

Shared Life

The Monthly Newsletter of Old First Presbyterian Church

December 2017

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Maggi's Musings

The theme for Advent this year is Prepare the Way. We enter in to the gift, the challenge and, sometimes, the bother of trying to slow down and savor the waiting for Christmas, of making room for the birth story of God coming into the world, the God who is enfleshed, the infant Lord Jesus.



Somehow in the midst of the busy-ness, our memories both joyful and sad, and our faith, both strong and doubt-filled, have their place. We find ourselves in the midst of every-day routine, yet Advent offers time and place for the rebirth of hope, of love, and of an intimate relationship with the God made tangible in Jesus Christ. So, let us prepare ourselves that God may find a way into our lives and for us to find our way back to God.

We can do this by following the Advent calendar available at worship beginning December 3, or by

reading a devotional on line – such as www.d365.org – or by E-mail – such as Richard Rohr's myemail.constantcontact.com/Richard-Rohr-s-Meditation-Breathing-Yahweh, or by following the PC(USA)'s devotionals on Periscope.

I invite you to read the scripture for each Sunday in the week before as preparation. The readings are listed below. See how the Word plays with you or inspires you during the week and especially in Sunday morning. In my own life I find if I prepare: read and listen to the scripture Sunday morning can bring such amazing surprises! It is like I am ready for something to happen and often it does.

Peace,

Pastor Maggi

ADVENT: PREPARE THE WAY

First Sunday of Advent, December 3

Prepare The Way: God is Near

Luke 1:1-25

Advent cultivates the difficult discipline of waiting. But that waiting and hope find fulfillment when God draws near. Advent is alive with a sense of restoration and stirring with the hope of redemption. It is heavy with the longing for God to rescue us and bring us back to himself. In our culture, the Christmas season is often associated with a fast-paced sense of hurry. The “holiday rush,” they call it. Inevitably, we will feel the tension of impatient shoppers and hectic schedules. But the Christian embrace of Advent is a counter-cultural act of intentional patience. We wait. We hope. Resisting the urge to rush ahead to the manger, we enter into the story of Israel and share their longing for a Savior.

Second Sunday of Advent, December 10

Preparing the Way: God is Among Us

Luke 1:26-38

Discover the mystery, the mission, and the motivation of Advent. As we prepare the way in our hearts for the arrival of the Messiah, we see a peculiar truth. Almost every other religion in the world is structured so that humanity has to make its way to God. But in this upside-down, backwards kingdom of Jesus, God comes to us. In today's passage we examine Gabriel's announcement to Mary: God is about to be among us. And in this exchange we catch a glimpse of the mystery, mission, and motivation of Advent.

Third Sunday of Advent, December 17

Preparing the Way: God Shows Us God's Favor

Luke 1:39-59

Discover that God's favor is poured out on us for his glory and for the sake of others. As we prepare the way for the arrival of the Messiah, we are humbled that God would show his favor to us. Why would he do this? What did we do to deserve it? How should we live in response to it? In today's passage we look once again at Mary and Elizabeth, and we discover through their example that God's favor is poured out on us for his glory and for the sake of others.

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 24

Preparing the Way: Born into the world, God is with us

Luke 2:1-20

Discover that Jesus is glorified in all things—from the highest place to the lowest place. As we prepare the way in our hearts for the arrival of the Messiah, we are moved to worship him! We can't help but sing out his praises as Christmas Day draws near. Everywhere we turn, songs flood the airwaves, rejoicing in the birth of Jesus. As we see in today's passage, it's been that way since the beginning of this story.

Help Brighten Advent and Christmas with Greens and Poinsettias

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 17**, or by delivering them to the church office by Wednesday, December 20.

- 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 "Greens and Poinsettias" on the memo line of your check or envelope.



New Offerings from the Worship Committee to Celebrate the Advent Season

- This year instead of an Advent devotional booklet we are offering an Advent calendar, Advent 2017 with short daily messages and related scripture verses to fill the Advent weeks. There is space to add a special message or the dates and times of holiday services on the blank back. The calendars are free to all, just as the booklets were.
- Also new this year, volunteers are decorating the sanctuary with some newly purchased faux greenery to brighten up the sanctuary. As a side benefit, the component parts will be reusable in the future thus saving budget funds.
- New artwork for Advent has been installed behind the choir: The Annunciation. Cindy Burt has led this project. The article that inspired her refers to the liturgical artists as a visual choir. Just as the choir enhances our worship aurally, we hope the art does the same visually.

