



Volume 36 Issue 3

March 2017

Curran Reichert, Minister

Notes from the Pastor

The difference between presence and performance

Early on in ministry I was asked one question repeatedly. When it became known that I had a performance background people would ask “what is the difference between preaching and performing?”

It took me a long time to figure out what that question was really about. At the heart of it was that people didn't want to be snookered. They wanted to believe that what I might have to say from the pulpit would be genuine. They weren't interested in being dazzled (although let's be honest, who doesn't love a little dazzle?) they wanted to be companioned; honestly and thoughtfully.

The truth is - and I can say this now, seventeen years into this career - any good church is also good theater. Ritual whether it is at Berkeley Rep or Chartres Cathedral is about sight, sound, timing and flow. Celebrating the presence of God in a service every Sunday ought to engage all the senses much in the way a concert or a play does. In fact, long before there were church buildings, there were traveling passion plays.

Now when the faithful gather each week across the world it is about creating a container for the participants to rest into. If a pastor, musicians and liturgists are well rehearsed those who come to worship experience seamlessness; a saturation in the art form that is church. This is a rich and worthy tradition and I find great satisfaction in the ways in which performing and pastoring overlap. The difference is that worship is not a spectator sport, but an opportunity for everyone to engage with the Holy and with each other. That is the most fulfilling part.

I speak with a ministry coach once a month and this month he asked me to consider the difference between presence and performance. He didn't mean stage performance. He meant the ways in which people often judge a pastor's performance; how many people did she visit, how many sermons did he preach, did she attend the meetings, did he write the newsletter etc. Those are the performance aspects of ministry. And even though pastors are often regarded for their performance in ministry, performance is not the heart of ministry.

The heart of ministry is *presence*. So Kent, that is the name of my coach who lives in Maine and has been in ministry since Jesus was a baby, asked me if I felt I had been *present* to the church in these first seven months. And then he asked me to explain what that felt like.

I reflected on our Sunday services, Stone Soup, Seven Sacred Pauses, meetings with team members, our conversations about Sacred Symbols and as I did I felt my heart gladden. I thought about getting to know the people on the Equity and Justice task force, and the clients and leaders of the Sonoma Overnight Shelter. I thought about my weekly meetings getting to know Rabbi Steve and monthly meetings with the Sonoma Valley Ministerial Association. And I realized that not only had I experienced being deeply *present* in these last months but I have been met by the authentic *presence* of others.

This was a helpful shift in my thinking, to gage one's success not by their performance or what gets done in a day, but by how *present* we were for and with each other.

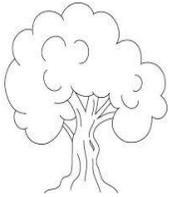
Let's practice that together this coming month, the art of being *present*.

Peace,
Curran

COMMITTEES AND LAY MINISTRIES

Earth Care Committee

- The next Earth Care Committee nature walk will be Monday, March 13, from 9 - 11:30 a.m. If you are not on the ECC's notification email list for these monthly nature walks and wish to be, email John Donnelly at (donnellyj63@gmail.com).
- Save the Date: Saturday, April 29 - The committee will be organizing with other local groups a People's Climate Mobilization March at the Plaza. This is a "sister" march in solidarity with nationwide "People's Climate Marches" being organized by 350.org on the same date. Stronger together!
- The Committee will host an **Earth Care Festival** on Earth Day, **Saturday, April 22**, from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. here on the FCC campus. Partnering with Crop Walk, Transition Sonoma Valley, Praxis Peace, and others, the Festival will feature conservation information, advice on green home cleaning and garden weed control, activities for children, Farmers Market produce, drumming and other music, and delicious food to buy. Are you interested in helping organize the Festival? Volunteers are welcome and appreciated! Contact Elizabeth Griego at egriego@pacific.edu or call 209-470-2557.



Monthly Hint from the Earth Care Committee

Half of the energy used in your home goes toward heating and cooling. You can be earth friendly and save money this winter by conscientiously lowering the thermostat by 1 degree from where you normally set it (vice versa for summer). Be sure to lower it 10 degrees when you are not at home or are sleeping.

