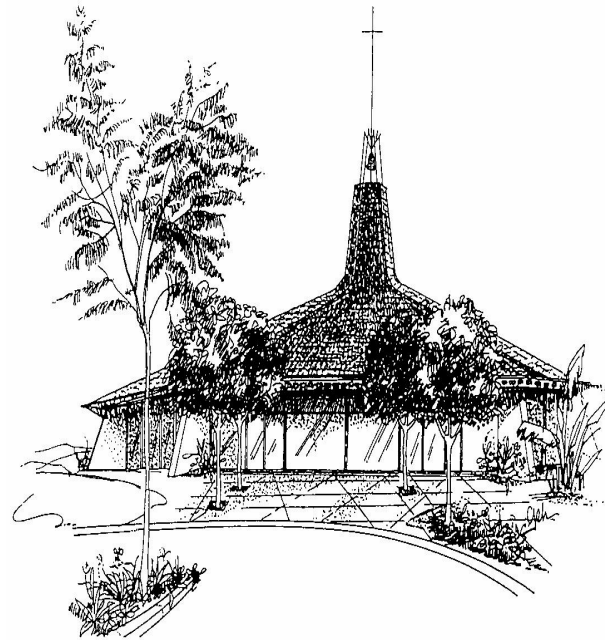


# HILLCREST HILITES

## "REVERENDLY" SPEAKING

*September 27, 2009*



**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*  
Wedding Director.....*Alison Ferguson*

This month I have spent time planning worship and listening to people. You would think that that would be two separate activities; one seems relatively active and one relatively passive. Actually, they have been and are very important to each other.

I have found that communication is the largest challenge for any group, couple, or even for an individual. It sounds strange, but we do need to talk to ourselves. If we don't, we don't know what we are thinking, feeling, or portraying to the people around us about ourselves. If we are not self-aware, we cannot understand ourselves, be in control of ourselves, much less be in relationship with others. Then, if we do not communicate well with others and them with us, there is no relationship. If we do not communicate well as a church and create community, if there is no transparency, there is no trust, and no place for God to work God's healing among us.

Most of communication is listening. Listening deeply, patiently, without judgment or comment. Then we need to check with the person we are listening to, in order to make sure that what we heard is actually what they meant for us to hear. The third step is not responding. It is internalizing what they have said: taking what we have heard, praying over it and talking to God about it, thinking about it, examining our feelings and thoughts, and what we value in our relationship with the other person or persons- perhaps some of that talking to ourselves I mentioned above. Finally we are required to open up and share, take the risk of being vulnerable with another person or persons, so we can be in relationship. It is in a cycle of ongoing communication that relationships and community is created and sustained, where God can be present and bring healing.

The listening I have been doing has influenced the worship we have been experiencing. I have asked people about what worship means to them, what we do that makes our worship valuable or sacred, and what new things we might do that would enhance our worship. We have tried out some of those new things. I have also received a lot of new perspectives from the people in the adult study groups about the scripture, what it may have meant for the people in the time it was written, and what it means for us today. I have changed the scripture and focus of my sermon on several occasions because of questions, input, and challenges. In both cases, that has created more conversation, an exciting cycle of communication and community building.

I have also heard questions about how we are a church together, both questions that involve the emotional investment we have in being in community with each other, but also questions about our basic structure and operations. Here are two very important questions that came up: Do we know what it means to be congregational? (Do we know what role our pastor plays, and do we know how we operate), and Do we know what it takes to run a church? Two of the articles in this edition of the Hi-Lites are an attempt to answer these questions.

(Continued on Next Page)

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

A congregational church is a church where the congregation determines its own organization, operation, and governance: everything is run by the congregation! The congregational church is the origin of the democratic model of our government, in which every member has a vote. The congregation writes, and votes to adopt bylaws that govern how the church will operate including everything from: the requirements for membership, how a pastor is chosen and what responsibilities the pastor has, how elections are conducted, what officers exist to operate the church between congregational meetings, and how meetings will be conducted.

