

Shared Life

April 2008 – *Shared Life* of Old First

Rev. Leslie Veen to Preach Here on April 6

While Pastor Maggi and many of our congregation are at the Retreat, our guest preacher on April 6 will be the Rev. Leslie Veen, Director of Vocational Formation and Placement at San Francisco Theological Seminary. Leslie, a 2005 graduate of SFTS, is fondly remembered at Old First from her stint as our seminary intern a few years ago.

Adult Education Classes – *Munro Room, 9:30 am*

In the March 30 class, you can learn what prompted the composition of some of your favorite hymns. On April 6 guest preacher Leslie Veen will lead a discussion of the day's lectionary passages.

On April 13 we'll begin one of the excellent Kerygma studies, on just about everybody's favorite book of the Bible – Psalms. The series is called "Passion, Promise and Praise." Classes will be held April 13, 20 and 27; May 4, 18 and 25; and June 1. The Rev. Don Griggs, author of the study, will be here to teach one or two classes in May.

On May 11, Pentecost, Steve Taber will show and talk about some of the art from all over the world that depicts the powerful descent of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples.

Old First's 159th Birthday Celebration, May 25

We'll celebrate our 159th birthday on Sunday, May 25, with an Ethnic Potluck Luncheon after the worship service. Think about what you can bring from your own tradition or someone else's (like the neighborhood deli's). Watch for more details.

Clerk's Corner

Jeanne Kirkwood, Clerk of Session (note: MSC means "Moved, seconded, carried")

Session met on February 26, 2008 and with the following action

items:

Worship committee proposed that the celebration of the Lord's Supper on the first and third Sunday of each month for 2008 and in addition, Maundy Thursday, Easter Sunday, Christmas Eve, Church retreats and other services approved by the Worship Committee, per W-2.4012.a. be approved. MSC

The President of the Corporation proposed that the Shared Equity Loan Agreement with Rev. Maggi Henderson be approved and direct that the President execute it for Old First. MSC. Pastor Maggi has a new home in The City!

Membership report: Remove Margie Baygell from active rolls per her request; Transfer Gina France to inactive roll per her request; Transfer Esther Kim & Jonathan Lee to Lafayette-Orinda (CA) PC; Remove Rex Sigafos

from rolls, due to no response. Victoria McCormack passed away on February 13, 2008.

Pastor's Letter

As I write this it is Holy Week, and the Easter Sunday has yet to arrive. But I know that it will soon be here with great excitement and trumpets, lilies will grace the sanctuary, folks will come dressed in their brightest and best and we will say together those words echoed for thousands of years "He is Risen, He is Risen Indeed".

But as my friend Kim Clayton once wrote,

"But Monday will come again. The day after Easter -- and we will have to go back to our daily lives, and go to work and go the grocery store (or Walgreens) again. I'll walk past the drooping lilies and discarded bulletins.

"Even the first disciples, you may recall, eventually went back to their boats and fishing nets. It was up to them, just as it is up to us, to figure out what the resurrection means, what difference it makes in our daily lives the day after, the month or millennium after its glorious appearance.

"This is the deep calling of our faith. To integrate the good and disturbing new of Christ's death and resurrection into our lives, so that the usual routines and responsibilities are somehow different, transformed by Easter. After all, if we live in awareness that death does not have the last word -- then there really can be new things to say."

The challenge and the privilege for us is to be not Easter people just one day but all year long, to speak/reflect in our words and actions each day "He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!"

Peace,
Pastor Maggi

Forrest and Pat to be honored at April 20 Coffee Hour

Forrest Cummings and Pat Devine have been at Old First since 1996. Now that they have moved to Rossmoor in Walnut Creek, they will be giving up the long BART trek on Sunday morning and will attend Grace Presbyterian, much closer to their home. Their last day with us will be April 20, and we'll honor them at Coffee Hour. A very special goodbye card will be available for your signature earlier in April.

Pat and Forrest have long been devoted to their monthly worship service visits at Central Gardens Convalescent Home. They leave us with another fine

legacy – the Peace and Justice Committee, which provides delicious Fair Trade products along with the interpretation of the work of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program.

Mary Russell says, “What a blessing Pat and Forrest have been to Old First! Forrest came here first. He always sat near my usual spot so we had the opportunity to get to know one another; he sat with a friend who was hard of hearing and had to be near the front.

