

FIRST PRES PRESS



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PALO ALTO

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Dear Ones,

A few years ago I had the pleasure of meeting a young man named David True who now serves as associate professor of religious studies at Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. David's specialty is theology and ethics—with a special interest in political culture and debate.

With that in mind, I turned to David's blog shortly after the shootings in Tucson to see what he had to say about the matter—especially from a theological standpoint. I found David's thoughts and reflections to be poignant and purposeful—and I share them with you now in the aftermath of this national tragedy. David writes:

This Martin Luther King Day my thoughts kept drifting back to Tucson, worrying that we are re-entering a tragic chapter of our history in which a generation of leaders was taken from us all too soon. This is not the 60s, but I can't help but worry about where we are headed. I worry about our leaders and the hateful rhetoric hurled at them, and I pray that God will keep them safe. Martin Luther King would want us to take it a step further: to heed God's call to boldly confront hate, and to move from words to creative action.

In Tucson President Barack Obama seemed to be channeling King, calling us to rise above the seething resentments of our politics. "The loss of these wonderful people should make every one of us strive to be better," Obama said, and then recalling Christina Taylor Green, "I want to live up to her expectations. I want our democracy to be as good as Christina imagined it. I want America to be as good as she imagined it. All of us — we should do everything we can to make sure this country lives up to our children's expectations."

One can hear echoes of King's eulogy for the three girls murdered by the bomber of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. There the stakes were clear and dramatic, and King was more direct in urging the congregation to avoid bitterness: "So in spite of the darkness of this hour we must not despair. We must not become bitter; nor must we harbor the desire to retaliate with violence."

To be sure, Tucson is not Birmingham. In Birmingham King faced a well-organized terrorist movement committed to a Caucasian identity and a racist ideology. The Tucson victims were attacked by a crazed and (we think) lone gunman.

In both cases, however, the attacks were felt more widely, and the survivors are left with the question of how to respond to the attacks, both personally and politically. This is where we most need to hear King's wisdom reminding us that the greatest weapon against violence is not hate, but love.

King's idea of love is a long way from contemporary notions celebrating love as an attraction that may come or go. He thought of love not simply as a feeling but as a virtue that depended not on the recipient's appeal, but on the giver's settled disposition. This word, giver, gets at King's idea of love with its deep roots in the Biblical notion of agape. The key to this form of love, as demonstrated by Jesus and Gandhi, is its strength, its stubborn refusal to yield to hate, indifference, or any of the other vices that would separate us from one another. While racism is bound up with the urge to segregate, King understood love to be devoted to the

Pastor's Letter—continued

creation of the beloved community in which all members are cherished as children of God.

In the aftermath of Tucson many of us feel a deep longing for some talk of the beloved community, some hint that together we might build something more than the fractious, hurried, and brutal society we fear we are becoming. King's inspiring life and heroic death remind us that aspirations are not actions and that dreams are worth little unless they inspire a new reality. King offers us more, much more, than calls for a kinder and gentler society. I do not mean to criticize civility, far from it, but civility on its own is not enough. The duty of self-restraint is no match for the passion of politics. If civility is to endure for more than a season, it must be wedded to the virtue of love. As King said so many times, love can heal the broken; it can even transform enemies into friends.

In our time of 24-hour news cycles and professional provocateurs, we may think this naive, but neither the smallness nor meanness of our politics can defeat agape any more than Bull Connor could defeat King and his army of children. It is those martyrs we remember today (not Connor), and it is they who remind us that we are called to be witnesses to a love stronger than hate.

Blessings on you and yours in this new year now begun—and may we all live as valiant witnesses to abundant love and abiding hope!

Much peace,
Rob

Worship Schedule for February 2011

Sunday, February 6th—Derrick Kikuchi & Craig Wiesner Lead Worship at 10:30

- 8:30 A.M. Early Church in the Chapel
- 9:15 A.M. Adult Study in Fellowship Hall
- 10:30 A.M. Community Worship in the Sanctuary
- 10:45 A.M. Children's Educational Classes
- 11:30 A.M. Coffee / Fellowship in the Courtyard

Sunday, February 13th—Communion / Installation of Officers / Annual Meeting

- 8:30 A.M. Early Church in the Chapel
- 9:15 A.M. Adult Study in Fellowship Hall
- 10:30 A.M. Community Worship in the Sanctuary
- 10:45 A.M. Children's Educational Classes
- 11:30 A.M. **Annual Meeting** in Fellowship Hall

Sunday, February 20th

- 8:30 A.M. Early Church in the Chapel
- 9:15 A.M. Adult Study in Fellowship Hall
- 10:30 A.M. Community Worship in the Sanctuary
- 10:45 A.M. Children's Educational Classes
- 11:30 A.M. Coffee / Fellowship in the Courtyard

Sunday, February 27th

- 8:30 A.M. Early Church in the Chapel
- 9:15 A.M. Adult Study in Fellowship Hall
- 10:30 A.M. Community Worship in the Sanctuary
- 10:45 A.M. Children's Educational Classes
- 11:30 A.M. Coffee / Fellowship in the Courtyard

