

Shared Life

The Monthly Newsletter of Old First Presbyterian Church

December 2016

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Maggi's Musings

I find myself ready for, maybe even longing for, Advent this year.

Sunday, November 27 marked the first Sunday in Advent, the beginning of the Christian year. Advent comes from the Latin word for arrival and anticipation. It includes the four Sundays before Christmas and the weekdays in between. It is a time of cultivating, growing our anticipation, our hope, and our awareness of how the birth of Christ has changed the world in the last 2,000 years and of how it still hasn't let go of us.

This Advent I feel an urgency, a new desire to renew my sense of hope and my efforts to follow in the ways of Jesus. So I going to cultivate hope this advent as I was inspired by this quote by the late Daniel Berrigan:

*Our Advent hope calls on us to write, with our lives, a new history,
the history of lives lived in justice and peace.*

Here are some good opportunities for cultivating hope:

- Read and pray the Advent devotional "From Heaven Above." Get one from usher on Sunday or call the church office to have us send you one.
- Use an on line devotional like www.d365.org or Richard Rohr's daily devotional – just navigate to cac.org/category/daily-meditations.
- Open yourself to the art, music, liturgy, words and movement in worship.
- Care for others by filling the S.F. Food Bank barrel in the narthex with food that's always needed: December 4 – canned tuna or meat, December 11 – cereal or oatmeal, December 18 – beef or turkey chili, December 25 – Spam.
- Say "Thank you," "I'm sorry," and "You matter," with ease and frequency. Listen deeply. Talk less.

May Advent write new hope into our lives this season and transform us to be lights of justice, peace and hope in San Francisco and the world.

Peace, Pastor Maggi

Worship committee plans for Advent and Christmas

The worship committee would like to remind everyone to pick up an Advent booklet from the ushers. This year's booklet, "From Heaven Above" by Michael Hay, is based on the hymns of Martin Luther. Also please consider donating and sponsoring a poinsettia to honor or remember or thank someone special. Last but not least, volunteers are welcome to help us on Saturday, December 3, 10 a.m., as we decorate the sanctuary for Advent and Christmas with art work and greenery.

The Worship Committee: Linda Reyder, Hsaiochien Chuang,
Chris Burt, Cindy Burt, Lori Yamauchi, AnnieScott Rogers

Help Brighten Advent and Christmas with Greens and Poinsettias

Each gift of Ten Dollars (\$10) toward greens and poinsettias will be acknowledged by a dedication in the bulletin on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18.



Please return the information requested below with your payment by placing them in the offering plate no later than **Sunday, December 11**, or by delivering them to the church office by Wednesday, December 14.

- Your name,
- The total dollar amount of your gift, and
- A dedication for each Ten Dollar (\$10) gift.

Please state the dedication as “in memory of [someone deceased]” “in honor of [someone living]” or “in gratitude for [some blessing].”

Finally, be sure to write “Advent and Christmas Decorations” on the memo line of your check or envelope.

Pinkham’s Christmas Cantata and You:

A Short-Term Choir Commitment, December 1, 8, and 15

I often hear “I’d sing in the Choir but don’t have the time for a weekly commitment.” Here’s a remedy to eradicate your non-singing frustration: a very short-term Choir Commitment Opportunity! Our Choir and our Artists-in-Residence, the Golden City Brass Quintet will be singing Daniel Pinkham’s marvelous “Christmas Cantata” on Sunday, December 18, from 10:30 am to 11:00 am. There are only three rehearsals: Thursdays, December 1, 8 and 15, from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm in the sanctuary. Private rehearsal files are readily available on the internet, and this piece does exceptionally well when additional voices augment our Choir. Can’t make all three Thursdays? How about aiming for two? We’ll be able to rehearse with the brass on Thursday, December 15, plus a brief warm-up on Sunday, December 18. Please E-mail me for more information: larry@oldfirst.org. Larry Marietta, Music Director

Festive Christmas Potluck, December 4

Missing an old-fashioned Christmas dinner with the table brimming with a variety of tempting dishes? Want to begin the holiday season in the most festive way possible? Join us on December 4th after worship for a one-of-a-kind Christmas potluck. Turkey will be the featured entree and members and guests will provide all the trimmings. We hear rumors of mashed potatoes and gravy, corn pudding, deviled eggs and pumpkin pie adorning the loaded tables and many more tasty items as well. Members are asked to bring side dishes, salads and desserts. As usual, if you cannot bring a dish to share, a small donation is all that is needed. Friends and guests are also invited. So plan now to start the season with Old First. Betty Voris

LGBTQ Group, December 17

The LGBTQ Group will meet at Susan Ashton’s house Saturday at 7:00 pm. Watch for E-mails for more details, or speak with Susan or Pastor Maggi.