At Hillcrest, the bylaws were recently modified to operate with a church council and Koinonia (community) groups as the elected leaders. The church council consists of the moderator, vice moderator, clerk, and representatives of the four Koinonia groups. The people who serve in each of these positions are elected by the full congregation. The church council and Koinonia groups are required to meet monthly, and these meetings are open to the entire congregation. The Koinonia groups are: Care for Enrichment and Growth (education and fellowship), Care for Our Legacy (buildings, equipment, finances) Care for the Worship Year (worship!), and Care for our Congregation and Community (shepherds, mission, outreach, and Arts Festival).

An annual meeting is held in January at which the congregation elects the church council and Koinonia groups, as well as

adopting the church budget. A recommended budget is prepared by the church council and Koinonia groups, and the nominating committee presents a slate of nominees to the congregation for its approval at the annual meeting.

The pastor is called (a vote is held after prayerful discernment) by the full congregation, to provide spiritual leadership to the congregation. The pastor has the privilege of the pulpit - meaning they are encouraged by the congregation to speak what God has called them to preach, without concern for their job or censorship by the congregation. The pastor is not CEO or president and does not run the church or congregation. The Moderator serves as “president” of the congregation. While the Pastor is a member of the congregation, with right to vote with the entire congregation, the pastor does not have a vote on the church council or in Koinonia groups. The pastor must be a UCC pastor in good standing with the UCC. A Pastor has a contract with the congregation that specifies the expectations of the pastor and the congregation. These may include some day-to-day administrative duties and supervision of staff.

Is this different from other churches? It is very different from churches in denominations that do not have the congregational structure. In other denominations the pastor or priest runs the church (the congregation may provide input or assist in operations). Rules of governance are imposed by the denomination, and Pastors are appointed by denomination officials (United Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Episcopal). (Two denominations which also have the congregational structure are Unitarian Universalist and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)).

**ADDITION TO OUT OF AREA TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Jennifer (Karam) Kensler’s name was omitted from the new directory. Her address and telephone information is as follows:

Jennifer (Karam) Kensler  
400 Fairfax Road, Apt. J75  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060-6524  
Cell: (714) 904-1475

Jennifer was very active at Hillcrest until she move out of state to attend college. She is currently working on a PhD in Statistics at Virginia Tech. Jennifer and her husband, Jonathan, were married at Hillcrest in 2005.

Jennifer (Karam) Kensler’s birthday was accidentally omitted from the recent September birthday calendar. Her birthday is September 20<sup>th</sup>.

**GIVING AND RECEIVING THANKS**

Dear Supporters,  
It is with deep and humble gratitude that I thank you for your support to the Interfaith Food Center. Your donation will enable us to continue purchasing food for the many families we service. We hope that you will stop by our Food Center sometime and see our operation and the results of your generous donation.  
*Veronica G. Hernandez, Executive Director*

Dear Friends,  
On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, First Day guests and the many that will benefit from your kindness and generosity we say **Thank you**. Remember without you we couldn’t exist.  
*Betty Kenworthy, Board Member*

**ALL SAINTS DAY CELEBRATION - NOVEMBER 1, 2009**

(Please drop in offering plate or return to church office no later than October 26, 2009)

I/we would like to celebrate the life of:

Name(s) This person was my/our (father, mother, friend)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My/our name(s) are:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If there are any questions, please contact me/us at: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number

## YOUR CHURCH COUNCIL AT WORK

Although summer activities have kept us all busy, the Church Council has accomplished some important tasks and nearly completed others since June, all desirable before we call a new pastor. These are: updated pew brochure, updated church directory, updated Hi-Lites mailing list by deleting 50 names and adding 22.

