

The Neighbor

The Orinda Community Church

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

January 27, 2010

Frankly Speaking: a prayer update

In my opinion, there are few things more important and meaningful that OCC does than our mutual ministry of prayer. As a congregation, we are blessed with a rich diversity of prayer: our prayers are formal and informal, public and private, personal and corporate; they are offered for one another, for those we know outside of church, for ourselves, and for the world; they can be general and universal, or focused on particular circumstances, situations and individual needs; they might seek guidance, forgiveness, healing, blessing, protection, help or understanding; they may be thanksgivings, confessions, intercessions, supplications, adorations or even questions. And we have a faithful Prayer Network of people who have covenanted to pray when requested for specific joys or concerns.

For the past four years, we've also had "prayer folders" in the sanctuary pew racks, wherein anyone may write down a personal prayer to be shared in confidence by the pastoral staff. It has become one of the most inspiring and humbling experiences of my pastoral life to learn, through this simple means, who and what you are praying about, and so to pray in solidarity with your prayers. I find that week after week I now receive as many as twenty beautiful and touching prayers.

We started this "prayer folder" ministry with a ritual of inviting people to bring their prayers forward during the silent prayers in worship. Over time, an interesting evolution has occurred in this ritual, as people have realized that they can also use the offering baskets to send a prayer folder forward to the altar. I currently receive more folders via the offering than any other way. Rethinking our worship

service in this light, I've suggested to the Worship & Music Commission that we might utilize the offering baskets to receive prayers as well as monetary gifts and contributions. This will simplify and refocus somewhat the fellowship of prayer, and give everyone a little more time to write, if they wish to. Of course, it will always be possible to share a verbal prayer request during the time for joys and concerns; or to hand me a prayer folder at the door after church.

~ Frank

ANNUAL MEETING

We will gather for the 71st Annual Meeting of the Orinda Community Church on Sunday, January 31, 2010 beginning at 11:15 p.m. with a catered lunch in Fellowship Hall. Donations will be accepted to defray cost for the lunch, childcare will be available. The congregation will receive reports from various commissions and committees and discuss plans for the future. Those present will vote on nominees for church officers and commissions and adopt our church budget for 2010.



Facebook User? Become a fan of OCC!

Orinda Community Church now has a group on Facebook!

Although the OCC web site will always be the best source for news and events, the Facebook page creates a presence for us on this popular site. If you're already a member, "fan" us by searching on Orinda Community Church and choosing the "Become a fan" button at the top.

OCC will show up in your profile and status update, creating great exposure for the church among your friends.

<http://www.facebook.com/?ref=logo#/pages/Orinda-CA/Orinda-Community-Church282644549224?ref=nf/>

Thanks to Anne McCarten-Gibbs for setting this up.

Winter Nights

The Interfaith Winter Nights shelter for homeless families and elderly has been operating for five years in various churches and synagogues in Contra Costa County – a real community effort. Currently the shelter is home to 33 individuals, 21 children, 13 adults representing 10 families. The children include 6 preschoolers, (one a 4 week old baby), as well as 15 school age youngsters. One mother is maintaining a 3.5 grade point average as she attends college. Seven of the adults are seeking employment, three are currently employed. One of the families is headed by grandparents. This population changes as individual members find jobs and/or more permanent housing but remains fairly constant in numbers over the winter season.

Orinda Community Church will be hosting these families the last two weeks of April – April 12 to April 26 in cooperation with Santa Maria Catholic and St. Marks Methodist churches which will be providing most of the evening meals. Patti Grier is our Winter Nights Volunteer Coordinator for 2010 and in about a month will have signup sheets for volunteers for tutoring, sheet/towels laundry, breakfast preparation, meal serving, weekend activities supervision, sleepovers, or help loading/unloading the truck at the beginning and end of our hosting.

With the large number of school age children this year, tutoring the children has become a priority. Winter Nights has been providing at least one volunteer homework supervisor who knows the children from previous weeks to help OCC's 3 or 4 tutor volunteers work with the children as individuals in a wide variety of subjects. This intense program has helped all children keep current on school work at their home schools where the van (or parents) drop them off each morning. Meg Nicholes will be coordinating the volunteers in this area.

