

Shared Life of Old First – June 2009

Old First's June calendar

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

Old First Photostream website -- <http://www.flickr.com/photos/oldfirst/>

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June 2009

Shared Life

of Old First Presbyterian Church

Recession Relief Food Pantry at Old First begins June 6

Old First has answered a request from the San Francisco Food Bank to house and staff a Recession Relief Food Pantry on Saturday mornings, beginning June 6. Since the need for food for those of working age has recently risen by 20%, the Food Bank is opening short-term relief pantries from June through December to meet this growing need.

We will 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 will be stored at the church. The Food Bank will deliver a supply on Saturday morning, and it will all be distributed.

A pantry is a weekly farmer's market style grocery distribution held at the same time each week in a convenient, dignified and respectful atmosphere. Pantry participants select food from a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, dry and canned goods, bread and perishable items. Services at Recession Relief Food Pantries will be available to San Franciscans who have recently faced job loss or hours cutbacks as a result of the decline in the economy.

Elder Michael Berg and Pastor Maggi and a core group of four people have begun the initial planning. There will be an overall coordinator. Each Saturday we will need at least 10 volunteers, a team leader, and coordinators. These volunteers will come from the membership of Old First, our families, friends and co-workers; we're counting on our neighboring churches too. We need folks to volunteer to work at least one Saturday a month. You can call the church office or sign up at coffee hour after worship.

Pastor Maggi says, "The call to be of help to our neighbors in need and the conviction that the church has to be about feeding the body as well as the soul has moved us to take this leap of faith. It might be chaotic at first, and we probably will make some mistakes – but we will learn in the doing, and God will be with us."

The Day of Pentecost, May 31

*** We expect the Spirit to manifest in our Pentecost worship service in a number of ways – and we've even made plans for most of them. All are invited to turn up at 11 am, wearing something red, and see what happens.

*** The Pentecost Offering will benefit the younger members of God's family; 40 percent will be used to support children at risk in this community.

*** We'll celebrate Old First's 160th birthday with an Anniversary Lunch in the Fellowship Hall. Those who prefer not to bring a side dish or salad can chip in \$6 toward the cost of entrees and dessert. The program will feature news of ways our historic church is being renewed and challenged in this memorable year. (And a hint about dessert – visualize the birthday cake.)

Maggi's musings

As I sit at my desk and my mind swirls as I think about all the e-mails to be returned, the sermon yet to be finished, working out details on the Recession Relief Pantry we will be hosting at OFPC and a mountain of other details and projects I have yet to complete, I get a bit overwhelmed. Then I find myself remembering that in June 8-25th I will be taking part in a spiritual pilgrimage to France. It is a time away to rest, to have plenty of time to hear the Spirit's voice, and to just plain old enjoy the adventure in being in France. The Reverend Leslie Veen will be preaching June 14 and 21; pastoral emergencies will be covered by pastors at our neighboring Presbyterian churches.

Read a bit about the trip:

A pilgrimage is more than just a trip to distant lands, it is a spiritual adventure. Because we believe that all of life is sacred, any or every aspect of this pilgrimage can be the key to opening us to receive the touch of the Holy in new and awesome ways — the planning, the travel, the people we meet, the cuisine, the foreign language, the cathedrals and abbeys, and the celebrations — they are all God's good gifts to us. So come, join this spiritual adventure and become a pilgrim.

You are invited to participate in a 15-day pilgrimage crossing ancient *Portals to the Sacred* that pilgrims have traversed for centuries. These external thresholds invite interior exploration as you enter luminal space. You will join the footsteps of some of the early monks of medieval France as you experience and encounter passageways to the Holy.

We will travel by vans from Paris to Vezelay — a 12th century village perched on a hill in Burgundy — from which many a pilgrimage began. Our focus, *Portals to the Sacred*, will take you from there to some of the sites sacred to the Benedictine and Cistercian monastic movements in Burgundy: Cluny, Fontenay and Brancion. With Cluny as a home base, we will worship with the community at Taizé, a portal through which many pilgrims today encounter God. At Taizé we will gather for *Prayer Around the Cross* on Friday, June 12, the *Service of Light* on Saturday, June 13 and the *Feast of the Resurrection* Sunday, June 14.

From Cluny, we will make our way to the heart of Burgundy staying in Dijon exploring the delights and wonder of this ancient city. A day-trip will be made to the medieval walled city of Beaune, having a glimpse of life in Medieval times as well as satisfy our senses with the cuisine of this region. Then to Chartres where we will explore one of Europe's most well known Cathedrals as well as the delightful city in which it is located. With other pilgrims, we will pray/walk the ancient labyrinth — a different portal to the sacred — located in the nave of the cathedral. From Chartres, we will return to Paris allowing you to be a pilgrim in the "city of light" where wonderful museums, churches, architecture and boulevards await your discovery.