“Forrest devoted many long hours to his ministry at the Ambassador Hotel in the Tenderloin, whose tenants at that time were all people with AIDS. In his retirement, he also had the time and energy to work at Avis where he provided a wonderful outreach ministry to other employees who could depend on his caring and sympathetic listening.

“Many years ago in Chicago, Forrest had the strength and commitment to demit his ordination over McCormick Seminary’s refusal to convert some apartment buildings they owned into much needed low-income housing. At Old First he found the strength of faith to accomplish his re-ordination, and served as one of our Parish Associates for a number of years.”

Jazz Vespers, First Sundays, 5:00 pm

April 6 – Gerry Grosz Quartet

Welcome to New Members Received on March 23

Robin Currier grew up in Maine and was baptized as a Methodist. He’s been in San Francisco for 16 years, working for much of that time for the Brown & Toland Medical Group. Although he had been away from the church for many years, he began attending Old First several years ago with his partner Bryan Nichols, and is now serving in the usher corps. He joins by Reaffirmation of Faith.

Priscilla Yu first attended Old First as a member of the high school youth group. **George Yu**, who attended mission schools in China as a child, was baptized at First Presbyterian in Berkeley. George and Priscilla met when both were students at UC. They were married at Old First in 1957. George and Priscilla then pursued academic careers at UNC-Chapel Hill and then several decades at University of Illinois-Urbana, he as a professor of political science, she as a librarian. They have two sons and four grandchildren. Retiring last year, they moved back to San Francisco. They intended to check out several churches, but have found Old First just the church home they wanted. They’re already members of a small group, and Priscilla is helping with the Al Barrios Children’s Library. They join by Letter of Transfer from First Presbyterian Church of Urbana, IL.

Evangelism Chairman Bob Hermann reminds prospective members that the next Inquirers Classes will be held May 4 and 11, with new members received on May 25. If you want more details, contact Bob at bobhermann@aol.com or call the church office.

Note of Thanks

Many thanks to my friends who have been there for me in my time of need, during my illness. It's obvious that Jesus is loved through your actions. Thank you all, so very much. Johnni Olds

Serving the larger church through the presbytery

Pam Byers

Presbyterian government and mission, as we know, occurs in a series of increasingly larger bodies. Our local church's session sends representatives to the presbytery, which in turn sends commissioners to both the Synod of the Pacific and the national General Assembly. Old First is one of 77 congregations and five New Church Developments in the Presbytery of San Francisco.

Like a congregation, the presbytery does most of its work through committees made up of volunteer ministers and elders from different churches. Indeed, one of the ordination questions for both elders and ministers asks them to "share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church."

Old First takes this responsibility seriously. We not only are among the top ten congregations in SF Presbytery in sending our allowed number of elder commissioners to presbytery meetings; we also contribute a disproportionate number of members to presbytery committees. The following Old First elders are currently serving on these presbytery committees:

Committee on Ministry (caring for ministers and assisting congregations, especially in times of transition) – **Jeanne Choy Tate**

Committee on Preparation for Ministry (caring for and guiding people preparing for the ministry) – **Jean Olson**

Partnering and Resourcing (connecting congregations for effective ministry and action) – **Jeanne Kirkwood**

Personnel (caring for and overseeing presbytery staff) – **Bill Feister**

Nominating (identifying people with appropriate skills and inviting them to serve) – **Pam Byers**

In addition, **Steve Taber** serves as Counsel not only to the Presbytery (and two other presbyteries) but also to the Synod. **Nancy Holve** chairs the Partnering and Resourcing Committee, and Bill Feister chairs Personnel. By virtue of these assignments, both also serve as members of the Presbytery Council. **Jeanne Choy Tate** also represents the whole PCUSA denomination (!) on the Caribbean-North American Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. In fact she went to a meeting of the Council in Guyana the end of February. (Ask her about her adventures!)

Why should you say Yes if invited to serve on a presbytery committee?

- It actually is interesting, as you get to know more about the church

beyond our own congregation.

- You'll meet lots of other Presbyterians, most of whom you're likely to enjoy.
- You'll be contributing to the work and ministry of the church – both strengthening local congregations and ministers and helping to support local and national mission work.
- And you'll keep Old First in good standing when it comes our turn to nominate commissioners to General Assembly and other bodies.