With *Pastor Loletta's* business expertise, drafts of staff and lay leadership job descriptions with a consistent format, now in the process of being made final. In addition, a filing system in the office instead of a box or notebook at the moderator's home! We are also tackling 21 pages of church policies to match our by-laws revisions such as eliminating the language of trustees, boards and senior care and revising others to reflect changes that have been made in the last eight years. Hillcrest Church Council is a dedicated group of people working hard to get our house in order!

*Diana Ford, Moderator*

### FALL FOOD DRIVE!

Hillcrest is once again asking for your non-perishable food items for our Fall Food Drive. We are doing it earlier this year so that we can give all the food to the Whittier and La Habra Food Banks in time for Thanksgiving. Please bring your donations to the church **Oct. 11-31**, and place them in the wooden box in the narthex. Your help is so greatly appreciated – there is a huge demand at every food bank this year. Thank you!

### TAI CHI ANYONE?

The Tai Chi class meets 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.

## THE HILLCREST BOOK CLUB

The next meeting of the Hillcrest Book Club is Thursday, October 15, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room. We have an informal discussion of recent fiction and non-fiction books, but occasionally they do an older classic. The book chosen for October is "*Man's Search for Meaning*" by *Viktor Frankl*. The main goal of this book is to provide perspective and techniques for a person to use to find meaning in his or her life. It is written in an autobiographical style by psychiatrist, *Viktor Frankl*. He discusses many specific examples from his imprisonment in a Nazi concentration camp, along with his professional knowledge to offer a method for discovering personal fulfillment and a sense of meaning in life. With descriptive language, *Frankl* creates a vivid image of this horrible ordeal. He begins the book by describing his reactions and observations at the outset of his imprisonment. 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 combines bible study and adult Sunday school. Choose the time most convenient for you.

Although there are similarities, Hillcrest is also different from other UCC churches. (Each church is unique to their own congregation! But there are many similarities.) There are 4 uniquely Hillcrest items: 1) Hillcrest has named its committees or ministries, Koinonia (community) groups. 2) The bylaws require quarterly meetings to ensure that the congregation is kept informed. 3) The church council and Koinonia meetings are open to the whole congregation, and the congregation is invited and encouraged to attend. 4) The church council includes not just the moderator, vice

moderator, clerk, and chairpersons of the Koinonia groups, but all elected members of the Koinonia groups. In summary, the Hillcrest model encourages wider participation by the congregation in planning and operating the church and its programs.

*How do I get to participate on the Koinonia groups or on the church council?* Attend the meetings! Your input is welcomed and invited. But to formally participate as a voting member on a Koinonia group or on the church council, contact the nominating committee members and let them know you are interested in serving. The Nominating committee is comprised of the Vice Moderator, the Member-at-Large, and representatives from each of the Koinonia groups. The nominating committee begins working in November to put together a slate of candidates for the congregation to consider at the annual meeting. Nominations are also permitted at the meeting. The congregation then votes for the individuals who will represent them for the year.

## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO RUN A CHURCH?

One thing that is necessary is a budget, consisting of both planned expenses and income. At the annual meeting, the congregation adopts a budget- a financial plan. This plan is put together by the church council, which is elected by the congregation. The plan is based on the church's planned activities (worship, fellowship, choir, youth group, Sunday school), the pledges from members, and past experience with expenses and income.

The August report included \$230,995 in expenses and \$211,884 in income. If all goes as planned, this means that additional \$19,111 in income would be needed by the end of the year to balance the budget. This is almost one month of planned expenses, and is more than one month of planned income.

Each month, God's house has expenses, just like your house. Some expenses are the same each month (perhaps like your trash hauling bill), some rise and fall depending upon the season (electricity rises in the summer for air conditioning), and some occur only periodically (insurance). The average monthly expenses of the church are approximately \$19,250.

Just like your house, God's house needs income to pay the bills. Playing your tithe by keeping up with your pledge, or putting your treasures into the offering plate each week pays the bills. The average monthly giving is approximately \$17,657 in income each month of the year.

