Thailand
144 Moo 7, Donyaihom, Muang,
Nakhon Pathom 73000 Thailand

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Grace and peace as we part and give blessing to one another,

Pastor Ann Michele Rogers Brigham

PS—Please check out the Global Ministries Web site for updates on Mission Personnel—
www.globalministries.org

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!

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And if you want to dig deeper and learn more about our church, please visit us at:
www.CongregationalChurchOfAlmadenValley.org.

Moderator's Note



Like many of you, I received the announcement of Michele's resignation with mixed feelings and a variety of emotions. Certainly I am sad to see her go, especially as I reflect back on her work with us, and the reasons that we as a search committee felt so confident in recommending her to Council in the

first place. I believe that Michele has been good for us in many ways, and I will miss her leadership and guidance. I am also happy, at least for Michele, as I believe this move is one that is right for her at this time in her life, and I can sense her excitement as her new calling draws closer. I am anxious and apprehensive, selfishly, because I hadn't planned to be moderator when we were in a transition time – and this feels like a bit more than I am sometimes able to handle. At the same time, I am excited for our church, as I look forward to time together when we will reflect and brainstorm as we dream about the future of CCAV. Mostly, however, I am pensive as different scenarios run through my head when I think about our church and the possibilities that lie before us.

As soon as I learned that Michele would be leaving us in September, I contacted the NCN Conference to ask about next steps and what kind of support was available for us. I was directed to Rev. Daniel Ross-Jones and set up a time for a phone conference with him. During that phone call, I was relieved to find Daniel knowledgeable, kind, easy to talk to, and genuinely interested in offering support. Instantly, he put me at ease as he assured me that he would be there to guide us through the process.

Daniel came out and spoke to the Council at our August meeting. He was a wealth of information and left us with lots to think about. I have called a special council meeting

for us to get together once again to discuss some of the things Daniel talked about and to make some decisions about our next steps. It is my intention to keep the congregation informed when there are things to report. If you want to specifically be involved, I welcome your presence and your input. We are in this together, and I look forward to much discussion and discernment as we move through the process of searching for our next pastor.

Happiness, sadness, anxiety, excitement, nervousness, overwhelm, anticipation --- all are things that I am feeling related to Michele's leaving. Mostly, I know, this is an opportunity for us – and I am excited about the possibilities as I think about our future. I hope you will join me and take an active part in our next steps. We will need each of you – your thoughts and ideas, your involvement and help, your commitment to the process.... This is our church. We have an opportunity to dream, brainstorm, and create together what it is we want our church to become and how it is we want to serve God here in our little corner of the world. What an exciting prospect! I hope you will take an active part in helping us plan for the future of the Congregational Church of Almaden Valley!

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

Debbie Bemis

We Welcome Our New Member!

Kuang-Lei Tsao

On June 26, 2016, in our Sunday Service of Worship, we welcomed Kuang to our church family. Here is what he shared so we may get to know him better.

Hi my name is Kuang-lei Tsao and I am honored to be joining the CCAV! I think many of you know me and have heard a bit of my story, but for those who don't, here is a brief synopsis:

I was born in Taiwan and moved here to the U.S. when I was a one-year-old. I have been in California for most of

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my life and moved to San Jose in the 1980's. I am currently working for the Santa Clara County Office of Education as a paraeducator. I was married to my wonderful wife last December. She is still in Singapore now waiting for her immigration visa so she can come to the U.S. I found my faith in Jesus while in Oman. It is quite interesting that I would discover Christianity in a Muslim country. But then again, it doesn't really matter where you are when you hear the calling of God. There, I attended the Protestant Church of Oman along with my wife and began my spiritual journey into Christianity. That is just a little bit about who I am. If you want to know more, just ask! I would love to chat with every member here. I would especially like to thank everyone who welcomed me into your congregation. Let us all share in the love that is Jesus Christ!

NCNC Annual Gathering 2016

I was honored to be our delegate to this year's Northern California Nevada Conference Annual Gathering at Sonoma State University from June 19–26. This was my first year attending but it was such a fruitful experience I hope I will go again.

Our theme was "Have You Seen Your Neighbor?" It was centered on 1 John 4:7-21 that speaks much to God's love for us which we are also to mimic in our relationship to others. All of the speakers, workshops, worship music and sermons were centered on this common theme.

