

Disciples General Minister Delivers Sermon at National Prayer Service



General Minister and President Dr. Sharon E. Watkins of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was selected by the Presidential Inaugural Committee for President Barack Obama to deliver the sermon at the National Prayer Service on Wednesday, January 21, held at the National Cathedral at the conclusion of Inaugural activities, to celebrate America's diversity of faith. Reverend Dr. Watkins was the first woman to deliver the sermon at this traditional Inaugural event.

"I am truly honored to speak at this historic occasion," said Reverend Watkins. "My prayer when I preach is always that God will use me to bring a Gospel message that is uplifting and appropriately challenging to those who hear it. I hope that my message will call us to believe in something bigger than ourselves and remind us to reach out to all of our neighbors to build communities of possibility."

Reverend Dr. Sharon E. Watkins has served as General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada since 2005. She is the first woman to hold this position. As General Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), she is the general pastor of the 700,000-member denomination. As General President, she is the chief executive officer for the denomination, responsible for overseeing the work of the church's various structures. She is serving a six-year term that extends through 2011.

Dr. Watkins has an extensive background of service both in this country and abroad. She is a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches based in Geneva, and serves on the WCC's Permanent Committee for Consensus and Collaboration. In 2006, she was a representative at the World Council's General Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil. She is the former pastor of Disciples Christian Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, where she served for eight years. Reverend Watkins holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Phillips Theological Seminary, a Master of Divinity from the Yale Divinity School, and a Bachelor's Degree in French and Economics from Butler University. She is married to Reverend Dr. Richard (Rick) H. Lowery, Interim Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky. They have two children, Bethany and Christopher.

The National Prayer Service, a tradition dating back to George Washington, includes prayers, readings and hymns delivered by religious leaders spanning a diverse array of faiths.

For the latest information on the 2009 Presidential Inauguration, please visit www.pic2009.org.

From One Minister to Many



— Rev. Tim Tiffany

In my childhood I was taught that there was a literal hell and that if one sinned (so who doesn't?) they would go to "the bad place." Even after I had moved on into adulthood, there was lingering smoke from the fires of hell! It was not until I stood at the crib of my second child, profoundly moved at how much I loved him, that the gift of reason kicked in. "We say God is love," I thought, "perfect love. I love this child so much that there is nothing he can ever do that would cause me to separate from him or to cast him away or stop loving him. If that is true for me---an imperfect human being---how much more true is it of our God?" On that day I let go of a fear-based faith and fell into the loving arms of God.

Yet there are countless Christians who live every day in fear---fear of change, fear that people different than they might be okay, fear that rights freely shared might lead to the decline of civilization as they want it to be. These Christians will walk past 100 passages about how much God treasures us to find one passage of judgment---and then beat the hell out of others with it!

The battle over Proposition 8 from last November's election continues. The state's Attorney General has indicated that he now believes that Prop. 8 is flawed in that it denies basic human rights to an entire segment of our population. Religious groups and others continue to toss word bombs at each other over the appropriateness of homosexuals securing the right to marry. Those who are opposed to gay marriage rights and many who support those rights ground their positions on biblical passages. Some of those interpretations are simplistic, flawed or downright ignorant. People read Bible texts from 2000 years or more ago---ignoring scientific data and common sense that has emerged over two millennia---and apply them as though nothing has changed in the interim.

I say all this to tell you this; at the Leadership Council meeting of November 19, 2008, we approved the following by a unanimous vote: "University Christian Church will continue to perform weddings for all couples, whether they are gay or straight. Since the state cannot dictate to a religious group, we will marry all couples, recognizing that the civil entities will not validate what we have done." I cannot speak for all who voted, but surely some must have approved it because they have seen---up close and personal---the loving, committed couples in our church who just happen to be gay or lesbian. They have seen their commitment to covenant and witnessed their pain at the rejection of a fundamental right.

Some day we will strike the above resolution from our books, not because we no longer support the rights of all, but because it will no longer be necessary. Pray for that day and welcome its coming through constant work in love for a better world.

Shalom,

The Reporter

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Behold!



