



Grace Notes from Kristie

Cathedrals and church spires grace the skyline of Prague, in the Czech Republic. My husband Bob and I, like so many other visitors, were captivated by their beauty. Perched high on a hill, the Prague Castle is the home of both St. George's Basilica and St. Vitus Cathedral. St. Nicholas Church dominates the Old Town Square and the church where reformer Jan Hus preached in the early 1400's is just a few blocks away. The city's history dates to the 9th century, when the castle was established and missionaries Cyril and Methodius brought Christianity to the area.

The Cathedral of Saints Cyril and Methodius stands today to remember them, but the Christianity proclaimed by these brothers has faded in the Czech Republic. The country calls itself an atheist nation, the effect of 40 years of communist rule. From the late 1940's until the Velvet Revolution of 1989, the Church was repressed and church properties were taken over by the state. But most importantly, as one young monk told us, the people stopped passing the stories of their faith to their children.

We were not the only visitors to Prague late this September. Pope Benedict XVI came to town. But Prague hardly noticed. Just two hours before he was to go to St. Vitus Cathedral, we were inside, touring the beautiful, ornate sanctuary. The closest we came to him was to see the Vatican flag hanging in front of the castle.

The pope spoke at several events, including in Brno, where he celebrated mass for 120,000 of the faithful. In this and other gatherings, he gave the same sort of message: an argument for the Czechs to reject secular materialism and move society back to Christian values. This pope, known for his academic and theological discourses, urged people not to artificially separate the Gospel from intellectual and public life.

Now if I were the pope (now that's a funny thought), I think I would have chosen much simpler words. I might have spoken to the heart, not so much to the heads of the people.

Something like.... **From everlasting to everlasting, God is with us! God does not abandon us when things get hard. It has been witnessed to us: nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ – not life nor death nor principalities nor powers. So we can proclaim with confidence that God has been with you through every year of your glory and every moment of your pain.**

Crying with you and calling you to hope even in your darkness. Now is the time to wake up. To hear your own stories again. To discover the hope in Jesus Christ that built these magnificent buildings around you.

Continued on page 3

Inside This Issue	
District News & Events.....	2 - 6
Media Resources.....	7
Senior New Ways.....	7
Calendar.....	8

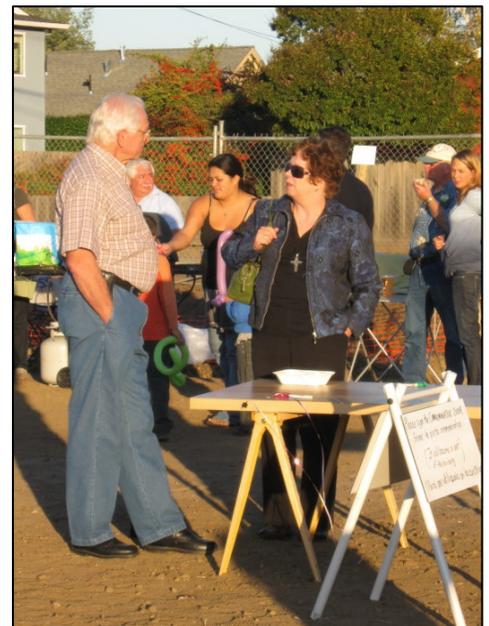
The people of the United Methodist Church of Santa Cruz joined with a large number of friends, neighbors, and community partners to celebrate the start of construction on their new church facility and community center in the Live Oak neighborhood of Santa Cruz, on Saturday November 7th. After years of planning, praying, and dreaming; the ground-work for this platinum level, LEED certified “green” project is scheduled to start later this fall. In addition to the environmentally sustainable features incorporated into the building design, the church will also be a certified Red Cross disaster relief shelter, providing space for up to 250 people. Rota-Care, a national program administered through the Rotary Club will also occupy part of the facility, providing free medical clinic services for the poor and uninsured of the community. Additionally there is space dedicated to serve the children of the neighboring community and meeting space for community groups and other organizations to utilize.

More than just an ambitious building project, the people of UMCSC see this as an opportunity to fundamentally re-think what it means to be the Church today. “This is all a part of a larger process of rethinking church,” said UMCSC pastor Mike Harrell. “We need to go beyond patting ourselves on the back because of the high commitment to environmental sustainability involved in this project. We need to continue to think in terms of what kind of tangible difference this facility and congregation can make in the everyday lives of people in this community.”