If we all do our parts, the Winter Nights program has opportunities for each of us to alleviate some of the problems that the economic downturn has presented to so many of our neighbors. Pick your area of interest and volunteer when asked.

Mardi Gras Party

Sunday, February 7 from 5-7 in
Fellowship Hall.

Hey ya'll!!! Join us for a Mardi Gras Party featuring crafts, a parade, dixieland jazz and a cajun potluck. Of course, all potluck dishes are welcome, but we encourage you to try a little cajun cookin'!!! Suggestions are Andouille Sausage, Jambalaya, Cornbread, Red Beans and Rice, Gumbo and Pralines. We'll provide the traditional King Cake!!! All are welcome. Invite your friends!!!



Doug Adams Art Gallery



Our recent exhibition is "Marys World - a collection of paintings, photographs and quotes by and about Mary Grah, one of our founding members.

Born in 1917, Mary has lived in Orinda since 1950 when all the land was open hills. Come and find out how life is similar, and interestingly different..The most enduring strand woven though her long life is her enjoyment of her husband and six children, of other people and her talent for making friends everywhere. The natural extension of that empathy for others took her into nursing, public health work and into social justice work. She was instrumental in opening up the Orinda real estate market for example, and in the process of making OCC an open and affirming congregation. We can learn some subtle and important lessons from a life well-lived.

If you'd like to help and have input for our future exhibitions, contact Sue Boudreau at sueboudreau2004@yahoo.com



New Neighbor Mailing Date

Beginning in February the monthly Neighbor will be published and mailed the 3rd **Wednesday** of every month. Next Neighbor: February 17, Deadline for submissions: February 14.

Benefit Concert February 28

At 3 p.m. Sunday, February 28, OCC will play host to a festival concert of African-American gospel music to benefit Aseya Africa, Inc., an international Christian group that does education projects in African villages. The concert is sponsored by our sister Orinda congregation, St. Mark's United Methodist Church. For more information call 925-944-9241 or 510-779-6690.

Save the Date!



Please save Friday May 7th to Sunday May 9th to celebrate Mother's Day in style with OCC in Yosemite Valley!

This year the trip will include youth activities organized by Leslie O'Brien, a Saturday night cocktail party/BBQ hosted by Care and Fellowship (similar to our hugely successful Oktoberfest last fall), followed by fellowship and singing around the campfire. There will be a church service Sunday morning.

We have reservations for 25 units in Yosemite's rustic Housekeeping camp - - a cross between car-camping and a motel. Each unit/cabin sleeps up to 4 people.

Don't miss this great annual event!

For additional information, please contact Dave Hoppock, Sabine Hathaway or Leslie O'Brien.

Haiti Earthquake Response

Our United Church of Christ has launched an emergency appeal for Haiti in the wake of the devastating earthquake. UCC-related personnel based in Haiti are working with Church World Service, the ACT Alliance, and indigenous local groups to provide satellite telephones, water purification equipment, blankets, hygiene kits, medicine and medical supplies. Donations can be sent either through the UCC website, www.ucc.org, the Church World Service website, www.churchworldservice.org, or the Orinda Community Church (note "Haiti" on your check).



Thanksgiving Offering

Contributions totaling over \$1,000 have been forwarded to Contra Costa Interfaith Housing on behalf of the Lamorinda Interfaith Thanksgiving Eve Service held November 25 at Orinda Community Church. CCIH provides permanent affordable housing and on-site social services to 27 formerly homeless Contra Costa families at the agency's Garden Park Apartments in Pleasant Hill. OCC is a founding partner in the outstanding work of CCIH.

Forum "The Outlook for Peace in the Holy Land"



Former ambassador and retired Foreign Service Operator and now Director of Churches for Middle East Peace, Warren Clark, will be in the Bay Area, speaking on "The Outlook for Peace in the Holy

Land". On Sunday, February 28 he will lead a forum at 11:30 in Fellowship Hall. On Friday, March 5 at 7 p.m., he will speak the sanctuary of Orinda Community Church. Please invite your friends for this outstanding presentation.