- John Donnelly and Elizabeth Griego

Ministerial Relations Committee

The newly formed MRC is now in place. Our mission is to act as a sounding board and to offer support for Pastor Curran so that she can thrive in her ministry with and among us. It is important to remember that Curran and her family are experiencing their first year in a new home, a new school district, a new town, a new church community and new jobs. That is a whole lot of new! The MRC strives to provide a safe place for Curran to share her experiences of the blessings and challenges of this transition. Our conversations are honest and kind and confidential.

We are heartened by all the joy and energy Curran has brought to our Sunday worship services. It's hard to believe she has been with us just six short months. Through our conversations we get a glimpse into the many responsibilities that our pastor carries beyond her inspirational preaching and worship leadership. She serves as pastor, counselor, teacher, staff supervisor, community outreach representative, organizational leader, and so much more. Curran's open and invitational style makes room for many voices. Our church is blessed by the gifts of other clergy and lay folks who treasure the opportunity to preach and share their own spiritual journey with us. Their gifts provide time and space for Curran to focus on these other aspects of her ministry to the benefit of individuals and our entire church body.

As we grow to know one another more deeply and begin to envision how much more we can be, we all must remember to breathe and to celebrate the newness and possibilities that are just ahead. When things seem a bit uncomfortable or unfamiliar, we need to practice patience and remain open to the Spirit to see where we will go together. If you have concerns or questions for Curran, she invites a conversation with you. You are also welcome to talk with any of us on the MRC. Our journey is underway. May we be surprised by joy and Spirit Sightings along the way.

The MRC consists of Susan Kelchner, Elizabeth Griego, Nancy Denkin, Ellen LaBruce, and Jan Edwards.

- Susan Kelchner

Peace Committee

The Peace Committee is planning its next meeting on Sunday, March 12 in the Community Room. It will begin 15 minutes after the service and last for an hour (or about 12:00 - 1:00 pm). We have identified the below topics as possible study areas, and perhaps you have others to add. Please come with your ideas, plus be ready to prioritize the topics you most want to learn about. Areas of study so far:

- A. Military service; is war ever justified? *Context* - The current climate of fear. Military weapons and the defense budget. Nuclear disarmament.
- B. Death penalty and other forms of legal killing.
- C. Economic Justice: Local aspects such as Living Wage, Housing Justice, Sonoma Overnight Support, Affordable health care. Socially responsible shopping and investing.
- D. White privilege, our benefit from the status quo, and what it suggests for attitude and action.
- E. Building bridges across cultures in our community, working with NBOP, El Verano School, and the Latino community.
- F. Relationship building within the church: positive interaction, trust. Combine with conflict resolution, civil discussion practices, and nonviolent communication.
- G. Law Enforcement/ interface with minorities: Black/Brown Lives Matter, Native Americans, Immigration/sanctuary, etc.
- H. Voting Rights of the disenfranchised, barriers to voting.
- I. Environmental issues.
- J. Other?

Peace committee members are Ellen LaBruce (co-chair with Brian Smucker who will be away), Janice Mattison, and Dick Ridenhour

- Janice Mattison

Social Action Team

Moments of Mission: Cristen Kelso did an education piece on Feb. 5 regarding Teen Center Sonoma. She told us what is happening and mentioned all the ways we have supported her. One Great Hour of Sharing, our Lenten offering, will be March 26.

Immigration Help: We are trying to find ways of taking positive action to help our neighbors in need, perhaps driving folks to the Immigration Office in San Francisco or Santa Rosa. Stay tuned.

Come and See: We have been working with the North Bay Organizing Project to try to come together with other groups in our current struggle for fairness and equity. A meeting is planned at El Verano School on March 26, from 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. for an introduction to community organizing.

Civic Roundtable: We think there are folks who need to express their feelings, thoughts, information, fears, etc. about what is happening in politics. We will offer a chance for discussion in the Community Room right after the Sunday service. We will continue as we see this need.

How Can We Help?: We, as individuals and as a committee, need to watch for ways to love each other in our community and for ways to help. We need to speak up as Christians and be available as needed.

