

Shared Life

The Monthly Newsletter of Old First Presbyterian Church

September 2015

Church Website: oldfirst.org

Church Photostream: www.flickr.com/photos/oldfirst

Old First Concerts: www.oldfirstconcerts.org

MAGGI'S MUSINGS

As I write this I am sitting at my desk which already looks like a bit of tornado has struck: There is sun pouring in the window, wonderful smells are drifting up from the Senior Center lunch being cooked, I am trying to ignore the noise from work going on in Bank of America just outside my window, I am wearing a beautiful floral lei presented to me in worship as a welcome home gift, and all the while I am preparing to lead a graveside service in Colma for a community member who took part in many of our outreach activities. I am thrilled to be back in the midst of this life. I am pleased to be once again preaching, pastoring and being in this community of Old First Presbyterian Church.

I am thankful for gift of the pulpit exchange with St. Andrews Parish East in Glasgow, Scotland this summer. They were a kind, gracious, patient, and enjoyable congregation to live and worship with. I have much to ponder about what it means to be a person of faith in that situation and how it informs, defines and maybe reshapes how I look at ministry here. I suspect you too have enjoyed and learned from your time with St. Andrews East's pastor, Barbara Quigley. I look forward in the coming months to share what I learned and to hear what you learned during this exchange time.

Peace, Pastor Maggi

FROM THE REVEREND BARBARA QUIGLEY, MINISTER OF ST. ANDREW'S EAST PARISH, GLASGOW

Thank you very much for your generosity and concern and welcome to me as your exchange pastor. I have had a great time with some things never to be repeated (appendectomy). My hospitalisation brought home to me that we are part of the one Christian family, the church... I also treasure the British National Health Service.

On my return [to Scotland] I will do a more formal report, but in the meantime, "thank you!"

Barbara

FEATURE: "THEOLOGY PUB," FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHLAND, OREGON

Excerpted from *Bringing Good News: 40 Stories of Congregations and the Ministries that Transformed Them*, H. Simmons and R. Boyer, editors. Richmond, VA: Union Presbyterian Seminary, 2014, pp. 65-66.

"You're the pastor who drinks in bars, right?"

"Don't you run some kind of bar ministry?"

These are not unusual questions for people to ask me since starting up Theology Pub in Ashland, Oregon. A few months ago, almost 50 people crowded together in a local pub in Ashland to discuss the theme of anxiety in their lives. At that point, this was the highest turnout we'd had for Theology Pub, program our church began back in the summer of 2012. The diverse cross-

section of folks present for the gathering was amazing. Probably a third of those present were from our church, First Presbyterian Church of Ashland. We had some folks in their 20s and 30s, and even had a few octogenarians present for the event. Others came because they were friends that I made through local Facebook and Twitter connections. While many of them had no formal connection with a faith community, they loved the idea of being able to gather in a place like a local pub for religious and spiritual conversations. There were a few other pastors present, as well as some folks who came because they had seen our Theology Pub posters up around town, at local grocery stores and coffee shops.

We ran through our ground rules for Theology Pub, and then our guest facilitator shared some thoughts on anxiety, and how to move from living a life that is rooted and grounded in anxiety to one that is rooted and grounded in love. We then broke up into small groups. The guest facilitator and I rotated between groups, getting a chance to hear parts of conversations that lasted about two hours, with some groups ending earlier and spending the rest of the time chatting, getting to know new folks and hearing people's stories.

One participant shared that he felt like something was missing in his life, but didn't quite know what it was. he said, "I'm just not at a point in my life where I could even imagine walking into a church, showing up on Sunday morning. but I saw this poster, liked the idea behind the group, and figured that I could certainly show up at a pub and talk. That seemed safe."

That is why we do Theology Pub. Theology Pub is both an outreach of our church and a program sponsored by our Christian Education Committee. However, our context of Ashland, Oregon, has allowed Theology Pub to be more diverse than simply a "Christian" education event. I've invited rabbis to come and help facilitate conversations, and those who attend run the gamut from Presbyterians, to seekers, to Jews, to the "spiritual but not religious," to those who would claim to be atheists.

