



Churches advocate for new legislation

Alameda church votes to support new marriage laws

"This congregation believes that every couple should have the same legal rights. We, as a Christian community, believe that denying civil rights is not consistent with Christian principles.

"Therefore, we support local, state and national legislation that grants equal marriage rights to all couples regardless of gender.

"Furthermore, we will work against legislation, including constitutional amendments, which denies civil marriage rights to couples based on gender."

First Congregational UCC, Alameda, voted unanimously, with two abstentions, in support of this resolution at their Jan. 29 annual meeting.

Rev. Laura Rose said the process leading up to this vote was as meaningful as the vote itself.



"We've been engaging in a process of prayerful discussion and discernment on this issue since May 2005. After the General Synod action recommending that churches study and consider action in support of marriage equality, our members felt that it deserved a well-thought-out discussion.

"The church was fine with the discussion and prayer part of the General Synod resolution and even the wedding policy part," Rose said.

"But the key issue was whether members of the church wanted to start a ministry of advocacy on legislative issues. They needed to see where the whole congregation stood on the issue in order to feel that they had the support of the majority of members.

"A few of our lay members did some research and put together two workshops. Besides the helpful content, it really opened up

See MARRIAGE LAWS Page B2

Signatures sought for Children's Health Initiative

Sharon Filippi is only one of hundreds of people statewide collecting signatures to get the Children's Health Initiative onto the November ballot. But she, like many other members of NCNC churches, is doing it because her church, Congregational UCC, Fremont, is involved in faith-based community organizing.

Her church is a member of COR, Congregations Organizing for Renewal, a coalition of 14 congregations in Southern Alameda County that work together to improve communities. COR congregations also include Eden UCC, Hayward, and Community UCC, San Lorenzo.

COR has joined a coalition of health advocacy groups to file the initiative, whose goal is to win health care coverage for all children, prevent children from smoking, help smokers quit and strengthen health care services in their communities.

The initiative calls for a \$2.60 per pack tobacco tax to raise \$2.27 billion annually, including \$405 million every year to make health insurance affordable for all California's children. Currently, California's cigarette tax is below the national average.

Almost 1 million children in California lack health care coverage. The Children's Health Insurance section of the initiative will cover children currently ineligible for most health insurance programs. It will also improve children's health insurance programs to make it easier for children to get enrolled and stay enrolled.

COR is a member of PICO, the Pacific Institute for Community Organization, a coalition of 19 congregation-based community organizations representing 350 congregations and 450,000 families across the state.

See HEALTH Page B2

Annual Meeting to consider six business items

"Our covenant heritage gives lay and clergy delegates from each church the right and responsibility to vote on important issues in the life of the Conference," said Kyle Lovett, Conference moderator.

The items include:

- The annual NCNC budget.
- Nominating Commission Report and Elections

- A proposed Conference By-law amendment to give each congregation an additional voting delegate to Annual Meeting who is a youth or young adult (age 13-25).

- A proposed Conference By-law amendment to make members of the board of directors and association moderators voting delegates at Annual Meeting.

- A position statement, "God

is Still Speaking in an Age of Science and Technology."

Calls upon the United Church of Christ to renew and expand its engagement with the intellectual, social, economic and personal implications of science and technology by supporting a church-wide program to create resources and promote discussion on current topics such as creation and evolution, stem cell research, and information technology.

- A position statement "Statement Advocating Legalization of Physician Aid in Dying in Limited Circumstances." (See story on Page 3).

Check <www.ncnccucc.org> for more information on business items and numbers of delegates your church has. Make sure you have a youth or young adult delegate in anticipation of the vote to add one such person to each delegation.



Rev. Elder Tauoa Head was installed Feb. 26 as pastor at Kalavaria UCC/CCSA, San Mateo and the congregation was welcomed by the Golden Gate Association as a church in full standing. Pictured with Rev. Head are Rev. Wendy Taylor, Rev. Dora Ford, Rev. Mary Susan Gast and Rev. Kyle Lovett.

It's OK to come only on Saturday

Can't make the whole weekend May 18-21? Spend Saturday, May 20, at the beautiful Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove.

Special events that day:

- Morning theme program on covenant: 9:15-10:30 am
- Small Groups building covenant: 10:45-noon

- Honored Lay Women's lunch: 12-1 pm
- Afternoon business sessions: 1:45-4:45 (or time on beach!)
- Association Gatherings, 5-6 p.m.

- Open and Affirming dinner 6-7 pm
- Special Worship Celebration: 7:15-9:30 pm
- Preacher: Rev. Deborah Lee.

Lee is program director at PANA Institute (Pacific Asian North American Religion Institute.) Previously director of the Pacific and Asian American Center for Theology and Strate-

gies (PACTS) of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, she has served as a community development worker in Brazil with the Mennonite

Central Committee and as the training director of the Center for Ethics and Economic Policy in Berkeley.

She earned her master of divinity at the Pacific School of

Religion with an emphasis on theology and race, gender and global justice. She is a member of New Fellowship, UCC, Berkeley.

- Special Music: Oakland East Bay Gay Men's Chorus and Plymouth UCC Oakland Jazz Group

Contact Registrar Joy Davis at 510-247-8990 to register for a one-day visit to NCNC Annual Meeting or to see if there are still rooms available for overnight stays.



Deborah Lee

INSIDE

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- Miracles at AIDS orphanage..... B8

PACIFIC CURRENTS

NCNC congregations to celebrate PSR Sunday May 7

"Every Sunday is PSR Sunday!" said Laura Barnes, associate pastor at Danville Congregational UCC.

Perhaps she exaggerated, but her church is one of many that support their local United Church of Christ seminary, Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, several times during the year and through various programs, including hosting seminarians who are ministers-in-training.

"Our contact with PSR keeps us better informed about theological issues, more compassionate toward those answering the call to ministry, and excited about the

work the progressive church is doing," added Barnes, who earned her master of divinity degree from PSR in 2001.

