

# KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley—United Church of Christ

Spring 2016

## Pastor's Reflection



Dear members and friends,

At our Joint Venture Ash Wednesday Service on February 10, I was pleased to meet a new person in our community who came to the service. She was very happy to find us and to join with us to mark the beginning of the Lenten season in our church life.

As I talked with this young woman, she was telling me about a recent trip to nearby Pinnacles National Park. She said with the rain, it was green, verdant, and full of life. The waterfalls were spectacular and the weather was cool and pleasant for hiking. As she talked, it made me want to go back! When I visited Pinnacles National Park last summer, it was very hot and dry, and I almost got lost on the trails. I did not take a flashlight and found that the caves were dark and hard to maneuver without a light. It was a beautiful, intriguing park even in the summer heat, but I don't think I was well prepared for the visit.

Sometimes in the life of the church, *preparation is key* for the experience of the seasons of the church year. From Epiphany we move to Lent and then to Easter. To fully appreciate Easter, we know the importance of a Lenten journey, a walk with Jesus through days of his suffering and his joys and finally his death and his resurrection. The joy of Easter morning is felt deeply when we have made preparations to be in a "listening to God space."

Lent is a time for the "checkup" on our prayer life and our commitment to spiritual practices that keep us healthy and centered in God's presence. My prayer is that each one of us may find sacred moments to nurture the

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spiritual life and know the movements of the Spirit to bless us. My hope is that we, as the gathered body of Christ, may find refreshment and renewal in God's Spirit because we "are" sharing our stories, our pictures, and our passions for living.

Thank you for being faithful to our church and the opportunities we have for worship, service and sharing community life. Thank you for your generous gifts to support my ministry as your pastor and for gifts to support the life we share with our Joint Venture partner, the Episcopal Church in Almaden.

Thank you for your gifts to sustain the programs of outreach and care through regular and special offerings and for covenanting to be identified with our denomination, The United Church of Christ. Thank you to all of you who sing, pray, serve, teach and listen! Lastly, I want to offer my gratitude to our moderator, Debbie Bemis, and all those who serve in leadership of our Church Council as well as those who serve in leadership of our Joint Venture Board.

After the season of Easter, we'll enter the season of Pentecost (May 15 is Pentecost Sunday this year). Our hearts will be full as we prepare for two of our youth to be confirmed. This celebration will give us opportunity to

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surround our youth with hands of blessing for their spiritual journeys and for us to remember our commitments to be faithful to the Christian life.

There are wonderful things ahead for our church—let's prepare ourselves to be fully alive in the Spirit and fully engaged as Easter people!

Grace and peace ,  
Rev. Ann Michele Rogers Brigham, Pastor

## Prayers for the Easter Season

Take these prayers with you for the seasons of Lent, Easter and Pentecost!

### *Lenten Prayer—Wrestling with Darkness* (by Emma Peterson)

Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

In a tumult of darkness I wrestle with bitter thoughts that blind me to reason

*then you break through....*

streaming peace, yielding rest

I am released....

Why then so often do I embrace the turmoil of untruth instead of living in the liberty of shalom?

### *Easter Prayer for Peace and Reconciliation*

Persistent God, gather us around the common table, where the poor are included, the peacemakers are renewed, and the faithful sent to weave songs of peace and deeds of justice. Holy God, turn our face toward kindness, fill our hearts with your compassion, and guide our feet along the paths of peace. For you, Risen One, bring the dawn after the darkest hour and you, the Freeing One, desire liberation for all the oppressed. Work your will and your way in and through us that we may be your Easter people in word and deed. Amen.

### *Pentecost Reflection—A Poem by Mary Oliver "Spring"*

Faith is the instructor. We need no other.  
Guess what I am, he says in his incomparably lovely young man voice. Because I love the world I think of grass,  
I think of leaves and the bold sound, I think of the rushes in the black marshes just coming back from under the pure white  
and now finally melting stubs of snow. Whatever we know or don't know  
leads us to say: Teacher, what do you mean?  
But faith is till there, and silent.  
Then he who owns the incomparable voice suddenly flows upward  
and out of the room and I follow, obedient and happy.  
Of course I am thinking the Lord was once young and will never in fact be old  
And who else could this be, who goes off down the green path,  
carrying sandals, and singing?