Other February Activities

ADULT STUDY 9:15-10:15 A.M. in Fellowship Hall

The winter series of classes on "Understanding Islam" continues through February 27, with Dr. Mohammad Rajabally as leader. Dr. Rajabally is a long time community activist in the San Francisco Bay Area. One of his primary interests is building effective understanding between American Muslims and the wider community. He has been active on the Human Relations Commission for the City of Fremont, has experience working with various shelters, and is a Board Member of the Tri-City Homeless Coalition (Abode Services). He is also the Vice President of the Islamic Society of East Bay in Fremont, the largest mosque in the Tri-City Area. He and his wife, Dr. Fareeda, have a son and own a family dental practice in Fremont.

On successive Sundays in February he will discuss Islam and previous prophets and books, the status of women in Islam, a range of issues including terrorism and the Middle East, and American Muslims' response to current challenges.

John Zlatnik

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILY MINISTRY

February 6, 10:30 A.M. Worship:

Derrick Kikuchi and Craig Wiesner will lead a family-friendly worship using *Operation Marriage* (by Cynthia Chin-Lee), inspired by GLBT families at First Pres. Highlights will include Cynthia reading the story, sketches from the book, and Claire, Chloe, and Matthew participating in worship. February 6 will be all-in-worship (no church school).

February 6, 3:30 P.M. Superbowl Party:

Nicky Ravishankar's family is hosting a Superbowl party, 1064 Moffett Circle, Palo Alto. Superbowl Party takes place in lieu of youth group and the Covenant Group of families. Check with Marissa Myers for details.

COOL PLANET WORKING GROUP MEETING Sunday, February 6, 11:45 A.M., in the Lounge



The meeting of the Cool Planet Working Group will feature a guest speaker, Jess Chamberlain, Market Editor of *Sunset* magazine (and one of our own here at First Pres). She will be speaking on her recent article in the January issue of *Sunset*, "The Zero Waste Home." You'll hear about a family of four in Mill Valley whose household has all the trappings of a normal life—a garden, a TV, computers—but has no garbage.

Please join us and learn about a simpler, lighter way of living on the planet. All are welcome. Contact Susan Chamberlain (suschamberlain@gmail.com) for more information.

Pat Kinney

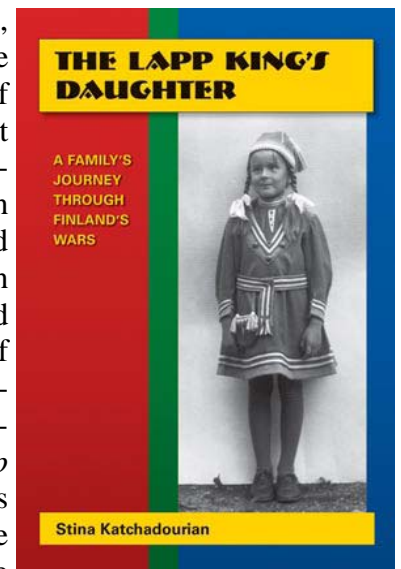
PRIME TIMERS

Tuesday, February 8, 12-2 P.M., in Fellowship Hall

The Lapp King's Daughter

From 1939 to 1945, Finland fought three wars: the Winter War of 1939, when the Soviet Union attacked the country; the Continuation War, when Finland fought the Soviet Union alongside Germany; and the Lapland War of 1944-45 against Germany. Stina Katchadourian's memoir, *The Lapp King's Daughter*, tells the story of how these three wars uprooted the

lives of one Finnish family. The book draws on the author's childhood memories and also on the correspondence between her parents, who were separated during most of World War II, with the father on the front, fighting the Soviets. Finland's dramatic political history during World War II, and how this small country retained its independence despite facing repeated attacks by the Soviet Union or domination by Nazi Germany, are told in riveting detail in this eyewitness account, which also includes family photos, maps, historical photos and other unique material from Swedish



Other February Activities—continued

and Finnish archives. There will be books available for sale (\$15) and signing.



Stina Katchadourian returns to Prime Timers with another remarkable tale documented in a new book. She lives locally in Stanford and summers in Finland. She regularly contributes to a Helsinki newspaper and has made numerous programs for Finnish radio and television. She holds an M.A. from Stanford University and has been an Affiliated Scholar at Stanford's Institute for Research on Women and Gender. Her prizes include the Leif and Inger Sjögren Translation Prize of the American-Scandinavia Society and the Södergran Prize.

All are invited. Bring your own bag lunch along with cakes or cookies to share. Coffee and tea provided.

Don Fidler

ORDINATION SERVICE FOR THE REVEREND VICTOR FLOYD

Saturday, February 12, 11 A.M., in the Sanctuary



All are invited to the ordination service for Victor Floyd. If you are planning to attend the reception that follows, please email your intention to him at victor@louandvictor.net.

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY MEETING

Sunday, February 20, 12-1 P.M., in the Lounge

All are welcome!