Thank You

from the Food Bank of Contra from Costa and Solano County for the contribution of 102 pounds of food just in time for the holidays! The Food Bank serves 108,000 people every month and distributes 40,000 pounds of food every working day! A barrel for your food donations is located in the narthex all year around.

Sharing Circle

OCC's Sunday morning Sharing Circle will not meet until after Easter.

Ongoing Lifelong Learning Opportunities at OCC

Monday Night Bible Study

usually meets from 7:00 to 8:00 pm each week in the Library. The class is led by Frank Baldwin.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

On Thursday mornings from 10:30 to 11:30, there is a Bible class held in the 6th floor classroom of the Orinda Senior Village. This group is attended by members of Orinda Community Church and residents of Orinda Senior Village. This class has been meeting for many years, facilitated by clergy of OCC. It is currently facilitated by the Rev. Lee Cruise. We welcome all to this opportunity for study, prayer and community.

Theology Book Group

meets in the church library from 7:00-8:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month. Next meeting February 16. Continuing: "The Future of Faith" by Harvey Cox and adding "God of Intimacy and Action" by Tony Campola and Mary Albert Darling. (Get discount copies at Orinda Books).

Breakfast Group

The breakfast group meets every Wednesday at 7:00 a.m. in the Board Room for breakfast. They are discussing the book "Christianity for the Rest of us". Discounted books available at Orinda Books. All are welcome!

Climate Change Group

This group meets every second Sunday of the month in the Fireside Room. Come and share what you've been doing to change the social, political, economic or physical climate. This is the follow up to the three forums on climate change. All are welcome!

Re-Envisioning Steering Committee



The committee's December 6, 2009, meeting centered on a discussion of Diana Butler Bass's book *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church Is Transforming the Faith*. To build on her examples of thriving churches, committee members cited local instances of interesting experimentation, such as First Congregational Church of Berkeley's monthly jazz service. Field trips to churches with innovative programs are being planned.

Although the group expressed enthusiasm about what is possible for OCC to achieve, several members noted the challenge of serving the growing "spiritual but not religious" community that has no experience with church at all. All agreed that clearly defining OCC's strengths and building on them is the best path forward.

At its January 17, 2010, meeting, the committee began to set a timeline for bringing its work to the congregation. Retreats, after-church forums, and other ideas were discussed as possibilities. Much of the discussion focused on finding the best method for engaging the congregation. Past successes with similar "re-visioning" efforts were cited, such as the "Open and Affirming" process and the "Quaker dialogs" that were held some years ago to hear different points of view on the direction of the church.

This committee was tasked by Church Council last October to engage the congregation in a multi-year process to "re-envision, re-focus, and restructure Orinda Community Church." Members include Kurt Sunderbruch, chair; Sabine Hathaway, Anne Long, David Milnes, Susan Russell, Roger Samuelson, and Bob Winbigler; with Frank Baldwin and Jeff Crews *ex officio*.



2010 Registration and Information

Ruby Slippers Fundraising Gala

There's No Place Like Home

An Elegant Fundraising Gala to benefit

Contra Costa Interfaith Housing

Saturday, February 6, 2010

6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Contra Costa Country Club

801 Golf Club Road, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Please come and enjoy exquisite HORS D'OEUVRES and an elegant DINNER in your cocktail attire.

Register online at ccinterfaithhousing.org

The SILENT AUCTION will feature unique items donated by local merchants and the LIVE AUCTION will include matchless experiences, exceptional products, and wonderful vacation home possibilities. You will also hear music performed by ML CRISIS BAND, a seven-piece rock'n roll band of fun-loving Lafayette dads, playing your 60's, 70's and 80's favorites rock with classic sounds, featuring songs by The Rolling Stones, Bachman-Turner Overdrive, John Mellencamp, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Van Morrison and many more! Expect the dance floor to be busy throughout the night. Ladies, wear your **red shoes** ready to rock!

