



# THRESHOLD

*C'mon In!!*

## *Pastor's Message*

Dear Church Family,

What a blessing our first month as Open Door United Methodist Church has been! It has been a great joy to be living into the vision we dreamed of for so long. This summer has been full of historic firsts for the new church – our first worship service, our first class of new members and now our first newsletter for Open Door! *The Threshold* is like a hometown newspaper. It's a forum to stay connected to what's happening at church, provide content for spiritual reflection and to share news of our faith community. Abiding thanks for our editor Janet Sowers, and to all the volunteers and contributors!

During worship this month we will focus on something that unites us all – our heritage as Methodists. We will take a look at some of the principles of what it means to be United Methodist in the context of John Wesley's three simple rules for Christian living – do no harm, do good, stay in love with God.

In this series we are reminded that United Methodists...

- Depend on God's grace.
- Are a Biblical people.
- Are a Priesthood of all believers.
- Are a worshipping people.
- Are a witnessing people.
- Are a connected people.

Join us in worship as we reconnect to our roots and deepen our connection to one another through Jesus the Christ.

Blessings,  
Pastor Mariah



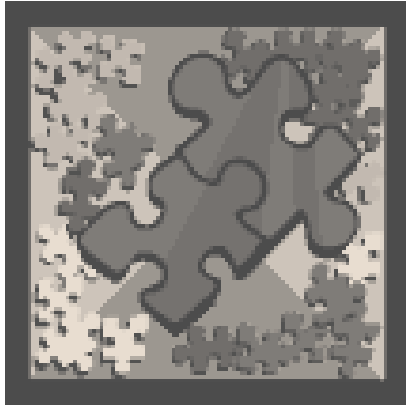
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THRESHOLD is published bi-monthly by the Open Door United Methodist Church of Richmond, California.

Please submit material by September 20 for the October-November issue, to Janet Sowers, at [JMSowers@aol.com](mailto:JMSowers@aol.com).

To be added or removed from our e-mail list, or to change delivery type (electronic vs. paper), please contact us at 510-525-3500, or [opendoorumc.office@gmail.com](mailto:opendoorumc.office@gmail.com).



## Looking Out...Looking In

Well, here it is. Our first issue of **THRESHOLD**, the newsletter of the Open Door United Methodist Church of Richmond, California. The name "Threshold" was chosen (over many other worthy suggestions) as a symbol of the way we see this church and the function of the newsletter. We each cross the threshold on the way coming in, and on the way going out. "Looking in" we see our beautiful and historical building, our church family, and our inner selves. Here we nurture our spirits and our relationship with God.

**GSUMC + ECUMC + ❤️ = ODUMC!**

All are welcome to come through this open door and join us here as we look inward. "Looking out" we see our community, our jobs, families, friends, the world. After we cross the threshold on the way out, we seek ways to serve and to open doors for all people. The newsletter hopes to capture both the comings and the goings of ODUMC.

Threshold will be published every two months, arriving at your In-Box or Mailbox around the first of every even-numbered month (Feb , April , June , August , October , and December .) Pastor Mariah will lead off each issue with a letter to the congregation sharing her perspectives on where we are and where we are heading. In this issue we are pleased to have Anne Santoro, a regular contributor to ECUMC's Viewpoints, continue to share her spiritual journey and insights with us. Musician Deb McCaffrey begins a column on the songs we sing in worship, their history and meaning. Our church is blessed to have three seminary students, and Chris Hockle leads off a series of student essays.

We are seeking additional contributors who can bring in the news or write thoughtful or informative articles. The addition of a "member news" column, missing from this issue, is a goal for the October issue. Both Good Shepherd and El Cerrito congregations have beloved members who have retired or moved on, who we want to keep touch with and share news with. Please send any contributions to me at [JMSowers@aol.com](mailto:JMSowers@aol.com). Here's to an exciting future!

-Janet Sowers

## Upcoming Events

### United Methodist Women

All women invited to come to the first UMW meeting after our summer recess. It will be on Wednesday, September 4, 2013, at 2 p.m. in Friendship Hall. We will have a short program, then a business meeting.

Tea and light refreshments will be provided after the meeting for a chance to socialize. If anyone is unable to attend during the day and would like to set up an evening circle, please contact Shelia at 237-4012 or [sc345@juno.com](mailto:sc345@juno.com).



Thanks, Shelia

## August & September Worship Calendar

SUNDAY, August 4<sup>th</sup> 10am  
Worship, Communion & Fellowship  
John Wesley's 3 Simple Rules  
Preacher: Pastor Mariah  
Worship Assistant Pat Y.

SUNDAY, August 11<sup>th</sup> 10am  
Worship, Godly Play & Fellowship  
John Wesley's 3 Simple Rules: Do No Harm  
Preacher: Pastor Mariah  
Worship Assistant Anne S.

