

January 2010

Shared Life

of Old First Presbyterian Church

January 3 – Name Tag Sunday:

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

January 10-Recession Relief Food Pantry Volunteer Thank you-Worship Service

January 24- Sign up begins for Congregational Luncheon

February 14-Congregational Luncheon

February 27-28 - Interspiritual Wisdom: Sharing the Mystic Heart: First United Lutheran Church Contact Pastor Jay Wilson at jay@welcomeministry.org for information.

Shared Life Deadlines -- e-mail articles to molberg@earthlink.net

4 For February -- Sunday, January 17

4 For March issue – Sunday, February 14

Recession Relief Food Pantry

December 19 marked the end of our grant from the Food Bank to open a six-month Recession Relief Food Pantry. We are thankful for all the prayers, support and amazing volunteers, and especially thankful for the work of coordinators Betsy Chiao and Buddy Tate Choy. Buddy and Betsy have been hardworking, faithful and inspiring. On Ekipany Sunday, January 10, the church will honor and give thanks to all the volunteers that made the Food Pantry such a success.

Annual Meeting and Congregational Luncheon: February 14: SIGN-UP BEGINS
SUN. JAN. 24

Good reasons to come to the annual Old First Family Sunday Luncheon next month!

- The Congregational Care Team of the Community Building Committee will provide the main course;
- Members and friends will contribute to the potluck of Old First favorites (corn pudding, anyone?) It's no secret the best cooks in town are at Old First!
- If you can't bring a dish, just chip in \$6.00; the same as last year.

Christmas Gift Market Update

Whether gift items to wrap up, or gift cards to send to people, everyone found something at this year's **Christmas Gift Market**. These groups are grateful for your contributions: the Doris Krauss Senior Center, (\$120), Larkin Street Youth Services, (\$195), the Deacon's Fund, (\$410), the Peace & Justice Fair Trade Project, (\$400), gift items from Sunbula (\$425), and the many outreach programs of Alternative Gifts International (\$1,300). The Old First Choir sold 20 CDs on just one day proving the gift of music is perfect for Christmas! The Alberto Barrios Children's Library participated for the first time at both Gift Markets. A *Wish List* for books was made up for donors to purchase in honor of a special person. Priscilla Yu and Lori Yamauchi thank you for your donations.

Maggi's Musings

As you read this newsletter it is 2010. We have watched the ball fall from Times Square, exclaimed "Happy New Year!" at the stroke of midnight, or maybe we fell asleep by 10:00 p.m. and never made it till midnight. But I have a confession to make. As I write this "Maggi's Musings," it is still 2009. The fourth week of Advent is just days away, and the Christmas Eve service, and the December the 27th service, all making demands on my mind and spirit. I can barely imagine what I will be doing on New Year's Eve much less say anything insightful or fresh about moving into 2010.

And then I remember it isn't up to me to create something awe inspiring, thought provoking or even mildly amusing. The best words about living anew are found in scripture in the book of Revelations. I simply need to listen, to trust, and to be inspired by the words that God's people have been drinking in for thousands of years.

Revelations 21:5- 6 And the one who was seated on the throne said "See, I am making all things new..... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."

Jesus Christ offers us new life this day, this year, and every day and every year forward. The new thing would be that we actually take time to listen, to pay attention, to hope, and to believe in God's love and to become the new creations God longs for us to become.

May it be so.
Peace, Maggi.

PPPPPP

Congratulations!

ANDREW S.CHANG, in a Ceremonial Induction on December 3, 2009, was sworn in as a Judge of the Superior Court of the State of California and County of San Francisco. We are so proud of Andrew. Details on the Induction in the February issue.

Change in Serving Communion

We celebrate Communion on the first Sunday of the month through distribution to the pews, and on the third Sundays by Intinction and at other special times such as Lent, Easter, World Communion, Advent and church Retreats. The Pastor and the Worship Committee looked at how we serve Communion in light of our being stewards of our resources. We recommended to Session that we serve Communion by Intinction only. Session agreed and this practice will begin this month.

We replaced our glass communion cups 15 years ago because of the time involved in hygienically cleaning them, and began using disposable plastic communion cups. However, this is now an unsustainable use. Our Communion service-ware also needs to be replaced. Passing the communion tray or plate to each other in the pew with the words of remembrance is a reminder that we are members of the priesthood of all believers and that Communion is an invitation from Christ to all people and not just the province of the clergy. We do not lose that sense of invitation and serving by moving to Intinction.

Intinction is a public affirmation and response to Christ's invitation to the Table. We move as pilgrims in joy to the Table to receive the Elements from either the Pastor or Elders and Deacons. During communion by Intinction, we break off a piece of the bread that's offered, and dip it into the wine or juice. This supports public health and is a safe way to share the Communion elements.

