

# KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley—United Church of Christ

Winter 2017

## Meet our Interim Pastor

*Rev. Dr. Martha "Marty" Williams*



Rev. Marty grew up in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, and you will still hear a little bit of Texas twang. She received her BA from Texas Christian University and moved to southern CA and attended the School of Theology at Claremont, receiving her Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees.

Rev. Marty has served 38 years in ministry. She was licensed in 1978 and or-

dained in 1983 by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She has a deep love and passion for the local church and her ministry reflects this. She has served local congregations in Southern California and Northern California and has many years' experience in regional and conference ministry. Rev. Marty delights in working with congregational transformation, transition, and equipping the church for the "next faithful thing".

Rev. Marty recently concluded her service as Interim Transitional Pastor at Lafayette Christian Church in Lafayette, CA. She served as an Associate Conference Minister in the Northern California-Nevada Conference for 5 years and was the Regional Minister-Vice President for the Christian Church (DOC) in Northern California-Nevada for 13 years. Rev. Marty has a strong commitment to the UCC/DOC partnership as well as ecumenical and interfaith ministries.

In her spare time, you will find Rev. Marty and spouse Sue Goddard hiking, camping, and backpacking in the Sierras. They enjoy cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter. Good books are her constant joy. She

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enjoys cooking, playing bocce occasionally, and walking the dogs. Lulu, the beagle, and April, the Cairn/Chihuahua mix, keep Rev. Marty and Sue entertained and walking every day.

### Welcome Visitor!

Whether you're visiting with us because you're looking for a church, or accompanying a friend or family member, we bid you a hearty welcome!

We welcome all who would join us on our journey—for a day, a week or a lifetime—to discover who we are now and who we can become on this road of faith and inquiry.

We embrace our diversity of thought and scriptural understanding. We respect and honor all who seek to be in covenant with us as we share in the joys and responsibilities of our church family.

We are a warm and friendly bunch, but we're not perfect! So, if in our excitement to greet our church family members, we forget our manners, please talk to us, introduce yourself and ask us lots of questions! And if you want to dig deeper and learn more about our church, please visit us at: [www.CongregationalChurchOfAlmadenValley.org](http://www.CongregationalChurchOfAlmadenValley.org).

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## Moderator's Note



As I think back on this year in the life of our church, I am struck by how blessed I am to be a part of this very special family. The year for me personally has been a tough one. Things at school have been and continue to be difficult and stressful, and there seems to be no end to the chaos I experience there every day in spite of the fact that I

love what I do. My family has experienced numerous traumas this year, which have caused much anxiety and sadness for Jan and me as we struggle to find ways to support those we love in their difficulties while dealing with our own grief. I had my own health scare this year, which thankfully ended up to be OK, but which came at a time when things for me were not going well. And I have worked hard to try to keep things moving here at church in the absence of a pastor and without her care when I needed it most as I was experiencing my own personal difficulties.

I have to admit that there were Tuesdays when I thought about cancelling a council meeting or forgoing a JV meeting....and Wednesdays when I just didn't think I could manage going to choir.....and Sundays when I wanted nothing more than to go for a long hike rather than get dressed, put on a smile, and come to church. But come I did—and I never once regretted it.

Council meetings energized me with the dedicated group of people who could always find humor as we discussed the realities of our dwindling budget and aging congregation. JV meetings inspired me, as members from both churches discussed matters of importance together with a genuine concern and love for each other in a constant spirit of respect and cooperation. Choir rehearsals always put

a smile on my face and sent me home singing the anthems we had just been practicing for days to come. And Sundays brought me a sense of peace to start my week – and a constant reminder of the love and caring that is abundant in the people who come here each week. Although I chose not to discuss my own struggles much of the time, I felt supported and content among you as I participated in activities and events each week. I felt needed and loved here, and it brought me comfort and strength to face the tough times in my week ahead.

I was sorry to see Pastor Michele leave us, but I recognized that the calling for her to be a missionary was strong, and her time with us had come to an end. She left us in a good place, I think, and I began to see the opportunities before us. As we experienced different perspectives from different worship leaders after Michele left, I found a renewed sense of meaning at church, especially as we came together to support each other in order to keep our little church moving forward. Then as we read different profiles and talked with interim candidates, I began to get excited about the possibilities before us. I was thrilled when Rev. Marty, with her wealth of experience and skills, accepted the call to be our interim pastor. I look forward to our work with her as she helps us look at our church with fresh eyes, discern what it is we want here in our church community, and dream about what our future can be.

We are blessed with so much here in our little church, not the least of which is the caring and love we have for each other and our community. With that, we can accomplish anything together. Thank you for being a part of my church family.

Blessings and joy to you this holiday season and into the new year.

