

Good News



Community Presbyterian Church

February, 2010

From the Pastor

A little wonder can work wonders.

I think this is the best time of the year to enjoy the stars. Yes, it can be cold, but the air is clear, sometimes clear enough to perceive the colors of individual stars. (Have you ever noticed that Betelgeuse, sounds like “beetle juice,” the star in Orion’s right shoulder, is reddish?) And during the winter some of the brightest stars and most easily recognizable constellations are high in the sky, Orion, and the Twins, and the Big Dog, to name a few. I love the winter sky.

But for more than a week the stars have been in hiding. At least I think they were, but I didn’t even look up for fear of catching a faceful of rain. Finally today was clear and we were able to enjoy the sunshine. But tonight, ah tonight, the stars are out, even with the waxing moon. I had to catch my breath it was so beautiful. The wonder of it all! And I came back into the house refreshed and invigorated.

A little wonder can work wonders.

For me the wonder is not limited to the beauty and the breadth that my eyes can perceive. I have learned a little about the stars. I know that all the stars I see are part of one galaxy, our Milky Way. And I know that there are as many other galaxies in the universe as there are stars in the sky. Can you imagine? I have tried to. And when I do, I feel so small (in comparison), but also so big (because I can imagine something so big). I know that the light I can see on a very clear night has originated in the past, only about 8 years ago from Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, but a couple of million of years ago from the Andromeda Nebula. I’ve tried to imagine time on this scale as well, to see hundreds and thousands of years all in one glance. And when I do I feel that my life is short,

in comparison to all this time I can see, but also that time is full, gathered together somehow in my imagination.

My knowledge of the stars is not extensive, but I have lived with it for many years and it has sunk deep within my being. And my imaginings are just imaginings, but they too have been with me for years and have become part of my consciousness. So on a night like tonight when I look up into the sky I see the beauty of stars on a clear night and I also experience—without having to think about it—the immensity of the universe and the long flow of time. I am surrounded simply by these stars and this moment. And when the moment passes I am left with a feeling of wonder. And I am also left with a wonderful feeling that life is good, a miracle, and that I am at home in this amazing universe.

A little wonder can work wonders.

I probably should mention God here, since this is a church newsletter and I am a pastor. And it is okay for me to talk about God now, now that the initial experience of wonder is past. God was in the wonder, and God was communicating to me in the wonder. I know that God created this immense and ancient universe, and each of the billions of billions of stars in it. And I know that God somehow set time in motion (or set everything in motion and we call that “time”). And this knowledge lies deep within me as well.

Yet if, under the stars, I should mention God, or think about the speed of light, or recall that the star in Orion’s shoulder is named Betelgeuse, I would step out of the moment and lose the wonder. Sometimes talking about God can get in the way of experiencing God. As for me, I’d rather experience God.

Pastor Mark

Ash Wednesday

February 17

6:00 — World Famous Potato Bar
7:00 — Service of Ashes



Service of Ashes



Lent SUPPERS

Thursday Evening Get-Togethers

Every Thursday in Lent

6 pm — Supper
7 pm — Study

February 24 supper hosted by the
Brown Bag Ladies

February Birthdays

- 4 P. J. Hetland
- 9 David Todd
- 27 Jim Conrad

February Anniversaries

- 13 Blair & Jessica Wallace
- 14 Dottie & LeRoy Gray
- 20 John & Alice Schlak
- 24 Aaron & Magali Hollingsworth



...HOW WIDE AND LONG
AND HIGH AND DEEP
IS THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS 3:18, NIV



A Note of Thanks

from Pastor Mark & Nancy

We want to thank the congregation for the monetary gift we received at the Christmas Dinner. We used it to upgrade to a flat-screen HD TV.

Thank you!



“So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is Love, and (s)he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in her/him.” I John 4: 16

February, of course is Valentine’s month, and love is in the air!!!

Mark and I are preparing to fly to Seattle this weekend to attend our niece’s wedding. Both new college graduates, the bride and groom are fresh from roommates, final tests and job hunting.

Last summer we flew to Kawai, Hawaii, to attend our nephew’s wedding. This couple is a bit older and decided to marry after having lived together for some years in New York City.

I am struck by the contrasts of these family weddings, and the beauty and constancy of love.

More generally, in observing how “opposites attract” I find the thrill of adventure and joy when people who seem very different from one another on the surface find companionship and affection leading to love. In fact, men and women *are*, in my experience, fundamentally opposite in so many ways. Yet finding one’s soul-mate not only complements, but completes the other. The very thing that seems like an obstacle can become an attribute.

Even when we are as different from one another as the climates in Seattle and Hawaii, God pours out his love to each of us, and he delights in how we love one another, showing respect and tolerance toward those whom we may not even understand. Once again, our differences can be a catalyst toward a positive outcome.

At lunchtime today a work friend who grew up

in a small village in Guyana, shared how elders from his community who attended a family wedding in Central Park did not understand why the bride and groom rented a classic Rolls for their wedding, when they had a good new car at home. Similarly, my landlady in Japan was puzzled when I was thrilled with an antique wooden wall clock containing a chime and key-wound works. She brought out her new battery-powered plastic clock as a superior clock to admire. We were both very happy with our own clock and allowed the other the same right.

Both anecdotes make me smile. Not only is it impossible, it is undesirable for us all to be alike or to convince someone else we are right and they are wrong.

Recently my three year old grandson asked me how I got fat. I told him slowly. On the phone this week he told me he loves me. As usual, kids get it. If he is skinny and I am fat it is OK to still love each other. That’s it and that’s all.

Maybe we adults can learn from the wisdom of children. We don’t have to pretend that we are all the same to care for each other. God knew what he was doing when he made each one of us to be uniquely ourselves.

Happy Valentine’s Day.

I love you!

Nancy



COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

399 Sixth Street
Gustine, CA 95322
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Gustine, CA 95322

Sunday School, 9:00 AM — Worship, 10:30 AM

Pastor — Mark Hollingsworth

Treasurer — Dorothy Gray; Choir Director — Jim Conrad

Secretary — Med Hoover; Parish Nurse — Nancy Hollingsworth

Office Hours — 9:00-Noon, Wednesday, Thursday and by appointment

Telephone: (209) 854-6772; email: cpc-gustine@earthlink.net

Web Site: www.wefollowjesusingustine.org



Sunday, **February 7**, we will set out a soup pot to collect your offering for the Souper Bowl of Caring. All donations will go to our local *Agape* food closet.