

Redlands United Church of Christ

Wanderings

May 2014



Christ is Risen!



Alleluia!

From the Editor's Ipad

Doors and Thresholds

Walking through the hallways and rooms of life, being invited in and inviting others to join or to leave, staying for a while and then maybe a while longer. Always leaving and entering through doors that open up to the unknown and the mysterious. Those doors have a well kept secret: that little space under its frame, the threshold: a moment of eternity in our lifetime where possibilities abound to go ahead, to come back, or even sometimes to linger under the protection of the beam. No wonder we in California run to the door when an earthquake happens. At the onsite of the shattering of our world, the threshold becomes the safest place to be in. But when the shaking has subsided, the choice awaits and it is time to move, for life never stops.

It helps to hear the stories of whom the years have left their marks on their faces and hands. So listen to the story of Charles with its goings and comings, the different choices he made and how life was always generous with him in many different ways. It helps also to take time to listen to God, a time for pilgrimage or a retreat, when the veil is thin and our hearts open to receive as Jim so nicely recounts. And it helps to know that Mary, the mother of God, mother of joys and sorrows walks with us leading us to God the infant and the grown-up. As Rev. Sally tells us, our hearts will be delighted and our burden lightened with our mother by our side.

The doors and thresholds abound in all different sizes and colors, picking one is only half the story. Going through or not makes all the difference. – *Katia Hage*

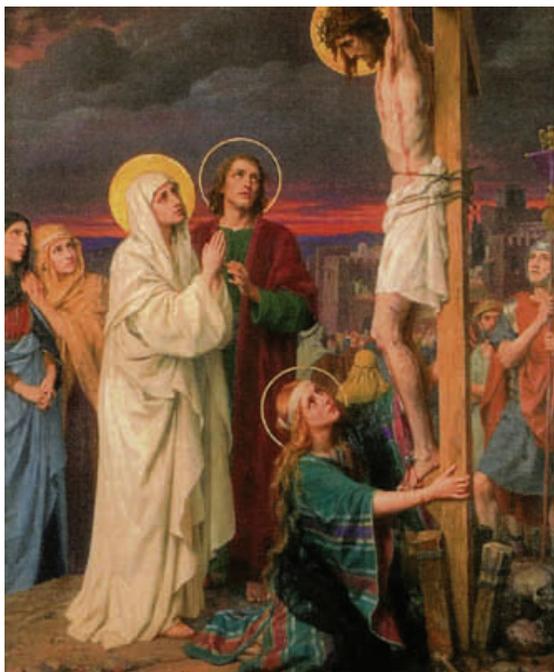


Jesus' Mother...

Mary, mother of Sorrows

“When Katia Hage invited me to write something about how Jesus’ mother, Mary as a part of my spiritual life, I considered that as protestants we often contemplate Mary during Advent and Christmas. She is not necessarily a large focus for us in other seasons. That being said, I think that Mary can be a wonderful soul companion during the season of Lent. There are many things to notice and learn from Mary as we journey through this season of self examination and hope for spiritual transformation.

In the gospel of Luke, Mary seems to be a woman who thinks for herself, even though in the culture of her day and time she was considered the property of her father and then her husband. In Luke’s story the angel Gabriel speaks directly to Mary and she makes her own decision. She then traveled without the expected male escort to her cousin Elizabeth’s home to share the joy and wonder of their unexpected pregnancies. We can suppose that Mary had a relationship with God that caused her to trust in God’s invitation to conceive and bear her son, Jesus. It doesn’t seem too much of a stretch of the imagination to think that Mary had prior experience with the trustworthiness of God. It seems as though she knew she could depend upon God to always be with her, whatever might lay ahead.



The fact that God’s grace is freely given to ordinary people is something that we can share with Mary. There is nothing we can do to earn God’s grace. We need only be open to receiving it, as Mary was. Mary models a life that was buoyed by God’s grace and steadfast presence. That kind of faith can see us through the long haul as it did for her. It doesn’t mean that things will always be easy, but it gives us strength and hope, even in the hard times. Mary is someone who was present from Jesus’ birth until his death on the cross and the journey was sometimes frightening and painful. As we journey with her through Lent, she has much to share.

