



# UCCM NEWS

Sponsored by the Presbyterian Church USA, United Methodist, American Baptist, United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Unitarian Universalist denominations, and Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

## News and Thoughts from the Campus Minister

As you know, Covid-19 has upended ministry and much else at Stanford. The Office of Religious Life has suspended most of its operations. Students have been sent home for the Spring quarter and to maintain this distancing, campus communication takes place online.

Prior to the virus, when meetings were still face-to-face, the Episcopal Lutheran Campus Ministry (ELCM) at Stanford asked me to join their Bible study. At the start, they were not studying the scriptures directly but rather some important contemporary interdenominational background theology that shapes Bible study. We read and discussed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church. Now, Catholics and Lutherans have found that with respect to the doctrine of justification by faith, the two groups have become compatible. We see that what began as a difficult time of testing and turmoil that split the church 500 years ago is now catalyst for unanimity.

Fittingly, after the study of the Joint Declaration, the ECLM weekly Bible study then turned to the Epistle of James in the New Testament, which begins by addressing the experience of testing and turmoil: "... knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." (James 1:2-3) There appears at first glance to be no way to reflect upon Covid-19 with Jamesian optimism. We see its destruction and worry about the possible outcome. We fear death. We think of loved ones and chores unattended. What we can know or even imagine about possible enduring benefits of a deadly virus seems unfathomable. But James aims to open up the knowing process by telling us we need to know "...that the testing of [our] faith produces endurance, and those who realize endurance are said to be living in accord with a "law of liberty" (1:25, 2:12), which I take to a more flexible life-giving spiritual framework that is introduced via mutual interpersonal benevolence (shared love), which possibility can transform personal relationships and extends through the remainder of the epistle.

One bright spot at Stanford is that I am engaged with campus groups and individuals via Zoom. The novelty of ministry online is familiar territory for students, who will find it practical. The weekly ELCM Bible study, for example, is meeting via Zoom and will continue, as will a Sunday group, and one student has asked for a Zoom meeting after April 7 if at that time the Bay Area shelter-in-place order is not lifted. UCCM's supporting churches are going online so it will be easier for me to attend multiple services. The UCCM dinner now postponed until April 3 may be done (perhaps) by Zoom, all of us eating in front of our computers at home; we may have a better turnout this way, assuming everyone still has food in the cupboard. So as UCCM like the rest of the Stanford campus and the Bay area operates under Covid-19 restrictions, I cherish your prayers for students who face additional stresses as they manage an all-online format amidst the anxiety of the times.

Thank you for your continuing prayers and support.

Rev. Dr. Terry R. Mathis



## Thoughts From Abroad: Religious Community in the UK

For Winter Quarter I served as Stanford's Faculty in Residence at the Bing Overseas Studies Program here in Oxford. I am still here as Spring Quarter begins, having been caught in the whirlwind of travel restrictions and cancelled flights over the past few weeks, and I am now scheduled to return to the Bay Area in May. Like the Stanford students who study in Oxford, I was assigned to a college – the 511-year old Brasenose, where my status as a Visiting Fellow has given me access to meals, events, and the beautiful chapel where College Prayers (a regular church service) are held each Sunday evening during term time. Musical recitals are also held there regularly. I have enjoyed attending these events -- along with an Evensong at Salisbury Cathedral, which turned out to be the last one before the nationwide shelter-in-place guidelines (later rules) were announced by Boris Johnson on March 16.

The Brasenose Chapel is affiliated with the Church of England, whose refusal to perform same sex marriages I consider to be deeply wrong and backward. Many others in the College agree with me, and I can tell that the Chaplain herself is an ally. I appreciate her publicly expressed hope that this policy will change, as well as her willingness to listen and act as a go-between on this and other issues.

I have participated in College Prayers in Brasenose much as I have joined chants in a Zen Buddhist temple during a meditation retreat – as a way to understand and connect with the tradition that surrounds me. A Jewish colleague in Brasenose attends, but does not sing the hymns or voice the prayers. Much of the service here is familiar to me (although the sung Bible verses of Salisbury's Evensong are exotic). The student choir sings beautifully, and I feel a sense of belonging as I mingle with other churchgoers after Prayers. The easy conversations I have with the Chaplain and Music Director, the drinks, and the attitude that everything in the church is a work in progress, all add to my feeling of the chapel as a haven. Not an institution that demands anything from me, but a common place for spiritual and physical connection and dialogue. I find myself strangely missing all of that now, as we -- like those back home in California -- practice social distancing and gatherings of more than two people are prohibited until further notice.

Todd Davies is Associate Director and Lecturer in the Symbolic Systems Program <http://symsys.stanford.edu>



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## Exploring Partnerships

UCCM intends to partner with Evangelical Lutheran Campus Ministries to co-sponsor events, such as the weekly "Bread and Belonging" dinner and discussion at University Lutheran Church. This means that if either ELCM or UCCM wants to bring in a guest speaker, both can work together to share logistics and funding to make the event happen.

UCCM is going to coordinate with students in member churches to contact the LGBT Bible Study in Intersivity, to see if those students would be interested in forming a distinct organization on campus that would be denomination-less but providing an alternative vision of Christianity to dominant conservative student groups on campus. This organization would encourage its students to attend "Bread & Belonging" on Wednesdays, and the Ecumenical Bible Study on Thursdays, but otherwise would maintain their own calendar of activities. This group would be more service oriented, organized around weekly service activities such as jail ministries or helping those with shelter or food insecurities. They could also offer things like mission trips to travel to (for example) South American countries to build homes and such.

