



WANDERINGS



Inside each of us there is a noble heart.

This heart is the source of our finest aspiration for ourselves
and the world.

It fills us with the courage to act on our aspirations.

Our nobility may be obscured at times,
covered over with small thoughts or blocked by confused and
confusing emotions.

But a noble heart lies intact within each of us nonetheless,
ready to open and be offered to the world...

When we clear away all that blocks it, this heart can change the
world.

The 17th Karmapa
from "A Heart Is Noble"

Gratitude

I have heard of one fellow who was pushing his Volkswagen down the street, with the drivers window open so that he was able to steer as he trudged along. There was no gas station in the di-rection he was going, so a passer-by stopped to help.

"Do you need some gas?"

"No, I have plenty!"

"Would you like a push to a garage or may we take you for help?"

"No thanks, the car is O.K."

Silence. The passer-by was unable to think of any more obvious questions. Finally, he asked: *"Well, if I may ask, just why are you pushing your car along here?"*

"It's this way. I bought this car new several years ago, and it has given me 99,999 miles of trouble free happy driving. I thought that out of gratitude the nice thing to do would be for me to push it the last mile as it turns over 100,000..."

The fellow peered in the window, and sure enough, the odometer was just turning over to 100,000 miles.

I suppose I have been blessed with reliable cars. In my first ministry, I lived in the Bay Area, and there were many opportunities to spend time in San Francisco... when friends came to town, when family visited, or just to enjoy the magic of that City by the Bay. I re-member one time when my parents were with us, and my dad was espe-cially concerned about the brakes on my Volvo. I assured him that things were fine, but he seemed skeptical. On one very steep hill, it was-n't the brakes that gave me trou-ble, but the clutch. It seemed to slip and slip as we inched to the top. I think my dad was glad to get home to Southern California.

In RANDOM ACTS OF KIND-NESS I found this: *"You hear stories about tourists trying to drive in San Francisco all the time. I discovered a whole new twist one day when I was walking up a particularly steep hill and saw a car stopped near the top with a very frightened woman inside. As I watched, she made a few attempts to get moving but each time seemed to lose more ground that she gained. Then a man came out of the corner market. The next think I know, she gets out of the car and goes around to the passenger side while he climbs into the driver's seat and promptly drives the car up over the top of the dreaded hill. By then, I had reached the store where the helpful man's wife was standing, watching the proceedings. She told me that her husband, who owns the market, has been doing that for years, and that during the summer time — peak tourist season — he will "rescue" as many as ten scared drivers a week!"*



Happy Easter

Unfolding Light

"Easter sunrise service
we gather on snow frozen
hard.
We shiver and shuffle for
warmth.
The sun is late coming up
over the bare trees.

Resurrection seldom comes in
a flash,
Jesus in the flowery garden.
The woman in labor knows.
This path can only lead to life,
but it is a long one.
It takes time for God
to make sorrow into joy,
fear into wisdom,
love into victory,
death into life.
Justice gestates.
Only gradually, with great trust,
does this life become the next,
with much practice and failure,
many jugs of spices left again
beside the empty tomb.
Day by day the bread is kneaded,
the light folded into our hearts.

Don't stop watering the bare soil
where seeds lie working.

Christ is rising.
He is rising indeed."

Steve Garnaas-Holmes



Resurrection
seldom comes in a
flash...

Ritual

Each Sunday evening, as my high school youth group closed our meeting, we reached across the person on our left and on our right and clasped hands with the ones on the other side of them. With our stretched-out arms, we created an interwoven circle, and we prayed together, “May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Goodnight.” We would give one more squeeze of our hands and the meeting would be completed, the circle broken...until the next week.

It was a simple ritual, but for the three years that we were a part of the United Christian Fellowship, it sustained us and kept us connected to one another and to God. It was a simple but strong ritual that has stayed with me over 35 years. Each time I hear the scripture from Psalm 19 read or sung here at RUCC, I am transported through time and space and I am once again holding the hands of high school friends. I have no idea where Katie O’Daniel is, or whatever happened to Amy Wilbur or if Bruce Higdon is still the same as he was, and in those moments the present state of affairs



doesn’t matter. I am not connected to the 55-year-old versions of those people, but the 15, 16, 17 and 18 year olds who hold my hands and heart again in the hearing of those words.

Rituals...we don’t think or talk about them much. We sometimes, in our progressive protestant world, don’t even acknowledge their existence. However, I invite you to connect to the rituals of your spiritual journey, past and present. Hold on to them as touchstones. Talk about them and be open to the possibility that someone in the pew next to you may benefit from learning a new practice. A practice that could be both magical and miraculous!