Vicky Greenbaum

Also Note...

SENIOR CHATS

We have a couple of very important subjects to learn about this month. I hope many of you from our different churches and communities in Palo Alto will join us. We appreciate the fact that Covenant Presbyterian of Palo Alto cares about diverse faith traditions and opens its doors to us on the second and fourth Fridays of each month. We start at 10:00 in the Fireside Room. Refreshments will be served. For more information, contact Rev. Dona Smith-Powers, 650-494-3093.

February 11 - Samina F. Sundas, Executive Director of American Muslim Voice Foundation, will speak on "A Healthy View of Islam." She has a passion for sharing the beauty of her faith with others and is equally respectful of the beauty in the faith of others. Islam has been a positive force in the world's culture, art, science, and history, in ways that we may not realize. Join us for an important, timely discussion.

February 25 - "Senior Driving" is a topic of importance to anyone over 50 years of age. Have you found that you drive differently than when you were 20 years

old? Why? What is different about you or the road that has brought about that change? Richard Simonds of AARP will be with us to facilitate our discussion. In the meantime, notice your habits and issues around driving in today's atmosphere.

BAROQUE FLUTE ON TOUR



Friday, February 11th, Greer Ellison performs music for baroque flute from baroque-era composers of different countries and contrasting styles, including J. S. Bach, Corelli, Couperin, Leclair, and more.

With JungHae Kim harpsichord
Kevin Cooper guitar

7:30 p.m. — Music Center Recital Hall,
University of California, Santa Cruz
\$12 general, \$10 seniors (62+), \$8 students
UCSC ticket office: (831) 459-2159
or santacruztickets.com
Parking \$3

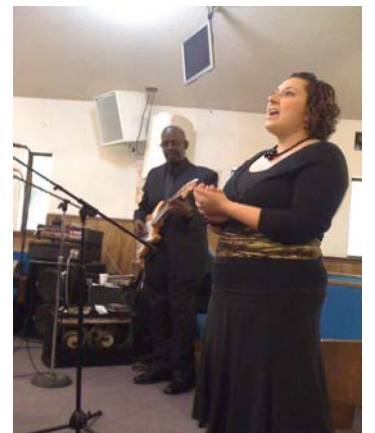
Looking Back

FLOW SUNDAY AT SAINT SAMUEL CHURCH

Thanks to everyone who helped, donated necessary items, and joined in worship on Sunday, January 16, with the Saint Samuel congregation! Social Justice Ministry supported the necessary purchase of 30 cots; folks gave multiple bags of clothing, towels, paper goods, and sundry items to be used at the Warming Shelter at the Lord's Gym!

More good news to follow!

Vicky Greenbaum



Many thanks to Holly Brady for taking these wonderful photos!

Looking Ahead...

CROP WALK HEADS UP



When: Sunday, April 3, 2011
 Time: 1 P.M.
 Where: Lincoln High School in San Jose

You probably remember from similar announcements over the past many years that the Crop Walks are part of Church World Service. The money collected is used for local hunger-fighting agencies as well as the international relief and development efforts of CWS. Santa Clara County will get 25% of the funds collected. Stay tuned!

Interested? Questions? Contact Joy Sleizer (joysleizer@sbcglobal.net) or Melissa Kirven-Brooks (melissa@kirvenbrooks.org).

Session Highlights

The meeting of January 26th, the first Session meeting of 2011, was a busy one. We had 4 guests, the incoming Elders of the class of 2014: Ellen Forbes, David Thornton, Karen Wentzel, and Sukgi Choi. While they will not be installed until February 13, they were invited to attend the January Session meeting to familiarize themselves with the meeting process and the issues that we are currently discussing.

Our first order of business was Rob Martin's performance review, which was overseen by the Staff Relations Ministry. Evelyn Wong, the Chair, was happy to report that they had 100% participation on input for the review from Elders, Deacons, and Staff, as well as some from the broader congregation. Evelyn gave us both a written and verbal summary of the review, listing what were perceived as Rob's strengths and his "think-about," issues on which he needs improvement. There was a fruitful discussion, with both Rob and the Session members agreeing that there will be a need to check in with him again later in the year regarding the issues that were discussed during his review.

Evelyn also gave an update on the search for a substitute for Rob during his sabbatical later this year. The Staff Relations Committee has interviewed a candidate that they believe would be a good fit at First Pres. They are planning on doing some follow up with him in the coming weeks, and hope to have enough information to share some news with the congregation at the Annual Meeting in February.

Vicky Greenbaum, Chair of the Social Justice Ministry, brought a proposal from the Cool Plant Committee asking us to approve the church's becoming an Earth Care Congregation. To become an Earth Care Congregation, churches affirm the Earth Care Pledge to integrate environmental practices and thinking into all facets of their church life and to complete projects and activities in the fields of worship, education, facilities, and outreach. The Cool Planet Committee has completed the initial audit that is required for First Pres to achieve this designation, and they asked for Session's approval to submit the audit to the Environmental Ministries office of the PCUSA. The motion was approved.

