

Shared Life

The Monthly Newsletter of Old First Presbyterian Church

February 2019

Telephone 415-776-5552

Website www.oldfirst.org

Old First Concerts: www.oldfirstconcerts.org

Maggi's Musings

Cultivating Kindness

Since MLK Day, I have found myself focusing the word kindness. Well, not simply the word but the act of kindness, the practice of kindness, and how a small act of kindness can change how I interpret the world, how I react, how I treat people and myself.

Kindness is defined as the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. It is a generous act, a good turn, an act of assistance, offering help and care. The word kindness in the Bible is found over 8000 times! Amazing. It indicates to me that kindness is hard to do, it takes attention and practice. Kindness is an attitude, an action based on, informed by and stretched by God's love for us and all creation.

So often kindness is directed to the stranger, to "least of these", and those that we do not like, agree with, in other words our enemies. One person said **kindness is love's conduct. It is how love behaves.** I like that definition. Kindness is powerful. I am convicted in this day and age we must cultivate kindness. Kindness, how love behaves, that is the kind of "valentine" we all need this February, so I offer to you a blog that my friend Jan Edminston wrote.

How Does Kindness Inform Your Choices?

Jan Edminston, January 21, 2019

Photo: Mike who hangs out in Harvard Square in Cambridge, MA.



It had been a rough day and I can't even remember why. I had gone into a coffee shop for a hot mocha and the barista made the mocha and then I realized that I didn't have my wallet and I burst into tears like a ridiculous person. The barista just gave me the mocha. It wasn't that big a deal to her but it was to me. I will be their best customer when I'm in that neighborhood.

Kindness is powerful.

I would like my doctor, my dentist, my lawyer, my accountant, and my local brewer to be kind people. Yes, I want them to be good at what they do professionally, but if the best dentist on the planet is a total jerk, I don't want to give her business.

My partner and I love the last two restaurants where we ate. They are almost side by side, but there's a Starbucks in between them. I was in the Starbucks over the weekend and I asked that barista (also making me a mocha) if he had eaten at the restaurants. He hadn't eaten at either place yet, but he reported that the chef at New Restaurant A is mean. He yells at the barista staff like a disturbed person. The owner of New Restaurant B is lovely, though. He treats the baristas kindly and he's a good neighbor.

So, does this impact whether or not I return ever again to New Restaurant A? Probably.

How much does kindness inform your choices? Are you more likely to do business with kind people? Do you pay it forward?

On this special day (MLK DAY) in the world, in our nation, being kind to people seems like the very least we can do. Being fair is the next step.

You can find more of Jan's blog at <https://achurchforstarvingartists.blog/jan>

Peace,
Pastor Maggi

Interfaith Refugee Welcome Concert, February 8

Acclaimed pianist Sarah Cahill and virtuoso violinist Kate Stenberg perform in concert together Friday, February 8, 7:30 pm at Zion Lutheran Church at 495 9th Avenue (at Anza Street).

Fully 100% of all donations will go directly to Dirty Girls of Lesbos, an on-the-ground NGO that has pioneered the cleaning and redistribution of used and discarded clothing, bedding, and other materials for humanitarian relief. For more information, visit <https://dirtygirlsoflesbos.com/>

Suggested donation: \$15/person, \$25/family. Cash, checks & credit cards to Cardea Center for Women (Write Dirty Girls on memo line) accepted at door. Free reception follows the concert.

The New York Times recently called writer, producer, and pianist Sarah Cahill "a sterling pianist and an intrepid illuminator of the classical avant-garde." New Music Box describes violinist Kate Stenberg as "highly virtuosic and deeply communicative... Full of character and presence." Watch Kate Stenberg perform with Sarah Cahill: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xd0k3d4F-bw>

Old First's Annual Meeting, February 10

Old First Presbyterian Church will hold its Annual Meeting at the end of worship on Sunday, February 10, to elect those to serve on Session, on the Board of Deacons and on next year's Nominating Committee, as well as to review the church's budget and the pastor's compensation package. The slate prepared by the Nominating Committee follows below. Nominations can also be made from the floor.

