



## Sunday Celebration Notes from Jerry Stinson

*Celebrating God's Love Every Sunday at 10 am.*

This will be our annual **WELCOMING SUNDAY** during which we celebrate the Open and Affirming Covenant made by this congregation seventeen years ago, when the members declared that this church will be open to and affirming of people of all sexual orientations. The hymns and liturgy will lift up God's radically inclusive love and will speak of a faith community which publicly welcomes everyone – especially those others would perhaps reject.

We will celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion during the service, and there will be a special "open and affirming moment" by Jennifer Mota.

In my sermon I will look at one of the most often-quoted phrases of Paul which affirms unity. But I will contend that Paul got it wrong!

SERMON: *Galatians and the Erasure of Identity*

The Rev. Jerry Stinson, preaching

READING: Galatians 3:26-28

LITURGIST: The Rev. Libby Tigner

*Next week during the sermon time Jerry Stinson will discuss "Why First Church Matters So Much to Me" with Edric Guise, Deb Buller, Peter Wright, and Alison Mitchell.*

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## In Sunday School This Week

**Theme:** Power to Do

**Scripture Focus:** Mark 1:21-28

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## In Adult Education This Week

*Sundays at 8:30 am in the Klar Rooms, upstairs in Pilgrim Hall*

The class on "The Historical Jesus for Beginners" continues - please see page 2 for more information.

## Music on Sunday

This Sunday the choir will sing "Bright Morning Star," a Kentucky Appalachian Folk-song arranged by Fred Squatrito. He based his arrangement on a version that was sung by G.D. Vowell and recorded on September 10, 1937, in Harlan, Kentucky. It is a poignant song about how we are surrounded by the "loving arms" of our friends who are around us, even those who have passed from us. Our new soloist, Steve Berlanga, studied theory with Professor Squatrito in northern California. See you in church!

*Dr. Leland Vail, Minister of Music*

## All Are Invited to the 121st Annual Meeting

Celebrate the  
Accomplishments of 2008

Special Entertainment

The Ralph Pillsbury Award  
Announced

Potluck Lunch—Please Bring

A-G: Side dish or salad

H-R: Main dish

S-Z: Dessert

**Sunday, February 8, 11:30 am**

## Sunday Adult Class Extended: The Historical Jesus for Beginners

By Libby Tigner

I'm extending our series, "The Historical Jesus for Beginners," by two weeks. We will continue this exploration through the end of February. I promise to stay a little more on track and keep us focused so that we can get through all of the material that we need to cover.

If you are interested in this topic and have not been able to join us, you are welcome to drop in to check the class out. We meet on Sunday mornings at 8:30 a.m. in Klar 1 and 2 – the upstairs classrooms in Pilgrim Hall. Coffee is available, and you are welcome to bring your breakfast with you.

## Service of Spiritual Wholeness This Wednesday Night

By Libby Tigner

Is your life too busy? Are you feeling distracted? Do you find yourself fretting and worrying, or are you having a hard time focusing? Our monthly Services of Spiritual Wholeness are designed to be a time and a place where you can pause, catch your breath, and get centered and reconnected with the sacred. It may be just what you need.

On the first Wednesday of most months, a small group gathers in Sacred Space, our interfaith chapel space upstairs in Pilgrim Hall. There, we sit together in silence, share in liturgy, talk about our lives, and allow God's spirit to breathe fresh life into our hearts. The service begins at 7 p.m., and lasts about 40 minutes. For more information contact Libby at 562-436-2256, ext. 224, or via email at [ltigner@firstchurchlb.org](mailto:ltigner@firstchurchlb.org).

## Greeting from the Moderator

As we start this new year of 2009 together I am delighted to have the opportunity to serve as your moderator. I am looking forward, to the future with new found optimism. As we move forward let us fervently wish that the economy improves and that the hope for peace burns brighter. We are very fortunate here at First Church to belong to a unique group of people who truly care about each other, our neighbors, our country and our planet. Let us continue to proudly be "A Tower of Strength in the Heart of the City."

Peter Wright

## [www.firstchurchlb.org](http://www.firstchurchlb.org)

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## Support Group

By Jerry Stinson

The next meeting of the support group for those caring for aging parents or for those who have recently lost a parent will be on Tuesday, February 2 at 7 p.m. in the Pownall Room. This support group, which I facilitate, is not a class; it is simply an opportunity for people to share their experiences with one another and perhaps find some support through that sharing. Everyone is welcome to attend.

### Third Annual Interfaith Community Organization

#### Celebration of Gifts

February 7, 3-5 pm

Patterson Hall

Featuring Gregorio Luke and

Honoring Rose Cabanban

Marking 10 Years of Organizing in  
Long Beach Faith Communities

Enjoy food prepared by our member congregations, a raffle and silent auction, and a fascinating art presentation by the former curator of the Museum of Latin American Art, Gregorio Luke.

