

THE IVY VINE

May 2022

God is Still Speaking Volume 17 Issue 5



Dear church family and friends,

It is hard to believe that we have already come to the fifth month of this year. Easter is behind us, in-person graduations and family events are approaching, and as I write this, for the first time in two years, masks are optional as we meet for worship services. Doesn't it feel like there is some 'normality' returning to our daily lives? But what does 'normality' actually mean? For as we have been reminded over the past two years, what constitutes 'normal' can be rather fluid and, in part at least, can become outdated in a relatively short span of time. When these type of questions and ponderings arise, I am all the more grateful that we can always turn to God, the one certainty available to us that never changes. The one certainty that we can count on through every type of experience we might have. No matter who we are or where we are on life's journey. No matter how many times we might have doubted or pushed God away. Wherever the journey ahead takes us, God will be with us. It is up to us if we want to try and carry the world on our shoulders, or if we will let God be God. It is up to us whether we allow God to fill even the most unexpected places with a peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil 4:7).

With this in mind, I invite you throughout the month of May to pray and/or reflect on the following prayer inspired by Luke 24:



Unexpected Places

You come to us
In unexpected places,
In a crowded room,
In a journey on a dusty road,
In conversation,
In the stillness.

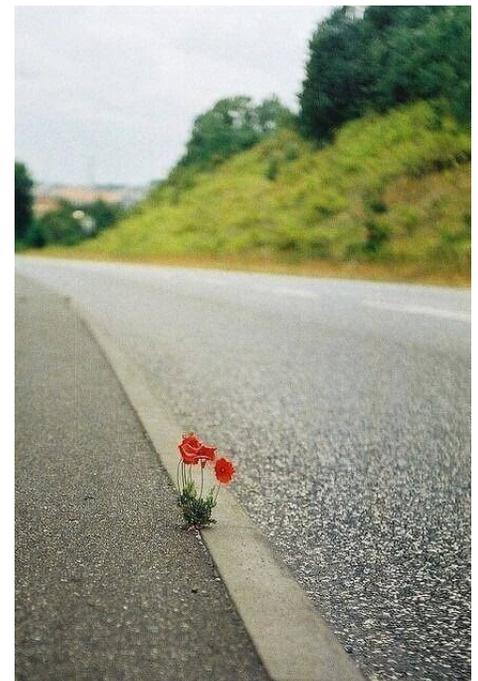
You come in the midst of our doubt, our fear, our sorrow
You come in the power of the resurrection
No pain and suffering is unknown to you.

You bring us peace
And we pray for the places where there is no peace
Countries torn by war
Refugees seeking homes
Prisoners facing torture

You bring peace
Peace to the tensions and conflicts within us
To the regrets, the failure,
The broken relationships
The lost friendships

You bring peace
For you are a friend to us
When we are alone
When we are lonely
Unseen you are there

You bring us peace
And we pray that we too
may become peacemakers.
Amen.



With blessings and love,
Pastor Jen

Thrift Shop Update

We want to share the wonderful news that we have "retired" the tee shirt table. We now have three new racks and much more room. They were generously donated by Arlene and Larry. It has made a big difference in the shop and has been admired by our clients. It is an exciting time for us as we prepare to switch over to our spring arrivals.

Come in and check out the new look, we are open Thursdays & Saturdays 10am to 2pm.

Submitted by Carolyn Crandall



Annual Meeting of the Northern California Nevada Conference – UCC Theme: Learn. Love. Act. June 17-19, 2022

We are seeking members who may wish to attend this meeting, which will be held in-person at Sonoma State University's campus. (Hybrid options including Zoom rooms and virtual attendance are also available).

United Church has budgeted funds to reimburse costs of registration and lodging for anyone who may wish to be our church's delegate. Our Conference is composed of 113 local churches, stretching from Eureka to Tulare, Monterey to Reno.

For more information about this wonderful opportunity, see <https://ncncucc.org/annual-gathering/> and talk to Pastor Jen or one of our Co-Moderators. (Lavonne, Bob or Richard W.)