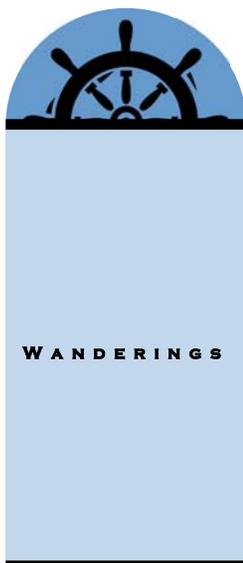
It’s a brief bit of time and soul travel, probably not even 30 seconds. However, for me, it is incredibly powerful retreat in its purest form. It’s magic! It’s a miracle! These few words, strung

together, connect my heart and soul to a safe and sacred place and by the time they are completed, I am renewed. (I always still add the word “goodnight” to the end of the scripture, so if you ever see me read this in church, you might notice this out-of-context word!)

In my “current” life I have rituals and practices that I know will stay with me always as well. Many of them were begun as a part of my journey with Redlands United Church of Christ. Before coming to this place I had never walked a labyrinth. Before this community, I didn’t know what “listening with delight” was. Now I know that for the rest of my walking days, when I walk a labyrinth anywhere in the world, the path at RUCC will come into my vision and the stones from the old church house will be under my feet. When I listen to heartfelt stories of people at work, at the grocery store or anywhere in the world, I will “listen

with delight” and our Summer Series, Lenten Series and Retreats will anchor me to RUCC as I journey. Such is the power of sacred ritual. They bind us to the Holy, to one another and more deeply to our own souls.

Barbie Fiske-Phillips



Spring

Spring is an awakening in nature, animal and human life in every part on planet earth, from the deserts to the mountain, the calleys to our gardens, from lands which experience extreme four seasons to California



were the seasons gently mingle into one another.

We become part of this amazing birth by allowing oneself to be in harmony of this brilliant awakening. Ones body, mind, and soul become renewed.

First we experience the anticipation of spring, then the tiniest signs of the beginning, like a little bud

bursting, the first tender pure light green leaves on the tree. We can meditate on this wonder to make this miracle last. Last week when I opened the blinds in my breakfast nook, one of the buds on my orchids

was any moment about to show its glory. I took the time to watch this miracle happen while having a cup of tea. My eyes became the time exposure of a camera. My whole being was only focused on

this wonder.

Rare flowers in remote areas left a life lasting impression upon me. As a young and growing child, when my father and I hiked the Swiss, Austrian, and German Alps, only in very high elevations we came across the starlike velvety soft Edelweiss. My heart still jumps of joy, when I become reminded

of this treasured experience.

When hiking our mountains, and I come across for the first time of the ble Canterbury Bells which I remembered seeing on the German trails, a happy smile embraced me. How is it possible that the same wild flowers grow continents apart? Also we find tiny little flowers in three or more colors huddled together climbing up the steep slope of the mountains. Who planted these exquisite gardens? Not to forget the yellow wallflower growing only on the edge of the trails, so we never get lost.

The other day a little two and a half year old girl with her mother had picked a hand full of yellow clover flowers in our church garden, and she passed one at a time with her gentle little hand to us church goers coming through the front door. - - - That was truly experiencing spring in our hearts.

Thank you God, creator of the universe, for these amazing blessings.

Helga Vroom



**We become part of
this amazing birth
by allowing oneself
to be in harmony of
this brilliant
awakening.**

From the editor's Ipad

With every good deed, breaking of the bread, sharing and witnessing, our heart unfolds to the world of love. It blossoms in infinite colors that scatter dark spaces with hope and joy. Our heart invites us to be present every moment to our lives and to others. When all else fails, it is our heart that keeps us going to places never fathomed. Isn't time to listen?

Katia Hage

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As the Redlands United Church of Christ, we are called by God to follow the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

We are an Open and Affirming community of faith, who value all people as the family of God. We love, nurture, support, and give hope to one another on the journey of faith, seeking God's will for our lives.

Led by the Holy Spirit, we reach out to serve, and to help heal the hurts of humanity and the world with caring justice to the glory of God.

We welcome all into the full life and ministry of this church.



Gratitude *(continued...)*

The world may get us down some days, but I believe what Ann Frank said: "I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart." For this I am truly grateful!

Rev. Dr. Stanley Smith