Since the summer of 2012 we've had many wonderful conversations on a variety of topics. We've discussed pluralism and how people of faith can hold onto their beliefs with integrity and do so in a way that respects the beliefs of others. We've discussed the Bible, the metaphors we use to describe its significance in our lives, and what issues we have with the Bible. Last summer, we discussed the Aurora, Colorado, shooting and the shooting in the Sikh Gurdwara [in Wisconsin], and how fear and "othering" can lead people to commit horrific acts of violence. A local rabbi led us in a conversation about rethinking the Divine in quantum terms instead of medieval imagery, which led to a diverse group sharing their experiences of God in their lives. We discussed suffering and share how we experience God, or don't, amidst the tragic losses and journeys of grief in our lives. And we discussed anxiety in our culture and what spiritual practices can lead us to a life of freedom, rather than one of anxiety.

Our congregation has really gotten behind the idea as well, and as we have continued to host more conversations around town, I've seen a sharp increase in the number of attendees who come out from 8:30 pm to 11:00 pm on a weeknight for these conversations. They're bringing their friends whom they wouldn't normally bring to church.

It's exciting to see that people in both our church community and in the greater community have responded very well to providing this space for discussion. Maybe it's true that theology goes down a little easier with a pint. Theology Pub is able to meet the need for theological reflection and sharing in ways that other churches' ministries (including ours) weren't able to meet.

SMALL GROUP TOPIC: A PRIMER ON BAPTISM BY JEAN OLSON

Small groups, clusters of adults formed to study the Bible and other topics, have a long history at OFPC. The 1st and 3rd Monday group has recently begun a Kerygma study of the Bible and Theology focusing on the sacraments and eschatology. We have just finished a four session discussion on baptism and would like to share a summary of what we learned with everyone. This is particularly timely in that there will be a baptism in September. We would also like to invite all other small groups to share some topic of discussion by sending in a short article to Kristi Hoerauf so that one may be selected each month for this new column.

Sacraments were defined by Augustine as “visible signs of divine things.”¹ Protestants identify two sacraments, baptism and communion, as instituted by Christ. Images of water as a source of life, a cleanser or a provider of refreshment for the soul are roots of baptism found in the Old Testament. References to baptism throughout the New Testament form the foundation of our understanding of this sacrament. These references include

- the baptism preached by John (Mark 1:4),
- the baptism of Jesus as he began his ministry (Matthew 3:3-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22),
- the great commission from Jesus to his disciples (Matthew 28:18-20), and
- the baptism of 3,000 persons on Pentecost (Acts 2:37-42).

Additional light is shed on baptism in the writings of John and Paul.

Our understanding of the meaning of baptism is derived from study of these and other scriptural references and includes several images. First, baptism is recognized as the entry of the person being baptized into the community of believers. In the case of infant baptism this is viewed by many as a sign of covenantal responsibility by the parents and the congregation for the proper upbringing of the child. Baptism is also connected with forgiveness of sins. Further, baptism is regarded as the gift of the Holy Spirit to the individual. This gift of the Holy Spirit brings illumination or passing from darkness into light and thus, salvation. Finally, baptism is considered as the sign and seal of the death of the old life and of rising or regeneration into a new life with Christ. Migliore has summarized an understanding of baptism as “the commencement of Christian life signifying a dying and rising with Christ, a cleansing from sin, a receiving of the life-giving spirit, a welcoming into God’s new society of love, and the start of a faith journey toward God’s coming renewal of all things.”²

1. Augustine, *Letter* 138, 7.
2. D. L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Cambridge, U.K., 2014, p 295.

Celebrating Seniors

Doris Krauss Senior Center’s First Annual *FunRaiser*

**Food, Music, Entertainment, Silent Auction, Surprises
Please join us on Saturday, October 3, 5:00 to 7:00 pm**

Watch your email for details and reservation info.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September Book Discussion, September 13 and 20, 9:30 am to 10:30 am

The Christian Education Committee is pleased to open the fall season with two discussions of short fiction. The discussions will be led by Diane Molberg who has led many such classes at Old First in the past. Each class will begin at 9:30 am and is scheduled until 10:30 am with enough time before service or an extra five minutes discussion if desired. If you haven't already received an E-mail from Diane with the class readings, please contact her for copies. If you need a print copy, that can be arranged as well. These classes have always been very popular, so don't miss these book discussions. Diane's contact information is molberg@earthlink.net or 415-517-2163 and of course you can always contact her in church. Happy Reading!