Lectionary

Apr 6 *3rd Sunday of Easter* - Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Ps 116:1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13

Apr 13 *4th Sunday of Easter* - Acts 2:42-49; Ps 23; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

Apr 20 *5th Sunday of Easter* - Acts 7:55-60; Ps 31:1-5, 15-16; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

Apr 27 *6th Sunday of Easter* - Acts 17:22-31; Ps 66:8-20; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

May 1 *Ascension of the Lord* - Acts 1:1-11; Ps 47 or Ps 93; Eph 1:15-23; Luke 24:44-53

May 4 *7th Sunday of Easter* - Acts 1:6-14; Ps 68:1-10, 32-35; 1 Peter 4:12-14 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

April 6

Name Tag Sunday - Remember your name – to wear it, that is.

And please keep those members at the All Church Retreat this day in your prayers.

A few notes from the church office

- It's not too late to bring your One Great Hour of Sharing envelopes or coins to the church office.
- And it's about time a few more sponsors signed up for Coffee Hour. If you look at the signup sheet in the hall by the Munro Room, you'll notice lots of empty spaces in April and May.

- If you receive the print version of *Shared Life* and would rather get it by e-mail – or if you get it by e-mail and would rather have a paper copy -- please call Cheryl King at 776-5552, or e-mail her, Cheryl@oldfirst.org
- A woman's London Fog raincoat (tan with a black lining) found in the church library some time ago is still unclaimed. If it's yours, contact the church office before it's donated.

One Church, Six Ways

Rosemary Bledsoe

When you say "Old First is my church," you might not realize how very many others can say the same thing. It's more than the people on our list of members, more than the ones sitting in the pews with you. Sunday morning worship is the visible part of the iceberg; we serve other congregations in other ways. These are personal snapshots from five particular days – three worship services, three community ministries. Other events on other days could be very different. Try it for yourself.

Friday, February 29 – Old First Concerts presents Kitka

This is the most beautiful singing I have ever heard in our church – period, no discussion, no question. The nine women in the ensemble called Kitka sing like angels – angels with dirt and blood on their feet and tears running down their faces. Their Eastern European melodies are veined with Slavic suffering, Jewish suffering, human suffering. If you don't know one word in any of the languages of their songs, you can understand the suffering.

Old First is a special place for this internationally-known group. Their faces light up as they recall previous concerts and memorable moments here. The sanctuary is well filled with music-lovers who seem familiar with the place and comfortable here. I spot a few Sunday-morning folks -- Linda Reyder, Chris and Cindy Burt doing various official concert duties -- and see Pastor Maggi slipping into a back pew for some rest and spirit-restoring after a long day.

Saturday, March 1 – Funeral Service for Victoria McCormack

When your church has supported you and your family through your last breath, there's still more it can do – comfort your family and friends and give you a good send-off. Victoria's service is full of the same mixture of warmth and dignity as the lady herself. The Lenten banners might have been put up specially to honor her with their words of "Faith," "Prayer," "Truth." The sanctuary is full of family and friends from all over this country -- from England and Africa, too.

Music is by the St. Mary's Cathedral Choir; one of their members is Victoria's son Wallace.

Here are Michael and Tina Wilson's children all grown up, and teenager Adeyinka Adetuyi offering fond memories of her grandmother. Jeff Cheifetz joins Pastor Maggi in officiating. Maggi knew Victoria only in the last six months of her long life, but she, too, was privileged to encounter her gracious and welcoming presence. "I often left our visits thinking that Ms. Victoria had ministered to my spirit and felt richer for the experience."

Want a few more reasons to be proud of our church? Think of Ted Chiao ushering mourners to their seats with an air of welcome, sympathy and respect, and Jeanne Kirkwood wearing a long, colorful scarf – which seems to me a gesture of courtesy to the women in vivid African robes and intricate turbans.

Sunday, March 2 – 11 am Worship

Having just seen Kitka preserving and honoring ancient European cultures and Victoria's family preserving and honoring their African connections and traditions, I look at our worship service with a new awareness of what we do here every Sunday. As our community worships God, we also preserve and honor our Scottish/Calvinist heritage, keeping it alive in a post-Christian society.