Our keynote speaker, Rev. Julian DeShazier of University Church in Chicago, expressed it best when he called us to be hell RAZERS saying that we need to walk with our neighbors through their hard times and raze to the ground the hardships that they are going through, not just stand idly by while they suffer. Other worship speakers challenged us not to wait for the world to come to us but to go walk with the world and learn from them in ways only they can teach us, expand our minds and hearts by being where they are, knowing what they know, and understanding better how they live.

One of my favorite parts was the book in Common Session. We were offered four books—to choose from, read and discuss—regarding what it means to be other or different or apart in a world of status, privilege, class, money and all those things many of us take for granted. The book I read was called A Lesson in Dying by Ernest J. Gaines, and I highly recommend it.

We had our business meetings around this same topic as well as the regular business of budgets and installation of officers. But two of the most important things we did were resolutions we discussed and voted on; namely, the Immigration Welcoming Congregations and Gun Violence and Proliferation Resolutions. The first was about becoming more welcoming to immigrants, migrants and refugees. We also included language to strengthen our resolve to offer sanctuary. The second was written in the heat of Orlando and upcoming votes by congress regarding the violence created when guns are involved and the fact that this is happening with increasing regularity because of access and types of weapons available. It called on the National Setting and Congress to take action and a tougher stance to stop the violence and tighten the accessibility. Both passed.

We also met in our Association groups. This gave folks an opportunity to meet and discuss the more "local" business of churches in each region of the conference, touch base and get to know new faces as well as reconnect with familiar ones.

Mary Susan Gast was named Conference Minister Emerita. She had been the Conference Minister from 1997–2011. We wanted to bless her for all she had given in her love and service to us.

Our times of worship and entertainment couldn't have been more wonderful. They gave us a chance to laugh and dance, sing and pray, cry and hold on to each other. We who came not knowing each other became neighbors as we shared this wonderful time together. It gave us a taste

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of what seeing our neighbors could be like in the world if we would but try to live differently in their regard.

I hope I can go again next year and that you'll join me. The experience is well worth the effort.

God's peace,
Debra Newcomb
CCAVUCC Delegate

Life Skills Class

Report from the Day Room

Now into our second year, our Life Skills Class continues to evolve. We are having good success with our LS program. We are also proud to work in an organization with an (advertised) 82% success rate. (82% of clients who complete the program of LifeMoves have gained permanent housing and become self sufficient.) I do not know what that number is for Julian Street alone, but I know it will probably be lower as our clients are special because they usually have a mental health disorder. For many, this means they are unable to work but as they are eligible for SSDI or SSI, will still become self-sufficient.

Deputy Program Director Colleen Budenholzer is no longer at JSI. Colleen was promoted to Program Director of First Step for Families (FSF) in San Mateo. Patti) FSF is a shelter for homeless families that offers 24 emergency units and 15 transitional units for families. This has been quite a shift for her, as she has spent many years at JSI and is learning about working with families very quickly!

This quarter we have added three terrific instructors who came to us from an ad we placed in "Nextdoor" titled "Do you want to help save the world?" followed by details. We have had six very uniquely qualified people volunteer.

Leslie Emma—a recent Masters graduate in Public Health from the University of Virginia and Public Health Advisor for Chevron—has done a remarkable job and is turning some of our classes upside down in a good way. Just as

Saleem once proclaimed that answering the "tell me about yourself" question in an interview was a key to teach, and caused big changes; Leslie presented a dynamic session on Body Language in an Interview which will be incorporated. Kevin Williams (Lt. Col. USA ret.) was a helicopter pilot in Afghanistan for several tours and provides up-to-date information about how Silicon Valley hires people. He has worked for a few years here at a couple of companies. Kevin has also helped one of our Army veteran clients with getting her pending discharge upgraded to "Honorable" from "General" because it greatly affects getting a job. This client had a medical issue which became the basis of the Army discharging her. (I have been following how the military is finally changing the way they treat mentally afflicted personnel.) When conduct was involved, resolving (and punishing) the conduct issue was the top item, followed by treatment for the mental health issue. Those are being flipped now, and in cases where the conduct issue is a direct result of the mental health issue—such as attempting suicide in a PTSD event—there will be some relief. We suspect the Army wants to turn a mental issue into a conduct problem as opposed to a medical problem. Identifying it as a pre-existing conduct problem conveniently serves to block future VA medical claims for PTSD. Kevin is Leslie's Dad, and they enjoy teaching as a team.