SUNDAY, August 18<sup>th</sup> -5pm  
Evening Worship & Potluck  
John Wesley's 3 Simple Rules: Do Good  
Preacher: Pastor Mariah  
Worship Assistant: Shelia

SUNDAY, August 25<sup>th</sup> -10am  
Worship & Fellowship  
John Wesley's 3 Simple Rules: Stay in Love  
with God  
Preacher: Pastor Mariah  
Worship Assistant: Meredith

MONDAY, September 2nd -5pm  
Worship, Communion & Labor Day Picnic  
Preacher: Pastor Mariah  
Worship Assistant: Nicole



SUNDAY, September 8<sup>th</sup> -10am  
Worship, Godly Play & Fellowship  
Preacher: Pastor Mariah

SUNDAY, September 15<sup>th</sup> -10am  
Worship & Fellowship  
Preacher: Pastor Mariah

Sunday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> -10am  
Worship & Fellowship  
Preacher: Pastor Mariah

Sunday, September 29<sup>th</sup> -10am  
Worship & Fellowship  
Preacher: Pastor Mariah



### Children's Ministry Meeting

Our children's ministry program is growing! Join us after church on Sunday, August 11st for a conversation about children's ministry in the year to come including Godly Play and special events.

## Open Door News

### WELCOME NEW STAFF!!

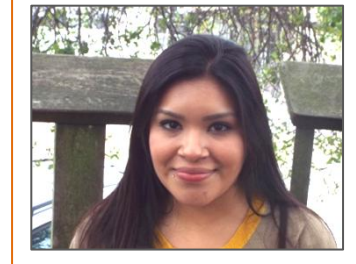
#### Church Administrator – Barbara Arriaga

Barbara will be in the office Tuesdays-Fridays from 9am-2pm. Her email address is [opendoorumc.office@gmail.com](mailto:opendoorumc.office@gmail.com)



#### Child Care Provider - Erika Cortes.

Erika Cortes is our new Assistant Child Care Provider. Erika lives in Richmond, is a student at Berkeley City College, and hopes to be a pediatric nurse someday. She comes to us with extensive child care experience and a great love for children. For fun, Erika likes to dance and to go places like the zoo. She joins Adriana Ruiz in caring for our kids on Sunday mornings.



### CHURCH CONTACT INFORMATION

Open Door United Methodist Church  
6226 Arlington Blvd.  
Richmond, CA 94805  
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[www.opendoorumc.org](http://www.opendoorumc.org)

Pastor Mariah's new email: [mftollgaard.opendoorumc@gmail.com](mailto:mftollgaard.opendoorumc@gmail.com)

Church office email: [opendoorumc.office@gmail.com](mailto:opendoorumc.office@gmail.com)

### BUILDING UPDATES

Summer projects continue throughout the church. The Trustees are working to update the sanctuary, friendship hall and the church office. Expect to see new carpet, paint, furniture among other aesthetic changes as we seek to make the space reflect our new identity as Open Door UMC.

### RELAY FOR LIFE A HUGE SUCCESS!

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Relay for Life last weekend! Our team raised over \$1,600 to support the American Cancer Society's work to cure cancer. Over 20 luminarias were lit in honor or memory of individuals named by our church. Thank you to all who walked and donated.



## Listening Through the Cracks

by Deb McCaffrey

How do you get a chemist, a pilot, and a veterinarian in the same room together? This may sound like the start of a bad joke (which I'm quite fond of), but in this case, I'm being completely serious. The answer? Put out a set of handbells. I was a part of several music groups during the four years I was at Purdue and I always appreciated that music could bring people together from all different vocations. It helps give a face to the nameless accountant who does your taxes or the radio host you only know by sound. It provides a common ground for people to relate to each other and creates a sense of community. Is this starting to sound familiar yet? A church congregation is similar in that regard. In my mind, the two are inextricably linked.

John Wesley understood this. If you look at the beginning of the hymnal (in the no musician's land of musicless words), you'll find his "Directions for Singing." Briefly, they are: learn these songs first, sing them as written, sing everything, sing enthusiastically, sing modestly, sing in time, and sing spiritually. We might not follow all of these very closely (\*cough\* number two \*cough\*), but they are good to keep in mind. Personally, the one I find hardest is sing spiritually. He describes this as singing for God and not yourself. I interpret this as mean what you sing. Don't just sing the words on the page, think about what the words are saying. I think John Wesley must have had some training as well, because this is the mark of a good singer in general. Being an instrumentalist at heart, I usually care more about the sounds I'm making than the words I'm saying, so I struggle with this.