People used to keep their various gods alive and healthy with the blood of sacrifices, and our ritual of worship is a kind of sacrifice. We get out of bed on Sunday morning with a certain amount of grumbling and then expend precious time and effort and fossil fuel to get our bodies into this sanctuary. (When it adds up to more than we can manage, our place is empty that day; bright colors of light from the high windows fall on a cold pew cushion.)

We honor our tradition by allowing it to grow and change. The structure of the service is formal and familiar, but the content is fresh and lively: Maggi's sermon on "Mud Blessings," the dramatic scripture reading in four voices, the new anthem composed by Jay Pierson. It's all relevant to our lives today. *"Healer of blind hearts, we confess that we see what we want to see and do not understand what we do not want to understand"* It's good to say words like this, say them right out loud, and not too scary when we can put our heads down and say them all together. It's good to drop a little something in the offering plate and to share even a morsel of bread and sip of juice with people we wouldn't share anything with if we could help it. It's good to stand up and sing, *"We walk by faith and not by sight"* It's good to be blessed before we leave.

Sunday, March 2 – 5 pm, Jazz Vespers

But we are Presbyterians, after all, and there's a limit to the freshness and relevance we can tolerate on Sunday morning — which is why we offer a Jazz Vespers service one Sunday afternoon each month for those who want to worship God in a different way. Today's service blesses our differences: "*Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly,*" said Martin Luther King, Jr., and "*The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world,*" said Rabindranath Tagore.

It's good to be kind of cool, too – to allow yourself to move just a teeny little bit to the beat of Mad and Eddie Duran's music, to appreciate how Megan's meditation on Water flows into the next number with the drummer's evocation of the sound of rain, to notice how the light in the sanctuary feels warmer and mellower in the afternoon – or this afternoon, anyway.

Monday, March 3 – Doris Krauss Senior Center

When Jan Hammock greets me, she says, "You need to be careful where you sit. Ask if the place is available." The folks who come here every week have their turf staked out; they want to sit with their particular group of friends.

The Center has a new nurse, who will be here twice a month. The seniors are learning how to transform those unpopular plastic grocery bags into useful items by crocheting them into attractive purses. They look forward to hearing an Irish tenor on St. Patrick's Day and seeing the movie "Ratatouille" on the TV recently donated to the Center.

I was surprised to see a couple of pre-school children running around (Jan's and Jen Wilson's younger ones), to find that director Genie Kinney plans an outing up to Grace Cathedral and the labyrinth, to hear Don Pender playing classical music with a woodwind quintet, to enjoy the delicious lentil soup and excellent salad produced by the new cook ("She had a transforming experience on a trip to Israel, and she came back wanting to help people.") I was happy to share some of my memories of Doris Krauss with Genie -- then really, really surprised to realize that it sounds like ancient history to her and that many of the elderly participants in the Center weren't around the church back in those days.

Tuesday, March 4 – Welcome Ministry

"You should have been here last week. There were 30 people waiting when we opened the door," Megan tells me. Today isn't nearly that busy, though. The Welcome Ministry serves people whose checks arrive on the first of the month and who can still feed themselves on the fourth, and today the

weather is so warm that a person who's claimed a sunny spot on the sidewalk might not want to leave it.

Our guests are quiet and well behaved. Some obviously live outdoors, others look as if they have at some time or might have to soon, and there are a few you'd never pick out of a crowd as needing to be here. There is a little general conversation, but most of them enter and leave one by one in their own bubbles of silence. Some seem to know that the Welcome Ministry offers more than food, new blankets, white socks from a big bag, and books from the library shelf ("Mysteries are popular, but we get more requests for Bibles than anything else"), but I get the impression that it takes some work to discover their individual stories and needs.

Mikey has made a big pot of soup that's packed with nourishment. The volunteers (including Rose Marie Springer and Dianne Lewis) are experienced and well organized, assembling trays in the kitchen. The meals become less balanced when the last of the salad is served, but they keep finding food of some kind; there's always enough of something.

If you feel like you haven't done anything worthwhile lately, try handing a tray of food to someone who doesn't get many meals; you might find yourself going back to the kitchen for some extra crackers for them. If you despair of the human race, spend a few minutes talking to Sister Susan of the Faithful Fools, a person radiant with faith and service.

*In every room in our Father's house, Christ will be there as
Lord and Host.*