- **Sunday, September 13: "Dandelion Wine"**

One warm summer day, Bill Forester's life is forever changed when he has a dish of lime vanilla ice at the town drugstore. Sharing in his journey may change how we understand life as well. Set in 1928 in small town America, the essence of summer pours gold and glowing from the imagination of Ray Bradbury in this, his best known and most loved novel. Written in elegant and profoundly lyrical language, "the love story" opens on "the middle of the first day of August," when Bill Forester gets out of his car and invites young Douglas to have a dish of ice cream with him. Thus begins Forester's own "coming of age," a journey into the wisdom and magic of Miss Helen Loomis.

- **Sunday, September 20: "The Chrysanthemums"**

Elisa Allen, a woman approaching middle age, is at a point in her life when she has begun to realize that her energy and creative drive far exceed the opportunities for their expression. When a tinker, passing through the area, sparks her interest and kindles her imagination her life changes. John Steinbeck published "The Chrysanthemums" in a collection of stories called *The Long Valley* (1938). "The Chrysanthemums" is set in the Salinas Valley in California where Steinbeck was born, the fertile farmland nourishing his imagination. Steinbeck's characters, like Henry Allen, are quite pleased to be able to make a decent living, but equally important, like Elisa Allen, they are beginning to sense that not everybody can be satisfied by bread alone. Steinbeck is one of America's premier authors.

SF Ballot Discussion with Betty Voris, September 27

On Sunday, September 27, Betty Voris will lead a discussion of the contents of the ballot for the upcoming November election. The discussion will be held in the Munro Room.

Old First Staffs the Interfaith Food Pantry... Twice! September 19 and October 3

There will be two opportunities to participate in the Interfaith Food Pantry: Choose one, or come to both. The dates are Saturday, September 19 and Saturday, October 3. On September 19, there will be volunteers from all the sponsoring churches, so you will be able to meet the volunteers who are there on other Saturdays. On October 3 we will need more volunteers, because they will come only from Old First Presbyterian Church. Come unload the truck, bring food inside, distribute and clean up later. Contact Dana Nojima or foodpantry@oldfirst.org.

California Academy of Science FREE Weekends, September 25 through November 1

From September 25 through November 1, the California Academy of Sciences will admit San Francisco residents free on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The weekends are assigned by neighborhood and zip code. You need to bring ID showing your San Francisco address.

Go to <http://www.calacademy.org/neighborhood-free-weekends> to find the dates for your neighborhood, as well as acceptable proof of residence for free admission.

Jean Olson is a newly-trained volunteer docent at the Academy of Science and will be there most Fridays, so you might see her there.

Old First Co-Sponsors *Wrestling Jerusalem* Performance, October 3

Wrestling Jerusalem is a 90-minute live, solo performance, following one man's journey to understand

the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. It is a riveting, personal story that grapples with the complexities of identity, history and social justice. Aaron Davidman, the writer and performer, gives voice to seventeen engaging characters, including Israelis, Palestinians and American Jews. Their perspectives convey the conflicting narratives of what seems to be an endless conflict in the Holy Land.

The performance will be Saturday, October 3, 2015, at 7:00 pm, at Marines Memorial Theater, 609 Sutter Street at Mason Street. A film crew will film the performance. *Wrestling Jerusalem* is an invitation to listen and reflect, and an interfaith panel discussion will follow. For more information on the performance and performer, go to wrestlingjerusalem.com.

Old First Presbyterian Church is a co-sponsor the performance. Other co-sponsors include the San Francisco Film Society, the Intersection for the Arts and other faith organizations.

Tickets can be purchased through cityboxoffice.com, 415-392-4400 and range from \$50-\$125, with \$35 discounts (balcony) and \$60 discounts (selected orchestra sections) for groups of 10 or more. For more information on group discounts, contact Deena Levine, Outreach and Community Manager 925-451-3556; deenalevine@mac.com.

World Communion Sunday, October 4

World Communion is also Peacemaking Sunday, October 4. The Worship Committee has invited a special speaker as our pulpit guest: Heidi Kuhn. Heidi is the founder and CEO of Roots of Peace. This is a group started in the Bay Area dedicated to the eradication of landmines worldwide. Working with Napa Valley vintners, Roots of Peace seeks to transform "seeds of terror" into "seeds of hope." The goal is to replace landmines with grape vines in war torn countries. Please come and listen to this most intriguing presentation.

Save the Date: Congregational Retreat, October 16-18

Mark your calendar for our 2015 congregational retreat the weekend of October 16-18. This will be an all-ages retreat with opportunities for fellowship, spiritual growth, worship and fun for adults, children and youth.

