

Keeping up our end of the conversation

By Mary Susan Gast

In July of 2001, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of The Pacific, then-editor Melinda McLain wondered, pointedly, "Why is it that the early editors of The Pacific got into all kinds of trouble for what they printed?"

Picking up the theme I volleyed back the question, "How is it, by contrast, that our efforts to offer commentary on the issues of the day from a non-sectarian faith perspective—whether in The Pacific or via the public media—so seldom ruffle feathers, cause the ground to tremble, find voice on KQED's Forum or warrant a quote in the Sacramento Bee?"

And, of course, it was a different world, 158 years ago. It was a different church, 158 years ago. Most particularly, the relationship between the world and the church was very different, 158 years ago. 158 years ago, the church shared a common frame of reference with a whole lot of people. Today we don't.

At a recent meeting on church development the presenter tossed out the statistical morsel that 80 percent of the people under 21 years of age in this country have never been inside a church building.

On that 150th anniversary I added, "If we find ourselves wailing like Jeremiah, 'They did not listen to me or pay attention to me,' could it be because, more and more, Christians are less and less part of the 'majority' secular culture? Are we 'odd' or 'peculiar' or 'not of this world?' And is that a bad thing?"

"We are called to be faithful. Faithful to the Creator Who fashioned us all in delight and in

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longing. Faithful to the Savior Who loves us into new life and Who lives the Word into flesh. Faithful to the Spirit Who unites us in community over distance and across time.

"No matter if we are ignored or distrusted or dismissed as irrelevant, we must persist, in faithfulness, to be agents of healing, bearers of hope, never isolating our words from our deeds, or the Word from our lives.

"And, oh yes, we have every intention of keeping up our end of the conversation with the world around us for the next 150 years."

Eight years later, with the possible ending of the paper publication of the Pacific on the near horizon, we still intend to keep up our end of the conversation. Moving to electronic mode may well be the way to more effectively initiate conversations on the profound issues of life and hope, desperation and deadliness, among people of faith and people of no faith.

And we will, electronically, persevere in our Spirit-generated ministry of communications, uniting us in community over distance and across time.

To quote current Pacific editor, Deborah Streeter, "BASIC POINT: Be in touch."

Keep in touch. "You, O Redeemer, cause me to rejoice when the community gathers," says the psalmist. The gathering of bodies



At the April 19 dedication of First Congregational UCC, San Francisco's new "Building 5" (the fifth building in their 159-year history, now at Polk and Bush), Conference Minister Mary Susan Gast, left, led worship along with Wilfried Glabach (right) the church's senior pastor. Many honored guests joined in the celebration, including Barbara Rudolph (center). Rudolph is senior church officer for Ecumenical Relations at Glabach's home church, the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland, Germany.



Choir members from Chinese Congregational UCC, San Francisco, and Old First Presbyterian, San Francisco, joined with the choir of First Congregational UCC, San Francisco, at the dedication service, singing a new musical rendition by music director Jonathan Russell of Conference Minister Mary Susan Gast's setting of Psalm 112.

and souls, in touch and touching one another's lives, is an irreplaceable and irreducible manifestation of the incarnate Word that speaks healing and welcome and redemption.

Yet there are times, places, and situations when we cannot be together physically, when we yearn to connect with someone from our far-flung faith family,

with another member of the congregation of congregations that is our Conference.

So, yes, let's stay in touch over our 137,094 square miles of geography—and even farther to link with other settings of the church and its ministries. Let's dream together about the ways in which we can most blessedly be and stay in touch.

Leann Blackert

resigned from Community UCC/ABC, San Leandro, as of June 7 to take a call at United Church of Canada in Kamloops, Canada, where her partner Ivy Thomas serves as regional minister.

Matt Broadbent

will be honored June 7 on the 10th anniversary of his service as pastor at Foothills UCC, Los Altos.

Leian Cimarra,

member at Filipino-American UCC, Fremont, will be recognized as an Honored Laywoman at UCC General Synod in June in Michigan.

Cyrril Colonius

was installed May 3 by the Golden Gate Association at United UCC, Cloverdale, in a four-way covenant with the Alliance for Rural Community Health, the Golden Gate Association and the Cloverdale church.

