

Shared Life of Old First

January 2008

January Adult Education - Munro Room, Sundays, 9:30 am

A Season of Discernment

Have you ever wondered why Christians sometimes just cannot get along with each other?

Why are we so intolerant of each other's views when we are supposed to follow Christ, who told us to love one another?

The Presbyterian Church USA is trying another way—and we (the San Francisco Presbytery and Old First Church) are right in the middle of it!

In 2001 the PCUSA, recognizing the conflict arising from several issues including the ordination of gays and lesbians, formed The Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity (PUP) of the Church to lead the church in spiritual discernment of our Christian identity. The Task Force finished its report in August 2005, and the 2006 General Assembly approved both the report and its recommended Authoritative Interpretation that reinforces the traditional Presbyterian concept that sessions and presbyteries are responsible for upholding ordination standards in the light of their knowledge of candidates.

Lisa Larges, a candidate under care of this Presbytery (a person called by God to become Minister of Word and Sacrament), asked to be certified ready to be ordained by the Committee on Preparation for the Ministry. The Committee after much discussion and discernment has certified her (by a split vote) as ready to be ordained with a declared departure. This decision, which will be closely watched by Presbyterians across the country, will be voted on by the Presbytery on January 15.

Our January adult education classes will discuss these timely issues at a critical juncture of our church's history.

January 5: The PUP report: Background and Theological Reflection

January 12: The PUP report: Process and the four issues (Christology, Biblical Authority and Interpretation, Ordination Standards, and Power)

January 19: Lisa's story and the process of becoming a Minister of Word and Sacrament

January 26: The San Francisco Presbytery: What does it do for us anyway?

Annual Meeting and Congregational Luncheon, February 10

On Sunday, February 10, our Annual Meeting will be held in the sanctuary immediately following worship. A major item of business at the meeting will be a review of Old First's 2008 budget.

The Congregational Lunch will be held in the Fellowship Hall after the meeting. The luncheon program will feature short talks about Old First's plans and commitments for this new church year.

Tickets for the catered Chinese lunch will be on sale at Coffee Hour on Jan 20, 27 and Feb. 3 at \$7 for adults, \$3 for ages 6-12. On the day of the event, tickets will be \$8 for adults, \$4 for children.

Pastor's Letter

January 21st is Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Living in Decatur, Georgia I had the privilege to live in the environs where he grew up, studied, and preached. Two years ago I had the opportunity to walk with members of North Decatur Presbyterian Church in the Martin Luther King Day March through the streets of Atlanta.

There is something about walking in the streets he grew up in, sitting in the pews of his church and talking with people who knew the King family that called me to admire and give thanks for the mind, the passion, the vision, the courage, the faith, and the commitment of Dr. King. The challenge for me is that the prophetic words, his passion, his mission not be seen simply as history but that they still convict and lead me today.

Let us not let this day pass with out being moved, challenged, inspired by the life, ministry and words of Dr. King: *“Love is the most durable power in the world. This creative force, so beautifully exemplified in the life of our Christ, is the most potent instrument available in mankind's' quest for peace and security.”*

Peace,

Maggi Henderson

Epiphany

January 6th marks the season of Epiphany. Epiphany lasts through February 3rd, as February 10th is the first Sunday in Lent. Epiphany is when we commemorate the visit of the Magi/wise men to Jesus.

Literally, “epiphany” means manifestation or disclosure. In this sense, Epiphany refers to God's revelation to humankind in human form — namely, Jesus. The season's color is white, which reflects the star which led the Magi.

Some call epiphany an “A-HA” moment, symbolized by that comic light bulb over someone's head when they get a great idea or life-changing insight.

As Christians, we still believe that God can lead us and pray that we will have the courage to listen and the strength to follow.

Look and listen for the Magi's visit in worship on January 6th.