Happy Valentine's Day! February is the month of love and there is nothing more important in all the world than love. In honor of February, I would like to share a tantalizing Scripture passage from the Bible that not too many know about:

*The feelings I get when I see the high mountain ranges
--stirrings of desire, longings for the heights—
Remind me of you,
and I'm spoiled for anyone else!
Your beauty, within and without is absolute,
dear lover, close companion.
You are tall and supple, like the palm tree
and your full breasts are like sweet clusters of dates.
I say, "I'm going to climb that palm tree!
I'm going to caress its fruit!"
Oh yes! Your breasts
will be clusters of sweet fruit to me
Your breath clean and cool like fresh mint,
your tongue and lips like the best wine. (Song of Songs 7:5 ff, The Message)*

Okay, okay, you are wondering whether you are really reading this in a church newsletter or whether you just picked up a Harlequin romance novel by mistake? No, this is our newsletter and this is straight from the Bible, believe it or not! There was much discussion, however, regarding whether the Song of Songs (or Song of Solomon) should be accepted into the Bible. Some thought the book belonged in the Scriptures; others noted that the book was being sung in brothels around the countryside. Needless to say, it was the last book to be accepted into the Old Testament. Many Christian theologians are embarrassed by the book and have either ignored it or tried to interpret it as a symbol for something else. I believe that the Song of Songs is in the Bible to affirm that sexuality and spirituality are intimately tied together.

One pastor writes, "Sexuality and spirituality are one. Our culture divides sex and spirit and that leads us to think that combining spirituality and sexuality will take away the passion, when exactly the opposite is true. Our culture is disembodied and anti-sensual, but saturated with explicit sexual messages." In other words, we as a society know a lot about sex and very little about sensuality. The Song of Songs reminds us about the sacredness of sensuality.

Sensuality in its truest form is not to be confused with just sex. No sensuality awakens us to heightened awareness of our loved one – colors are radiant; eyes are deeper. Sensuality brings us into the world of spirituality. Yes, our holy scripture urges us, implores us, invites us to delight in our loved one. In the final chapter of the Song of Songs, the author affirms, "Great seas cannot extinguish love, no river can sweep it away." Oh, how glad I am that the Song of Songs made it into the Bible. Happy Valentine's Day!

In Christ's Love,

NEW MEMBER INTERVIEWS

Steve Munday

Steve Munday, 49, joined UCC in August. Originally from Florida, Steve's work as a doctor and toxicologist in the US Navy brought him to San Diego in the 1980s. He came back to San Diego in 1992 and stayed on until leaving the Navy. Currently, Steve works in the same field at Sharp Rees Stealy. In addition to his duties as a doctor, Steve owns four dogs, two of whom are rescue dogs.

Steve, originally a member of a Restoration church, had visited UCC previously but had his initial doubts. A Christian for 30 years, Steve had attended Bible college earlier in life (intending to be a medical missionary) but the medical profession and the Navy pulled him away. Steve's own theological background made him question, but after talking with Revs. Jill and Tim, he decided to join UCC. "I was looking for a church in the same tradition I'd grown up with, but I also wanted a church where you could be yourself. We can have our own opinions here, even if they're different." Opinions are more than welcome, Steve – we look forward to the discussions to come!



John Armantrout, Larry Moreno, Nick Dunavent and Tristion Moreno

John Armantrout and Larry Moreno, along with their two boys Nick Dunavent (14, soon to be Nick Armantrout) and Tristion Moreno (8) joined UCC in September. John, who considers his job now to be "father to two boys", was a tactical radio engineer and program manager for the US Navy for 21 years. Larry, who earned a Master's of Information Systems, works in communications at a teachers' union.

With Baptist and Catholic backgrounds, John and Larry wanted to find a church that "felt like home." They found UCC via friends who attend, including Charles and Deb Poey. UCC attracted the family with its friendliness and its message. John, Larry, Nick and Tristion have now settled in and the boys attend Sunday school. "There's connections of all sorts here at UCC," Larry says, "connections that range from school to friends who care and who made us feel very welcome as part of this church family."

Nick observes that "I like the humanity and stuff in church. I also like the music of the first service, that contemporary feel." Tristion enjoys Children's Church and, according to his proud dads, "always has an intelligent comment on what the pastor says." Tristion also loves music and musical instruments, including the organ, piano and guitar. He's currently taking lessons in piano and guitar.



