



The Good Table Café and Nursery News

After two and 1/2 years working remotely and meeting online due to the global pandemic, our initial plans to provide free wifi access to the public throughout The Good Table property have now expanded to become **fully capable of hosting live streaming events** such as live music, webinars, and community educational offering in the Gathering Space and Conference Room.

With pro-bono help from the wizards at [Desired Effect](#), we will be putting the necessary cables into the walls of the building to allow for streaming audio and video (via robotic cameras mounted in the ceiling) and other connectivity to make our **1966 architectural gem a truly 21st century building.**

At the moment, we do not have money budgeted to buy all the equipment needed to build this out (we will need another \$75k at least) but we have signed a contract with [Illuminate Electric](#), a local specialty electrical contractor, to make sure we have all the wiring in place. And when we do finally get everything connected, we have multiple volunteers willing to serve on a “tech team” so that our offerings from **pay-what-you-can yoga to live performances by local musicians to permaculture courses offered by Planting Justice and the Sunday Gathering of The Good Table UCC** can all be shared via online with ease. If this part of our vision is exciting to you, we would welcome your financials gifts and/or introductions to funding sources or individuals who might be able to help.

This special double-issue of **The Good Table News** is to make it easier for Pastor Melinda to take medical leave from Nov. 21 through Feb. 6. But be assured - this project is a BIG team effort, so if you have questions or want to connect, contact co-manager of The Good Table LLC, [Gavin Raders](#) or our Temporary Managing Pastor, [Joanne Whitt](#).

As in previous years, we have rescheduled our last Saturday **Community + Fun Workdays** for November and December due to the holidays, but do hope you'll join us on **Saturday, December 3rd** and **Saturday, January 7th, from 12-3p**. We always have a variety of gardening and cleaning projects that can be done while construction is happening. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes and bring work gloves or just stop by for a tour. We are likely to begin scheduling some **additional workdays for specific projects**. Do get on our direct e-list if you'd like to come help - we need you and are so grateful for all your support.

If you haven't been to a workday recently, you'll be delighted to see all the work being done in the **Planting Justice Nursery** space outside and inside their lovely farm store space. Do come check it out!

Thanks to everyone who has **financially contributed to the project** and if you haven't given yet, please help as you are willing and able. We're delighted to receive your **tax-deductible contributions in any amount** and we would really appreciate **introductions to other individual donors and/or foundations** that would be interested in our project. You can give online through the-good-table.org or **save the processing fees by mailing a check to:** The Good Table LLC, 780 Ashbury Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. All donations are 100% tax-deductible.

December Birthdays

4th Sylvia Sugg
9th Nancy Lemon
13th Rev. Dr. Celeste Fields
21st Matt Kavanaugh-Lynch
22nd Sally Dunham
30th Andrew Noble and
Benjamin Noble

January Birthdays

7th Colleen Rodger
15th Rev. Davena Jones
16th Margaret Kavanaugh-Lynch
19th Angela Jernigan

*Let us know your birthday or anniversary date
and we'll celebrate you here!*

Choice Tidbits

GTUCC church member **Marilyn Colbert** will soon be moving to Chico to be closer to her adult children. She will be missed!



While Pastor Melinda is on leave, questions about The Good Table LLC and The Good Table Café should be directed to the [Rev. Joanne Whitt](#). To connect with The Good Table UCC church community, contact the [Rev. Dr. Celeste Fields](#).

If You See Something, Say Something

By Nancy Lemon, member The Good Table UCC

In airports, there are signs saying “If you see something, say something.” This is also true about ending racism.

My father spoke out against racism as a minister. He lost his job in 1968 because his all-white congregation in Richmond didn’t approve of him preaching about and working with the Black Panthers and the United Farm Workers, and for protesting against the Vietnam War.

But while both of my parents were opposed to racism, they also raised us to be “nice.” As preacher’s kids, our behavior in public could jeopardize our father’s job. And our middle class conditioning meant not rocking the boat. I got mixed messages about responding to racism.



As a child I thought racism meant slavery, lynching, and overt discrimination. I have become more aware of the many more subtle ways that racism operates in me and around me. I think these are the micro-aggressions that African Americans describe occurring to them on a frequent basis.