CHILDREN & YOUTH CORNER



**February 7,
Souper Bowl of Caring**

**Third Sunday –
Youth and Children to Zamboni's for
Fellowship and PIZZA!**

A Very Brief Biography of Emanuel Swedenborg

By Steve Sanchez

Swedenborg lived from 1688 to 1772 in the heart of the age of reason. In the first half of his life he was a scientific genius. (A study done at Stanford claims that Swedenborg, Goethe, and Mills had the three that had the highest IQs in history). As a youth he studied with many of the greatest scientist in Europe and England such as Newton, John Flamsteed, and Edmond Halley. He won these great scientists over and became their trusted assistant. He lodged with artisans so that he could work with them to learn the artisan's trade. He became expert at watch making, metallurgy, navigation, and astronomical techniques to name a few. In his early career he made plans for the invention of a submarine, an airplane, a machine gun, and a universal musical instrument.

He was a very practical man. He became close to the king of Sweden, Henry the 7th, and by commission of the king, engineered a remarkable system of locks to transport ships across land; he engineered a dry dock for the navy, and he designed a system for the production of salt. He served Sweden very well as the assessor of mines for many years. He also contributed his voice to major issues of politics during his time that proved to be of great wisdom. He mastered more than 10 disciplines of science such as mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, metallurgy, anatomy, physics, navigation, geology; and he made pioneering discoveries in these fields far ahead of his time. For instance he was the first to identify the functions of the left and right hemispheres of the brain, and the relationship between motion in the brain and breathing. He wrote more than thirty books on his scientific studies and discoveries.

His study led him to the point where he was determined understand how the spiritual and material world interacted; he desired to find the seat of the soul in the human form. In this pursuit he began to experience clear perceptions of the spiritual world. He reports that when he was on the right track in his investigations on particular subjects he would see light from a candle that was burning in the spiritual world; this experience was accompanied by a corresponding joy.

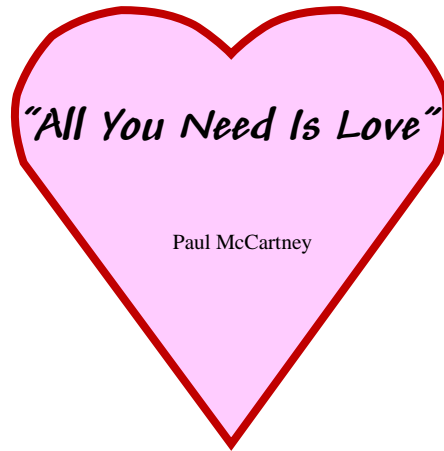
At nearly the age of 50 he began to enter one of the most remarkable processes of self-examination ever recorded. He knew there was much more to understanding than intellectual knowing and he was compelled to pursue this way of knowing. He became engulfed in a spiritual crises, which was well documented, because he recorded and interpreted his dreams for more than a year (while still working as assessor and on his scientific works). These dreams were alternately hellish and heavenly, but consistently interpreted with keen psychological and spiritual perception. This crisis culminated in an experience of being visited by the Lord. In his dream diary he writes:

A strong shivering seized me, from my head to my feet, as a thunder by several clouds colliding, shaking me beyond description. I was thrown prostrate to the ground, yet I was clearly awake and saw how I was overthrown. Then I spoke as if awake but found the words put into my mouth, "Oh though almighty Jesus Christ, who of great mercy deigns to come to so great a sinner, make me worthy of this grace!" I was sitting in the bosom of the Lord and beheld him face to face, a countenance of a Holy mien. All was such as I cannot describe. He was smiling at me and I was convinced that he looked like this when he was alive. He spoke to me and asked if I had a health certificate; and to this I replied, "Lord though knowest better than I". He said, "Well then do!" – I inwardly grasped this as, "Do as promised". God give me grace thereto!