Sunday Prelude, December 18, 10:30 am

Come to worship at 10:30 am on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 18, to hear the Old First Choir sing Daniel Pinkham’s Christmas Cantata before the regular 11:00 am worship service.

Old First Christmas Eve Potluck, December 24

Old First members and friends are invited to the annual Christmas Eve pot luck party at the Taber's home on Russian Hill from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., ending just before Old First 7:30 pm prelude and following worship service. Gather around the Christmas tree to sing Christmas carols accompanied by Don Pender on the piano. The Taber's will provide turkey, ham, scalloped potatoes, persimmon pudding, and hot spiced cider. Guests are invited to bring a dish to pass around, if they can (beverages, appetizers, vegetables, rolls, or desserts most needed). RSVP to Steve or Sarah 415-771-3358.

Christmas Eve Prelude and Worship, December 24, 7:30 pm

The Christmas Eve service begins with an extended prelude, a half hour of sacred Christmas music for organ, harpsichord, chancel choir and soloists, at 7:30 pm followed by the 8:00 pm Christmas Eve Service.

Christmas Day Worship Service, December 25, 11:00 am

Our worship on Christmas Day, December 25, will include lots of singing and much joy, and for the coffee hour, we will bring home-made and other amazing treats to share with each other. If there are treats left over, you'll have a chance to take some home with you – like an old fashioned cookie exchange.

New Year's Day Worship Service, January 1, 11:00 am

On January 1 we will celebrate the Epiphany of Christ, so I'm looking for people to tell me about their interactions with their "star words" from this past year. Please contact me by phone or E-mail. I'd like to hear from you!

Pastor Maggi

Brighten the Holidays for a Homeless Young Person

Bring a Christmas gift to church and help Larkin Street Youth Services brighten the holidays for over 450 young people who stay in Larkin Street's emergency shelters and transitional living facilities or access Larkin Street's drop-in centers and programs.

Gifts do not need to be expensive. Gift cards are always popular, especially from retailers such as Ross, Gap, Payless, Macy's, Old Navy, REI, Safeway, Trader Joe's, Target, Sports Basement, Peet's, Starbucks, Walgreens and Best Buy. All gifts must be new and unwrapped. Everyday items are much needed. Besides gift cards, items on young people's wish lists include:

New Gifts	New Personal Care Items	New Clothing and Household Items
MP3 players, headphones, home electronics, cameras	Shampoo, conditioner, lotions	Socks (preferably black), underwear, sports bras
Watches, flashlights	Deodorant, soap	Shoes, sneakers, flip flops
Bike helmets	Sewing kits	Hooded sweatshirts, jackets
Backpacks, sleeping bags, tarps	Brushes, combs, beauty products	Ponchos, rain boots, umbrellas
School and art supplies	Makeup and shaving kits	Towels, sheets, blankets
Muni or BART passes	Perfume, cologne	Alarm clocks, small appliances
Purses, wallets	Hair dryers, straighteners	Plates, bowls, dishes, cups, pots, pans
2017 day planners, journals	Toothbrushes, toothpaste	Sewing and first aid kits

We have two options for delivering gifts: One is to bring them to church on Sunday, December 4. Look for the Larkin Street Christmas gift box in the Narthex before the worship service or Fellowship Hall during the coffee hour, or Bill or Marilyn Campbell. The other option is to take or send gifts to Larkin Street's Engagement and Community Center at 134 Golden Gate Ave. (between Jones and Leavenworth) weekdays, 9:30-4:30, attention Jason Giblin, by Friday, December 9.)

Larkin Street offers innovative and comprehensive services that give homeless and at-risk youth ages 12-24 all the tools they need to reclaim their lives and become self-sufficient adults. Three out of four youth who complete Larkin Street's comprehensive program exit the street.

Bill Campbell

Christmas Joy Offering, December 18

Follow Christ's lead this Advent: Give hope through the Christmas Joy Offering.

Every year, society expects us to celebrate the holiday season even bigger and better than years before. This year, coming together to reclaim Advent and Christmas can be both humbling and fulfilling. As we excitedly await the birth of Christ, it's important to remember the reason for the season: the newborn Servant of All.

With Christ at the center this holiday season, we can follow in his example of servant leadership by serving our brothers and sisters in faith. Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we are able to support those in our community and give them the gift of hope.

