

SUMMER 2023 

THE GOOD TABLE NEWS



The Good Table Café & Nursery News

Welcome to the Summer issue of The Good Table News! Like everyone else, we are rejoicing at all the green hills around us and working hard to get the weeds under control! It's amazing what a difference **nearly 47 inches of rain** - some of it even in May - makes on the natural world. Thanks to all the folks who came and weeded on Sobrante Avenue - many hands pull many weeds in much less time!

But since **drought is more the norm for us**, and rainy years more rare, we are building in lots of water-wise systems into our project. We have a metal roof that will make it easier to collect water into storage tanks. Planting Justice will also be hand-watering their plants to make sure every drop counts! And we will be careful in our kitchens and bathrooms to build **water-saving practices** into all of our activities.

Upcoming work days will be held from 12n-3p on last Saturdays: (June 24, July 29, and August 26) at 5166 Sobrante Avenue. Wear sturdy shoes and clothing suitable for gardening or cleaning projects or just stop by for a tour!



Our workdays are organized and led by **Sam Lustig** of Planting Justice if you have questions or would like to help out at other times. 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.

Choice Tidbits

A wonderful [short video](#) about **Planting Justice** was just released entitled "**Oakland Permaculture Heals The Hood!**" Check it out!



Planting Justice has also launched a **capital campaign** that will partially benefit our project. [Donate here](#) and support our work together.



Summer Birthdays Anniversaries

June Birthdays

7th Kelly Knight
12th Olivia Wisely
15th Cathy Noble
17th Randi Nielsen

June Anniversaries

17th Susan Meeter and Barbara Cook
21st Bonnie and Dan Hariton

July Birthdays

13th: Brady Morales-Woolery
24th: Barbary Bly
29th: Brian Campbell-Miller

July Anniversary

July 3 Margaret and Mhel Kavenaugh-Lynch (1995)

August Birthdays

4th: Rev. Susan Meeter
8th: Rev. Thom Longino
8th: Ardith Hayes

August Anniversaries

11th: Rev. Dr. Melinda McLain (ordination anniversary 1996)
24th: Patsy & Stan Severson

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

Seeking the Holy Through Thick and Thin

by Rev. Dr. Melinda V. McLain

Pastor for The Good Table UCC



There is a Celtic saying that “heaven and earth are only three feet apart, but in the Thin Places the distance is even smaller”. Our spiritual book group, the Live Edge Readers is currently reading [The Celtic Way of Prayer: The Recovery of the Religious Imagination](#) by Esther de Waal. While de Waal does not talk about these “thin places”, she does emphasize the ancient Celtic view that God is present everywhere and in everything.

In our group, we challenged each other to take up this Celtic idea and create prayers or spiritual practices that might help us to discern the presence of God in a daily task or perhaps an unexpected place. One of our members, Dr. Lila Anderson told me that it was “hard to sense the presence of God while shopping at Costco, but she got there eventually.”

Obviously, we were joking, but there might be some deeper truth here. So many of the places that humans would label “thin places” are often natural and even remote places like the holy Isle of Iona or the Chama river canyon in New Mexico. Could it be that thin places are full of “living” carbon instead of human-created “dead” carbon? Have we indeed “paved paradise and put up a parking lot?”

If so, then if we don’t readily have access to a naturally “thin place” we will have to contend with the “thick” places that we have created in order to touch the holy in our daily lives. What might help us to transform a “thick” place into a sacred spot?

Some folks find that creating a home altar helps. Others burn incense or listen to contemplative music. Maybe you can help the Live Edge Readers bring the sacred into everyday activities by creating specific prayers for washing dishes, looking in the mirror, or weeding in the garden. We can also choose clothing and jewelry that is meaningful and readily creates mindfulness. I often wear a silver pendant from the Monastery of Christ in the Desert for this very purpose.

May you find glimmers of the holy through thick and thin, in drought or drizzle, throughout all your days.

Live Edge Readers



The **Live Edge Readers** spiritual book group is currently reading and discussing: [The Celtic Way of Prayer: The Recovery of the Religious Imagination](#) by Esther de Waal. The group meets on Wednesdays from **2:30p to 4p** [via zoom](#).

At the beginning of July, we will begin reading [This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us](#) by Cole Arthur Riley. From Goodreads: In her stunning debut, the creator of Black Liturgies weaves stories from three generations of her family alongside contemplative reflections to discover the **"necessary rituals"** that connect us with our belonging, dignity, and liberation.

