



# The Fellowship Post

Mira Vista  
United Church of Christ

September 2018

## Thirty Days and Counting . . . . or How Meditation Ruined My Life

by Bonnie Hariton (August 28, 2018)

Thirty-two days ago, when Rev. Melinda invited us on Sunday to consider how we structure our days, I had no idea that sitting in silence a few minutes each morning could upend my life. You are not really doing anything - right? Let me tell you how it went down. Following my friend Colleen Rodger's advice, I added an app called "Insight Timer" to my phone. I set the timer for twenty minutes, chose the "wood block" to strike three times to begin, and the Shürong gong to strike three times to end. I started on Monday.

The first twenty minutes of the first day went by. Right away the structure of my days was ruined. No more late night Korean dramas for me! I used to go to bed at midnight or one or three a.m. I woke up late, sometimes dreaming in Korean. But I would always try to water the garden before it gets too hot. For the sake of sitting before gardening, I was forced to go to bed earlier and wake up earlier. I must say, mornings in the garden are so sweet...

Another day went by. But sitting itself is a physical exercise that takes strength. So my lackadaisical style of taking one calcium supplement one day, and two another day, and skipping some days just wasn't right. My doctor thinks I am taking the recommended dose of



three a day! My vitamin taking regimen had to change. I have to tell you I am more consistent now: I want my back to be strong.

A couple days later I had another concern. The room where I sit to meditate, an extra bedroom, had a table and my ironing board and a chair piled high with rumpled linens. How could I sit calmly in that messy room with so much

neglected ironing? I had no choice: I spent two entire days ironing. Really. The table runner at the bottom of the stack had silver snowflakes on it. Once I got started, ironing wasn't too bad, and I put all the linens away neatly, and I could see out the bedroom window. But all was not well. I remembered another unattended pile: my IN box, filled with unopened letters and solicitations. I was surprised it only took two hours to go through.

Twenty minutes goes by quickly. But what about prayer? Our community prayer time on Sundays gathers our concerns and our joys for those we love and for the world at large. I wanted to be a person with a prayer list. So, on Insight, I added ten minutes and an interim bell, in order to regularly lift up people and places in prayer. I also hold a bracelet of prayer beads during that part of my practice. Each bead a prayer.

How do I meditate? First I open the window, settle into my chair, turn on my timer,

and close my eyes. Then I take about five breaths with a short inward breath and a long, open-mouthed, outward breath. I go back to breathing normally. I focus for a minute or two on what I hear, smell, and feel in the moment. Often I hear two different clocks ticking. I hear birds chirping. One day I could smell smoke from fires to the north. I feel my spine straightening. I think about what I need for the day: courage or energy or compassion. Then I focus on a phrase or mantra. Rev. Melinda has spoken several times this summer about "praying the Psalms." So I searched our Sunday bulletins for a phrase that resonated with me, and chose Psalm 25:4, the Spanish version. "*Señor, hazeme conocer tus caminos; muéstrame tus sendas.*" (Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.) I shortened it to tie in with breathing: Conocer (breathe in), tus caminos (breathe out). After twenty minutes, I take up my beads, and pray.

As if I hadn't cleaned up enough, after several more days of meditating I felt uncomfortable with the level of debt we are carrying. The thought came to me that my husband was bearing a disproportionate load on one particular loan. Only once or twice over the past ten years had I ever paid anything toward it, whereas I did have investments set aside in my name. Ruined! I could no longer keep all of that cash for myself. I called my financial advisors on Friday, they transferred a chunk to my checking account on Tuesday, and by Wednesday at the bank I had cut the loan down by a quarter and we came up with a plan for paying the rest. My dear long-suffering husband and I celebrated with lunch at a local restaurant. Where else am I not in right relationship, I wondered.

I swear to you that, while meditating, I am not thinking about Korean dramas versus bedtime or about vitamins or ironing or paperwork or finances. Those worries would come to me later in the day. It used to be I

could just ignore them! Now somehow I have time and energy to address them. In only a month, meditation has ruined my life as I knew it. I change. I am surprised. I am calm-ish! Who knows what will come next?

### **Creating *the GOOD table***

by Rev. Dr. Melinda V. McLain

***There is no such thing as a failed experiment, only experiments with unexpected outcomes.*** - R.

Buckminster Fuller

In August, we investigated another potential home for our café church, a former nursery in El Sobrante. While it was out of our target area, the purchase price was more in line with our budget and it presented some unique advantages. Sadly, an inspection by a commercial contractor and architect friend yielded the bad news that renovation would be way beyond our budgetary means. We would have to raise or borrow, or borrow then raise, about \$500,000 to make it work. And we would have to do it quickly in order to work within the seller's timeframe. The Council felt it was too risky, so we won't be presenting this potential property to the whole congregation.