"It's a daily blessing to walk with these seminary students."

Danville's senior minister, Alan Kelchner, said, "It's a wonderful advantage to have PSR close by. The congregation realizes it's a real enrichment for us. It gives us the chance to see people who are on fire with their vocation, those preparing for the ministry."

The Danville church has sponsored several ministers-in-training from PSR, including, this year, Rachel Ciupek-Reed. Currently

in her third year of an MDiv/MA degree program at PSR, she is both a minister-in-training and in-care at the church.

To increase support for and awareness of PSR, the seminary in 2001 launched what it calls "PSR Sunday," held the first Sunday in May, or whenever it is most fitting for the congregation. Last May, Ciupek-Reed spoke at the church about how the congregation can interact with PSR.

"It's more than an appeal for funds," she said. "It's the building of a relationship. It's not only a benefit for PSR, receiving support and grounding the seminary in a

local congregation. It also helps the congregation to get access to on-going theological education and to students going through the process of ordination. This semester a member of the church is even going to attend a class with me. She's always wondered what a seminary education is like, and now she'll be able to find out."

The Danville church, Ciupek-Reed said, has been engaged in a dialogue between its more conservative and liberal members, a dialogue championed by PSR. "A strong priority of the congregation has been to say: 'You may be conservative, and I may be liberal, but

we both love God, so how do we engage in dialogue and ascertain the needs of our community in light of our differences?'"

More than 60 churches nationwide take part in PSR Sunday, held this year on May 7. Participation can include sharing from a PSR alum in the congregation, a representative from the seminary, or a minister in training. For more information, and supporting materials, contact Celeste Douville of PSR at 510-849-8274 or <cdouville@psr.edu >.

Thanks to Russell Schoch of PSR's Office of Communication.

Campers: 'Winter camp is as much fun as summer camp'

Editor's note: Our Outdoor Ministries program includes camps in January for middle schoolers and February for high schoolers, both held in the Santa Cruz mountains.

Here are some reflections on Mid-Winter Camp by youth from First Congregational UCC, Redding. For more information about summer and winter camp, contact Barbara Broadbent at 510-247-8996, <bbroadbent@ncncc.org>, or visit the conference website <www.ncncc.org>

"At camp, everything is different. You don't realize how different it is until it's over," wrote Lindsey Hood, eighth grade.

"You bond six times faster when you know that you'll only be together for three days. Everywhere you turn people have stories you can relate to.

"Everyone knows that you are you, but you are also a part of everyone else. You recognize that you are your own best friend, that you have this unique and strange relationship with yourself, but you don't notice it until you are taken out of the world of cell phones, x-boxes and the media.

"You find a strength, a trust, that is never present on the surface. We were given the change to prove to ourselves that we believe in ourselves."

"Home is a place where the

Marriage laws

Continued from Page B1

some good dialogue. More than that, it really engaged the congregation more in congregational process, what it means to be a Congregational church, and our polity. By the time we took the vote we had learned really to listen for God's call to us as a community."

A special ministry team will be researching appropriate ministry and action the church can take. For more information contact COR at <www.corcommunity.org> or 510-727-8833.



soul runs free. Home is where everyone belongs, and a home belongs to everyone. Camp was home. Camp was amazing.

"There were so many new people that I met, and new faces to see, and it was like, when I left,

I had a new part of me inside of me that I just forgot to pack in my suitcase, and I left it there for next year to get it again.

"It was really fun and I can't wait until next year," said Rudi Yniguez, seventh grade.



Having fun at winter camps includes building a newspaper house at Feb. Camp (above left) and playing in the mud at Mid-Winter Camp (above).

Health

Continued from Page B1

In addition to UCC churches in COR, there are UCC churches in other PICO California affiliates in San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, Modesto, Fresno, Sacramento, San Jose and Antioch.

To qualify the initiative for the ballot, each PICO California affiliate will collect roughly 6,000 signatures from February through April.

Joining PICO California in this process are, among others, the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, California Hospital Association, American College of Emergency Physicians and California Emergency Nurses Association.

NCNC
Annual Meeting
draft schedule
on Page B6

Founded August 1, 1851
Northern California Nevada
Conference edition
UNITED CHURCH NEWS
Published monthly, except for
January and August.
Northern California
Nevada Conference, UCC
21425 Birch Street
Hayward CA 94541-2131
510-247-8990 www.ncncc.org
The Rev. Dr. Mary Susan Gast,
Conference Minister;
The Rev. Deborah Streeter, Edi-
tor, 831-624-6072
STREETCOOK@aol.com

Don't miss Womens' Network News
about Outstanding Women nominations
and the upcoming 2006 Fall Retreat
on Page B6 in this Pacific

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Go 'Five for Five' with 'Forums for the Future'

By Mary Susan Gast

The mission of the Northern California Nevada Conference is to "be a community of diverse congregations which nurtures, supports and unites local churches in faithful covenant in Christ to carry out ministry and mission in the world."

The first part of the statement tells us **who** we are: a community of diverse congregations.

The second phrase describes **what** we do as that community of congregations: we nurture, support, and unite local churches in faithful covenant in Christ.

The third phrase states **why** we do what we do: so that local churches can best carry out the ministry and mission to which they are called.

It's the "what" part that occasionally needs re-assessing, re-tooling, re-conceptualizing. Fifteen years have passed since a period of Conference-wide reflection and envisioning has been conducted.

The Conference has changed. New congregations, new leadership, new needs and new possibilities call for a new look at how we

OUR CONFERENCE MINISTER

can best carry out our mission.

The Conference Board of Directors and your Conference Staff thus invite you to take part in Forums for the Future.

My dictionary defines "forum" as "a place of assembly for the people," and advises me that the word is related to the Latin root for "door." No, we're not going to meet outdoors, like an ancient Roman forum. But we look to these assemblies of the people to provide a door into our future.