*"From the womb, we must repeat with regularity that to **love ourselves is to survive**. I believe that is what my father wanted for me and knew I would so desperately need: a tool for survival, the truth of my dignity named like a mercy new each morning."*

So writes **Cole Arthur Riley** in her unforgettable book of stories and reflections on discovering the sacred in her skin. In these deeply transporting pages, Arthur Riley reflects on the stories of her grandmother and father, and how they revealed to her an embodied, dignity-affirming spirituality, not only in what they believed but in the act of living itself. Writing memorably of her own childhood and coming to self, Arthur Riley boldly explores some of the most urgent questions of life and faith: How can spirituality not silence the body, but instead allow it to come alive? How do we honor, lament, and heal from the stories we inherit? How can we find peace in a world overtaken with dislocation, noise, and unrest? In this indelible work of contemplative storytelling, Arthur Riley invites us to descend into our own stories, examine our capacity to rest, wonder, joy, rage, and repair, and find that our humanity is not an enemy to faith but evidence of it.

At once a compelling spiritual meditation, a powerful intergenerational account, and a tender coming-of-age narrative, ***This Here Flesh speaks potently*** to anyone who suspects that our stories might have something to say to us.

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.

Construction Takes a LOOONG Time

By Nancy Lemon

Some people may feel discouraged about how long our church's remodeling project in El Sobrante is taking. However, I am not one of them. My husband worked in construction, working his way up over 30 years from carrying lumber to becoming a carpenter, then a construction supervisor. So I heard a lot about remodeling and building new houses taking a long time.

And when we decided to rebuild the house we live in, I knew that would also take a long time. We did this in two stages. Our floors were very uneven, as our 2 story house is on a hill and was sliding toward the street. In this stage, the house movers jacked up the entire front of our house and put cribbing underneath in order to level and stabilize it while the front half of the cracked foundation was replaced.

Before the house movers jacked up the house, my husband put a lot of duct tape on all the windows in the upstairs living room and dining room and the rooms beneath them, in case the windows cracked, but they did not. Then all the windows in the living room were removed, along with the upstairs and downstairs fireplace openings and the chimney. There were so many large holes in the living room walls that at one point a bird flew through the room!

For many months we had 2-story high scaffolding in front of our house, a great place to put a scarecrow wearing my old overalls and a jack o lantern at Halloween. All the lath and plaster inside the walls in the front of the house was replaced with shearwall and drywall, making the house more earthquake proof. This part of the remodel took about 6 months.



A few years later we were ready to remodel the back half of our house. This part took about a year and a half. The workers dug a moat/trench close to 6 feet deep and 3 feet wide around the back of the house, so when we needed to go out the back door to recycle things and get to the back yard, we had to leap over the moat. I thought this was great exercise!

After the house movers leveled the back of the house with jacks and put cribbing under it to keep it from falling, we prayed there would not be an earthquake while it was on the cribbing and again we were lucky. We excavated another bedroom and a laundry room in the back of the house downstairs. My husband and the workers removed the thousands of buckets of dirt by hand since the area was too steep and narrow for construction equipment.

We also remodeled the upstairs kitchen. We were not able to use it for 12 months. First we moved all the kitchen appliances into the dining room along with the upstairs washer and dryer. We ate in the dining room with lots of boxes full of dishes and pans, and cooked in the microwave and a waffle iron/grill. We also could use the downstairs kitchen. There was Ram Board over all the upstairs floors to protect them and a layer of fine white dust on everything – I finally gave up trying to clean it up.

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Many mornings I would wake up in our upstairs bedroom to another male stranger in the kitchen, who was working on electrical or plumbing or drywall or painting, as I stumbled to the bathroom. Blaine and the crew fixed cracks in the upstairs bedroom walls and painted them. Last came refinishing the new hardwood floor in the upstairs kitchen – we had to sleep elsewhere for a few days since the fumes were toxic.

One day my husband came down from looking closely at our roof and informed me that it was not actually attached to the house, just sitting on top of it. Of course we fixed that and now it is firmly nailed to the house.

During these remodeling projects, the neighbors periodically asked me, “You’re not LIVING in that house are you?!!” and were surprised to hear that we were. Eventually it was done and we have a beautiful and safe house.

I know our church will eventually finish our El Sobrante project and we will look back at this construction phase with humor. Let’s face the rest of this project with patience, knowing it will end up taking as long as it takes but will finally be done!



Regular Ways to Connect



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 @780 Ashbury Avenue, El Cerrito (near Stockton) and online everywhere!



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 (June 24, July 29, and August 26), 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](#).