1. I was in a group of mostly white people standing in a circle. One person was African American. A white man joined, standing in front of this woman, facing the group, and talking. The African American woman changed her stance, crossing her arms in front of her body as if to protect herself, then left, visibly upset. As she walked away I followed her and said, “I saw what happened.” I said it looked like racism and it was wrong. I asked if there was anything she wanted me to do. She thanked me for acknowledging this, and said she didn’t need me to speak to the man. She said she experienced this type of behavior frequently and had learned to assume a powerful stance, asserting her presence and right to be there.

2. My African American friend was standing at a table at an event when a white woman I know slightly bumped into her but did not apologize. My friend said, “Excuse me?!” and was obviously upset. Not knowing what to do, I introduced the two of them. My friend asked me to move away with her, and commented that as a black woman she often feels invisible to white people. Even though the bumping seemed accidental to me, I realized that my friend had a different experience of being bumped into in public places than I do.

If You See Something, Say Something Continued...

3. There were several white women standing in a circle, and an African American woman who was outside it. The white women were being introduced to each other but no one introduced the African American woman. I felt uncomfortable, and reached across the circle to offer my hand to her, and introduced myself. She shook my hand and told me her name, then the group disbanded and she and I talked. As we disbanded, one of the white women in the group said to me, “Thank you for doing that.”

I talked about these incidents in my peer counseling sessions. My counselor noted that while I had supported the African American people, I had not said anything to the white people. I realized that this was because of the years of conditioning to be nice, to not make other people feel uncomfortable. I also know that we white people who are opposed to racism may feel that if we ever make a mistake around racism that we are bad, unredeemable. This makes it hard to talk to each other when we see something we think is racist.

I also realized that my not saying anything to the white people in these incidents is itself racism. It should not be up to people of the global majority to always be the ones who point out racism, just as I want the men in my life to speak up when they see other men saying something sexist.

The day after the bumping incident, the white woman emailed me, saying she wanted to apologize to my friend for not having said “Excuse me” at the time of the bumping. With her permission, I forwarded her email to my friend, who accepted her apology. While I am glad this was resolved, my training to be nice got in the way of coming up with a more effective response in the moment, leaving my friend again feeling invisible.

After two counseling sessions I approached the white woman from the third incident who had thanked me for reaching out to the African American woman. I told her that I thought she owed the African American woman an apology. She told me that she had had a conversation earlier with that woman but had forgotten her name, so she could not introduce her to the white women. She assured me that she was not offended by my speaking up about this incident, and stated that she knows that situations like this do create micro-aggressions.

I know all of us in our congregation are committed to ending racism. We are all figuring out what that means, making mistakes, and hopefully learning from them. I can see racism happening around me more easily these days. For me the challenge is pushing through my conditioning to be nice, and speaking up to other white people about the racism I see.

The Advent of a Mothering God



By Rev. Dr. Melinda V. McLain, pastor for The Good Table UCC

"We are all meant to be mothers of God. What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? Then, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of God is begotten in us."

–Meister Eckhart, 14th century mystic

When we talk about our spiritual lives, language of birth often crops up. Our physical experiences of birth, life, and death are always the context of our pursuit of a God-centered life. One of my favorite local preachers, the Rev. Lynice Pinkard identified one of the problems this language presents. "We have a hard time knowing the difference between birth pangs and death throes". Indeed, the pain we experience in our life could be leading to death. . . or new life.

In my own thinking and experience, I have learned to assume that pain leads to both because birth and death are intimately linked. Heaven knows that when a parent views their new child for the first time they simultaneously feel the joy of birth and they experience the instant death of their life before that child. Everything is completely changed. Writer Clarissa Pinkola Estes called this the "life, death, life" cycle that is constantly in motion.

Because the gospels are mostly silent about the life of Jesus between the birth narratives in Luke and Matthew and adulthood (the brief incident in the Temple notwithstanding), we don't think very much about Mary as an actual mother. If we did, we might imagine how scared she must have been to be visited by an angel. Her shock when she began to understand the message of Gabriel. Her challenging pregnancy and delivery in a stable. (with or without a side trip to Egypt)

But what was it like to be the mother of Jesus, a younger brother, whose "father" was not the man to whom she was married when she discovered she was pregnant? There are a number of books that imagine Jesus (Yeshua) as a child and adolescent. Some are based on painstaking cultural research such as Rabbi Jesus by Bruce Chilton. My personal favorite, however, is an insane piece of comedy writing entitled, **Continued -->**

The Advent of a Mothering God, *continued...*

Lamb: The Gospel According to Biff, Christ's Childhood Pal by Christopher Moore, one of the few books that has literally made me bend over laughing. But even in this book, Mary is only a supporting character.

