

from the pastor

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I suspect many of us can remember classmates who gave up candy bars or gum for Lent, and I suspect many of us remember thinking something like, “What does God care whether I chew gum or not?”

It is a legitimate question. Fasting can be a spiritual practice if it moves us to be more open to the will of God in our lives—if it helps us to listen to what God wants us to be and do. Fasting was important to Reformer John Calvin. Our desire for many things gets in the way of our desire for God, believed Calvin, and fasting serves as a counterbalance. In his book on Reformed spirituality, Howard Rice notes that fasting is healthiest when used as a way to cut through distractions and return to God as a central focus in our life.

But the prophet Isaiah reminds us that fasting is never supposed to be about putting on a show for God or anyone else. In Chapter 58, a group of people who have returned from exile in Babylon are attempting to curry favor with God with their self-righteous religious observances. The prophet, speaking for God, says God is not impressed: “Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not *this* the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?”

Continued on page 7



Ash Wednesday Worship Service

February 17
7:00 pm

*“An Acceptable Fast:
An Introduction
to an Environmental Challenge”*

The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, preaching

Sabeel Conference

Spotlights Palestine-Israel

Friday March 5—11:30 am to 10:30 pm

Saturday March 6—8:00 am to 6:30 pm

Hosted by FPCSA

Poets and activists, academics and former government officials, will come together in Marin County next month to train a spotlight on the continuing crisis in Palestine/Israel. The **speakers include Jews, Muslims and Christians** and hail from Israel, the Occupied Territories and the US.

The two-day conference, “**A Time for Truth, a Time for Action: Palestine/Israel and the US at the Crossroads,**” is sponsored by **Friends of Sabeel**, an international peace movement initiated by Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land. The ecumenical organization links with peace activists of all persuasions to promote a non-violent solution to the occupation.

Speakers include **Ambassador Ed Peck**, who served as a terrorism expert under Reagan; **Kathleen and Bill Christison**, former CIA analysts; two Palestinian leaders of non-violent resistance movements; Israeli peace activist **Jeff Halper**; and Americans **Anna Baltzer** and **Mark**



Braverman, as well as local academics, including a Muslim expert on Hamas.

Also appearing are the **Rev. Naim Ateek**, founder of Sabeel, and a panel on religious extremism, representing Muslims, Christians and Jews. A Palestinian-American hip-hop artist will perform at the event along with two local poets, one Jewish and the other Palestinian. **Mohammad Alatar**, producer of the film, “*Jerusalem: The East Side Story*,” will present his work and answer questions.

Norwegian physician **Mads Gilbert**, who served in Gaza throughout the attacks last year, will give a presentation and conduct a workshop. Other workshops will address topics ranging from Christian Zionism and anti-Semitism to non-violent activism and Islamophobia.

Our own Keep Hope Alive group has hosted Jeff Halper, Anna Baltzer, Mark Braverman and Rev. Naim Ateek helped us plant our olive tree Oct 12, 2008 and made a presentation July 25, 2009 in our sanctuary.

The conference will take place from 11:30 am on Friday, March 5 through 6:30 pm on Saturday, March 6 at the **First Presbyterian Church of San Anselmo**, 72 Kensington Rd., San Anselmo. Registration is \$90 for both days, including meals, \$50 for one day, with discounts for students and low-income participants.

To register or to view the complete schedule, visit www.fosna.org. Information is available at 415-721-0703 or 510-499-0537



Upcoming Concert and Events

All at First Presbyterian Church

February 7, 4:00 pm—**San Francisco Chapter of American Guild of Organists** presents choral and organ music by local composers. Free will offering.

February 27, 6:30-8:30 pm—**Family Folk Dance Night**, led by Martha Wall and Laura Jeanne Ruppert. Fun international dances for all ages. Free admission, with donation of a food item for the food barrel.

March 28, 2:00 pm—**Classical Guitar Concert** by Kevin Dee, local musician studying at Oberlin. Free

April 18, 4:00 pm—**Ugandan Orphan Choir Concert**. Freewill donations.