Alec Henderson, Finance Chair, led us in a discussion of the 2010 and 2011 budgets. Happily, and to the surprise of us all, we ended 2010 with a surplus! Thanks be to God for both the generosity of our congregation and the good stewardship of our finances by staff and church leaders. While some of the reasons for the surplus were one-time events, we are nonetheless happy to be in relatively good financial shape. We had some discussion of the 2011 budget, which will look much like the one for 2010. The budget will be finalized in the coming weeks.

Craig Nordlund, Chair of the Tenants Ministry, asked for approval of a proposed amendment to the lease with

Session Highlights—continued

The Learning Center (TLC). TLC requested an extension to their lease, expiring in 2015, due to the large number of improvements they have done to the facility in recent months. Craig proposed extending the lease one year to 2016, with some compensation for the unlikely event of an early lease termination. The proposal was approved unanimously.

Helene Butler, Clerk of Session, brought a transfer of membership request from Pamela Reed to Broad Street Presbyterian Church in Columbus, OH. The request was regretfully approved. Helene also proposed the annual election of the officers of the Corporation: Rob Martin, Moderator of Session, nominated as Chair of the Corporation, and Helene Butler, Clerk of Session, nominated as Secretary. The nominations were approved unanimously. Dave Thornton, Chair of the Stewardship Committee, gave us an update. As of January 25, we had 103 pledges totaling \$431,877 vs. 113 pledges for \$445,293 at the same time last year. 34% of the pledges increased this year, while 15% decreased.

Rob gave special thanks to those who have given a great deal of their time to the church serving as Elders and have now completed their terms on Session. Alec Henderson, Holly Brady, Gordon Craig, and Evelyn Wong were all recognized for their work and will all be missed by both Rob and those continuing on Session.

Helene Butler, Clerk of Session

Key Financial Highlights (Through December 31st)

| Major Categories | Status <i>(Rounded actual compared to prorated budget)</i> |
|---|---|
| Pledge Income | ☺ \$2,500 over budget |
| Total Congregational Giving | ☺ \$16,000 over budget |
| Staff Compensation | ☹ \$8,000 over budget |
| Administrative | ☺ \$5,500 under budget |
| Facilities | ☹ \$4,000 over budget (after accrual) |
| Presbyterian & Ecumenical Giving | ☺ Right on budget |
| Social Justice | ☺ Right on budget |
| Total Income | ☹ \$20,000 over budget |
| Total Expenditures | ☺ \$4000 over budget (but only after accrual) |
| Income – Expenditures | ☺ \$10,193 surplus! |

Financial Report Commentary

The church had a surplus of over \$10,000 in the Operating Fund for 2011!

The surplus was without any draw from the Legacy Fund and after a substantial accrual by Session for future facilities repair and renovation.

In addition, the Landlord Account had a \$58,000 surplus (which will be set aside for future capital improvements to Westminster House and TLC) and the Legacy Fund investments increased \$53,932 during the year. Finally, pre-paid pledges for 2011 total \$59,306, up over \$20,000 from last year.

Key Financial Highlights—continued

This is great news! How did we end up with such a large surplus?

The short answer is:

- Pledge income was almost \$2,341 over budget. *This is tremendous testament to the ongoing generosity of the entire congregation.*
- Donations from Identified Donors were \$14,660 over budget. *These are gifts made via check, so we know who gave us the money, but it was not part of a pledge. It's important to note the overage was the direct result of three separate large gifts (\$4,000-\$10,000) from three different people.*
- Facilities Use Fees were \$4,642 over budget. *These are fees from AA, outside weddings, and other groups who use the church property. It does not include the rent from TLC and the Westminster House organizations (those are now part of the Landlord Account). Sarah Clementson's good work and follow-through as office manager were major reasons for this strong performance.*
- Total staff compensation was \$7,617 over budget. *Although this was a year of staff transition, that did not reduce our total compensation spending. We paid salary and health benefits for Oleta and Brad for much or all of the year. We transitioned quickly from Oleta to Sarah and later increased Sarah to ¾-time. The primary reason for the overage is that Sarah and Javier spent significantly less time than expected on TLC and Westminster House issues, and so we were not able to "charge back" as much of their compensation to the Landlord Account as originally budgeted.*
- Administrative expenses were \$5,501 under budget. *We transitioned to a new copier and, at year end, a new postage meter. These did not reduce our expenses significantly, but did give us new capabilities and more reliable machines. We saved on administrative expense primarily because our telephone expenses were lower than expected, and we did not buy a lot of new office equipment. The church's telephone and IT infrastructure are antiquated and hanging on by a string, however – we will need to spend substantial amounts here in the next two years.*
- Facilities was \$4,272 over budget. *Utilities, property insurance, and supplies were all under budget. Spending on maintenance, repairs, and renovation was significantly under budget at year-end. Because deferred maintenance usually catches up with us in succeeding years, Session chose to accrue \$16,957 for the future in the Facilities Maintenance and Renovation Fund on the balance sheet.*
- Giving to Presbyterian and Ecumenical Ministries and the Social Justice Ministry budget were right on target. *The Social Justice Ministry worked hard to spend all of their money before the end of the year. As previously noted elsewhere, the church also made special gifts to Puente de la Costa Sur and the Warming Shelter in East Palo Alto.*
- Virtually every other committee and ministry area underspent their budgets.

