



**Hillcrest Congregational Church
United Church of Christ**

Ministers.....*All Members of Hillcrest Church*
Interim Pastor.....*Rev. Dr. Loletta M. Barrett*
Director of Youth Ministry.....*Sally Schacht*
Director of Children's Ministry.....*K.C. Coonis*
Director of Music.....*Debbie Carter*
Organist/Pianist.....*Colleen Keith*
Country Day School Director.....*Joan Edgerton*
Country Day School Director.....*Danielle Darlow*
Moderator.....*Diana Ford*
Vice-Moderator.....*Gail Stier*
Church Secretary.....*Howard McCoy*
Treasurer & Financial Secretary.....*Laurie Gjoraas*

HILLCREST HILITES"

"REVERENDLY" SPEAKING

July 26, 2009

As the summer slips away, and as many of us take time to vacation and visit family and friends, I find myself dreaming about the fall. Not that I want summer to end! No, I love the lazy days of summer, with childhood memories of whole days spent in the sun in the swimming pool with no sunscreen. Now a little wiser, I substitute indulging in hours of reading, covered with SPF40, in the shade.

Having just completed years of academic work, I feel totally spoiled to have the luxury of time to read what I WANT to read! My favorite genre is science fantasy in which even the most implausible sounding experiences, and "unrealistic" peaceful futures, become real. But I have also been having fun reading with the Book Club. The most recent selection, *The Sparrow* by Mary Doria Russell, generated much discussion. It included such things as SETI technology, missionary history, space travel and what other life in the universe might mean to our view of humanity and God, the fact that we cannot avoid bringing our own perspective to our experience of differing cultures, our relationship with, and our imagination about the nature of God. And then there is the reading generated by the Adult study groups: the Bible of course, but also *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time* by Marcus Borg, and *Jesus Was a Liberal* by Scotty McLennan.

While I love to read- libraries are like candy stores to me- I am most particularly interested in reading that opens my mind, exposes me to new possibilities, and allows me to engage with others in imaginative thinking and discussions. Which brings me back to dreaming about and planning for the fall. Traditionally the church worship year begins anew in September. In addition, this year we will begin the exciting work of the interim time in celebrating our past, embracing our present,

and visioning our future. That means August is a time of dreaming and planning for us.

As I have been meeting and talking with members of the congregation and staff, I see so much hope, possibilities, excitement, yearning, and potential. There are many options to consider in how we live out our faith life together, which of the many paths we choose as we walk in the Way of Jesus. And the best news of all is that we, you and I and all the people here at Hillcrest get to choose.

But having many options, can sometimes feel a little confusing or intimidating. That is why we meet to discuss, plan, and implement the exciting possibilities together. Jesus said where two or more are gathered, he is with us. That means we can draw on his view of the Way to be in relationship with God to lead us, and to help us in our decisions. And Jesus encouraged us to be in prayer. Prayer helps us to center and be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Prayer helps us to connect to God, our strength. Prayer helps us to remember whose we are and what our mission is here in this life.

I invite you to intentionally engage in prayer from the beginning of August about our beloved Hillcrest Church; its people and the ministry God has called us to. Then come to the Koinonia and Church Council meetings (August 11 at 6:00 in Barwick Hall). Being a congregational church means that the whole church is not only invited and welcomed, but is NEEDED in discerning God's direction.

Get involved in sharing your hope, the possibilities and potential you see, and the excitement you can bring, generated from the deep yearnings God has placed in your soul. You will not be sorry about participating in planning how we live out God's call on your life and our life together.

By the way, I happen to believe that is what our mission is here in this life: making implausible sounding experiences, and "unrealistic" peaceful futures happen. It is called, the Beloved Community of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus said it is already among us. Now all we have to do is live it. How exciting! Let's get busy!
Peace, Loletta

A Character of the Highest Caliber
By: Brian Jenkins, Spring 2009

A character of the highest caliber.
And a laugh that never quit.
A personality that beamed with warmth
A role model of the rarest kind
She was a gift from God, that never stopped giving
We knew her as Randy Brunk

They say its character that counts. And although she sometimes had trouble counting without using her fingers, she had no shortage of character. She succeeded in the art of living, she found beauty and joy in the *smallest* and *simplest* things of life. Mistakes or triumphs, *all* intent aside, she found *enjoyment* in *everything that she touched*.

They say it's not what you say, but how you say it. From her career in the classrooms to bed-time stories- it was her *sense of humor* that wove stories that you couldn't tune out if you wanted to. A million times...we've all heard the story of the old lady that swallowed a fly...and it never *lost* its humor. *Neither did she*.

They say the wisest of men, only know that they know nothing. She certainly took it to heart. From her core, she always loved to learn- she learned something from everyone she met, it never mattered who or how old-she learned something from each of us. It was her personality to find wisdom in every voice....and then...she'd share it with the world.

She probably would have denounced such a complement, but to many she was the ultimate role model. One who accepted everyone with open arms, without judgment or expectation. One who recognized and shared her own imperfections and by doing so... reassured us that we are all part of the human experience-complete the virtues and flaws of our own individualism. She reminded us to accept our failures as she did and encouraged us to be better than we thought we were and achieve more than we thought we could. She was a role model of the rarest kind.