Session: George Becker (3 years), Tom Culp (3 years), Eva DeLair (3 years), Bob Fleming (3 years), Lori Yamauchi (2 years)

Board of Deacons: Maryam Behmanesh (3 years), David Griffith (3 years), Riley Kramar (3 years), Emily Olson (3 years), Karen Payne (2 years), Mary Russell (2 years)

Nominating Committee for 2020: Chris Burt, Glen Potter, Mary Russell, Randy Smith, and alternate Kristi Hoerauf.

Valentine's Day Cards for Our Members and Friends, February 10

Come to coffee hour after worship on Sunday, February 10, to sign Valentine's Day cards for members and friends of Old First who live far away or who cannot get to worship.

Ash Wednesday, March 6

Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent's 40 days, falls on March 6 this year. The people, choir and clergy of St Luke's Episcopal Church will join us for worship that evening at 6:00 pm.

New Mothers Group Meeting at Old First

On Thursdays a group of San Francisco mothers and babies are meeting in the nursery. Virginia Webb-Pekelnicky met these women through the Golden Gate Mothers' Group (GGMG) a local nonprofit that provides support and connection for mothers in San Francisco. The group consists of women in the northern neighborhoods of the city (or women who find meeting up in the northern part of the city most helpful) who have babies under twelve months. These women connected after a GGMG social. Virginia offered to see if the church could provide space for a regular meetup and play group. More women are joining the group via connections through the GGMG and friends. About 12 mothers and babies attend every week. The nursery toys have been a big hit. Especially the large plastic building blocks with the little ones (they make wonderful drums) and the shopping cart and fire truck with those who walk. The mothers talk about child rearing issues,

information around local activities for children while the babies play. A new changing table is available in the nursery which helps with diaper changes.

Session Meeting Report

Tom Culp, Clerk

The session of Old First Presbyterian Church met on December 18, 2018. The following are highlights.

- The Finance Committee presented a financial report with notes pointing to significant items that session should pay attention to.
- The Evangelism Committee outlined some thoughts on current and future outreach.
- The Worship Committee reported that plans for fourth Sunday of Advent and for Christmas were going well including making luminarias and anti-drip rings for Christmas Eve.
- The Stewardship Committee reported on the status of the current drive.
- The Operations Committee submitted a written report outlining goals for 2019.
- The Mission Committee reported on various offerings and benevolences.
- The Christian Education Committee reported great attendance at a two-week session on 'Welcoming the Stranger.'
- The Nominating Committee reported that their work was coming along fine.
- The session would meet next on January 22, 2019.

Spiritual Practices – Worship

Lori Yamauchi

Worship is the service or the work of the people. We serve God when we express a spirit of sacrifice of praise, thanksgiving, self-offering – in gratitude for who God is and what God has done for us. In worship, we are served by God – God loving us, God forgiving us, God feeding us through his Word and through the gifts of bread and wine of new life in Christ and new purpose to our lives.

As a spiritual practice, common worship allows us to experience our Christian life as rooted in the larger community of faith. The role of common worship is to join us to the Body of Christ by gathering to receive and respond to God's living Word. Life in the church teaches us that we are made for communion not only with God, but with one another in Christ.

We can take responsibility for our own experience of common worship in three important ways:

1. Preparing in advance for Sunday service
2. Engaging worship itself with a different quality of awareness
3. Taking the initiative to speak with worship planners and leaders about how we experience worship.

Prepare in advance for Sunday service by revitalizing our practice of personal worship through daily prayer, self-examination through prayer and confession before Sunday service, engaging in weekly Bible study on the lectionary passage.

Engage in worship with a different awareness of God's presence by:

- Prepare to hear God speak to you personally and to the whole group,
- Listen to the words of hymns for the meaning of the sentences,
- Listen carefully to any Psalm,
- Find points in the written prayers for adding your affirmation or "amen",
- Pray silently by offering to God what you discover in your heart at the time,
- Stay focused on the parts that speak to you,
- Give yourself permission to respond to God in worship with the fullness of your being (tears, laughter, nods),
- Use simple gestures to express what is in your heart to God, and
- Observe and reflect on symbols in our places of worship (stained glass windows, crosses, baptismal fonts).

