

Shared Life

The Monthly Newsletter of Old First Presbyterian Church

December 2018

Telephone 415-776-5552

Website www.oldfirst.org

Old First Concerts: www.oldfirstconcerts.org

Advent: Christians Look Forward

Happy New Year! As many of you know the churches calendar begins anew on the first Sunday of Advent – December 2, this year. Advent means “coming” or “arrival.” During the season of Advent, we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world, and watch with expectant hope for his coming again. In its historical origins, the season of Advent was patterned after the season of Lent, a six-week period of penitence and preparation for Easter. Similarly, the four weeks of Advent present an opportunity for communal discernment and personal examination, as the church prepares to celebrate the birth of the Lord and looks with hope for Christ’s return.

To follow the days of Advent there are two opportunities for you easily at hand: The Worship Committee of Old First has made the Advent devotional “God Lifts the Lowly” available at Old First. You can pick up your copy from the ushers at worship. Alternatively, you can check out San Francisco Theological Seminary’s electronic Advent devotional. They can be sent to you daily via E-mail. Visit the seminary’s website to learn more and sign up: <https://sfts.edu/2018-advent-devotions/>

The Coming of God by Ann Weems

Our God is the One who comes to us
in a burning bush,
in an angel’s song,
in a newborn child.

Our God is the One who cannot be found
locked in the church,
not even in the sanctuary.

Our God will be where God will be
with no constraints,
no predictability.

Our God lives where our God lives,
and destruction has no power
and even death cannot stop the living.

Our God will be born where God will be born,
but there is no place to look
for the One who comes to us.

When God is ready
God will come
even to a godforsaken place
like a stable in Bethlehem.

Watch...
for you know not when
God comes.

Watch, that you might be found
whenever
wherever
God comes.

Maggi’s Musing on Trans Heart Line

Sometime during the last year, I was challenged by the question “What was I passionate about? What new idea, new thing got my heart pumping a bit quicker?” For where my passion is might just be where the church’s passion could be. The person wasn’t satisfied with things that had already had been done, they wanted to hear about a new passion. And then Janie Spahr called from the Spahr Reconciliation - Center for Innovation in Ministry (<https://innovation.sfts.edu/spahr-reconciliation/>) and said, “I want you to meet this person Jordan Decker and hear about what we are dreaming to do.” Well, you don’t say no to Janie, so she brought Jordan to my office and I heard about the dream to use a house on the San Francisco Theological Seminary to offer care to those who had gender transformation surgery and had no one to care for them for the long recovery with churches and houses of worship offering care and support. I learned that many transgender folks come to SF

and the Bay Area to have surgery and then have literally no one or no place to recover. The recovery does not take weeks but months.

Well Jordan's energy and passion caught me. (I was also aware by how much I did not know and how much I could learn.) My heart said maybe Old First could be a part of this: we know about welcome, we are about compassion and full inclusion of all God's people, we have beloved Trans members, and we have heart and talents to be and show the love of God made real. So I invited Jordan to come preach to us - and way back in the summer, Jordan said, "I can come in December!" And so on Sunday, December 9, we are welcoming Jordan Decker to our pulpit.

So much has happened since our initial meeting, but Jordan can tell the story so much better than I can. I invite you to read the information from TransHeartLine.org and bring your open hearts and minds to 11:00 am worship on Sunday, December 9.

Pastor Maggi

How Trans HeartLine Got Started

by Jordan Decker



I had Gender Confirmation surgery in 2016. After living in the area and then moving away, the cost of coming back for surgery almost prevented the surgery itself. I had some minor complications and stayed 2 extra weeks. With housing, food, medical supplies and the cost of my own caretaker for 6 weeks, the cost was over 10k just for recovery. Not covered by insurance.

I saw a need and I am filling it with a compassionate setting for others recovering from Gender Confirmation Surgery. We have a particular path on this journey called life. We should not have to struggle because a "system" does not understand. We should just love one another right where we are.

In the Spirit of sharing, I had the idea of sharing my home to help others in March of 2016.

After a year long recovery journey, in November of 2017, we gathered 15 folks together to talk about making this idea, a reality. We had area doctors, nurses, attorneys, allied health care workers, Faith leaders and more gathered on November 20, TDOR (Transgender Day of Remembrance) to begin the tides of change.

I am privileged enough to have insurance that covered the largest part of my surgical procedures. It also provided me with 100 home health visits. My spouse called 24 different agencies in the area and not ONE of them said they knew how to treat my wounds! Because of this, we are taking this next year to work closely with others to develop and provide wrap-around care services as well.

