



Sunday Celebration Notes from Jerry Stinson

Celebrating God's Love Every Sunday at 10 am.

It's Homecoming Sunday – vacations are over, Labor Day is behind us, and our church life returns in full!

Our Homecoming Sunday activities begin with a continental breakfast for everyone, adults and children, in Patterson Hall at 9 a.m. At 9:30, members of the staff will briefly describe opportunities for children's, youth and adult education at First Church. Our youth music programs will also be described. Then there will be an opportunity for people to sign up for our fall programs and to look at displays, visit classrooms and meet teachers.

"Be the Welcome" will be the theme of our service, designed by our Worship and Arts Ministry Team around a poem written by Tina Datsko de Sánchez. We will celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and there will be a special litany and candle lighting related to an axis of friendship with the people of Iran. Alison Mitchell will offer a Moment of Recognition.

My sermon will look at what it means for us to strive to be a community of extravagant welcome.

Following the service there will be a celebration luncheon sponsored by the Church History Ministry Team. There will also be a forum led by Akiko Dohi who will continue the conversation "No More Gembaku" that she started in the Nagasaki Remembrance Service on August 9.

This will clearly be a memorable Sunday – everyone will want to be present!

SERMON: *A Community of Extravagant Welcome*
The Rev. Jerry Stinson, preaching

READINGS: Mark 10:13-14; Acts 10:27-28

LITURGIST: The Rev. Libby Tigner

Next week Jerry Stinson's sermon will be titled "Lessons Learned in the Hot Dog Line."



Music on Sunday

For Homecoming Sunday, the choir will offer "O Sifuni Mungu." This is a wonderful anthem written in the style of African music heard in Zimbabwe. The choir sings in both Swahili and English. The percussion instruments, which serve as the driving force of this piece, are played by David Gerhart and friends. Avocation also helps out by singing the second ensemble part. Our fabulous tenor soloist Carlos Carlos (who begins his sixth year) will be the featured cantor. This wonderful anthem was written by the team of Marty McCall, David Maddux, Mmunga Mwenebulongo and Asukulu 'Yunu Mukalay. I am pleased to announce that our new soprano soloist is Megan O'Toole. I will have more information about this sensational soprano in next week's *Pilgrim*. See you in church!

Dr. Leland Vail, Minister of Music

In Sunday School This Week

Theme: Who Are You, Jesus?

Scripture Focus: Mark 8:27-38

Please note that there is no Adult Education this week.

Homecoming Sunday Luncheon: September 13, Patterson Hall, Following the Church Service

This fundraiser for the Church History Ministry Team will feature a delicious salad bar, drinks and dessert. Tickets are \$8 for individuals \$20 for families. Proceeds from last year's luncheon were used to purchase archival quality storage containers for valuable church records and papers.

An Axis of Friendship with Iran

By Jerry Stinson

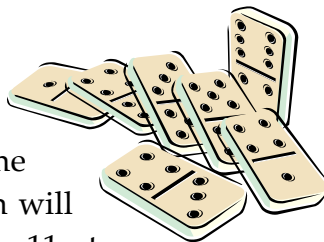
At our annual congregational business meeting last November, our church agreed to be one of six congregations sponsoring a resolution to the United Church of Christ (UCC) General Synod calling for an Axis of Friendship with Iran. After a committee of the Synod made some changes in the resolution, it received the Synod's approval. The resolution calls for some sort of action in solidarity with the people of Iran each year around September 12.

On September 12, 2001, America's September 11 tragedy brought an outpouring of sympathy from many unlikely places, even from far off Tehran, Iran. Thousands of Iranians lit candles in solidarity with the people of the United States. To complete the circle of care and concern, the resolution invites all UCC members to light a candle and place it in their windows on the evening of September 12 as a sign of friendship. Then our churches are encouraged to lift up this axis of friendship in some way in the Sunday service closest to September 12. So on Sunday, September 13, there will be a second peace candle on our chancel and there will be a special litany in our service.

Game Night Is Back!

By Yvonne SaMarion

Friday Night at First Church is game night! The adult gamers of First Church will gather in the Pownall room on September 11 at 6:30. The cost is only \$5 per person for dinner, drinks and an evening of fun with fun people. This month is wide open as to what game will be played – we'll have a variety available. If you have a favorite game – bring it with you. Your favorite game may win the night! Come one, come all and join in the fun. We'll have the welcome mat out for you!



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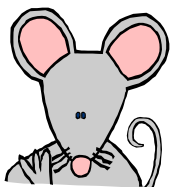
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The Church Mouse has heard...

... Allison King and her dad Randy recently swam the 1.5-mile Alcatraz Sharkfest Challenge from Alcatraz to San Francisco's Aquatic Park.