Funds from the Christmas Joy Offering help the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions provide critical financial assistance to eligible workers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and their families, and to qualifying retired church workers and their families.

The Christmas Joy Offering also supports the education and development of our future leaders at Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges. These schools are dedicated to creating opportunities and environments for racial ethnic students built on a foundation of Christian values. The Offering benefits Menaul School and Presbyterian Pan American School, two secondary schools that ready students for a path of higher learning, as well as Stillman College, where graduates are prepared for lives of leadership and service.

By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, we can share in the hope of Christ and celebrate his leadership by providing support to our church workers, racial ethnic young people, and their families.

Stewardship 2016: Fast Away the Old Year Passes

Please review your pledge for 2016. As we begin December, we are about 10% behind in giving toward pledges made for 2016. We need to move forward into 2017 with strength, so please make your contributions toward 2016 now. If you cannot meet your pledge, please let our treasurer, Greg Free, know as soon as possible.

Stewardship 2017: Fearless Generosity

Don't forget to send in your pledge card now. You can mail them to the church office or put them in the offering plate on Sunday. Your pledge helps us make robust plans for the coming year.

Before the Paling of the Stars
Christina G. Rosetti, 1830-1894



*Before the paling of the stars,
Before the winter morn,
Before the earliest cockcrow,
Jesus Christ was born:
Born in a stable,
Cradled in a manger,
In the world His hands had made
Born a stranger.*

Music in Worship: Silent Night

Two priests at Oberndorf's St. Nicholas Church were involved in this carol's composition: the newly ordained Josef Mohr (1792-1848) and the Church's ordained organist, Franz Gruber (1787-1863.)

Inspired by a view from an 1818 winter vista above the village of Oberndorf, Mohr penned a poem titled "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!" When, on December 24, 1820, organist Gruber sadly informed Mohr of the organ's indisposition, Mohr suggested using his "Stille Nacht" poem as a possible text for a new hymn with guitar accompaniment. Within a very short time of reading the poem, Gruber composed a melody for a soloist, choir and guitar that was sung at the church's Christmas Eve mass. Although the original is lost, in 1995 a manuscript with Mohr's signature was discovered, crediting himself as the author and Gruber as the composer, thus verifying the carol's creators.



When the organ repairman eventually arrived, he left with copies that eventually arrived in the hands of two professional singing families: the Rainer's and the Strasser's. Titled "A Tyrolean Carol" and sung by these families, the carol's fame quickly spread throughout Europe. (In 1834, King Frederick William IV of Prussia ordered his court choir to sing it every Christmas Eve.) The Rainer's brought it to the US, premiering it in 1863 at NYC's Alexander Hamilton monument in front of Trinity Church, Wall Street.

Currently translated into more than 120 languages, "Silent night! Holy night!" is one of the world's most famous and beloved Christmas carols. The fanciful stories of its origin are legion: the most popular blames a hungry mouse who chewed through the organ bellows; another faults rust as the culprit. To date there is no evidence whatsoever to support either of these allegations. A small chapel honoring the carol now sits on the land of the original St. Nicholas Church.

Larry Marietta
Music Director

Columbarium Window Dedicated

On October 30, the Sunday before All Saints' Day, members and friends of Old First gathered in the Columbarium to dedicate the radiant stained-glass window recently installed in the area. Conducting the ceremony, Pastor Henderson spoke of a space that has been transformed by the presence of the window, which reminds us to remember all the saints who have gone before us. Steve Taber recalled that the design for the window was first commissioned from San Francisco Stained Glass Works a decade ago, when the Columbarium was opened. That original vision has now been brought to reality through the generosity of twenty-two donors — Columbarium subscribers and their families — who contributed the funds needed to execute the project. We are deeply grateful for their beautiful gift.



October Session Meeting Report

- A shepherding committee for intern, Brook Scott, was formed.
- Session focused on next steps addressing the homeless situation on Van Ness Avenue and Sacramento Street. It was agreed that a discussion be held with the SF Police to determine if the signs as posted are adequate, and that additional cleaning be done.
- It was confirmed that the annual Stewardship campaign would start in November.
- After a report on Interfaith Welcome activities, Session concurred that publicly identifying Old First as a member of Interfaith Welcome on Facebook is well within the scope of Session's previous action authorizing communication. It was reported that a second group of Refugee Welcome Kits will be delivered on October 26, that financial contributions had been used to fill gaps in kit contents and also purchase Target and Safeway gift cards to be included with the kits.
- Session agreed to help promote increased use of end of life documentation and directives for all church members.
- The Worship Committee has begun planning for Advent, Christmas Eve services as well as Christmas and New Years as these holidays fall on Sundays this year.
- It was reported that photos for an All Church Directory were proceeding as planned and that an additional date had been added.