The UCC's distinctive union of autonomous congregations in covenantal relationship makes a series of forums an apt means of



approach to our shared concerns.

Each forum will focus on a particular area of mission for local churches.

National UCC staff and board members will provide inspiration and a wider perspective, but the focus will be upon the challenges faced by local churches.

Each forum will be designed by a specific Conference-based planning team, and the "results" of the conversations which ensue will be taken back to the Board of Directors so that they can shape the future "what" of the mission of the Conference.

We want every church to go Five for Five with the Forums for the Future. That is, to send at least two people (probably not the same people) to each forum. The forums will take place in five different locations on 5 Saturdays, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Arrangements are in progress to offer overnight housing for those who "come from afar" to a forum. Yes, Five for Five certificates will be awarded — maybe even prizes.

But the greatest reward will be the enlivening of your church's

ministry and mission and a strengthening of the support which the Conference can offer you.

These are the Forum topics and proposed dates:

Forum 1: UCC Identity—how do we build on who we are, June 17.

Forum 2: Youth and Young Adult Ministry — addressing the realities and calling forth the gifts of young people, Sept. 9.

Forum 3: Forming and Transforming Churches — church vitality, Nov. 4.

Forum 4: Justice and Peace — our churches' faithful witness, Feb. 10, 2007.

Forum 5: Making the Dreams Real — developing a sense of stewardship, promoting financial support for the ministries of our churches, April 28, 2007.

Fuller descriptions will be posted on the NCNC website as the details are put into place. Meanwhile, mark your calendars. Talk it up. Look around for the people you will send to each forum.

And remember, it's really God's mission — not ours — that we're talking about.

Why I support physician-aid-in-dying legislation

By John Brooke, Pastor Emeritus, Congregational UCC, Belmont

My mother died in 1989 the kind of death she had feared: "John, I'm not afraid of death, but I am afraid of dying by inches."

My life-long friend Lilian Stevens, 83, told me later in 1989 of her decision to hasten her own death. That began a nine-month conversation. She died in 1990, alone in a hotel room, since she would not legally jeopardize anyone else by being with her at the end.

Neither my mother nor Lilian would have been covered by a physician-aid-in-dying law. Lilian, although suffering greatly was not terminally ill. My mother was neither terminally ill nor mentally competent in her last years.

Nevertheless, based on these personal experiences I became deeply engaged in the emerging issue of physician-aid-in-dying as a legal choice in limited circumstances.

In 1992 when the issue was on the ballot in California, I took two two-month leaves of absence from my co-pastorate in Belmont to work full-time on that initiative. In succeeding years I became president of Americans for Death with Dignity, which had sponsored the 1992 initiative.

Since then palliative care, pain management and physician competence in end-of-life care have greatly improved. However, some dying persons still find their end-

of-life suffering to be intolerable even with the best palliative care.

My local congregation, Congregational UCC, Belmont, is sponsoring "A Position Statement Advocating Legalization of Physician-Aid-in-Dying in Limited Circumstances" at our NCNC Annual Meeting this May.

Briefly put, it states, "On the grounds of compassion and choice, if strict safeguards to prevent abuse are followed, a terminally ill, mentally competent adult should have a legal right to request and receive medication from a physician to hasten death if the patient finds his or her suffering to be unbearable."

If passed, this Position Statement will be forwarded to UCC General Synod XXVI in 2007.

Oregon passed a "Death with Dignity" initiative in 1997 with 60 percent of voters in favor. In its first seven years only 209 Oregonians used this act. However, many more have had the peace of mind of knowing that if their own end-of-life suffering should become unbearable, they would have a compassionate choice of a peaceful release.

In January the Supreme Court affirmed Oregon's right to have such a law. The Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ was among religious organizations and leaders who supported this outcome in a friend of the court brief.

We are co-creators with God, given free will, the ability to make compassionate choices. A proposal under consideration in California, patterned on the Oregon law, would permit physician-aid-in-dying to be legal if strict safeguards to prevent abuse are provided.

Life is a precious gift from God. Life is sacred.

God intends that created life be more than simply the existence of a human organism. The Gospel of John reports Jesus as saying, "I came that you might have life, life in all its fullness." (John 10:10 - Good News Bible)

But life is also a perishable gift. Mortality is universal. "There is a time to be born and a time to die...." (Ecclesiastes 3:2)

When mortal life on earth is inevitably ebbing, when death is imminent, what then?

Compassion will offer the best possible palliative care and pain management by physicians, nurses, family members, hospice workers and others. Compassion will offer spiritual support from family members, clergy, church

members and friends.

Nevertheless, a few people, finding their end-of-life suffering to be unbearable, will decide that continued existence on earth without hope or meaning is no longer "life in all its fullness"; in fact, it is no longer tolerable. They may ask to have the choice of a peaceful release.

Justice and protection of the most powerless persons in society are important concerns for Christians. Fears are sometimes expressed that these persons will be endangered by physician-aid-in-dying legislation.

There is no evidence in seven years of reporting in Oregon to substantiate such fears.

Safeguards ensure that any request must be totally patient-driven. Without a terminal diagnosis by two physicians, no person, including persons with chronic conditions or disabilities, are eligible for physician-aid-in-dying.

Many physicians, religious leaders from Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faith communities, Christian ethicists, terminally ill patients, surviving family members and others support the option of physician-aid-in-dying as a principled moral choice.

For the full proposal and further information, contact me at (707) 794-7968 or <johnbrooke@earthlink.net> or <www.physicianaidindying.com>.



John Brooke

April 1

Sacramento Valley Association Spring Gathering: Equipping the Saints. Liturgical Visual Arts, Vacation Bible School, Meaningful Mission and Miracles, Casting Your Cable Net. \$12 Adults, \$6 Youth. Reserve by March 24; 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Congregational UCC, Chico, Rev. Fred Jones, 530-342-4913.

