

Shared Life of Old First – July/August 2009

Old First's July and August calendars

http://www.mychurchevents.com/calendar/calendar.aspx?cei=196947443&event_date=3/30/2007&ci=L6H2G1J4F0K5N8N8H2&igd=

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July/August 2009

Shared Life

of Old First Presbyterian Church

Welcome our new organist, Dennis Flynn

After a six month search interviewing many talented applicants, the Organ Search Committee is proud to announce the appointment of Dennis Flynn as our new organist. He will be moving to the Bay Area in July and will begin at Old First mid-July. We are pleased to have him as part of the music team!

Dennis Flynn holds degrees in Organ Performance from Central Michigan University and the University of Michigan, with post-graduate study at Arizona State University. He has provided music for worship at a number of different churches/synagogues including Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Unitarian and Jewish. Dennis comes to us from his current position at St. James Episcopal Church in Paso Robles. For nine years, he was at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado as Director of the Catholic and Jewish cadet choirs and served as the Cadet Chapel organist. His extra-musical interests include collecting stray cats, gardening, cooking and reading.

New Recession Relief Food Pantry

In the first four Saturdays of the new Recession Relief Food Pantry, we served 26 people on the first day, 50 on the second, 85 on the third, and 105 on the fourth. The Food Bank expects the number to continue to grow, maybe to as many as 200 a week.

For an account of a typical Saturday morning shift, see the story on “Volunteering at the New Food Pantry” on page 4 of this issue. If you would like to volunteer a very worthwhile four hours at the church, helping to feed our hungry neighbors, please contact Betsy Chiao at bchiao40@yahoo.com.

We operate from 8:00 am until noon, setting up from 8:00 to 9:00 am, being open for distribution from 9:00 to 11:00 am, then cleaning up until noon. No food is stored at the church. The Food Bank delivers a supply on Saturday morning, and takes back anything that hasn't been distributed.

Indoor Picnic, July 26

It's taken us a long time to figure out the best place for a summertime church picnic – inside, out of the fog! Our Indoor Picnic was so much fun last year, we're doing it again – Sunday, July 26, in the Fellowship Hall after worship.

Once again, the church will provide sandwich bread and condiments, also iced tea and ice cream. You are asked to bring a sandwich filling or a picnic-type side dish. If you think your deviled eggs are the greatest, you can enter them in a competition. Or, if you prefer not to bring food, you can contribute \$4.00. Sign up at Coffee Hour, beginning July 5.

Something new this year is a Book Swap table. Bring a book you don't want to keep and exchange it for one you haven't read.

Monday, July 6

The church office will be closed for the Independence Day holiday. The Senior Center will be open.

Maggi's musings

One of my best memories of summer was sitting in the crook of a tall pine tree reading books. I would climb to a Y in the branches, bring along a snack or my lunch and simply read. Summer meant my time was my own and I could spend hours reading books carefully checked out from the Lake Merritt branch of the Oakland Public Library. While I no longer find myself climbing trees, I still find summer and book reading goes together (I read three books during my time away in France.)

During July and August I want to suggest that Old First to read together, *Take This Bread: The spiritual memoir of a twenty-first century Christian*, by Sara Miles. Why this book? First, it is a wonderful read. It talks about deep spiritual and theological issues in ways that make sense and call me to reflect further in my own spiritual journey. I read this book as I began my ministry here in S.F. and it helped me appreciate the unique place in which we live and grow in faith. Second, it is written by a local author, Sara Miles, who came to faith at St. Gregory's of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco. Thirdly, it talks about that church developing a food pantry. When we were discussing beginning a food pantry here and I was anxious if we could pull it off at Old First, I met Sarah Miles at a church meeting and she gave me encouragement and said she would send volunteers from her church if we needed.