What I plan to do with this column is spend some time talking about the history or meaning of various songs. Hopefully, with some insight into the songs, it will be easier to experience the music spiritually, special music included. After all, you can't have a performance without an audience. Next Sunday, as you're waiting for the service to start, I challenge you to read through the songs like you would a book. The punctuation is included on purpose. Give it a good ponder, then sing lustily and with good courage!

Before I go, I have one final question: What is the difference between the first and second violins? Two beats and a half step.

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*Editor's Note: Deb is a member of the ODUMC Chancel Choir, Praise Band, and Bells Cerrito. Watch for Deb's column as a regular feature in upcoming issues of Threshold! And listen for the new Wind Quartet, with Deb on oboe, at Sunday morning worship.*

# This I Believe

by Chris Hockley

As a seminary student I am often asked to write about my beliefs and I spend page after page writing my theology. So when I was asked to write an essay in the style of NPR's "This I Believe" a couple of years ago I thought it would be a snap. For those unfamiliar with "This I Believe" it was a series of 350-500 word essays written by ordinary people expressing something that they believed. What I found was by being this brief it forced me to really think about the belief I wanted to talk about. It made me rethink how we talk about faith and help me put into words a belief that I had not had much opportunity to write about.

"I believe that creativity is a spiritual act. Creativity is at heart of the universe we live in. Too often we think about the universe we live in as being a dead and lifeless machine, but that is not the case. Science shows us this; if you leave elements alone long enough they will combine and create all kinds of things.

The act of creativity connects us. It certainly connects artist with those who view the result of the creativity but I think that it goes much deeper than that. When we are creative we connect with the very world around us and with the source of all.

This view has changed the way I see things; as the seasons change it is more than just something that happens each year. It is instead creativity at work. I see the process of creation happening right in front of me.

God did not just create at some time in the past. Instead creation is continually happening around us. God has created, is creating and will create. So as God creates it gives us the opportunity to use our gift of creativity to be active co-creators of a more just, loving and caring world.

It is through this spiritual act of creativity that we will better our world. When we look at the world we can see that the same old solutions that we have been trying to use for years simply are not working. The good news is that when we see creativity as a spiritual act it allows us to create new solutions to the problems facing us and future generations. It allows us to be at the work of bettering the world with God, side by side with our creator. It allows us to more fully be honest when we pray "your will be done." The opportunity to use our passion to help God's kingdom come excites





me and gives me reason for much hope.”

After I had written this I shared it with a group who had all written their own and what I found was while I really learned a lot from writing mine I learned even more from hearing other people’s essays. I heard deep truths about my beliefs from others written their essays. Sharing faith with one another can be such a deep experience and is an important one as we share this wonderful journey with one another.

## Yes, We Love Jesus, but what about the Father?



When people refer to Jesus, it’s usually in terms like sweet and kind and benevolent. He championed the underdogs of his day; he healed sick and tormented souls. He fed 5,000 people from 2 loaves of bread and 5 fish. This, and more, is all undeniably true, but let’s remember that Jesus is the son of God. I’ve noticed that people think the God of the Old Testament (OT) an old grouchy, demanding, stern taskmaster, much too severe for our day and age. Who needs the OT when we have the New Testament (NT)? Jesus has such appeal for us because he was human, and we can relate to him.

Let’s not forget that Jesus had quite a temper. Remember the scene in the temple (Matthew 21:12) where he turns over tables and chairs, and throws the moneylenders out? In Luke (2:48-50), after having searched all over for him, his parents and siblings find Jesus in the temple. When Mary asks him why he has treated them this way, their being so sick with worry, Jesus rebukes her for not understanding that he was “going about my Father’s business.” In Mark (3:31-35), Jesus pretty much disowns his family saying, “Who is my brethren?” Clearly, Jesus got testy. He even chewed out his apostles on occasion. So, a mild, gentle Jesus is not the whole story. We may be forgetting the human side of Jesus.

Yet, he is the son of the Father. In the OT, God was so fed up with His creation he caused a flood in order to start over again, saving only those in Noah’s ark. God becomes angry when we disobey His laws. Jesus angers when His apostles show a lack of faith. God the Father will test our faith, for sure. Poor Job! And don’t forget Abraham, who almost sacrificed his son for God. We know our God is a jealous God who can wreak havoc on those who don’t obey Him (Exodus 20:5). It is unsettling to us that God does these things. The OT is perceived as dark and gloomy and stern whereas the NT is perceived as more loving because of Jesus’ presence. So, we go with Jesus.

We must remember that Jesus' message is always about the Father. In Matthew (5:16 and 5:48 respectively), He advises glorifying the Father and being perfect like the Father. How do we do that? By obeying God's commandments. God will show love and mercy to those who love Him (Exodus 20:6). Just because His laws aren't mentioned verbatim in the NT doesn't mean they don't exist anymore. We can't throw out the OT for the NT, because those old Jewish laws are the foundation for the NT. In Mark (10:45), Jesus says "the Son of man came to minister." Jesus refers to Moses as having written of Him (John 5:46). In the Sermon on the Mount after preaching the beatitudes Jesus says the Lord's Prayer, a prayer to the Father of all creation. Jesus says the way to the Father is through Him (John 14:6).