April 1 or April 8

NCNC Board of Directors, date and location TBD, 10 a.m., Ellen Sweetin, 650-879-0104, <ellensweetin@rcn.com>.

April 3

Golden Gate Association Board of Directors, 4:30-6:30 p.m., St. John's UCC, San Francisco, Faith Burgess, 650-591-0994.

April 5

Administration & Finance Committee and Assets Management and Development working group of the NCNC Board meet together 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., Conference office, David Bergman-Hill, 510-247-2028.

April 8

Annual Meeting Planning Team 2006, Conference office, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Kyle Lovett, 510-841-2397, <pastor@sfsjohnsucc.org>.

April 12

Santa Clara Association Clergy Group, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Skyland UCC, Los Gatos, Steve Glauz-Todrank, 408-353-5407, <sglauztodrank@cs.com>.

April 14

Good Friday, NCNC Office Closed

April 19

Youth Leaders Network Meeting, First Congregational, Berkeley, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Adam Blons, Youth Leader Network facilitator, 510-848-3696. <ablons@fccb.org>.

April 21

Committee on the Ministry, Sections A and B: Hillcrest Congregational UCC, Pleasant Hill, 8:45 a.m. Section A: Jackie Kortright, chair; Susan Hamilton, scheduling <revsusan2@juno.com>, Section B: Melinda McLain and Kevin Manz, chairs; Iris Moran, scheduling <ikmoran@pacbell.net>.

April 23

Installation of Kevin Smith, Almaden Valley UCC, San Jose, 2:30 p.m. council, 4 p.m. service. 408-268-0243, <office@avucc.org>.

April 25

South Bay Association Clergy, UCC, Hayward, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Drew Nettlinga, 510.276-4808, <dwnett@ncnccucc.org>.

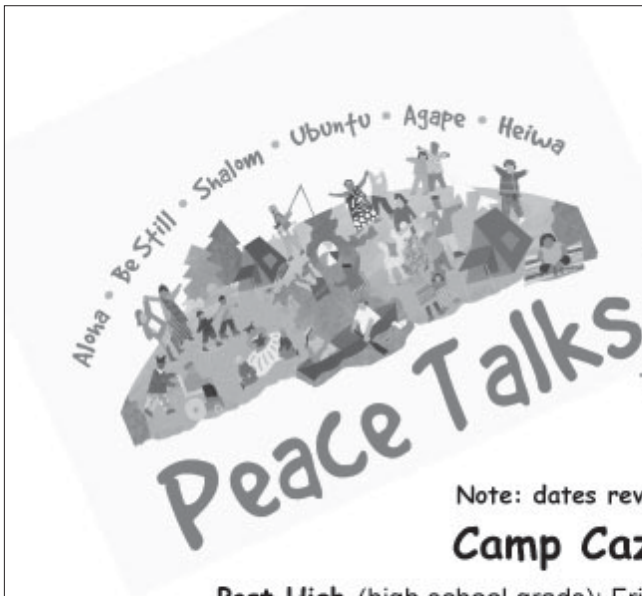
April 29

NCNC Board of Directors with 2006 Annual Meeting Planning Team, location TBD, 10 a.m., Ellen Sweetin, 650-879-0104, <ellensweetin@rcn.com>.

April 29

Overview Board for Justice & Witness Ministries meeting, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., Arlington Community Church, Kensington,

See CALENDAR, Page B7



Peace Talks, our 2006 theme for Outdoor Ministries at Camp Cazadero and Camp Tamarack, offers daily "Discoveries," scripture themes introducing different ways of understanding peace. Some are very personal; others emphasize the community. Some talk about the inner life; others focus on the world. Together they help us to glimpse the total picture of God's desire for humankind. The One who created and sustains us wants us to live together in unity and harmony—spiritually, emotionally, and socially.

Note: dates revised 12/05

Camp Cazadero

- Post High** (high school grads): Friday, June 30—Sunday, July 2
- Junior** (entering grades 5-6): Sunday, July 16—Saturday, July 22
- Kids** (entering grades 2-4): Tuesday, July 18—Saturday, July 22
- Junior High** (entering grades 7-9): Sunday, July 23—Saturday, July 29
- Senior High** (entering grades 10-12): Sunday, July 30—Saturday, Aug. 5
- Community** (multigenerational): Saturday, Sept. 2—Monday, Sept. 4

Counselors-in-Training

Ages 15½ and older: Camp Cazadero, Sunday, July 16—Saturday, July 22

Camp Tamarack

- Junior** (entering grades 3-5): Sunday, July 16—Saturday, July 22
- High School** (entering grades 9-12): Sunday, July 23—Saturday, July 29
- Junior High** (entering grades 6-8): Sunday, July 30—Saturday, Aug. 5

