

KALOS

Congregational Church of Almaden Valley—United Church of Christ

Spring 2017



Interim Reflections

Rev. Marty Williams

I've been thinking about "sacred conversations". These are conversations we have with God, with one another, with our faith story, and with the world. In interim work sacred conversations are vitally important and are shaped by the interim tasks or goals.

These interim tasks/goals are:

- Claiming and honoring the congregation's past and healing griefs and conflicts.
- Illuminating the congregation's unique identity, its strengths, its needs, and its challenges.
- Clarifying the multiple dimensions of leadership and navigating the shifts in leadership that accompany times of transition.
- Renewing connections with available resources within and beyond the UCC
- Enabling the congregation to renew its vision, strengthen its stewardship, prepare for new pastoral leadership and engage its future with anticipation and zest (from *Temporary Shepherds*, Editor Roger Nicholson) .

Over these next few months we will continue to engage in sacred conversations about the history of CCAV and about who you are at this moment in time. You will listen to one another and to God's spirit to shape the next "faithful" thing God is calling CCAV to do. We will engage in conversation with our ECA partners, with local congregations, with our UCC association and conference partners whose gifts and reflections will strengthen the renewed vision of CCAV.

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This is challenging and exciting and energizing work! The interim time is a gift to a congregation—a time to reflect, assess, experiment, and to deepen connections with God and with one another while listening to the needs of the world.

During the season of Lent, which begins next week, I invite you to join with me as we focus on the theme "Sacred Conversations". This is an invitation to be open to God's still speaking presence among us. The gospel readings are stories of Jesus engaging in "sacred conversation" with a variety of folks along his journey to Jerusalem. Jesus speaks with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the man born blind, Lazarus' family, and Lazarus. What will God's spirit reveal to each of us and to CCAV as we listen and participate in "sacred conversation" with Jesus?

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These first 3 months of ministry at CCAV have been a blessing. I am grateful for your welcome, for your sharing, for many “sacred conversations”, and for the ways you love each other, and the ways you serve the world. I am excited and curious to see what God is up to at CCAV.

Blessings and Peace
Rev. Marty

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

By Debbie Bemis

Today was one of those gorgeous days after the rain when the sky is a deep blue and the clouds are a fluffy, bright white in contrast, and everything looks crisp and clean. It is my favorite kind of day, and I



never fail to notice and appreciate the beauty of the sky and the crisp freshness all around me. It always reminds me of the promise of fresh, new beginnings after a storm—and we have certainly had our share of those this season!

A fresh, new beginning is kind of how I look at the interim period of the church. It is an opportunity for us—a chance for us to dream, and at the same time to take a hard look at ourselves and our resources—and then to get clear on our priorities as well as our limitations. It is exciting and challenging—and a little bit scary as I think about our dwindling resources—but it is an opportunity that I am excited to delve into with all of you this year, and I can’t wait to get started! It is an opportunity for a fresh new beginning for us, in spite of our more than 50 years together. I hope you will join in with us when we have discussions and fellowship events together this year. We are a small but mighty church, and we need each of you to keep us strong.

There is so much about our church that I love, and so much that I am proud to be a part of. Having participated on the last couple of search committees, I am always reminded how very fortunate we are when candidates are impressed with our love for each other, our dedication to JV, and the compassion we show in the many outreach projects that we are a part of, and I am once again reminded of why I love this congregation. I have no doubt that you love it as much as I do, and thus the reason you are here. Let’s work together this year to continue our good work with each other and within our community while taking stock of who we are and what direction we want to go in the future. I have no doubt that we will continue to be a strong, caring church community—and I hope you will be a part of helping us plan our future—and our new “beginning”—together.