As always, healing Prayers will be available in the side chapel during Communion with an Elder or the Pastor on both Sundays. The Worship Committee will continue to explore ways of serving Communion that refresh and remind us of Christ's incredible and profound invitation that each time we eat together, we remember Him.

Adult Education Classes

Adult Sunday morning Christian Education programs will not be held through January as we assess ways to nourish our Adult learners. We will offer a Lenten program. Look for the description in the February *Shared Life*. Keep on the lookout for more discussions with Diane Molberg on religion through the lens of poetry. These sessions have been rewarding for all those who attended.

Winter-Spring Children Education

Jeannie Choy Tate has provided leadership and a meeting place for members to plan sessions on various topics of interest and appeal to the children of Old First. The topics for January through March include:

- Epiphany January 3 and 10
- Calling the disciples and other disciple stories January 17 through February 7
- Wilderness temptation February 14 and 21
- Prodigal son February 28 through March 14
- Palm Sunday March 14 and 28

Fifth Sunday Meeting-January 31

An informal, informational meeting on Christian Education will be held in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, January 31 at 12:30. Pastor Maggi's sermons form a common foundation, but Sunday

morning discussions, meetings after church, retreats, mid-week forums, small groups, etc. are open for discussion. Bring your ideas! What topics interest you? Do you want to join a small group? What is a small group? When is the best time for you to meet?

Lectionary

Jan. 3 Jer. 31:7-14; Ps. 147:12-20; Eph. 1:3-14; John (1-9) 10-18

Jan. 10 Isa.43:1-7; Ps.29; Acts 8:14-17; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Jan. 17 Isa.62:1-5; Ps.36:5-10;Cor.12:1-11; John 2:1-11

Jan. 24 Neh.8:1-3; 5-6,8-10, Ps.19; 1 Cor.12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21

Jan. 31 Jer.1:4-10;Ps.71 1-6;1Cor.13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30

The Doris Krauss Senior Center

Reverend Genie Kinney, Director of the Senior Center, reports that Sean Smith, Doris Krauss's grandson generously donated \$1800 plus substantial donations from others, to the Senior Center. As a result, funding for a nurse and support for food and kitchen personnel now has good financial support for 2010. Please help support this vital arm of the Old First Community by putting a check in the collection plate made out to The Doris Krauss Senior Center. Sarah Taber can also take checks. More details on the Center's activities for 2010 will appear in February's *Shared Life*.

The Columbarium

The Columbarium Society hosted their annual meeting and tea on All Saints Day in the Munro Room. Members included those who have purchased either a Niche, a Plaque, or both. Tracy Claggett did a lovely job on the official Register, and Marne Krozek provided delicious food and sweets. Stephen Taber gave details on the current status of the Columbarium and his vision for the future of the space. In conclusion, members were blessed with a prayer led by Pastor Maggi in the calm and peace of the Columbarium.

On November 29, Pastor Maggi dedicated a plaque in the Columbarium for Helen Ramona DuBois, Evelyn Molberg's mother, and Diane's grandmother. It was a special, moving moment, and Evelyn and Diane thank Pastor Maggi and those friends who attended.

Sessions Report to the Congregation

As a possible precursor to considering same-sex marriages in the Presbyterian Church, the 2008 General Assembly established a broadly representative Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage. It was charged with studying and reporting on "the history of the laws governing marriage and civil union, including current policy debates; how the theology and practice of marriage have developed in the Reformed and broader Christian tradition; the relationship between civil union and Christian marriage; the effects of current laws on same-gender partners and their children; and the place of covenanted same-gender partnerships in the Christian community." A draft report was released in September and invited Presbyterians to comment on it. The Old First Session approved and sent the following response in November.

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your service on the Special Committee to Study Issues of Civil Union and Christian Marriage. You have wrestled on all our behalf with important and challenging issues. We are especially grateful for your reminder that the church belongs not to any of us but to Christ, and we gladly embrace your covenant, "Those whom Christ has joined together, let no one separate."

Nevertheless, we believe you have not completed your assigned work and hope that in your next meeting and your final report to the General Assembly, you will. It is not enough simply to “acknowledge the presence of same-gender partners in our communities and congregations.” Members of our congregation play important roles in our community of faith regardless of their sexual orientation, and are equally deserving of respect and pastoral care.

While the majority of our congregation is heterosexual, we are blessed by numbers of very active gay or lesbian members. They teach Sunday school, sing in the choir, usher, visit shut-ins, overhaul our website, serve on committees – in short, they are core, active, equal members of the congregation.