Debbie Bemis

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## Stewardship Moment

This is the fourth year in a row that I have stood up here on this very Sunday—the week before Stewardship Sunday when the pledges are turned in and blessed. Public speaking is NOT my forte, and I am not quite sure how or why I end up doing this each year. It started as something that was important to Pastor Michele. In the weeks leading up to Stewardship Sunday her first year with us, she wanted people from the congregation to take a moment to talk about why this church was important to them, and somehow in her gentle and persuasive way, she talked me into it.

That first year, I talked about my spiritual journey and the reasons I chose *not* to leave this church three separate times when I did not feel that CCAV was providing me what I needed. I described why I chose to stay each time, which ultimately led to my shift in thought—the shift from my expectation that the church should be providing for my needs, to my epiphany that I needed to provide for the needs of the church in order to feed my spiritual soul.

The second year, I actually wanted to speak again because it was important to me to expand on my thoughts. That year I talked about the blessings we already had in this little church, most importantly the love and caring we have for each other. I made it clear that as the newly elected Moderator, it was important to me for us to realize our own gifts and what we could offer to our little church—rather than to worry about adding to our membership. In my view, if we are happy with who we are and continue to feed our own spiritual souls, we will continue to thrive—at least for each other.

Last year, we had just finished our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, and when Michele once again approached me, I decided it was important to address the natural feeling of “let down” after that incredible high—especially because I was the one who was feeling it. As the moderator, it was important to me to address it publicly—and once again reiterate that our church is what we make it. We can be

discouraged about our lack of membership and become apathetic about how we function—or we can share the gifts we have to give with each other and the community around us, and feed our spiritual souls with enthusiasm and joy.

That brings us to this year.—Year Four. Pastor Michele is no longer with us. She didn’t put me up to it this year. But somehow I felt a calling to stand before you once again—partly because I feel a responsibility as Moderator, but more importantly, because I am simply a member of this beloved congregation.

This year I want to talk about *why* we are still together. Every year we face a significant deficit in our budget, and we always find ourselves asking for people to prayerfully consider whether or not they can dig a little deeper. We have cut the budget to bare bones at this point, cutting out Christian Ed and nursery care, yet we all want to fill our pews with families who have children and youth. We cannot afford a full time pastor, yet none of us is happy with only being able to have a part time person among us. We have been forced to cut our contribution to JV, which is not something any of us wants to do given how important that unique and very special relationship is. *And* we don’t have enough people to do all of the work necessary to keep the church together.... Yet somehow we are managing to do just that. *Why is that?*

I would venture to say, once again, that it isn’t about growing the church. It isn’t about getting more money (although that would be nice!) or about having enough people to be on Council and JV (another dream of mine) or even having new voices in the choir or people to help out at shelter feedings or on various committees. It is about what we can—and do—offer to each other that keeps us alive. It is about our caring and commitment to our church family, no matter how small it is. It is about people stepping up when they really don’t want to, just because there is a need they are able to fill.

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The Stewardship theme this year is “Go and do the same” from the Gospel of Luke. It is a powerful reminder of our commitment to be genuine followers of the gospel. I would submit that it is also a reminder of what we do for each other. We all are capable of stepping up—and we all do it when we are able. Perhaps you are able to be on council or JV this year – or on one of the committees we have established—or perhaps you are in a place where you can give more financially—or maybe you want to volunteer to establish something new, or provide a service to others, or plan a fellowship activity for all of us to enjoy. Wherever you are in your spiritual life, you are welcome here. We will embrace you and care for you no matter what you have to give. And THAT is why we are still here—together.

We are embarking on our next journey together as we work through our interim period, discern what our next steps are, dream about what our future could be, and then finally, search for our next pastor to guide us along on our journey. We want you all. We need you all. We need your love, your blessings, your prayers, your gifts, and your caring. We ALL are important in this wonderful church family—regardless of our size or our average age. Please prayerfully consider what you can give, how you can help, and how you can care for our beloved church... and then, *go and do the same*.

Thank you  
Debbie

## Outreach

### *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 strawberry 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.

#### **“Red Box” in Narthex**

The marked red box in our J.V. Narthex is especially for donations of clean, gently used, or new clothing items for The San Francisco Night Ministry (Associate Night Minister Rev. Monique Ortiz has said that warm socks (black especially welcomed) “are like gold”).

#### **Beneficio Coffee**

It is with sadness that I report to you that Beneficio Coffee is no longer available. For 11 1/2 years we have served the coffee at our J.V. fellowship hours, and some folks in both congregations have faithfully supported the mission which has helped the small-scale farmers and their families in Costa Rica. I am very grateful that we have purchased and served the coffee, the beans of which have been roasted near Sacramento, and also to “Jinxi” Betty Allen, the owner of the company, a member of a U.C.C. congregation near there. Not to worry; coffee will continue to be served at our fellowship times.

Phyllis Chai

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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 Kathryn McAbee ([kathryn.mcabee@hpe.com](mailto:kathryn.mcabee@hpe.com) or 203-4794).

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 Kathryn McAbee and Risa Feely.

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