2006 SUMMER CAMP DATES

Northern California Nevada Conference United Church of Christ

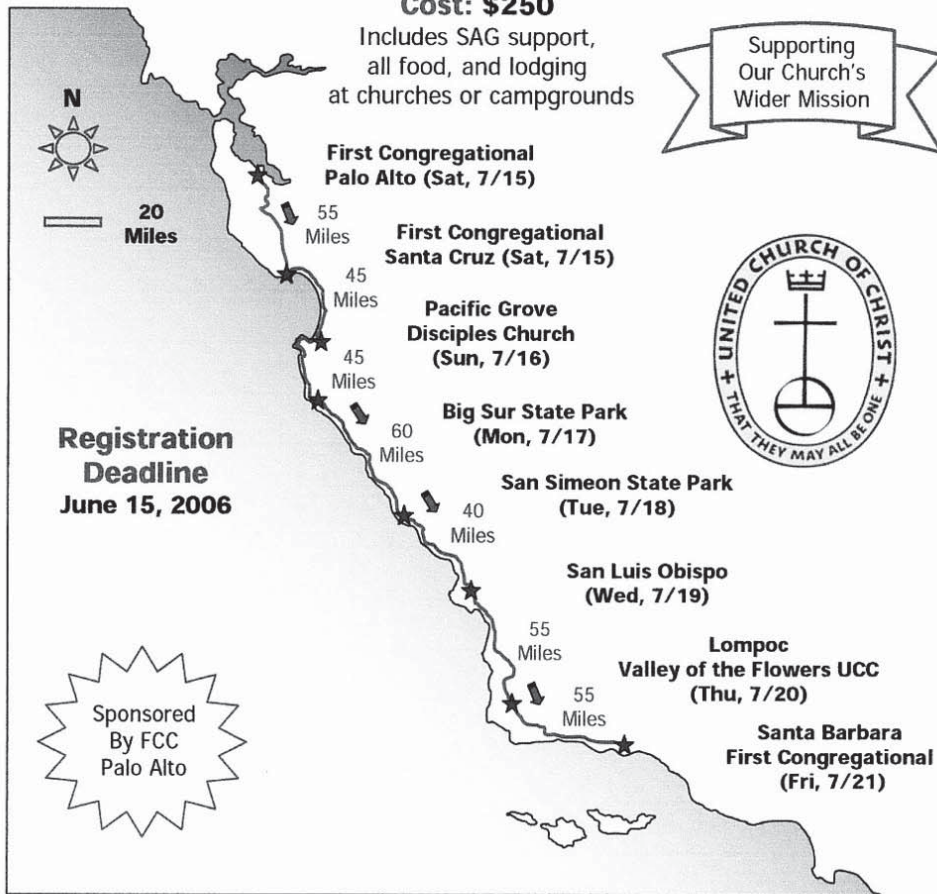


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408-249-3061 or russ_sheila@att.net**

CONFERENCE NOTES

Women's Network News

Attention: Women's Groups and Pastors!!

Time to nominate your church's Outstanding Woman! Does your church have a woman who stands out for her faithfulness and devotion to your congregation, work, community, and home? Each year the UCC Women's Network chooses several such women from those you nominate and honors them at the annual luncheon on Saturday during the NCNC Annual Meeting.

To give a good picture of your nominee, please complete the form (pdf file available at ncnucc.org) as fully as possible. Include the name of a contact person who knows your nominee well.

Deadline: April 18th. Send your form to Velma Tinkler, 2009 Vista Drive, Modesto, CA 95356. Call Velma at 209-579-5407 to let her know it is coming.

Women's Network Fall Retreat

Oct. 13-15

Mercy Center, Burlingame

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Judith Jones

Early-bird Deadline: June 30

This year's Fall Retreat Committee is just starting the planning process. The theme this year, Vessels of Love, Voices of Light, is based on materials Rev. Judith Jones is developing for her new book. We are really excited about the possibilities for creative expression in our worship services and workshop presentations. If you would like to join a sub-committee to help with the retreat please contact Fall Retreat Chairwoman, Robin Spindler at 925-862-2580 or email at <rspindler@juno.com>. We need many volunteers to make it fun for everyone. Join us!

The Fall Retreat Registration forms will be available at Asilomar as well as in our next newsletter.

Actions of Committee on Ministry Sections A and B

In-Care Status Granted

Feb. 17

Theresa Freeman, Plymouth UCC, Oakland
Melissa Gardner-McBride, Plymouth UCC, Oakland
Kristen Pratt, Skyland Community UCC, Los Gatos

Licensed

Feb. 17

Leomyr de Jesus to serve Filipino-American Evangelical UCC, Fremont

Ministerial Standing transferred

Feb. 17

Dorothy Brooks to Central Pacific Conference

Ministerial Standing transferred

Jan. 20

Jennifer DeWeerth, to Oneida Association, New York Conference

Suspension of Ministerial Standing rescinded

Jan. 20

Celia Scott

Annual Meeting 2006

Draft Schedule
as of March 8

In Covenant ... God Is Still Speaking

Thursday, May 18

3 p.m.
3-6 p.m.
5-6 p.m.
6-7 p.m.
7:15-8:30 p.m.
8:15-9:15 p.m.
9:15-10 p.m.

Registration opens and Asilomar rooms check-in
Orientations and Special Activities
Discernment session — Bylaws Change — Youth Vote
Dinner
Opening Worship Celebration
Business Session — Bylaws Change — Youth Vote
Celebration / Party

Friday, May 19

7-7:30 a.m.
7:30-8:30 a.m.
8:45-9:15 a.m.
9:15-10 a.m.
10:30-11:45
Noon-1p.m.
1:15-1:45 p.m.
2-3 and 3-4p.m.
4:15-6 p.m.
6-7 p.m.
7:15-8:15 p.m.
7:15-8:15 p.m.
8:15-9:30 p.m.
9:45-10:30 p.m.
9:45-11 p.m.

Morning Nurture and Inspiration Opportunities
Friday Breakfast
Worship
Covenant Keynote Address — Elizabeth Nordbeck
Small Group Theme Sessions
Friday Lunch
Worship, Singing, and Vote
Discernment Sessions and Nurture and Inspiration Opportunities
Affinity Groups and Choir Rehearsal
Friday Dinner (Youth and Earth Stewards' Special Dinners)
Conference Minister's "State of the Covenant" Address
Youth Leadership Orientation
Covenant and Community Building — Marcia McFee
Evening Vespers
Youth Gathering with Marcia McFee

Saturday, May 20

7-7:30 a.m.
7:30-8:30 a.m.
8:45-9:15 a.m.
9:15-10:15 a.m.
10:45-11:45 p.m.
Noon-1 p.m.

1:15-4:45 p.m.
5-6 p.m.
6-7 p.m.
7:15-9:30 p.m.
9:30-11 p.m.