WOMEN'S ANNUAL SPRING RETREAT

Friday, April 30th—Saturday, May 1st
Ralston White Memorial Retreat Center

The Women's Annual Spring Retreat will be the week before Mother's Day this year, on Friday April 30th and Saturday, May 1st at Ralston White Memorial Retreat Center, Mill Valley. Detailed information will be available in March. Your Retreat Committee is working diligently on planning a memorable experience for you, so plan now to attend! Committee: Jo Gross, Virginia Thibeaux, Martha Spears, Joanne Whitt, Sally Johnson, Betty Stott

**EARTH GOSPEL—
AN EXCITING ADULT ED SERIES FOR LENT
February 21—March 28**

In concert with the environmental focus that has been chosen for Lent, the Worship Committee has arranged for Rev. Sam Hamilton Poore, D.Min to conduct a weekly series of sessions during Lent, using his book *Earth Gospel, A Guide to Prayer for God's Creation*. Sam is the Director of the Program in Christian Spirituality at SFTS, and has long been attentive to nature and the environment, including human relationships to them. The series will be for six weeks, from February 21st through Palm Sunday, March 28th. We'll have a light lunch in Duncan Hall right after coffee hour each week, and plan to finish by one o'clock. Child care will be available if requested prior to the session.

As stated in its introduction, *Earth Gospel* is "offered to Christians who know or suspect that there is a direct connection between loving God and loving God's creation. I offer the prayer book as a guide for exploring—through a sustained period of prayer, meditation with scripture, and prayerful reflection—the interconnecting love that binds together God, humankind and creation."

Earth Gospel offers a sustained period of prayer in the form of three prayer settings each day for 28

days. Prayers are morning, midday and evening, and each day of the week has an identified theme. The morning and evening prayer times begin with a few opening words, often from scripture, sometimes from a hymn or a poem, to help the conscious transition to a time of prayer. These words are followed by a hymn as a morning prayer, and then scripture as a listening prayer. "Another voice" for reflection is

"Earth Gospel is offered to Christians who know or suspect that there is a direct connection between loving God and loving God's creation. I offer the prayer book as a guide for exploring—through a sustained period of prayer, meditation with scripture, and prayerful reflection—the interconnecting love that binds together God, humankind and creation."

Rev. Sam Hamilton Poore
Earth Gospel, A guide to Prayer for God's Creation

provided in the form of a reading chosen from a wide variety of sources, mostly Christian. The morning and evening times then finish with a blessing. The midday prayer is designed for a shorter period of time and consists of a single reading and a prayer. We all know there are many in our congregation who know and experience loving God by loving God's creation. What do you think might be the result of a big group of us exploring this relationship by immersing ourselves in prayer and reflection about that creation? Especially under the guidance of a pastor who has

a lifelong spiritual relationship with nature and who has now put together a guidebook especially for people like us, the results might be rather remarkable. You are invited to come and see.

There will be opportunities to sign up and to order the book early in February. We're hoping that most of those who sign up will be able to commit to attending every session.

Worship in February



All Sunday morning worship times are 10:00 am

February 3

The Service for Wholeness and Healing
Wednesday, 7:00 p.m., the Sanctuary
Prayer, Taizé Music, Iona Liturgy

February 7

5th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Communion
“Deep Water”
Luke 5:11
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, preaching

February 14

Transfiguration of the Lord
Carnival Sunday
“Shiny Faces”
Exodus 34:29-35
Luke 9:28-36
The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, preaching

February 17

Ash Wednesday
Wednesday, 7:00 pm
Communion and Imposition of Ashes
Isaiah 58:1-12
Genesis 1:31
“An Acceptable Fast:
An Introduction to an Environmental Challenge”
The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, preaching

February 21

1st Sunday in Lent
Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Luke 4:1-13
“God, the Giver”
The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt, preaching
Lenten Environmental Challenge Focus: Use of Transport

February 28

2nd Sunday in Lent
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18
Luke 13:31-35.
“Looking Forward, Acting Now”
The Rev. Dr. Kevin Buchanan, preaching
Lenten Environmental Challenge Focus: Use of Water

Adult Education

February 7th

11:30 am

following Worship in the Fireside Room

What does communion mean to you?

What do you experience when you take communion? What do you expect during a communion service? What is your understanding of the theology of communion? Does the way it is done in our worship services satisfy your desires and expectations? How do you think it might be done differently? Do you remember a particular communion that was a special experience for you? What made it special?