All-Church Retreat, April 4-6

Come retreat for study, fun and relaxation in the beautiful hills near Napa Valley. Four Springs Retreat Center (www.fourspringts.org) is over the hill from Calistoga, near Middletown, which is on the way to Clear Lake. It's rustic, yet comfortable with a well-stocked library, seminar room, meditation chapel, and lodge where you can relax for reading, quiet conversation with a cup of coffee or tea and where we will gather for meals.

Your retreat committee -- Jean Olson, chair; Harriet MacLean, Chris and Cindy Burt and Jeanne Choy Tate and Nancy Holve, staff support -- will begin the new year with a planning session. The committee will send out more information regarding cost, topic and fun activities in the near future.

Want to be part of the planning? Email Jean Olson (sfkidney@sbcglobal.net) or Nancy Holve (nancy@oldfirst.org) to let them know your interest.

A Little Time Off for Pastor Maggi

Maggi Henderson will be on vacation from December 27- January 4th.

The Reverend Megan Rohrer will be preaching on December 30th.

In case of pastoral emergencies please contact the church office, your deacon, the Reverend Susan Ashton, December 27-29, or the Reverend Erwin Barron, December 30-January 3.

College Bible Class begins this Spring

Have you ever wanted to take a real college Bible class? Now's your chance! City College of San Francisco is offering this spring semester a survey class called "The Bible as Literature" taught by Erwin Barron. Several of our members took the class a year ago and loved it.

The class will meet at 7pm on Tuesday nights beginning January 15 at the main CCSF campus on Ocean Avenue at Phelen. The course will briefly cover all of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, studying them using historical-critical and academic methods. The instructor is Erwin Barron, PhD, a Presbyterian minister who is also a City College English professor.

If you're interested or want to find out more information, contact Erwin, or you can look for English 48K at the website, www.ccsf.edu.

Editor's Note: OK, so it looks different. Get over it.

We've been sending out the church newsletter in two different formats for several years now. Some of you receive it by e-mail and some get paper copies by "real" mail. Whichever version you've been reading, you might not realize there's been another one that looked quite different, even though the content was the same.

Beginning with this issue, both print and e-mail versions will look the same. It's a simple concept. You'll get used to it.

Jazz Vespers, First Sundays, 5:00 pm
January 6 – John Calloway Quintet

Lectionary

Jan 6 - Epiphany of the Lord --- Isa. 60:1-6; *Ps. 72:1-7, 10-14*; Eph. 3:1-12; Matt. 2:1-12

Jan 13 - Baptism of the Lord --- Isa. 42:1-9; *Ps. 29*; Acts 10:34-43; Matt. 3:13-17

Jan 20 - 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time --- Isa. 49:1-7; *Ps. 40:1-11*; 1 Cor. 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

Jan 27 - 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time --- Isa. 9:1-4; *Ps. 27:1, 4-9*; 1 Cor. 1:10-18; Matt. 4:12-23

Feb 3 – Transfiguration of the Lord --- Exod. 24:12-18; *Ps. 2 or Ps. 99*; 2 Peter 1:16-21; Matt 17:1-9

Thinking about Next Christmas

Does anyone at Old First find that sitting down and mending is rather a fun thing to do on occasion? We have a good collection of Christmas pageant costumes that have served us well over the years. As always happens, though, things get ripped and seams pull apart with use. If someone out there would like to help get our costume wardrobe back into good condition, please email me (nancy@oldfirst.org) or give me a call (776-5552, ext. 304).

Now, I'm going for broke. Is there anyone who would like to design and sew one or more new costumes? We have lots of fabric available!

The time element on these projects is open-ended, so if you have some time to help, please contact me.
- Nancy Holve

January 6 – Name Tag Sunday – Remember your name – to wear it, that is.

Welcome Ministry Newsnotes

- Welcome Ministry has a second staff member: Allen Shapiro. He has seven years' experience working with persons newly released from prison.
- Megan Rohrer is now able to spend more time preaching. In December and January, her calendar included sermons at Old First, Christ Church Lutheran and St Francis Lutheran in San Francisco, Resurrection Lutheran in South San Francisco, and Christ the Good Shepherd in San Jose.
- The Bingo Evening in November raised \$5,230.
- Saturday dinners in December served over 300 meals, with nearly 200 more meals served at the Welcome Center and Wednesday Evening Outreach.
- More than 100 Christmas toiletry bags were given out, along with over 150 pairs of sock, and warm coats and jackets.