Many of these members are in “covenanted same-gender partnerships.” Indeed, during the summer and fall of 2008, several of these pairs legally married under the laws of California. It was very important to these couples, and to our whole congregation, that their marriages could be celebrated in our church. Our pastor, acting as an agent of the state, married them – as she does other couples in the congregation. And acting as a Presbyterian clergywoman, she exhorted them in faithful living and invoked God’s blessing on their covenantal commitments. Our whole congregation rejoiced with them.

Of course most Presbyterian congregations in California did not celebrate these weddings – nor did they need to. Our “mutual forbearance” means that we would not dream of asking any pastor or session to perform or countenance a ceremony that violates their conscience or understanding of scripture. But our pastor’s conscience and scriptural interpretation, and those of most members of our session and congregation wanted to encourage these faithful covenants. We believe that many or most people find their discipleship is best lived out in a faithful covenant with another Christian. Those of us who have not found a life partner are mystified and saddened that some Presbyterians would deny this blessing to some couples, based on an alleged prohibition that was never mentioned by Jesus.

The decision of whether or not to invoke God’s blessing on any particular marriage is entirely within the discretion of pastors. No one can force a pastor to perform a wedding that violates his or her conscience. But we strongly believe that the same pastoral discretion should apply to pastors who wish to support GLBT members of their congregation in making vows of covenant fidelity. The current definition in the Directory for Worship of marriage as “a civil contract between a man and a woman” is factually wrong in several states (the number changes almost monthly). The Presbyterian Church permits pastors to ask God’s blessing on new homes, businesses, boats, and pets. Fortunately, the church decided in 2000-01 that pastors could perform “holy unions.”

We urge your committee to recommend at minimum that in states that permit civil marriage for same-gender couples, Presbyterian clergy will have the freedom and pastoral discretion to perform any legal marriages they wish, without fear of ecclesiastical charges. We believe this will best reflect God’s call to all Christians to live with integrity in all relationships of life.

Blessings on your ongoing work, and thank you for your service!

The Session of the Old First Presbyterian Church, San Francisco (The oldest Protestant congregation in California)

OLD FIRST CONCERT SERIES Concerts - \$15 general admission, \$12 students/seniors
 Old First Concerts, begun by Pastor John Bodo, has been called “a jewel in the crown of San Francisco’s music community.” In 2009, 6,300 people attended concerts. We showcased the careers of about 173 musicians. Our funding includes William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, and The Bernard Osher Foundation. Our most important supporter is Old First. The commitment of the church to the community is clear. As a way of expressing our thanks we are inviting any church member to come to concerts at no cost. Please call Kathy Barr at 415-474-1608 if you’d like to attend a concert. www.oldfirstconcerts.org

Friday, January 22 at 8 PM

Adam Tendler, *prepared piano*

Sunday, January 24 at 4 PM

Dan Carlson, *violin*; Robert Howard, *cello*; Elizabeth Dorman, *piano*

Friday, January 29 at 8 PM

New Pacific Trio

Ann Miller, *violin*; Nina Flyer, *cello*; Sonia Leong, *piano*

Sunday, January 31 at 4 PM

Hausmann Quartet

Revolutionary Traditionalists

Isaac Allen and; Bram Goldstein, *violins*; Yuan Zhang, *cello*; Angela Choong, *viola*

Hello from your new editor of *Shared Life*

A little over a year ago I asked Rosemary if she’d be interested in my submitting pieces on literature, specifically fiction, that reflects various aspects and values of faith. “Maybe even once a month,” I said. Her eyes widened and a happy gleam appeared in the way only Rosemary’s eyes can widen and gleam. “Yes!” She said. “How about next month?” Thus began a happy and productive collaboration and friendship.

I learned a lot from Rosemary. I learned that editors can, and should be generous with their writers, that it’s best to be nice to editors by submitting on time, that editing, and editing again, and proofing makes for a good piece of writing.

I like to think Rosemary learned some things from me as well, another aspect to a healthy editor/writer relationship. I’m proud to say she read *The Hummingbird’s Daughter*, *Dandelion Wine*, and *The Camel Bookmobile* after reading my reviews. Well, and perhaps because I thrust the latter into her hands one Sunday morning, and stood in the bookstore with her another time to be sure she purchased *Dandelion Wine*. Our mutual friend, Rev. Genie Kinney had something to do with backing me up on *The Hummingbird’s Daughter*.

One thing that has always impressed me is the creativity and talent of our congregation. While *Shared Life* will stay the same, I’d love to add more personal “passions” in these pages. Cooking, gardening, woodworking, walking, sailing, fishing, dancing, music....there’s any number of interesting things we do, or are interested in, that we should *share* with each other in the pages of *Shared Life*. And not just hobbies, but professional expertise as well: health, legal issues, and financial concerns.