Perhaps the trademark of her character...evident in all that she did... the hallmark of how she would want to be remembered.... was her generosity and her capacity for giving. I've never owned a goat or a chicken, but I can't remember a single Christmas, when every member of the family didn't get some farm-animal for an impoverished family half way around the globe. But her giving didn't start or end there...it was a constant. An invariable, and continuous trait. From the children she taught and tutored, to the hospice program she so dearly loved. To her congregation here at the church...*to everyone she met*. She gave. She sacrificed. She believed in the Christian belief, that through the goodness and charity of humanity we would achieve solidarity.

She had character of the highest caliber.
And a laugh that never stopped.
She was a personality that beamed with warmth
And role model of the rarest kind
She was a gift from God, that never stopped giving
God Bless Randy Brunk.

Mum-mum, I'll love you and miss you forever. Thank you so much for being you.

(Editor's Note: Written as a tribute to his grandmother, *Randy Brunk*, who died June 9, 2009.)

UCC GENERAL SYNOD UPDATE

Our UCC General Synod took place last month and it is important that we know and understand the actions taken. A delegation representing us from the Southern California Nevada Conference attended and participated on our behalf. These delegates were elected at our Annual Gathering, which is held in June each year.

The most visible action was to call our new General Minister and President Geoffrey Black. Rev. Black comes from the New York Conference having most recently served there as the Conference Minister for nearly 10 years. He succeeds the Rev. John Thomas who served two terms.

Rev. Black was previously a program staff member in our national Office for Church Life and Leadership. During his career he has served as assistant chaplain at Brown University, associate minister at St. Albans (N.Y.) Congregational UCC, pastor of Congregational UCC of South Hempstead (N.Y.), lecturer in the Field Education Department of Union Theological Seminary in New York, and protestant chaplain at Adelphi University. Rev. Black currently is a member of the board of trustees of Lancaster Theological Seminary.

"The phrase 'servant leadership' encapsulates his understanding and practice of leadership. Leadership, in his view, is about serving God and God's people," said the Rev. Jim Moos, pastor of Bismarck (N.D.) UCC and chair of the UCC's Executive Council. "He does not believe that leadership is the exclusive purview of a single person, but the shared responsibility of the many." Ecumenical commitment,

concern for equal justice, African-American empowerment, and community improvement have shaped Rev. Black's ministry in the church and the communities in which he has lived.

Resolutions were also voted on by General Synod 27. A resolution to restructure the governance of the national setting of the church will require a study and recommendation be presented at the General Synod in 2011. The challenge is to create an efficient and effective governance structure that allows appropriate representation of the diversity in our denomination.

Social Justice resolutions were also approved, including six in the area of international relationships: A call to Awareness and Action to End the Practice of Trafficking in Persons, Calling on President Barack Obama to Revisit and Renegotiate a More Humane, Democratic, and Ecologically Sound Version of the North American Free Trade Agreement, On the Roles of Church and Government in Addressing the Global Food Crisis, Affirming the Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth, Solidarity and Friendship With Iran, and On the Situation of Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced.

One resolution was passed regarding national policy: An Urgent Call For Advocacy in Support of Healthcare For All, as in H.R. 676. There were also eight resolutions passed regarding national and local church operations: Calling For Comprehensive HIV Prevention in Church and Community, A Call for Study of Our Church's Involvement in the Eugenics Movement, A Call To Be Global Mission Churches, An Economic Justice Covenant, Affirming Diversity/Multi-Cultural Education in the Public Schools, Ministering to Those Struggling and Suffering in The Troubled Economy, a Resolution on Responsible Meeting Practice, and Sacred Conversations On Race.

Information on these resolutions can be found at <http://www.ucc.org/synod/resolutions>. According to our Congregational polity, resolutions approved by the General Synod set policy for the operations of

the national church office, and serve as recommendations for local congregations to consider implementing in their faith walk together.

GIVING & RECEIVING THANKS

Dear Hillcrest Congregation,

Thank you so much for your prayers, cards and concern for my husband, *Ken Frey*. His triple bypass surgery was a total surprise for us and a major reminder of how important diet and exercise are! *Ken* is recovering nicely, but will be off work from his job at CVS for 3-4 months. He'll be having cardiac rehabilitation three times a week all summer. Thank goodness I'm a teacher and can be home with him during those months. We so appreciate the love and support from everyone.

Karen Frey

(Editor's Note: After this was written, *Ken* had a heart attack. However, he is back home again and doing well.)

Dear Hillcrest Church,

Thank you so much for thinking of us for the generous donation of miscellaneous food items for our food distribution program. On behalf of the board and staff, we want you to know how much your support means to us. The Gary Center offers a variety of services, such as, Community Counseling for individuals, groups and families, a "full mouth restoration" dental clinic that serves children and adults, a food distribution program serving 150 low-income families each week as well as a job creation program. We are proud to be a part of the community that has embraced our mission for more than 38 years.

