

SAN MARINO CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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“Never place a period
Where God has placed a comma”

[Gracie Allen]

God is still speaking,

February 17, 2008 – 10:00 a.m.

Second Sunday in Lent

For Reflection

*“Compassion is the ability to be one with others
And sacrifice your needs for their needs
Without feeling depleted. Giving of self
With the realization that you are
In effect giving to self.”*

Iyanla Vanzant – One Day My Soul Just Opened Up

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

**The asterisk indicates the times when you are invited to stand if the Spirit so moves you.
You are invited to watch the screen up front to increase your participation in worship today.*

PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

Congregation

***“Come, Now is the Time to Worship”**

Acolyte: Camille Cribbs

***A SONG FOR THE SPIRIT**

Congregation

“You Are Holy”

We invite you to learn this new song and join in when you feel comfortable doing so.

***OPENING PRAYER**

Bret Naylor

Great, Holy God, your Spirit has come upon us and lives within us. You have opened our eyes to see the beauty of your world and the faces of your people. You have opened our ears to listen attentively to your Voice and the cries of your children. You have opened our hearts to be touched with compassion as a source of healing and friendship. You have opened our minds to understand the purpose of our being alive at this moment. You have given us everything we need to be a peaceful presence at a time when so many people are drunk with violence. You love us so abundantly that we have so much love to give away. Thank you for your mercy. Thank you for guiding and inspiring us to do our best, and to go forward without giving up. Hallelujah. Shalom. Salaam. RIGHT ON! Amen.

A SONG FROM THE HEART

Congregation

“I Sing Praises to Your Name”

The congregation may be seated.

OUR COMMON LIFE

A Time for One Great Hour of Sharing
A Time to Give
A Time to Act

Ross & Allen King
Bret Naylor
Pastor Art Cribbs

A Time to Dedicate Ourselves and Our Gifts

Bret Naylor

We bring our offerings before you with gladness and thanksgiving. Thank you for making it possible for us to give as freely as we have received. Bless these gifts that they may be used in your service. We dedicate ourselves and our gifts to you, O God. Amen.

TIME WITH OUR CHILDREN

Story “Yes, Jesus Loves Us!”
Our Common Prayer

Pastor Cribbs

*Children are welcome to proceed downstairs to their sanctuary at this time
for CHILDREN WORSHIP AND WONDER.*

Miss Barbara is available to care for the youngest children.

Music to Bless the Children

borrow the current mantra in a highly charged political environment, "YES, WE CAN!" "Si, se puede!"

On the night of Nicodemus' secret visit to Jesus, there was something pushing and rubbing against the depths of the priest's conscience. Steeped in the laws, history, and theology of his faith, Nicodemus was far from satisfied with himself and his relationship with God. The tugging became too great for him to go on as he had. His very person was disturbed and he needed comfort that could only come from the rabbi without credentials.

Nicodemus needed to know if Jesus was truly the One who had been promised by the prophets of old. He had witnessed the 'signs' that Jesus performed and was more than mildly curious about the source of his power. Nicodemus wanted confirmation; he asked the pertinent questions. But, there remained blockage. He was not able to fully comprehend Jesus' response.

Many of us share Nicodemus' frustration. We can become captives of our quest to the point where we are unable to realize our own resolve. External matters take precedence and cause us to miss the profound yet simple solution that resides within us. God's love anticipates our desire to be fully united in right relationship with the divine. We have been given an unbroken bond that connects us with God, but there is something that makes us doubt the extent of God's love for us. Nicodemus articulated our concern. He embodied our fears.

How can we accept God's love when we have not accepted our love for ourselves? This is not an egotistical affection based on inflated impressions. We have the ability to love ourselves beyond measure, but we hold back. Instead, too often, we hoard experiences that justify our reasons to minimize our joy, happiness, and peace. We stand in the way of receiving God's love for us.

So, Jesus tells Nicodemus, "You must be born from above." That was very strange talk and Nicodemus did not understand it. He immediately interpreted what Jesus said as a physical re-birth through his mother's womb. He missed the point entirely. But, we cannot judge him harshly. Many of us still miss point even as we are judgmental.

God's love is to be accepted, received, respected, and shared. Those are the components that make it possible to live up to our potential. We cannot substitute our hardened attitudes that reduce our powerful presence with a selfish consumption of exclusive godly love doses. We have to give our love away with

abandon. We are vessels from which love flows freely with an endless supply of forgiveness and mercy.

Jesus shows us how to accomplish our purpose of reflecting God's love with every breath, step, and encounter. His message to Nicodemus was: know how you have been formed and don't be afraid to live your life fully alive with gratitude to the One who gives us life. God loves the world. God loves you! Go and live with the confidence there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God.

-Pastor Art Cribbs

UCC Calendar of Prayer: Respect and Challenge

The Community United Church of Christ in Boulder, Colorado seek to be a community of Christian believers and as their name suggests, they are challenged to respect and work through one another's differences. In their Open and Affirming Statement, they write: "We welcome all individuals and families: be they lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual; single parent and couples, nuclear and blended, extended, step and/or same sex parents, as they strive to function faithfully in response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Christ's principles of love and justice, grace and mercy. Such faithfulness is a response to God's Spirit and is guided by responsibility, accountability, trust and mutual nurturance.



We acknowledge God's gift of sexuality with its joyous power and challenging mystery. We believe that people of all sexual orientations share the worth that comes from being unique individuals created by God. We will continue to reach out to those who feel they have been exiled from their spiritual community or from the community at large.

Community United Church of Christ, Boulder, Colorado, declares itself to be Open and Affirming of women and men of all ages, races, abilities, and sexual orientations who desire to share in its services, its leadership and its activities."

From our Global Ministries partners:

Pray for Hong Kong on Sunday, February 17, 2008

Lectionary Text and Prayers for Hong Kong: John 3:1-17

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Holy God, the whole world yearns to enter Your Kingdom of peace and justice. Yet, as You taught us, Your Kingdom comes through the Cross - the emblem of suffering and sacrificial love. May the people of Hong Kong learn the way of Jesus Christ, who came to serve, not to be served. May the churches of Hong Kong follow the example of Your Son, who showed us that only in dying to self are we are born to eternal life. May the churches and people of China show forth Your glory - not through our wealth but by our generosity, not through our power but by our compassion, not through our will but by Your will done on earth as it is heaven. Amen.

(Prayer by Judy Chan)



Prayer Requests:

- For more compassionate action by the Hong Kong Government to assist the 1.2 million people living below the poverty line
- For citizens to embrace the privilege and responsibility to contribute to the future political development of Hong Kong
- For Hong Kong churches and Christians to be more aware of their prophetic call to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with their God

Mission Moment

You Just Have to Ask



“What am I going to do with my life?

How can I make a difference?

For what purpose was I created?”

Maybe these are questions most of us ask at one time or another in our lives. For some, they are questions that lead to wondering about a “vocation”—a call to serve God through ministry in the church. In the United Church of Christ, we have a special website designed for anyone who wonders whether ministry is for them. Even if you’re just curious, you might want to check out www.askthequestion.org. It’s a site to help people on their journey of exploration. There are video testimonies from others who have asked themselves the question, resources for prayer and study, and an online forum about church vocations. In February, we celebrate Church Vocations Sunday. Maybe someone you know would make a wonderful pastor . . . maybe you are someone who has wondered about answering God’s call in your life. Go to askthequestion.org and explore. If you don’t ask, you’ll never know.



February 2008
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