While betrothed to Joseph, Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel and told that she would become the mother of Our Lord. Inspired by a photo of a visual choir creation, several Worship Committee members formed our own visual choir to create a version of Gabriel announcing the good news to Mary.



- As always, there will be poinsettias. Due to rising costs (the first in many years) this year they will be \$15 for each plant sponsored. A plant may be dedicated in memory of someone, or in honor of someone, or in thanksgiving for someone or something, or simply to the Glory of God. Dedications will be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletin as usual. Donations for holiday decorations and/or music are also always welcome. Submit your payment and dedication to the church office by Wednesday, December 20.
- In addition to the art and music there will be our traditional Advent wreath lighting and, on Christmas Eve, a liturgical reading: “People and Places of the Nativity”. It looks at the significance of the ordinary people and places of the Nativity. Pastor Maggi is looking for enthusiastic scripture readers. Here is an opportunity to enrich your spiritual growth during the holiday season! Please consider reading on Christmas Eve.

The Sundays of Advent

- **December 3:** God is Near! Advent cultivates the difficult disciplines of waiting. But that waiting and hope find fulfillment when God draws near. –Luke 1:1-25.
- **December 10:** God is Among Us! Discover the mystery, the mission and the motivation of Advent. Luke 1:26-38.
- **December 17:** God Shows Us God’s Favor! Discover that God’s favor is poured out on us for God’s glory and for the sake of others. –Luke 1:39-59
- **December 24:** Born Into the World, God is with Us! Discover that Jesus is glorified in all things – from the highest places to the lowest place. –Luke 2:1-20. *Note there will be only the 8:00 pm worship service and no morning service on December 24.*

Linda Reyder, Worship committee co-chair

World AIDS Day Interfaith Service, Sunday, December 3

The World AIDS Day Interfaith Service will be held at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, 250 Dolores Street at 16th Street, Sunday, December 3, 4:00 pm.

Racism, Power and Dominance in the US and the Church:

A Crossroads Antiracism Workshop, Saturday, December 9

The Presbytery of San Francisco is sponsoring an antiracism workshop at Primera Iglesia Presbiteriana Hispana, 1941 High Street, Oakland, on Saturday, December 9 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, to introduce participants to how the presbytery and its congregations can identify systemic racism in spite of their commitments to oppose racism.

The workshop will introduce participants to a working definition of system racism and considers how culture, cultural dominance, and organizations, including the church, are intentionally and unintentionally complicit in systemic racism. A rationale will be explored for the need to develop within the church a deeper understanding of the historic and legal roots and contemporary manifestations of cultural dominance and racism. Participants will build their capacity to engage in constructive dialogue about white supremacy and racism and will practice analyzing the ways systemic racism operates in U.S. society and their congregation. Finally, participants will explore individual and organizational strategies aimed at interrupting the ways systemic racism operates in our society. Contact Pastor Maggi for more information.

Christmas Joy Offering, December 17

Out of Gratitude We Give! During the Christmas season, Presbyterians join all Christians in giving thanks for the indescribable gift of the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ. (Read 2 Corinthians 9:15.)

Presbyterians express their joy and gratitude in myriad ways, including through the Christmas Joy Offering, received during Advent. This Offering continues a decades-old tradition of equally supporting the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges.

Every congregation's gifts to the Offering are critical to the future of these ministries, especially now when the need for funding is at its height. If you don't already do so, please make the Christmas Joy Offering part of your Advent and Christmas tradition.

The Vigil: The Interfaith Annual Homeless Persons Memorial, December 21

The San Francisco Interfaith Council and the San Francisco Night Ministry will again hold a memorial service for our homeless neighbors who have died during the past year. The service will be held on Thursday, December 21, at 5:30 pm, on the Polk Street side of the Civic Center Plaza. Please bring a candle to light and remember the dead.