It is becoming increasingly clear that finding a property of the right size in a location that would create a sustainable business may not be possible with our resources. In addition to the expensive price of real estate, construction costs have soared because contractors are in high demand. Between the building boom of the Bay Area and lots of projects in areas impacted by wildfires from the past few years, finding a good contractor - at any price - is a challenge. Cost for wood and steel have also risen about 25% due to punitive tariffs, making this a lousy time to buy and renovate property.

On Saturday, September 29th, from 10a - 3p, we will gather in El Sobrante at the home of

Pastor Melinda and Colleen Rodger to consider what alternative plans could fulfill our vision of a more community-based ministry that would be sustainable for Mira Vista UCC going forward.

Here are a few thoughts in no order of likelihood or preference. Would it be possible to partner with housing developers or other non-profits to create a café space as part of a mixed-use project? And if so, where and who? Could we develop a “non-locational” model of ministry that might combine a food truck and events in other spaces and create a “nomadic” way of being church? Or, finally, do we need to just be content with our current model of being church and find ways to use our saved funds to support other ministry initiatives?

We have learned enough in this process to write a book on the challenges of trying to make this particular vision possible in this particular place and time. And we have been blessed at every turn to receive expert help and advice from lawyers, chefs, planning officials, elected officials, business experts, and so many others.

I am deeply grateful for the courage and love of wanting to serve our community well that this congregation has embodied throughout this process. I look forward to what is next.

Love and many blessings,  
Melinda

### **Mira Vista Retreat**

Saturday, September 29, 10-3p

Colleen and Melinda's

in El Sobrante

Lunch will be provided

## **News from the Pews (and beyond!)**

Lots of pastoral transitions in our immediate area. **Rev. Kevin Omi's** last Sunday at **Sycamore Congregational** is September 16th. He has moved to Redwood City and will be serving Skyland Community UCC, Los Gatos as their intentional interim. **Rev. Tony Clark** is also departing **Arlington UCC, Kensington** to work in the national setting of the UCC in Cleveland, OH and finally, our friends here at **Christ Lutheran** have called a new settled pastor, the **Rev. Ruth Peterson**.

**Colleen Rodger** and **Pastor Melinda** will be taking a quick vacation in Sayulita, Mexico from Sept. 22 - 26 to celebrate their anniversary.

### *September Celebrations*

#### **Birthdays**

8<sup>th</sup> Carol Kiehn  
21<sup>st</sup> Iris Ridgway  
23<sup>rd</sup> Elisabeth Severson



#### **Anniversaries**

18<sup>th</sup> Joan Thompson and Ken Alborn  
20<sup>th</sup> Ruth Ann Clark and Ardith Hayes  
24<sup>th</sup> Melinda McLain and Colleen Rodger  
25<sup>th</sup> Kathe Kiehn and Heinz Lankford

*Best Wishes to each of you from  
Mira Vista!*

## Photos of Olivia in China



Visiting a Buddhist temple



Teaching a dance to the Chinese students for a school-wide assembly



Helping students with their English classes!



Pastor Melinda and Colleen Rodger with the Rev. Emanuel. Tom is wearing the stole we gave him on behalf of Mira Vista.



# Mira Vista United Church of Christ

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# 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
<b>2</b> 12 Noon Worship & Holy Communion, Social Action Team during La Mesa Live jazz w/ Amy Ukena and Hans Raag @El Cerrito Natural Grocery, 6-8:30p <i>FREE - invite your friends!</i>	<b>3</b> Mindfulness Circle, El Cerrito Royale, 7p  <b>LABOR DAY</b>	<b>4</b> Mira Vista prepares lunch, GRIP Souper Center, 10a 	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Community Office Hours with Pastor Melinda each Thursday @Catahoula Coffee, 2-5p  Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Rise for Climate March @San Francisco, 10a
<b>9</b> 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Council meeting, 7p	<b>13</b> Community office Hours, 2-5p  Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b> 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa  Live jazz w/ Amy Ukena and Hans Raag @El Cerrito Natural Grocery, 6-8:30p	<b>17</b> Mindfulness Circle, El Cerrito Royale, 7p	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Community office Hours, 2-5p  Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Pastor Melinda & Colleen on vacation through August 26 
<b>23</b> 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa 	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Interfaith Meditation @Sycamore UCC, 6p	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Mira Vista retreat, 10a-3p, Pastor Melinda & Colleen's, El Sobrante
<b>30</b> 12 Noon Worship followed by La Mesa						

# Our worship life together . . .

Join us on **Sundays at 12 noon** for our celebration with music and preaching, then stay for lunch because our worship continues as we share food and friendship together at our common table, **La Mesa**. Feel free to bring food to share as you are able. We celebrate the sacrament of **Holy Communion every First Sunday**. All are welcome at our table!

Sep 2	Slow, Slow, Quick <i>Social Action Team meets during La Mesa</i>	James 1: 17-22
Sep 9	Determined to Choose	James 2: 1-8
Sep 16	Wag the Tongue	James 3: 1-6
Sep 23	Mind the Children <i>Rev. Lois Mueller preaching</i>	Mark 9: 30-37
Sep 30	Praying Together	James 5: 13-16

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Address Change Requested

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