May I be so bold as to ask you to take a page from my book. Propose a short piece (mid-size paragraph is fine) on something you like. It might enrich your spiritual well-being or just make you feel satisfied. Maybe the scent of roses makes you feel all young and giddy or incomparably elegant, and your rose garden shows this. Or your mother’s recipe for spaghetti sauce really *is* the best ever and when you were little, you wanted to grow up and be a great Chef. Maybe you have a favorite recipe to share. Make my eyes widen and a happy gleam appear. It is a profound honor to take over the editorship of *Shared Life*. I will need your help and your prayers,

and especially your voice. I know you'll be there. Please direct articles, notices, and announcements in email by the end of the deadline date to: molberg@earthlink.net.
Peace, Diane

The Doris Krauss Senior Center

Reverend Genie Kinney, Director of the Senior Center, reports that Sean Smith, Doris Krauss's grandson generously donated \$1800 plus substantial donations from others, to the Senior Center. As a result, funding for a nurse and support for food and kitchen personnel now has good financial support for 2010. Please help support this vital arm of the Old First Community by putting a check in the collection plate made out to The Doris Krauss Senior Center. Sarah Taber can also take checks. More details on the Center's activities for 2010 will appear in February's *Shared Life*.

Rediscovering Faith through Film

The Wizard of Oz - Katharine J. Yee

*This year represents the 70th Anniversary of an American Movie Classic, **The Wizard of Oz**. Katharine has attended worship with us at Old First on several occasions has shared this post from her blog in **Shared Life**. She is a past grand prizewinner in American Zoetrope Screenplay Competition.*

Worship is an underlying theme in *The Wizard of Oz*. It's in our best fantasy stories that we can challenge and examine, with near impunity and close depth, questions of faith and leadership. Dorothy and her friends decide they can go to the Great and Powerful Wizard and ask for their deepest desires. They feel they can turn to no one else and are simultaneously naïve and bold enough to believe they can appeal directly to an authority they've never met. The Wizard has an obligation to them because he is so gifted that he must share with those who are not. But in their journey to Oz, Dorothy & Co. find that they provide for themselves in friendship and fortitude. Metaphorically, that is the relationship between humankind and God. If God is who He's supposed to be, people expect Him to understand and provide. But the cosmic irony is that God depends on individuals to come to their achievements and to survive great adversity.

The argument for atheism is just as strong. There is no Great and Powerful Oz. There's just that man behind the curtain – pay no attention to him! We've created the legend of a supreme being and swindled our-selves in the process. And yet, the awesome rumor of someone (or something) so beyond our mortal capacities may just be what we need to understand our place in the universe.

We can also ask ourselves if we've deified our leaders to unrecognizable proportions. The giant head shouldn't be talking to us. We should know what the true faces of our leaders are. And if we allow the tyranny of leadership to stop us, we become like the Munchkins and the castle guards who only realized their liberation through the unsolicited intervention of Dorothy. Tyranny is not so overwhelming that it can't be upended by a meek individual. The Wicked Witch laments as she melts: "What a world, what a world! Who would've thought a good little girl, like you, could destroy my beautiful wickedness!"

Theology and politics are not the ultimate lessons in *The Wizard of Oz*. What Dorothy and the audience must really consider is home. Glinda tells Dorothy that she's always had the power to go back to Kansas, but she had to learn it for herself. When asked what she's learned, Dorothy replies: "If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look any further than my own backyard. Because if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with. "

In this day and age of unstable and even abusive home lives, it's a little hard to justify Dorothy's conclusion simplistically. And yet, it is simple. There is no place like home, if you've got one where you are safe and loved unconditionally. We all need a place to return to, one that knows us absolutely and accepts us as we are.

The Officers of Old First Church

Deacons - Nina Berg, transportation, funding requests, communion clean-up; Tracy Clagett, prayer coordinator; Mary Culp, treasurer, funding requests; Pam Free, co-moderator; Dan Joraanstad, secretary; Craig Kehne, coffee hour; Diane Lewis, funding requests; Heather Losee, co-moderator; Dianne Middleton, transportation; Dana Nojima, merchandise sales; Oliver Spencer, memorials and meals; Priscilla Yu, memorials and meals

Elders - George Becker, Personnel; Michael Berg, Mission and Giving/Stewardship; Christopher Burt, Worship; Pam Byers, Personnel; Jeanne Choy Tate, Special Projects/ Liaison for DCE; Barry Clagett, Finance; Bob Hermann, Community Building; Kristi Hoerauf, Finance; Jeanne Kirkwood, Clerk of Session; Alfred Martin, Worship; Charles Olson, Operations; Jean Olson, Christian Education; Mary Russell, Mission and Giving; John Sebastian, Planning Elder; George Yu, Christian Education.