Tom Culp, Clerk of Session

Why It Matters that We as Christians

Learning about Islam and our Muslim Sisters and Brothers: Part 1

I challenge you to think about the following question and how to answer it for yourself.

Maybe, all that you know about Islam is the September 11 attacks by Islamic al-Qaeda radicals, or the terrorist activities of the Islamic State, or the acts of violence being committed by Muslim radicals in the US. But, labeling all Muslims as radical terrorists is like labeling all Christians as anti-abortionist white supremacists. What do we know about Islam and Muslims and why does it matter?

On October 22, a group of Old Firsters joined other Presbyterians and friends to hear Sumbul Ali-Karamali speak about Islam and Muslims. As an American-born Muslim from southern California, Ali-Karamali spoke about the "real Islam". Here are a few takeaways from her talk:

- Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was a social reformer who preached the tradition of Abraham. Moslems, like Jews and Christians, are descendants of Abraham.
- The *Qur'an* (also transliterated Koran) is the compilation of "Recitations" from Muhammad, which were messages he received from the angel Gabriel.
- Muhammad preached on the behalf of the poor and extended rights to women and on nonviolent resistance.
- *Jihad* means struggle and striving. There are different types of *Jihad*: Internal *Jihad*, or struggle to be a better person, and external *Jihad*, or struggle to make society better. Jihad can occur by the word or writings, by hand or actions, or by sword or military action. Jihad by sword means taking arms in self-defense or to overthrow oppressors, which has historically meant those who suppress religious practice.
- Islam contains strict rules of engagement for *Jihad*. Islam prohibits: 1) killing of civilians, children or the elderly, 2) acts of terrorism or rape, 3) war against other Muslims, 4) committing suicide.
- Terrorism violates *Jihad*. Muslim terrorists call their work Jihad, ascribed as religious motivation, but they are legitimized falsely. The reason that terrorists wage war is for political revenge. ISIS pays others to be fighters; ISIS is politically, not religiously, motivated.
- There is a tradition of pluralism in Islam. Muslims are allowed to marry Jews and Christians, since Muslims believe that anyone who believes in God will receive their reward. The *Qur'an* does not promote compulsion in religion, i.e. people are not forced to follow Islam.
- *Shari'a*, means "road to watering place." It is a body of religious interpretation, and not statutory. It includes the *Qur'an* (recitations of Muhammad), and Muhammad's words. Sometimes, it includes the *Fiqh*, or interpretations of religious text. Islamic scholars will also issue legal opinions of the *Shari'a*, called *Fatwa*, but they are neither divine nor an order to be followed. There is no Muslim country where the *Shari'a* is the law of the land.

Lori Yamauchi

All-Church Read 2017:***Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving**

Please join Pastor Maggi reading this attention getting new work of non-fiction. Copies of Irving's book will be available on Sundays in the Children's Library for \$20.

Old First Family and Friends

Prayers for Mourning and Comfort

We mourn the death of Nancy Spencer who died October 23, 2016, and remember in prayer her husband Oliver Spencer, her children and her grandchildren.

Prayers for Healing and Wholeness

Pray for Steve Bacik, husband of Glenn Potter; and for Mary Lou Wilson

Dates to Remember

December 4	Larkin Street Youth Services Christmas Box (last day) Festive Christmas Potluck, Fellowship Hall, 12:30 pm
December 11	Deadline for January Issue of <i>Shared Life</i> Deacons Meeting, 12:30 pm
December 18	Pinkham's Christmas Cantata, 10:30 am Worship, 11:00 am
December 20	Session Meeting, 7:00 pm
December 24	Fancy Christmas Potluck, Sarah & Stephen Taber's Home, 5:00–7:00 pm Saturday Community Dinner, 5:30 pm Christmas Eve Prelude, 7:30 pm Christmas Eve Worship Service, 8:00 pm
December 25	Worship, 11:00 am

Church Officers

Session

Bill Campbell, Hsiaochien Chuang, Robin Currier, Kristi Hoerauf, John Kramar, Harriet MacLean, Dana Nojima, Linda Reyder, Betty Voris, Lori Yamauch, Tom Culp, clerk of session

Board of Deacons

Bryan Nichols, moderator, Nina Berg, Cindy Burt, Riley Kramar, Alfred Martin, Emily Olson, Mary Russell, Randy Smith, Sarah Taber, Jian Wang