

**SAN MARINO CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
2560 HUNTINGTON DRIVE
SAN MARINO, CA 91108**

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**“Never place a period where God has placed a COMMA,
God is STILL SPEAKING!”**



January 24, 2010 – 10:00 a.m.

Third Sunday after Epiphany

For Reflection

“O mortal, what is good; and what does God require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8)

Please stop by the Sound Booth if you wish to use a sound receiver today.

You are invited to watch the screen up front to increase your participation in today's service of worship.

**The asterisk indicates the times when you are invited to stand if the Spirit so moves you.*

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

Music provided by Albert Mendoza & Murray Middleman

WELCOME

Rev. Dr. Art Cribbs, Pastor

***SONGS FOR THE SPIRIT**

“This Little Light of Mine” and “God of the Bible”

***OPENING PRAYER**

Susan Jakubowski-Weiner

Liturgist: Good morning, Loving One. Your people have come to worship you.

People: You alone are God and we are your people. We praise your Holy Name.

Liturgist: Caring Creator, we entered this sanctuary and left our cares behind so we can concentrate on you.

People: You have given us new life and new hope. We praise your Holy Name.

Liturgist: Walk with us, O God, and keep us close to you.

People: We turn to you because you love us. We praise your Holy Name.

Liturgist: Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for your peace.

People: There is no one like you. We praise your Holy Name.

Liturgist: Come now, O God. Your people are listening for your Still-Speaking Voice.

People: Your ways are not our ways. Teach us how to live. We praise your Holy Name.

Liturgist: Great Spirit, hear our prayers and heal the Earth.

People: We need you, O God. We are waiting to hear from you. We praise your Holy Name.

ALL: Hallelujah. Shalom. Salaam. Right on! Amen.

***A SONG FOR THE HEART**

“Rain Down”

The Congregation may be seated.

TIME WITH OUR CHILDREN “What About My Brother and Sister?”

Pastor Art

OUR COMMON PRAYER “O God, who art in heaven...”

MUSIC TO BLESS THE CHILDREN “Children, Welcome”

*Children and Youth are welcome to join our Sunday School and Children Worship & Wonder program!
After the children's time, children aged 3 through those in 5th grade are invited to process downstairs to the
Wonder Room and those in 6th through 12th grade to the Green Room. Childcare for children under age 4 is
available in our nursery today with trained and certified childcare provider, Mrs. Barbara Sanchez.
When these programs finish, children and youth will be brought up to social time.*

SCRIPTURE READING	Genesis 4:1-16	Susan Jakubowski-Weiner
SONG OF PREPARATION	<i>“Soli Deo Gloria”</i> <i>By Michael Praetorius, Arr. by Hal H. Hopson</i>	The United Voices Guest Conductor: Alexandra Loutsion
REFLECTIONS	“CAIN, ABEL, AND YOU”	Rev. Dr. Art Cribbs
HYMN OF RESPONSE	<i>“Won’t You Let Me Be Your Servant?” (#539)</i> <i>featuring Lester Wakefield on the organ</i>	Congregation

A TIME TO GIVE, A TIME TO ACT Susan Jakubowski-Weiner
A TIME TO DEDICATE OURSELVES & OUR GIFTS

Thank you, O God, for your many blessings. Thank you for making it possible for us to bring our offering to your altar. Receive this money and let it be used for the building of your Kingdom on earth through the ministries of this congregation and the United Church of Christ. We give back as freely as we have received, and we dedicate ourselves and our gifts to you. Amen.

A TIME FOR PRAYER ***“God Fill Me Now”*** Prayer time led by Pastor Cribbs

SENDING HYMN ***“O for a World” (#575), vs. 1, 3 & 5*** Congregation
featuring Lester Wakefield on the organ

***BENEDICTION** Pastor Cribbs

***CHANGING OF THE LIGHT** Susan Jakubowski-Weiner

***GOING FORTH** Instrumentalists

Everyone is welcome to the SOCIAL TIME next door in Crist Hall after the service.
 THANKS to Charlotte Cunz for providing our treats today!

We express a warm welcome to all who are here today!

This Church is affiliated with the United Church of Christ, a denomination dedicated to spiritual growth, faith with action and social transformation. If you’re visiting today, please stop by our Visitor’s Center in the Entryway to sign our Guest Book, fill out a visitor card (with nametag so we can greet you by name) and receive information about everything happening here.

ELIZABETH ROSE CAMERON FOOD FIRST EVERY SUNDAY is a giving opportunity available to support families and individuals who are hungry and need help. Remember to bring canned, non-perishable foods to church every Sunday along with your extra change and place them in the basket and glass teddy bear in the Narthex.

Please note: In an effort to control the spread of any germs we invite you to utilize the hand sanitizer provided for you at the Nametag table. Thanks to our members who have provided this opportunity.



