

February 2008 **Shared Life** of Old First Presbyterian Church

Ash Wednesday, February 6

Our traditional service with imposition of ashes will be February 6 at 7:00 pm. It will be held in conjunction with First Congregational Church, our neighbors at Polk and Post Streets.

Annual Meeting and Congregational Luncheon, February 10

On Sunday, February 10, our Annual Meeting will be held in the sanctuary immediately following worship. A major item of business at the meeting will be a review of Old First's 2008 budget.

The Congregational Lunch will be held in the Fellowship Hall after the meeting. The luncheon program will feature short talks about Old First's hopes and plans for this new church year.

Tickets for the catered Chinese lunch will be on sale at Coffee Hour on Feb. 3 at \$7 for adults, \$3 for ages 6-12. On the day of the event, tickets will be \$8 for adults, \$4 for children.

Old First Retreat: Friday April 4 – Sunday April 6

Set the dates aside for an all-church retreat at Four Springs Retreat Center, off Highway 29 above the wineries of Calistoga, near Middletown. In a lovely country location on a wooded hill, Four Springs is a great place for walking, relaxing, deepening our spiritual lives, increasing our sense of community, and just having fun together.

Our topic will be "Spiritual Season-ing" led by Sue Singer, PhD. Sue is Assistant Professor of Ministry Development and Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific. She holds a Ph.D. from the interdisciplinary program in Theology and Education at Boston College. Sue is a native of England and has been an Episcopal priest for seventeen years. She previously served as Education Coordinator for the Diocese of California and Canon Liturgist at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco. Throughout her ministry, her passion has been educational, formational and pastoral work with adults, children and youth.

Stay tuned for further details, Four Springs pictures, and sign-ups. Retreat Committee: Jean Olson, Chris and Cindy Burt, Jeanne Tate Choy, Harriet MacLean and Alfred Martin, and Nancy Holve

Pastor's Letter

February 6th marks the beginning of the Lenten Season. Lent is the 40 days, plus six Sundays, before Easter. The 40 days reflects the story found in Matthew 4:1-11 in which Jesus journeyed into the wilderness. Lent has been a time of self examination, penitence, prayer, spiritual reflection and renewal.

I suspect that many of you have given up something for Lent. I would like you to think about this time not as a giving up time but as a **Season of Turning**, of turning away from something old so you can turn something new. This idea comes from the old Shaker hymn,

*“To turn, turn will be our delight
‘til by turning, turning we come round right.”*

You can begin this Season of Turning with the Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00 p.m. on February 6th. If you can't be a part of that service, take some time to read the following poem and ask God to lead you in deciding what to turn from and towards this Lent. Why not put the completed part of the lower portion of this sheet somewhere you will see it daily: the mirror in the bathroom, the dashboard of your car, or at your work place?

Take a moment each day or at least a couple of times a week to read and pray with using a Lenten devotional which you can receive at the Ash Wednesday service or the first Sunday in Lent, February the 10th. Youth are invited to explore the daily devotional site www.d365.org, which is sponsored by the PC(USA) and several other denominations.

Turn from pessimism, turn toward optimism.
Turn from criticism, turn toward praise.
Turn from self pity, turn toward joy.
Turn from bitterness, turn toward forgiveness.
Turn from ideal gossip; turn toward purposeful silence.
Turn from jealousy; turn toward love.
Turn from discouragement, turn toward hope.
Turn from selfishness, turn toward service.
Turn from fear, turn toward faith.
Turn from anger, turn toward patience.
Turn from self concern, turn toward compassion for others.
Turn from discontent, turn toward gratitude.

May our hearts be turned anew toward God this Lenten Season,

Pastor Maggi Henderson

During Lent 2008, I want to

Turn from _____

So I can turn toward _____

Music during Lent

Dr. Jay Pierson

It has been a Lenten tradition at Old First for the organ to remain silent during the prelude and postlude times of the worship service. This year, at the beginning of the service the organist will provide thoughtful and reflective music to prepare for worship. At the conclusion of the service, the choir will sing an "AMEN" and the service will then end in silence. This silence will provide an atmosphere of thoughtful meditation during the Lenten season.