Sharing Our Announcements

Please submit all announcements to Jilloni by Thursday at 12 pm in order for it to be included in the bulletin. When it is not possible to get an announcement in the bulletin, please check with Jilloni about the possibility of sending out a blast email if the announcement is time sensitive.



**Rooted and Grounded in Love!
Two churches team up to support refugees.**

Dana Johnson, Rev. Jane Snibbe,
Rev. Bob Scott, Rev. Tim McDonald,
Not pictured: Rebecca Henderson



Bob Timm, Rev. Jen Collins,
Jerry Huot (representing Blake & Jean Ridgway), Jim Nameny, Lavonne Blucher-Nameny,
Linda Clapp & Benji, Not pictured: Jean Craig



Meet Lavonne and Jim, Pedal to Resettle 2022 (or should we say “Paddle to Resettle”) swimmers! They have been involved with Pedal to Resettle for 6 years but they aren’t cyclists - they create their own annual challenge to fundraise for #refugee families. This year’s challenge: swim 15,000 meters in one month. Lavonne and Jim both love welcoming new neighbors any way they can, “We are passionate simply because we are drawn to people in diverse cultures. We always feel uplifted interacting with people who may have a different life experience than ours. And, when they have suffered injustice, we feel an extra obligation. We simply can’t imagine the difficulties/ challenges facing them. It brings us such joy to be able to lend a hand.”

There’s still plenty of time to register for Pedal to Resettle this year!
Join us on June 18 and help us create belonging for all families in Northern California.

(photo and article from World Relief Sacramento Facebook page and website)



Reminder: If you choose to support refugees through Pedal to Resettle, you are reminded to make sure you are donating to this year's campaign (2022) and team (United Shepherds).

UCC has teamed with Church of the Good Shepherd to take the challenge to support World Relief as they resettle refugees in the greater Sacramento Area.

This is how to participate. **Support** the team or a team member with a donation or **join** the team. No matter how you choose to participate, the **first step** is to log on to <https://worldrelief.org/sacramento/pedal-to-resettle/> Click REGISTER which will take you to the Pedal to Resettle 2022 screen. Then decide which option you want (1 or 2).

1. **Support** the team or team member. Scroll down to **Support a Cyclist**. Select the option to see all *teams* or see all *individuals*. Click on who you want to support, and follow the instructions.
2. **Join** the team, click REGISTER again. In the pop-up window, select **Join a Team** and then choose **United Shepherds**. The next window will tell you to register as a Resilience Rider, but don't worry if you don't want to ride a bicycle. As you get further into the registration process you define your own challenge for the month of June. Just follow the steps. Once you register, you will be asked to create your own fundraising page (include your photo, your reason for participating and a description of your personal challenge). You can then send a fundraising letter to your family and friends.

If you want more information about World Relief, or if you have problems with any part of registering, call Lavonne Blucher-Nameny (707-477-8373) and she will help you out.



SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN FOR LA FAMILIA SANA

Our March special mission giving campaign raised more than \$1,100 for La Familia Sana. A check was presented to the Executive Director, Jade Weymouth, who indicated that this will cover the rent for a family this month.

We are engaging with La Familia Sana to find other non-monetary ways of working with them to find ways to better integrate our Latino and non-Latino communities in Cloverdale. We hope that many of us will participate in these efforts.



Pictured left to right:
Jim Nameny,
Jade Weymouth,
Neidi Calvillo,
Pastor Jen,
Mayra Arreguin.

Dear VCC-
 Thank you for your donation
 to our Guatapena funds.
 We appreciate & look
 forward to your partnership.
 -Jade



Photos from the La Familia Sana Cesar Chavez Event held at the parking lot of Dahlia & Sage Community Market



Interview with Reverend Jen Collins

By Lavonne Blucher-Nameny

It was my privilege to interview Reverend Jen Collins on video. You can view it on the United Church of Cloverdale You-tube channel. Here are a few highlights from that interview.