Take the initiative to speak with worship planners and leaders about how you experience common worship with suggestions for changes that would enrich your worship experience, such as more silent reflection time, healing prayers, more frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper.

How Can We Help Logan Hollarsmith?

Ted H. Chiao

Many long-term Old First members must remember the three kids, Jordan, Logan and Camryn Hollarsmith, who "grew up" with us in the past twenty some years. Of course, their parents, Sidney Hollar and Randy Smith, are still faithful members of our Church.

In the recent past, we were delighted to learn that Jordan was about to receive her PhD in biology and Camryn was to receive her BS in mathematics from Scripps College. And, after his graduation in 2014 from Bard College, Logan has primarily been doing volunteer work helping people in need, and supporting himself with carpentry and welding jobs along the way.

Then, in early December, 2018, we were distressed to learn from Old First member John Kramar that criminal charges had been filed in February, 2018 against Logan and eight other volunteers for humanitarian aid work with No More Deaths. No More Deaths is a humanitarian organization based in southern Arizona. It began in 2004 as a coalition of community and faith groups, dedicated to stepping up efforts to stop the deaths of migrants in the desert and to achieving the enactment of a set of faith-based principles for immigration reform.

Nine No More Deaths volunteers, including Logan, face prosecution for their efforts to place life-saving food and water on the Cabeza Prieta National Refuge, a vast and remote area south of Ajo, Arizona, where 155 border crossers are known to have died since 2001 and countless more have gone missing. In fact, we just learned on January 19, a verdict of guilty was issued by federal magistrate Judge Bernardo Velasco to four of the nine volunteers, not including Logan, for entering a national wildlife refuge without a permit and abandonment of property and/or operating a motor vehicle in a wilderness area, all misdemeanor charges. Sentencing date will be set in the next 10 days, and sentencing for each charge can range from zero to six months of time in federal prison and a fine of up to \$500. The trial date for Logan and two other volunteers will be March 4 to 6.

Below is a declaration made by Logan to the court as one of the defenses to the alleged crimes. [See the following page.] Logan filed this declaration in court as one of the defenses to the alleged crimes, based on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. His declaration says that his faith compelled him to offer assistance to people in dire need, including immigrants. Under this law, if Logan shows that his beliefs are religious in nature, that they are sincerely held, and that they are substantially burdened by a law that applies to everyone, the burden of proof shifts to the government. A reading of his declaration has overwhelmed me by his dedication to the service-to-the- needy model of life and the volunteer work he has done since he graduated from college.

Representing several other Old First members, I made a request to the session's Mission Committee to make two donations: one to No More Deaths, one to Logan. I am very happy to report that the Mission Committee had just approved a donation of \$500 to No More Deaths. [For more information on this organization, visit: <http://forms.nomoredeaths.org/en/>]

The committee also informed me that the Committee cannot offer donations to individuals, but encouraged me to write an article to be published in our *Shared Life*, asking Old First members and friends to make cash donations to help Logan Hollarsmith. Would you please join Jeanne Kirkwood, Sally Spencer, Betsy Chiao and me in making a cash donation to help Logan prevail at his trial and continue his life of assisting and helping people in need? You can submit a check or money order payable to Logan Hollarsmith (not to Old First) and either drop it in the offering plate at worship or mail it to the church to the attention of Greg Free, treasurer. If you must make a cash contribution via the offering plate, please put the cash in an envelope with "Logan Donation" in large print along with your name and the amount enclosed, then seal the envelope and drop it in

the offering plate. In either case, since the donation to Logan is a person-to-person gift and therefore it is not tax-deductible, and Old First will not issue you a receipt.