When Jesus says, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God," (Matthew 6:33), I interpret this as: put God first. Paul changed this. He wiped away the old Mosaic laws, saying we didn't need them. No one obeyed them anyway. What is important is faith (Romans 3:28). We don't need laws written in stone. Jesus died for us, to wipe the slate clean of our sins. All we have to do is believe in Jesus as our savior. In Mark (12:28-31) when a scribe asks Jesus, "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus says "to love the Lord with all thy heart" ... and secondly, "to love thy neighbor as thyself." These 2 laws seem to have supplanted the OT laws. Yet, we find these very same laws stated in Deuteronomy (6:4-5). Back to the OT! Through Jesus, there is continuity between the old and the new. That is because He takes us back to the Father. Jesus doesn't let us off easy. He emphasizes striving to be perfect (Matthew 5:48). This takes effort. It implies that in the process, one undergoes an inner transformation. Many people who believe in Jesus and regularly attend church, behave in a most unchristian manner. Where is the transformation? Even Jesus' brother James says "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

Let's remember that, all sturm and drang\* aside, we are choosing the Father when we choose Jesus. Jesus does say that He and the Father are one (John 10:30). I think it important to pray to the fear-inspiring God of the OT as well as to pray to His son in the NT. Our souls are nourished by both (John 15:1). The vine extends from God the Father, to Jesus, to us, and then back to God. We have the "Father in creation, and the Son in redemption."

Anne Louise Santoro

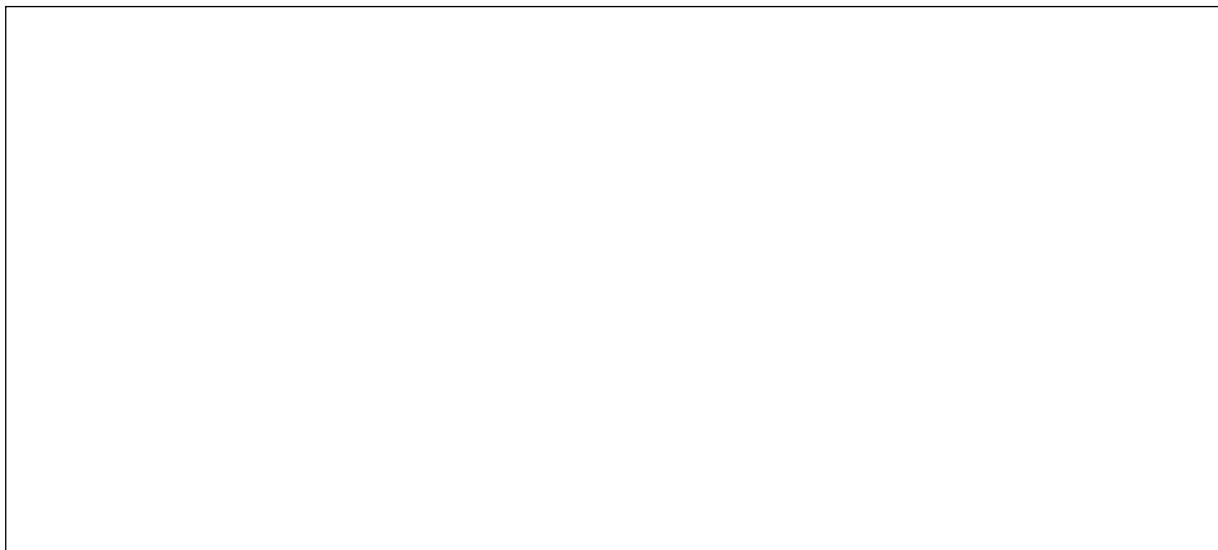
*\*a phrase used in German romance literature for conflict, passion, and thunder.*



## THRESHOLD

Open Door United Methodist Church  
6226 Arlington Blvd.  
Richmond, CA

Dated Material: August 4, 2013



Sunday Schedule:  
Worship: 10 am

**Contact us!** [www.opendoorumc.org](http://www.opendoorumc.org) Office (510) 525-3500

Ministers	Everyone
Pastor	Rev. Mariah Furness Tollgaard
Director of Choir & Bell Choir	Evan Alparone
Organist	Evan Alparone
Threshold Editor	Janet Sowers
Threshold Publisher	Thair Higgins, Marge Elliot
District Superintendent	Renae Extrum-Fernandez
Bishop	Warner H. Brown, Jr.



Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.

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