I suspect Mary was just as confused about whether she was having birth pangs or death throes or both at the same time. I'm sure that when he was born, she could not have imagined she would witness the horrifying end of her child's life. Thinking about the life of Jesus through the eyes of his mother Mary comforts me because it reminds me that no matter how faithful or faith-filled you may be, tragedy will come. And yet, God is still present.

This Advent, consider what may be preventing you from being a "mother of God"? What do you need to let go of in order to make room for the birth of the holy in your life? What needs to die in you so that you might fully live the promise of God within you?



Live Edge Readers & Interfaith Meditation

While Pastor Melinda is on leave, **Joy Barnitz** has agreed to be the zoom master and facilitator for our spiritual book group, the Live Edge Readers. Thanks Joy! This lovely group of spiritual seekers meets **Wednesdays, 2-3:30p pacific via zoom**.

In early December the group will begin reading and discussing *The Thirst of God: Contemplating God's Love with Three Women Mystics* by SFTS professor Wendy Farley. In this enlightening volume, Farley eloquently brings the work of three female mystics--Marguerite Porete, Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Julian of Norwich--into creative conversation with contemporary Christian life and thought. Get a copy now and join us! If you're not already on the e-list for Live Edge Readers, do send an email to **Joy Barnitz** by [clicking here](#).

Our **Interfaith Meditation** group meets [via zoom](#) Meeting ID: 416 454 2723 each **Thursday from 6-6:40p** for a restorative session of shared silence. While Melinda is on leave, group member **Joyce Hedges** will be the zoom master and facilitator for this group. If you'd like to receive zoom credentials via email to join this group, send an email to Joyce by [clicking here](#).

Regular Ways to Connect



Sundays at 12 noon - Music, prayer, and preaching via Zoom. Our style is relaxed and interactive. Our music includes many genres from chant to gospel, and pop/rock to classical. We celebrate Holy Communion on the first Sundays of every month.



Wednesdays, 2-3:30 pm - How do we find our true self? What are the similarities between Buddhism and Christianity? Is there something that is real beyond the limits of our perception? These are just some of the questions that our Live Edge Readers has explored while reading and pondering together. If you are interested, kindly send an email to Pastor Melinda to get added to the list: info@the-good-table.org



Thursdays, 6 pm - Interfaith Meditation via Zoom. There is an old Zen saying, "Everyone should meditate for 20 minutes each day unless you're really busy, and then you should meditate for an hour." We sit in chairs in silence for about 45 minutes and no previous experience with meditation is required.

Worth Noting

- **Pastor Melinda's Medical and Study leave begins Monday, Nov. 21 through Monday, Feb. 6th.**
- **Social Action Team for GTUCC meets on Sun. Dec. 4th@1p.**
- **Our Community Work + Fun Days @5166 Sobrante Ave will be held on Sat. Dec. 3 and Sat. Jan. 7, 12-3p.** Wear sturdy shoes and clothing and bring work gloves and favorite gardening tools. We will resume last Saturday workdays in February.
- **Candlelight Christmas Eve service, Sat. Dec. 24, 8p**
- There will be no **Sunday Gathering** for GTUCC on **Sun. Dec. 25 and Sun. Jan. 1**
- **The Good Table UCC Council** meets via zoom, **Thursday, Dec. 29, 7p**
- **Semi-Annual Meeting** for GTUCC will be on **Sunday, Jan. 15, @1p**

The Good Table UCC Worship Offerings

Join us on **Sundays at 12 noon** for our celebration with music, prayer, and preaching in person AND via Zoom . We celebrate the sacrament of **Holy Communion every First Sunday**. All are welcome at our table in El Cerrito and online everywhere! All are welcome at our table in El Cerrito and online everywhere!

Mark your calendar!

Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

Dec 24 at 8p in-person and via zoom.

The Good Table UCC will not meet on...

Christmas Day, Dec. 25th

New Year's Day, Jan. 1.

The Good Table
780 Ashbury Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530

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The Good Table
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