

the **Visitor...**

. . . bringing into your home the news and ministries of
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Vallejo

I've been thinking Lent
from the pastor's keyboard

One of our members asked me to put together a little explanation about Lent for the children in our Sunday School. As I tried to put not too much information in not too complicated a way, I realized that Lent is pretty hard to explain, period. I think this is largely due to the fact that Lent was a concept conceived by the early church and its forms and structure reflect our early Catholic heritage. Many of us remember our Catholic friends of childhood, who "had to give something up for Lent." I remember that this frequently involved trying to find something the person would miss, but not too much, for the forty days of deprivation. (The season of Lent encompasses the forty days before Easter, not counting Sundays.) My best friend confessed that she gave up chewing gum for Lent one year. (My friend loved to chew gum.) But she said she had no idea how much she loved to chew gum, until she gave it up. Being, even then, a young woman of conscience, she faithfully went "gum-less" for the season, until Easter released her from her sacrificial promise. She bought several packs of gum and stuffed as many as she could fit in her mouth, and a positive orgy of gum chewing followed.

A writer I encountered described Lent as the "time of mud." Lent occurs in very early Spring when everyone is wanting to get out into the garden and dig and plant and weed, (unless your garden is covered by Snow in March, something we in Vallejo do not expect to experience). This urge to plant new life is stymied by the persistent rain and soggy ground and—well—mud. No matter how much we anticipate those early bulbs and flowers, we have to wait for more sustained sunshine to dry up the mud.

My husband Fred remembers his Catholic boarding school days during Lent. All moveable ornamentation was removed from the church, and the nuns would sew dark purple gauze covers for every statue and decorative element that couldn't be physically removed. He recalls how eerie it was to walk through the big church, already full of shadows, among all those towering statues wrapped in shrouds of purple.

As a child, no church I attended observed a Lenten season, and a very simple Maundy Thursday service during Holy Week was the only dividing line between every other

Sunday and Easter (which was largely about new clothes and baskets of candy). During the 70's, however, many Disciple churches began to bring back into the church the sense of liturgical time, when we mark the major events in the life of Christ and of the church. This included the season of Lent. We have tried to evoke the sense of Lenten reflection and repentance in our own sanctuary by removing ornaments, and introducing our own "purple veils." The forty candles behind the veil, representing the forty days of Lent, have been steadily decreasing in number as the days pass, moving us toward the darkness of Good Friday.

Last year Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion of Jesus Christ" took the movie-going public by something of a storm. Amid the controversy one thing was always clear. To Mr. Gibson, the most important thing about Jesus was his suffering and death, and his movie reflected that. I have always believed that the most important thing about Jesus was his life. Lent is a time when we can reflect upon life, its gifts and its demands, its blessings and its challenges. And as Christians, I think we must reflect upon the life of Jesus and how our understanding of it defines our own. As life includes death, we must consider His death, but we must always be aware that death as defined by Jesus Christ is not the end of the journey but only a point of departure. The journey continues.

Lent then, is a time when we can willingly and voluntarily give up something so that we may experience sacrifice made out of love. It is a time when we turn our eyes away from decoration and indulgence, and give ourselves a space that is uncluttered in which to be more aware of God's presence. Lent is a time when we acknowledge the simple truth that the darkness and mud of winter are absolutely necessary if there is to be a blooming and living spring.

The word "Lent" comes from Anglo Saxon (Old English) and means, simply, "Spring."

With deepest Shalom,

Pastor Judith

FCC to start freecycling

Freecycle is an online community dedicated to the free exchange of unwanted items that believes it's better to give things away than to throw them away. It is a forum for people (or organizations) to post items they no longer have use for so that others may benefit from them. Learn about freecycle through its web page, www.freecycle.org.

First Christian Church is now signed up with a local freecycle group. Hopefully, this will reduce what we are forced to take to the dumps, and also benefit the church as we can acquire items which we need. Freecycle groups mandate that new users post an item to give away before claiming any; so we have offered our old blue choir robes which we have not used for many years. As of press time, we are connecting with a church that asked for the robes because they do not have any of their own. Freecycling is an admirable effort by folks dedicated to keeping our earth clean and helping people at the same time. Check out their web site, and maybe you'll want to sign up yourself!

more fun and games

For all of you who missed the fun and games night on February 8th, you now have three more chances! Mark your calendars for

March 8th 6:30 - 8:30 pm

April 12th 6:30 - 8:30 pm

May 10th 6:30 - 8:30 pm

The approximately 20 of us who gathered played hard and ate lots! Scrabble. Cards. Two tables of Chickenfoot (Ask Cheryl and Sonya about their custom-made set!) and The Game of Life! Bring a snack to share and any games that are your particular favorites - or maybe games you know you can win - or games you really don't like and hope someone else will take home with them. For information, call Glenda Goode at 644-6326. See you there!