Alfred Jr. is Home from Iraq

We would like to thank all the members and friends of Old First who expressed concern and prayed for the safe return of Alfred Jr. from Iraq. We take comfort in your prayers for our son A.J. Martin. His coming back from Iraq safe and sound is a blessing that we thank God for. We thank you, our Old First family, for all your support and prayers. A.J. is now home in Alaska, and we hope to see him soon.

Sincerely,
Harriet and Alfred Martin

Welcome to our New Members

Old First joyfully welcomed five new members on December 2, 2007.

Janet DeLong and **Jim Ziegler** moved to San Francisco from Monterey this past fall. After visiting several churches, they found Old First and stayed. They joined the choir on their second Sunday with us! Jim grew up Presbyterian; his parents and grandparents were elders. Janet was raised in the Congregational Church and has always been active in church. Jim is a retired family physician; Janet's career as a linguist included stints in the Foreign Service. They join by Letter of Transfer from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Pacific Grove.

Bobby Lane is a familiar sight around Old First, monitoring the church lot, washing the sidewalk, volunteering at the Welcome Center and at Old First Concerts. Bobby was on the streets for many years; but since 2003 he's been in the process of remaking his life, thanks, he says, to Megan, the Welcome Center, and especially the Holy Spirit. He joins by Reaffirmation of Faith.

Diane Lewis did not grow up in a church home, but found Christ as a teenager when friends took her to a youth group and church camps. In the years since she has tried to stay connected to God by herself, but has realized she wants the company of others in this quest. Diane has been an attorney, but currently spends most of her time volunteering at the Welcome Center, St. Vincent's, Lighthouse for the Blind, and PAWs. She joins by Reaffirmation of Faith.

Leota Parker grew up as a Methodist in Oklahoma. Her adult life included numbers of moves and several different churches. Since coming to the Bay Area, she's lived in Oakland and San Francisco and enjoys the diversity of both. Now retired, she is an active watercolor artist and has exhibited in several local venues. She joins by Letter of Transfer from Lake Merritt Methodist Church.

New Session Structure Task Force at Work

It has been 16 years since we set the size of the Session and the Board of Deacons at 21 members each and organized the Session into ten committees to look after the work of Old First. A lot has changed since then. Our membership today is about 70 (27%) less than it was in 1992 and the pressures on our time have increased in ways we could not have anticipated.

In the last few years, it has been difficult for the Nominating Committee to identify enough people to fill out the Session and Board of Deacons, so these bodies have been operating with fewer members. This has meant that the elders and deacons on these bodies had to carry more of a load than was anticipated.

The Mission Vision report recognized these and other changes and recommended that a task force be formed to recommend changes to the size of the Session and Board of Deacons and the structure of the Session. If the size and structure are changed, then the Bylaws and Standing Rules of Old First will need to be changed.

In November, the Session chartered a new task force to make recommendations about the size of the Session and Board of Deacons and about how the Session organizes itself. This task force will also look into ways to improve the communication and collaboration processes involving pastor, elders, deacons and congregation.

In the next few months this task force will gather impressions and ideas from Old First members and will learn how other churches in the Presbytery are organized, particularly those about the size of Old First. For example, we will want to learn how smaller Sessions organize their work, and we will explore the effectiveness of alternatives to committees. That is, we would like to learn how work can be done without forming a committee to do it or, if we decide to continue with committees, learn how we can make the committee experience more enjoyable.

We also want to talk with members who have declined to be nominated to elder or deacon so we can understand what changes might be possible that would lead people to be excited about serving in these important positions.

If you have any ideas about how we can improve in any of these areas or would like to be interviewed by members of the task force, please feel free to talk with any of the task force members listed below. If you know of any other church that has a remarkably effective Session (or other organization with an effective board of directors) and from which we could learn a lot, please let us know that as well. We want to learn from the experiences of others.