Christmas Eve Party, Sunday, December 24

On Christmas Eve, Steve and Sarah Taber will host their annual party for members and friends of Old First Presbyterian Church. The party will last from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm on December 24 and will be held at 1170 Green Street (near the corner of Hyde Street). It is accessible by public transit lines 19, 41, 45, 47 and 49, and the Hyde Street cable car. The Tabers will provide ham, turkey, scalloped potatoes, persimmon pudding & hot spiced cider. You are invited to bring an appetizer, vegetable dish, dessert or beverage to help to round-out the feast! Don Pender will play jazz and Christmas music on the piano. After the party, we will adjourn to Old First to arrive in time for the 7:30 pm Christmas Eve choral prelude and worship service. Steve and Sarah Taber

Christmas Eve, Sunday, December 24, Prelude 7:30 pm, Worship 8:00 pm

There will be ***no morning service*** at Old First on Sunday, December 24. Our Christmas Eve Service will begin with an extended prelude at 7:30 pm followed by worship at 8:00 pm.

If you will miss going to worship on the morning of December 24, Pastor Maggi suggests you visit a church in your neighborhood or one of our sister Presbyterian congregations. Then join us for Christmas Eve. She would enjoy hearing about your experience.

“Christmas Everywhere” by Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)



For the Christ-child who comes is the Master of all,
No palace too great and no cottage too small;
The angels who welcome Him sing from the height,
“In the City of David, a King in His might.”
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Then let every heart keep its Christmas within,
Christ’s pity for sorrow, Christ’s hatred for sin,
Christ’s care for the weakest, Christ’s courage for right,
Christ’s dread of the darkness, Christ’s love of the light,
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

So the stars of the midnight which compass us round
Shall see a strange glory, and hear a sweet sound,
And cry, “Look! The earth is aflame with delight,
sons of the morning, rejoice at the sight.”
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

October Session Meeting Report

- November 14 Presbytery Meeting delegates, Jeannie Choy Tate, Bill Campbell and Kristi Hoerauf were unanimously approved.
- It was announced that the congregation had been generous in support for those affected by the Northern California wildfires: \$911 had been raised.
- Operations Committee reported on an increase in street cleaning to a Sunday to Friday schedule.
- Community Building reported on activities including the Italian themed potluck, the active notice Board on Van Ness Avenue and the website scale revamp.
- The Mission Committee highlighted the OFPC photograph in the national Peace Making Offering brochure and reported that over 10,000 meals were packaged by the Vision Project.

Tom Culp, Clerk of Session

Complete Your Pledge for 2017 before the End of December

Please take a moment during December and complete your pledge for the current year, 2017. Lots of bills come in the last month of the year and you pledged funds are needed.

Also if you haven’t submitted pledge card for 2018, there are extra pledge cards in the narthex or the church office can supply one. Just E-mail brad@oldfirst.org and he can send you one.

Thanks from Port of Oakland Chaplain Jamieson Prevoznak

Dear Old First,

Thank you so very much for your generosity of donating DVDs to seafarers who call into the Port of Oakland. They love watching movies as the routine of the open ocean can become very tedious. Your donations allow them a break from their chores on ship. It also helps them learn English as there is no better way to learn native American English than through our pop culture!

Seafarers work long hours and are away from home and family for nine months a year. They are the ones who make our way of life possible, at great personal expense. Most come from among the poorest countries of the world and are just trying to survive. As Jesus said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me... I tell you, whenever you do this for one of the least of these, you do for me!" Help us welcome the stranger in in your name and the name of Christ! Thanks for all you do.

Very Respectfully,
Chaplain Jamieson Prevoznak+

Mission Fair Next Features Mission Causes Old First's Benevolence Budget Supports

The November 19 Mission Fair was a reminder of Old First's impact through our benevolence program. Twelve mission causes, a sample of the many that Old First's budget supports, were featured. People in our own church who are active supporters—in some cases board members or former members—represented all the organization.

The twelve causes and their representatives were: San Francisco Night Ministry (Mary Russell); Interfaith Food Pantry (Dana Nojima), San Francisco Campus Christian Center (Ec House); San Francisco SafeHouse (Jim Fagler); San Francisco Theological Seminary and Edgewood Center for Children and Families (Steve Taber); San Francisco Interfaith Council (John Kramar); Faithful Fools, Temenos Catholic Worker and Old First's effort to help homeless folks who live on our sidewalk (Levi Knippel), and Larkin Street Youth Services and the International Rescue Committee (Bill Campbell).

