

Go Tell It on the Mountain

January 2017 Newsletter

Skyland Community Church

Rev. Stephen Glauz-Todrank

10:30 Sunday Service

Church phone: 408-353-1310

Minister's Letter

New Year Challenge: Keep Humor in Struggle



Dear Skyland Friends,

Happy New Year! All the world seems to be waiting to see what this year will bring. It is impossible to imagine a greater change in our government than the one we will be enacting shortly. I believe it is important for us as a church community to examine our values and remember our rights and duties as citizens and be sure that we are clear about communicating what we stand for into the community; local, state national and as world citizens.

I believe we are at a critical moment in the history of the world and as citizens on a fragile planet. I believe there is a place for unconditional love and acting for human rights, wealth redistribution, access to medical care, and slowing climate change among many other issues. I also hope there is a place for humor and light-heartedness in the midst of all the high stakes drama. Can we work more vigorously for peace and justice and still enjoy life and laughter? Maybe that is where faith comes in. This is a test, a big test and part of passing it is the spirit that we bring to the work. If it is based in cynicism or despair, we have already failed. If we can find God's love in there somewhere and live it out as we work with smiles and good spirit, we will be on our way.

Speaking of politics, our church's annual meeting will take place after worship on the 29th. During that time we will receive reports from boards and committees as well as our beloved treasurer, Gerald Alonzo, and elect a slate of new officers and board and committee members. This power is part of our heritage as a free church where the members each have a



Miss Hipps's 1st grade class, 5th Ave. Elementary school, Huntsville, AL, 1960 - three years before it was desegregated.

Life as a Privileged White

(This is the first article of a series on the experiences of white privilege related by members of the Skyland discussion group on that topic. The group meets monthly as part of a UCC initiative on white progress. Other articles on this topic are welcome for future newsletters.)

By Shannon Edwards

When I was 7 I learned that I was white, and as a result I had a different life.

I was born and raised in Huntsville, AL. One of my earliest memories was in second grade, being walked up the steps of Fifth Ave. Elementary School by my mom, who said to the National Guard sent by George Wallace to block the doors, "We'll go to school together, blacks and whites together."

She was raising five kids born in five years, and finding that balance was not easy for her. She really wanted me to be one of the first whites to integrate Tuskegee University, but I turned her down; finding a way to live in a diverse world back then was not easy for me either.

Being a person of white privilege who has traveled the world, I now ask myself, "How can I make my country more inclusive, a place for ALL Americans to call home?" How can I help?

I have gone to peace marches at the City Hall in San Jose with



vote to guide us on the way forward.

This particular meeting will not be as controversial as the machinations of our federal government, but we draw from the same inspiration of mutual rights and responsibilities and spreading the power around as much as possible. I hope you will join us. Maybe our little exercise in civic and religious polity will be a model for others.

Prayerfully,
Stephen

PS Thank you so much for the Christmas gift certificates for books from Bookshop Santa Cruz and food from one of our favorites spots in Santa Cruz. Wonderful food for mind and body. Thankful hugs to all!

Annual Meeting Dec. 29 after service

The Skyland annual meeting will be held Sunday, Jan. 29, in the sanctuary after church service.

Members will elect new church officers, as well as board and committee members. Treasurer Gerry Alonzo will give the financial report, and the church boards and committees will present their annual reports.

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UCC Leader Describes Ways to Experience White Privilege

What is "white privilege," and how do we experience it? John Dorhauer, the general minister and president of the United Church of Christ, offers some practical suggestions for experiencing this phenomenon in the curriculum on white privilege provided by the UCC. (His article is on page 30 of the curriculum, which is available online [here](#).)

The piece describes situations in which the Rev. Dorhauer realizes his own failure to experience white privilege for what it is: a process in which white-skinned people are catered to by their social environment. He does not, for instance, normally notice, when he goes into a grocery store, that the products are chosen by white people for white palates. He can be sure

young Latinos looking to help their community; In Costco I spoke to a woman wearing a headscarf, told her I was sorry that my country was scapegoating immigrants and asked if she were afraid to be living here now. She said, "No, I'm running for City office next year. Here's my card if you want to help me."

Skyland Church's UCC curriculum on white privilege is a great way for us to get to know each other while exploring an important social issue. Connections count. Here's to connecting more and sharing our stories.

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Second White Privilege Meeting Jan. 15 in Whitaker

By Chelsea Page Collonge

Our second discussion using the new United Church of Christ white privilege curriculum will be on Jan. 15 after worship. All are welcome! If you need a copy of the UCC curriculum, we can email it to you. It's also available online, [here](#).

If you are not sure what white privilege is or whether discussing it is for you, I invite you to check out this neat 1-minute video called "White Privilege Goggles" for some speedy insight. Click [here](#) to see it. Also check out Cliff's and Shannon's articles above and below - they show how fruitful our first discussion was. The lens of "white privilege" can help us understand some ways in which "race" is still an important part of our identities and affects our approach to racial justice.

On Jan. 15, we will begin our discussion with a celebration of Martin Luther King, and then share stories of when we noticed



white-skin privilege affecting a situation we were in or were observing.

Our General Minister of the United Church of Christ, Rev. John Dorhauer, invites us to practice noticing whiteness more in our daily lives. He says, "If you are white, try to say to yourself, even in some of the more routine aspects of your life, 'This happened to me

because I am white.' When walking down the street, watch how people react to you and ask yourself "Would that have gone differently if I were not white?"

Come to share, or come just to listen. We will meet again in February and March.