Mary said “yes” to God’s invitation even though she had some questions unanswered. She was not yet married to her betrothed husband, Joseph. She would be open to terrible scandal within her culture as an unmarried pregnant woman. She was probably a very young teenager at the time. Still she said yes, trusting God to see her through. Like Mary, we can’t always know how things will unfold as we do our best to walk with God and to follow God’s promptings. How nice it would be to have our next steps clearly mapped out when we are asking God for answers. Many times it is not until we look back on our journey that we see God’s guidance more clearly.

Mary, mother of Sorrows

Mary pondered things and lived with her questions. That is a good companion to have on a Lenten journey of self reflection and discovery. Mary was a good disciple who was faithful to Jesus, as she sought to have greater understanding of his life and mission. She never assumed that she had all the answers and that is a good role model for us as we seek greater clarity in this season.

In the season of Lent we walk with Mary during the most painful time of her life. The angels, shepherds and Magi of the Christmas season are in the past and now Mary travels the lonely road to the cross. In John's gospel she is there at the inauguration of Jesus' ministry with new wine at the wedding of Cana. We are reminded of that as Jesus is given a taste of sour wine during his last moments on the cross. Mary was there, standing at the foot of the cross with the beloved disciple, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the wife of Clopas.

As disciples in our day and time, we will remember Jesus' journey to Calvary and in our minds and hearts we'll stand with Mary and the others. It is a time to ponder as Mary did and to feel sorrow over the powers that killed Jesus. In those last moments Jesus forged a new relationship between Mary and the beloved disciple as mother and son. They would now care for one another in a new family bond.

Some say that in this scenario, Mary represents the church or the new community of Jesus' followers that was forming. The new community will need the insight of beloved disciples, just as we do today in order to flourish and to grow. The wisdom, stories and grace that have been cherished and passed on through the centuries by the great cloud of witnesses is our legacy. The relationship between Mary and the beloved disciple reminds us that community is



an important aspect of our Christian faith. The body of Christ is strengthened by the many parts that we all bring. We find wisdom, strength, solace and insight within the Christian community.

In Acts 1: 14 we learn that Mary was present in Jerusalem with other disciples after Jesus' crucifixion. It is good to picture her standing with the others as the Holy Spirit poured forth at Pentecost. She was always there, a disciple who did her best to walk with Jesus and to follow God's invitations; from Jesus' birth, to the crucifixion to the day of Pentecost as the new community took root. We can learn from her as we also wrestle with questions and journey toward the transformation that God wants to offer us as we move towards Easter.

Rev. Dr. Sally Burton

The Inward Journey— *Retreats and Pilgrimages*

Why?

Retreats and pilgrimages: Much has been made of these over the years at Redlands United Church of Christ. Nearly everyone who participates in one comes back with high regard for the experience. Yet many who have not



participated question the validity of the time and “trouble” it takes to go on one. The questioning is valid and so I herein offer my opinion (in the positive) of the experience.

But first let me differentiate between a pilgrimage and a retreat (at least how I perceive it). A pilgrimage involves travel to a special “holy” or sanctified” place. Some place like Jerusalem, or Lourdes, or the isle of Iona. For followers of Islam it would be Mecca.

In my mind, a pilgrimage does not necessarily involve a retreat. Though a retreat may be done in conjunction with one. Pilgrimage is primarily travel to a sacred place in order to connect with its spirituality. A retreat, on the other hand, does not necessarily involve travel. One can retreat at home, or at church, or in the mountains, the desert or at the beach. A retreat involves literally

withdrawing from the noise, pressure and social demands of our modern society. It is a time to reconnect with our true selves, our inner-selves

and to allow our spirit to awaken to the voice of the great “I am!” All the great spiritual teachers of all the major faith traditions emphasize the need to get

away from the distractions of every-day exist-

ence. Thus the common choice of a mountain, desert or ocean shore. The noise of our culture/society prevents us from truly clearing our minds; from hearing the “still, small voice” when it speaks. How can anyone engage in deep prayer when the phone is ringing, the sky is a roar with jets and people are constantly interrupting your daily routine in order to unload their’s on you?