- Janice Mattison



Education Committee

Education Committee Happenings:

We invite everyone to our Lenten Series: *Seeking Solid Ground: Sermons from great preachers in times of deep turmoil!* Facilitated by Curran Reichert and Alan Kelchner, this series will be held on three Wednesdays in March: 1, 5, and 15 from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the Community Room.

We also invite you to the Eve Decker offerings of mindfulness, kindness, and song in like-minded community - a remedy for these times. They will be held on Sunday, March 12 and Sunday May 14, 4-5:30 p.m. in Burlingame Hall. A \$15 donation is suggested.

Correction to the 2016 Annual Report:

I would like to correct an item in the 2016 Education Committee's Annual Report. It was mistakenly reported that our Child Care provider, Sara Kenton (hired in August), had made a choice to no longer serve in her capacity as Child Care provider. What actually happened was that a vote to discontinue the Child Care position occurred at the Church Council's December meeting. With almost no infants attending Sunday services, and in an effort to meet the proposed 2017 budget, cuts needed to be made. Council made this decision and the Congregation voted to approve it. Our deepest appreciation and best wishes to both Sara and Emily Webber as they move through their full and final year at the High School.

- Kathy Jewell



Happy March Birthday!

- 5 – Annika Baumgarten
- 6 – Candi Horton
- 10 – Bill Hutchinson
- 16 – Patricia Serota
- 27 – Dotty Abbott
- 29 – Mary Cort
- 30 – Jan Edwards

From Your Moderator

Our Council and Committee Chairs came together for our semi-annual Leadership Conference on Saturday the 25th. We met to review the events and feelings of the past several months and to look ahead to the challenges and opportunities of this coming year. We had a lively and productive discussion. It was also a great opportunity for your leaders to get to know each other better and enjoy fellowship together. One challenge that rose to the top is achieving a unified and joyful coming together in our renovated sanctuary. We will be focusing our energy on moving toward that blessing together.

At the close of the meeting, I informed the group that I am stepping down as your Moderator. For some time, Adele and I have been wrestling with feelings of a need for a transition in our spiritual journey, and in the past several months we've felt that we were ready to move on to the next step in that journey. I intended to fulfill my term as Moderator and have been working with my best efforts to do that. But Curran and I have both come to realize that I have not had the full engagement and focus that I should, and that she needs and deserves. So we have agreed that it is time to make this change.

Fortunately, our vice moderator, Elizabeth Griego, is ready, willing, and more than able to step into this position, lead you and be the partner Curran needs. I am pleased that you will be in such good hands.

Adele and I love this church, the congregation, and the many great friends we have made here. All have been an important part of our spiritual journey. We are grateful for the love and friendship you have shown to us, and hope that these doors will remain open to us and the friendships will continue in the future. Best wishes and many blessings to you all.

Ray

Mark Your Calendars

Welcome to Lent, Beloved!

I know it is not traditionally a very upbeat season, but this year the worship team has some wonderful surprises in store. Lent is a season for reflection and contemplation. We will host two services in Burlingame Hall:

* **Ash Wednesday Taize, March 1, at 7 p.m. in the Community Room**

* **Maundy Thursday, April 13, at 7 p.m. in Burlingame Hall** – A soup supper and service in the style of Taize.

We hope these services will serve as bookends to the journey further into your own spiritual awareness. The Sunday services will center on familiar stories of transformation in the biblical text.

Adam/Eve in the garden of abundance, Nicodemus exploring rebirth, the woman at the well restored to community, the blind man whose sight is restored, and Lazarus restored to life! You guessed it, the theme is restoration and renewal. Hope to see you all in church. *Rev. Curran and the Worship Team*

Seeking Solid Ground: Sermons from great preachers in times of deep turmoil!

March 1, 8, and 15, 10:30 a.m.–noon, Community Room

Facilitated by Curran Reichert and Alan Kelchner. We are moving through a time of shifting sands nationally. I am hearing regularly from people that the most challenging thing we face daily is how to find our own center of gravity. Perhaps this is true for you? For three weeks in March, Rev. Alan Kelchner and I will lead the group through provocative sermons designed to inspire courage in moments of despair and transition. We hope you will join us for the adventure and together we will ground ourselves in the Word and the wisdom of Love. All are welcome to one or all of the classes.