Tickets are \$10, available at the Board of Outreach table after church on Sunday. For more information, please contact ICO at 562-984-2727 or [info@greaterlongbeachico.org](mailto:info@greaterlongbeachico.org).

## Shepherds Needed

By Susan Dampf

So, did you want to be on one of the boards but were worried you didn't have the time? Well, I have a great solution! How about helping our church family grow? Become a shepherd to new members! The board of membership development is in great need of our members to volunteer their time to show a new member the ropes.

This is only a one-year commitment in which you invite your new pal to lunch or coffee within the first month they have joined and invite them to sit with you in church sometimes. Invite them to any church related activities you attend once every three months or so.

Integrating our new members is an integral part of the health of our church! The Board of Membership Development is not just about helping our membership grow, but stay healthy! I have done this several times and have made two of my dearest friends, Marti Kaye and Miriam Herrmann, because of this!

We are receiving many new members. Yay! But not enough members are agreeing to open their arms in friendship to embrace our newest family members. So, all you are asked to do is make a new friend: invite them to one event, at least each quarter, be it game night, movie outings, one of our many concerts or lectures, Sacred Practices, a fundraiser, or my favorite ... the church picnic at El Dorado Park!

For some of us it's rather hard meeting new people. Be a blessing to that new member and be the smiling face they see each Sunday that knows their name!

If this sounds like an act of service you would enjoy then please contact Susan Dampf: 562-425-6772 home or at [crazy-painter@gmail.com](mailto:crazy-painter@gmail.com). I'll be waiting to hear from you! So will your new friend. Thank you very much!

## Senior Minister's Blog

The title of Jerry Stinson's blog article this week is: Can conversations about "reducing" abortions bring together those who have been so far apart?

Go to the blog and not only read the article, but add your comment as well: [jerrysjusticejournal.blogspot.com](http://jerrysjusticejournal.blogspot.com).

## Friday Night at First Church on February 6

By Libby Tigner

It's time for weekend fun and relaxing with First Church friends. Join us in the Pownall Room at 6 p.m. for supper, and then we'll enjoy some fun and games. Last time, we played Cranium and Mexican Train, and we all had a great time.

Please RSVP with Libby at 562-436-2256, ext. 224 or via email at [ltigner@firstchurch lb.org](mailto:ltigner@firstchurch lb.org) so that we have the right amount of food. The cost is \$5 to cover food expenses.

## President Obama's First Actions

By Jerry Stinson

I admit that I have been somewhat less excited than many of you about the possibilities of change with a new president. But I am really impressed with the president's actions in closing the Guantánamo Bay Detention Center and in repudiating torture.

For the last year, our congregation has been involved in the effort to stop the use of torture by the American government. We have anti-torture banners hanging in the courtyard and from the bell tower. The Church Council voted to make the church a participating member of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, and Dale Whitney has done a wonderful job of representing our congregation in that national movement. The founder of that national campaign spoke at First Church last year.

I am writing this article on the day when the president's executive order was signed. Here is some of what the leaders of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture said in a press release:

"President Obama asked this country during his campaign to join him in changing the world. By requiring the CIA to abide by the restrictions in the Army Field Manual in conducting interrogations of detainees, by closing the CIA's secret prisons, and by providing the International Committee of the Red Cross access to all US-held detainees, he has already changed the world with respect to America's use of torture. He has rejected the use of torture as an interrogation technique and allowed the United States to again find its moral bearing.

"The establishment of a task force to study whether the CIA should be able to use additional interrogation techniques beyond

*(Continued on back page)*

## Mardi Gras Potluck with Wii and Board Games February 21

By Libby Tigner

Want to have some good-natured fun with friends? Itching to show everyone that you are a rock star on Guitar Hero? Interested in participating in a virtual bowling game? Looking for a relaxed game of cards? The Mardi Gras potluck and game night is for you!

Saturday, February 21 (the last Saturday before Lent) is the night that we'll celebrate Mardi Gras. We'll start with a potluck supper (bring a dish for six to eight), and then everyone can play their favorite games. We'll have two TVs set up with Wii games, and several tables for board and card games. It'll be great fun for all ages, and everyone is encouraged to wear your Mardi Gras spangles, beads and boas! This is a great opportunity to invite a friend or neighbor to a church event.

When: Saturday, February 21 at 6 p.m.

Where: Patterson Hall

What to bring: a potluck dish, your favorite game

Optional: wear your Mardi Gras outfit, and bring your own table settings to save on paper usage and clean-up.