Morning Nurture and Inspiration Opportunities
Saturday Breakfast (PSR Special Breakfast)
Worship — Deborah Lee preaching
Covenant Keynote Address — Elizabeth Nordbeck
Small Group Theme Sessions
Saturday lunch — caucus lunch by church
Women's Network luncheon
Plenary Business Session
Association Gatherings and Youth Gathering
Saturday Dinner (Open and Affirming Special Dinner)
Worship Celebration — jazz, singing
Youth Program and Celebration

Sunday, May 21

7-7:30 a.m.
7:30-8:30 a.m.
9:45-11:30 a.m.
Noon

Morning Nurture and Inspiration Opportunities
Breakfast
Closing Worship — Mary Susan Gast preaching — and Communion
Lunch and Departures



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Friday Evenings 8 p.m.
Arlington Community Church
52 Arlington Ave., Kensington
(510)526-9146

- April 7 Grizzly Peak String Band
- April 21 New Age Music
- May 12 Bobby Ingrams, piano
- June 2 Women's Antique
Vocal Ensemble
- June 30 Bay Area Classical
Harmonies (BACH)
Admission is \$15

Continued from Page B3

Redwood City church celebrates 25 year friendship with refugee family

First Congregational UCC, Redwood City, honored the Hue and Lien Truong family in November for 25 years of friendship with the church. In 1980 the church sponsored the family, Vietnamese refugees, by helping them settle, employing the father as church custodian and then watching the family grow and blossom.



Hue Truong

For the celebration, member **Millie Cole** shared these memories:

"We began with many fundraising events to save enough to resettle our little family of five. After bake sales, Tupperware parties, fashion shows and sales of food from our gardens, we finally saved up \$8,000. At last we received word that our family would arrive in August 1980.

"We learned through an interpreter of their ordeal getting out of Vietnam. They arrived with one suitcase, one change of clothes for each member. Not only were they rushed out of their homeland on a crowded boat, but they were set upon by pirates who took anything of value. They suffered terrible conditions on that boat. The children must have been terrified. Four-year-old daughter Tran (Aimee), little sons Thanh (Tom), 3, and Cuong (Kevin), 1, were a handful as the parents struggled to protect them from harm. The boat took them to Malaysia to a refugee camp for 14 months awaiting adoption.

"My husband and I had a

OUR FAMILY NEWS

small rental cottage over a garage. Church members gave furniture, took them to immigration and Social Security for cards, enrolled them in English school. They took them to a doctor for complete physicals and shots and to a dentist. We all took them into our hearts.

"Because the father wanted to go to work, he dropped out of English school and took on the job of church custodian. So two of our members taught him English after he finished work each day.

"The mother, Lien, found a job. Another child was born, Andy, now 14. All the children were involved in our youth ministry. The other children have now finished college, each valedictorians of their graduating classes.

"I can't say enough about the joy this fine family has brought to our church. No other project brought so many participants out for such a worthwhile cause. The family is so remarkable. Our church seemed to grow in stature and become more united as we share our love with these people."

Pastor Carol Barriger added, "Hue has been more than just our church custodian. He has been the soul of hospitality and helpfulness here." The family maintains Buddhist traditions but also worships with us occasionally, and faithfully attends the memorial services of long-time members whom they have known.

Santa Cruz church vandalized

First Congregational UCC, Santa Cruz, was one of five area churches vandalized Feb. 4 with spray painted messages that the police called hate crimes. One

message depicted a cross with an equal sign and a swastika, and the other read "Abort Christ." The other churches targeted were Lutheran, Catholic and Episcopal, suggesting the vandals were not reacting to one particular theological stance. However, the UCC church has, in recent months, also received hate mail and been the target of break-ins. **Associate Pastor Shannon Spencer** told the media that she hoped the vandals would find a better way to communicate. "It's sad this is the only way they feel they can be heard. We are an open community that welcomes people's perceptions of God and faith, and we are OK with disagreement. I would hope we could build a bridge and come to some reconciliation."

Chico UCC woman arrested at School of Americas protest

When **Dorothy Parker**, 76, joined 19,000 other protesters outside Ft. Benning, Ga., in November to protest the U.S. Government's military training school there that has been connected with torture and other human rights violations in Latin America, she was prepared to be arrested.

"I have wanted to come here for the past several years but didn't want to risk arrest because I thought it might result in having my passport revoked and my trips to Nicaragua with Habitat for Humanity are too precious to me to want to jeopardize future work there," Parker said. "But this year, it felt like what I wanted to do. I got a ride, and thanks to a friend of my pastor, I got housing, so it didn't break the household budget."

Parker was sentenced to two months in jail, along with 30 other nonviolent activists. A former UCC missionary to Angola, a retired drug and alcohol counselor and a volunteer in Latin America for Habitat for Humanity and

Seeds of Learning, Parker is an active member of **Congregational UCC, Chico**. At her website, <www.DoJustPeace.com>, she explains her motivation and invites support.

Local Pacific Asian group to host national convocation

Northern California Nevada will be the host conference for the 2006 national convocation of the UCC Pacific Island Asian American Ministries July 25-28 at UC Berkeley. UCC President and General Minister John Thomas will keynote the event, "Doing a new thing: Our Stories of Faith." Check out the PAAM newsletter, "One Voice," at <www.ncnc.ucc.org> for more information.

Pastor supporting Native American "Sacred Run"

Rev. Roger Straw is webmaster for the Native American "Sacred Run" which left San Francisco Feb. 11 after early morning ceremonies at Alcatraz and will arrive in Washington, DC April 22, Earth Day. Led by activist Dennis Banks, who organized the first such run 27 years ago, the event includes walkers and runners highlighting concerns for peace and the needs of "sacred Mother Earth." Straw worked with the Vallejo Intertribal Council while he was pastor at Community Congregational UCC, Benicia. His spouse **Rev. Mary Susan Gast** worked with Banks on issues of racism and sports when she was an executive at the national UCC setting in the '90s. Initially Straw was going to do the web support from home, but then Banks invited him to travel with the group. Straw saw it as an opportunity to do spiritual reflection and see America from a new perspective. You can follow their progress at <www.sacredrun.org>.