The retreat will be at Mt. Hermon, the site of our 2012 retreat. Mt. Hermon is in the redwoods of the Santa Cruz Mountains near Monterey Bay. <http://www.mounthermon.org>

The guest speaker will be Dr. Rodger Y. Nishioka of Columbia Theological Seminary. To quote Maggi Henderson, "He is stunning speaker. Anything he does I would go to."

Look for more details to come. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact Nina Berg, Bill Campbell, Jeanne Kirkwood or Glen Potter.

PLAN YOUR ROUTE TO WORSHIP, SUNDAYS, SEPTEMBER 6 AND OCTOBER 4

Partial Closure of Van Ness Avenue: Geary to Post, September 5 through 7

A portion of Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco will be closed to vehicles for a 72-hour period on **September 5 through 7**. From 12:01 am on Saturday, September 5, until 11:59 pm on Monday, September 7, Van Ness Avenue will be closed **between Geary Boulevard and Post Street**. During the closure, Van Ness Avenue will continue to serve MUNI and Golden Gate Transit bus routes and pedestrians along one side. Detour signs will be posted.

Bridge to Bridge Run, October 4

The 39th Annual Oral-B Glide Floss Bridge to Bridge Run to benefit the Special Olympics is set for Sunday, October 4. The route begins at the Ferry Terminal and proceeds north along the Embarcadero, continuing on Jefferson Street and Marina Boulevard toward the Golden Gate Bridge. The runners then return to the finish line at Marin Green. Plan your route to worship at Old First Presbyterian Church accordingly.

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY: THE SUNDAYS IN SEPTEMBER, 2015

Date	Day	1 st Reading	Psalm	2 nd Reading	Gospel Reading
September 06	Ordinary 23	Isaiah 35:4-7a	146	James 2:1-10, (11-13), 14-17	Mark 7:24-37
September 13	Ordinary 24	Isaiah 50:4-9a	116:1-9	James 3:1-12	Mark 8:27-38
September 20	Ordinary 25	Jeremiah 11:18-20	54	James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a	Mark 9:30-37
September 27	Ordinary 26	Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29	19:7-14	James 5:13-20	Mark 9:38-50

OTHER DATES TO NOTE

Saturday	September 5	No Food Pantry
Monday	September 7	Labor Day: Church Office Closed, No DK Senior Center
Sunday	September 13	Christian Education: Bradbury's "Dandelion Wine" Munro Room, 9:30 am
Sunday	September 13	Board of Deacons, Munro Room, 12:30 pm
Saturday	September 19	All Faiths' Day at the Interfaith Food Pantry
Saturday	September 19	Presbyterian Women, Library, 12:00 noon
Sunday	September 20	Christian Education: Steinbeck's "The Chrysanthemum" 9:30 am, Munro Room
Sunday	September 20	Deacons' Sunday in Worship, 11:00 am
Tuesday	September 22	Session Meeting, Munro Room, 7:00 pm
Saturday	September 26	Saturday Community Dinner, Fellowship Hall, 5:30 pm
Sunday	September 27	4 th Sunday Small Group, Library, 12:30 pm
Sunday	September 27	SF Ballot Discussion, Munro Room, 12:30 pm
Saturday	October 3	Old First Staffs the Interfaith Food Pantry
Saturday	October 3	Doris Krauss Senior Center <i>Fun-Raiser</i> , Fellowship Hall, 5:00 pm
Saturday	October 3	Wrestling Jerusalem at Marines' Memorial Theatre, 7:00 pm
Sunday	October 4	Peacemaking Sunday, Heidi Kuhn Preaching in Worship, 11:00 am
Sunday	October 4	Fall Potluck, Fellowship Hall, 12:30 pm

OFFICERS OF OLD FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Session: Christopher Burt, evangelism; Bill Campbell, mission and giving; Hsiaochien Chuang, worship; Gregory Free, treasurer; Kristi Hoerauf, finance; Harriet MacLean, personnel; Dana Nojima, operations; Jean Olson, clerk of session; Linda Reyder, worship; Steve Taber, planning; Betty Voris, community building; Priscilla Yu, Christian education

Board of Deacons: Nina Berg, Cindy Burt, Samuel Cheng, Diane Molberg, Alfred Martin, Bryan Nichols, Mary Russell, Randy Smith, Sarah Taber, Jian Wang