



UCC
Petaluma

A Ministry of Hope | Open & Affirming
Servants of the Just & the Good.

Sun March 26, 2023

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*To Heal, Inspire and Empower in the Way of Jesus
So that all people may create lives of deeper meaning and greater value.*

News & Opportunities - Sunday and Beyond...

This Sunday: Join us for worship in sanctuary as we continue our Lenten practice in conversation with the art of Henri Matisse. Click [Here](#) for a printable copy of the Sunday bulletin.

Mark Your Calendar

Mar 27: UCC Petaluma Bible Study. Join a long-standing, thoughtful group in Bible study on the 2nd & 4th Mondays of the month, in the church library at 10am. Rev Garnet is currently leading the group in a healing focused practice - a half hour or so of meditation & healing prayer practice followed by study of biblical healing stories. All are welcome, whether you have a lifetime of Bible study experience or none at all. To learn more, please contact Dorothy Wilcox at 707-540-1796.

Mar 28 11:30am: What Does Life Require of Me? - A Conversation

See details in Opportunities for Spiritual Learning below.

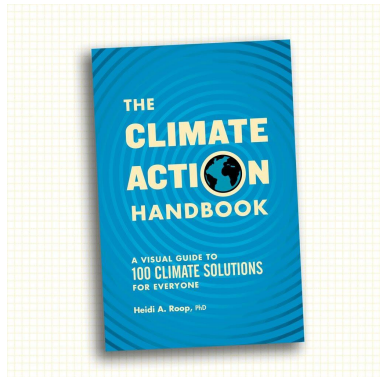
April 5: The Genesis Circle (Women's group): at 12:30pm in the Friendship Hall. This group meets on the first Wednesday of every month. To learn more about this group, please contact Dorothy Wilcox at 707-540-1796.

April 7: Good Friday Ritual: Arrive at the Sanctuary anytime between 5:30 and 6:30pm to participate in a meaningful & quiet ritual of "casting ash" toward the veiled altar and table of our sanctuary. Taize music will play quietly in the background as you take time, as you find meaningful, to gather for silent reflection as the sun begins to set and the cross, symbolic of original goodness & openness to possibility, illuminates. No formal program will take place - stay as long as you find helpful in the quiet of sanctuary to bring to heart and mind the Lenten call to simplicity, strengthening, and seeking toward an Easter which on this Friday is "not yet."

April 20 10am: UCC Petaluma Book Group is starting a new book: "Jesus' Alternative Plan: The Sermon on the Mount" by Richard Rohr. Read the first 3 chapters for our April 20th meeting! Please contact Paul Eklof for details at Peklof@pacbell.net. We currently gather by zoom at 10a.m. using the Zoom ID: 282 945 1345 Zoom Password = "ucc"

Opportunities for Spiritual Learning & Action

A Practical take on Climate Action: from Personal to Communal



[Click Here to read this insightful NYT article](#) referencing a practical guide to what you can do as an individual to make real contributions to Climate Action at a level that moves from self to globe.

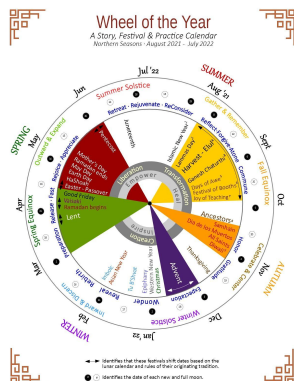
An inspiring Article on Curiosity

Curiosity offers wonderful benefits. It keeps one young, helps one learn and fosters better relationships. But, according to studies, we become less curious as we grow older. So, here are some tips to cultivate curiosity: 1) Ask questions. 2) Read outside of your field. 3) Be inquisitive about what your friends find interesting and why. 4) Practice saying less. 5) Immerse yourself in a topic. 6) Write. 7) Carry a notebook. 8) Learn about yourself. 9) Slow down. 10) Hang out with a child. [Click Here to read the article.](#)

Support Transgender Healthcare

The well-being of transgender and non-binary youth is being debated in legislative sessions across the United States. As of March 3 there have been 385 anti-LGBTQ bills introduced, with 108 of these bills aiming to end gender affirming healthcare for trans and non-binary youth. This places more than 54,000 trans youth actively taking life-saving gender affirming medical care at risk.

This is the highest number of anti-LGBTQ bills ever introduced in a single legislative season. Please [click here](#) to send your support to congress to defend the marginalized and vulnerable in our nation.



[Click Here to download a new Wheel of the Year for 2023.](#)

This visual tool is a helpful guide to your spiritual practice - connecting your unique faith to the festivals of our tradition in relation to the traditions of billions of others around the globe & the unique practices of your household. If you would like a printed copy of the Wheel, we would be pleased to make one for you. Please reply to this email. You can also download a copy at our [website](#).

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

1: Janet Talamantes
7: Robert Evans Heithaus
9: Anne Markum Bailey
26: Margaret Kullberg
27: Tom Joynt
28: Rebecca Cone
30: Ella Rae Smith '05

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

13: Bob and Marilyn Larsen
17: Paul Brown and Maureen Frances

Worship Sunday March 26, 2023

Gathered in Sanctuary at UCC Petaluma

Special thanks to our liturgist this week, June Goudey

Gathering Light

“River Flows in You”

by Yiruma

Responsive Call to Worship

One: With enthusiasm of Spirit for the Light that is Life,

All: Let us declare an everlasting goodness - an openness to possibility.

One: With lives set forth in diverse expression, no two the same,

All: Let us be the words and deeds that honor the Holy within, beyond and between us all.