SEASONS OF OUR LIVES

Adam Blons, associate pastor at First UCC, Berkeley, and Meghan Voorhess are the proud parents of Satya Grace Blons, born Jan. 13.

Esther Chung, chaplain in four-way covenant with Sycamore UCC, El Cerrito, is moving to Detroit for a three-year training program to be a supervisor in clinical pastoral education.

College Community Congregational UCC, Fresno, celebrated its 50th anniversary March 11-12.

Shelley Dieterle was ordained by the Bay Association March 12 as minister for campus life in a three-way covenant with First UCC, Berkeley.

Heather Dillashaw and Shannon Spencer were installed by the Santa Clara Association Feb. 12 as associ-

ate pastors at First UCC, Santa Cruz.

Joyce Ellis, retired NCNC pastor and Associate Conference Minister, and Jim Ellis, retired Administration and Finance Committee member, are moving to Ashland, Ore.

Karen Foster has resigned from New Spirit UCC/DOC/MCC as of June 4 to be a full time parent.

Tauao Head was installed Feb. 26 by the Golden Gate Association as pastor of Kalavaria CCCSA/UCC, San Mateo.

Kalavaria CCCSA/UCC was welcomed Feb. 26 by the Golden Gate Association as a church with full standing in

the UCC. **La Selva Community UCC, La Selva Beach**, voted unanimously Feb. 5 to become an Open and Affirming church.

Bea Morris was ordained by the Bay Association Jan. 29 to a four-way covenant with Mira Vista UCC, El Cerrito and The Center for Social Ministry in a creative writing ministry. The Pacific misstated the group she works with; it is low income women.

New Spirit UCC/DOC/MCC, Berkeley, was welcomed by the Bay Association Feb. 26 as a church with full standing in the UCC.

Dale Pederson, pastor at First Congregational UCC, Salida, married Tara McDonnell March 4 and became Dale Pederson-McDonnell.

Lynice Pinkard was ordained March 26 by the Bay

Association as associate pastor at First UCC, Oakland.

Art Raab, minister emeritus at United Congregational Christian UCC/DOC, Lodi, was honored in January by the Lodi School Board for creating "Project Breakthrough" which promotes diversity and works to eliminate racism.

Blythe Sawyer, pastor at United UCC, Petaluma, and Craig Sawyer are the proud parents of Elan Sawyer born in January.

Bran Scott resigned from New Community of Faith, San Jose, as of March 19. He continues as chaplain at Pilgrim Haven Home, San Jose.

Kevin Smith will be installed by the Santa Clara Association on April 23 as pastor at Almaden Valley UCC, San Jose.

Allan Essex, Chair, 510-559-9793, <cabge@comcast.net>.

April 30
Mountain Valley Spring Association Meeting, "Getting to Know You: Building Relationship and Covenant with One Another." Program: Phil Porter, Commissioned Minister in Liturgical Arts. Dinner served and donation requested. 3 p.m. First Congregational UCC, Murphys. Reservations: Mary Cole, 209-728-3141.

April 30
Bay Association Executive Board Meeting, 3 p.m., First Congregational UCC, Martinez. Suzanne Bernhardt, 510-521-0307, <sbernhard52@sbcglobal.net>.

April 30
Bay Association Spring Meeting, 5 p.m., First Congregational UCC, Martinez. Suzanne Bernhardt, 510-521-0307, <sbernhard52@sbcglobal.net>.

May 1
Golden Gate Association Board of Directors, 4:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m., St. John's UCC, San Francisco, Faith Burgess, 650-591-0994.

May 3
Committee on Ministry, Section D, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Conference Office, Kevin Omi, Co-Chair, <kevinomi@comcast.net> or Carol Barriger, 650-365-0198, <barrigers@comcast.net>.

May 6
Annual Meeting Planning Team 2006, Conference office, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Kyle Lovett, 510-841-2397, <pastor@sfsjohnsucc.org>.

May 7
Sequoia Spring Association Meeting, 3 p.m. Grace Community UCC, North Fork. Jim Hightower, ACM and Pastor of Little Farms UCC, New Orleans, Louisiana. Dinner served. \$5 donation. Reservations to Rev. Bill Choate, 559-877-3944 or 559-658-7730.

May 8
Santa Clara Assn. Executive Committee, 6 p.m., First Congregational UCC, San Jose. David Brown, 650-325-5258, <drbrown@alum.mit.edu>.

May 11
Blessing of UCC students who are graduating, Bade, PSR, 4 p.m., Jo Siders, <josiders@ncnccucc.org>.

May 18-21
NCNC Annual Meeting, Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove. (Refer to Annual Meeting schedule on website www.ncnccucc.org and B5. Association Gatherings May 20, 5-6 p.m.) Registrar Joy Davis, 510-247-8995.

May 19
Youth Leaders Network Meeting, Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove. 4:15 p.m. Adam Blons, Youth Leader Network Facilitator, 510-488-3696, <ablons@fccb.org>.

May 21
Visual Word Regional Meeting for artists involved in sacred/secular art work. 3 p.m., San Rafael. For specific location, contact Bill Shelley, 707-525-1125, <bshelley@sonic.net>.

DIVING INTO THE DEEP

Miracles at an AIDS orphanage in Zimbabwe

Editor's note: Rev. Kendal Brown, associate pastor at City of Refuge UCC, San Francisco, traveled to Zimbabwe and South Africa in February with Bishop Yvette Flunder, UCC AIDS/HIV program director Rev. Mike Schumemeyer and others to see the health and wholeness work they (and we with our Our Church's Wider Mission contributions) are supporting.

Below are excerpts from his journal.