One reviewer writes "*Early one morning, for no earthly reason, Sara Miles, raised an atheist, wandered into a church, received communion, and found herself transformed—embracing a faith she'd once scorned. A lesbian left-wing journalist who'd covered revolutions around the world, Miles didn't discover a religion that was about angels or good behavior or piety; her faith centered on real hunger, real food, and real bodies. Before long, she turned the bread she ate at communion into tons of groceries, piled on the church's altar to be given away. Within a few years, she and the people she served had started nearly a dozen food pantries in the poorest parts of their city. Take This Bread is rich with real-life Dickensian characters—church ladies, millionaires, schizophrenics, bishops, and thieves—all blown into Miles's life by the relentless force of her newfound calling. Here, in this achingly beautiful, passionate book, is the living communion of Christ.*"

One of the pleasures of reading a book is the chance to discuss the book with others. How will this take place over the summer? You can decide to hold a book discussion at a local coffee shop, your home, or a restaurant and invite others (and me) to attend. Let me know and I will announce it on a Sunday or through E mail. The book can be the focus of your small group meetings. Maybe a friend or co worker would be interested in reading it with you? You can just call me or e-mail me and meet for coffee or lunch to discuss the book. I will offer two identical book discussions: Sunday morning, August 2, following coffee hour in the library (Childcare can be provided if you let me know by Sunday June 28th) and Thursday evening, August 13, at 6:00 p.m. (before choir) in the Munro room. Soup and bread will be served so e mail me at maggi@oldfirst.org and let me know you will be coming.

Take This Bread is widely available at local book stores, the San Francisco Public Library, and there are two copies which can be borrowed from the church.

Are you reading some great books this summer, sitting in a tree or not? Let others know what you're enjoying. Share the titles and authors in a sheet on the bulletin board outside the Munro room.

Peace, Maggi

July 5 and August 2 – Name Tag Sundays

Wear your own name tag and take a look at others'

Christian Education News

Katie Thompson

The Christian Education Committee had a very productive meeting on June 7. We would like to make you aware of a few important announcements.

First, there will be no Sunday morning church school for children and youth in July and August. Glendy Velasquez, the nursery attendant, and an administrator will be downstairs to provide childcare as usual through the summer. This childcare will ideally be for children five years old and younger. Church school will begin again in September.

Also, the CE Committee would like to thank all the people who have given their time and energy to the Christian education programming this year, including Erwin Barron, Nina Berg, Marilyn Campbell, Yvonne Cheng, Britt LaGatta, Pam Free, Marne Krozek, Jean Olson, Mary Russell, Krista Slanker, Chloe Spencer, Sally Spencer, and all small group leaders and participants, and all parents of children and youth. We hope the congregation will join us in thanking each one of you for all the great work you have done over the past year.

Finally, this committee is about to embark on an exciting project, which will require the help of the entire congregation. We plan to meet on July 5 to discuss our philosophy of Christian education and to formulate questions about CE to ask the entire Old First community. We want to know how we can improve Christian education at Old First, and we need your help! In the next few months we will be asking what you need and want from adult, youth and children's education. Your honest input and insight are important to us. Thanks in advance for all your help.

AIDS Walk 2009, July 19

Registration is still open for the 2009 AIDS Walk, which will be held in Golden Gate Park on Sunday, July 19. It begins at 10:30 am in Sharon Meadow. Again this year Old First will join with San Francisco Presbytery's District 5 team. It is Team 1057, Presbyterians Fighting AIDS. You can find them and register to join, and to begin the process of getting sponsors for your walk, at www.aidswalk.net/sanfran:

Click on "Team Info," then "2009 Registered Teams," and go to "Presbyterians Fighting AIDS – 1057." And you're on your way! Thank you!!

August 8, Planning for Advent

Watch for more details about the Advent Planning Workshop on Saturday, August 8, 9 am-noon.

Two Labyrinth events in August

On Saturday, August 29, 2 pm, at Old First Church, Rosemary Bledsoe will present "Under the Surface", a half-hour introduction to the labyrinth, followed by an open walk on a temporary labyrinth created in the Fellowship Hall for the occasion.

Rosemary will also be helping with a Global Healing Walk at Noe Valley Ministry (1021 Sanchez) 6:30 pm Wednesday, August 12.

Volunteering at the new Food Pantry

Rosemary Bledsoe

Potatoes, yams, beets, onions, oranges, cucumbers, lettuce, rice, sour cream, cottage cheese with pineapple, powdered grape drink, eggs. That's healthier and better balanced than my last grocery shopping list. All these good things were carefully displayed on red checkered tablecloths, with the fresh produce in big metal tubs, and offered with good cheer and respect. Not exactly what I'd envisioned as a free food giveaway.

I'd had a mental picture of people lined up along the sidewalk back to Polk Street and around the corner. That didn't happen, and isn't going to happen. Our clients are shown first into the Fellowship Hall, where a Food Bank staff person checks them in, and then directed to the food distribution tables in the Munro Room. When we have larger numbers to serve, each person will be given a number, and the numbers will be called at random – so there will be no advantage in lining up early. This is the system that works well elsewhere.