At Trans HeartLine we are making the "Word flesh" by becoming the "hands and feet" in the world. Many of us come from broken families that reject us because of their faith. My own journey was painful and full of me "going to Hell". We are now out in the community having the hard conversations about trans topics from Youth suicide rates (57% attempts) to Gender Confirmation surgery, to Spiritual abuse and the affects particular to Transgender folks.

Everyone deserves to live life authentically. The system isn't set up for the margins. With your generous donations, we are helping the margins by creating a healing environment, so we can embody our authentic self and re-activate back into society wholly us.

Jordan Decker

Goal

To provide a safe, affordable, post-operative gender confirmation recovery house in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Thank you for prayerfully considering the gift of life as we walk into authenticity.

Mission Statement

Trans HeartLine builds bridges between Faith, Spirituality, and gender through safe post-op housing and community education.

Program



Trans HeartLine is a 501(3)c non-profit. We have created safe, affordable, post-op housing in the Bay Area. We are focused on creating a healing environment in which gender conformation surgery clients can focus on healing and not survival. Recovering in a safe environment contributes to faster healing with fewer complications. We are educating and advocating in the Faith communities and beyond by having the hard conversations about what it means to be transgender and the challenges we face.

Website: <https://transheartline.org/>

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance: CA Wildfires

Dear family of God,

We know that your hearts, like ours, have been broken as the devastation wrought by wildfires in California continues to increase in severity. In addition to the destruction of land and forests, the cost to lives and human community has been unprecedented, and those costs are still rising. The town of Paradise has been leveled; more than 80 people have been confirmed dead... and thousands more are unaccounted for. In Northern California, families are living in tents and having difficulty accessing basic services; many of those who have lost their homes are older than 60. While the focus is on those closest to the fires, the impact is widespread. Due to the smoke, communities hundreds of miles from the fires are being impacted by unhealthy air quality. What's more, after the wildfires there is an increased risk of mudslides.

Through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been present since the beginning of the disaster. Working closely with leadership in the affected presbyteries, we have released emergency grants to support the presbyteries in meeting the urgent needs of their neighbors. At the request of



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**

OUT OF CHAOS, HOPE

the Red Cross, PDA has deployed four disaster spiritual care providers from our national response team to work directly with survivors in shelters and the affected communities. We are deploying additional

PDA teams to support the presbyteries in their assessment and response as they help their neighbors begin recovery. Additional grants for ongoing emergency support for survivors and long-term recovery will be forthcoming.

As people of faith we seek comfort, support, and direction from God. We ask that you join your spirits with ours as we walk with our California neighbors through the valley of the shadow.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202

How We Can Help

- The most effective form of assistance is a cash contribution. You can write a check to Old First Presbyterian Church with "PDA: CA Wildfires" on the memo line. Or you can make your gift electronically at the podium in the narthex on Sunday mornings.
- You can also make a gift directly to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance via DR000165 (U.S. Wildfires).
- You can also send gift cards to the Presbytery of Sacramento, 9983 Folsom Boulevard, Sacramento, CA 95827. Gift cards for general purposes please, not for gas stations.
- Contributions of clothing are not needed at this time!

Old First Mission Fair, Sunday, December 2

Don't miss the Old First Mission Fair after the worship service on Sunday, December 2. This will be a superb opportunity to learn more about our own mission initiatives, as well as great nonprofits, both local and around the world, that we support through our benevolence program and volunteer efforts.

Welcoming the Stranger Discussions, December 9 and 16

In this city of St. Francis, ironically, we are more socially isolated from each other, as we live in a period of unprecedented global displacement. Please join the discussion of what it means to “welcome the stranger” as we reflect on the Holy Family’s displacement and the Biblical references to refugees, as well as consider how we as Christians are called to live out the radical welcome of God. The ‘stranger’ is someone who is displaced and vulnerable and lack the resources to survive on their own. Practicing hospitality to the stranger is a fundamental part of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The discussions will take place on December 9 and 16, 12:30 to 1:30 pm, in Room A, adjacent to the Fellowship Hall. If you have any questions, please contact Lori Yamauchi at lori.yamauchi@ucsf.edu.