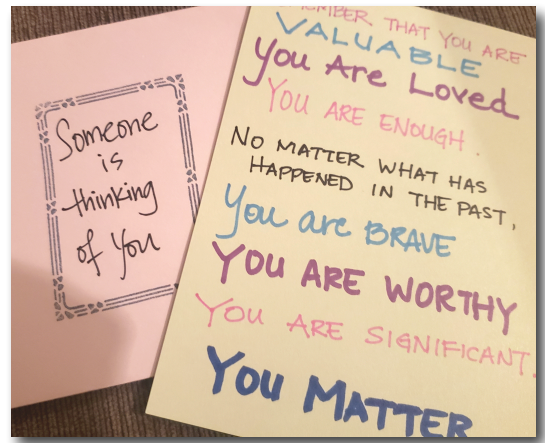
## SEEDS Street Outreach: Planting hope. Changing Lives.

Following packaging events reported in the last UCCM newsletter, SEEDS started delivering kits a few days ago, and plan to deliver about every 4 days. Santa Cruz is opening 4 homeless “crisis” sites, intended to be an entry point to get folks off the streets and into long term shelter, but we are not sure this situation is safe (or even available) for the kids, so it still appears there is no direct support for the homeless youth.

The video project is on hold because for obvious reasons - a production crew can't get out on the street right now, but I am chronicling as much as I can what is happening right now. Admittedly, now it's even a little more trickier due to the social distancing methodology and now delivery of the kits only from my car. I do get the sense from these folks they know something is wrong, but they have little access to accurate information. From the brief conversations I have had, they see the testing tents set up outside the medical clinics. They notice the change in the traffic patterns, especially at certain times of the day (and more than one peep has been confused on what time it is...). They notice there is basically no foot traffic in downtown Santa Cruz ALL day long. Someone asked me yesterday, “What's really going on because there's less and less people every day. I know this ain't no regular holiday.” They know there's something but they are still not aware of the full scope and magnitude of the situation. So, the “retired” English teacher in me gave our church's youth Pastor a homeschool assignment for the kids in our congregation and they worked as a team online to write a note sharing important information about how to stay safe. We are printing this and putting it in with each kit. And the kids are also making care cards and in the short term they are mailing those to me as they get done and I will include those as well in future kits.

UCCM is collaborating with SEEDS and hopes to engage college students in the SEEDS work. For more information about this ministry program visit the website: [www.myseeds.org](http://www.myseeds.org).

by Caryn Cranston



### Invitation to Alumni

UCCM recognizes a need to connect with Stanford alumni who participated in UCCM activities while they were students any time in the last 50 years. Did you attend “Bread and Belonging”? Ever sit at the UCCM table at the fall Activities Fair? Go on a Spring Break trip? We know you exist; please let us know who you are. We are especially seeking volunteers to contact other Stanford alumni having good memories of being part of UCCM. If you are one of these, please contact Terry Mathis

### UCCM Member Churches

Covenant Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto	First Baptist Church (American Baptist), Palo Alto	First Congregational United Church of Christ, Palo Alto
First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto	First United Methodist Church, Palo Alto	Foothills Congregational United Church of Christ, Los Altos
Ladera Community United Church of Christ, Ladera	Palo Alto Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)	Stone Church, San Jose
Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church, Sunnyvale	Valley Presbyterian Church, Portola Valley	Wesley United Methodist Church, Palo Alto
Woodside Road Methodist Church, Redwood City	and thanks to San Jose Presbytery	

## The Innocence Project and Legal Help for Prisoners

Paige Kaneb, the Supervising Attorney for the Northern California Innocence Project and Terry Mathis are collaborating on a possible event that would bring several different groups together to encourage synergism. These groups include our local *Youth Community Service* (YCS) that engages young people in meaningful service-based learning to build leadership and life skills to gain empathy for others while making a positive difference; *SEEDS*, the mission of which is to provide direct and immediate care to homeless and street youth; *Talking Peace* with Eric Butler, who has mediated conflicts on the ground in Oakland neighborhoods and schools, and has facilitated *Grief Circles* in response to homicide and extreme violence in Oakland area schools as part of Catholic Charities' crisis response program; *Fresh Lifelines for Youth* (FLY) that reaches out to at-risk teens in the San Jose and San Mateo areas; and *Homeboy Industries* which reaches out to gang members to welcome them into a community of mutual kinship, love, and a wide variety of services ranging from tattoo removal to anger management and parenting classes. Eric Sabelman has suggested that Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice would help with this, as could the Peninsula Peace and Justice Center. These groups might first meet at the Innocence Project Office, and then in the future (might) meet again at Stanford, and while all of this is merely envisioned at the moment, we welcome your prayers.

Terry continues to interact with the Stanford Law School to develop legal help for prisoners in California. In addition to his effort with Pelican Bay State Prison, he is now proposing a legal network that would stem from Stanford Law School through UCCM at Stanford to provide contact with chaplains in California prisons to offer legal aid to prisoners with viable cases. The deplorable living conditions in prison accelerate aging and eliminate the possibility of social distance and adequate medical treatment. We can only guess how Covid-19 will play out in the prisons. We pray for God's special grace for all those our culture has bound up in hopeless hellish places.

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## UCCM Board Welcomes Rev. Dr. Margaret Boles

Rev. Dr. Boles has served on the Boards of San Francisco Theological Seminary and the Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto. She has been Moderator of the Presbytery of San Jose, and for 5 years she was Campus Minister for Parish Based Campus Ministry, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas. She plans to contribute to UCCM's finance and outreach functions..

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