Each month, the treasurer/financial secretary pays the bills, creates reports that track expenses and income against the budget plan, and presents the reports to the church council. These reports are also made available to the congregation at Quarterly meetings.

The report submitted by the treasurer for August shows that as of the end of August, our expenditures have been \$138,450, and income was \$142,279. This is a positive of \$3,829. While this is good news for August, we must continue to be cautious in our spending and consistent in paying our pledges. We have additional bills that are paid in the fall, and without a corresponding increase in income to offset them, we will still be short. Please see **QUARTERLY MEETING NOTES**.

What do the costs of running a church consist of? Staff expenses 64.5%, utilities and trash collection 11.8%, janitorial and gardening services 8.3%, insurance 5.6%, office expenses 3.5%, taxes 2.1%, supplies for church activities 1.9%, day-to-day maintenance 1.6%, and advertising .7%. (Please note that this does not include larger maintenance costs such as painting, resurfacing parking lots, etc.)

Besides pledges, are their other incomes to the church? Yes. Pledges consist of 54.6% of the income. There is also income from: facility use donations 15.6%, un-pledged giving 12.3%, other special funds 6.5%, festival 4.1%, fundraisers including vouchers 3.6%, interest and dividends 2.4%, and memorials .9%.

#### **HILLCREST HISTORY PROJECT**

Join in the fun! Pictures of past events will be displayed in Barwick Hall for the next few months in an ongoing history project! Come and check out the pictures and help us try to identify the people, places, events, and things they are doing! Everyone can join in the fun, even if you are relatively new to Hillcrest- there are some newer pictures that will be displayed! And perhaps you will see what someone you know well now looked like 10, 20, 30, 40 or even 50 years ago!

#### **ART IN WORSHIP**

In anticipation and celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> Art Festival, we are celebrating our art in worship. Hillcrest has a wonderful collection of art that will be displayed in our sanctuary so we can appreciate it and the creativity of God that is expressed through artists! Some of the art is not transportable, but nonetheless we will find a way to feature it. Come, learn about and enjoy the beautiful art we have in our midst!

#### **WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER**

#### **SAVING US MONEY IS EVERYONE'S JOB**

Let this serve as a reminder from the Church

Council that the drain of utility expense payments does not help us pay staff or maintain facility repairs. Our Hillcrest power (Edison) bill in July was \$2,300.00 and in August it was \$2,400.00. Much of this is air conditioning expense, the balance is lighting. To help reduce this expense, please help with the following:

1. Set air conditioning not lower than 75 degrees. Turn it off when leaving. When the room is not in use, shut it off.
2. Turn on the minimum lighting level. All the lights do not need to be on at once. Turn all lights off when leaving the room.
3. Use closed drapes to help shield rooms from afternoon sun and heat.

#### **SECURITY IS EVERYONE'S JOB**

When using any part of the Church property, our Church Council asks you to remember to close and lock all doors and windows before leaving. In the past month our gardener's power tools were stolen from the upper parking lot while he was using a blower in the lower parking lot. Also a pop up tent loaned by a member for the Pancake Breakfast was stolen from the Barwick Hall entry. While we know that open doors and windows tend to welcome uninvited visitors, there are steps we can take to reduce future losses at Hillcrest:

1. Close doors behind you. Leaving doors open can not only jeopardize loss of our fine art and other property, but it can allow rodents/rats entry.
2. If windows are opened for ventilation, make sure they are closed when use of the room is finished.