Now I expect you can understand why I am so excited. I hope to come home well rested and recharged and filled with amazing stories. I will covet your prayers while I am away.

Peace, ☐☐
Pastor Maggi

June 7 – Name Tag Sunday

Wear your own name tag and take a look at others

June 21 Workshop on Prayers of the People

One of the special aspects of the worship service at Old First is lay leadership. Members of the church serve as liturgists and lead us in the Prayers of the People. We hear a variety of voices and styles of expression, different approaches, all with the same purpose -- thanking God for our many blessings and asking for intercessions in our lives. We are always seeking new voices to keep our worship fresh and new.

So....please come to a workshop led by the Rev. Erwin Barron on Sunday, June 21 at 1:00 pm to learn about how to lead the congregation in the Prayers of the People. Even if you've done the prayers before, you might like a refresher. We'll meet in the Munro Room.

Many Thanks

to Daniel Pearch, Tracy Clagett, and all the hands that helped make the paper banner which graced our sanctuary during the Easter Season.

June Adult Education

Adult Christian Education on Sunday morning (9:30 am, Munro Room) will discuss the following topics: Micah, Sin as found in the Bible, Sin as seen by theologians, The Meaning of Salvation? Diane Molberg is also interested in continuing the discussion of "The Religious Poems of Emily Dickinson" Watch the Sunday morning bulletins for dates.

Congratulations

- to **Pam Byers** for graduating from San Francisco Theological Seminary on May 23 with a Master of Arts in Theological Studies.
- to **Bill Campbell**, on the publication of his history of the first 25 years of Larkin Street Youth Services, and for receiving a Nonprofit Board Leader of the Year 2009 award from the San Francisco Volunteer Center.

AIDS Walk 2009

Registration is now open for the 2009 AIDS Walk, to be held in Golden Gate Park on Sunday, July 19. 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!!

Katie Thompson - Director of Christian Education

On May 24th Old First welcomed Katie Thompson as our new Director of Christian Education. For the first month or so Katie's main job will be getting to know us and the job. Please make sure you tell her your name more than once. Feel free to invite Katie out to lunch after church and generally make her feel at home. Katie will concentrate on the Christian Education Program during the summer months. *In the fall she will move into a more broadly defined role as our seminary intern.* It is our expectation that by the fall the Christian Education program will have been strengthened under Katie's attention and she will spend more time on general intern duties.

Katie wrote the following piece for the Pacific School of Religion Bulletin and I think it will give you a taste of Katie's history and the amazing gifts she brings to Old First.

Pastor, Maggi

Becoming Progressive Christian Witnesses

By Katie Shaw Thompson, first-year MDiv student, Pacific School of Religion

My husband Parker and I went to the same high school in rural Pennsylvania, where people are much more likely to believe in creationism than in global warming, and where it would not be uncommon to see five SUVs with "W" bumper stickers parked next to an Amish buggy outside a local supermarket.

Both of the churches we grew up in were pastored by folks who were politically and theologically much more progressive than the majority of the congregation. And although both sets of pastors have moved on to retirement or other congregations, I believe it is the seeds those pastors planted that led us to grow uncomfortable with and to question what we were told we ought to believe. So, as we developed our own political opinions and identities, both of us fell away from the organized religion with which we were in conflict—and then we found Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, PA.

While the Brethren—a small, Anabaptist, German-rooted, historic peace church—have just as wide a mix of viewpoints and theologies as many other denominations, there was something much different about this church from any we had visited. The pastors acknowledged that stories in the Bible were shared with other faiths and cultures. The congregants wanted to pray for victims of social injustices, not just natural disasters. And they had formed a group called a "sustainability circle" to support ecological justice. To us, this church was our burning bush. Throughout our year with them our passion for politics and faith grew together and grew stronger until we felt called to take the next step.

We talked about the Brethren Volunteer Service and seminary with our pastors, and then one night in May (months after the application deadline) I called Pacific School of Religion's admissions office and spoke with Joellynn Monahan. PSR had been highly recommended by a respected friend and had greatly impressed us with the theology we found on its Web site. I explained to Joellynn that I was asking about applying for the following year; but after we talked for awhile, she asked, with the grace of a pastor, if we were so impassioned to come to seminary, why wait? And so, last August we packed our belongings, our 50-pound dog, and ourselves into our 15-year-old Honda Civic and drove the majority of Interstate 80 to reach what my father had called "the land of fruits and nuts"—and he wasn't talking about the food—Berkeley, California.