On a personal note, this is my final report as Treasurer. I greatly appreciate the good questions you have asked and the words of encouragement you have given me over the past few years. Most of all, I am grateful for the tremendous generosity and support you all give this church.

Alec Henderson

Per Capita Fee

Each year our denomination assesses a per capita fee, a "head tax" for each church member, which is used to support the work and ministry of the church at the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly levels. This year our per capita fee is \$7,036, or \$27.92 per member. The church pays the total amount on behalf of all members. We encourage each member to reimburse First Presbyterian for your per capita fee by writing a check for \$27.92 (or just \$28) and noting "Per Capita" in the memo line. The amount is \$55.84 (or simply \$56) for couples. We are not charged for friends of the church, although friends are certainly welcome to contribute also!

Please consider your per capita donation as a form of mission giving above your regular contributions to the church. By helping to paying the per capita fee, you free up money in the 2011 budget for funding other priority items. Should you have additional questions, please contact Alec Henderson, Finance Ministry Chair, or Dave Thornton, Stewardship Chair.

Key Financial Highlights—continued

Stewardship Campaign Report

The annual stewardship campaign is close to completion. To date, 103 pledging units have indicated they collectively will be giving \$431,877 to the church in 2011. This compares to \$445,293 in pledges for 2010 from 113 pledging families. The number of pledging units from last year who have not responded, as yet, are five. 34% of our giving units increased their pledges this year, while 15% decreased them. There are six new pledging units this year.

Thanks to all members and friends who continue to support the church with generosity and commitment.

Dave Thornton

JANUARY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

| Date | Early Service | 10:30 Service | TOTAL |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|
| 1/2 | 10 | 68 | 78 |
| 1/9 | 8 | 80 | 88 |
| 1/16 FLOW SUNDAY | 10 | 45 | 55 |
| 1/23 | 9 | 92 | 101 |
| 1/30 | 7 | 118 | 125 |
| Total for Month of January: | | | 447 |

Presbytery Report

The Presbytery meeting, held at Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church on January 22nd, opened with a combined worship service and installation of the new moderator, Rev. Jack C. Longley, interim pastor of San Jose Westminster Church. Rev. Longley was installed by outgoing moderator, Elder Charlotte Powers.

Following the welcoming and information, the first order of business was voting on the 15 proposed amendments to the constitution that were forwarded by the 2010 General Assembly.

Rev. John Kelso, Chair of Polity and Government, moderated the debate, which began with Amendment 10A, changing the language on qualifications for ordination. Mitzi Henderson, Rob Martin, Geoff Browning, and Bob Butziger spoke in favor of the amendment, stressing the need for fairness without bias. Most statements against the amendment threatened break-up of the Presbyterian Church if it passed. After a half hour of debate, Rev. Lyle Schmidt led a prayer, following which delegates marked their paper ballots.

Presbytery then considered the other 14 amendments, none of which was debated at all. When voting was complete, the ballots were collected. Tabulation continued until after the Presbytery meeting was adjourned. As announced later, Amendment 10A was passed with a margin of 21 votes, a greater margin than any past non-discriminatory amendments.

Jane Odell presented a report on Safe Church Practices, stressing that training is a requirement, not an option.

Carmen Siegall brought a message from the Insurance Board and a power point presentation that did not work. She stressed the importance of adequate insurance coverage.

Among the Mission Advocates, Elsa Amboy focused on the needs of refugees being resettled in the Bay Area. She thanked Sunnyvale Church for making space available for their use. Geoff Browning reported on Peacemaking and described a recent pamphlet, "Christians in Palestine." Geoff awarded a Peacemaking Certificate to Los Altos Presbyterian Church in recognition of their work in interfaith outreach and cross cultural activities.

Paul Jones gave a brief report on Financial Affairs. The Presbytery approved a lease between Santa Clara First and Carden Academy. Copies of Presbytery's lease policy and a short form lease were made available.

Joey Lee gave a report on mission support and urged all churches to complete their mission pledges.

Claudia Hamm reported on Presbyterian Women's activities, including their March 4 meeting in Hollister, their work with migrant workers, and their safe house in Hollister.

Presbytery Report—continued

Approval of the consent docket had already accepted Rev. Nancy Harrington as stated supply at Evergreen for one year, and authorized Elder Vern Netzley of First Church Salinas to administer communion as part of his ministry to shut-ins.

The Committee on Ministry introduced Rev. Don Hammond, who has been called by Trinity Church, San Jose. After a lively examination and debate, he was approved.

The Stated Clerk's report closed the meeting at 12:20 P.M.