The day I worked, we only took enough food off the truck to stock the distribution tables before we opened, then asked for more as we needed it. Whatever was left was loaded back on the truck to be returned to the Food Bank. We have been told that once we have a better idea of the number of people we'll be serving, all the food will be unloaded before we open – but we should still have the option of calling for more if we need it.

We are responsible to break down and recycle cardboard boxes – but our neighbors at Brownie's Hardware are very kindly accepting the boxes to add to their own cardboard recycling.

My volunteer stint at the second-ever Saturday of our new Recession Relief Food Pantry taught me a number of things, including 1) The folks at the Food Bank know what they're doing. We haven't been called on to re-invent the wheel with this effort; all we need to do is to keep it rolling. 2) It isn't too demanding physically. The Food Bank delivery truck driver delivers the boxes to our back door, then each box is passed along a human conveyor belt, from one pair of hands to another, down the stairs and into the Munro Room. If you can't lift anything even moderately heavy, you don't need to do this. You need to be at your station for a couple of hours, but if you can't stand that long, it's perfectly OK to sit. 3) We're getting some help with this project – from friends, neighbors, co-workers, perfect strangers – from people who like doing this, who want to do it, and who therefore fit right in to the basic core of Old Firsters.

If you think you'd like to volunteer, don't wait too long to sign up. Everyone expects the number of people served to keep growing for a while. It's easy to learn what to do and how to do it when you aren't serving a big crowd; there's really no pressure. If you get trained now, it will be easier to deal with more people at once later on.

If you just can't get down to the church on Saturday morning, you can bring a contribution of food to the Food Bank barrel on Sunday. If you can't hear people say "thank you," if you never see their children, if you don't see them all going home with their bags full of good food – you can take my word for it that this is well worth doing. Actually, we have already heard the only word we need: "Feed my sheep."

Dear Old First congregation and friends,

On behalf of the Hermann family and myself, I want to extend my thanks and gratitude for the outpouring of love and support during my mother's recent passing. Your words of comfort either through phone calls, sympathy cards, prayers of the people, or just a thought meant a lot during this hard time.

I was blessed in that my mom had the opportunity to visit Old First, with her most recent visit in September 2008 for our wedding. Mom loved the organ music, the songs, the praise, and the sanctuary.

I am grateful that we had that opportunity, and I will hold that special time in my heart forever.

Thanks again to my Old First Family,

Sincerely,

Bob Hermann

August 30 Church Town Hall Meeting

There's a Church Town Hall meeting on the calendar for Sunday, August 30, right after the worship service. Topic to be announced.

Musical notes

No matter where you roam this summer, you can enjoy George Becker playing Old First's wonderful Hutchings-Visscher organ. Check out his YouTube site, [sfbonedoc](#).

You don't even need Internet access. The Dedication Recital that George played on the rebuilt organ in May, 1996, is on CD. It's yours for a \$15.00 contribution to the Deacons' Fund.

Pay attention to Old First Concerts' August schedule. On Sunday, Aug 16, at 7:00 pm, Don Pender and his new quartet present "Jazzberry Patch," a program of standards and original compositions.

Lobbying for the Common Good – "Clergy Call" in D.C.

Pam Byers

I had the privilege on May 4-5 of joining about 300 clergy and other faith leaders in Washington, DC, for the Human Rights Campaign's second "Clergy Call." HRC, the largest advocacy group for GLBT civil rights, had invited religious leaders to come and lobby Congress with a rather different message than our elected leaders usually hear from "religious" spokespeople.

We were there to urge our senators and congresspeople to support two measures before this congressional session: a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which specifically includes protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and the Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes bill, which similarly includes GLB *and* T Americans within its protections. Staffers for both Sen. Boxer and Sen. Feinstein told a couple of dozen of us that their principals are fully behind this legislation. I also called on my own representative, Jackie Speier, and got her aide's promise of support for both bills.

The Covenant Network of Presbyterians – which as most Old Firsters know was founded out of Old First and of which I serve as Executive Director – moved our spring meeting to Washington so that many of our board members could participate in the Clergy Call. I was glad to be able to draw on our network to help HRC achieve their goal of having clergy from all 50 states.