By Kendal Brown

We arrived at Mother of Peace Orphanage and were greeted by 80 singing, dancing, smiling children. Never in my life have I ever been the recipient of such unbridled love and hospitality.

Mother Jean who runs the orphanage is doing well and being the angel that only she can be. At almost 80 years of age, she is still driving tractors, feeding babies and being mother for the children that reside at MOP.

Over 10 years ago, Mother Jean retired from her job as a school teacher in London and returned to Zimbabwe to provide care and love for these 200 precious children most of which are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

If you've ever question the reality of miracles, question no more. In addition to the amazing care that MOP provides for the all of the orphaned children, it also operates a full-service free clinic for persons in the community.

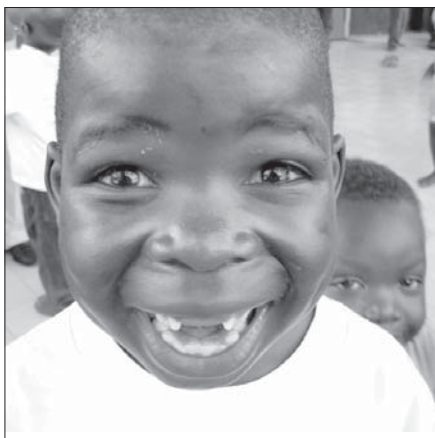
Our beloved Dr. Bob Scott, an HIV/AIDS specialist who runs a medical practice in Oakland, who serves as a deacon at Allen Temple, and who first introduced Bishop Yvette Flunder to Mother Jean and MOP, is doing the most amazing work that I've ever experienced in my entire life.

Persons begin lining up for treatment at the free clinic at around 5 a.m. They walk from miles and miles away. I honestly don't know how many of them survive the trip as frail as they are when they arrive.

On our first full day at MOP, Scott and Dr. Joya Heart who attends New Spirit Church in Berkeley, saw patients from 7 a.m. to 9 that evening. Without this clinic, thousands of individuals would be dead. Scott comes about every three months and brings boxes and boxes of AIDS drugs.

Upon our arrival, one of the first infants we met was baby Anthony. 11 months old, weighing less than 10 lbs. He had the biggest and brightest eyes that anyone has ever seen.

Baby Anthony's mother passed



Members of City of Refuge UCC, San Francisco, New Spirit UCC/MCC/DOC Berkeley and UCC health and wholeness staff people visited the Mother of Peace Orphanage in Zimbabwe in February, supported in part by Our Church's Wider Mission. Pictured: Bishop Yvette Flunder enjoying children of the orphanage, Director Mother Jean, boy whose life was saved by the orphanage.

from AIDS soon after he was born, and he was brought by social services to live at MOP. By the time he reached MOP, Baby Anthony was a very sick child.

Several members of our group bonded instantly with Baby Anthony, namely our sister Aretha from City of Refuge. For hours she held him, as he watched her every move.

At 3 a.m. that very next morning, Baby Anthony passed and entered into sweet rest. The community at MOP and all of us from the States were devastated. MOP has not experienced the death of a child in over a year.

Mother Jean and Scott were, of course, devastated and fought hard to figure out how and why they lost (in their minds) this precious child. But the amazing thing was that they did not stop working.

It was becoming increasingly apparent that we were supposed to be there and also that Baby Anthony had done exactly what God had put him on this earth to do, to change our lives in unimaginable ways.

Mother Jean announced that



— blessed be the name of the Lord.

The men of the community covered Baby Anthony's grave and then we witnessed indescribable beauty as the smallest of the children placed single flowers on Anthony's grave and sang the most beautiful songs of praise as they said goodbye to Anthony who was now among the ancestors.

Bear in mind that this was just our first full day at MOP. We spent the rest of our time at MOP holding children, playing, laughing, crying, listening to God's spirit — attempting feebly to share God's and our love.

We were fortunate to have with us several medical professionals. They were a tremendous blessing to the people at MOP and the surrounding countryside. There were so many children to hold and never enough arms or time.

We are all trying to find ways to process what we've witnessed and, in many ways, we know that there will be no resolve. But we are determined to wrestle with the questions — and most of all, we are motivated to work, even in the midst of our wrestling.

I will be sharing with all of you the ways in which we can all support the work of our beloved Mother Jean and the children of Mother of Peace. Mother Jean will be with us in California in December and you will have the opportunity to shower an angel with love and support for MOP.

We will also be shipping a container of much needed supplies from the Port of Oakland in the spring. Plan now to do whatever you can.

The drugs taken by the infected persons in Zimbabwe cost less than \$20 U.S. per month. We have NO reason not to give.

For the rest of our time there, we visited with our UCC partners in South Africa. Pray for us as we do God's bidding. We are indeed called to greatness and to save lives.

Signposts that guide my faith and hope

By Patricia de Jong

I find a window or a lens to God through the life and teaching of Jesus.

I find the Bible contains truth for life but is not the literal truth of God.

I recognize the truth of people who have other names for God and I give thanks for their witness to faith and their respect for mine,

I believe that science and religion are not at odds with each other, but lift up the mystery of an always-creating God.

I want to participate in an inclusive community who come as we are, with questions, doubts, dreams and wounds. I want to welcome all joyfully and without judgment.

I want to find more grace in searching than in certainty? I want to love the questions!

I believe that we are all called to equip and support one another for the work we are called to do in the world, like working with the poor and homeless, striving for peace and justice, standing strong against the death penalty, holding the line against torture and abuse of human rights, and restoring the integrity of God's creation.

Finally I believe that being a follower of Jesus is a joyful adventure, but a costly discipleship, demanding love, hope and bold humility.

My signposts are by no means conclusive or exhaustive. I offer them as a beginning of a conversation of what it means to be a "progressive, evangelical Christian with liberal and conservative leanings, who enjoys prayer, poetry and the psalms." And your signposts?

Patricia de Jong is senior pastor at First Congregational UCC, Berkeley.