From this day forward Swedenborg began to experience prolonged trips in the spiritual world. He did not just have a vision of heaven, he traveled many realms of heaven, hell, and the spiritual world, speaking with angels and spirits, observing the state of everything, and learning the wisdom. (He developed breathing techniques that rivaled any yogic master of India: he was said to breath only 2 or 3 times an hour during his spiritual experiences, though he was also aware of the spiritual world at times while fully present to the world, such as at dinner parties). He did all this under the auspices of the Lord, commissioned by him to communicate the inner sense of the Word, and the truths of heaven.

He performed this task with unfailing discipline, while living a normal useful life, for the last 35 years of his life. He wrote more than thirty volumes of theological works. These volumes consist of mainly three types of writing; exegeting the inner sense of Holy Scripture, relating his experiences, discussions, and observations in the spiritual world; and writing philosophical, metaphysical, and religious expositions on the nature of man, God, and religion. His writings possess a wisdom and coherency astounding to behold. Of course, one could only see this by studying it. Many writers were influenced by Swedenborg; including William Blake, (though he ended up renouncing him), Elizabeth Barrett Browning, August Strindberg, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Baudelaire, Adam Mickiewicz, Balzac, William Butler Yeats, Sheridan Le Fanu, Jorge Luis Borges, Carl Jung, and Helen Keller to name a few. Other notable figures in history that were adherents to his teachings were the theologian Henry James Sr. and mid-Western pioneer and nurseryman Johnny Appleseed.

Happy Valentine's Day!



Web of Life

Jason Hurley and Kasey McNulty celebrate the arrival of **Prudence Mary Jane Hurley**, born Saturday, January 9, 2010.

The Rev. Don Lamka died peacefully Friday, January 22, 2010 in Santa Rosa, following an extended struggle with cancer. Over the years Don served Orinda Community Church in many capacities, including Interim Pastor and founding member of the Pastoral Relations Committee. A memorial service in celebration of Don's life and spirit will be held at OCC, 1:30 p.m. Saturday, February 6, 2010. Our love and prayers are with Ruth, Don's family and friends.

OCC FINANCIAL SPOTLIGHT, JANUARY 15, 2010

January – December 2009 Income/Expenses

Income	\$422,649
Expense	\$399,840

The 2009 budget included income of \$417,000 and expenses of \$441,000. However, additional pledges received during the year resulted in a balanced budget.

December is generally a heavy expense month but, sufficient income was received and expenses were lower than expected so at the end of the year income exceeded expenses, as above indicated.

2010 Stewardship

The budget for 2010 being presented to the Congregation at the annual meeting on January 31st includes income in the amount of \$382,700, including pledges of \$300,000, and expenses in the amount of \$404,675. To date, about 104 pledges have been received for a total of \$278,000. This means that additional pledges of about \$22,000 would be required to balance the budget assuming that the other income sources are as anticipated. Pledges are the key to a balanced budget because they provide 75% of the income received by OCC.



February 2010

Worship Service Sundays 10 a.m.
Fellowship Hour 11 a.m.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	10 Sewing Circle 7 Bible Study	9:30 Children & Youth Commission	7 Breakfast Group 11:45 Lifelong Learning 11 Staff meeting	10:30 Bible Study OSV		
7 Souper Ball of Caring	8	9	10	11	12	13
5 	10 Sewing Circle 7 Bible Study		7 Breakfast Group 11 Staff meeting	10:30 Bible Study OSV		
14  <u>Neighbor Deadline</u>	15 Presidents' Day	16	17 Neighbor published	18	19	20
11:30 Climate Change Group – Lib.	Office Closed 10 Sewing Circle	7 Theology Book Club	7 Breakfast Group 11 Staff meeting	10:30 Bible Study OSV		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
11:30 Youth to Zamboni's 	10 Sewing Circle 7 Bible Study		7 Breakfast Group 11 Staff meeting 7:30 Church Council	9:30 Parish Callers 10:30 Bible Study OSV		
28						
11:30 Forum Warren Clark 3 Concert Asey Africa Inc.						

Deadline for next *Neighbor* submissions: February 14
email: office@orindachurch.org or fax 925/254-1348