When these questions were asked of the five members of the Worship Committee during a Worship Committee meeting, the differences in the responses were very surprising and informative, and we immediately thought that the entire congregation would enjoy – and perhaps benefit – from participating in such a conversation.

What we did at that point was also a little surprising. We essentially stopped the conversation and committed ourselves to continuing it with whomever else in the congregation wanted to participate.

So everyone is invited to Adult Education after worship February 7th to delve into the topic of communion. That date was chosen because we will have had communion that day, and also because Lent begins February 17th and begins the period that we have communion every week.



Zephyr Experience Annual Conference July 4-9, 2010 Zephyr Point Conference Center

Would you like a vacation at Lake Tahoe that includes all your meals, morning classes for the whole family taught by top rate leaders, and recreation opportunities for the whole family plus interesting people to share it with? If so, you should consider the Zephyr Experience annual conference at the Zephyr Point Conference Center. Offerings include classes by Herman Waetjen, Greg Love, and other stimulating teachers, hikes on the Tahoe Rim Trail, swimming, relaxing on your own, and more.

Check out the conference brochures with all the details at the coffee hour in February or at the church office. Mark your calendars now for July 4-9. Space is limited so don't wait. See Carl Basore, Conference Dean or Joan Basore for any questions.

Life Stories Group Second Tuesdays of the Month Church Library, 10:00 am

Who went to school with Carol Channing? Whose parents made and sold triangular doughnuts? Who was lucky enough to get the part of the turkey in a Thanksgiving play? These are the kinds of things you might learn if you join us the second Tuesday of each month at 10:00-noon in the church library. No need to be a professional writer; this group just enjoys setting down their experiences and sharing them with each other. We would love to hear about yours.

If you have questions, call Phil Gross (453-5364)...and has he got some stories to tell!

Library News



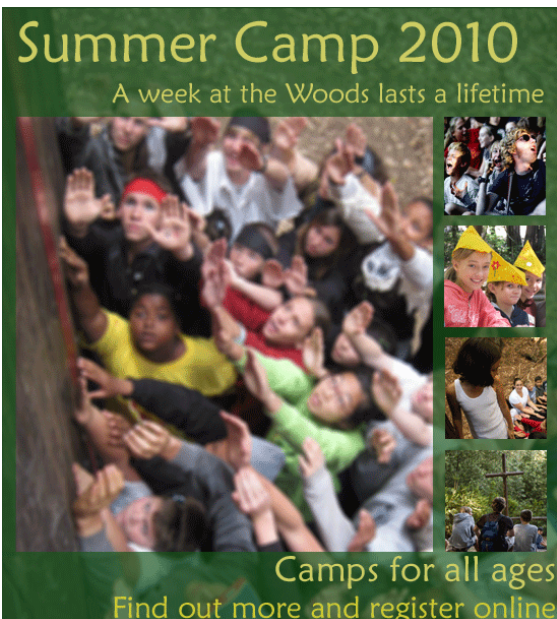
The first of a new year is a good time to refresh our memories on how to check out a book in the church library, don't you think?

So, if you know the name and/or author of the book you want, either of those can be found in the card catalogue on the desk, IF we have the book. Another way to go about it is to look up a specific subject in the card file.

When you find the right card, the numbers or letters in the top left hand corner will tell you how to find the book on the shelves. The numbers begin in the middle section of the book case which is on your left as you enter the library, numbers getting higher as you go around the room. The last section next to the closet door contains fiction. After that "aha" moment when you have the book in your hands, please write your name and the FULL date you are borrowing it on the book card in the book pocket just inside the cover. Leave the book card in the front of the small card file next to the card catalogue.

The children's books are to the right of the door as you enter. The cards for these books are alphabetized in the first drawer of the card catalogue, and the procedure for checking them out is the same.

Though there is not a hard and fast time for you to return a book, 2-3 weeks seems reasonable. Questions? Call Nan Harle (456-4008).



Summer Camp 2010
A week at the Woods lasts a lifetime

Camps for all ages
Find out more and register online

Westminster Woods Summer Camp Registration Now Open

Westminster Woods is now accepting online registrations for summer camps for children and youth from grades 2-12. Check out their website for information on the various camps and dates at www.westminsterwoods.org. If you register before April 1, 2010 and enter the church partner code (WWC2010), you will receive an instant \$20 savings and receive your Summer Camp t-shirt ahead of time.