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

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Lent and Easter Events 2017

The season of Lent begins March 1, with Ash Wednesday. There are three Ash Wednesday experiences available:

Almaden Joint Venture Churches to give “Ashes and Coffee to Go”—On Ash Wednesday, March 1, from 6:45–8:30 a.m. The Congregational Church of Almaden Valley and The Episcopal Church in Almaden (6581 Camden Ave, San Jose, 95120) encourage neighbors to drive through their circular driveway to receive ashes on their foreheads and a free cup of coffee or tea to go, with a smile. These churches want to bring a moment of spiritual connection and ancient tradition out of doors and into daily life. Ashes remind us that we are mortal and help us remember what is important in life. They remind us that God continually offers the forgiveness of unconditional love, and a new start. Come, start your morning with “Ashes and Coffee to Go.”

Help Needed on Ash Wednesday—We need a couple of folks from each church to volunteer to help set up the coffee and tea and serve during “Ashes to Go” time. Plan to arrive by 6:15 a.m. and be done after 8:30 and clean-up. Please let Rev. Marty know you can help at (925) 785-6258 or revmartyccavucc@gmail.com.

ECA Ash Wednesday Worship Services on March 1, at 12:00 pm and 7:00pm. Both are services of Holy Eucharist and Imposition of Ashes.

ECA invites CCAV to Quiet Day, March 4—The Quiet Day will be on March 4, 9:00–3:00 p.m. at ECA. The day will begin with Morning Prayers, followed by a short Bible Study (Lectio Divina) and opportunities to visit the various stations set up to encourage us to listen to God. There will be a journaling station, art and college station, centering prayer time, music station and reading station.

Morning snacks and a simple lunch will be provided. If you are interested in helping plan the Quiet Day, please let Marianne Schmidt know. Call her cell phone at (408) 914-8775, or email her at marianneschmidt8025@gmail.com.

Holy Week and Easter

- **Wednesday, 4/12**—ECA will offer a Tenebrae Service
- **Thursday, 4/13**—Plans are underway for a Joint Venture worship experience on Maundy Thursday.
- **Easter Sunday April 16**—CCAV Worship at 9:00 a.m.

NCNC-UCC Annual Gathering

June 15–18, 2017

Early bird registration is due by 3/1/17. Prices increase after this date.

The 2017 Annual Gathering of the Northern California Nevada Conference United Church of Christ, June 15–18, will be held at Sonoma State University, 1801 E. Cotati Ave., Rohnert Park, CA. The theme this year is “Come Home to Peace, Go Forth to Disrupt.” As we struggle to understand what it is to be the People of God in this time and in this place, we find ourselves confronting issues of Peace and Disruption. How do we find peace within ourselves and our church communities in order to find the courage and strength to answer Jesus’ call to go out and serve when it is not comfortable?

This year’s keynote speakers are Kristin Stoneking and Kazu Haga who will help us explore these themes. There will be opportunities for study and fellowship as well as beautiful worship and music throughout the weekend. If you have questions, contact Rev. Marty at (925) 785-6258 or revmartyccavucc@gmail.com.

2017 Council Retreat

By Debbie Bemis

Generosity of spirit, dedication, empathy, love for the CCAV community, wisdom, creativity, perseverance, sense of humor, enthusiasm, caring, get things done, breadth and depth of experience, and just plain awesome!

These are some of the words we came up with to describe your 2017 CCAV Council. During the retreat we figured out that among the nine of us on council, together we have

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over 200 years of membership and experiences with CCAV! That's a lot of love and dedication to this church community!

When we started the retreat, I shared a fortune that I had gotten the night before when Jan and I had ordered Chinese take-out. The fortune read, "Tomorrow your creative side will shine forth with exceptional ideas." That fortune set the tone for the day.

After our business meeting, Rev. Marty led us in a meditation and then a couple of fun "getting to know you" activities that we all enjoyed. Then we began our group work together to describe various aspects of CCAV as we see or have experienced them and then looking at what we have done in the past, are currently doing, and could potentially see ourselves doing in the near future. We have much more work to do. It is an exciting time for us. A time when we are free to really look at ourselves: who we have become as well as who we want to be. For this interim time, we could not have a better leader than Rev. Marty. She is passionate about this work that she clearly loves, and she has the wisdom and skill to guide us through some challenging and exciting conversations, as we take a hard look at our realities and try to "think outside the box" in an effort to create the church community we want to be.

