

The Mustard Seed

A monthly newsletter of St. John's United Methodist Church, Rohnert Park, CA Issue 0112



January 2012

Notes from Nancy **2**

Rest Stop **4**

January Educational Offerings **5**

COTS – Three Evening Volunteer Training Classes

The Family Connection is a program that matches a team of 3 to 5 volunteers to create a support network for a family working its way out of homelessness. The families typically live in a transitional housing program or perhaps has just moved into their own place.. They are facing challenges in learning life skills, parenting, finding resources, and trying to have good times sober.

After attending three Wednesday evening trainings, you would be teamed with other volunteers and your family. The commitment is about 2 hours per week and the team experience lasts for one year.

When: Wednesday, February 8, 15 and 22 from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Light dinner provided.

Where: Vida Nueva, 705 Rohnert Park Expressway West (just past Food Maxx)

Please register for this training by contacting Copper [707.585.6500 ext. 1](tel:707.585.6500) or copper@cots-homeless.org. Or for more information, contact Yvonne Clarke 795-8665.

What is COTS?

COTS – Committee on the Shelterless, offers help and hope to homeless persons in Sonoma County by providing safe shelter and housing, helping people develop steady incomes and helping them get back under a roof of their own.

COTS helps homeless families become stable and break the cycle of homelessness by teaching homeless parents to make their children's needs a high priority and to provide a safe, loving and secure home for their children.

Community volunteers provide over 50,000 hours of their time each year. COTS is also strongly supported by the cities of Petaluma and Rohnert Park, and the County of Sonoma.

Open Hearts

Open Minds

Open Doors

Notes from Nancy

Do you want to know what the difference between the importance of a two-horned altar uncovered in the ancient Philistine city of Gath on the coastal plain of Palestine is and the four-horned altars discovered in several places in iron age Israel? Are you interested in how accurately the Gospel of John can describe the city of Jerusalem in 50 AD? Do you want to look at pictures from the earliest religious site in history from the 10th C.B.E.?

Well maybe not. Some people are not interested and then there are some who are so fascinated they just can't soak up enough information. That would be me. I think back to 1992 or 1993, I went on an archeological dig in Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee. I have never gone on a dig again. I do not get up at four in the morning and eat dry bread and jelly and then shove a wheel barrel full of tools uphill so I can swing a pickaxe. No no no! However, even that three-week experience did not dim my love for archaeology although I have kept my enthusiasm to touring and looking at dig sites ever since.

Recently, I attended The Biblical Archaeology Fest at the Hilton Hotel in Chinatown in San Francisco. It was full of wonderful scholars who gave their latest research on their recent archaeology work. Most exciting to me was Dr. Rami Araav the director of the Bethsaida site for the last 25 years. When I went to dig there, they thought it was a very small fishing village full of Jewish fisherman and farmers. It was important because for some reason it was mentioned in the New Testament 7 times. Three of the disciples came from Bethsaida. Since 1992 much has changed and there have been many new discoveries. It had been a huge site in Old Testament times. It was the city of Geshur. King David had married the daughter of the king of Geshur. The Assyrians destroyed Geshur in 751. King Herod had brought in a few Jewish families to repopulate Bethsaida. He wanted to make himself look like the king of a larger territory. After the Roman Empire had destroyed Bethsaida along with Jerusalem and Nazareth in 70 AD, an earthquake destroyed the area in the fourth century and the site of Bethsaida was lost until digging began again in the 1990s.

Archeologists have learned so much in the last 25 years that enriches our knowledge about the Holy Land. The Biblical Archeology Society is a nonprofit and can be found online at www.biblicalarchaeology.org.

Blessings,

Reverend Nancy

POETRY CORNER

Heaven has different Signs - to me

"Heaven" has different Signs - to me
 Sometimes, I think that Noon
 Is but a symbol of the Place-
 And when again, at Dawn

A mighty look runs round the World
 And settles on the Hills-
 An Awe if I should be like that
 Upon the ignorance steals-

The Orchard when the Sun is on-
 The Triumph of the Birds
 When they together Victory make-
 Some Carnivals of Clouds-

The Rapture of a finished Day-
 Returning to the West-

All these-remind us of the place
 That Men call "paradise"-

Itself be fairer-we suppose-
 But how Ourselves, shall be

Adorned, for a Superior Grace-
 Not yet, our eyes can see-

Emily Dickinson

Gundaway Biteng, Foster Grandparent

For more than 20 years, Gundaway Biteng has been a volunteer in the Foster Grandparent Program at the Sonoma Developmental Center.

The Foster Grandparent Program connects volunteers age 55 and over with children and young adults with exceptional needs. These volunteers support some of the most vulnerable children in the United States. This program was established in August 1965. The Foster Grandparent Program, RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) and Senior Companions were brought together as Senior Corps in 1994 under the umbrella of one central organization, The Corporation for National and Community Service.

Every week, Monday to Friday, Gundy walks from her Santa Rosa apartment to the Downtown transit mall to catch the #30 bus to the Sonoma Developmental Center. At the Developmental Center she reads to the clients, helps with activities, and when the weather is nice she accompanies the clients outside, usually pushing someone in a wheelchair. She spends the day there, brings her lunch, and doesn't arrive back home until about 3 pm.