HRC's particular focus this year is on transgender inclusion; it has published various educational resources that I hope we may use at Old First. Our own Megan Rohrer is one of the authors. The educational day that preceded the lobby day was eye-opening to me; and the shared worship, very ecumenical and multicultural, was powerfully moving.

Helping hands needed this summer

The Mission and Giving Committee would like to share with you some of the various mission opportunities that exist in the U.S. This is just some of the information on the Presbyterian Church website, www.pcusa.org/pda - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance – do take a look, and maybe work a visit into your summer vacation plans!

Seminar on "Living into identity, meaning and possibility"

The Guild for Psychological Studies will offer a four-session seminar called "Do this, and you will live" on how to live into identity, meaning and possibility; all-day classes will be on Sept. 19 and 26; Oct. 17 and 24. The Rev. Sue Singer, who was the leader of Old First's last retreat, will be one of the leaders. For more information, see www.guildsf.org.

Lectionary

- July 5 14th *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – 2 Sam 5:1-5, 9-10; Ps 48; 2 Cor 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13
- July 12 15th *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – 2 Sam 6:1-5, 12b-19; Ps 24; Eph 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29
- July 19 16th *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – 2 Sam 7:1-14a; Ps 89:20-37; Eph 2:11-22; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56
- July 26 17th *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – 2 Sam 11:1-15; Ps 14; Eph 3:14-21; John 6:1-21
- Aug 2 18th *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – 2 Sam 11:26-12:13a; Ps 15:1-12; Eph 4:1-16; John 6:24-35
- Aug 9 19th *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – 2 Sam 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; Ps 130; Eph 4:25-5:2; John 6:35, 41-51
- Aug 16 20th *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – 2 Sam 11:1-15; 3:3-14; Ps 111; Eph 5:15-20; John 6:51-58
- Aug 23 21st *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – 1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10-11) 22-30, 41-43; Ps 84; Eph 6:10-20;
John 6:56-69
- Aug 30 22nd *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – S of Sol 2:8-13; Ps 45:1-2, 6-9; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8,
14-15, 21-23
- Sept 6 23rd *Sunday in Ordinary Time* – Prov 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23; Ps 125; James 2:1-10 (11-13) 14-17;
Mark 7:24-37

Update on Children's Library

Diane Molberg and Priscilla Yu have completed the inventory of the Children's Library, and will have remaining details finished by the end of summer. If you want to check out or return a book, please fill out a card and leave it, or the book if returning it, on the shelf to the left of the door. We will re-shelve. We have several books to donate to worthy causes. If you'd like to look through what we have, please let Diane know.

Letter from Johnni Olds

Dear OFC Family, I miss S.F. and OFC terribly, but we had to go where Glen could find work. We are living with family while this seemingly endless search continues. Please keep us in your prayers.

In some strange way, I am enjoying watching the corn grow. We should be thankful for the hard working farmers who depend on the weather to harvest the crops in these beautiful fields. We are close to Amish settlements and I wonder how the horse and buggies would handle the freeways around S.F.

God is good to me. I have time to take several classes while visiting nursing homes. The brightly colored birds awaken me with their singing. Then I start the day with reading and quilting. I think I've always had a bit of Amish blood in me and Illinois agrees with me.

Also, I'm taking an exercise class for people with arthritis. All my doctors are down to earth and caring (like Marcus Welby). I've had a few tests and my medicine has been adjusted, resulting in my feeling well and walking without even a cane! Many thanks for your understanding and lending a helping hand. Prayers are always appreciated.

PEACE AND GOD BLESS,

Johnni

*Rediscovering Faith Through Fiction****Dandelion Wine* by Ray Bradbury**

Diane Molberg

You do things and you don't watch... then all of a sudden you look at what you're doing and it's like the first time.

I want you all to do something. I want you to read *Dandelion Wine*. I want you to read it now in summer's magic time. I want you to read it before it's too late, or before you forget, and so I don't have to keep saying, "Have you read *Dandelion Wine* yet?"

I want you to set aside whatever you're reading now, and read Ray Bradbury's evocative novel of a young boy coming of age in small town America, 1928. I'm asking you to read this because it will bring back the best, brightest, most shining moments of your best summer, even if you think you've forgotten it. I want teenagers to read it, and young people, and those who have to squint through reading glasses, because everyone needs to live in a world that is immediate, sensuous, and anticipating of each moment—even if you only live there while you hold this elegant, small book in your hands.

