

Feb 8, 2009 (Rev. Martha Hodges)
Homily: “Mad About You: A Valentine”

Because we have so many people to honor today, I’ll keep this brief. But there are some important things to tell you, and they all boil down to this: There is no church I’d rather serve as minister, and no place I’d rather be than here with you. I can’t believe how lucky I am that you chose me to call as your minister

I’m fond of telling people that what I love most about you is your beautiful spirit. Here’s what I mean by that.

You are accepting – of one another and of me. No one here has to pretend to be other than they are. No one here is afraid to say, “I don’t know.” Or “I made a mistake.”

You’re forgiving. Sometimes at the end of the day, looking back at something I said or did or failed to say or do, I’ll think, “I can’t believe I said that!” But because I know that you don’t expect me to be perfect, I’m able to let it go.

You’re creative and strong and dependable.

You laugh at my jokes.

You may get tired and worried, but you never lose your hopefulness.

You tell me when I’ve done something that you like or appreciate as well as when I’ve done something not so great.

You know how to pick your battles and keep a sense of proportion.

Most of all, the feeling that “we’re all in this together” is so strong and pervasive. It runs through everything we do together. And it’s big enough to include everyone in that “we.” It includes people who aren’t members here, people you’ve never met. This is a radically welcoming church. You love this church, you love being here together and you want to open our doors and share our message, to share your spirit with one and all. This church home keeps its doors and its heart wide open. That is your gift to me, to each other, and to the world.

I love you very much. Happy Valentines Day.

Honoring Our Volunteers

Marge Piercy writes: We are made to be used... to engage in work that is real. Work that satisfies because it makes a difference in the world.

Your presence and your gifts of time and talent make a difference to this church. We are truly blessed to have so many who “move in the common rhythm when the food

must come in,” or the kitchen must be cleaned up or the altar decorated. People who submerge in the task of making decisions, handling our finances, planning for our future, teaching our children... who make this a community that worships and plays and learns together... people who don't begrudge their gifts of time but give it freely and lovingly and too often go unrecognized or insufficiently thanked.

Today is my chance to remedy that by publicly and sincerely thanking all of you who give your time, talent and love to this church by volunteering. By doing the work to keep this congregation not only running but thriving. You make it a joy to work with you as your minister.

We hear repeatedly what a friendly church we are. Our greeters and ushers and sharers of hospitality make our visitors feel at home here, not in a forced way but because you truly do want everyone to know they are welcome. I'd like especially to thank Frieda Fergus and Laura Osborne for being such loyal greeters, and I'd like to thank Sonia Duffoo and then Frieda for organizing the ushers and greeters until recently, when Laura took over that job. I also want to recognize our Membership Committee that works so hard to help us keep growing. I'd like to ask all those who work as ushers or greeters or who bring us refreshments and coffee and all those on the Membership Committee to stand and be recognized.

We are rightly proud of this building and the sacrifices that have gone into getting it. Even as we think about making our rent and the fact that we are rapidly outgrowing this space, we love being here. Gene Anderson is the one who makes sure that our altar is always beautiful and adds immeasurably to the aesthetic quality of our worship. Patrick Cody keeps us in essential supplies. The Décor Committee makes sure that our place is pleasing to the eye and the spirit. Would all those who prepare our altars, serve on the Décor Committee and otherwise help care for this building, please stand?

The heart of any church is its shared worship experience. I want to thank Jim Skow for being at the early service every week to provide the audio and visual parts of that service and for chairing our Worship Committee and Worship Associates. I also want to thank Lucy Bunch for chairing the committee until last fall and for continuing to coordinate our music. And of course I want to thank Loren Richmond who gives so much more than he is required to to make our worship a joyful, beautiful and rich experience every week. Would all those who serve on the Worship Committee, as Worship Associates, all those who provide special vocal or instrumental music and all those who have spoken here on my Sundays off please stand?

Our Religious Education program has grown in both numbers and quality since Paula Braxton came to join us, but she could not do any of her good work without all those who volunteer in our RE classrooms. I'd like especially to recognize Annette Emery, Chair of the RE Committee, Antonio Gonzalez and Candy Wood, who are teaching our OWL class, and Susan Lange, who even though new to UUCC, jumped right in and organized the Harry Potter book club, brought games and fun to the Halloween party, did such a great job with the Christmas pageant, and is about to help

launch our pre-K program. If you teach or help out with our children in any capacity, please stand and be recognized.

I'd like to thank Merry Walle and Terry DeCrescenzo for organizing our Action Auction and all those who contributed their time to that event, and Steve Baaken, Ernie Tomasilli, Richard Leimbach, Tom Rintoul, Jerry Melnick, Kurt Schmidt, Ken DeCrescenzo and the rest of the Men's Group for organizing our yard sale. Would all of you who have helped with special fundraising events please stand?

We have a brand new Pastoral Care Team. Would Jane Thompson, Teri McKown and the others who have volunteered to help out our members when they could use a little support now stand?

Our Committee on Ministry consists of Tom Rintoul, Celia Buckley and Jim Eastman. They meet with me once a month to provide feedback and give me their support. Would you please stand?

I want to thank Antonio Gonzalez and Julia Walle and the Justice Coordinating Team for getting our social justice efforts off to a good start this year. Would members of the JCT and everyone who contributed to our efforts to defeat Prop 8 please stand?

Our Operations Committee takes care of all the nuts and bolts of this place behind the scene: personnel matters, communications, care and use of the facility, and, it sometimes seems, everything else that doesn't belong to some other committee. I want to thank Alison Navas for so ably chairing that committee and Nancy Flagg for editing our newsletter and website. Another behind-the-scenes committee whose hard work is absolutely essential and often gets overlooked is the Finance Committee, chaired by John Sugar, and the Endowment Committee. I'd also like to thank Celia Buckley, retiring Chair of our Stewardship Canvass. Would Celia, the members of the Operations Committee, the Endowment Committee and the Finance Committee please stand?

Our Nominating Committee also works behind the scenes until it becomes time to elect our officers. Laura is the conscientious chair of that Committee. Our Board gives its blood sweat and tears to UUCC in the form of long hours, vision, innovative thinking, determination and dedication to our church's future. They are Marion Randall, president; John Sugar, vice-president; Richard Leimbach, secretary; Eric Walle, treasurer, and Patrick Cody, Wynne Skow and Sonia Duffoo, members at large. Would the members of the Nominating Committee and the Board please stand?

Finally, I want to offer a special thank you to two people who are the unsung heroes of UUCC. Laura Osborne was until recently Chair of the Operations Committee and active on the Board and Membership Committees. Even while taking a break from committee work, she continues to track our visitors and with her fantastic spreadsheet skills, present our newcomer and member statistics in ways that have gained the admiring attention of the rest of the District. Laura is the go-to person in so many ways, more than

I can name. When I have question about the way this church runs or don't know who I should ask about something, Laura is the one I turn to. Laura, thank you.

I want to thank another unsung hero, Eric Walle. Eric is currently our treasurer, which is no small challenge in these times, and was formerly Chair of Membership. More than that, Eric is the architect of our proposed new 4 Ministries model of doing things, that he has spoken to you about. He has a gift for seeing the big picture and fitting all the parts of the puzzle together. His innovative proposal that the Board will present to you on March 22 has also gained the attention of the PCD. And we can't forget his genius for setting new lyrics to old tunes. Eric, thank you.

And to all of you, including especially those I inevitably omitted to recognize, thank you!