Nick and Tristion were baptized at UCC in November, a special time for the whole family. "We have a God-given family," John says thankfully. "With anyone else, it would not have worked." In addition, John and Larry celebrated their own 8-year anniversary on December 2. In terms of hobbies, Larry says that "Our passions center around giving back. John is into charities, and we're also looking to sponsor a Polinsky Children's Center child. But we also like movie night and game night."

We're glad this family found our family!

Notes from an Elder: *Unimaginable Loss*

By Gary Taylor

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14

The Sunday, December 14, headline needed no words. It was the picture of a grieving Don Yoon, with his hand and face across the casket of his wife and two daughters. A single red rose lay close to his forehead. The horrible accident also claimed the life of his mother-in-law. In an instant, four beautiful people, who were just "at the wrong place at the wrong time," were killed by a disabled military jet. Such is life so often, without reason, without explanation, and seemingly, without God

I chose the above scripture to help us "sort things out" for a very strategic reason. In the nine beautifully lush, very detailed, and highly dramatic chapters of the Book of Esther, there is not so much as one mention of the word "God." Not once. Full of spiritual "undertones", we as the readers are challenged, with what could have been, "unimaginable loss" without the quick actions of two Jewish relatives, who literally re-write history.

Decades before, under the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, thousands of Jews had been exiled. Now, under the leadership of King Ahasuerus and Queen Vashti, they are allowed to return to their homeland if they choose to do so. Many decide to stay and cultivate the life that they had become accustomed to over the years. Two of those people were Mordecai and his cousin Esther. He had raised her as his own following the death of her parents. Through a series of amazing events, this humble, yet wise, Jewish girl secures the coveted position of "Queen", as Vashti has been stripped of her royal title and position. One of the King's assistants, Haman, births a plan to eradicate all the Jews from the surrounding provinces. With her position as Queen secure, we read the above scripture from Esther 4:14. There is no other option but to make a daring move [Chapters 4-6] by Esther, on behalf of her people. Keep in mind that this evil and jealous Haman would have been the Hitler of his day! In spite of the possibility of terrible consequences, Mordecai and Esther put into action some spiritual principles that we must learn to embrace today. First, Esther receives the "word of hope" from Mordecai. Second, by declaring a "three day fast", she is calling upon the "Covenant Promise" of Divine intervention for her people. Third, she places the concern for "others" above herself. "If I perish, I perish! {vs. 4:16}. Fourth, she mixes "faith and action" in the midst of her circumstance {5:1,2}. Fifth, she is expectant of "favorable" results. How amazing is it that we see these Scripture-based principles, without the mention of God even once. I choose to believe Esther had so identified with them because of her royal "lineage" and that she "practiced what she preached!" It was a natural out-flowing of her relationship with her God! Esther's journey was destined for this moment as declared again in 4:14 "for such a time as this!"

So many of you have had the unbearable circumstances of life intersect your journey. At any moment your picture could very well be on the front page. Did you know that Don Yoon's pastor said on television that Don was "in the peace of God" at the time that the picture was taken? I guarantee you that Queen Esther was in the midst of the same "peace" as she stepped into the King's presence even though he could have her put to death! If the King had not extended the Golden Scepter toward her, it was over! You see, God may not remove you from an unbearable circumstance but will always fortify you to get through it. This process pulls you into the equation that so many others have journeyed before us. Like them, get yourself ready with scripture reading and memorization of their contents. Take up a personal fast {dedicate yourself} to the plan and purposes of God! Boldly ask for the "faith" to strengthen you for the next barrage of uncertainty. Above all else, remember your heritage! "Now", says the Apostle John, "now are we the sons of God!" "You are a royal priesthood," declares Peter. Like our precious Esther, reach out in faith and touch the Golden Scepter that extends from the loving and powerful hand of our awesome God!

With the greatest of love and respect, I dedicate this Meditation to the memory of Seo Kim, Rachel Yoon, Grace Yoon, Milee Yoon.

"Be strengthened in the power of His might." Gary Taylor

Health Ministry Care Team

Sharon Kay Mann

PREPAREDNESS FOR ALL AGES

What is 2-1-1?

2-1-1 is the national 3-digit phone number for quick, free information about local community, health and disaster services. Highly trained, bilingual phone specialists are available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day to help. This will help reduce inappropriate 911 calls and assist people in getting the help they need.