Gundy says the best part is the feeling that she is a member of a large family. "They need me."

Mike Hopkins' Rest Stop

What If God Was One Of Us?

Listening to the radio while driving has become increasingly unfulfilling. As soon as I get out of Rohnert Park in any direction, I lose my real-jazz station. The signal is weak and far away. Even under the best conditions, I have more noise and static than signal. Also, my true-oldies channel no longer graces the Bay Area airwaves. Radio has become a desolate wasteland. Don't tell me that there are strong smooth-jazz and classic-rock stations available to my car antenna... it's not the same. So I surf the dial looking for something, constantly sampling different formats. I hear a tune that sounds intriguing with a young woman singing. The words catch my attention: "What if God was one of us?" The sentiment strikes a resonant chord with me. I recall being a lonely teenager, confused, despaired, searching for God. My thoughts shift my focus to the wonderful Advent services offered these past several Sundays at St. John's. I reflect on what we have been celebrating: the birth of Jesus.

He was born in humbling and dangerous circumstances. Yes, the wise men from the east were well informed about his credentials, as such were documented by the Old-Testament prophets. But King Herod also knew, and put a price on the head of Mary's first-born son. There was no room at the inn, so He was laid in a manger. Like any infant, He experienced the human condition personally. All the same pains: hunger, cold, wet and soiled swaddling clothes, diaper rash, and for boys... circumcision. And also the same joys: nursing the breasts of mother, being cooed and cuddled, "worshipped," if you will.

As He grew to youth and manhood, He experienced all our joys and pains. There was fellowship and happy occasions: a wedding at Cana, good times spent with close friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus, camaraderie with the twelve apostles. And also pain and hurt: the bullying of town-folk (Luke 4:29-30), brothers that told Him to take a hike and get out of town (John: 3-5), family members going out to restrain Him because they thought He was out of His mind (Mark 3:21), religious authorities scoffing Him, abandonment (by the apostles) at His most trying moments, including betrayal by the one in an entrusted position.

And to my amazement, here is what now dawns on me: *"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary...?"* (Mark 6:3). Yes, in the interim years between His youth and His embarking on public ministry, He had to learn an employable skill in order to put food on the table. While under the apprenticeship of Joseph, Jesus learned "summa cum laude" every pertinent fact and detail required to be a skilled master craftsman: every type of wood and finish, every type of nail and supporting hardware, every detail of design and fabrication. Then years later, knowing intimately in every way imaginable the very cross He was suspended on. How especially poignant that must have been, considering that John 1:3 and the first chapter of Genesis state that He is the Author of Creation, with Gen 1: 11-12 specifically referring to trees.

There are religions that teach that men can become gods. Other faiths proclaim that God would never stoop to become human. Those religions hold no attraction for me. In the first case, one only needs to read Genesis chapter 3 to learn the consequence of Adam and Eve's folly to become gods. Under the limitations of the second case, the realization of Gen 1: 26-27 (where God makes man in His image) and Rev 21: 1-7 (when God comes to dwell among us) could not be actualized to the fullest extent possible. Quite the contrary, one powerful reason that I am a Christian is because God condescended to becoming a man, feeling and experiencing the human condition, so that He can personally relate to our needs, wants, shortcomings, joys and pains...even when we cannot find the words to express to Him in prayer. God is one of us.

Spirituality, Educational and Fellowship Offerings at St. John's January 2012

S groups

Tuesday 3:30 pm at Merrill Gardens

Bible Study with Rev. Nancy at Merrill Gardens in Pool Room

Tuesday 7 pm in the Adult Ed room

Book Study with Louise Graves

Wednesday 10:00 am in Oakmont at 6431 Stone Bridge Road, Santa Rosa

Book Study with Gail Claus, currently reading *Living the Heart of Christianity*.

Saturday 8:30 am in the Adult Ed room (Men's study will resume in Spring 2012)

Fellowship and Mission Groups

Second and Third Mondays at 7 pm in the Adult Ed room: Knitting Purls

Knitting Prayer Shawls with Barbara Howard

Second Wednesday at 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary: United Methodist Women

Fourth Saturday 8:30 am at Star Restaurant: United Methodist Men

Breakfast fellowship. All men are invited. (Resumes in January)

NOAH

Neighbors Organized Against Hunger

The NOAH food pantry located at Mountain Shadows School on Burton Avenue serves over 200 individuals each week. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors recently honored NOAH for service to the community.

Please mark your calendar for the 1st week in December and all weeks in January; St. John's will have the responsibility for the pantry during that time.

Contact Barbara St. Marie (795-9470) or Herm Johnson (795-7465) to volunteer.

St. John's United Methodist Church
5150 Snyder Lane
Rohnert Park, CA 94928



St. John's United Methodist Church

Pastor

Rev. Nancy Landauer

Website

www.stjohnsunitedmethodist.org

E-Mail

stjohnsrp@earthlink.net

Church Office (707) 584-9780

Hours M-F 9:00-1:30

Newsletter Staff

Vicki Hopkins, Editor

Marie Fox

Helen Gilstrap

Becky Jackson

Grace Johnson

The mission of The United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Open Hearts

Open Minds

Open Doors