To that end, we will be having some congregational "Let's Talk About" sessions—less formal than a congregational meeting, but very important for us all to attend as we go through this interim time. These conversations will give us all a voice to express what is important to us as well as to think about our priorities and limitations.

It is our intention to involve the congregation as much as possible during this interim period. We are your leaders, but CCAV belongs to all of us. We need your thoughts and your ideas as we move forward. We look forward to working with all of you in the coming year as we talk more and more about who we are and what we want for CCAV.

You can rest assured that you have a wonderful council working for you this year. Please take the time to express your thoughts to any council member, and while you are at it, please thank them for their hard work and dedication on your behalf.

2017 Council members are: Debbie Bemis, Moderator; Carolyn Crowley, Recorder; Laura Hall, treasurer; Kathryn McAbee, JV Representative; Connie Moore, Debra Newcomb, Dave Harris, and Kelly Yamanishi, Members at Large; and of course, Rev. Marty with her wisdom and enthusiasm helping to inspire us all and move us forward.

Time and Talent at CCAV

By Debbie Bemis

Have you ever wondered what happens to those Time and Talent sheets we ask you to fill out each year with your Stewardship package???? I have heard folks say that they never see the fruits of their labors in filling these out. I am here to tell you that nothing could be further from the truth.

This year, I received a total of 21 Time and Talent sheets back from the congregation. I would have liked to get more, but I appreciate what I get. Last year the number was identical, although some of the people who turned it in were different than those from this year.

I use these Time and Talent sheets to make my list of people who are willing to volunteer for things. I have a list of potential Liturgists, Greeters/Coffee hosts, Ushers, and Communion folks. I know who I can approach on Sunday mornings with the Matrix, and when I can't get it filled, I know who I can email to ask if they would be willing to take an open spot.

I will share names of people who are willing to volunteer in specific areas with people who are looking for volunteers: JV workdays, Care team ministry, Outreach Fellow-

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ship. etc. And I look at names of people who have a special talent or interest and pass them on to others who may need them: Office help, *Kalos*, computer help, Mission moments or Sunday speakers, musicians, etc. Your time and talents do not go unrecognized, believe me. We appreciate all of it!

Using the time and talent results this year, I am hoping to be able to pull together some committees—those who are more formal and those who will only meet once or twice. I have people who expressed an interest in being on Worship, Outreach, Pastoral Relations, Care Team, Membership, Music, and Fellowship committees. My next step is to contact all of those folks who expressed an interest and see if I can get some interest in the formulation of a formal or an informal committee in as many of those areas as possible. These committees keep our church going. They are a way to divide the responsibilities among us, hopefully having people serve on something of particular interest.

So stay tuned! I will be contacting you at some point in the near future to try to get some of these committees formed. Or you might be contacted to help out in an area you expressed as a talent or interest. If you are not contacted, please don't hesitate to ask where you can be of help. We need ALL of your time and talents to help make us stronger! Thank you for filling out your time and talent sheet!

Outreach

By Phyllis Chai

Shelter Feeding

Our congregation continues to serve the evening meal on the third Tuesday of each month at two downtown LifeMoves homeless shelters (Julian St. Inn for folks with mental health challenges or chronic mental illness and Georgia Travis Center/formerly Commercial St. Inn for women and children). Two of our volunteers typically serve the meal at JSI while one goes to Georgia Travis Center. 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-0 for the dessert. Please contact Phyllis Chai if you are able to drive, serve, or help prepare the jell-0.

Second Harvest Food Bank

Very gratefully, our full bin was picked up and swapped for an empty one not long ago. Contributions of healthy, non-perishable food items in unbreakable containers are always appreciated; on each Communion Sunday (first of the month) donations may be placed in the picnic basket by our altar. Any checks may be made out to CCAV,UCC with "Second Harvest Food Bank" in the memo section.