2-1-1 is not yet available from cell phones, some work places and hospitals. Callers should use (858) 300-1211. For more information, call 858.300.1242 or visit their website at www.211sandiego.org. For queries not clarified at the 211 site, more in-depth searches may be completed at www.InformSanDiego.org, the website of Info-Line, the 211 parent agency.



PEDIATRIC PRIMARY DENTAL HEALTH

Are you aware that cavities are the most common chronic disease of children and a major cause of school absenteeism? GOOD NEWS! This disease is nearly 100% preventable.

Cavities are Catching

Babies are not born with cavity-causing germs. Current research supports evidence that germs that cause cavities are passed from caregivers to babies through the sharing of food and utensils. Help prevent early childhood cavities:

- Avoid objects in a child's mouth that have been used by another
- Choose objects *other than the bottle or the "sippie" cups* as "self quieting" objects when quieting children for naps or bedtime
- First dental check-up now recommended by American Academy of Pediatrics and American College of Nurse Practitioners by First Birthday!
- Children require supervision when brushing teeth until age 8 (eight). Use small pea-size fluoride toothpaste and brush in the morning and before bedtime.
- Limit juice and other sweet drinks and snacks appropriately. The longer sugary food and drink expose the teeth, the greater the risk for cavities.

Baby Teeth Are Important!

It is important to take care of baby teeth because they are crucial for chewing, speaking, bone and facial development, and self-esteem. Baby teeth are placeholders for permanent teeth. If the baby teeth develop in a mouth that is unhealthy, the permanent teeth may become unhealthy too. Good dental health is a must!!!!

Source: First Smiles www.first5oralhealth.org



Help the Children of Hillcrest Preschool

In order for you to continue to help Hillcrest Preschool while grocery shopping at Albertson's, you will need to **re-link your Community Partners/Preferred Savings cards by February 28, 2009.**

To do this, go to www.ALBERTSONSCP.COM. 1) log onto the site, 2) enter the Preferred Card number on the back of your card, 3) enter Hillcrest Preschool's Community Partners ID#49000112481.

It's as easy as 1-2-3. If you do not have access to the Internet, bring your preferred saving card to the preschool office and Dana can do this for you.

If you shop at Ralphs, you can earn money for our school by registering your Ralphs Club Card online at www.ralphs.com, then click on Community Contributions and Hillcrest Preschool's NPO number - 90586.

The money we earn goes toward new tricycles and purchases to upgrade the school.

Prayer Concerns

Loving God, it is sometimes difficult to be a human being in this world.



Prayers Requested

Alan; members of Leonor Andrade-Chairez' family; Daryl; Grant Foster; Jim Fugitt; Pauline Hogan; Michael Mahrling; Barbara Mann, Shirley Massie, Katie McAllister, Jennifer Medisch; Irene Morrison; Linda Morrison; Amber Olsen, William Shelton and Alexander; Dorothy Ortiz; Angie Peralta, Corey and James; Jerry Peterson; Max Peterson; Charlotte Schellhaas; Bruce Smith; Egon Werdelman; Helen Werdelman; Bill Woodard; Ginny Wright; Bob Younker

For those whose loved ones have recently passed from life to Life

Family/friends of Ryan Bartlett; Brian Barto; Juanita Boy; Sharon Clark; Cookie; Mamie Day; Lydia Egbert; Gertrude Gerig; Lynda Goertzen; David Green's mother; Phyllis Inman; Bill Irons; Evadale Gurney; Frank Lynn Mann; Kevin McGarrigle; Marian Rauber; Virginia Roberts; Archie Smith; Dan Smitts; Marge Storton; Dr. Kim Tee; Betty Jean van Pelt

♥ "Dear Hearts" (homebound)

Wanda Applegate; Bob & Genny Ballantine; Ray Barnes; Minnie Bradley; Margaret Burns; Jeanne Calvano; Tom & Linda Christensen; Melba Close; Margaret Davis; Peggy Jacklin; Rhoda Kruse; Dorothy Lydick; Mary Kathryn Mills; Jerry & Max Peterson; Walt Price; Bruce Smith; Alice Walden

Receiving Hospice Care **Billy Cook, Phyllis Looper**

- Scheduled for hospitalization? Give your contact information to the office.
- If you have a prayer request, or want to join the Prayer Chain, call the church office at 619-295-4146, or contact Wendy Svenson at wensven@gmail.com.