Declaration of Logan Hollarsmith

Logan Hollarsmith declares, under penalty of perjury, the following to be true and correct to the best of his information and belief:

- 1. I am a carpenter.*
- 2. My residence is in New Orleans, Louisiana, although I often travel to different locations in the world to assist people in need.*
- 3. I am not able to fully express my spiritual beliefs with writing on a page; nevertheless, I endeavor to do so here.*
- 4. I was raised in a traditional Presbyterian Church and was quite active in the church as a kid. The pastor of that church remains a good friend who I speak with and visit to this day. During my participation in the San Francisco Presbytery, the leadership sent me as a delegate to the national assembly in 2014.*
- 5. In high school I began to see God as more metaphor and slowly replaced the Christian narrative with teachings from the San Francisco Zen Center. I meditated in the neighborhood Zendo before class in the mornings and on weekends I would go to hear a Dharma talk. On Sundays my mother still made me go to church. I took the lessons of compassion – suffering with others – from both the teachings of Jesus and the Buddha.*
- 6. During college, I learned carpentry on the side. I thought it may prove a more immediately effective skill in the service of others; more so than a BA. When one does not have a roof, and I do not have one to share, I build a roof. When someone is thirsty, I am thirsty too. The effort to improve ourselves has value. There is no end to that effort. Helping others is not avoidable. It is how I was raised and how I will continue to live. It is my meditation. It is my true nature, and it is nothing special.*
- 7. To express my true nature, I intend to live my life in service to others. When there is a stranger in my place, I make them welcome. I served in AmeriCorps providing live in New Orleans after Katrina and continued with that ministry even after the funding was exhausted.*
- 8. My spirituality is not abstract – it is as real as my hammer and my truck and my hands. My morality is born out of what I hear as an undeniable call to action by the real circumstances of our world.*
- 9. This is a brief description of how my spirituality manifests in the real world: I built a small shack in a friend's backyard; I live in that shack intermittently and work as a carpenter to save as much money as I can to use in service to others; with those earned funds, and with material and supplies I beg from individuals and corporations, I set out to places where people live in need – in need of the material items given to us and the skills I can bring in community with others.*
- 10. With this model, I have built structures in refugee camps in France, and I am currently on a small island near Puerto Rico that was ravaged by the recent storms but that is not receiving aid; we brought a boat with 600 pounds of food, boxes and boxes of tools and building supplies, loads of agricultural seeds, an EMT, two carpenters and a farmer. And so we begin again – to support our brothers and sisters in need.*
- 11. In the United States, and living this same spiritual model, I have operated a community bike shop with activities for children. And, as it is written, I worked in the West Desert of Arizona. While in Arizona, I installed a solar panel and a solar water heater at a medical facility; I brought water to those dying of thirst; and I attempted to rescue human beings in distress.*
- 12. My spiritual and ethical and moral beliefs compel me to engage in such humanitarian efforts regardless of the personal risks to my own comfort and physical well-being.*

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true to the best of my information and belief.

Signed this 20th day of April 2018.



Logan Hollarsmith

The Way: Henry van Dyke, 1852 – 1933

Who seeks for heaven alone to save his soul,
May keep the path, but will not reach the goal;
While he who walks in love may wander far,
But God will bring him where the Blessed are.

Universal Day of Prayer for Students

February 13 is this year's Universal Day of Prayer for Students. It's one of the special days found on the Presbyterian Planning Calendar. This one happens on the third Sunday in February every year and is one of the oldest ecumenical days of prayer. Everyone is encouraged to pray for students around the world 🌍 and for those who aspire to be students. Thinking of recent events in Oakland and Los Angeles it's a very timely prayer request this year. More information can be found at <https://wscfna.org/>

Prayers for Healing and Wholeness

Erwin Barron for improved swallowing after cancer treatment.
Betsy Chiao as she continues cancer treatment.
Riley Kramar for healing of his knee, improved mobility and less pain.
David Griffith for healing of foot infection.

Prayers for Those Who Mourn

The family and friends of Bart Crosby, who died January 24, particularly Bart's brother Peter.
Brad Peterson and John Kirk mourning their friend Marjorie Goldberg, who died January 23.

Dates to Remember

February 2	Saturday	Old First hosts the Interfaith Food Pantry.
February 4	Monday	Mission Committee, 6:30 pm
February 10	Sunday	Board of Deacons, 12:30 pm
February 16	Saturday	Presbyterian Women, 12:00 noon
February 17	Sunday	Ushers' Meeting, 9:30 am Deadline for February issue of <i>Shared Life</i>
February 19	Tuesday	Worship Committee, 7:00 pm
February 23	Saturday	Saturday Community Dinner, 5:30 pm
February 26	Tuesday	Session, 7:00 pm