Pastor Michele

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

## Moderator's Note



Today is a beautiful day! Yesterday was one as well, although it started a bit dark and dreary, trying to decide if it wanted to rain or not. It was representative of how I started the day....the day of the church council retreat. It had been a tough week for me, and my mind was on other things. I hadn't had the time to

prepare for the retreat as I had intended to do, and I was simply not feeling inspired. Yet I was supposed to be the leader! I was a bit stressed that morning as I drove to Carolyn Crowley's house with my radio off so that I could be in silence for the short drive. During the check-in at the retreat that morning, I confessed that I was preoccupied, slightly unprepared, and feeling out of my element. But as Michele led us in meditation, I was able to relax, get myself out of my current space, find my center, and be present for the meeting. Michele's meditation took us from our own inward spiritual journey to the outward journey—the heart of God in the world—and got us thinking and talking about how that “heart of God” looked and felt for each of us. This led nicely into our afternoon session of brainstorming and setting some goals for things we wanted to accomplish this year as a church. I needn't have worried that morning, because the retreat went well. I left feeling refreshed, spiritually fed, and energized. I got the shot in the arm I needed from Michele and the other council members in the room. We were all throwing out ideas during our brainstorming session, enthusiastically talking about the future of our church and some things we wanted to accomplish together. I was no longer feeling the burden of being the leader but feeling energized by those around me, all of whom were sharing the responsibility of church

leadership. I think we all felt motivated and excited about the possibilities when we left yesterday afternoon!

Last year was our 50th anniversary year, and I didn't worry too much about goals, because for me, they all centered around that significant year for us. They were clear to me. When it came to this year, however, I really wanted us to have a focus. This church is important to me, as it is to all of you, but I am not always clear on where we are heading. Setting goals will help to clarify that for me. We decided to start small, although the council discussion yesterday was including some pretty lofty ideas with lots of enthusiasm, and we have chosen to not forget about those long-term goals either. We will continue to talk about the long-term goals as the year progresses, in an effort not to forget the big picture and to see how close we can come to making these goals a reality in the future. For the short term, however, the council has chosen to focus on five very specific things this year. I have outlined our goals below. I hope you will choose to participate in helping to make these goals become a reality. This is your church, as much as it is mine, and we all have a responsibility to our church family and the wider world beyond. Let's work together to nourish ourselves so that we can spread the joy and love we have to the outside world. You have elected a great council for 2016, and I am looking forward to our work together this year!

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

Debbie Bemis

## Thank You!

### *Handbell Choir*

We continue to be grateful to Ruthanne Adams Martinez for being our Joint Venture Handbell Choir Director and our Joint Venture Church Office Administrator. Ruthanne can help you with your questions ranging from reserving

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church space or how to be reimbursed for a church related expense. She prepares the prayer request clip boards each week and posts our matrix help schedule on the CCAV website. Ruthanne prints our bulletin each week and preps/sends the mid-week newsletter every Wednesday. These are just a few of the duties she performs. She is a joy to work with as a JV staff member and we appreciate her dedication to both churches! A "shout out" of gratitude to Ruthanne and a thanks be to God for the many gifts she shares with us!

Pastor Michelle



## *Gifts of Gratitude*

- Phyllis and Hi Dong Chai, Susanne and Arnold Moore, and the Almaden Korean Methodist Church for donating money to buy a new lawn mower.
- Dave Byers for mowing the tree yard, cleaning up leaves, and other projects.
- Jerry Ferguson and Pat McGarvin for weeding and trimming.
- Todd Lukanc for troubleshooting and fixing the sanctuary furnace problem.
- Dennis Widman for taking such good care of the roses.
- Robin Williams for helping get the leaky outside faucet fixed.

John McPherson

## **Calendar**

All our Sunday Worship services begin at 9:00 a.m.

