



# Community Connections

March 2010



Rev. Jeff O'Grady, Pastor  
San Marino Community  
Church

## A RELEVANT MINISTRY

The Men's Breakfast recently discussed the relevance of church today for worshipers and for those preparing for ministry. An article in a recent issue of *The Christian Century* entitled "Our Life Story" by M. Craig Barnes provided the introduction. The author tells the story of a conversation with a young seminary student who asks, "What's the deal with all of these required courses? When do we get to study things that are relevant?" It is the same question of relevance that church members often ask when they wonder aloud about using ancient creeds for the affirmation of faith or older hymns and structures for worship. Barnes analyzes the assumption behind the question

concluding that, at least for many in our culture, the self is the final arbiter of what is relevant. "The individual is the one, and the only one, who gets to decide if something is relevant" in contemporary society.

As people try to cobble together a life as best they can, with relationships, work, philosophy of life, religion, all "a la carte" resources that can, or cannot, be used in building a life that we prefer, Christian faith can seem irrelevant. With the self in command of determining what is to be valued based upon our own limited experiences, our lives and churches run the risk of becoming so focused upon "relevance" that we can lose revelation and God altogether. Worship and the life of faith communities turn the tables and introduce us to a larger story than our own, which defines human life differently and then asks whether we (as individuals) are relevant to the unfolding story of creation; a story that belongs to God. It may be the one and only time each week that we step outside of ourselves and where

the stories of our lives are evaluated. In other words, we become the evaluated rather than the evaluators. That may help explain why church sometimes feels so foreign and irrelevant. Faith has a different world view, formed and handed down from generation to generation. There is a holy story to tell. Week after week the liturgy tells that story, through which we come to a different self-understanding as we discover the Lord of life and the life of faith.

Lent is the perfect time to explore what has been called "The Strange New World of the Bible." This year try doing something new. Let go of some habit or behavior that leaves

you worried about yourself. Commit to doing something that you have been meaning to do for sometime but just never quite seem to get around to. At least for the remaining weeks of Lent leading up to Easter, let your faith examine your life and make some change, however small. Life is a gift and your life story can change for the better.

Barnes concludes, "From the perspective of a casual observer, not much is going on in either the seminary curriculum or the church liturgy that is relevant to felt needs of the individual. But if you peer beneath the individual's clamoring and conflicting desires, you may find a soul that has begun to breathe again."

You may be surprised at how good it feels to breathe again!

In Christ's love,

Rev. Jeffrey V. O'Grady, Pastor

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*"Faith has a different worldview, formed and handed down from generation to generation."*

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# CCW Present Nellie Odhuno-Shani



Nellie Odhuno-Shani,  
March 2010 CCW Speaker

Friday, March 12, 10:30 am, Fellowship Hall

Community Church Women invite the women of the congregation to come learn about our African sisters.

Nellie Odhuno-Shani tells the stories of the 80% of African women who are rural and who bear the brunt of poverty and illiteracy, and on whom the burden of the family, village, and continent's economy weighs. She highlights inheritance issues for women and girls, showing how the system puts them in vulnerable positions, making them more likely to fall prey to traffickers. With many village husbands going to urban centers for work, she describes the way AIDS has spread killing over 12 million

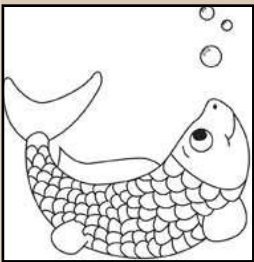
people in Africa, more than 50% being faithful wives.

Nellie is one of the minority of African women whose uneducated parents became Christians and empowered their daughters with faith and education as they moved to the city. She is a lovely, articulate follower of Christ who, with her husband Dan, served 27 years as a World Vision staff member, has raised three children and served churches and schools as they have worked in their native Kenya, as well as Zambia, Mauritania, Senegal, and the U.S.

Contact the church office for reservations at (626) 282-4181 x 10 or [EFarrar@smccpby.com](mailto:EFarrar@smccpby.com). There is no cost for the event.

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## One Great Hour of Sharing



The Lenten outreach focus is One Great Hour of Sharing – a time when Christians unite for a common cause and share with those in need. Funds collected are used for disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development aid throughout the world.

Within hours of the devastation in Haiti, \$100,000 in One Great Hour Of Sharing funds were released to provide initial aid.

“One Great Hour of Sharing” envelopes are available in the pew pockets. Fish banks and sharing calendars are available in the Sunday school classrooms and at the information center. Envelopes and fish boxes will be received on Palm Sunday, March 28, and throughout the spring.

Learn more about this important offering at <http://www.pcusa.org/oghs/>.