Christmas Joy Offering at Old First, December 23

Bring your Christmas Joy Offering to worship on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Sunday, December 23, at 11:00 am. The Christmas Joy Offering provides assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and develops our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. For a message from the PC(USA)’s stated clerg, J. Herbert Nelson II on the value of racial-ethnic schools/colleges, watch the video at this web address: <https://vimeo.com/195320858>



Christmas Eve Party, December 24

Steve and Sarah Taber will host their annual Christmas Party on Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24, before Old First’s Christmas Eve worship service. The party will start at 5:30 pm at their home. The Tabers will furnish ham, turkey, scalloped potatoes, persimmon pudding and spiced cider and guests are welcome to contribute other dishes. For location and to RSVP, call (415) 771-3358.

Christmas Eve Worship, December 24, 8:00 pm

Old First will celebrate Christmas on Monday, December 24, at 8:00 pm. Our worship service will include the music of the season and candlelight. Join us to celebrate the coming of Christ into the world.

Nominating New Deacons and Elders for 2019

Greetings, it is time to think whom to nominate for elders and deacons next year. The deacons and elders form the structure and heartbeat of the church.

Deacons and elders are chosen by the people. The Book of Order states that “Elders should be persons of faith, dedication, and good judgment. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel, both within the church and in the world.” As for deacons “The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, witness, and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, of exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, warm sympathies, and sound judgment should be chosen for this office.”

Please pray and reflect who might be called to be a deacon and or an elder. The Nominating Committee needs your suggestions. You may speak to the person you’re considering and ask if they’re willing to be nominated. Another way is you can also contact the Committee through E-mail to nomcom@oldfirst.org or by contacting Committee members directly.

The Nominating Committee: Priscilla Yu (chair), Sidney Hollar, Glen Potter, Mary Russell, Sally Spencer, and Betty Voris

Take Up a Spiritual Practice this Advent: Spiritual Reading

The practice of “spiritual reading” is intended to open ourselves to how God may be speaking to us in and through any particular text. Through spiritual reading, we are seeking formation, or being shaped more deeply according to the mind of Christ, into a living, transforming relationship with God-in-Christ, that reshapes us into the kind of beings God intends for us to be.

Spiritual reading is a meditative approach to the written word. It requires unhurried time and an open heart. The primary focus of spiritual reading for Christians has always been scripture, or God’s Word. It is a body of writings claimed to be holy scripture, inspired of God’s Spirit, and cherished as a reliable guide for faith and practice.

Scripture is both God’s Word and human word. In order for us to experience God’s presence in scripture, we need to be open to God’s Word penetrating us deeply, discerning our secret motives and intentions, and changing our inner beings.

It starts with an understanding of the meaning of the biblical texts themselves, through knowledge acquired by study, and then leads to deeper insights which grows out of personal involvement and relatedness.

The art of spiritual reading has its roots in the Jewish tradition of meditation. Its practice in the Christian church was refined by Saint Benedict in the sixth century. In Benedictine tradition, spiritual reading is referred to as *Lectio Divina*.

There are four phases in the classic practice of spiritual reading: *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. *Lectio* means reading in a reflective, gentle paced way. The question behind our reading is, God, what are you saying to me just now?

Meditatio is meditation, that involves an active mind, not critical or analytical in nature, but reflecting on where we are in the text – where memory, experience, thoughts, feelings, hopes, desires, intuitions and intentions are joined – so we can discover what a given passage means in our lives personally or as a community.

Oratio is the prayer that naturally flows out of our meditation. It is the direct cry of the heart to God that rises when we have heard ourselves personally addressed through the Word. It allows a full range of human responses to be expressed in heartfelt prayer to God.

Contemplatio means contemplation or a place of rest in God – no expectations, no demands, no need to know, no desire but to be in the divine presence, receptive to whatever God desires to do with us.

The nature of *Lectio Divina* can be illustrated in a cow chewing its cud. First, “the cow goes out and eats some good grass (*lectio*), then she sits down under a tree and chews her cud (*meditatio*) until she extracts from her food both milk (*oratio*) and cream (*contemplatio*).” The nature of *Lectio Divina* is like taking in the bread of God’s Word, chewing on it, and digesting it until it brings forth new life and energy that can be shared with others.

Choose a psalm, e.g. Psalm 63 or Psalm 19, and practice *Lectio Divina*. Write down some of your thoughts and prayers.

Lori Yamauchi

Returned Your 2019 Pledge Card? It’s Not Too Late!

In the busyness of the month please take a moment to fulfill your 2019 card and drop it in the offering plate.

