

My brothers and sisters, we have seen the Spirit move in our church and people discovering and putting their gifts to use in amazing ways.

In July and August of 2005, we embarked on a discernment process to find and enumerate our Core Values, so we could tell others about who we are and so we could frame our actions based on these values. Through a series of messages, small and large group meetings, we discerned that our Core Values are:

- Extravagant joy
- Passionate faith
- Loving respect
- Deep connectedness
- Intentional growth
- Shared laughter

And we also affirmed that we aim to be an inclusive community, welcoming all without regard to human distinctions of race, class, gender, ability, or sexual orientation.

We bade farewell and gave thanks for the ministries of our Choir Director Sally Skeels and Organist Florene Wells as they retired in 2005. We welcomed the music coordination of Susan Hough while we searched for a new Choral Director and Organist. In November, Cheryl Forest joined us as Director of Music Ministries. Cheryl's enthusiasm has enlivened and enriched the music for worship service and we give thanks that Cheryl has let the Spirit move her among us.

In September, we completed the refurbishment of Nelson Hall with new paint, lighting, flooring and air-conditioning. It has made a welcoming and inviting space for our ministry and our long standing aid and support to ministry partners such as programs for recovery from addiction. We began to explore with the leadership of New Community of Faith a model for a "village of churches" that would emphasize intentionally shared mission and ministry. The "village" would allow for full utilization of our property resources for ministry and worship, and for greater fulfillment of God's kingdom through the churches and shared ministries. In December, you approved the Village of Churches proposal at a congregational meeting. Shortly afterwards, NCF was unable to move forward with the Village proposal. However, the discussion we shared showed us that we are embracing the future, and looking toward opportunities for shared ministry, and outreach to our community. We still feel the Spirit is

moving us to pursue the concept of a Village and are continuing to seek other partners in this endeavor.

In October, the Men's Ministry helped Habitat for Humanity construct housing in Santa Cruz. Two of our children, Chandra Bergmann and Jenna Mennen, proposed a regular, ongoing giving opportunity for Heifer Project, part of Heifer International. Heifer Project provides farm animals to needy families around the world, and Chandra and Jenna began first-Sunday collections for this mission.

In November, Council agreed to take new member and ministry student John Rodgers in care. To be "in care" means that someone has felt a call from God to the ordained ministry, and is asking the care and support of his home church and the local Association during his discernment process.

The leadership for the annual Montgomery Street project was taken up by other members when the leaders (Jerry and Cheri) were struck by illness. We assembled 85 gift bags containing thermals, gloves, hats, socks, stamps, envelopes, toiletries, and treats were given to the men on December 20. The men especially appreciated the warm hand and heart many of you gave that night, by singing, sharing testimony, listening to prayer or personal story, and praying with men who asked for prayer.

In January, we began the Real Faith for Real Life worship series with small covenant group study of the book and learning how to increase Christ's presence in our daily lives. As a community, we began to learn and practice the marks of discipleship: prayer, worship, reading the Bible, serving, relating and giving. These practices strengthen us in our daily lives, and give us the foundation to do the work of love and ministry that Jesus commands us to do.

In June, our campus became a place of refuge and hope when we hosted the *God and Gays: Bridging the Gap* conference. This conference welcomed lesbian, gay, bisexual, straight, and transgender peoples from all over the south bay — Christians, and those who had given up on ever finding Christ's love, were welcomed by this church onto this campus

During the year, the individual ministries of members have blossomed as they discovered (or continued to use) their gifts as the Spirit intended:

- We give thanks for Faith King's food-pantry ministry and for Angie Jagers ministry to the women of Commercial Street Shelter, for Craig

- Benson/Larry Edson/Bob O'Conner leadership of the Men's Ministry, for Lyn Jenichen's children's church ministry.
- We give thanks that Larry Edson and Boyce Sanders have established a Youth ministry.
  - We give thanks that a new women's ministry, based in learning the marks of discipleship and applying them to the real lives of our women has emerged and grown from the Real Faith for Real Life meetings;
  - We give thanks that the new men's ministry is helping develop Godliness in our men, and encouraging wanton Jesus-following, service, and commitment;
  - We give thanks that new prayer triads are forming and witness the incredible spiritual growth of the individuals in them. I give special thanks for my prayer triad with Susan and George – I have never had such a deep spiritual relationship with others before joining with them.
  - We give thanks for the new life in worship, including the extraordinary development of the choir in a very short time, and the development of lay readers who write their own prayers, or pray them from the heart and the movement of the Spirit;
  - We give thanks for the improved facilities that help us welcome people in need of God's healing touch – those in recovery and others looking for a renewed spirit – and our investment in proactive care for these facilities in a hyper-competent and loving facilities manager, John Rogers;
  - We give thanks for our investment in developing the ministry of each and every member of our church family, both by sending people to conferences and workshops, but also by our search and hire of a ministry coach
  - We give thanks for reaching out and touching lives through our cyberpresence on the web and in the Strengthen Your Core blog;
  - We give thanks for the potlucks and campout and picnics and other events that helped us get to know each other better;
  - We give thanks for our Christian witness through our choir's singing and Bran's preaching at the Santa Clara Association of the UCC's fall meeting last October; at the Celebration in Spirit worship service before Gay Pride in June, and yesterday and this morning at sister church Celebration in Faith's 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary revival, and for our co-sponsorship with First Congregational of the Friday night prayer group, led by Bran Scott
  - We give thanks for the unveiling of spiritual gifts of leadership and service in Teresa, of liturgy and song in Susan, and of faith in me and others;

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- We give thanks for the Jesus-centered and exuberant life we're seeing in our newest family members – in Tracey and Bran and Nora and Ellen and Lisa and Debbie and Logan and Janeth and Michelle and Sarah and Suzanne and Jim and Claire and Christian and Joe and Jo-Mary and Jennifer and Brian and Cameron and Glenn, and in old friends who have come home Christine and Cindy.
- We give thanks for Pastor Elane and the worship team who have shown us how much more is available to us when we find and use our spiritual gifts to spread the word of God in our lives and community.

God has a lot more to do with us, and 50 years isn't anything to the Eternal One. Thanks be to God!

Ken True  
Moderator, 2006-2008