When we arrived in Berkeley, I expected there to be a protest or a rally on every corner. I knew this was not Berkeley of the '60s, but I was fully ready to burn things down and march on Rome—in fact, I could not wait to get arrested if that was what was needed! By now, I have attended some rallies and protests, but what I was first confronted with were

Becoming Progressive Christian Witnesses (continued from p. 4)

not large dramatic actions but tough personal questions, with which I needed to struggle in order to grow. While that growth has not always been easy—it has often been painful—Parker and I have both come to the conclusion that PSR is exactly where we were meant to have this experience.

Although we have often found more questions than answers, and we have been frustrated by the imperfections of this institution, we have found here a safe and nurturing, yet challenging and engaging, environment that we both needed to be able to grow into ourselves and become strong, healthy, spiritual leaders. I am not sure there is any other school or any other town in the world quite like this school and this town. And although I would not hesitate to join my classmates in referring to this place as “Bezerkeley,” I believe in many ways this is the land of milk and honey.

At PSR I have not found a place that is free from racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, imperialism, and ecological injustices, but a place where people are talking about these problems, engaging these issues, and seeking to dismantle the structures that support domination and oppression. At PSR I have been plunged into an environment of diversity I had never experienced before. It has challenged me to confront many issues I have never had to think about, including my own white privilege and heterosexism. Instead of being taught to call out these faults in others, I have been challenged to start by searching my own heart.

As first-year MDiv students, Parker and I were also challenged to begin our own inner spiritual journeys—for example, in Boyung Lee and Joe Driskill’s “Spiritual Disciplines” course. As Protestants from a region that seems entrenched in Puritan influence, at first we were very uncomfortable with the idea of a personal spirituality that Joe and Boyung were talking about. But we stayed in the class, and we struggled with this idea of spirituality and a spiritual practice until we had learned more about ourselves, our theologies, and our own connections to the divine than we had ever expected. It was when I carried a sign about inclusive Christian love into a post-election Prop 8 protest and discussed my faith with protest-goers to and from San Francisco on BART, and when I sat in the middle of the quad and led *Lectio Divina*, as Cal football fans passed us on the way back to their cars, that I knew I was becoming truly comfortable with myself and with my spirituality.

When we went home for Christmas it was clear we had changed. For me, it was almost as if I took Berkeley and PSR with me. Because I now knew that there was a place where people who thought more like me were in the majority, and I was more comfortable with myself—I could walk, talk, and live more confidently than before, even when surrounded by those who oppose what I believe. I could begin to grasp the next big lesson that PSR is teaching me: that we will never change the hearts of hard-line conservative Christians, like the ones populating the majority of central Pennsylvania, by screaming at people who do not recycle, by arguing over Leviticus, or by holding peace rallies. All these things have their place, and I will not stop doing them. But I am now beginning to understand that we will only win over those who oppose our beliefs by loving them, by finding ways to work with them, and by doing our best to live our lives as impassioned but caring, progressive Christian witnesses.

Lectionary

June 7	<i>Trinity Sunday</i> – Isa 6:1-8; Ps 29; Rom 8:12-17; John 3:1-17
June 14	<i>11th Sunday in Ordinary Time</i> – 1 Sam 15:34-16:13; Ps 20; 2 Cor 5:6-10(11-13) 14-17; Mark 4:26-34
June 21	<i>12th Sunday in Ordinary Time</i> – 1 Sam 17:(1a, 4-11, 19-23) 32-49 and Ps. 9:9-20; or 1 Sam 17:57-18:5, 10-16 and Ps 133; 2 Cor 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41
June 28	<i>13th Sunday in Ordinary Time</i> – 2 Sam 1:1, 17-27; Ps 130; 2 Cor 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43
July 5	<i>14th Sunday in Ordinary Time</i> – 2 Sam 5:1-5, 9-10; Ps 48; 2 Cor 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

Rediscovering Faith Through Fiction Making a Place for God - Part III

Diane Molberg

Everything is gestation and then bringing forth. Rainer Maria Rilke

When we create, we begin a journey with our spiritual selves that often begins in isolation and moves into a kind of holy solitude.

Old First is a *profoundly* creative environment. We have writers, painters, dancers. We have readers, musicians, and scholars. We have cooks, storytellers, and, with all this creative spirit, surely we have dreamers.

Yes, the music is a ministry, but the voices, combined and individually, are grace notes of creative elegance and beauty. A cornerstone in making a place for God. Jay Pierson's brilliant compositions are part of the foundation, as are Pastor Maggi's sermons, rich with literary references, humor and relevance to our dreams. *The children of Old First* reinforce the need for boldness and energy, play and awe, in the act of creating. Indeed, their spirit is the essence of creativity.