The third new instructor is Alie Saad, CEO of Ephyra Systems (Phd, former Professor, U of Manchester England). Alie travels a lot to Africa (born in Sierra Leone) and China but wants to teach all that he can. Alie is a very warm person who speaks with gravitas, easily commanding attention of the class.

Mike Moore

Ongoing Activities

Quest Group: The Quest ladies group will resume meeting in the choir room on Wednesday, September 7, at 9:30 a.m. We have been reading *Credo* by William Sloane Coffin. Know that you are welcome. For questions please contact Phyllis Chai (408-226-7150).

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Musical Notes

Once more we have had an outstanding summer of Special Music. While our Shalom Choir has its well deserved break during these summer months, members and friends of our congregation have provided us with most enjoyable music replacing our choir anthems.

Here is a list of those who have and will provide us with very special music this summer:

- Hi-Dong Chai singing with his beautiful baritone voice, accompanied by his talented wife Phyllis on piano.
- Lee Krahenbul, son of Charles and Janice, singing and playing on his guitar a very special and memorable song.
- Debbie Bemis on the flute and John Hawes with his guitar playing their July 4th medley.
- Randall and Debra Newcomb singing a wonderful duet as he accompanied on his guitar.
- Bart and Karen Smith singing a cappella a beautiful duet together.
- Dennis Elliott and Judy Martin singing a lovely duet accompanied by Debbie Bemis on the flute and Maria Brodsky on the piano.
- Kelly, Alison and Hannah Yamanishi singing together, accompanied by Phyllis Chai on piano.
- John Hawes singing and accompanying himself with his guitar.

The Folk Choir continues to play the second Sunday of each month. Their joy in playing is reflected by the response of the congregation. There are three guitars: Carolyn Crowley, Karen Smith and John Hawes; Debbie Bemis with her flute; Rae Harris on the keyboard; Jan Blake playing the tambourine; and Bart Smith keeping the beat with his various percussion instruments. We especially enjoy the young people who play and add to the Folk Choir sound: Hannah Yamanishi with her violin, Sofia Hawes on her bass, and Wyatt Hawes playing the cello. Also this summer we have enjoyed unbelievably beautiful music on the harp from Ruthanne Martinez.

And, of course, we cannot forget to include the moving, uplifting concert level music played by Maria Brodsky on the piano and organ.

Thanks to all who participate in this wonderful Special Music tradition we have every summer.

Diane Hawes

Outreach

The meeting previously scheduled for Sunday, September 18, has been cancelled. Communication will be forthcoming regarding the future connection of the committee.

Mission Programs

Shelter Feeding: Our monthly shelter feedings continue on the third Tuesday at Julian St. Inn (JSI) and Georgia Travis House (formerly called Commercial St. Inn (CSI)). The residents and staff welcome the banana jell-0 which we provide, and we're grateful for Betty Benson and the volunteers who prepare that on the Sunday prior to the "feeding". Too, without the volunteers who drive/serve the meals, we could not offer this needed service. Grateful thanks to everyone who serves! Please contact Phyllis Chai, 408-226-7150 if you're able/willing to help.

Second Harvest Food Bank: Thank you to all who continue to bring non-perishable food items (in non-breakable containers) for the Second Harvest Food Bank bin in our downstairs hallway near the Choir Room. We typically have a picnic basket by our altar on Communion Sunday for donations. For questions concerning donations of checks please contact Phyllis Chai (408-226-7150).

Neighbors in Need (NIN): On Sunday, October 2—World Communion Sunday—our annual Neighbors in Need (NIN) offering will be received. It is a special mission offering that supports the ministries of justice and compassion throughout the U.S. One-third of the NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's

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Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. The 2016 theme for NIN is “This We Believe” and connects the issue of child hunger to the work that UCC congregations are doing to serve their community and address injustice.

Checks may be made out to: CCAV,UCC with NIN in the memo section.

Beneficio Coffee: Both of our Joint Venture congregations continue to serve Beneficio (More Than Fair Trade) Coffee. A 12-oz. bag of beans (ground or not, as preferred) sells for \$10.50. To learn more about the Beneficio mission or to purchase the coffee please contact Phyllis Chai (408-226-7150), and know that you will be helping the small-scale farmers and their families in Costa Rica. If you wish to make a donation for coffee on Sundays, please place it in the cup with the brochure, where the coffee is served.

Phyllis Chai

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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