

## PACIFIC CURRENTS

# Writing the Vision

## From the Editor

They'll know we are Christians by our newsletter!

I read 75 or so local church newsletters each month to help get news for The Pacific. (I want to read your church newsletter! Do I get your church news? My preference is by mail, but whatever is easiest - keep me informed!)



Deborah Streeter

You can tell a lot about a church from those pages. Just the titles are fun: architectural, like Spire, Columns, Towers; historical, like Nugget and Lookout Post. Puns, like Pilgrim's Progress and Cross Word. Theological - Logos, Kalos, Good News. Environmental - Pine Tree, Grapevine, and of course, The Pacific!

Actually, The Pacific is a newspaper, not a newsletter. A newsletter is more in-house and serves to report on everything (meetings, recipes, prayer requests) in the life of church. Newsletters often lack an editor with an overall vision, who chooses or limits contributors. (That's what I do!)

It's worth looking at your newsletter to see how inclusive, informative and invitational it is. Some I read seem to be for an in-crowd, with little contact information, worship times and lots of abbreviations. Who's the audience?

They have lots of purposes. Which are most important and how well are you doing? Announce, teach, recruit, praise, impress, prevent, report, persuade, inspire, evangelize. No wonder it's hard to get someone to do it!

The seven deadly sins of newsletters are: untimely, old news, too long, reprints, incorrect, hard to read, bad photos. We are all sinners, and have been forgiven.

Some of our churches' newsletters include on their pages some bold sharing of opinion and disagreement among church members. Some include the California IMPACT newsletter with ballot recommendations. I liked the one that had a serious piece on racism right next to a great quiche recipe.

Some churches are doing very creative on-line newsletters with Constant Contact and other programs. Some do in-house emails to members every week. But some of our church's websites are way out-of-date with news.

It's a new exciting time in communication. I recommend a communications audit at your church: How, who, what, why, where and when is news shared?

And, of course, is everyone signed up to get The Pacific? It's free.

Keep in touch!

Deborah

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## Overheard at Asilomar

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Supreme Court decision on marriage equality.

- "When was the last time you got out of your boat and walked right up to Jesus?" **Felix Carrion**, saying "boat" can mean doctrine, constraints of local churches, fear, etc.
- "God wants our wholeness." UCC Coalition for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns Executive Director **Ruth Garwood**, as part of sacred conversation on race.
- "God is Still Speaking (GISS) taught us to tell others who we are and who we are not. LEAD (Leadership, Excellence and Diversity) invites us to ask ourselves and others to be open, to invite, to be humble." **Ron Buford**, *NCNC development director*
- "Growing up, church was the only place where I was not put down for being Chinese." **Rose Lee** from *Chinese Community UCC, Berkeley*
- "Are we willing to pay the cost of community, to get up off our assets and lay down the best of what we have, and be alchemized by the spirit, to burn off the dross, and talk realistically and stay alive?" **Lynice Pinkard**, conversation on race and racism.
- "We can't rest on our firsts; we are made of nows." **Felix Carrion**
- "I'm afraid of people who are different colors than me, and I'm mad at myself for that. I need to say that and I need help from my church for my fears." **Middle school youth member**
- "Let's get out of a mindset of 'us against them', 'protect our backs.' We are becoming a church that empowers trust. We will be covenantal this time." **Jan Heise**, *moderator, Congregational UCC, Belmont*
- "Bylaws, Bylaws, Yippee, Yippee, Yay!" *Cheerleaders after by-law vote, inspiring a standing ovation.*
- "Now where else can I be but with you here each third week in May. For your love and challenge I will always be grateful." **Paul Smith-Telfer** in worship service led by retired clergy.
- "I love to experience the various styles of worship and to learn to sing hymns in various languages. I feel grateful when I return home after the meeting each year. We are indeed a very lucky church family. It's important for us to be thankful for everything we have." **Adrienne Wong Hull**, *moderator, Chinese Congregational UCC, Berkeley*
- "I want to tell you how nurturing the spirit is when we are gathered. In the face of our disagreements and discomforts, we sang together, prayed together, cried together, laughed together, respected one another, trusted one another, as beloved children of God. For this I give credit to the leadership who always amaze me in their ability to adjust and shift, have their minds changed, and to leave room for and trust that God will be with us and work through us in unexpected and unpredictable ways." **Sue Scaff**, *Almaden Valley UCC, San Jose*
- "The youth were exuberant and assertive in their testimonials and during the business session. The way the youth supported each other, and their involvement in all aspects of the Annual Meeting, was inspirational. It showed us that our Conference will be in good hands for the future. What blessing the four days were!" **Sharyn Jacobs and Diana Schaufler**, *United UCC, Hayward*



Faith Burgess and Faune Towery



Happy youth lead the joyous singing of "We are marching in the light of God."

## Annual Meeting

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younger than 30.) Nominating committee veterans argued that this would be difficult, and four different proposals to modify the requirement were voted down, until First Congregational UCC, Berkeley, member Milton Fujii, their moderator-elect, crafted a compromise; 20 percent of seats would be reserved for folks under 30; if not filled, they would be left vacant.

2) **An annual Conference goal budget**, \$1,190,000, which adjusts all staff to target compensation guidelines.

3) A commitment to initiate and participate in **sacred conversations on race and racism** over the next two years.

4) An affirmation of the California State Supreme Court Decision of **Marriage Equality**, which included these words: "... The 2008 NCNC Annual Meeting extends its deep appreciation and prayerful blessing on all who worked for this day, including clergy, lay people, couples, attorneys, judges, political leaders and all who worked on the petitions and amicus briefs pro bono." (Full text is available at <www.ncnuc.org>, along with all Annual Meeting business.)

60 youth and young adults attended, of whom 21 were voting delegates. Adam Blons of First Congregational UCC, Berkeley again led a special Youth Leadership Program where youth take an active role in all sessions. Both Erin Dimond, new Conference Co-

Moderator and Meredith Jackson, Vice President of the Conference Council (former Board of Directors) are young adults. Youth and young adults spoke out on issues, proposed amendments, gave testimonies of transformation and told the adults to stop speaking for them during the Sacred Conversation on Racism.

Similarly the children's program with 27 kids, was more than child care. Coordinated by Alison Stamm-Kirk, the kids' projects and activities were also about "Walking the Talk" and they took part in the final worship service.

Attendees young and old left the annual meeting reminded not to be conformed to the world, but to transform it, by walking the talk.