District Spirit newsletter editor, Norah Miller with UMC Santa Cruz Pastor Mike Harrell.

Children of the community, above, take turns signing the commemorative door, which will be placed in the new church.



Pastor Clyde Vaughn speaks with District Superintendent Rev. Kristie Olah.

Dear friends... today I say, while you have been away, God has been waiting for you. God is right here, right now, with open arms, ready to love you through anything.

In this Advent season, as we prepare for the coming of the Lord, as we await the Christ, I wonder, is this a message we need to hear, too? This Advent, who is preparing for whom? Who is really waiting for whom?

Rev. Kristie Olah
District Superintendent

A joint mission project for [Nothing But Nets](#) teaming up 1st UMC Palo Alto with the Stanford Women's Basketball team was a big success. Thanks go to the church's Outreach Committee led by Chuck Hebel, the Youth Group led by Matthew Conway and the Stanford Women's Basketball team. 100% of the cost of every ticket bought an anti-malaria bed net for a family in Africa. Over 150 nets were purchased! Thank you to every one who came! Before the game our youth helped to raise awareness of this important program. Didn't make it to the game? You can still buy a net and save a life by donating online through Nothing But Nets.

Michael Love, Senior Pastor
First United Methodist Church of Palo Alto

“Simple Church” Event for Lay and Clergy

As our Conference grows in its understanding of the need to reclaim the primary focus of “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,” we will need to discover a means and a methodology for doing just that. How can we develop a focus that is directed toward disciple making? In their book, “Simple Church,” Eric Geiger and Thom Rainer suggest that what is needed is an approach that is based not upon “program,” but upon “process.” On Thursday, February 4, 2010, the San Ramon Valley UMC will be hosting a conference in which Eric Geiger will be with us to assist us in our local church efforts to develop a clear process for making disciples. Clergy and laity alike are invited to attend this conference as a means of both clarifying the challenges that are before us and deepening the resolve needed in order to meet them. Please join us for this “next step” experience on the path of Christian discipleship.

Please see enclosed flyer and registration form for more information on the event!

District Office Holiday Closing

The District office will be closed from December 24 until January 4. Rev. Kristie will check phone and email messages regularly. **Merry Christmas to you all from Kristie and Pam!**

Thanksgiving for Prayers

- Rev. Bob Chicou, is doing very well following health concerns earlier this fall.
- Rev. Jim Crawford, who had a procedure to lessen pain. The procedure went well, but unfortunately, did little for his pain situation.

Find-A-Church

The redesigned [Find-A-Church](#) option on www.umc.org provides United Methodist churches a [free online profile](#). Churches can share not only their address, phone number, and Web site information, but can also create a more personalized snapshot of their congregation. It's a chance for churches of any size to build a positive image, present opportunities and attract newcomers at no charge. The Find-A-Church directory receives approximately 280,000 hits a month. By updating the Find-A-Church profile, churches can reach anyone searching for a church home. Many churches use Find-A-Church as their primary Web site and others view it as an extension to their church Web sites and direct traffic there. If you have questions about updating your Find-A-Church information, contact United Methodist Communications at FAC@umc.org or (800) 251-8140.

Make the Holidays More Meaningful

This Christmas consider a monetary gift to either the Northern District Church Extension Society and/or the Monterey Bay Church Extension Society. It's a gift that brings promise to growing congregations in our community and beyond.

Make your check out to either Northern San Jose Church Extension Society or Monterey Bay Church Extension Society and send to San Jose District Office, 729 Morse St., San Jose, CA 95126.



New! Advent Conspiracy

Are you fed up with how consumerism has stolen the soul of Christmas? This year take a stand and join the groundswell of Christ followers who are choosing to make Christmas what it should be--a joyous celebration of Jesus' birth, not a retail circus. In four sessions, groups and individuals practice four simple, but powerful, countercultural concepts:

- Worship Fully
- Spend Less
- Give More
- Love All

DVD 8894, \$19.99

Book 8895 (each group needs at least one book), \$12.99



Quarterly Conference: Pick Up the Towel

Nearly 90 United Methodists from our district and beyond gathered at First UMC, Salinas, for our Quarterly Conference on November 7. We worshipped together, heard stories, and shared ideas for ministry right in our neighborhoods and out into the world. The people of First Salinas showed us how they have transformed their spaces, their schedules, and their ministries to support homeless and low income people.



