

the **Visitor...**

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

I've Been Thinking about Earth Day

from the pastor's keyboard

Years ago I recall sitting at a dinner table with an older cousin. Ken and I hadn't been married long, and my cousin was much older. I recall that I had really idolized her as I grew up, loved to sit and listen to her talk. As a family we would all gather and talk at the drop of a hat—sit around after dinner, or anywhere really, and tell stories about the family history or what was happening now. My cousin had a racy tongue and a quick intelligence, and she added a touch of sophistication, of wit and challenge to the storytelling. She was also a “take charge” kind of person. She advanced rapidly in her profession, because she was so good at organizing and keeping things running—in short, in keeping things under control. Now, my cousin, like all of us, had a flaw. Her flaw was that she was an extreme conservative. Therefore, in my politically liberal family, politics rarely came up at family gatherings. Neither did the subject of Christianity. I had learned quite young that my cousin was an agnostic. So we talked about great grandmothers, and the way it had been growing up in rural Oklahoma, and history and art and books—everything except politics and religion. Because, you see, no one wanted to cause an upset in a family gathering. Well, here I was, with my mother and dad, and my husband, sitting at the dinner table, and we had been warned beforehand upon no event were we to raise the subjects of politics or religion. Someone else, however, had failed to get the message, and the subject came ‘round to George McGovern who was running for president. It was a slip, I see that now, but his name came up, and it only took a moment for my cousin's face to darken, and for the sparks of anger to start flashing in her eyes. Someone was telling about McGovern's platform, and how he alone of the candidates seemed to be genuinely concerned about the well-being of the electorate. My cousin, who saw Marxism lurking behind the shoulder of every liberal, interrupted and said in a truly brittle voice, “he probably recommends that property should be shared out, and I suppose you know who first said *that!*” I still remember Ken's quiet voice as he said “I believe it was Jesus Christ.” Both calamitous subjects in one blow. I do not remember that my cousin said anything in return. In fact, what I vividly remember is the quality of the silence that descended over that dinner table.

Years ago, William F. Buckley, also a witty and extreme conservative, noted that you may be able to mention religion at a fancy dinner party once, but if you bring up the subject twice in one evening, your name won't be on the guest list for the next big shindig! Besides, as we sometimes say, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day." Actions speak louder than words. The best way to share our faith, to tell others about Jesus, may be the lives we live, rather than the words we speak. Over my desk hangs a print with these words by St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." It was a joy to see church members Vince Mezzera, Ron Richard, Helen Mezzera, and Doug Northrip at our table at the street market last Saturday, advocating for the conservation of our home the earth. Someone visiting the booth said with some exasperation, "well it's about time." About time we see a church advocating conservation. About time we see a church advocating peace. About time we see a church doing, not just speaking. Helen tells me there are members of the Peace and Justice group who simply don't believe that we mean what we say. Talk, as we know, can be cheap.

We live in a world and in a time where we cannot just be about talk. It is vital that we, as Christian people, live what we speak. How can we do this, when the numbers are so stacked against us? When we give and give and it never seems to be enough? When there always seems to be too few to do the work and the same few doing it? You can help make a difference. In the area of conservation, have you looked for ways to help? Have you established a recycle bin at home for plastic bottles and aluminum cans? You can bring them to church to be taken to Valcore if you can't do that yourself. Are you collecting all those little AA and AAA batteries and bringing them to Ron's Battery recycle station? Have you switched your lightbulbs to energy efficient ones? When you buy a new car, are you considering one that gets great mileage, or a hybrid? Will you sign a petition advocating for animal rights to protect our fellow creatures from cruel exploitation? Have you stopped buying Styrofoam cups and plates? Have you any idea how much energy you save, just you, by doing these things? Together, we can make a difference.

Oh yes, one more thing. Talk about religion and politics at every dinner party, every lunch out, every place you go where people are talking. Tell them that you believe in peace and justice and are not only willing to talk about it, you are willing to work for it and so is your church. Let's all put our heads together and figure out how we can let those whose trust in the word of the church has been destroyed that we are a church with a difference: We mean what we say, and we say what we mean. Preach the gospel in all things, and when necessary, use words!