Jen grew up in a small rural town of about 3,000 in south-west Michigan, where her parents had a board-and-care in their home. She's the youngest of 3, but due to life circumstances took on responsibilities for siblings and parents. Her Dad died about a year ago, but her Mom still lives with her. Although she's experienced losses in her life, including the murder of her sister in 1993, she feels those losses have enabled her to empathize with others and walk alongside them.

Jen is an avid birder, with ospreys and raptors as her favorites. She enjoys her time in nature, and considers it "one-on-one God-time". It enables her to disconnect from technology and to appreciate the things that allow her to slow down - to just be, and to listen. One of the ways Jen experiences that is to visit other parts of the world and enjoy the nature and the culture there. In fact, she recently walked the Camino in Spain – the northern route. The full amount was about 600 miles.

In 1995, Jen moved with her husband to southern California to pursue a career in education as an athletic director and school counselor. When her parents started having health issues about 12 years ago, she helped with their business. But she realized that setting wasn't where her passion was, nor where God was leading her. So she was prayerful in seeing where God wanted her to go next. That is when she first experienced a call to go into ministry. At that time, it was health care chaplaincy. And at the very moment she felt and heard that call, she said she felt this inexplicable joy. Following 3 years of seminary followed by a year of chaplain residency at UCLA medical center, she moved to northern California to pursue that career, first in a hospital setting and then in a hospice setting. In this role she felt honored by the opportunity to come alongside individuals in their life journeys, in the way she had personally experienced God's support after her sister's death.

A few years later, she reached a point in her life where she began to understand some things about herself that conflicted with her faith heritage. Specifically learning that she's gay. And that was distressing, to realize she's not the person she thought she was for her entire life. That acknowledgement wasn't supported by her faith heritage; neither as an individual nor as a pastor. That personal, spiritual distress was compounded by her being fired as a Chaplain by a faith-based hospital, specifically because she is gay.

So she began looking for a spiritual home that accepted her for who she is. A church that believed in and sought to follow the teachings of Jesus, and accepted people where they're at. That led her to the United Church of Cloverdale. She said the very first day she walked in the door, nobody knowing her, she found acceptance. It was a place that felt like home. Although she was experiencing such personal spiritual distress, she felt willing to risk reinvesting in a spiritual community.

Jen says, "What I've experienced here at UCC, authentically represents how I have personally experienced God. That reaching out and acceptance of other individuals. That wanting to offer sanctuary and hope to anybody that walks through the door. It is also offers me a way of giving back to a very specific church/spiritual community that walks alongside me. As I felt God leading me to the next level or next step of my ministry out of health care chaplaincy and into a church setting, I knew this is where I wanted to be. The timing was right for that door to open. I have a history of God opening doors for me at specific times. And it was clear to me this was the next step. Just as I know the way God accepts all people, it is important for me to continue to model and support that."

(Continues on Page 9)

(interview with Reverend Jen Collins Continued for Page 8)

Jen's dream for UCC is to continue to find ways to create spaces where individuals feel welcomed and accepted. She points out that the church is already practicing that, but that Covid has really given us opportunities to identify even more ways to help people to feel included. Whether that be in person, or on line when they are isolated in their homes. She's grateful for being able to draw on her background in health care chaplaincy, and come alongside individuals who are experiencing some of the hardest times of their lives (isolation, health care crisis). Her vision is one of giving hope to individuals, meeting them where they are. That also includes wanting to connect with the community and to build on that through partnering with others. Jen sees just a lot of exciting ways for us to continue. One of the things she really values about this church that is a part of her vision, is that desire and emphasis on the radical ways Jesus went to people who were in the margins, people who didn't always feel welcome in a place that is organized religion or within 4 walls. For her it is really important to continue to teach and to share what that looks like, and to also model it and live it out. Jen sees UCC as an opportunity to, continue to grow and learn, and to share how to live according to the teachings of Jesus.