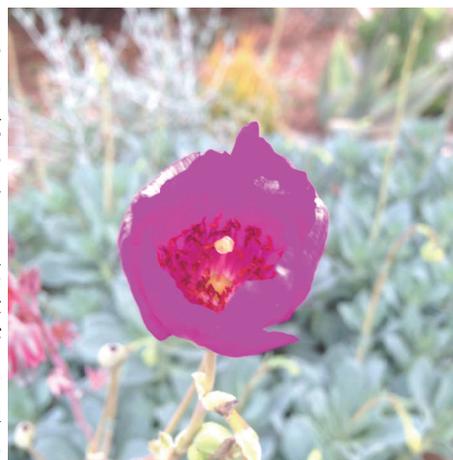
Anthony de Mello, S.J., in his book *Sadhana: A way to God*, explains well why we need remoteness -- aloneness. “Closeness to nature helps most people to pray -- and helps them substantially. People have their preferences, of course: the seashore with the sound of the waves beating against the sand, or a quietly flowing river, or the stillness of a lake, or the peace of a mountaintop... Has it ever struck you that Jesus, that master in the art of prayer, would take the trouble to walk up a mountain in order to pray? Like all great contemplatives he was aware that our place of prayer influences the quality of our prayer. Most of us, unfortunately, live in surroundings that cut us off from nature. And the places we are forced to choose for prayer are, alas, drab and uncondusive to lifting our spirits to God. All the more reason to expose ourselves long and lovingly to places that help us to pray whenever we get the chance.

Retreats and Pilgrimages

Take time out to soak in the atmosphere of a moonlit night or a seashore or a mountain retreat. You can carry it around in your heart and even though you may be far from these places geographically you will have them vividly etched in your memory and will be able to visit them in fantasy."

For some, aloneness is equated with loneliness. They are NOT the same. Aloneness simply allows you the time to get back in touch with yourself -- truly in touch with yourself. (And that can be a scary thing -- at first.) We are so used to being "busy" all the time that we... well let me just say that we too often let the urgent take precedence over the important. How often have you or someone you know said "I don't even have time to think." Sometimes you feel like everything is driving you crazy. Each of us needs to stop the "madness" and find a quiet, calm space and time. One of the odd things about a retreat is that for the first day or so one can feel bored silly. We come to it wanting peace and quiet but are so used to the incessant noise that we have a bit of withdrawal syndrome. But gradually you begin to relax and decompression follows.

To retreat is not to run away. It is to allow you to turn off the cell phone and the TV and to let people know you will not be available for a period of time. It will drive them crazy but it will help you to regain your own sanity. Retreating into aloneness and possibly silence allows you to truly and deeply think about the "great questions" or about a particularly inspiring article or book you have read. It may allow an original thought of your own to bloom and turn into action. It allows you to pray from the deepest well of the soul and to listen for an answer. The answer may not be what you expected but without aloneness and/or silence you will never hear it.



Retreats engender thought. Thought is powerful. The late Bertrand Russell said of thought: "Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth, more than rain, more even than death. Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible; thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habit. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid."

Remote places of aloneness are places of great natural beauty. The hand of man has not been at work there (or at least lightly so). Can you look on a scene of vast natural beauty and not feel lifted up, feel inspired? When I was on retreat in the Nada Retreat Center in Crestone, Colorado last November I often spent time in their small but impressive library. Sitting by the fireplace one evening I found my mind a complete blank and out of that blankness came a compulsion to get up and look to the west. The photo below inadequately portrays what I saw -- and nothing of what I felt.

God is still speaking. Retreats give you the time, the quiet, the aloneness to listen. Retreats are challenging, sometimes a little intimidating, and enlightening. They enable you to be open to hear the voice that has no sound yet travels beyond the end of the universe.

So gentle reader, if you feel called to retreat don't hesitate. You will return refreshed in body, mind and spirit.

Jim Sommer

The Outward Journey

Charlie Wheeler and Music History...From a novice point of view...