Shalom,

Judith

Goode home for May game night

Our monthly game night has been a popular event for those who have attended - if you're not one of them, you've missed out! The May game night will be held at the home of the Goodes - rather than at the church - on Tuesday, May 10th at 6:30 p.m.

on Pentecost, learn more about Heifer Project

We'll have a special guest on Sunday, May 15th - Suzanne Awalt, who will talk to us about Heifer Project. Following worship, there will be a luncheon at which time she will present a program of photos and stories from her 2003 Heifer study tour to Poland and Slovakia. Although we support Heifer each year at our holiday faire, we don't often think of Poland as a Heifer recipient country. In fact, since 1992, Poland has been the flagship of Heifer's Central and Eastern European Program that now assists families in 13 countries. The main focus of Heifer's work here is to demonstrate the value of self-directed small farm co-operatives.

Suzanne has been a volunteer in Heifer's Northwest Region for 14 years. She served on the Heifer International Board of Directors from 1998-2004. Plus, it will be great to catch up personally with Suzanne and her husband Roy - they were members of our church many years ago when they lived in Vallejo. It should be a really interesting day, so plan on staying for this event!

FCC to lend its building for Nairobi fundraiser

Another joint Outreach venture with Holy Family Parish for The Nairobi Street Children Project will take place on the church's front lawn on Saturday, June 25th, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Kenyan merchandise will be on sale, including: clothing; jewelry; bookmarks; carved animals; linens; coffee and an assortment of nuts. Come and do some fun shopping at great prices, knowing that what you spend is going to support a wonderful cause.

let's take action

Would you like to join a new group within the church that will identify important issues, discuss them, and then write letters to elected officials urging them to take action? We'll meet once a month in someone's home as we sort through local, state, national, and even international issues. Some of you have already expressed an interest in being a part of this new ministry; others of you are no doubt hearing about this opportunity for the first time. Let's start meeting and taking action!

FCC sends earth day message to Vallejo community

The church's table at the Earth Day Farmer's Market event in downtown Vallejo was full of things to give away: magnets, brochures, literature, and more. Many people stopped at our table to chat, gather material, and find out what our church does to aid the environment. The highlight for quite a few of them was checking out our display showing the biodegradable alternative "paper" goods and utensils which we used at last December's Holiday Faire - the ones made from wheat and sugar cane fiber. One woman even took some samples to share with her church's environmental group. The rain in the afternoon thinned out the crowd, but all in all it was a good day, spreading the message that "God's Earth is Sacred" and that there are churchgoing folks who are ready to help in the cause to protect the environment.

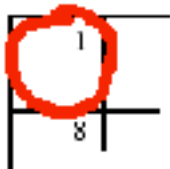
thank you for helping at the yard sale

A great big thank you for everyone who helped make the yard sale a huge success. The sale took in around \$1150.00. This money will be used to send the youth to camp. I couldn't believe how busy we were. From start to finish people came and bought. Most of the things were sold, but we also gave away three small truck loads of items to the Goodwill.

annual meeting was inspiring and all too short

Many things are happening in our regional church - some of them involve money, some involve prayer, and some involve volunteering. For example, each church represented at our region's annual meeting was given a milk carton with the following instructions: "One way to experience and share Jesus with others is to provide for the 'least of these' (Matt. 23:45). To promote this ministry, a special prayer box has been provided. The church name listed on this prayer box will be your 'Prayer and Mission Partner Church' for the next year. Collect donations for a mission or outreach project in your congregation's area/neighborhood. At a time agreed upon by your church, give the donations to your chosen project in the name of your congregation and your 'Prayer and Mission Partner' congregation." Our congregation is First Christian Church, Redding. We will need to decide what we will be doing for this mission project. Another venture involves the kids in an art contest and the adults and youth in a Miracle Day Project (to be explained later).

There are many opportunities for involvement in regional activities, like family camp, youth camps, men's and women's retreats, ministry mini-retreat for Sunday School teachers, and the dedication of the new dining hall at the Camp of the Great Commission (CGC). Check out the region's website (www.ccncn.org) for more information on upcoming events.



mark your calendars

May

- 2 - Peace Prayer Service. 7 p.m.
- 10 - Game night. 6:30 p.m. at the Goode home.
- 15 - Pentecost. Guest Speaker (Suzanne Awalt) and luncheon. After worship.
- 28 - Rehearsal for Youth Sunday. 1 p.m.

June

- 4 - Rehearsal for Youth Sunday. 1 p.m.
- 5 - Youth Sunday.
- 6 - Peace Prayer Service. 7 p.m.
- 25 - Nairobi Street Children Project sale. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the church lawn.



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