Paul Jones

Deacons' Diary

The Board of Deacons has three new deacons to help us with our ministry. Here's how they introduce themselves:

Hwaja Choi:

I used to go to the United Presbyterian Church for Korean people for more than 20 years before joining the First Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto three years ago. My first acquaintance with this church was when I attended one of the Brown Lectureship series about six years ago. The academic depth of the speaker and equally thoughtful questions from the floor were very impressive for me.

We lived in Los Altos for 20 years where we raised our three daughters before we moved to San Jose this year. They all grew up and left home, but we are close enough to have weekly phone calls.

I worked for Korean American Community Services, Inc., of Santa Clara County for over 10 years, helping community building. My focus at that time was running programs for limited English speaking Korean seniors of the community, among other things. Now, I am teaching Korean language at De Anza College. Reading books on literature and theology is my past-time.

I always appreciate the kindness and openness of the members of our Church. Participating in this church community and learning how the church ministers have been very educational and inspirational.

Pat Levin:

I am retired, living in Channing House. I worked only now and then after having children – for the universities where my husband taught: Stanford and then the University of Virginia. After my husband died in 1998 I moved back to Palo Alto to be with my son, daughter, and granddaughter. She was married to her partner by me as I was made a Reverend on the internet. They now have a 6 year old boy and a 2 ½ year old daughter for me to enjoy. When I lived at Stanford long ago I went to the Memorial Church, but I knew my friends the Browns and others went to First Pres. On my return I found MemChu cold and sparsely filled. So I came here and joined the church. It's nice to have it in my neighborhood.

Ellen Perry:

I am a single woman working as a technical editor for Microsoft Corp. in Mountain View. When I'm not being a high-tech wordsmith, I write poetry and work on it in a wonderful series of ongoing workshops with Kim Addonizio (a National Book Award-nominated poet who lives in the East Bay.) As I looked for a church to join—being a technical person!—I went online and visited websites for Presbyterian churches in the area, looking for a progressive church that is inclusive and works for social justice issues. As soon as I read through the pages of the First Pres website and then visited this church, I knew I'd found a home. The more I worship here and work with the members of this church, the more I know that I am so blessed to be here.

We bid a fond farewell to Anne Irons, Judy Zlatnik, and Pamela Reed, now living in Columbus, Ohio.

Mary Alice Thornton

Updates from Ministries, Small Groups, Committees, and Task Forces

ENGAGING SPIRITUALITY



People interested in “Engaging Spirituality, In Pursuit of an Undivided Life,” might be interested to know that we will begin a group in September. It will run for 21 weeks and include an opening and closing retreat, readings, journal-keeping, immersion experiences, and the wisdom of 24 contemporary spiritual pathfinders who are doing the

Updates from Ministries, Small Groups, Committees, and Task Forces

work of justice in the world and grounding their work in a deep and abiding faith. The material asserts that "Spirituality is an expression of our desire to be whole, at one with God, connected to life. This longing for integrity and communion motivates us to dedicate our lives to restoration, justice, and peace."

Until September, we will be meeting from 10-11:30 am on the first Friday of each month (2/4, 3/4, 4/1, 5/6, 6/3, 7/1, 8/5) to build community, hold each other accountable for journal-keeping, practice meditation, and participate in *lectio divina* (holy reading). There will be opening and closing prayer. We extend to you a warm invitation to join us and ask anyone who is interested to email Ann Teegardin annteeg@sbcglobal.net or Nan Swanson rev1nan@yahoo.com. We will be meeting at Sandra Hopkins' home.

complete this survey when you receive it.

The Task Force hopes to have some preliminary recommendations ready to present to Session in early March. Please hold this group in your thoughts and prayers as they undertake this important work.

Rob Martin

FILM REVIEW: "Departures" (2008)



"Departures," the 2009 foreign language film winner at the Oscars, is a small, quiet, ultimately very beautiful movie, the story of one of those series of pragmatic de-

isions that combine to change one's life profoundly. In Tokyo, Daigo is a middling young cellist with outsize dreams. When his orchestra is dissolved by its owner, he ends up working as a mortician's assistant in the rural city of his youth, beneath Mt. Fuji. The wrenching professional and personal adjustments that follow for him and his wife are shown and felt rather than explained (just as well considering the subtitles!). The film, directed by Yôjirô Takita, raises all sorts of questions about the value of ritual and the difficulty our own society has confronting the inevitable fact of death. Daigo and others honor the deceased and their families with enormous compassion. They willingly use their gifts wherever God calls them, remain open to change, and model grace and acceptance.

Rated PG-13, 130 minutes.

Janet Cox

MUSIC PROGRAM TASK FORCE—JANUARY REPORT



The Music Program Task Force, formed by Session to evaluate the direction of our overall music program, is continuing its work. The Task Force Members are Mohan

Iyer, David Rogers, Greer Ellison, and Vicky Greenbaum.

The Task Force has completed surveying current and former choir members and has also talked with former First Pres Music Directors. These responses have been tabulated and reviewed by the Task Force and will now lead to a general survey of the music program from the entire congregation. Please make and take the time to

And Finally...