Imagine a day "out there in the middle of the first day of August," a young man, twenty-something, asks Douglas, thirteen, to join him for "some extraordinary ice cream." And, in the "soda-scented air" of the corner drugstore, eating a dish of lime-vanilla ice, the twenty-something young man, Bill Forester, meets the grand love of his life, Helen Loomis. Age seventy-something.

Maybe this novel matters because I met the love of my life when I was sixteen, in August in a small town in Colorado, with a corner drugstore and wide-tree lined streets and the greenness of Acacia Park. He was only twenty-three, and of course he went away, but I never understood why the mere mention of these names and images carried such sadness and profound happiness until I read *Dandelion Wine*.

Bradbury calls *Dandelion Wine* a "celebration of death as well as life, dark as well as light, old as well as young, smart and dumb combined, sheer joy and complete terror." "It's all real," he writes. "Losing my best friend who moved to another town, the Lonely One who haunted the town but was never caught, the ravine - real and dark and deep." And Helen Loomis and Bill Forester.

What single summer in your life distills all that is magical, mystical, romantic? What August have you held precious? What chunk of summer do you look at if you're lonely in winter? Douglas Spaulding, thirteen, snapped his fingers one August morning and summer began, and we're blessed because Bradbury wrote about it.

Let me know how you like the novel. You can be sure I'll ask.

Ray Bradbury is the author of numerous books including *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Illustrated Man*, *The Martian Chronicles*, *Something Wicked this Way Comes*. *Dandelion Wine* is available for purchase on line and in libraries.

What's Happening in September

Before you turn off your brain for the summer, take note of a few dates of interest in September --

- Thursday through Sunday, Sept 4-7 - the Bay Bridge will be closed
- Sunday, Sept 13 - Diane Molberg will lead a second discussion in Adult Education (9:30-10:30) of the religious poems of Emily Dickinson on September 13. To facilitate the discussion, you can send Diane your email address and she'll send/identify the poems planned for discussion and any related material. Material will also be provided at class time."
- Sunday, September 13 – Ice Cream Social, after worship
- Sunday, September 20 - Southern lunch, after worship
- Sunday, Sept 27 – Liturgist training workshop, after worship

Dining with Faith, or Dining with Maggi *

Buddy Tate Choy

Pastor Maggi has invited me to share in a new column for *Shared Life* - periodic reviews of Polk Street restaurants that are near our church. Our first venture took us to a relatively new restaurant named City Kebab at 1338 Polk.

It's a small and unobtrusive dining place. You will immediately notice its cleanliness along with its welcoming booths and tables. Cem Buluteglu will greet you at the register as you peruse the menu on the wall and help you order. Cem is a young man from Turkey who operates City Kebab along with his cousin and uncle. On our first visit we ordered the Appetizer Combo Plate: hummus, babaganoush (eggplant), falafel, helise (mashed tomatoes), kalamanta olives, dolma (rolled vine leaves), and feta. We also tried the Lamb and Beef Gyros Wrap, which is slow-cooked, thin-sliced, and marinated lamb and beef wrapped in lavosh bread with lettuce, tomato, onion, and tahini sauce. We topped it off with Kurdish Baklava - layers of filo dough with pistachios and a not-so-sweet syrup that will leave your mouth watering.

After the first Recession Food Pantry, my spouse Jeannie joined us and we marched down to City Kebab because Maggi dearly desired to have a hamburger. Their Mediterranean Burger is not a hamburger. It is better. It is charcoal-grilled ground beef with herbs (very aromatic), served with a large salad that beams bright colors of the lettuce and other vegetables. Do not be foolish, as I was, and ask for ketchup. You won't need it. The burger will awaken all the taste buds in your mouth and you will be anxious to have the next bite. If you do want some sauce, there is a small jar of tahini sauce on all the tables. We ended the meal with a Rice Pudding that is more than delicious.

Prices are reasonable. Mention to Cem that you are from Old First and on Pastor Maggi's good persons list and he will treat you with much dignity and you will leave having eaten of delicious Mediterranean cuisine made by Kurds from Turkey.

City Kabab. 1338 Polk Street. 415.440.4410 www.citykebabsf.com

*Note: I was trying to think of a catchy title for this column and I was wishing that Maggi's name could have been Faith. So, a new contest: submit to Buddy (buddychoy@gmail.com) your title for this new column before July 15; the winner will be invited to dine with Maggi and Buddy when we next venture onto Polk Street.