Around the Church

News from the Pews



- Long-time member **Mamie Day** passed from life to Life on January 3. A memorial service was held on January 18.
- Member **Marian Rauber** passed from life to Life on December 20. A memorial service was held on January 10.
- **Diana Duke** was married to Mr. Ryan Monaghan in Las Vegas on December 27.
- "We have a new grandson, Micah. He was born January 1."
- **Dale and Wilma Good**
- Welcome! To our newest member, **Geo Barker**. Geo joined UCC during second service on January 4.
- **Marion Campbell** is assembling a suitcase of items to be sent to Honduras with the mission team in April. Marion will prepare a sewing basket and will purchase first aid kits as space allows, to be kept at the school at which the playground is being constructed. She is requesting donations of new or used sewing supplies and boxes of Band-aids. Thank you in advance.

The new Flower Calendar is up in Friendship Hall. Sign up to honor a family member or celebrate a special occasion with flowers on a Sunday morning. The cost is \$43.10.

CWF NEWS

Christian Women's Fellowship has donated \$500.00 towards the Honduras mission trip, to be used to buy playground equipment. CWF has also given \$1500.00 to UCC's General Operating Fund to help with the budget deficit.

The next CWF General Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 5. Come and hear our own Brigitte Zoeller speak on the topic, "How God Led Me Through the War Torn Years of Nazi Germany." Lunch will be catered by Dan Haslam.

10:00 am Board Meeting 11:00 am Business Meeting
12:00 pm Luncheon 1:00 pm Program

Reservations are due by February 3 to Evelyn May, 619-479-3970

Disciples Women invite you to join us at our 20th WOMEN'S CONVOCATION

Disciples Women 20th Women's Convocation will take place March 7-8, 2009 at the Doubletree Hotel, 201 East MacArthur Blvd., in Santa Ana.

Featuring Dr. JoAnn Bynum and Dr. Joi Robinson

Our theme is: "Color Me."

We will have the Marketplace, exciting seminars, a bookstore, and most of all, we will have an exciting time worshipping the Lord.

For more information, visit pswdw.com

SAVE THE DATE:

April 26, Youth Sunday/Scholarship Banquet

Covenant Couples

What is "Covenant Couples"?

- A group of about 8 or 9 couples that gather regularly to share life together and celebrate their covenant relationships;
- A group **open to other couples** who are living in covenant, committed to a deep, lasting and monogamous relationship
- A group for you and your partner---gay or straight---where we have fun and seek to strengthen our love within the boundaries of covenant.

Want more information? Ask Dale & Shelly Suggs or Barry Starke & Michael Severance; ask Ruth & Tim Tiffany or John & Sue Thompson.

The next gathering of "Covenant Couples" will be Sunday, February 8 at 5 p.m. The evening is hosted by Barry and Michael (619-260-8503). Call them if you want to check it out.

*At the November 19, 2008 Leadership Council meeting, the following statement was approved by the Council:
"U.C.C. will continue to perform weddings for all couples, whether they are gay or straight. Since the state cannot dictate to a religious group, we will marry all couples, recognizing that the civil entities will not validate what we have done."*

Lent Begins with a Special Service

Lent is one of the "high" seasons of the Church year, along with Advent and Pentecost. It is a 40-day period of spiritual preparation for Easter, not counting Sundays, which are "in but not of" Lent being considered celebrations of the Resurrection. The season often emphasizes "giving up" something as a sign of sacrifice, but it is equally important to focus on "taking on," such as taking on a period of Bible study and prayer, taking on a time of special devotion or service.

The 40-day emphasis mirrors Jesus' time in the desert that began his ministry ---a period of temptation and fasting. There Jesus found insight and strength for the journey that lay ahead, a journey that would eventually lead to Jerusalem, an Upper Room, a trial and a Cross.

The season begins on Ash Wednesday, which this year is February 25. In many countries, the last day before Lent has become a day for a final fling before the solemn period leading to Easter. For centuries it was customary to fast by abstaining from meat during Lent, which is why some people call the festival *Carnival*, which is Latin for "farewell to meat."

Save February 25 for a very special worshipful beginning to Lent as we gather with Metropolitan Christian Church for an Ash Wednesday service in our sanctuary. The service will begin at 7 p.m. and includes music, a message to launch our Lenten journey, communion and the imposition of ashes for those who so choose. Plan to make Lent 2009 special for your faith life.

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