**What comes first in your life?
What is the most important
thing to you? What are you
willing to give away that has
great significance to you?**

There is a television commercial in which a man and a woman sit at a table and have a conversation. The woman asks the man if she and his dog were hanging over a cliff and he could only save one of them, which one would he save. The man responds he would save her and apologizes to his dog. The woman then asks if he had to make a similar choice between her and his mother, who he would save. Again he answers he would save her. She presses him a third time and asks if he had to choose between saving her and his beer, which one would he save, and he replies, "How high is the cliff."

In the Biblical story about the first two sons of Adam and Eve, Cain, the elder, was a farmer and his younger brother, Abel, was a shepherd. Both made sacrifices to God. Cain kept the best of his crops for himself and gave God what was left over. Abel always took his fattest lamb, the best of the flock, and gave it to God first. God blessed Abel more than Cain. That angered Cain so much he decided to kill his brother.

God warned Cain about his anger and asked, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it." (Genesis 4: 6b-7 NRSV)

Cain's problems stemmed from his misplaced priorities. He put himself above God. He kept the best that he had to himself and offered the scraps to God. Does that sound familiar? Do you keep the best that you have to yourself? Do you protect your precious treasure and give your spare change to God?

Abel, on the other hand, realized he owed everything to God. He took his very best and gave it first. As a result, he received more and experienced God's acceptance and blessings.

There is a lesson in the brief account of our earliest ancestors. Although tragedy is rooted in the story as jealousy, envy, and greed conspired to murder the innocent one, we cannot miss the point about getting our priorities right. Putting God first leads to ordering our lives correctly. We lose nothing by giving away to God the best that we have to offer.

What does God ask of us? First, to acknowledge life comes from a Source that cares deeply about our welfare. God loves every person so much and has a great desire for all people to experience the joy of life. That means we must take time to rest, relax, and worship the One who is Sacred. We need to be conscious of God's desire for us.

Second, everything we have comes from God. It is impossible to lose anything when we give our best back to God. Whatever we give to God comes back in multiples.

There is a song we used to sing in church titled, "You Can't Beat God Giving." We marched to the altar, placed our offering and sang, "You can't beat God giving no matter how you try. The more you give the more God gives to you. Just keep on giving because it's really true: you can't beat God giving no matter how you try."

The 'law of reciprocity' is adjusted in our favor when we give like Abel. God delights when we give and live fully. But, it is not enough to give just to receive more. That is not the purpose of the story. Instead, we are reminded of God's goodness and faithfulness. When we give away our possessions and money to honor God, we make life better for others. God wants everyone to experience a good life. Selfishness and greed stifle life and smother the human spirit. That is what got Cain into trouble.

We still get into trouble when we become obsessed with our stuff. Greed is insatiable. No matter how much we have greed requires more. Someone once asked a very wealthy man how much was enough. The rich man said, "Just a little more." Greed blinds us from our blessings. No matter how much we have we feel it is not enough. We can become fearful of each other; afraid somebody is going to take away what we have.

Jesus offers an antidote to such worries, “From anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again....Do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High.” (Luke 6:29b-30; 35b NRSV)

We do not need to look back to the Creation story to realize the consequences of misappropriation and misplaced priorities. We witness the travesty of greed and callous attitudes toward humanity and the environment. Many people are suffering and struggling to make ends meet because of policies and practices that deny them opportunities to participate in the fullness of life. The example of Cain saturates societies around the world without exemption.

Think about your choices when it comes to your possessions. Do you put God first? Does Abel present an example for your life? What can you do to be more acceptable to God? Think about it.

-Pastor Art Cribbs

What’s Happening...

- **TUES.** 7pm – **SOUL FOOD** will meet in the Green Room downstairs.
- **THURS.** 12:30pm – **STAFF MEETING** in Pastor’s Office
7pm – **THE UNITED VOICES** will rehearse in the sanctuary.
- **FRIDAY SPIRE** published
- **SAT.** 10am **SACRED CONVERSATIONS** sponsored by the Central Association of the So-CAL/NV Conference of the UCC will continue this Saturday from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. here on our campus. Everyone is invited to attend and join the conversations.

NEXT SUNDAY

OUR ANNUAL MEETING & POTLUCK will take place after our service of worship. Many very important issues need to be decided for 2010. Your input and attendance is requested.

4pm – LEE DOMANN folk concert. Nashville recording artist, Lee Domann, will present a concert of his amazing music. A Love Offering will be received in lieu of selling tickets.

Please Note: Our Pastoral Assistant, Donald, has been attending a Music Conference in San Francisco this week and will return to the office this Wednesday.

COMING UP:

Feb. 6 – “Every Food Has a Story To Tell” cooking class meets at 10am in our kitchen with Sunny Kim teaching.

Feb. 7 – Planning Meeting for all interested in the new Sunday School Venture, “Have a Little Tea With Us.”

Feb. 21 – Sacred Writing Workshop, and on **Feb. 28** – Joint worship service with Refiner’s Fire congregation