## Social Networking Comes to First Church

By Libby Tigner

Are you on Facebook, the internet-based social networking site? Some folks find it a great way to stay in touch with friends and family. A lot of members of our church are on Facebook, and now the church has a Facebook group.

Connecting through Facebook is one way that we are trying to increase our exposure out there in the world and let folks know about what we're doing as a congregation. The more of us who join the First Church group, the more other people will see our involvement with the group and perhaps take a look at us.

The discussion boards on the site are also a way that we can continue our church-related conversations, make plans for meeting up with each other, and post information that members of the church might be interested in knowing.

If you are on Facebook, please do a search for First Congregational Church of Long Beach, and then join the group! You can add the group, our church homepage or the UCC homepage to your profile, and keep increasing our exposure.

See you on the web!

## Progressive Christians Uniting Presents Its 12th Annual Gala Benefit Dinner

Progressive Christians Uniting invites you to an unforgettable evening, which includes keynote speaker Van Jones, author, activist and President of Green for All. He is the author of *The Green Collar Economy* and his organization, Green for All, works to build an inclusive, green economy, strong enough to resolve the ecological crisis and lift millions of people out of poverty.

Monday, February 16

The Center at Cathedral Plaza

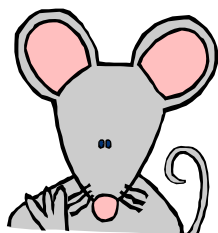
555 West Temple Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Parking \$5

Cocktails at 5 pm, dinner served at 6 pm

Right now there are two seats left at the First Church table, \$80 each (we got the early reservation price). Please contact Ruth in the church office to make your reservations and indicate if you would like the vegetarian entree. For more event information visit [www.progressivechristiansuniting.org](http://www.progressivechristiansuniting.org)



### The Church Mouse has heard ...

*The following essay by Claire Mitchell was recently published in The California Reader:*

Reading is probably my favorite thing in the whole world. I'm sure that reading helps bring up my imagination until it soars!

When I feel as sad as a baby with no attention, it always raises my spirits to start reading. Reading makes me feel better.

My favorite series of books are "Emily Windsnap," "Cam Janson," and "A to Z Mysteries." Other than that I read anything I can get my hands on (except the series of "Goosebumps," - it's way scary!).

My favorite non-fiction books are about horses, puppies, and hamsters. I like to learn new facts about my favorite, furry friends! Reading helps me learn more about my favorite things.

Reading is my family's hobby and I hope that it stays that way. **READING!**



*The Pilgrim*  
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TO:

“Never place a period  
 where God has placed a comma”  
[Gracie Allen]

## Parish Concerns

Your thoughts and prayers are requested for Kenia Casarreal; Georgette deBruyn upon the death of her mother; David Franco, Sr. (father of David Franco); Ben Rockwell’s daughter-in-law; Ramsis (friend of Bill & Betty Cole); and Rick Travis.

*To put someone on this list, put a note on the Parish Concerns board on the Third Street landing or contact Ruth Warkentin (562-436-2256 x221 or office@firstchurchlb.org).*



## Online Calendar

Don’t miss out! Check the online church calendar at [www.firstchurchlb.org/calendar.html](http://www.firstchurchlb.org/calendar.html) for details about all church events. You can use the online calendar to email invitations to friends to church events and to set up emailed reminders to yourself. Just click on any event to see information about it.

## You’ve got a date ...

### Saturday, January 31

8 p.m. Mozart Festival Gala Concert

### Sunday, February 1

11:30 a.m. Parish Life Board; Communications Committee

### Tuesday, February 3

7 p.m. Caregivers Support Group; Drop-In Center Committee

### Wednesday, February 4

7 p.m. Service of Spiritual Wholeness

### Friday, February 6

6 p.m. Parents’ Night Out; Friday Night at First Church

### Saturday, February 7

3 p.m. Interfaith Communication Organization Celebration of Gifts

*(Continued from page 4)*

## President Obama’s First Actions

those approved in the Army Field Manual is a cause for concern. We call on the president to ensure that any additional techniques are humane, effective, and available for public scrutiny. We cannot afford to risk a return to the secret abuses of the past. Specifically, the president should publicly affirm that any additional interrogation techniques comply with the “golden rule” - that they would be both moral and legal if used upon a captured American.”

The religious community has labored faithfully for three years to end US-sponsored torture. We are grateful today for this important step. The dark, dark days of the past are behind us, and we all must work to make sure they never return again.

## Becoming a Member of First Church

Whether you have been attending for a few weeks, a few months or several years, we would like you to consider becoming a member of First Church. When you are ready to take that step, please call or email Rev. Jerry Stinson at 562-436-2256, ext 230 or [revjstinson@verizon.net](mailto:revjstinson@verizon.net).