Lenten Adult Education Features Classes on The Lord's Prayer

Sunday, Feb. 3 - "Why Ashes?" (and other timely questions about Shrove Tuesday, Mardi Gras and Carnival) – Munro Room, 9:30 am

Each class on "The Lord's Prayer" will be held both on Sunday morning and at a Thursday evening 6:00 pm Soup and Study.

<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Title</i>
2/7	2/10	Where Prayer Begins
2/14	2/17	The Prayer of Complaint
2/21	2/24	The Prayer Perfect
2/28	3/2	The Prayer for Security
3/6	3/9	Whatever Became of Sin?
3/13	3/16	Everybody's Prayer

New Session Officers and Committee Moderators

In 2008, Jeanne Kirkwood will be Clerk of Session. Committee Moderators will be: Evangelism, Bob Hermann; Mission, Mary Russell; Worship, Chris Burt, with Alfred Martin as support elder; Congregational Care, Rosemary Bledsoe; Operations, Chuck Olson; Stewardship, Greg Free; Christian Education, Jean Olson, with Bryan Nichols as support elder; Personnel, Pam Byers; Planning, John Sebastian; Finance, Barry Clagett. Jeanne Choy Tate will be Designated Elder for Special Projects; Carol Carter, Session Liaison to Deacons; Chris Burt, Session representative on the Concerts Board; John Sebastian, Corporation President; Greg Free, Treasurer.

Communion Change Effective February 17

The Worship Committee is making a change in the way Communion is served with trays in the pews, usually on third Sundays. Currently, we eat the bread as it is passed and then hold the cup till all are served. In the future we will hold both the bread and the wine till all are served, so the whole congregation can join in the meal together. When everyone is served the pastor will say something like "The Bread of Christ broken for you" and all will eat together. The same will be done with the wine. Why has this change been done? On a simple level, it is a bit confusing for the pastor (and she suspects for others too) when one element is held and the other is not. Theologically, it reminds us that it is a joyful feast we all take together. It may take a bit more time — but truly, in worship we have all the time we need for Communion.

Jazz Vespers, First Sundays, 5:00 pm

February 3 – Clairdee and the Ken French Trio

Lectionary

- Feb 3 *Transfiguration of the Lord* - Exod. 24:12-18; Ps. 2 or Ps. 99; 2 Pet. 1:16-21;
 Matt. 17:1-9
- Feb 6 *Ash Wednesday* - Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isa. 58:1-12; Ps. 51:1-17; 2 Cor. 5:20b-6:10;
 Matt. 6:1-6, 16-21
- Feb 10 *First Sunday in Lent* - Gen. 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Ps. 32; Rom. 5:12-19; Matt. 4:1-11
- Feb 17 *Second Sunday in Lent* - Gen. 12:1-4a; Ps. 121; Rom. 4:1-5, 13-17; John 3:1-17
- Feb 24 *Third Sunday in Lent* - Exod. 17:1-7; Ps. 95; Rom. 5:1-11; John 4:5-42
- Mar 2 *Fourth Sunday in Lent* - 1 Sam. 16:1-13; Ps. 23; Eph. 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

February 3 – Name Tag Sunday

Remember your name – to wear it, that is.

Salute to Senior Center Volunteers

Rev. Genie Kinney

Did you know that the Doris Krauss Senior Center is run solely by volunteers? The director is a paid position, but all other jobs are filled by dedicated people who care.

We have a volunteer cook and now a volunteer dishwasher! Volunteers set up for the lunch, sell tickets and greet people. Commission members not only serve on the board but help prepare meals, greet and talk with seniors and support the director. The Tai Chi instructor has been teaching an afternoon class for eleven years. We have fine musicians who lead singing and play during the noon meal. We have been fortunate to have interesting speakers on health, spirituality and current events.

As we begin the new year I invite you to join us. You do not need to attend on Monday to be of service. We need ideas, resources and funds. Do you know of a nurse who could take blood pressure once a month? Do you know of an interesting speaker who would share their expertise with us? Can you arrange for a field trip to a museum, concert or play? Can you teach line dancing? What is your idea? What are your gifts you can share?