Please also remember that we also provide camperships for those who need some financial support. If you are interested in a camper-ship, please contact Kevin at 415-456-3713 ext.202 or e-mail him at KevinBuchanan@togetherweserve.org.

Knews from the FPC Knitters

On Christmas Eve our winter shelter guests received warm knitted stocking caps from the FPC Knitting Group.

We spread out the 30 caps on a long table and invited the men to choose the one they wanted. It was fun to watch them select one and then look carefully at all the others to be sure they had picked the right one! They had reasons for selecting a particular one, whether it was the color, pattern, or style! We had about 25 men that night, so left the rest of the caps out for other men who took theirs on Christmas night. They all were delighted with these gifts! Many thanks to the knitters for your quick response during the busy holiday season!



Youth Volunteer Award Center for Volunteer and Non-Profit Leadership of Marin Taylor Crouch

A hearty congratulation is extended to Taylor Crouch who was one of only five youth to receive the "Youth Volunteer of the Year" award at the Center for Volunteer and Non-Profit leadership of Marin luncheon on January 7, 2010. Taylor was the only student nominated from Drake High School and he received the award for his volunteer work with the Seminary, the church, his school, and the community. The award also included a commendation from the United States House of Representatives, the State Senate and State Assembly, the Marin County Board, and a monetary award. Thank you Taylor, for all your hard work and we wish much success with your continued volunteerism in the future.



Valentine Tea

Saturday, February 13th

2:00 pm

Fireside Room

Please join the Older Adult Committee for fun, fellowship and a formal English Tea.

Watch the bulletin for sign ups or call Martha Spears at 342-2578 to reserve your spot.

From the pastor

Continued from Page 1

An acceptable fast, then, is one which causes us to change—to stop doing whatever we might be doing that contributes to injustice, poverty, oppression, and misuse of the gifts God has given us. This year, as an expression of our congregational commitment to Global Stewardship, the worship planning team invites you to participate in “An Acceptable Fast,” to use Isaiah’s words, that helps us to care for the gift of Creation. We propose joining many congregations in adopting the spiritual discipline of a “green” Lent. We have been living in a way that has damaged God’s good creation. The damage we are causing is felt most keenly by the people on our planet who are already poor, already vulnerable. We need to change—or to use the theological word, to “repent.” So for the six weeks of Lent, we invite the congregation to “fast” by taking on environmental actions as families, household, individuals, and as a congregation. Each week we will focus on a particular environmental challenge:

1st week of Lent: The use of transport

2nd week: The use of water

3rd week: The use of energy

4th week: Reducing waste and pollution

5th week: Shopping thoughtfully

6th week: Maintaining and increasing biodiversity

We will explore the options for “green fasting”—for taking on environmental challenges—in worship and fellowship. Our fast will include a six-week adult education series led by Sam Hamilton-Poore, Director of Program in Christian Spirituality and Assistant Professor of Christian Spirituality at San Francisco Theological Seminary.

A prayer by Iona Community poet Chris Polhill summarizes this fast:

Creator God,
from quark to planet your universe is awesome.

Give us eyes to gape at the wonders daily about us,
and the will to live in the harmony of your creating.

Help us to recognize and honor the connections of all things,
even at a cost to our own wants and comforts;
so we may live gently on the earth,
and all creation praise you. Amen.

And amen.
Together we serve,
Joanne



Directory Changes

As you read these changes, please pick up a pen and make the additions and revisions to your directory.

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ADULT STUDY
9:00 AM
SUNDAY WORSHIP
& SUNDAY SCHOOL
10:00 AM
(NURSERY CARE)

The Rev. Dr. Joanne Whitt
Pastor and Head of Staff
The Rev. Dr. Kevin Buchanan
*Interim Associate Pastor for Children,
Youth & Families*
The Rev. Beverly Brewster
Parish Associate
Mary Wright Gillespie
Associate Pastor Emerita
Sally Johnson
Director of Music Emerita
J. Carolyn Johnston
Business Manager
Tom Lannert
Church Custodian
Kathleen McCalla
Office Administrator
John Parfitt
Organist
Martha Spears
Coordinator of Older Adult Ministries
Martha Wall
Director of Music

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so we may live gently on the earth,
and all creation praise you. Amen.

Chris Polhill, Iona Community poet

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