CELEBRATING SYDNEY BROWN



Sydney Brown is moving to The Redwoods retirement community in Mill Valley, California, just north of the Golden Gate Bridge at the foot of Mount Tamalpais. During worship on Sunday, January 30, 2011, there was an outpouring of love and appreciation for all the ways Sydney has impacted the lives of so many people at First Pres. Her warmth and ability to connect with others, as well as her leadership as a community builder, came through over and over again.

During the Communal Conversation, Pat Levin spoke of first knowing Sydney in 5th grade when they were both in Princeton missionary housing during a Thomson family furlough from their missionary work in China. Anne Irons told of learning about injustice in the workplace when she took a class at the Graduate Theological Union on Christianity and Labor taught by Adjunct Professor Sydney Brown. (Thanks to Sydney's sharing her resources, GTU Library will have a collection of books and papers focusing on issues of faith, vocation, labor rights, and economic justice.) Melissa Kirven-Brooks reminded us that last year Sydney received one of 15 Community Hero Awards for PIA Congregations in honor of her active leadership in our First Pres community.

And Finally...

John Rickford, David Leith, and Geoff Browning each shared that it was because of Sydney and Bob's warm welcome and passion for social justice that they became part of First Pres. Karen Peterson-Iyer said she loves the way Sydney combines her passion for the oppressed with fun. (In the mid-1960's, when the Sanos and Browns went to Delano, CA, with their young children for a rally to support the farm workers' struggle for justice in the fields, Sydney provided toys and snacks during the long drive because she didn't want the children to grow up disliking this kind of involvement.) The time of sharing concluded with Susan Phinney-Silver speaking for many when she said Sydney is her spiritual mentor and role model and a "life giving spirit."



The Prompting, "Reflections on Sydney Brown's Work & Witness in Our Midst," was given by Judy Dunbar, Craig Wiesner, and Pat Irish. Judy honored Sydney as a "Woman of Courage" leading us in the struggle for justice and as "a living call to action." We learned that Sydney and Bob first came to Palo Alto in 1962 when Bob started teaching at Stanford, returned to Union Theological Seminary from 1976-79, and were greatly celebrated upon their return to First Pres. Sydney worked with the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility, the Plant Closures Project, the Northern California Interfaith Council on Economic and Environmental Justice, and the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition. In 2010 Sydney was awarded the first Council of Churches Award for the Global Common Good. Whether supporting labor rights and economic justice, the ecumenical movement or anti-war activities, it is no wonder Bob's dedication of his memoir *Reflections over the Long Haul* reads: "For Sydney, who made it all possible. My love and my *companera*."

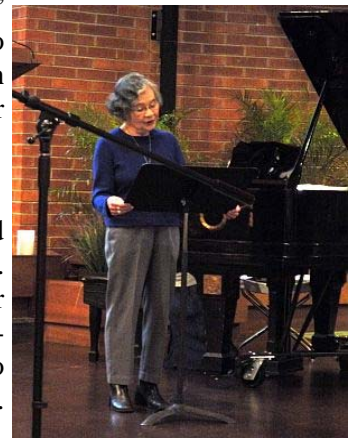


Craig reflected on how "The Remarkable Sydney Brown" truly listens when asking people who they are and then connects them to other people and organizations, with the end result that the world is a better place. Sydney was responsible for Craig joining in an interfaith peace delegation to Afghanistan that changed "this formerly somewhat conservative hawk into the flaming liberal dove that I am today." Pat Irish emphasized how Sydney always responded to the needs of people and at the same time pushed the system to change. In 1972 Sydney and two friends founded New Ways to Work, which reached out to laid off, discouraged workers, helping them find work while also pushing local employers to hire these older workers. (Margaret Ann Fidler and Eileen Burnett, on behalf of her husband Jim, earlier shared how supportive Sydney had been during their employment challenges.) We learned that as a member of the Presbyterian General As-

sembly's Mission Responsibility Through Investing Committee, Sydney was a strong advocate for justice in South Africa, moving corporate leaders to withdraw funds from South Africa and thus helping bring down apartheid. First Pres was blessed for many years by Sydney's leadership as part of the Adult Study Committee.

At the end of the Prompting, Sydney recognized her "amazing children, the source of my joy," and introduced Peter and Alison and Alison's husband Paul, who were at church. She also asked George Wilson, a former First Pres pastor, to stand. When Sydney and Bob arrived in Palo Alto, they came to First Pres because they knew George and also Peter Sano's brother from Union. She gave First Pres a wonderful photograph of "graffiti" taken in San Francisco in the 1940's that says simply, "Be Kind."

Special music during the worship service included Minako Sano singing the Scottish ballad *An Eriskay Love Lilt* in an arrangement by Alice Parker done for Sydney in memory of Bob. Alice Parker, First Pres' 2009 Robert McAfee Brown Lecturer, attends Sydney's summer church in Heath, Massachusetts. The Closing Hymn was *O God, Be Present*, words and music by Robert McAfee Brown, and the Musical Benediction was *Hymn For 100 Years*, also with words by Bob on the occasion of First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto's anniversary.