San Francisco Night Ministry

See the "red" collection box in the church Narthex to donate ADULT size new or "like new"/warm socks (dark are especially welcomed), gloves, caps/hats/scarves and "sweats". Rev. Monique Ortiz also welcomes warm jackets and other warm clothing, and was especially grateful for a very large clothing donation not long ago; she has said that she never has enough clothing to give out, especially after rain when clothing gets wet.

One Great Hour of Sharing

On Sunday March 26 we will dedicate our annual One Great Hour of Sharing (one of our four special offerings) offering. This year's theme for the offering is "You are here". You are here shows the church uniting to respond to the many critical needs present in our world today. Our support is given through partner organizations responding to health, education and agricultural development needs, refugee initiatives, and both international and domestic disaster response.

When God's love abides in us, we are moved to respond with our own material goods to the needs of other members of God's family.

Checks may be made out to CCAV,UCC with OGHS in the memo section; we will have offering envelopes in our bulletins on March 26. Look for a bulletin insert on a previous Sunday.

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Thank you for your support, whether you are a new supporter, or long-time supporter, every gift matters. Every gift allows us to say, "You are here."

CROP Walk

The annual South Bay CROP Hunger Walk will take place on Sunday April 23. The CROP Walk began in 1947. Community-wide events are sponsored by Church World Service (CWS) and organized by local congregations or groups to raise funds to end hunger at home and around the world. CROP, early on, was an acronym for the Christian Rural Overseas Program. Look for more information to come about the gathering location for the Walk.

For many years Kathy Kisabeth 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, and can be as long or short as one chooses, with a refreshing treat at the end, all while helping to ease the burden of those less fortunate.

Jail Ministry

We are grateful for the dedication of Randall Newcomb who is a Jail Chaplain and who leads a Monday night Bible study on the "Max" unit at the Main Jail downtown. Randall is grateful for paperback books, including bibles, and especially all books in Spanish, to share with the incarcerated ones to whom he ministers. During Holy Week Communion is offered to the inmates by volunteers; if you feel called to participate in this meaningful ministry, speak to Randall.

Quest Group

The Quest ladies group continues to meet each Wednesday in the choir room from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Know that you are welcome; for questions speak to Phyllis Chai at (408) 226-7150.

The group typically "checks in", sharing prayer requests, joys, and concerns, and also sings an opening and closing favorite hymn. Recently members have been sharing from the book *WomanPrayers* in which our own Rev.Christina Hutchins has some lovely contributions. The group also has discussed the UCC study "White Privilege".

Realizing that "Conversation Ground Rules" can ensure that conversation is a safe place for everyone involved to express their opinion, the group has spent some time sharing the guidelines.

American Red Cross Interfaith Community Blood Drive

The next Interfaith Community Blood Drive will be held on Saturday, March 11, 2017 at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at 6625 Camden Ave., San Jose.

To schedule an appointment to donate, please call: 1-800-733-2767 or log on to redcrossblood.org, enter the Sponsor Code: Interfaith Community.

Also, volunteers are needed to work at the registration desk and hospitality table, as well as for donations of healthy snacks/drinks.

For questions regarding the volunteer opportunities, please contact Phyllis Chai at (408) 226-7150.

Report from the Day Room

By Mike Moore

This has been a rewarding quarter for our Life Skills Classes. Connie and I continue to be inspired by the wonderful instructors with whom we work. They are each unique and very special caring people. After every meeting, we are each freshly inspired by the classes. It is motivating to have students speak up and participate in class in whatever way they are able.

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I believe a significant number of our students are incapable of reading. I have read that 14% (US Dept of Education) of all Americans are illiterate, 70% of all prison inmates are illiterate, and 85% of all teenagers who come into the juvenile court system are illiterate. This impacts how we deal with our students and challenges my ideas about the applicability of resume's etc. This is a hidden problem, probably of a greater importance than I had suspected and probably contributes to the reluctance of our students to volunteer to read during classroom exercises.