You will note that Maggi is not listed as a task force member. Rest assured that she is actively involved and has a great interest in the outcome. But at this time in her ministry, she does not need to be on another committee!

Pam Byers - Bill Campbell - Dan Joraanstad - Jean Olson\ - John Sebastian - Lori Yamauchi

March 30 Church Town Hall Meeting – after worship
will feature a report from and conversation with the Restructuring Task Force.

New Elders Elected to the Class of 2010

Christopher Burt - Chris was ordained an Elder in 1977 and served as Moderator of Worship during the 1980s. He was on the Exonarthex Design Committee and the 1989 Mission Vision Committee, organized worship at Central Gardens for 12 years and has been President of Old First Concerts. A member of the choir and the Concerts Board, he enjoys recording and mastering CDs of concerts for the performers. Chris loves the significance of music in our worship, outreach and the community. In Christchurch, New Zealand, his mother played the organ at church. He met Cindy in London. In 1975 they joined the choir, John Bodo married them, and Old First has been their home ever since – even though they still pack their bags for NZ, Asia, India, UK, etc.

Carol Carter - Carol joined the choir of Old First in 1994 and decided to join the church a month later. It seemed only moments later when she was suddenly a Deacon and moments after that (10 years in fact) Clerk of Session. In addition, she has served as president of Presbyterian Women. In her secular life, she was temping when she first joined Old First. Since then she has changed career direction to some degree and is approaching her third anniversary as an AA111 in Radiation Oncology at UCSF, Parnassus Ave.

Barry Clagett - Barry joined Old First in 1997 and has served three terms on Session. He was a member of the '99 and '06 Mission Vision teams and the recent Pastor Nominating Committee. He is treasurer of the board of the Welcome Ministry and moderator of the Session Finance Committee. Barry has benefited spiritually by relating to a wide variety of people and situations and Old First, learning to be more open to change and to let God lead the Way. Barry and his wife, Tracy, live in San Francisco.

Bob Hermann - Bob has been a Presbyterian since 1988 and at Old First since '91, joining with his partner, Dan Joraanstad. Bob has served on many committees, most recently on Stewardship. He has been a deacon for a number of years and has enjoyed meeting and nurturing many in the congregation. He looks forward to serving as an Elder and thanks the church for this opportunity to serve the Lord and our community.

Jeanne Kirkwood - Jeanne was born and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, where she and her family were members of First Presbyterian Church. She joined our choir in 1995 and became a member of the church the next year. She has served on the Operations and Mission Committees; she is a deacon and was co-moderator in 2002 and 2003. Jeanne chaired the Strategic Response Task Force (2002-2003) and was co-moderator of the most recent PNC. She lives in the Sunset District and works downtown in the insurance industry.

Alfred Martin - Alfred was born and raised in Philadelphia. He accepted the call of Christ at an early age and later became an ordained Baptist minister. He believes God's leading brought him to Old First, which he joined in 2003. He has served as a member of the ushers corps, Deacons, and Congregational Care. He and longtime member Harriet MacLean were married at Old First in 2004 and together they have grown in their faith. His vision For Old First Church is that God's love will direct us in our service to God, each other and the community at large.

Mary Russell - Mary was born and raised Presbyterian in Webster Grove, Missouri. She moved here in 1975. And joined Old First in 1986. She was called to be a Deacon, including two years as Board Co-Moderator; served as an Elder 1994-99, moderating Mission Committee much of that time, and returned Deacons 2001-06. Mary serves on the Christian Education Committee and enjoys working with the children's programs. She is a member of Presbyterian Women as well as two Small Groups – all very important grounding, she says, in her continuing faith journey.

Jeannie Choy Tate - Jeanne is currently completing her Doctorate at GTU. She has been at Old First for 23 years and before that attended the Presbyterian Church in Chinatown for 25 years. She serves on the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery, has been a General Assembly delegate as well as the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Caribbean Council. Jeanne has served on Session in the past and looks forward to working with Maggi. She and her husband, Buddy Tate Choy, live in San Francisco.