Thank you to our volunteers. Please join us and become a volunteer for this important ministry.

Marked by the Cross

Elizabeth A. Long-Higgins

Like those who have gone before
walking this road of Christian faith
this day, we too, wear the mark of the cross.
This mark is, perhaps, more public,
this mark is, perhaps, more confessing —
than other crosses that we wear throughout the year.
It is a mere mark, however gritty,
a dirty smudge which is even more humbling
than other marks, than other crosses that we bear.

But as you wear your mark of the cross from this place this day
May you remember all that it represents.
As you wear the mark of the cross
May you be mindful of ways in which the cross has already marked your life
and may you find daily, through this Lenten journey,
ways in which God is calling you to share with the world
the love and forgiveness which you have already come to know
in the gritty, humble, dirty, sacred mark of God — the Cross.

As you go to wash this mark of grit and ash from your own body
may you be mindful of the one whose love washes over us.
May you center on the one whose body lived, died, and rose again.
May you focus on the one who offers to remove all stains.
May you breathe a breath of remembrance of the one who gives us life
and may you, having confessed again what separates you from God's love,
say a word of forgiveness even to yourself.

Perhaps you may ask a loved one to wash the mark for you.
May you receive the word of forgiveness they offer you —
a sign of God's reconciling love at work in this world,
a sign of how we need each other to give witness to grace itself,
and move us ever closer to God's heart.

A Landmark Vote at San Francisco Presbytery's January Meeting

Rosemary Bledsoe

First Presbyterian Church of Richmond – January 15, 2008.

Even if you didn't know this could be a historic meeting of our presbytery, you might have caught on that something major is in the works. Do the commissioners at every meeting get a short outline of parliamentary procedures, including such "Rules of Decorum" as "Remarks shall not impugn another member or that member's motives"? Are meetings always so worshipful and prayer-oriented, with designated pray-ers petitioning Heaven at all times, with small crosses passed hand to hand among the delegates?

You might attribute a certain tendency toward good behavior to the presence of the Moderator of the 216th General Assembly, Joan Gray. You might even think that the brisk processing of the business on the docket is due to an eagerness for the dinner hour or the worship service.

However, I've attended enough meetings of the San Francisco Presbytery to make me look around and wonder, "Where am I? Who *are* these people?"

A casual visitor might wonder why Lisa Larges should have been a candidate for ordination for more than 20 years and is only now being proclaimed by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to be "ready for ordination" – or why there are so many reporters present ("Channel 2? Associated Press? You're kidding!") – or why the commissioners vote to close the meeting to the press during their deliberations on the CPM recommendation.

There probably aren't any casual visitors here tonight, though. In fact, many of us are connoisseurs of the art of Presbyterian politics, polity buffs who have studied the libretto of this evening's drama. Lisa's Statement of Faith contains a "departure," her declaration that she can't uphold G6.0106b, the ten-year-old "fidelity and chastity" amendment which has become known in some quarters as "the historic standards of the church."

This vote is the first test of a more recent ruling on the Book of Order that does not please those particular devotees of The Law. The General Assembly of 2006 enacted a new Authoritative Interpretation that allows departures such as Lisa's, citing historical precedent.

Now what? Whose law do we uphold? Whose history do we honor? Maybe Moderator Joan Gray can clarify the matter for us.

Her sermon is on the operating instructions left for us by the Founder of our Faith: "Little flock, love one another. Love one another. Love one another." OK, that's about as historic as you can get, but Love is no help at all when you're dealing with Law.

Maybe some of the opposing statements do sound a bit mean-spirited after that. Maybe that's why there are fewer speakers "against" than "for."

Or maybe not. The only thing I can say for certain is that members of the supporting majority of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry report on the integrity of their discernment process with conviction. Oh -- and that the vote upholds their recommendation, 167 to 151.

That's what Presbyterian politics is like these days. If it were a football game, it would be too boring to watch: a bunch of guys in a big pile, sometimes a foot or so on one side of the 50-yard line, sometimes a foot or so on the other. Small gains, small losses – which will either wear us all out or someday add up to something.

