

## DIVING INTO THE DEEP

## We are created by God to be naturally creative

By Martin "Skip" Grizzell

As reflectors of God's love, we have a responsibility to mimic the creative power of the Master Artist. As offspring of The Creator, each individual has the opportunity and responsibility to be creative.

An ancient proverb of Zimbabwe states, "If I can talk, I can sing. If I can walk, I can dance." In other words, humanity is creative by pedigree. All are part of an eternal creative process.

Creativity is inclusive, manifesting itself in all types of functions — administration and architecture, cooking, dancing, education and finance. I believe every person has a measure of creative energy deposited into their being

at conception.

As we explore our individual gifts, special abilities and creativity, gaining confidence by embracing and exercising them, we enrich and strengthen the global Body of Christ.

"Liturgia," a Latin term meaning the work of the people, all of whom have a stake in the collective experience, can take on monumental importance, power and influence when we explore our natural creativity.

*Skip Grizzell is a member of Plymouth, Oakland. He has done fabric art for the last two Annual Meetings at Asilomar, as well as liturgical dance at Asilomar and General Synod.*



"Balance" tapestry by Martin "Skip" Grizzell from his recent Sausalito gallery exhibit "Tapestry: When a Door is a Window." The program reads: "Grizzell interrogates assumptions about the tensions of everyday demands and the need for sacred space, a place of contemplation and restoration."

## CALENDAR OF PRAYER

Editor's note: Community Congregational, Benicia, is working on a new vision statement. This excerpt from the latest draft could be a prayer for all our churches:

We envision ourselves as a haven, a hub and a hotbed.

**A HAVEN:** a safe and welcoming place for all who seek God, community and fellowship, a place of peace and serenity, a refuge for those who feel marginalized or unaccepted by other churches or society at large for whatever reason.

**A HUB:** a center from which programs and activities can be hatched, can be nurtured and can spread out to the greater community.

**A HOTBED:** an incubator of new ideas and actions. Historically, we are the "act up church" — protesting slavery in the 1700s, ordaining the first African American, the first woman and the first openly gay pastors in the United States, standing for social justice at home and abroad. We provide a safe place for dialog on any issue. No topic is taboo at God's table, and in the spirit of God's living love, we honor and celebrate our differences as we break bread together.

Amen!

## Did you celebrate 'Interdependence Day' on July 4?

By Brad Bunnin

On July 4th, it's well to be reminded that we're NOT independent!

Despite the fact that we call it Independence Day, July 4th marks a recognition of our interdependence as a nation.

As a nation, we fought a war against the mightiest colonial power in the world.

As a nation, we made deci-

sions about the kind of government we should have.

As a nation, we stood up for what we believed was right.

Our interdependence continued as immigrants from all over the world sailed to our shores in a search for freedom of conscience and economic opportunity. And again, our lives were interdependent.

Farms, railroads, schools, hospitals — all depended on coopera-

tion for their very existence.

We depend on one another for the very sustenance that gives us life. We couldn't eat without dependence on those who grow our food. We couldn't work outside our homes without dependence on those who build and maintain our roads. We couldn't recover from illness without dependence on medical care-givers.

And we wouldn't be in close connection with our lives of the

spirit without dependence on God.

The difference between dependence on other people and dependence on God is that God asks so little in return. Just faith. That's all that we need give back to God in order to get grace from God.

Let's think of Independence Day as Interdependence Day.

*Brad Bunnin is pastor at Skyline, Oakland.*

## Applying Christian principles to candidates and election issues

*Editor's note: The National Council of Churches USA in July released these 10 principles for evaluating candidates that it hopes all Christians — from liberals to conservatives — will study and apply in this election year. For more information and a study guide: <[www.ncccusa.org/electionyearprinciples.html](http://www.ncccusa.org/electionyearprinciples.html)>*

These "Christian Principles in an Election Year" apply well-established ecumenical principles to both domestic and foreign policy issues, and address issues of war, poverty, immigration, education, health care, racial justice, distress in U.S. inner cities and rural communities, the environment and the criminal justice system. They urge domestic policies that build "communities shaped by peace and cooperation" and a foreign policy "based on cooperation and global justice."

Our Christian faith compels us to address the world through the lens of our relationship to God and

to one another. Public discourse is enhanced as we engage civic leaders on the values and ethics affirmed by our faith.

At the same time, religious liberty and the integrity of our democracy will be protected as candidates refrain from using faith-based organizations and institutions for partisan gain. We offer these ten principles to those seeking to accept the responsibility that comes with holding public office.

1. War is contrary to the will of God. While the use of violent force may, at times, be a necessity of last resort, Christ pronounces his blessing on the peacemakers. We look for political leaders who will make peace with justice a top priority and who will actively seek nonviolent solutions to conflict.
2. God calls us to live in communities shaped by peace and cooperation. We reject policies that abandon

large segments of our inner city and rural populations to hopelessness. We look for political leaders who will rebuild our communities and bring an end to the cycles of violence and killing.

3. God created us for each other, and thus our security depends on the well-being of our global neighbors. We look for political leaders for whom a foreign policy based on cooperation and global justice is an urgent concern.
4. God calls us to be advocates for those who are most vulnerable in our society. We look for political leaders who yearn for economic justice and who will seek to reduce the growing disparity between rich and poor.
5. Each human being is created in the image of God and is of infinite worth. We look for political leaders who actively promote racial justice and equal opportunity for

everyone.

6. The earth belongs to God and is intrinsically good. We look for political leaders who recognize the earth's goodness, champion environmental justice, and uphold our responsibility to be stewards of God's creation.
7. Christians have a biblical mandate to welcome strangers. We look for political leaders who will pursue fair immigration policies and speak out against xenophobia.
8. Those who follow Christ are called to heal the sick. We look for political leaders who will support adequate, affordable and accessible health care for all.
9. Because of the transforming power of God's grace, all humans are called to be in right relationship with each other. We look for political leaders who seek a

restorative, not retributive, approach to the criminal justice system and the individuals within it.

10. Providing enriched learning environments for all of God's children is a moral imperative. We look for political leaders who will advocate for equal educational opportunity and abundant funding for children's services.

Finally, our religious tradition admonishes us not to bear false witness against our neighbor and to love our enemies. We ask that the campaigns of political candidates and the coverage of the media in this election season be conducted according to principles of fairness, honesty and integrity.

National Council of Churches USA  
475 Riverside Drive  
New York, NY 10115  
[www.ncccusa.org](http://www.ncccusa.org)