New Deacons Elected to the Class of 2010

Nina Berg - Nina grew up in Rome, Georgia, where she was a member of Trinity United Methodist Church. Since she and her husband Michael joined Old First ten years ago, Nina has served one term as a Deacon, taught Sunday School and been a member of the Old First Dancers. Presently she is serving on the Nominating Committee and the Music Task Force.

Betsy Chiao - Betsy was baptized, raised, confirmed and married in the Presbyterian church. She joined OFC in 1993. Deeply involved in the Welcome Ministry, she has contributed countless hours to our homeless guests. She has been involved with the children's CE and served on many committees, including the Christmas Angel Tree for the Edgewood Center. Betsy also has served a three-year term as Deacon and one as Elder and most recently as a member of the Pastor Nominating Committee. She and her husband, Ted, reside in San Francisco.

Mary Culp - Mary was first elected to our Session in 1983 and was an Elder for 18 years.. She was chair of Mission for 6 years, and later chaired the Stewardship and Nominating Committees. She served San Francisco Presbytery on the Nominating Committee and Committee on Ministry and was staff for District 5 from 1983 to '91. Mary assisted in establishing the San Francisco Interfaith Council, served on that board as well as chair of the Child Care Task Force. She is just finishing a term from 2005 to 2007 as Deacon. She lives in San Francisco and is proud that her son, Tom, has also served OFC in many capacities.

Dan Joraanstad - Dan is from North Dakota and a deeply religious Lutheran family, who lived next door to their church. When they moved to the Minot and joined the Missouri Synod church, he became church organist at the age of 15. Dan joined Old First in 1983 and served for two years as deacon before moving to New Jersey where he joined Rutgers Presbyterian in NYC, then returned to San Francisco in 1991 with his partner, Bob Hermann. They did look at other churches, but came back to Old First. Dan served for 6 years as a member of session, and for most of that time was moderator of the Evangelism Committee.

Heather Losee - In 1986 Heather Losee came to an Easter service here with her eight-year-old daughter, Meshah; she joined the same year. Heather has been an usher for many years and has served three terms on Deacons. She is also a member of the OFC Columbarium Commission. Heather loves serving as a Deacon because it calls on and strengthens her faith and blends her professional registered nurse skills and her love of working with people.

Dana Nojima - Dana has been a member of OFC since 1999. During this time he has been an elder, serving on the Evangelism Committee and as chair of the Mission Committee. He has just finished his work on the Pastor Nominating Committee. The two years were wonderful, but he is pleased that this phase of his ministry is finished. (This was Dana's second PNC experience; the first was when he was a member of Westminster Presbyterian in Minneapolis, and served on the committee that called Tim Hart-Andersen from the Old First pulpit.) He was previously ordained and served as a Deacon at Andrew-Riverside Presbyterian in Minneapolis. He and his wife, Elaine, have been married for 23 years and live in Oakland along with several Maine Coon Cats.

Oliver Spencer - Oliver was born into the Presbyterian Church; his great-grandfather was pastor of a huge church in St. Louis. He and wife Nancy met at a small Presbyterian college in Kentucky. They have moved five times, and finding a church home was always a priority. With the culture of Old First being that of an active congregation, Oliver became more involved. Evangelism and Stewardship Committees, CE teacher and story-teller, usher, Deacon (three terms, co-moderator twice), commissioner of our Senior Center and Project Open Hand are only some of things Oliver has done at OFC. With these activities, he has felt a strong need for spiritual growth and maturity. Adult CE, small group and Wednesday morning Bible class are a part of his life, and Oliver and Nancy have started their own fixed-hour prayer four times daily.

AnnieScott Rogers - Annie has been an integral member of OFC since 1993, a member of the choir and served as a Deacon for two terms. She is a clinical laboratory scientist and an actor. She was born in North Carolina and was christened and raised a Methodist.