For Sue Monk Kidd, building her creative and spiritual life was much like the child's game of moving a pencil from dot to dot until eventually a whole picture emerges. In *First Light: The Early Inspirational Writings*, Kidd traces her creative/spiritual development based on thirteen motifs ranging from "The Crucible of Story" to "Compassion," "Solitude," "Severe Grace," "Letting Go."

In "The Crucible of Stories," she writes "finding our personal stories is a spiritual quest." Our inner stories, she states, give us identity, transform our vision, and help us understand the mystery of self. Such examination leads us to study the mystery of the Divine as well, as so thoroughly demonstrated in Emily Dickenson's poetry, for whom the journey was everything.

A prolific keeper of journals which she wrote well into her eighties and until her death, May Sarton wrote, in *Journal of A Solitude*: "I have felt that the work of art, (I am thinking especially of poetry) a kind of dialogue between me and God, must present resolution rather than conflict." And later, "It is only when we can believe we are creating the soul, that life has any meaning..." Journals are a valuable tool in making a place for God and the artist to communicate.

Countless artists write of their spiritual quest. Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* encourages the artist to constantly ask questions; almost any work of Annie Dillard is grounded in a theology of nature. Flannery O'Connor's short fiction, or her essays in *Mystery and Manners*, Annie Lamott's *Bird by Bird*, and other works, reveal creating as a solitary enterprise that ends in light and love. That enriches both the artist and the audience.

Writing these pieces for *Shared Life* has become my creative journey. I have found a new relationship to reading and talking about literature, and to my own writing. I'm blessed by the creative energy of Old First. The journey is deeper because of the creative fellowship along the path.

Gold Circle – Members of Old First for 50 years or more

Emma Lee	1945
Bill Wunsch	1953
Euphemia Felicitas	1956
Doris Bebb	1958

Silver Circle – Members of Old First for 25 years or more

Jim Wilson, 1961; Mary Lou Wilson, 1961; Peggy Utterback, 1963; Josephine Yee, 1963; Jessie McFadyen, 1964; Joan Dills St Clair, 1964; Mary MacWilliam, 1965; Joe Ballard -1965; Charles Olson, 1966; Charles Burns, 1970; Charles Rambo, 1970; Bill Campbell, 1971; Marilyn Campbell, 1971; John Sebastian, 1972; Pam Sebastian, 1972; Cindy Burt, 1973; David Maxwell, 1974; Chris Burt, 1975; Bill Feister, 1978; Steve Taber, 1979; Jim Baubel, 1980; Sarah Taber, 1980; Michael Wilson, 1980; Phil Pollock, 1980; Augusta Duncan, 1980; Tina Wilson, 1980; Rose Marie Springer, 1980; Jerry Stuart, 1981; Rosemary Bledsoe, 1982; Nancy Day, 1982; Katie Olson, 1982; Lori Yamauchi, 1982; Mary Culp, 1983; Buddy Tate Choy, 1984; Jim Fagler, 1984; Dan Joraanstad, 1984; Glen Potter, 1984

Quote of the Month

Personal, but not Private

From *Rethinking Evangelism* by Ben Campbell Johnson

A contemporary theology of evangelism must be grounded in the church for a number of reasons. The redemptive act of Christ was corporate, one in which the whole world has been reconciled; therefore, the experience of that reconciliation must be corporate. Christ incarnates himself in the church, his body; thus a witness of Christ to the world originates in this community where Christ has chosen to live

The corporate life of the church mediates a transforming, converting power that creates and sustains faith, a reality that complements and completes the witness of individuals. Since reconciliation with God is personal but not private, it is necessary for believers to participate in the community that mediates and sustains faith.

The church is Christ, existing as community The church as the bearer of Christ's presence extends the incarnation and continues the ministry of Christ on earth. This corporate fellowship of believers re-presents Christ to the world. The church speaks the word of Christ. The church reconciles. The church seeks the lost. The church heals the broken. The church seeks peace on earth and goodwill among all persons. The ministries that Christ began when he was among us in the flesh, the church continues.

Since the church, both corporately and through its individual members, often betrays this holy calling, how can it claim to be the visible presence of Christ? This betrayal does not annul the intention of God that the church incarnate the presence of Jesus Christ. Human disobedience cannot cancel God's promise and purpose.

Long ago the church recognized that God's use of this community, or of individuals within it, did not depend upon the moral goodness or the perfection of the instrument. It is not the church's goodness that makes it a bearer of the Holy. The church can only be called "the body of Christ," a bearer of his presence, through grace, a grace which operates in spite of the church's disobedience and failure. The "in spite of" character of the church points toward its justification by faith, just as the individual members are justified by faith.