Food was collected for the Tongan relief project coordinated by pastors Sione Halafau and Norm Mowery and their congregations, Seaside Hilltop UMC and Carmel Church of the Wayfarer.

Two girls from the Happy Children program of Mision Metodista de Soledad danced their faith after Rev. Ines Verdugo told us about the program.



Lay and clergy church leaders were also challenged and inspired by Rev. Jerry Fox of San Jose St. Paul's UMC and Niniv Ibrahim of Pacific Grove First UMC, who told of their churches' work in their communities.

**Flyer for “Simple Church”
“The Process of Making Disciples”
goes here in hard copy version**



Senior New Ways Older Adult Groups and Activities—December 2009

Senior New Ways Executive Director Judith Pruess-Mellow To Semi-retire December 31, 2009.

After ten years of commuting to Los Altos, this will be a welcome change for Judith! She hopes to continue teaching for Senior New Ways outside the Bay Area, and she will continue to be on the Conference Older Adult Ministry Council and Board of Ordained Ministry. Judith says, **“It has been a huge pleasure working with many of you who receive this newsletter.** I look forward to continued contact with those in our Conference who live in the Grass Valley and Sacramento areas, as I will be staying closer to home now in Grass Valley. Please give the new Executive Director, for whom we are searching, your support. After December 31, if you wish to reach me by email, please use judithpm@theunion.net.”

New: BLIP.TV! Our monthly TV programs are now on the internet. Just go to <http://blip.tv> and search on Senior New Ways. Note which entries are designated as highlights vs. the full half hour programs. **Coming Fully Alive Series: Coming Fully Alive as You Age**—(on Finding Meaning in Life, Being Fully Alive, Aging as a Spiritual Journey, and Humor): Woodside Terrace (Redwood City), Nov. 11, 10-11:30 (Cultivating Joy); DVD teaching kit also available.

Senior Health Chat at Los Altos United Methodist Church (LA UMC), 1st and 3rd Fridays, 10-12 noon. Call Dona Smith-Powers (650-494-3093) or Rick Plain (650-948-1083).

Call Judith Pruess-Mellow of Senior New Ways for information (650-209-1119) on any of these groups. www.seniornewways.org; email: judithpm@seniornewways.org. 655 Magdalena Ave., Los Altos CA 94024. Senior New Ways is a 501 (c) (3) corporation. All donations are tax-deductible.



NOR/CAL ECUMENICAL MEDIA RESOURCE CENTER MEDIA UPDATE – November, 2009

408-378-2532 FAX: 408-378-2652
emrcvideos@aol.com www.emrclibrary.org

Dear Friends,

The **2009-2010 CD Catalog** is ready at last! Out-of-date materials have been deleted, and new materials have been added. We no longer produce a printed catalog except for office use. Since the web site is updated regularly, you may want to use the web site only. Others of you will prefer to have the CD to pop in or download to your desktop

In any case, we are asking that you request the CD if you would like one by e-mailing us at emrcvideos@aol.com or calling us at 408-378-2532 between 10:00 and 3:00, Monday through Friday. Please include your address.

Prepare for Lent

The MRC board President, Donna Lindsay, will be presenting a workshop entitled "Lenten Experiences for Children" here at the Media Center on Sunday afternoon, January 24th. The workshop will include praying with children. There will be more information later.

May God bless you in your ministry.

Pat Strandburg, Director
Northern California Ecumenical Media Resource Center



CALENDAR

December 2009

Dec 5 9:30 am to 11 am

DCOM, Calvary UMC

Dec 7 6:30 pm

NSJCES, Calvary UMC

Dec 9 10-2 **Circuit Leaders meeting,
Almaden Hills UMC, San Jose**

Dec 14-16 **Ministry Staff and Cabinet**

Dec 18 **Furlough Day--District office closed**

Dec 24-Jan 1 **Christmas Holiday and New
Year's Holiday --District Office closed**

December 2009



The District Spirit is published September through June by the San Jose District 408 295 5341. The purpose is to keep district churches connected with information on activities and news happenings around the local churches, District and conference. Send your church information to the District Office at sjdist@sbcglobal.net or email Norah Miller at nkmill52@cruzio.com

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