LifeMoves, formerly InnVision, purchased the house next door (corner of Julian and N. Autumn). A long term goal of the facility is to become a residential mental health facility with a resident psychiatrist. The house next door may become a residence for the on-duty psychiatrist. My sense is that the planning is in its early stages.

Our Great Christmas coat giveaway, sponsored by Bill Fritz and the Star Fellowship was a huge success. Our hats off for this group which also provided noon meal each Sunday for Julian Street Inn. We were fortunate to contribute a large number (maybe a hundred or so) of suitable warm weather coats that were donated based on an ad we placed in our local Nextdoor Holiday Lake. As always, the meal was a great success also. We earlier, on 12 December, had Staff Recognition day (Connie attended as I was out of country), which was very well received. The Staff Support Committee had made plans for staff recognition in early November and had decided on creating certificates of appreciation suitable for framing. Patti Dolan and Halie Broadstreet wrote individual complimentary paragraphs about each of the approximately two dozen staff personnel. Connie formatted, typed, and printed each of them on nice certificate forms and placed in a presentation folder. They were very well received as was the cake.

Finally, two of our instructors, Kevin Williams and Leslie Emma, gathered some friends and neighbors, then cooked and served a fantastic Christmas meal for the Julian Street shelter. They had asked, as have others, about serving

food for Christmas. Because other groups were providing meals on different days, they obtained permission to serve food they had prepared on a different day. Kevin is a retired LtCol helicopter pilot and Afghan Veteran. Daughter Leslie is the Public Health Officer for Exxon.



Warming Center

By Sandra Mueller

The Warming Center crew wishes to thank all of you for providing fresh fruit and fruit drinks, a great assortment of snacks, and necessary paper supplies. It truly takes a village to provide workers, food and material for the month-and-a-half long caring of our guests sent to us from The Village House—the city program that has set up shelters and warming centers for these homeless women. Thank you for your faith and generosity.

A Note of Care

By Rev. Debra Newcomb

Things aren't going exactly as I would hope for Care Ministries. I've had two surgeries and some other just random illnesses that have impacted my ability to continue pulling our team of volunteers together. Sometimes I wonder if I'm the right person to be facilitator but I know it's the right thing to do to get Care Ministries up and running so I forge on.

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Persistence is my star word this year from our Epiphany stars and I think we'll see that in Care Ministries. Care Ministries isn't going to start with a bang, a rush or quick out of the shoot. It's going to happen over time as a result of patience and caring from a team of ministers committed to caring for our congregation.

The plan we set up in the fall, I believe, is still a good one. We will organize around small groups headed by a leader and focused on specific tasks of Care that come under the umbrella of Care Ministries. The groups we talked about initially and where we will start are: Meals when desired; Rides when needed for appointments, groceries, or other services; Phone calls to friends, members and new acquaintances, when we don't see them on a Sunday or when we hear that they need a comforting word; Funeral service receptions; Cards for birthdays, anniversaries and other celebrations; and, Prayer, even though we have an active chain already, we may make it more visible through Care Ministries. Our overall focus is you all!!!

We also started a conversation that I'm continuing with Rev. Marty and she'll continue with us in our next meeting TBD about being a more active part of the 'In Care' ministries of hospital and hospice visiting, as needed. We're not sure how this one will flesh out but we'll figure it out.

The overall plan is to set up a chain of communication from Rev. Marty to me and/or leaders of the individual groups named above. Each of those groups will have a leader that will coordinate the activities for that group to make sure that what needs to happen does happen in a timely fashion.

We're also looking at the most effective way not only to gather ourselves but to gather information from you the congregation about what care is needed. We know we'll

start with Rev. Marty but after that working as a team may be done by phone, letter, email and word of mouth. We will of course maintain the highest levels of confidentiality and sensitivity about what you share with us. Only those who need to know will know.

We have lots to do and hearts to care so the work is good. Even though we're getting a slow start, I believe we'll get there in God's grace and the Care of each other. Thanks for your support.

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.mcabee7@gmail.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 15th of the month to kalos@ccavucc.org. *Kalos* editors are Kathryn McAbee and Risa Feely.

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