OLD FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In gratitude to God and for the support of Old First Presbyterian Church, after reflecting on God's goodness to me, I will give to the church:

\$ _____ [Weekly] [Monthly] [Annually] (circle one)


Name _____ Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Telephone _____ (H)

(W), e-mail _____

Signature(s) _____ I / We understand that this pledge amount may be increased or decreased because of changing circumstances.



Session Meeting October 2018

Old First's session met on Tuesday, October 23. Following are some highlights from the meeting:

- A thank you letter with project status detail on the Pam Byers Memorial Collecting Initiative at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia was shared.
- Appointed commissioners to the next Presbytery Meeting were confirmed.
- After discussion there was final positive resolution of the budget for Choir Section Leaders.
- The Community Building Committee requested set-up and take down help for the community Trick or Treat activities to be held on Polk Street October 31, and new ways of Evangelism work were embraced.
- The Worship Committee reported that Advent preparations had been made.
- The Stewardship Campaign kick-off was announced for November 1 and November 25 as Pledge Sunday.
- The Operations Committee reported that the electronics in the garage were being addressed, and that a monitor had been installed in the Narthex.
- The Mission Committee distributed a flyer for the Interfaith Welcome Zion Lutheran Church Concert Series.
- The Christian Education Committee announced several upcoming classes which included a focus on *Strangers in Our Midst*. Tom Culp, Clerk

Pray for Healing and Wholeness

For Betsy Chiao as she undergoes chemotherapy and for her supportive husband, Ted.
 For Erwin Barron for continued healing and improving ability to take oral food.
 For Bart Crosby for improved breathing and steady mobility.
 For Jian Wang for healing of her broken ankle.
 For those recovering from the wildfires in Northern and Southern California.

Give Thanks

For the return of rain to California.
 For the life of Old First member James Uren: Memorial Service, December 15, 2:00 pm.

Sharing Beauty in the Sanctuary: Poinsettias for Advent and Christmas

Each gift of Fifteen Dollars (\$15) toward greens and poinsettias will be acknowledged by a dedication in the bulletin on Christmas Eve.

Please return the information requested below with your payment by placing them in the offering plate no later than **Sunday, December 16**, or by delivering them to the church office by Wednesday, December 19.

- Your name,
- The total dollar amount of your gift, and
- A dedication for each Fifteen Dollar (\$15) gift you make. Please state each dedication as “in memory of [someone deceased]” or “in honor of [someone living]” or “in gratitude for [some blessing].”
- Write “Poinsettias” on the memo line of your check or envelope.



Dates to Remember

December 1	Saturday	Worship Committee Work Session, 10:00 am
December 2	Sunday	First Sunday of Advent: The new Church Year begins. Mission Fair, 12:00 pm
December 3	Monday	Mission Committee, 6:30 pm
December 8	Saturday	OFPC hosts interfaith food pantry.
December 9	Sunday	Second Sunday of Advent Board of Deacons, 12:30 pm Christian Education: "Welcoming the Stranger," 12:30 pm
December 15	Saturday	Memorial Service for James Uren, 2:00 pm
December 16	Sunday	Third Sunday of Advent Deadline for January Issue of <i>Shared Life</i> Christian Education: "Welcoming the Stranger," 12:30 pm
December 18	Tuesday	Worship Committee, 7:00 pm
December 22	Saturday	Saturday Community Dinner, 5:30 pm
December 23	Sunday	Fourth Sunday of Advent Christmas Joy Offering at Worship, 11:00 am
December 24	Monday	Christmas Eve, Worship Service, 8:00 pm
December 25	Sunday	Christmas Day: Church Office Closed
December 30	Sunday	Sunday after Christmas
January 1	Tuesday	New Year's Day, Church Office Closed

Note: The deadline for submissions to Shared Life has been changed to the third Sunday of the previous month.

OFPC Church Officers

Session		
Class of 2019	Class of 2020	Class of 2021
Tom Culp, clerk of session	Bill Campbell	Kristi Hoerauf
Robin Currier	Hsiaochien Chuang	Dana Nojima
John Kramar	Daniel Peach	Stephen Taber
Lori Yamauchi	Linda Reyder	
Priscilla Yu	Virginia Webb-Pekelnicky	
Board of Deacons		
Class of 2019	Class of 2020	Class of 2021
Riley Kramar	Beth Arnaoot	Sarah Taber
Emily Olson	Courtney Blake	
AnnieScott Rogers	Cindy Burt, moderator	
Mary Russell	Glen Potter	
	Jian Wang	