#### **QUARTERLY MEETING NOTES**

The September Quarterly meeting was held following worship on September 20, 2009. Two particular items were discussed: the year-to-date financial status and the election of a search committee. Operating statements were distributed at the quarterly meeting and **the good news** is that there was a clerical error. It showed a projected shortfall of \$19,111, however in reality, the shortfall was \$7,911 for our

projected budget. This is higher than the shortfall of \$3,727 projected earlier this year. **The bad news is**, not surprisingly, interest income and dividends are way down and use of facilities, weddings and memorial donations are much lower than we had hoped for. Making adjustments for those line items to a more realistic figure brings a shortfall to \$11,711. This number is calculated with a conservative \$3,500 added to misc fundraisers since we have the craft sale in October and the Gala coming up in November. How do we make this shortfall up? An increase in purchasing Stater Brothers vouchers, clean out closets and supply things for Granny's Attic in October, participate with a unique item for the silent auction and invite friends to the Gala in November, increase facility use from outside sources and keep expenses down as best we can for the next three months. We can do this, if we jut put our heads together!

The Pastoral Search Committee was confirmed at the Quarterly Meeting. Those confirmed included: *Nick Coonis, Carol Ferguson, David French, Gloria Karam, Ron Karam, Maria Lynch, Michael Maguire, Bryan Pitzer, Bill Yetter* and *Janet Dickinson* as an alternate. Their first task will be to assemble a church profile from your input to be distributed to clergy seeking a position. We are grateful that these people have pledged their time for this very important task.

#### **ANNUAL PICNIC**

The Annual Picnic took place on the day after this Hi-Lites was printed. So many of you didn't have a chance to participate. There will games for people of all ages here on our beautiful campus with fabulous prizes. I'm certain the potluck will be extremely delicious as always. More next month!

#### **EASTERN ASSOCIATION MEETING!**

The next Eastern Association Meeting is in Las Vegas on November 7, 2009, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The Las Vegas churches are always well represented in these meetings, getting up early and driving from Las Vegas to the meeting here and back again on the same day! Now it is our turn to go to them. We are invited to send our Pastor and two delegates to each meeting, but anyone is welcome. Please see *Pastor Loletta*, if you are interested in attending.

## YOUTH MINISTRY

### New Youth Curriculum!

The Hillcrest Youth Group began the new church year with "Gather Round," a new curriculum from the UCC. "Gather Round" focuses on the Old Testament's understanding of Exile and Restoration and how Jesus' ministry served those who often felt they were excluded from society and how it continues to resonate with the disenfranchised of today. The Youth Group Sunday School meets in Room 9 in Barwick Hall from 10:20 to 11:00 a.m.

### Youth Group Rocks in October!

The Youth Group has a busy October planned. On October 4<sup>th</sup>, the kids will travel to Rock City in Anaheim for some rock climbing and bouldering. It is always one of the youth groups' favorite trips. On October 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> the kids will be putting together the Haunted House for the Church Halloween Part scheduled for Sunday, October 25.

## FELLOWSHIP

### Halloween Spooktacular!

The Church Halloween Party will be here before you know it. On Sunday, October 25, 2009, at 6:00 p.m. there will be old-fashioned bobbing for apples, a costume contest, a haunted house and much more! Bring the kids and the grandkids and help the community too. Admission into the Halloween Party is a can of food for the foodbank. Last year we took in more than 250 cans of food and had a wonderful time at the party. Set-up for the party will be after church on Sunday, October 25 for those who would like to help.

### Fly Me To The Moon!

The Rat Pack will be rocking again on Saturday, November 14, 2009 at Hillcrest's annual dinner party and dance. This year's party is **Fly Me To The Moon** and the music of Sinatra, Martin, Como and Crosby will be the standard. Tickets go on sale Sunday, September 27, 2009 for \$20. We encourage everyone to get their tickets early and to begin thinking about donations for the silent auction. Talk with *Sally* about your ideas!

## RALLY DAY A SUCCESS!

It was a day of celebration of accomplishments and our call! We celebrated the many things that have been accomplished over the year by our members and Koinonia groups. We had a special celebration for *Claude Drake's* 56 years of audio/visual ministry as well as his all around handyman work. He was presented with a book of 50 notes from members and friends, as well as a microphone award! He was surprised when not one, but two of his daughters and sons-in-law and his son-in-law's mother came. We also celebrated the 20-year wedding ministry of *Laurie Gjoraas* and welcomed *Alyson Ferguson* as the new wedding director. *K.C. Coonis*, *Nick Coonis*, and *Bryan Pitzer* were also welcomed to their new ministries of Children's Ministry Director, Rangers, and audio/visual services.