### *Holy Week Services*

- March 20 Palm Sunday—9 a.m. Join the palm procession and mark the beginning of Holy Week .
- March 24 Maundy Thursday Service—Look for more information regarding our Joint Venture Evening Worship.
- March 25 Good Friday—You are welcome to join the ECA for their Good Friday Worship Services. Our Joint Venture Service will be at 12 noon on Good Friday.
- March 27 Easter Sunday—9 a.m. Please bring a flower for the cross that is raised at the beginning of worship. It is a day to recognize birthdays/anniversaries and other celebrations in worship and at our coffee hour with a community “birthday cake”—come and light a candle for you or someone special!

### *Ongoing*

- **CCAV Book Study:** This book study is on the first Sunday of the month after Worship/Coffee hour with Pastor Michele leading the discussion. All are welcome—no pre-read required.
- **Quest Group:** The ladies Quest group continues to read, if slowly, and discuss *Credo*, a thought provoking book, by Rev. William Sloane Coffin. The group meets in the choir room on Wednesdays from 9:30 a.m.–11:00 a.m. Please know that you are welcome to join, and do not need a book to participate. For questions, please contact Phyllis Chai (408-226-7150). The group does not meet during the summer months. The last meeting will be on June 15. The group resumes on September 7.

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## Events

**Spring Renewal and Women's Retreat Day:** On Saturday, March 12, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. there will be a Spring Renewal Women's Retreat, hosted by women of the Disciples of Christ at the First Congregational Church in San Jose. The cost, including lunch, is \$25. Please speak to Phyllis Chai if you are interested, wish to car pool, or have questions.

## Outreach

### Mission Programs

**Next Outreach Missions Meeting:** The next Outreach Missions Meeting is scheduled for Sunday, May 22, at 10:30 a.m. in the Choir Room. Please know that you are invited to attend.

**Second Harvest Food Bank:** Thank you to all who continue to bring non-perishable items (in non-breakable containers); flip-tops are especially appreciated. For questions concerning donations please contact Phyllis Chai (408-226-7150). There is never not a need for our offerings, and with the Easter holiday approaching, there is expected to be even more requests for food.

**Shelter Feeding:** Our congregation continues to serve the evening meal at Julian St. Inn (JSI) and Commercial St. Inn (CSI) on the third Tuesday each month. The non-profit Loaves and Fishes prepares the meal, and we take milk and banana Jell-O to each shelter. Volunteers, led by Betty Benson, prepare the Jell-O in the J.V. kitchen, after our church service, on the Sunday before the third Tuesday; other faithful helpers in this effort are usually Harriet Yamada, Toh-Bee Syn, and Joan Okumura. Hannah Yamanishi's shopping for bananas and milk has also been much appreciated. Too, the loyal drivers and servers (Often, of late, Laura Hall, John Hawes, and Dennis Elliott) are indispensable.

**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 in Costa Rica and their families.

### CROP Walk

The acronym stands for: "Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty." For many years our congregation has supported the mission of CROP under the "umbrella" of Church World Service, and Kathy Kisabeth faithfully headed up our giving. In the last few years we've been grateful for Kathryn McAbee's setting up a donation website for our team. This year the South Bay Crop Hunger Walk in San Jose will be on Sunday April 24. To walk and/or donate, please contact Phyllis Chai (408-226-7150).

**LifeMoves—Formerly InnVision:** On January 26—after a year-long planning and development process funded by a private grant—InnVision assumed the new name LifeMoves. The new identity highlights the transformative nature of the successful model. The new brand improves and expands the ability to focus on the service that is provided to our community. For more information please visit the new website: [www.lifemoves.org](http://www.lifemoves.org).

**"New" Care Ministry:** Many from our church have expressed a new or continued interest in doing the ministry of care in our congregation. It was discussed and decided to make it a more formalized opportunity through a new care ministry which I have been asked to coordinate. As I look at what's been done in the past and what people are willing to do, I see our continued desire to be a caring church. My vision is to continue and perhaps expand that heart of care. I will be contacting by email or phone those who expressed an interest to find a time, probably after church on a Sunday, when we can meet and discuss what's been done in the past and how, what we envision ourselves able to do now and in the future. Hopefully this will give more visibility to care at CCAV and provide the

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opportunity to do one of the things we do best: CARE. Look for a date in the Sunday bulletin. I look forward to seeing soon everyone who's interested that we may vision care together.