Unleash Your Inner Hippie

Saturday, September 12, 10 am - 12 noon in the basement Dining Room. Bead a boss candle holder to sell at the Craft Fair in October and rap with friends or just hang loose. For more info or to sign up: cathcham@otis.edu.

Dig?

Cathy Chambers

Senior Minister's Blog

Jerry Stinson's blog article this week will look at the Roman Catholic excommunication of Maryknoll priest Roy Bourgeois. The article will focus on Sister Joan Chittister's call for the church to instead proceed with great tenderness, an open mind and a listening heart.

Go to the blog and not only read the article, but add your comment as well: jerrysjusticejournal.blogspot.com.

Forum This Sunday after Church: "No More Gembaku"

By Akiko Dohi

The topic of the forum on September 13 will again be "No More Gembaku" (No More Atomic Bombs). It will be an expansion of the presentation I gave on Sunday, August 9, including segments of documentary films.

Although I had terrible experiences when I was six or seven years old during the last two years of World War II because our house was close to the Osaka airport, I did not know much about Hiroshima and Nagasaki until much later because the US government forbade the Japanese government to talk about the affects of the atomic bomb until seven years later.

So I will talk based on information I have learned from my acquaintances who had direct and indirect experience, from segments of some documentary films of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the South Pacific and Kazakhstan, and also from books which reference US secret documents that were declassified later.

Adult Education Classes for Fall

By Libby Tigner

We're happy to announce the new schedule of adult classes that will be offered on Sunday mornings this fall.

September 20 and 27 - Marc Dickey and the Mighty Möller

Our organist, Dr. Marc Dickey (who moonlights as the chair of the Music Department at California State University, Fullerton) will spend two Sunday mornings explaining all things pipe organ! Watch next week's *Pilgrim* for a fuller explanation of the class.

October 4 through December 20 – First Light: Jesus and the Kingdom of God

This series explores the life and teachings of Jesus, his impact on the first-century world, and allows for some reflection of how contemporary America might come under his critique. A DVD-based class, "First Light" was produced by the same folks who created "Living the Questions" and features Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. It was filmed in Galilee and Jerusalem.

A 60-page reading guide will be available for those who want it for \$1. It will provide a lot of in-depth materials that will aid your understanding and our conversations. Each class session will include a 20-minute video and discussion questions.

New Members

By Jerry Stinson

WAVERLY FARRELL and VICKI DOOLITTLE have been together as life partners for twenty-two years.

Vicki was born in Los Angeles but grew up in Orange County where her family was active in the United Methodist Church. Then her parents switched to a more evangelical church and Vicki stayed out of Christianity for a while. She wanted to experience other religions, and because of her sexual orientation she didn't feel welcome in most Christian faith communities. She eventually joined a congregation of the Church of Religious Science. That congregation was very welcoming and had a number of GLBT members. But eventually the style and message of that church changed and Vicki longed for a church that was more active in terms of social justice.

Waverly comes from an Irish Catholic background, and Roman Catholicism has played a significant role in her life. She says it was her "whole life" when she was a young person. So she finds it a little scary to actually be joining a Protestant church. But right now it is difficult for her to attend a Catholic church due to Catholic positions on women and sexual orientation.

Vicki and Waverly began attending First Church about a year ago. They appreciate the balance between a traditional style for the Sunday service and liberal theology and justice advocacy. They like the intellectual stimulation here. They are attracted to our notion of a community of seekers recognizing that no one has all the truth.

Vicki, who has degrees from Cal State Fullerton and Cal State LA, is the director of Su Casa, a shelter for abused women. Waverly is a marriage and family therapist and also an Imago relationship therapist. Imago weaves together leading psychological theories and practical observations on the experience of love into an approach to relationships that is said to be compelling and easy to understand. Waverly offers several Imago workshops and focuses particularly on the GLBT community. She will be offering one of those workshops, without charge, here in the coming months.

CYNTHIA HOEGER, known to all of us as Wally, is our Director of Children's and Youth Ministries. Wally grew up in San Bernardino where her dad was a project manager for that city

and her mom was a medical coder at Loma Linda Hospital. Wally was raised and confirmed in the First Congregational Church of San Bernardino where she sang in the youth choir, played in the bell choir, was president of the youth group and sang in the chancel choir. At the end of high school, Wally was a delegate from our conference to the UCC General Synod in Kansas City, and while in college she served on the Conference Board of Directors.

Wally attended Chapman University where she graduated in 2005 with two bachelor's degrees, one in religious studies and one in organizational leadership. While in college, she was very active in the Disciples on Campus program and even served as secretary to the Dean of the Chapel, which meant she helped organize all the interfaith events at Chapman. She did an internship with the Disciples on Campus which allowed her to lead a three-way mission project in India.