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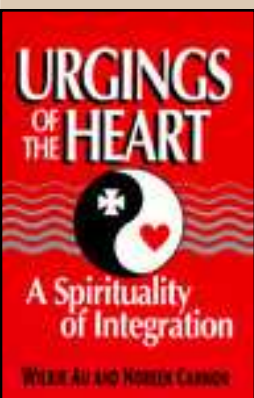
## Lenten Reflection & Renewal Class

Tuesday Evenings, March 2, 9, 16, 23, & 30,  
7:00 pm - 8:30 pm, Fellowship Hall

Church family members of all ages are invited to participate in this six-week series, which began February 23. Each evening will begin with a time of reflection and learning as Rev. O'Grady, Rev. Karen Berns, and Martha Williamson explore themes from *Urgings of the Heart: A Spirituality of Integration* by Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon. As part of the time,

small groups will meet for discussion and fellowship. Youth and children will explore the theme in special small groups. Childcare and Children's activities will be available upon pre-registration. Contact the church office at (626) 282-4181 x 10 or [EFarrar@smccpby.com](mailto:EFarrar@smccpby.com).

Copies of *Urgings of the Heart* are available for \$15 in the church office or at the class.



## NEWS, NEWS, NEWS

All the latest activities and events

### Annual Meeting of the Congregation

*Sunday, February 28, 12:15 pm, Fellowship Hall*

### World Day of Prayer

*Friday, March 5, 2010*

Celebrate this world-wide ecumenical observance of prayer for all people.

### Meet GA Moderator Bruce Reyes-Chow

*March 10, 2010, 9:00 am, Fellowship Hall*

The congregation is invited to meet the moderator of the PC(USA), who will be addressing church leaders from throughout the Los Angeles area. The event is sponsored by Monte Vista Grove Homes. Lunch is included in the \$5 registration fee. Contact Alisha Zuch at (626) 796-6135 x 113 or [AZuch@mvgh.org](mailto:AZuch@mvgh.org) for registration.

### Daylight Saving Time Begins

*Sunday, March 14, 2010*

Remember to "spring ahead" one hour!

### One Big Fellowship Breakfast

*Sunday, March 21, 10:30 am, Fellowship Hall*

The Board of Deacons invites the congregation to breakfast served between the worship services. A free-will offering will be received to cover costs.

### 2010 Photo Directory - Save the Date

*Photos taken May 11-15, 18-22*

### Men's Breakfast

*Wednesdays, 7:00 am, Fellowship Hall*

Join in breakfast and discussion.

3/3: Crawford Brubaker – "What is real worship?"

3/10: Dr. Matthew Lin - "Medical Mission to Haiti"

3/17: Jim Folsom, Director of the Huntington Library Botanical Gardens

3/24: Rev. Jeffrey O'Grady

3/31: Meet at Colonial Kitchen

### Spring 2010 Baptism Dates

*March 14, April 18, & June 20*

Parents who wish to have their children baptized are invited to participate in the sacrament. For details contact Business Manager Skip Ober Miller at [SkipOM@smccpby.com](mailto:SkipOM@smccpby.com) or (626) 282-4181 x 12.

### Elftman Organ Competition

*Saturday, April 17, 3:00 pm, Sanctuary*

Before *American Idol*, there was SMCC's Elftman competition - one of the premier organ events in the country. Two finalists compete for a cash prize and will play during the 9:15 am worship service on April 18. All are invited to the competition. An offering will be taken to support the organ fund.

### Next New Member Class

*May 22, 2010, 8:30 am - 12:30 pm*

Those who wish to learn more about SMCC and join the church may contact Peggy Flynn at [PFlynn@smccpby.com](mailto:PFlynn@smccpby.com) or (626) 282-4181 x 19.

## CONSTRUCTION CORNER



In the original SMCC blueprints, a covered portico was planned to encircle the entire courtyard. Our history is unclear whether design, practical reasons, or finances (or a combination) were responsible for changing the plans. In any event, the lack of protection for the south wall of the Sanctuary over the past 60 years can be seen in the deterioration of the doors, exterior walls, and stained class windows.

The upcoming Capital Campaign includes plans to restore both doors and windows as well as protecting these areas from future damage. Under consideration: installing a covered portico along the south wall of the sanctuary to complete the vision of the founding members.

# PRESIDENT'S DAY WEEKEND HIGH SCHOOL SKI TRIP

24 students and leaders  
from San Marino  
Community Church  
and Laguna Nigel  
Presbyterian Church  
spent the President's  
Day weekend skiing  
in Heavenly at Lake  
Tahoe, CA



March 2010 Edition

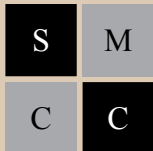
**Sunday Schedule:**

9:15 *Traditional Worship*

10:30 *Spiritual Formation  
for all ages*

11:15 *"The Gathering"  
(casual worship  
service)*

*March Community  
Connections Deadline:  
March 8, 2010*



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## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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# March & April 2010 Adult Spiritual Formation

## **What Can the Rebirth of the Church in Russia Teach Us about the Spiritual Life?**

*Sunday, March 7, 10:30 - 11:10 am, Fellowship Hall*

The Christian churches in Russia were practically stamped out during the Soviet era, but since the fall of Communism they have experienced a miraculous rebirth. What can Christians in Russia teach us today about life in Christ? We will look especially at the spiritual resources of the Russian Orthodox Church and its martyrs of the 20th century.

