



THE GOOD TABLE NEWS



The Good Table Café & Nursery News

Welcome to the first Spring issue of The Good Table News! We have decided to switch to a “four season” schedule for this newsletter: **Winter (December), Spring (March), Summer (June) and Fall (September)**, knowing that our weekly blog “The Good Table at Home” plus our social media channels (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube) will fill in any communication gaps.

Our communications manager [Jacob Day](#) will also continue to create “**Meet Your Tablemates**” videos and some additional video content to swell the content on our YouTube channel. Jacob would be delighted to interview you at one of our Community Work + Fun days about your visions and dreams for The Good Table.

One of the wonderful “upgrades” to the site is that the [Aesthetic Pruning Club of Lake Merritt College](#) now comes to our site at least twice a year to prune and care for the wonderful ornamental trees and bushes originally planted by the Adachi family. **Ann Owen**, the President of the club is a resident here in El Sobrante and leads these events. This club also prunes many famous Japanese gardens around the Bay Area and Lake Merritt offers classes in proper pruning. We are so grateful to these “professional” volunteers that came to care for our ornamental plants on Saturday, February 18.

Upcoming work days will be held from 12n-3p on last Saturdays: (March 25, April 29, and May 27) at 5166 Sobrante Avenue. Wear sturdy shoes and clothing suitable for gardening or cleaning projects or just stop by for a tour!

Continued on page 2

Our workdays are now being organized and led by **Sam Lustig** of Planting Justice so that **Colleen Rodger** can focus on other tasks. Thank you, Colleen, for doing this job for almost four years!

If you haven't been to a last Saturday Community Work + Fun Day 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.



Sam Lustig of Planting Justice



Spring Birthdays Anniversaries

March Birthdays

5th Patsy Severson
7th Patsy Stubbs
12th Kathe Kiehn
24th Gavin Raders

April Birthdays

1st Dan Hariton
4th Joan Thompson
7th Bill Willcutts
7th Rev. Paul Honigs
10th Cordell Britt
23rd Mary Ivas

May Birthdays

1st Eliot Hariton
2nd Andy Weill and Tim K. Murphy
4th Rev. Katie Morrison
5th Rev. Niels Teunis
7th Marilyn Colbert
12th Mhel Kavanaugh Lynch
14th Rev. Tom Emanuel
19th Rev. Dr. Melinda V. McLain
22nd Wendy Mahoney
23rd Beth Koutz
25th Leah Darrell
29th Ken Alborn

May Anniversaries

26th Nancy Lemon & Blaine Devine
27th Angela Jernigan & Niels Teunis

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

The Presence of Absence

by Rev. Dr. Melinda V. McLain

Pastor for The Good Table UCC

A desert is a place without expectation.

– Nadine Gordimer (1923-2014), Nobel-prize winning author from South Africa



While I'm not exactly sure what Gordimer means in this quote, I do know that a dramatic change of scenery and expected way of living life does help to shake loose old patterns of thinking and feeling. This might explain that "going into the desert" to seek a vision or revelation is an almost trite trope for spiritual discovery. It's also an almost obligatory part of most biographies of the founders of religious traditions including, of course, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed. (may their names be praised!)

My own trip to the high deserts of New Mexico over the winter months did not produce any major visions or revelations of divine activity in the world and I'm sure we're all relieved that I have no plans to start a new religion. In fact, the most transformative thing I experienced during my desert sojourn was rest. Real rest that comes when your responsibilities are few and there is time to breathe, walk and enjoy the beauty of the snow, the mountains, and a stillness so deep that it has a sound. A sound that can only be heard when all the noise of human activity is absent and the earth's song becomes audible again.



Now that I'm back at sea level and regularly driving through traffic and seeing and hearing what feels like "hordes" of people all around, I am still seeking to rest well while taking up the challenges of being a solo pastor and helping to do the work of creating The Good Table for the benefit of the El Sobrante community. It is harder for me to hear the song of the earth here, but it is there if you can take the time to tune out the racket of human endeavor.

The Presence of Absence *continued*

My time in Santa Fe was not just defined by the altitude and its beautiful desert setting, but it was also a time of reconnecting to art and music and remembering that human beings have transcendent songs to sing too.

The former abbot of the Monastery of Christ in the Desert near Abiquiu, NM, Father Philip, used to say that life in the world is “90% noise and 10% silence and that in the monastic community, they simply try to reverse that percentage.”

As we move from Winter to Spring, we also enter the church season of Lent a time of preparation for the celebration of Easter. This word was first recorded before 900 c.e.; and appears in Middle English as *leynte*, and in Old English *læncte* meaning “spring, springtime, Lent,” literally, “lengthening (of daylight hours)”; and is also a cognate with Dutch *lente(n)* and German *Lenz* “spring”.

The liturgical season of Lent is often a time when some believers choose to “give up” various habits and/or foods as an act of spiritual discipline. For myself, I would like to give up some of the noise and futile busyness that can so easily fill up the day and instead be more attuned to silence and to beauty.

As the days lengthen and the blossoms of Spring turn into the fruits of Summer and Fall, I invite us all to take time to rest so that we can hear the song of the earth and our own hearts again.



Live Edge Readers

The Live Edge Readers spiritual book group has begun reading and discussing: *Hearing God in Poetry: Fifty Poems for Lent and Easter* by Richard Harries. From the book's cover: *From Yehuda Amichai and W. H. Auden to Phyllis Wheatley and Walt Whitman, Hearing God in Poetry invites you to*

take a closer look at fifty great poems by some of the finest poets in the English language. Some are well known, some deserve to be better known, but all say something distinctive that will lift your spirit. Send an [email to Pastor Melinda](#) if you have questions about this weekly group that meets on Wednesdays from 2:30p to 4p via zoom.

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. No previous experience with meditation is necessary and all are truly welcome. **Joyce Hedges** is the zoom master and facilitator for this group.

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

- Our **Community Work + Fun Days** @5166 Sobrante Ave are held on **last Saturdays (March 25, April 29, and May 27), 12-3p**. Wear sturdy shoes and clothing and bring work gloves and/or favorite gardening tools. Or just stop by for a tour!
- **The Good Table UCC Council** meets each **3rd Wednesday, 6:30-8p** [via zoom](#).
- **Joint UCC Good Friday** service, **Friday, April 7, 7p** @Orinda Community UCC, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda.
- **The Good Table Café Board of Directors** will meet **Saturday, April 15, 2023 at 2:30p** [via zoom](#).

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! Also mark your calendar to attend our **Easter Sunday Celebration service Sunday, April 9, 12n** in \-person @780 Ashbury Avenue, El Cerrito (near Stockton) and [via zoom](#).

Good Friday 2023

Presence and the Absence of Presence



Good Friday Service

Friday, April 7, 2023

7:00 p.m.

Orinda Community Church

10 Irwin Way

Orinda, CA 94564

The Good Table
780 Ashbury Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530



Address Change Requested
Dated Material - March 2023

The Good Table News
published quarterly by

**The Good Table United Church of
Christ**
An Open and Affirming
Congregation

Rev. Dr. Melinda V. McLain, pastor
info@the-good-table.org
780 Ashbury Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530
510-526-0110
the-good-table.org