Don't forget – "Writing to Remember!"

Monday, March 20, at 7 p.m. in the Community Room, and every third Monday of the month. Hosted by Garen Patterson.

Sonoma Overnight Support (SOS) provides:

Emergency Shelter

The Haven is a 10-bed home, in operation since 2007, serving low-income adult men, women, and families who lack stable housing.

Hot Meals

We work with The Brown Baggers, volunteers who prepare and distribute burritos or sandwich lunches at The Haven and several other Sonoma locations.

Drop-In Help

This community service offers counseling, referrals to other agencies, computer use, laundry services, showers, and hot meals. For resident and non-resident clients.

As a member of the board of directors, Curran would like to encourage people to check out the Sonoma Overnight Shelter webpage. Give it a scroll, and remember to share it as reference.

<http://www.sonomaovernightsupport.org>

Mary Cort's 90th Birthday Reception
Wednesday, March 29

El Dorado Restaurant, Sonoma

Join Mary's family as they celebrate their
mother and our friend.

5:30-7:00 p.m. - Appetizers, Wine, Beer, Soda

7:00-7:30 p.m. - All About Mary!

7:30-8:00 p.m. - Toast! Birthday Dessert

Cards Only Please!

RSVP: Betsy at 360-460-7848
or Mary Jo Koepke at 530-400-1502.

March

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 First day of Lent 10:30 am Seeking Solid Ground – CR 12:30 pm CR Education Comm. 7 pm CR Ash Wednesday service	2 5:15 pm CR Bell Choir 7:00 pm CR Church Council	3 8:00 am CR Meditation	4
5 9:00 am CR Practicing Presence 10:30 am Worship and Coffee Hour BH Tim Boeve preaching	6 4:00 pm Poetry	7 11:00 am CR Stone Soup 12:15 pm CR Social Action Team 4:30 pm CR Earth Care Committee 7:00 pm BH Choir	8 10:30 am Seeking Solid Ground – CR 12:30 pm CR Caring Friends	9 10 am Peace Committee – Brian Smucker’s home 5:15 pm CR Bell Choir 7:00 pm CR Worship Comm.	10 8:00 am CR Meditation	11
12 10:30 am Worship and Coffee Hour BH 12 pm CR Peace Committee discussion	13 7:00 pm CR Seekers	14 10:00 am CR Peace Committee 11:00 am CR Stone Soup 12:00 pm CR Women’s Fellowship 4:00 pm CR Earth Care Committee 7:00 pm BH Choir	15 10:30 am Seeking Solid Ground – CR	16 10:00 am CR Property and Finance 7:00 pm BH Bell Choir	17 8:00 am CR Meditation	18
19 9:00 am CR Practicing Presence 10:30 am Worship and Coffee Hour BH	20 7:00 pm CR Writing to Remember	21 11:00 am CR Stone Soup 7:00 pm BH Choir	22	23 5:15 pm CR Bell Choir	24 8:00 am CR Meditation	25
26 10:30 am Worship and Coffee Hour BH One Great Hour of Sharing 12 pm Peace Committee – Brian Smucker’s home	27 7:00 pm CR Seekers	28 11:00 am CR Stone Soup 7:00 pm BH Choir	29	30 5:15 pm CR Bell Choir	31 8:00 am CR Meditation	

First Congregational Church of Sonoma
252 West Spain St., Sonoma, CA 95476
707- 996-1328 · contact@sonomaucc.org · www.sonomaucc.org
Office Hours: Tuesday - Thursday, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Sunday Worship Service and Sunday School - 10:30 a.m.

We are an Open and Affirming Earth Care Church

Music Director: Terry Lezama-Jensen

Pianist: Stephanie Ozer

Office & Event Manager: Angela Ljung

Facilities Manager: John Shinnick

Pastor Emeritus: David McCracken

West Spain Thrift Shop

Store Hours:

Thursday and Saturday from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Donation drop-off hours:

Regular store hours, and Monday, Tuesday, and Friday
from 9 a.m.-11 a.m.