Our gifts and pledges support these causes, and the Old First volunteers who represented them at the Mission Fair can tell more about them.

Benefit for Interfaith Welcome Raises \$1,370 to Empower Refugee Girls in Oakland

Zion Lutheran Church's November 10 benefit concert for Interfaith Welcome raised \$1,370 to support the International Rescue Committee's Vision Project. The IRC's Oakland office is spearheading the Vision Project, an initiative to empower middle and high school girls to envision their future in America and redefine what the girls, their families and their communities may have thought possible for them. A local foundation matched the evening's contributions to double their impact. After a second Vision Project pilot workshop in early January, the IRC will roll the Vision Project out in offices around the US.

For more information on the Vision Project or Interfaith Welcome, please contact Mission Committee chair Bill Campbell.

"Forced from Home" Exhibition by Médecins sans frontières/Doctors without Borders

Imagine what you would do if you were forced to leave your home, your city, your country. What would you take with you? Where would you go? Not since World War II have so many people been displaced globally. Over the past year, some 34,000 men, women and children were forced from their homes every single day, pushing the total to an astonishing 65.3 million people. That's nearly as

many people as live in all of France. Roughly equal to the combined populations of Texas and California.

The experience of displaced people was described in a special temporary interactive exhibition, called “Forced From Home” (www.forcedfromhome.com) sponsored by Médecins sans frontières (MSF) or Doctors without Borders, an international medical humanitarian organization who was awarded the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize for their work in providing direct emergency medical care to displaced people in numerous countries worldwide. Some of us at Old First were fortunate to visit the exhibition, which was set up in Oakland.

The exhibition consisted of several outdoor “rooms”, spread out over 10,000 square feet. We were taken on a guided tour by MSF aid workers, starting with a 360° video about the contexts and issues which force people from their homes. Each of us was given a temporary identification card, with the country of origin and type of displaced person we were (e.g. migrant, internally displaced person, refugee). We were asked to choose five items which we would take with us, e.g. passport, clothing, shoes, water, medicines. The exhibition focused on five countries – Syria, Honduras, Afghanistan, Burundi, and South Sudan – where large populations of people have been displaced. The top ten host countries for refugees include: Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Uganda, Ethiopia, Jordan, Germany, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Kenya.

The exhibition showed large posters of displaced people in various countries and information about the causes of displacement, such as war, ethnic/religious tension, political strife, economic instability, food insecurity, environmental and natural disasters. At each transition point, we were asked to give up one of the items we had with us, as payment for escape. Based on one’s status, one could leave one’s country or not. Certain international mandates and agreements protect refugees and migrants, but not all displaced people are refugees, such as migrants or internally displaced people (who are forced to leave their homes, but remain within their countries). Some people are “stateless persons”, who are not considered a citizen of any country, and have no access to legal protections. Also, family members can be separated from each other, depending on their identification and status.

Displaced people are vulnerable to having to travel long distances over long periods of time to get to their destinations, political violence and imprisonment, hygiene-related illnesses, exposure to the elements, human trafficking, war-related injuries, kidnapping and torture, sexual violence and mental health issues. The exhibition showed rubber pontoons, which are designed to hold eight people, but often hold 30+ people, who try to cross the Mediterranean Sea, not knowing if they will survive and waiting to be rescued.

Displaced people need access to basic things to live, such as food, clothing, connectivity (phone/com-munication), water, hygiene, waste management and shelter. The exhibition showed how organizations like MSF provide for those needs. Food, for example, might be in the forms of high protein/high sugar bars to supply malnourished people with quick nutrition, or with grains that are flavored to their tastes. Counselors sit with displaced people to help them with mental trauma.

MSF, as a medical organization, is particularly attentive to the medical concerns of the displaced populations, such as unsafe water, poor hygiene and overcrowding, insufficient food, exposure to the elements, and no access to basic medical care – all of which can lead to disease and death. The exhibition showed tents that are used as clinics or temporary hospitals, with cots and mosquito nets (which can save lives), and supplies. The exhibition showed tents that are used as shelter by displaced people.