After college, Wally worked for a year for the YMCA in Newport Beach and then joined our staff in 2006. Wally is still very active with the wider UCC. She is an elected synod delegate from the Southern California Nevada Conference. She is the

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New Members

western states representative for the Association of United Church Educators, and in 2010 she will chair the Western Christian Educator's Conference at Lake Tahoe.

Wally plays rugby for the Belmont Shore Women's Rugby Team, so don't be alarmed about the cuts and bruises you will see during rugby season. She plays the guitar and collects frogs, real and otherwise.

She is joining our church as an associate member, which means she will retain her membership in the San Bernardino church as well. She is delighted that she now has two church homes.

What's Saving You Now?

Friends? Creative endeavor? Productive activity?

Find all three at the Craft Circle gathering every Thursday evening during the month of September. We'll meet somewhere at church (usually in the Koinonia Room) between 6-ish and 8:30-ish and everyone is welcome. Bring a craft project if you're working on one or just drop by to say "hi."

Cathy Chambers

Who Is Missing from Your Pew?

By Libby Tigner

Summer often brings increased travel and other interruptions to our weekly involvement with church. There are generally a few more empty pews in the summer than in the fall and winter. And since most of us tend to sit in the same pew all of the time, it's fairly easy for most of us to notice who has been missing from our pews.

So, who has been missing from your pew? Do you know why? Have they been traveling, taking kids to camp, or entertaining visitors? Have they been sick? Let them know that you noticed they've been gone, and give them a call! Invite them to come to Homecoming Sunday, or to sit with you at lunch at the First Church Café, or to join a Getting to Know You Group, or come with you to Friday Night at First Church.

We are each of us responsible for building up this community. Do your part – pick up the phone!

Supporting a Local Mosque

By Jerry Stinson

Not long ago, I had the opportunity to speak at a special forum at the Islamic Center of the South Bay's mosque in Lomita. It is a delightful congregation. They are trying to get the City of Lomita to approve plans that will allow them to build a new mosque on their land. They have met with the neighbors and have made drastic changes to the plans in order to accommodate the criticisms. They need support when they appear before the Lomita City Council on Monday, September 14. It would be great if any of our members who live in Lomita would attend that meeting and support our Islamic friends.

Let Us All Give Thanks ...

... for Paul Bogdan and Jim Lumen. Jim repaired and painted the Pilgrim Hall basement wall a few weeks ago and then went one step further and painted the walls outside of the kitchen in the church basement. Paul has taken on a job of herculean proportions, repairing the water- and time-damaged walls that are in the women's restroom in the church basement. We are certainly blessed to have such great guys in our congregation.



Yvonne SaMarion

Boycott of Long Beach Hilton Hotel

By Jerry Stinson

Early in 2008, I got involved with the efforts of the Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and Healthy Communities to support workers at the various downtown hotels in Long Beach. The coalition held its initial meetings in Patterson Hall, and I spoke at its first march and rally.

I have continued to participate in that organization's efforts, especially those directed at the Hilton Hotel on Ocean Avenue. I was part of a small delegation that met with the hotel's general manager concerning the desire of most of the workers to form a union.

The workers at the Hilton are now very discouraged. They continue to need a living wage, health insurance, better working conditions and the opportunity to form a union. The hotel has refused to make any changes at all. So 80% of the Hilton's workers have signed onto a petition calling for a boycott of the hotel. This is a courageous act of sacrifice by those workers, but they feel it is the only way to get the Hilton to make the needed changes. Some will probably lose their jobs because of their support of the boycott.

Earlier this year, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy published a report entitled *A Tale of Two Cities: How Long Beach's Investment in Downtown Tourism Has Contributed to Poverty Next Door*. Here are some important paragraphs from that report's Executive Summary:

This report tells a "Tale of Two Cities:" the vibrant, revitalized Downtown Long Beach, which in April, 2007 was listed as "one of the top 10 revived downtowns in the United States" by the Urban Land Institute, and the second less-discussed Long Beach, consisting of the surrounding working-class neighborhoods where poverty concentration is listed as 6th highest in the nation by the Brookings Institution.

According to a review of tourism related expenditures, Long Beach has invested an estimated \$750 million since the early 1980s to reinvent its Downtown area as an attractive destination for tourists and convention attendees. Hotels have received at least an estimated \$114 million in direct subsidies since 1981. Although the city has succeeded in attracting an increased number of visitors, it is clear that these investments have not paid off for that second, neglected Long Beach. To-

day, more than 18% of Long Beach residents live below the federal poverty line, a measure of extreme poverty. The median family income in Long Beach is 10% lower than the median family income in Los Angeles County.

The tourism and hospitality jobs created by the city's investments have contributed to these rates of poverty. Hotel workers in Long Beach make 12.2% less than their counterparts in the LAX area, 13.6% less than their counterparts in Anaheim, 25.4% less than hotel workers in Santa Monica and 26.9% less than those in Downtown Los Angeles.

A Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy survey of workers employed at one prominent Long Beach Hotel found that:

- The median yearly earnings of the workers interviewed were \$19,240.
- 41.4% of surveyed workers utilized some form of public assistance in order to meet their basic needs.

At a press conference where I spoke in support of the boycott, I heard heart-breaking stories from workers

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Boycott the Hilton

who can't keep up with their rent and who are terrified because family members have no health insurance.

I support the boycott and will not enter the Long Beach Hilton until they have met the demands of the boycott. I will not attend any meetings held at the Hilton. And I will encourage all of those I know, including the members of this congregation, to join in this critically important justice effort. Long Beach's tourist industry can no longer prosper at the expense of its workers. Everything Jesus said and did calls us to stand by the side of those workers in support and solidarity.

Jesus Seminar on Road: The Politics of the Real Jesus

Who was the historical Jesus and how did he relate to the social and political issues of his time? What were his attitudes toward nature, the economy, war and peace? What does Jesus have to do with justice and politics today?

Jarmo Tarkki (Ph.D., University of Helsinki; Adjunct Professor of Theology at California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks; Teaching Fel-

Changes in Staff Hours and Responsibilities

By Jerry Stinson

In March, the Church Council announced several staff changes in an effort to reduce our budget deficit. Those changes included shifting the positions of Associate Minister and Director of Children's and Youth Ministries from full-time to three-quarters time beginning September 1, 2009.

The Personnel Committee has worked with both Libby Tigner and Wally Hoeger to create new job descriptions for their positions. Those job descriptions will probably be presented to the Church Council for final approval later this month.

In order to reduce her workload by 25%, Libby will no longer serve as the staff member for the Board of Parish Life, the Board of Membership Development and the Communications Committee. She will no longer organize Friday Nights at First Church and the Services of Spiritual Wholeness. Her office hours will change. In addition to having Monday off, she will now take off every other Friday as well. In addition to the eight Sundays she currently has off each year (four vacation Sundays and four study leave Sundays), she will now be gone on thirteen additional Sundays. Generally she will take off the second Sunday of the month but there will be exceptions to that.

Wally's position will be reduced by 25% in a very different way. She will continue to work full-time nine months of the year, and then she will be off in June, July and August. In addition to that she will continue to have three weeks of vacation and one week of study leave. Since she will be gone during the summer, she will no longer be responsible for summer Church School, Vacation Church School, summer camp and any summer youth trips. The Board of Christian Education will need to look carefully at our summer programming for children and youth and decide how we handle that using only volunteer leaders.

low in Philosophical Theology at the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley) and Thomas Sheehan (Ph.D., Fordham University; Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University; Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Loyola University Chicago) will lead workshops on Jesus' politics, discussing their first-century historical context and their relevance for politics today. The conference will take place on the evening of Friday, September 25 and throughout the day on Saturday, September 26 at Pil-

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The Pilgrim
 241 Cedar Avenue
 Long Beach, CA 90802

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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 Jane Crandall; Fran Holand; Julie (Susan Kallok’s friend); and Shirley Burgess, Carol Armstrong and Michelle Repucci (Perry Ellwood’s friends).

In the armed forces: Daniele Ware (Karen Miller’s granddaughter, in Iraq).

To put someone on this list, put a note on the Parish Concerns board on the Third Street landing or contact Ruth in the office (562-436-2256 x221 or office@firstchurchlb.org). Names are listed in two consecutive issues; military personnel in combat zones are listed throughout their deployment.

Online Calendar

Don’t miss out! Check the online church calendar at www.firstchurchlb.org/calendar.html for details about all church events. Just click on any event to see information about it.

You’ve got a date ...

Thursday, September 10

6 pm: Board of Cultural Arts
 6:30 pm: First Bellissimo rehearsal

Friday, September 11

6:30 pm: Friday Night at First Church

Saturday, September 12

10 am: Craft Workshop

Sunday, September 13

8:30 am: Church History
 Ministry Team
 9 am: Rally Day
 11:30 am: Church History
 Ministry Team Luncheon;

Forum: “No More Gembaku” with Akiko Dohi

Thursday, September 17

5:45 pm: First Beloved Bells rehearsal

Saturday, September 19

5 pm: Guest Chef
 5:30 pm: Spirited Parenting Potluck

Sunday, September 20

Outreach Sunday
 11:30 am: Outreach Fair, Church tour

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Jesus Seminar on the Road

grim United Church of Christ (2020 Chestnut Ave, Carlsbad, CA 92008). You may see complete information and register online for the entire conference or single sessions at <http://westarinstitute.org/Events/JSORs/carlsbad2009.html>. If you pre-register by September 11, the conference fee is \$60; after September 11 it will be \$75.

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.