One: With time and talent offered into servant leadership in justice and care

All: May our generosity reach further than we can reach ourselves

One: With hands and hearts stretched out to neighbors near and far,

**All: May we be family & friend to the marginalized & vulnerable
Let this be our prayer, as we worship with grateful hearts.**

Sing

Morning Has Broken

Arr. by Cat Stevens aka Yusuf Islam

Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world

Sweet the rains new fall, sunlit from Heaven
Like the first dewfall on the first grass
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden
Sprung in completeness where His feet pass

Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning
Born of the one light, Eden saw play
Praise with elation, praise every morning
God's re-creation of the new day

Morning has broken like the first morning
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning
Praise for them springing fresh from the world

Serenity Prayer

The Serenity Prayer

By Rienhold Niebuhr

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace, Amen.

Poetry

“At the New Moon”

Title inferred, by Juliet L. Spitzer

Each new moon we begin
with a sliver
of an idea we tend and curate and sculpt and hone
to its fullness
where we float for a spell,
contented in the completion,
then suddenly notice - as if we've never been on this ride -
it becomes less magnanimous
more concise
waning, allowing
making room for the next inspiration
that again grows and blooms
into round, unfettered wholeness
where we rest for a beat,
then tune our wild howling
slowly back to its essence -
the fragment of a month
waiting to be well-lived

Teaching Scriptures

Acts 22:11 Since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, those who were with me took my hand and led me to Damascus.

John 9: 1-17 As he walked along, Jesus saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who’s fault ([sin](#)) is it, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents; he was born blind so that G_d might be revealed (*shine through*) through him. We must work the works of the one who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as *I am* - in the world, *I am* - the light of the world.” When Jesus had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Shiloam, (*She-low-am*).” Then the man went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” The man kept saying, “*I am* he.” But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam (*She-low-am*) and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.” Then they brought the man who had formerly been blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. The Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. The man said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” Some of the Pharisees said, “This man, Jesus, is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a [sinner](#) perform such signs?” And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” The man then said, “He is a prophet.”

Postlude

“River Flows in You”

by Yiruma

Observations for Lenten Practice Inspired by Henri Matisse

Color helps to express light, not the physical phenomenon, but the only light that really exists, that in the artist's brain. – Henri Matisse

Light is one of the 1000 Names of God that we use at UCC Petaluma to paint as wide and varied a vision of the ineffable Source of Life/Light) many call G_d. In our teaching scripture today, Jesus encounters a man blind from birth. For such a person, the concept of light would have to be fundamentally different than for most people who can see with their eyes and thus compare with others the variety of physical light present in the world.

If we move beyond merely physical/biological understandings of light and “seeing,” could it be that Jesus covers the blind man’s eyes, not to return him to normative physical sight as a magic trick, but rather to free him of the identity the world has imposed upon him? Here the literal meaning of the Hebrew root *Shalach* from which the Greek *Shiloam* is derived is helpful to understand what the parable offers. Jesus sends the man to the Pool of Shiloam, which means “sending in order to release, let go and expand.”

Let’s notice that after the blind man can “see” (a metaphor) he then encounters a world full of people who struggle to free their long-standing vision of the man as a beggar who has always been defined in their minds by blindness. Is it any different today? Do you experience that making change in your life is often resisted by those closest to you?

Like a biblical teaching story, Matisse’s art moves beyond literalness and even physical expression of light. The point of art for Matisse and the bible for us is to open us to an interior experience. Thus Matisse and Jesus call us to confront our tendency to believe we can know or even describe the whole of a person or culture from the outside or even from a their history - in words or in paint.

What is left for us to do then is honor the deepest truth of each person we encounter in the present moment - to know and be known in the greater Light of possibility. We are called to become aware of our tendency to impose our normative sightedness (or any other faculty or opinion) upon those who come into or express life differently. In fact, the people with different and atypical conscious or cultural experience (those who are blind, deaf, autistic, or of less common gender, sexual, racial, or cultural identity) complete rather than diminish the world. Those who are not like us are not a problem to be solved, but rather a Light to be revealed.

Zen Buddhists illuminate this calling with a teaching about pointing at the moon. “All instruction is but a finger pointing to the moon; and those whose gaze is fixed upon the pointer will never see beyond. Even let them catch sight of the moon, and still they cannot see its beauty.”

Suggestions for Lenten Practice Inspired by Henri Matisse

Take time this week to imagine how you have come to see someone in your life in static terms that make you normal and them “a problem.” Become self observant of this tendency through your days. Imagine how the world may be seeing you like this. Consider offering someone close to you the literal freedom to “let go and expand” in their life. Ask how you might be a servant of their Shiloam practice - the practice of sending in order to release, let go & expand.

An Ancient-Modern Biblical Glossary

This glossary is offered as a resource for re-orientation to words that church and culture have often defined in one particular way, but now require more historical, metaphorical and nuanced understandings for use in a pluralist Christian community of spiritual learning. These are terms whose deeper and wider understanding invite reflective study. This glossary is not meant to be complete or definitive, but rather a starting place for your learning.

Sin (error): a word that communicates the understanding that human beings are not gods. Thus, humans are capable of errors, small and large, as we lack complete, god-like, perspective (the ability to “see”). The word sin arises from ancient archery which understands a sin to be the “missing of the mark (bullseye) when shooting an arrow toward an intended target.” Thus when we hear the word sin, we are not speaking of how humans are originally “bad,” - quite the opposite. Sin assumes the original goodness of humanity while acknowledging that humans are not gods and thus capable of error. Sin is a term calling humanity to humility, rooted in its original goodness.