Sincerely,

Martha Lester, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you for your generous contribution of \$108 – especially appreciated in this challenging economy. Thanks to caring donors like you, Church World Service can provide food, water and other necessities to families displaced by war or natural disasters. And with your help, we can also assist impoverished communities as they work to improve their farming techniques, develop reliable water sources, and build a more

sustainable future. May God bless you for your compassionate support.

Rev. John L. McCullough
Executive Director and CEO

GIVING & RECEIVING MORE THANKS

Dear Friends,

It is with heartfelt gratitude that the Board of Trustees of Whittier Meals on Wheels expresses appreciation for your generous donation of \$167.50. Whittier Meals on Wheels provides nutritious lunches and dinners five days a week, and by special request, on some holidays, to those who are shut-in or otherwise unable to adequately prepare their meals. The service is provided regardless of race, creed or financial status, and as recommended by a doctor. Operational expenses are exceedingly high and many clients cannot afford the modest cost of the meals. In order to cover these costs, some partial and full subsidies are needed. For this reason, the program depends heavily on support from companies, organizations and individuals as well as many volunteers. This thoughtful gift can be used to help sick, elderly and handicapped citizens remain in their own home instead of being forced into institutional life. We thank you again for your donation.

Whittier Meals on Wheels
Patricia A. Holody, President

PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

We are in need of at least three more members to submit their names for the pastoral search committee. Our by-laws require nine to service and we have six volunteers to this date. Our next quarterly meeting is scheduled for September 20th at which time it would be desirable to confirm the committee. If you have any questions about this very important responsibility, please contact either *Diana Ford* (562) 696-2166 or *Gail Stier* (562) 943-5676.

NEW WEDDING HOSTESS

After 489 weddings, *Laurie Gjoraas* has decided to retire from the wedding hostess responsibility she has so ably managed. *Alison Ferguson* expressed interest in the position and was confirmed at our June council meeting. *Alison & Andrew Ferguson* were married at Hillcrest and

Alison has already worked with *Laurie* on one wedding and will continue to be under her tutelage. Welcome aboard *Alison* and thank you *Laurie* for all the weddings you have supervised for the last 20+ years!.

KOINONIA/COUNCIL MEETING

The next Koinonia/Council meeting is Tuesday, August 11, 2009. Dinner is at 6:00 p.m. in Barwick Hall. The business meeting begins at 6:45 p.m. All church members and friends are encouraged to attend the August meeting.

TAI CHI ANYONE?

The Tai Chi class is weekly on Monday morning at 9:30 a.m. in the patio area. Tai Chi is designed for anyone wishing to gain flexibility and balance, while learning a short form of shadow boxing. All ages and abilities are welcome - no experience is necessary! This is an open class and is FREE.

DID YOU BORROW IT?

Monday morning, June 29th, after the pancake breakfast, our "pop up" which was waiting to be picked up in front of Barwick Hall with the griddle, was missing. Did anyone borrow it? According to sources, it was there Sunday night! Please call me if you have any information. *Diana Ford* – (562) 696-2166.

JANE BATES PROJECT

The **Jane Bates Project** is a Hillcrest mission to provide prayer shawls to folks who are experiencing challenges – mainly for women as they heal from breast cancer. Knit and crochet patterns for prayer shawls are available at the church office. Since some of us don't know how to crochet, we've arranged for a lesson. The class will be taught by *Cindy Martine* (706) 955-2785. *Cindy* also teaches a weekly on-going class at the **Tea Leaf and Coffee Bean** on Greenleaf Avenue. The first HCC crochet class and potluck will be August 3, 2009, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. in Barwick Hall. Please bring a "K" hook and some yarn to practice. The cost is \$15.00 for the first class and \$7.00 for additional classes. Patterns will be provided at the class. Please let *Sally Hyslop* (562) 697-2907 know if you are interested in attending the class and what you will be bringing to the potluck or you may sign up on the sheet available in the narthex.

THE HILLCREST BOOK CLUB

The Hillcrest Book Club meets the third Thursday of the month. The next meeting is Thursday, August 20, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room. They have an informal discussion of recent fiction and non-fiction books, but occasionally they do an older classic. Criteria include availability of a particular book.

The book chosen for the August meeting is "**The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society**" by *Mary Ann Shaffer & Annie Barrows*. "Just after WWII a writer is contacted by a fan on the British island of Guernsey. As events unfold and she goes to Guernsey, the writer learns of the misery, bravery, and ingenuity of the locals when Guernsey was captured by the Germans. The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society is like no other book I've ever read, and it's outstanding."

-- *Elaine Petrocelli, Book Passage, Corte Madera, CA*

Newcomers are always very welcome.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE

If you wish to have the name of a loved one added to the Memorial Plaque in the Memorial Garden, please call the church office, (562) 947-3755, with the full name, year of birth and death. The bronze plaques are 8" x 1" and cost about \$96, at least for the last one we got.

ADULT STUDY GROUP

The Adult Study Group meets on Mondays at 10:30 a.m. and Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room. This group will combine bible study and adult Sunday school. Choose the time most convenient for you.

DEADLINE

The next **Hi-Lites** deadline is Sunday, August 16, 2009. Now "Nuff said!"