Presenter: John Burgess is Professor of Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. In 2004-05 he spent a sabbatical year with his wife and three children in St. Petersburg, Russia. He has returned three times, most recently in November 2009, and has written and spoken widely about his experiences. He is the son of SMCC member Betsy Burgess.



## **Touring our Creeds and Confessions**

*Sundays, March 14 & 28, April 11, 18, 25, 10:30 – 11:10 am, Fellowship Hall*



“Touring our Creeds and Confessions” introduces the people and places which gave birth to the core beliefs in our Reformed tradition. Rev. Karen Berns introduces Dr. Jack Rogers (via video) who will lead participants to see and hear why and how the statements of belief Presbyterians say in worship came to be. Get a grasp of the geo-political issues at the heart of the confessions. Dr. Jack Rogers, former professor from Fuller, founder of SFTS-So Cal, as well as former Moderator of the PC(USA) General Assembly, teaches with slides and banners in memorable ways. He is the author of numerous books, including *Presbyterian Creeds: A Guide to the Book of Confessions* and *Reading the Bible and the Confessions: The Presbyterian Way*. This series is especially recommended for new members, church officers, history buffs, and those going on the July Oberammergau/Reformation tour. Over 7,200 churches use this resource and write rave reviews about it!

## **One Big Fellowship Breakfast**

**Sunday, March 21** - No Adult Spiritual Formation today (Please plan to attend the Deacon's One Big Fellowship Breakfast in Fellowship Hall, 10:30 am - 11:15 am)

***Children's Activities & childcare are provided during Adult Spiritual Formation***

# Holy Week 2010 at San Marino Community Church

Join the church family as we conclude our Lenten journey  
and celebrate the events of Holy Week

## Maundy Thursday Communion and Tenebrae Service

*Thursday, April 1, 7:00 pm, Sanctuary*

One of the primary steps as we walk with Jesus toward the suffering of the cross and the glory of the resurrection is Maundy Thursday, a day of love shown and love commanded. It commemorates Jesus' meeting with the disciples in the Upper Room, just hours before his death. When they all gathered together, Jesus showed his love to them by washing their feet (see John 13:1-17). He did this not only to demonstrate his love, but also to model how they should love one another. In fact, the name 'Maundy' (note the spelling: the word ends in '—dy' not '—day') comes from the Latin word *mandatum* which means 'commandment.' It is based on Jesus' words in John 13:34, 35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." This was also the night when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, so we celebrate communion as a part of our service.

This year we celebrate Maundy Thursday with a Tenebrae service. The word "tenebrae" is Latin for "shadows." The purpose of the Tenebrae service is to recreate the emotional experience of Jesus' trial and crucifixion (also known as his "passion") by moving from light to darkness in the sanctuary. The service consists of the customary elements of worship, but also includes numerous Scripture narratives, each one assigned to a different reader, reciting Jesus' final hours. But the essence of the service is the experience of moving from light to darkness. We begin with the church lit by candlelight. There are as many candles as there are readings, plus a white Christ candle. Following each reading the reader will extinguish one of the candles, until only the Christ candle remains. Then the Christ Candle is hidden, symbolizing the apparent victory of the forces of evil over good, leaving the congregation in near complete darkness—and near complete devastation. We ask the congregation to leave in silence, meditating on the suffering that Christ endured for our sakes. The purpose of the service is to recreate the betrayal, abandonment, and agony of the events. This better prepares us to experience and celebrate the wonder of Easter.

## Good Friday Quiet Afternoon Apart

*Friday, April 2: lunch 12:30 pm; meditative afternoon 1:30 pm– 4:30 pm*

Enrich the experience of Easter by setting apart time to reflect on Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Come for a simple lunch and fellowship. Please stay and experience quiet, readings, music, and art designed by the Rev. Karen Berns. Walk with Jesus through Biblical "stations of the cross" beginning in Christ Chapel at 1:30 pm. \$5 for lunch; \$5 for handouts. Contact the church office at (626) 282-4181 x 10 or [EFarrar@smccpby.com](mailto:EFarrar@smccpby.com) for reservations to guarantee enough soup and resources are available for all. Please pre-register!

## Easter Sunday Worship

*Community Sunrise Service, 7:00 am, Lacy Park* – Director of Christian Education Jennifer Baer will preach and students will lead an experiential worship service.

*Sunday Worship, 9:15 and 11:15 am, Sanctuary* – Rev. O'Grady will preach, the choirs will sing with brass instrumentalists and organ accompaniment, and a special children's Sunday school program will be held at both worship services.

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# Easter Lilies



Help decorate the Sanctuary for Easter with a contribution toward flowers. Contributions are for lilies and other flowers for Easter Sunday, palms for Palm Sunday, and for maintaining the living plants that grace SMCC's Sanctuary throughout the year.

Contributions may be made in honor or memory of a loved one and will be recognized in the Easter Bulletin.

Contributions must be received by Monday, March 29 to be included in the Easter Bulletin.



## *Easter Lilies Donation*

Flower donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Envelope # \_\_\_\_\_

Provided by \_\_\_\_\_

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form with your check to "SMCC" by Monday, March 29, 2010.