Our worship was celebratory as well: We began with a joyful procession, used our audio/visual capabilities instead of bulletins, enjoyed special music, poetry, and scripture dramatization from our choir, speech choir, *Edith* and her granddaughter *Gina*. We also saw a portion of *The Art of Parables*, a video presentation of the parables in the Gospel According to Mark, featuring the sculpture of Charles McCollough. During the offertory we were treated to a video presentation "How God Expresses Creativity - Through Us!" This included a pictorial directory of our members and the teachers and staff of the Country Day School. Our worship ended with a recessional that led us over to Barwick Hall for lunch.

Seventy five people stayed for lunch and participated in ministry faire riddle contest and drawing. The three winners received gift cards: *Diana Ford*, *Eloise Robinson* and her granddaughter *Danielle Linke* who showed up to surprise her grandmother! We had photographers taking pictures so expect to see more about this at a later date!

## UPCOMING WORSHIP EVENTS

October 4<sup>th</sup> is World Communion Sunday. Please come to celebrate with fellow Christians from all over the world by dressing or bringing items that represent your heritage, your travels, or people you know in other parts of the world. The **Neighbors in Need** offering will also be accepted

November 1<sup>st</sup> is All Saints Day. On this Sunday we will remember in worship members of the Hillcrest family who passed over into eternal life in the last year. You are also invited to remember and honor people who have been important in your life who have joined the ranks of the Saints. Please drop the enclosed slip into the offering plate or turn it in to the office no later than Monday October 26.

## ART FESTIVAL

The 50<sup>th</sup> Art Festival screening will take place on October 3 from 9 to noon. If you know of an artist who may be interested in participating, please have them contact Jan Lynch at (562) 694-5810. A Fine Arts committee meeting is scheduled for Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup> after the worship service in the conference room and a light lunch will be served. Plan on brainstorming innovative ideas for the celebration of our 50<sup>th</sup> festival, talking about anticipated expenses, and reaching out to both the church and local community. Your attendance is important, so please mark your calendar for October 25. Thank you!  
*Lyn Sandahl*, Festival of Fine Arts General Chair

## CHRISTMAS BOUTIQUE

The Christmas boutique will be held on October 9-11, 2009, in Barwick Hall. Donations are *desperately* needed for Granny's closet. Donations may be dropped off at the church office (No clothes please). If you have any questions please contact *Sally* at (562) 902-6539. The times are Friday & Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. On Sunday the time is 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

The Children's Ministry is embarking on some new adventures this month, beginning with our first **Hillcrest Movie Night!** We will be showing "*Monsters vs. Aliens*" on the big screen on October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the church parking lot. This will be a drive-in style movie, so back up your cars, pull out your lawn chairs, and enjoy the show. Everyone is welcome to come for the free movie. A small snack shop operation will be available with popcorn, drinks and candy to raise funds for the Children's Ministry.

## HILLCREST RANGERS

The Rangers are having a wonderful month! We've already made homemade bows and arrows, and on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, we will be going on an overnight backpacking trip to San Geronio! Our next meeting is October 7<sup>th</sup>, where we will be learning all about basic home repair!

## HILLCREST COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

September is here and hillcrest country Day School is back in session. I hope you all had a wonderful summer. The children are busy adjusting to school, meeting their new teachers and making new friends. Remember **Back to School Night** is Wednesday, September 30, 2009, from 7:00-8:00 p.m. This is a time for the parents to ask questions and to learn about their child's day at Hillcrest. We will meet up in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. and then go downstairs to the children's classrooms.

We have preschool & school age openings, so please tell your neighbors and friends!

*Love, Joan & Dani*