## *Outreach Events*

**Interfaith Community Blood Drive:** On Saturday, March 5, there will be an interfaith blood drive at the nearby Latter Day Saints church. Charley Coy is again the coordinator of the volunteers, and welcomes those who are able to either donate blood, snacks, or their time to help with registration or at the canteen. Look for related posters at church or contact Phyllis Chai for more information (408-226-7150).

**A Report from the Day Room:** We continue to be inspired and amazed by our students at JSI (now called LifeMoves formerly *InnVision Shelter Network*). *The name change acknowledges the role we have always had. We are here to change lives, not to be just a shelter. Clients are expected to participate and accept responsibility for their part in this life changing experience.*

We meet in the Day Room at Julian Street Shelter each Monday. Since the last note I wrote, we had a staff Appreciation Day on Friday, Dec. 11. It was a great time with at least half the staff there. We provided two cakes at the meeting, which were well received. As this was a regular staff meeting, Patty Dolan conducted an art therapy session which was pretty interesting. We had made up 29 individually framed inspirational quotations. (See last photo) and allowed each Staff person to choose their own. The recognition coffee came out of a discussion Colleen, Connie, and I had back in October discussing staff losses and morale. We discussed Connie and my thoughts that it was one of the noblest jobs we could imagine. Colleen answered back: "they need to hear that from someone else besides us". I gave a brief introductory talk on behalf of the community, and mentioned that Bono (of U2 fame) once said in a speech that "God is with the homeless, and

if you are with them, you are with him." Then Kathy Burden gave a very powerful talk about her son, who had been addicted and had lived there for a while, and how Geronimo (a current case worker there with us) had saved his life, and had convinced Kathy she had to be prepared for a relapse (which inevitably came) and be ready to deal with it positively (she was). Her son is now entering college and is doing well.



*Kathy Burden*



*JSI Staff Art Therapy*

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We are always excited with success of any of our clients. It is thrilling when they let us know of their successes. One client a couple of months ago was thrilled because he was cooking now at Bass Pro and loved it. Several others have let us know when they get permanent residence somewhere. One of our students, a heck of a fine young, got a great job with B of A as an IT manager. We currently have an MIT grad in our class who is aspiring to enter Stanford for an MS degree.

We recently had a lady who was employed full time by Services by Medallion. She was sick and couldn't work for a week. We have no idea why she was at JSI for the week (we never ask). She stood up one day and said she had a background" (prison time), and she had a handicap (seizures) so she had been unemployable. She got her health under control and got a job with Services by Medallion. The phone number was collected by many. Irene had said she could not stand to be on General Assistance.



The Julian Street Support Committee meets monthly and determines ways we can help with needs of the Staff. Staff, many of whom hold down two jobs are often overwhelmed by daily crises, lack of funding for needed supplies (such as razors or peanut butter and jelly for lunches). Our Support Committee tries to fill those gaps, which are frequently urgent and need fast response. Our

church has responded with emergency needs for new coats (we donated nearly 30 brand new overcoats) and we provide disposable razors for job interviewers (and anyone else!)

Things like the following email Connie and I recently received from a student/client give us both a great lift when we get them:

*"just wanted to say "hi" and thanks for coming to group so religiously. I got a chance to rent a room and I'm going for it. It is a breath of fresh air to say the least. Well just wanted to say "hello" and I will be putting the concepts to use as I look for a job in the coming few weeks. thanks again,*

*sincerely,  
eloh d. leMoorebach"*

This was later followed by:

*"im glad you guys enjoyed me because we enjoy having you there. it gives us a sense of hope. will keep in touch.*

*thanks,  
eloh"*

Mike Moore

## *Special Offerings*

**One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS):** This year our One Great Hour of Sharing offering will be dedicated on Sunday March 6. This is the Lenten offering of the UCC that supports disaster, refugee, and development actions.

**Strengthen the Church:** Our annual Strengthen the Church offering will be dedicated on Pentecost, May 22. The offering supports church growth, pastoral and lay leadership development, and youth and young adult ministries within conferences.