Keep coming to those Presbytery meetings, folks. Keep behaving well, keep praying, and at least consider trying to love one another.

Al Barrios Memorial Children's Library

Priscilla Yu

Welcome to the Al Barrios Memorial Children's Library of Old First! Nancy Holve, Lori Yamauchi, and I are excited about the new re-arrangement of books in the Library in Class Room B. We have begun the New Year by re-shelving and making accessible the many resources and books, old and new. The books have been shelved in subject categories.

There are approximately 232 books including 28 VHS tapes, reflecting our Christian heritage and beliefs. One of the unique features of Old First is that we have a Library collection devoted to children, young adults, and families. Families as well as children will find materials and resources that will help develop and nurture a personal relationship with God.

Our wish is that you will encourage the children to use the Library as they grow in their faith. We hope it will be a place of wonder and joy for children as they are guided to know God. This is also a good place for parents seeking sources as they face the challenges and issues that come with being a parent.

Recently, we have collected books donated to the Library in Honor of Sara Barrios (Al's wife) – included are fiction works teaching you about life, loving and grieving. Those which we found of interest include:

Sharon Creech's *Walk Two Moons*. This Newbery Medal-winning *Walk Two Moons* story is about journeys, family love, and commitment. The story follows the tales and travels of Salamanca Tree Hiddle. Traveling with her grandparents in search of lost dreams and a lost mother touches the heart of anyone who reads it. The book gives us glimpses into families that are solid in their love and devotion. This rare book is not only wise, but also humorous. The characters speak with zing and verve. The plot is fascinating and full of unexpected twists and a surprising conclusion. This book is written for children, but is also recommended for all ages.

Please encourage your children to visit the Library and browse through these wonderful books. Checkout sheet is available. We welcome your suggestions and even donations of books.

The Al Barrios Memorial Children's Library is typically open just prior to and just after regular Sunday church services. On other days, arrangements may be made by calling the church office.

Thank you -- and we look forward to your visit to the Library.

Conflict is Inevitable

Forrest Cummings

In January of 1963, a fiery young fellow delivered the Seminary Sunday sermon at his home church in Burlington, Iowa, six months before his ordination. Forrest Cummings said that "seminary students are being told to re-examine their attitudes toward the church and its mission. Some of them are unable to accept the church's new ideas and its new concepts."

*His sermon was reported in the January 18 **Hawk Eye News**, in an article entitled "Conflict is Inevitable." Here is an excerpt:*

.....

In 1963 Americans must expect changes, including changes in education and society. Whether these changes will be beneficial depends upon the people who are in a position to bring them about.

Conflict is inevitable as the church seeks to transform modern culture. At no time in the church's history has it been more challenged than now, and this is good, because it is forcing church leaders to look about them and to think deeply.

Leaders of the church are coming to realize that the church is for all, and not just for the comparatively few who are formal members. The church exists to serve God's purpose. It must challenge the world by heeding the words of Peter and putting aside the discord within its own ranks.

It is not enough to renounce evil. Positive growth must take place within the church if it is to be the instrument of God's redeeming power.

Critics of the church charge it with hypocrisy, especially with regard to its attitude toward certain racial, ethnic, and social groups -- and with some justification. Traditional Protestantism cannot deny that it has often pushed away these groups. The church needs to ask for forgiveness for its shortcomings.

The real purpose of the church is to serve all, regardless of who or where they are. In this socially dynamic time some of the traditional ideas of Protestantism are out of date.

Since the church's mission is the redemption of all people, it must become less concerned with its own institution and more concerned with people. It must concern itself with more than its own members.

Token gestures are not enough; if it does not face up to its responsibilities it will become irrelevant. We in the church are too afraid of offending somebody -- despite the fact that Jesus Christ offended so many people they crucified him.

It is not an easy task to work in his name and in his spirit in the twentieth century, but it is our responsibility as Christians to offer new life.

.....

It isn't easy in the twenty-first century either, Forrest. Thank you for not giving up! Happy 83rd birthday!