Leomyr De Jesus,

pastor at Evangelical Fil-Am UCC,

SEASONS OF OUR LIVES

Fremont, has returned to the Philippines due to visa issues with hopes to return to Fremont soon.

Pat DeJong

will be preaching at General Synod, in her home town of Grand Rapids.

Janet Dorman

resigned as interim minister at First Congregational UCC, San Rafael, June 30 to take a call in Falmouth, Maine.

Yvette Flunder,

pastor of City of Refuge UCC, San Francisco, was received into the ordained ministry of the Metropolitan Community Church in April as an expression of solidarity with the MCC. In communication with the UCC Collegium and

with the NCNC Committee on Ministry, Yvette stressed her continued loyalty and accountability to the UCC as the MCC, UCC, and the Fellowship pursue a closer relationship.

Karl Fung,

pastor at Berkeley Chinese Congregational UCC, was honored March 20 in San Diego as he retired from 23 years of service in the U.S. Navy as the first Chinese American captain in the Navy Chaplain Corps.

Wilfried Glabach

will celebrate the 25th anniversary of his ordination June 7 at First Congregational UCC, San Francisco.

Meredith Jackson,

Conference Council president, will be recognized as an Honored Laywoman at General Synod, in June in Michigan. She is a member at First Congregational UCC, Santa Rosa, and is active in campus ministry at UC Davis.

Sharon MacArthur,

pastor of Sycamore UCC, El Cerrito, is the new president of the board of trustees at Pacific School of Religion.

Garnet McClure,

pastor at Congregational UCC, Fremont, received the Friends of Our Children Award May 2 from the Fremont chapter of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) for her work in support of gays and lesbians including performing many weddings.

Melinda McLain

began as interim minister at Island United UCC/UMC/PCUSA, Foster City, April 26.

Katie Morrison

resigned as associate pastor at Community UCC, Orinda, as of April 12.

Parkside UCC, Sacramento

will dedicate its new sanctuary at 2 p.m. on June 7.

Gerri Paulson

was ordained May 2 by the Sacramento Valley Association as

May 31-June 7

AIDS LifeCycle 8, bicycle from San Francisco to Los Angeles, for more information, please go to <www.aidslifecycle.org>.

June 1-2

NCNC office closed (Annual Gathering recovery)

June 6

Justice & Witness Overview Board meeting, 10 a.m. - noon, Danville Congregational UCC, 989 San Ramon Valley Blvd., Danville

June 8

Life Long Learning Committee meeting, 10:30 a.m., conference office, 21425 Birch St., Hayward. Contact Harold Rucker, 925-449-2655

June 19

Committee on Ministry, Hillcrest Congregational UCC, Pleasant Hill; Section A: 8:30 a.m., Carmelle Knudsen, <carmelle.k@earthlink.net> and James Kosko <egcc_pastor@yahoo.com>, co-chairs; Mary Evelyn Arnold, scheduler <mearnold@vom.com>. Section B: 9 a.m., Shirlee Bromley <shirleebromley@earthlink.net> and Lois Mueller <revlois@sbcglobal.net>, co-chairs; Aisa King, scheduler <gertrudeaisaking@yahoo.com>

June 26-30

27th General Synod of the UCC, Grand Rapids MI. For more information, please go to <www.ucc.org>.

July 17

Committee on Ministry, Hillcrest Congregational UCC, Pleasant Hill; See June 19

July 26-Aug. 1

2009 UCC Bicycle Adventure, San Francisco Bay Area Tour. For more information or to register for the trip, please visit www.fccpa.org/biketrip/ or contact Russell Stevens at 408-249-3061 or russ_sheila@att.net, sponsored by First Congregational Church of Palo Alto. Cost: \$225 includes SAG support, meals, snacks and church lodging (see article Page B1).

part of their association meeting at Loomis Basin UCC, Loomis. She is pastor at New Faith Community UCC, Auburn.

David Schlicher

resigned from College Community Congregational UCC, Fresno as of June 7, to take a call in Maui.

Koji Shara

is the new Nichigo associate pastor at Sycamore UCC, El Cerrito.

United UCC, Cloverdale,

celebrates the 10th anniversary of being Open and Affirming on June 7.