We will be celebrating Pastor Jen's installation with a special worship service May 22, at 4:00 pm in the church sanctuary, with a reception afterwards (either in the park or the fellowship hall, depending on the weather). Everyone is invited to help us welcome Jen. And of course everyone is welcome to drop in on any of our worship services - Sunday mornings at 10:00 am (other than May 22 at 4pm) Come in. Experience why WE are all so thankful that Jen has accepted the call to be our pastor. Get a chance to know her a little bit better.

Jen concluded with "I would want to add that if you aren't able to join us in person, we are available on Zoom and on our You-tube channel. But more important to me is that sometimes church is not the place that is comfortable to me. I personally have found a lot of connection to God outdoors in nature. So I just want to offer for anybody who would like to connect or meet, I'm open to meeting for coffee or going for a walk. I'd love to meet you and just provide support in any way that I can. If that's a way that would be meaningful to you, please let me know or contact the church office.

COVID PROTOCOL UPDATES

Reopening committee meets May 25th

COVID Protocol Updates:

- ⇒ **Masks are optional**
- ⇒ **If you are feeling sick or experiencing any symptoms**, please refrain from coming to the church campus.
- ⇒ **If you have allergies**, please use a mask for others' comfort.
- ⇒ **Communion is back** in-person during worship on the 1st Sunday of each month
- ⇒ **Coffee Hour is back** and we need people to sign up to host the coffee hour after services. Please speak to Polly Lile if you have any questions.
- ⇒ **Breakfast Gatherings at Zini's** on the 1st Saturday and 3rd Wednesday of the month are back
- ⇒ **Office will remain by appt. only**

Pennies From Heaven

On the 3rd Sunday of each month during our worship service we collect an offering we call "Pennies From Heaven." Many of our church family save up their loose change each month to bring to church, all the monies collected are then used to support Heifer International.

With our donations we help families all over the world!

CALENDAR

- 5/1 Council Meeting, after church
- 5/7 Saturday Breakfast 8am, Zini's Diner (no host)
- 5/15 Pennies From Heaven (during worship services or online giving)
- 5/18 Wednesday Breakfast, 8:30am, Zini's Diner (no host)
- 5/22 Pastor Jen's Installation Service & Worship 4pm, Sanctuary
(NO 10AM WORSHIP ON 5/22 WORSHIP AT 4PM ONLY)
- 5/25 Reopening Committee Meeting, 10:30am, Fellowship Hall
- 5/29 Council Meeting, 11:30am, Fellowship Hall

Weekly Activities

- Wednesdays 1-2:30pm Choir Rehearsal Fellowship Hall
- Thursdays & Saturdays Thrift Shop Open 10-2
- Tuesdays & Fridays NA Meeting 7:30pm Education Bldg.
- 10am Sundays In-person Church Services in the sanctuary
(also available on Zoom and our YouTube Channel)

Save the Dates

6/18 Peddle to Resettle



Online giving available
thru our website at
uccloverdale.org.
Just click on the give
button!



- Marilyn Michelin 5/3
- Jerry Huot 5/9
- Mary Dixon 5/10
- Jim Nameny 5/13
- Kirk Bilbro 5/17
- AmyJo Hendrickson 5/23
- Fred Westenberg 5/29
- Arlene Moeller 5/29



- David & Carole Romero 5/01
- Bob & Janice Timm 5/31

If you have a story you want to share and/or any photos please submit to uccoffice@sbcglobal.net
We would love to share it in the next newsletter!

Wednesday Prayer at 10 AM



Subscribe

Hold In Prayers
We continue to hold in prayer Jerome Wolter; Gus Wolter, Norma Reilly; Carol Fancher (Pastor Jen's Mom), Paul Lane; Conny Welch; Lynn Gertenbach; The Curlett Family; Christy Anne Latchford; Ukraine and all those impacted

NOURISHING HOPE THROUGH COMMUNITY
FRIDAY 1:00 - 3:00 PM
202 COMMERCIAL STREET
(COMMERCIAL AT SECOND)
CLOVERDALE, CA

Everyone is welcome to access the food Pantry
No ID or income verifications required!

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