just kidding - but not about food and fun

The "just kidding" kids and youth will be serving lunch on March 13 after church. This will be a fund raiser for the kids to go to camp this summer (or one summer). We will be having a taco bar with all the fixings and then for desert we will be having root beer floats. Now who could pass this up? After dinner we will be playing some games for money. Sounds like gambling . . . well, maybe. You will just have to come and see. Please try and be there and bring your friends and neighbors.

recycle at VALCORE

If you recycle, and you know you should, go to VALCORE (Vallejo Community Organizations Recycling, Inc.) and tell them that you want to make this a contribution for the church. We will be on the contribution list by the first of April. This means that all the money you raise because of the aluminum, glass and plastic you recycle will go to the church. VALCORE has a program where you bring in your recyclables and they will make the contribution to the church. So start taking your recyclables to VALCORE and tell your friends. If you have any questions, just let me know. VALCORE's phone number is 645-8258 and their address is 38 Sheridan Street. Check out their web site, www.VALCORErecycling.org.

what's in the works for worship?

Come join us in worship! Come into the shadows and light of our sanctuary this season of Lent. Holy week will begin with a special Palm Sunday Service (March 20). Maundy Thursday and Good Friday Services (March 24 and 25) will each start at 7:00 p.m. Easter Sunday (March 27) will begin with breakfast at 9:00 a.m. (all are invited to attend) followed by worship at 10:30.

Every Sunday is special but you should be aware that April 17 has been designated as Youth Sunday, which means that our church youth will be heavily involved in both creating and leading us in worship. The following Sunday, April 24, is Earth Stewardship Sunday. A special dedication is planned that morning. More details will be provided later. Pentecost, a special day for Christians everywhere, will be celebrated Sunday May 15.

fun fashion show furnishes needed funds

The "Building Bridges to Nairobi" fashion show and dinner was an uplifting event, as three churches came together to help kids living halfway around the world. Pastor Judith opened with a beautiful invocation that set the tone for the evening. Then the large crowd in attendance sat down to eat a delicious meal together and watch as models showed off the clothing made by hand by the beneficiaries of the Nairobi Street-Children Project. Before and after dinner, patrons explored the tables of items for sale - everything from shirts, dresses, and jewelry to nuts, coffee and tea. The meal was courtesy of Cattie McCarver and her daughter Kathryn Parker and son Donnie Parker, all of Liberty Baptist. The members of the youth group of Holy Family Parish - who were professional in their serving duties and colorful in their modeling - did a great job, under the direction of Michael Schneiders, whom some of you met when he came to speak at FCC several weeks ago. And Helen Mezzera really shepherded the idea from start to finish and acted as coordinator and host. It is amazing what people of great faith can accomplish when they do God's work together.

Prior to the event, which was held on February 26th in our Fellowship Hall, the efforts of Holy Family had already raised over \$9000 to send back to Kenya - in less than a year! This is such a worthy program, and FCC should be proud to have been able to lend its support.

A big "thank you" to Glenda and Ted Goode for their assistance getting the Fellowship Hall ready to go for the big event - and it looked great. Thanks also to Carl and Jeanne Cordes for their help cleaning up after the dinner. And thanks to everyone from FCC who came or who made monetary contributions. Although we will hope to have financial figures in the near future on how well the event did, we already know it was a great success.

news & notes

Thanks to David Mezzera for filling the pulpit the Sunday that Judith was at the regional women's retreat.

Sandy McIver recently underwent surgery and is facing some chemotherapy. Sandy, our prayers are with you!

Our February Peace Prayer Service collected money for Fellowship of Reconciliation. Wonder what goes on at the prayer service? Come and find out! The next one is Monday, March 7th at 7 p.m.

At our February congregational meeting, we elected Carl Cordes and Judith Jones as delegates to the Annual Meeting at Asilomar.

Sylvan Rogers and Milton Thomas departed for a short vacation to Florida. In his free time, Sylvan has been working to update his web site, www.liberalseekers.org.



mark your calendars

March

- 7 - Peace Prayer Service. 7 p.m.
- 8 - Game Night. 6:30 p.m.
- 12 - "Stampin Up" Event. 10 a.m.
- 13 - Taco Bar Lunch. After worship.
- 14 - Admin Council. 7 p.m.
- 20 - Palm Sunday.
- 24 - Maundy Thursday Service. 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary.
- 25 - Good Friday Service. 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary.
- 26 - Program Council Calendaring Session. 9 a.m.
- 27 - Easter Breakfast. 9 a.m.

April

- 4 - Peace Prayer Service. 7 p.m.
- 10 - Just Kidding Movie Day. After worship.
- 12 - Game Night. 6:30 p.m.
- 15 - Yard Sale set-up. 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
- 16 - Church Yard Sale. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- 17 - Youth Sunday.
- 22-24 - Annual Meeting at Asilomar.
- 30 - Lavender Tea.



*Finished with the **Visitor**? Don't forget to recycle!*



*First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
1035 Indiana St.
Vallejo, CA 94590*

(707) 643-7973

www.vallejochristian.com