I guess music in my life was started from my mother. She played the piano, what she called seconding, I guess really cording, my uncle played bass and a friend would stop by named Merle Travis who played guitar. We are talking country music, in southern Indiana and Kentucky. Merle later became a well known country music entertainer and played for many cowboy movies. He had a friend named Chet Adkins that he showed the three finger picking rhythm. (Travis Pickin')

My first step into "music" was as a member of a color guard as bugler, in the 7th & 8th grade in Evansville, Indiana. When I went to Central High School, I took piano lessons for the next 4 years. Played in two "Big Broadcasts" playing two, what I called Piano Fantasy I and II. What I put together was a beginning of a classical piece, then into boogie woogie and finished with a standard. e.g., Moonlight Sonata, Bumble Boogie and finished with Embraceable you.

The next encounter was singing tenor with a gospel quartet and of course in the church choir at an Evangelical United Brethren Church (Now a United Methodist Church)

While at Evansville College is spent most of my study time in the Union Building Music Room and playing classical music quite often, and I guess where my love of classical music really began.

The next encounter was while in the Air Force singing in a Men Chorus and being stationed near a place called Tanglewood, Nathaniel Hawthorne's old home and now the summer home of the Boston Symphony and Pops. This was a time when Arthur Fiedler was conductor of the Pops and Seiji Ozawa was conductor of the Symphony. Spend a lot of time listening and involved in the working of the summer home of some of the finest musicians in the US. I was reassigned in 1966 after almost 6 years near this wonderful place and didn't return to the Boston area until 1978 as Commander of a 2500 personnel unit in downtown Boston and was on the Boston Federal Executive Board and involved with businesses and the Boston Symphony.

I left Boston in 1982, and after a brief assignment in Dayton, OH I was reassigned to a remote island in the Pacific called Oahu. When it came time to decide where to retire from the Air Force, Betty and I found that we were sending more Christmas cards to Redlands than any other places, including our "home town" Evansville, IN. We were in Redlands from 1970 - 1974. In 1986, we decided to return to Redlands and make that our "home". Actually, it was a decision about, heavy wet snows and hot muggy summers...no contest..Redlands won. As Dr. Jeff Rickard has said, "Redlands is addictive".

Charlie Wheeler and Music History...from a novice point of view.

When we were settled in Redlands, our old friends the James' suggested that we go to the Redlands Symphony, and finally we did... Although we had our noses in the air about being involved with the Boston Orchestras. We were very impressed with the music and the musicians. They are the finest in the US, and that may be, in some cases, an understatement. We found ourselves supporting the orchestra in every way..as Board Members and Gala Committee members. I have had the pleasure of being on the Redlands Symphony Board for 13 of the last 14 years

Getting to know these fine musicians was and is a real pleasure. What I found out is that Redlands very much supports the arts as does RUCC. With that belief I am happy to support the musicians and share my joy with a church that appreciates not only the visual arts but the aural arts as well. I hope the Church enjoys the music from these professionals when we can get on their schedules. While we have some very fine musicians in our congregation, I hope they also enjoy hearing from the professionals .



In Memoriam

Let us keep in our prayers and thoughts

Janie Hurley

Opal Inman

Steve Chapman

all our loved ones who have passed away...

their families, and friends ...

Amen and Blessed Be ...

*For what is it to die but to stand
naked in the wind and to melt into
the sun?*

*And what is it to cease breathing,
but to free the breath from its rest-
less tides, that it may rise and ex-
pand and seek God unencumbered?*

The Prophet

Gibran Khalil Gibran



Birthdays

- 3 Joanna Ballard
- 5 Deborah Stanley
- 8 Janet Chandler
- 10 Glenn Rouse
- 12 Dan Wacks
- 14 Sondra Hodson
- 16 Jane Arnegrad, Floyd Orr
- 17 Jose Negrete Jr., Natalie Wiedlin
- 18 Georgia Sforza
- 21 Paul Hodson, Kate Morics
- 23 Helen Arth
- 27 Bill Buchanan
- 29 Kara Greene
- 30 Kristi Campbell



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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.

www.uccredlands.org