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White Skin Recent Human Feature

"White privilege," as approached by the United Churches of Christ, is simply privilege for white people: a pervasive environment in which customs and laws combine to smooth the existential path of white-skinned people at the expense of those with differently colored skins.

Many of us have yet to recognize the concept of White Privilege, or even think much about ourselves as whites (except when filling out

that when he goes to a barbershop, his hair will be cut by someone who knows white styles.

His list can easily be turned into simple exercises that reveal white privilege in action. They show not racist acts, but instead the operation of a process in which a whole society conspires to make life easier for white people.

Just walk down the street, for instance, and notice how many white people you see. Go into a store, and notice whether the products are designed for white lives. Are the clerks white or people of color? In a grocery, is the food chosen for white palates (except for the special, segregated "ethnic" section)? Go to a movie; are the actors mostly white? Talk to a police officer; is s/he pleasant?

In our time, these environments are changing; but they are still dominant. We can all find enough examples to show that white privilege does, indeed, exist, and in fact flourishes. "Whiteness," says Rev. Dorhauer, "is part of the air I breathe." And we all inhale it.

-- CB

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Altar Flowers

The 2017 calendar is on the Whitaker Hall bulletin board. Please sign up for as many Sundays as you like.



*Autumn rains herald
December's surprise visit:
amaryllis flame.*

~ haiku by John Heyes

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forms).

I am among the latter, in that I have always been aware of white privilege but careless of my own part in it; and having the question raised this way led me to wonder how whiteness came about, and how we acquired this privilege.

It turns out, according to the invaluable Wikipedia, that white skin is an astonishingly recent phenomenon. For most of human history, people have been dark-skinned. Humans - the genus *Homo* - originated 2.6 million years ago in Africa, and populated the rest of the world between 80,000 and 50,000 years ago through the largest of several migrations.



Polar map of human migration.

The first *Homo sapiens* had already appeared, some 200,000 years ago, at the beginning of the Paleolithic age of hunter-gatherers. They were dark-skinned. There were several human species in Africa then, some of which joined the eventual exodus; but only *Homo sapiens* survived into the agricultural Neolithic.

The dark skin of these African migrants contained melanin, which protects the body against ultra-violet rays, but in the process also inhibits the synthesis of Vitamin D in the body. Vitamin D regulates the absorption of calcium and promotes growth of bones and teeth.

People living in northern latitudes often don't get enough UV to synthesize vitamin D in their skin, so natural selection has favored two genetic solutions to that problem - evolving pale skin that absorbs UV more efficiently, and favoring lactose tolerance to be able to digest the sugars and vitamin D naturally found in milk.

The first lightskins in Europe were a mix of three tribes of hunter/gatherers who arrived from what are now the Balkans and southeast Europe and the Near East some 8,000 years ago. (Today's refugee migrations are following much the same route). A mix of two genes that selected for light skin eventually turned most of Europe into a white enclave.

So then, whence came "white privilege"? It's probably a product of the most recent millennium - or even the last couple of hundred years.

White skin first became a sign of high social class as a result of poor people working outdoors and being burned by the sun, while upper classes stayed indoors. Women eventually began using lead-based cosmetics - a dangerous practice leading to lead poisoning - to whiten their skin artificially.

The practice continues to this day, although normally without lead. A Google search on



Meditation Moment



Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

-- I John 4: 7 & 8

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"skin whiteners" retrieves nearly half a million hits. It's a multi-billion dollar business, which operates globally but flourishes particularly in Asia.

Shiseido White Lucent: \$52 at Macy's

Colonialism and slavery contributed to the belief that dark-skinned people were inferior to the light-skinned upper classes. Europe's industrial revolution concentrated wealth and power in the hands of whites, an environment that fostered a sense of privilege, in both people with it, and those without it. So, in a sense, a genetic solution to vitamin D deficiency has become a global social issue.

-- CB

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Mission Board Spotlight

On Jan. 8, we will have our annual special collection for students we support in India, Fiji, and Guatemala. Please view the photographs of these students displayed in Whitaker Hall.

Chelsea eager to visit Skyland members homes

Chelsea Page, our new intern, will be in the area every Sunday and Monday. She would love to spend more time with church members in their homes; please call her at 209-728-8271 and make an appointment.

Facts about Chelsea: Her full name is Chelsea Page Collonge, and she is one of seven siblings. She is in her last semester at the Pacific School of Religion, where this spring she will be studying biblical Hebrew and Greek.

Deacons Jeri Tjon, Julie Victorine, Jeremy Cole, and Gina Adams will meet with Chelsea regularly to talk with her about her internship.

-- Jeremy Cole

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NOTE from your treasurer:

Thanks to a pledge increase, our pledge income is almost on a par with original commitments for first seven months of our fiscal year. If you are able, please attempt to keep your pledge gifts current.

Thanks for your generous support to our local outreach programs:

* \$1,732 was donated for blankets to Church World Service.

* \$1381 is the final total donated to our Giving Tree program to help our local neighbors needing assistance this Christmas season.

* \$4197 was given to NCNC as part of our budgeted Our Share giving to UCC.

We are now able to accept credit card payments for pledge, general and special offerings if that is more convenient than check or cash. See either Jan or myself after service for these transactions.

Here are our operating finances for December 2016 as of Dec. 29.

Summary of Operating Finances				
December 2016		Jun 1, 2016 to Dec 29		
	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned
Income	\$ 23,937	\$ 25,801	\$133,232	\$130,518
Expenses	\$ 25,561	\$ 25,947	\$119,613	\$121,125
Net	\$ (-1,624)	\$ (-146)	\$ 13,619	\$ 9,393

-- Gerald J. Alonzo, Treasurer

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