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## CCAV Council Retreat

The Council Retreat was on Saturday, February 13. The full report is at the end of this newsletter.

## 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 15<sup>th</sup> of the month to [kalos@ccavucc.org](mailto:kalos@ccavucc.org). *Kalos* editors are Sue Scaff, Kathryn McAbee and Risa Feely.

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## CCAV Council Retreat, February 2016

The Council Retreat was on Saturday, February 13, and it was an enthusiastic, productive day of meditation, brainstorming, goal-setting, chatting, and eating! You have a wonderful council for 2016, and I am pleased to be working with each of them. Your 2016 CCAV Council consists of:

- **Debbie Bemis**, Moderator (Year 2)
- **David Hough**, Recorder (Year 2)
- **Laura Hall**, Treasurer (Year 1)
- **Carolyn Crowley**, Member-at-Large (Year 2)
- **Kelly Yamanishi**, Member-at-Large (Year 2)
- **Diane Hawes**, Historian (Year 3)
- **Dave Harris**, Member-at-Large (Year 1)
- **Debra Newcomb**, JV Board representative (Year 1)
- **Michele Rogers-Brigham**, Pastor

We spent the retreat at the lovely home of Carolyn and Dave Crowley, where we watched squirrels run and chase each other up and down trees and across fences throughout our meeting. It really was a beautiful day!

At this retreat we chose five specific goals on which to focus this year. These goals are (in no particular order of importance):

1. ***To strengthen our bonds with each other by offering more fellowship and discussion opportunities during our Fellowship hour after church.*** To that end, we have established a monthly brunch potluck on Folk Sundays (second Sunday of each month) when we will ask people to bring a simple dish to share so that we can all enjoy brunch and discussion together. In addition, we have already established the fourth Sunday of each month as a birthday celebration during worship service, but

we will be extending that to the Fellowship hour by asking the Coffee Hosts to provide a simple birthday cake for everyone to enjoy in celebration of those who have a birthday that month

2. ***To strengthen our pride in our church by making ourselves more visible within our own church walls.*** To that end, we plan to brighten up our own church walls and bulletin boards with flyers of CCAV activities, slogans, posters, etc. We want people to look around and take notice of CCAV just as much as they take notice of ECA. We have much to be proud of, and we want to share that pride within our own building!
3. ***To make ourselves more visible to the community around us.*** To that end, we plan to increase our advertising of our church and the activities we have available for others through our website, our Facebook page, Next Door, and other inexpensive advertising possibilities that make themselves available.
4. ***To strengthen the caring ministry within our church.*** To that end, we have formally established a Caring Ministry, under the guidance of Pastor Michele and Rev. Debra Newcomb, who will work together with members of our congregation to provide caring ministry services to those in need.
5. ***To strengthen our bonds with our sister church, ECA.*** To that end, we will set up two meetings a year with both Council and Vestry in attendance to discuss issues of importance between our churches together. In addition, we will continue with quarterly leadership meetings between both churches, which include both pastors, the CCAV moderator, and the ECA senior warden. And finally, we would like to explore the possibility of hosting one fellowship opportunity in conjunction with ECA before the end of the year.

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We also discussed, and will continue to discuss, the possibility of connecting with other UCC churches in the area to see if it would be feasible to do some joint activities together.

In addition, in the long run, we are interested in looking into how to bring more people into our beautiful facility in an effort to be a blessing to the community. This could take many forms, and many ideas were thrown around. We will continue the discussion through the year to see how feasible it will be to take on such an undertaking. But we all agreed that in the long run, we want to have a long-term goal of being a blessing to our community and figuring out some ways to do that.

We hope you are as excited about our goals as we are, and that you will take an active role in helping us to realize them! If you have other ideas for us to consider, please consider coming to a council meeting.

It is my intention to add to the agenda each month a check in of our goals – just to keep us on track – and to keep us talking about other ways to be a blessing to ourselves and to our community. We are open to any and all ideas, and your help is greatly appreciated! Please talk to any of the council members above if you have comments (preferably positive and constructive ones!) to share.

Debbie Bemis

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