We celebrate Sydney for her friendship and great gift as a connector of people and causes that has so enriched First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto for over forty years.

Effective February 1, 2011, Sydney's new address is: 40 Camino Alto, Box 4114, Mill Valley, CA 94941, and her new phone number is 415 383 3472. Sydney says: "Stay in touch! I look forward to calls and visits and letters."

Marcia Adams

First Pres February 2011 Calendar

Wed Feb 2, 2011

2 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. UMPA meal-Team 2, Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Fellowship Hall

Volunteer team that cooks, serves and cleans up after dinner for our local homeless, organized through First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto and the Urban Ministry of Palo Alto. Each team commits to serving in a five-week rotation. Coordinator: Rajesh Philipos. Dinner at 5 p.m.

Sun Feb 6, 2011

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Early Church, Chapel

Worship service of reflection and sharing

9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Adult Study Classes, Fellowship Hall

The winter series of classes on "Understanding Islam" continues through February 27, with Dr. Mohammad Rajabally as leader

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Community Worship Service, Sanctuary

Child care is provided. Children and youth will remain in worship for the entire service, with several youth helping lead worship. Please bring food to donate to the Palo Alto food closet

11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m. Cool Planet Working Group, Lounge

Guest speaker, Jess Chamberlain, Market Editor of *Sunset* magazine (and one of our own here at First Pres). All are welcome!

3:30 p.m. Youth Group Super Bowl Party, Ravishankar home

The Ravishankar family is graciously hosting a Super Bowl party for the Youth Group and Covenant Group and families. All are invited to attend!

Tue Feb 8, 2011

12 p.m. - 2 p.m. Prime Timers, Fellowship Hall

Stina Katchadourian returns to Prime Timers with another remarkable tale documented in a new book, *The Lapp King's Daughter*. Bring a bag lunch and cookies or cakes to share

7 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Super Tuesday, Fellowship Hall and Classrooms

Ministry and Committee meetings start at 7pm in various rooms on the church

campus. Come participate in the leadership and planning for our teaching ministry, community building activities, finance and facilities ministries.

Wed Feb 9, 2011

2 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. UMPA meal-Team 3, Etz Chayim, Fellowship Hall

Coordinator: David. Dinner at 5 p.m.

Sat Feb 12, 2011

11 a.m. - 12 p.m. Ordination Service for Victor Floyd, Sanctuary

Reception immediately following in Fellowship Hall

Sun Feb 13, 2011

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Early Church, Chapel

9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Adult Study Classes, Fellowship Hall

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Community Worship Service, Sanctuary

Worship service with Communion. Please bring food to donate to the Palo Alto food closet.

10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Children & Youth Educational Classes, Classrooms

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Annual Meeting of the Congregation, Fellowship Hall

Wed Feb 16, 2011

2 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. UMPA meal-Team 4, First Pres, Fellowship Hall

Coordinators: Joy, Derrick and Craig. Dinner at 5 p.m.

7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Deacons Meeting, Classroom 1

Monthly meeting of the Deacons, on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. The Board of Deacons is the primary caregiving leadership group for our church community.

Thu Feb 17, 2011

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Worship & Music Ministry, Pastor's Study

Worship & Music Ministry monthly meeting on the 3rd Thursday of the month

Sun Feb 20, 2011

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Early Church, Chapel

9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Adult Study

Classes, Fellowship Hall

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Community Worship Service, Sanctuary

Please bring food to donate to the Palo Alto food closet

10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Children & Youth Educational Classes, Classrooms

12 p.m. - 1 p.m. Social Justice Ministry Meeting, Lounge

All are welcome!

Wed Feb 23, 2011

2 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. UMPA meal-Team 5, Fellowship Hall

Coordinator: Heidi. Dinner at 5 p.m.

4:30 p.m. First Pres Press Deadline

Please send Press articles and news items to Lela Noble

(lnoble@sbcglobal.net) and Sarah Clementson (sclementson@fprespa.org)

7 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Session Meeting, Classroom 1

Monthly meeting of Session on the 4th Wednesday of the month. Session is the operational leadership board for our church congregation

Sun Feb 27, 2011

8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Early Church, Chapel

9:15 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Adult Study Classes, Fellowship Hall

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Community Worship Service, Sanctuary

Please bring food to donate to the Palo Alto food closet

10:45 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Children & Youth Educational Classes, Classrooms

First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto

1140 Cowper Street
Palo Alto, California
94301

We're on the Web!
www.fprespa.org



Our Mission Statement

The mission of First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto is to make our personal witness and public work consistent with the prophet Micah's challenge to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. As a community of faith, we center our communal life in worship and are challenged to live out the good news of the Gospel. Following Jesus the Christ, we pursue God's nonviolent vision of justice and human dignity for all people and share this understanding with our children, our members, our community, and the World.