One of the more memorable illustrations of the horrors that displaced people face was a paper bracelet that measures the circumference of a child's arm, with red/yellow/green colors for different ranges of measurements. If the measurement for a child's arm is less than 116 mm (or 4 ½ inches), then the child is severely malnourished and is dying of starvation. As a point of comparison, my wrist is 164 mm or 6 ½ inches.

The exhibition also had virtual reality goggles, to give you a sense of what displaced peoples see and experience, and how organizations, like MSF, are trying to help them.

It was a sobering and amazing experience. Even if you didn't see the exhibition, here's what you can do:

- Stay informed through the news or organizations like MSF,
- Add your voice to discussion that impact how refugees and other displaced people are treated,
- Support organizations that work with displaced people with donations or volunteering time,
- Spread the word about Forced From Home and related issues on social media,
- Check forcedfromhome.com for the latest news about MSF's work with displaced people.

Lori Yamauchi

San Francisco Homeless Resources: Daily Shelter Shuttle

The Shuttle operates seven days per week. It transports shelter clients from fixed pick-up locations to designated destinations only.

Morning Schedule:

- 7:00 am – Family Shelter 501 Steiner to Mission & 13th (AWP Drop-in)
- 7:35 am – Providence Shelter 1601 McKinnon Ave to MSC 525 5th St.
- 8:15 am – MSC 525 5th St. to SF General Hospital
- 9:15 am – MSC 525 5th St. to Tom Waddell Clinic 50 Ivy St.

Evening Schedule:

- 3:15 pm – Mission & 13th (AWP Drop-in) to WFS 501 Steiner
- 4:15 pm – SF Main Library Grove St. Entrance to MSC 525 5th St.
- 5:30 pm – MNRC 165 Capp St. to MSC 525 5th St.
- 6:15 pm – Glide RC 330 Ellis St. to MSC 525 5th St.
- 7:30 pm – MSC 525 5th St. to Providence Shelter 1601 McKinnon Ave.
- 8:15 pm – MSC 525 5th St. to Providence Shelter 1601 McKinnon Ave.

In case more clients want a ride than there are seats in a shuttle, the driver will prioritize seating by age, mobility, health concern, scheduled appointment at the destination. No minors will be transported without a responsible accompanying adult.

Prayers for Healing and Wholeness

For George Yu for successful gall bladder surgery and during his recovery period.

For Priscilla Yu for supportive prayers.

For Randy Smith for his extended period in Austin, TX working on FEMA hurricane claims.

For Andrea Smith for supportive prayers during Randy's absence.

For Mary Lou Wilson for mental clarity.

For Joe Sheffey's father, Joseph Sheffey Jr., who has recently been relocated to the skilled nursing care unit at the Washington, DC, Veteran's Hospital.

For all who have lost friends or family members this past year and will be spending a first Christmas without them this year.

Dates to Remember

December 3	Sunday	First Sunday of Advent: Lectionary Year B begins.
December 6	Wednesday	Mission Committee, Munro Room
December 9	Saturday	OFPC staffs the Interfaith Food Pantry.
December 10	Sunday	Deadline for January Issue of <i>Shared Life</i> Board of Deacons, 12:30 pm
December 16	Saturday	All Faiths staff the Interfaith Food Pantry.
December 23	Sunday	Saturday Community Dinner, 5:30 p.m.
December 24	Sunday	No Morning Worship Service Christmas Eve: Prelude 7:30 pm, Worship Service 8:00 pm
December 25	Monday	Christmas Day: Church Office Closed
December 26	Tuesday	Session Meeting, 7:00 p.m.
December 30	Saturday	Saturday Community Dinner, 5:30 p.m.
January 1	Monday	New Year's Day: Church Office Closed

OFPC Church Officers**Session****Class of 2018**

Chris Burt
Kristi Hoerauf
Dana Nojima

Class of 2019

Tom Culp, clerk of session
Robin Currier
John Kramar
Lori Yamauchi
Priscilla Yu

Class of 2020

Bill Campbell
Hsiaochien Chuang
Linda Reyder
Daniel Pearch
Virginia Webb-Pekelnicky

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Alfred Martin
Randy Smith
Sarah Taber

Class of 2019

Riley Kramar
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