

GOOD NEWS

A Newsletter from First Presbyterian Church San Mateo • February 2012



Lenten Focus:

Pursuing Jesus in Prayer

The 40 days before Easter begins with Ash Wednesday, and is traditionally a time of reflection and soul-searching – a time to bring oneself before God. This Lenten season, as part of our commitment to “helping people become fully-devoted followers of Jesus,” FPCSM will be focusing on prayer, encouraging our whole congregation to deepen their understanding of, and their devotion to, prayer.

Because we believe that God is all-powerful and that He responds with love to the prayers of His people, we will be:

- offering a five-week, Sunday morning class on Prayer** (begins February 26th)
- providing a prayer focus for each week**, with prayer prompts for each day
- encouraging everyone** to have a specific time each day when they will stop and pray
- making prayer resources** (inspiring books and articles) available

Prayer is both life-producing and life-changing (James 5:13-16) and we’re excited to see what God will do when we, His people who are called by His name, humble ourselves and pray (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Plan now to commit to participate in Pursuing Jesus in Prayer this Lenten season! (To read a testimony from one of our members about the prayer in her own life, please see the article on page 2.)

A “Vote” for FPCSM

by John Tastor

I recently ran into an old friend, a long-time insurance industry colleague, who is also an elder at a Presbyterian church in San Francisco. For most of his elder “career” he has been involved in finance, and stewardship.

Stewardship: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care; an ethic that embodies responsible planning and management of resources.

Our conversation turned to our respective church’s finances and challenges. He said that to him a stewardship pledge or commitment is really an affirmative “vote” for your church’s mission, values and programs. If you are on board, you can vote “yes” by fully supporting the mission of the church with those things of which you are a steward: your time, talent and treasure.

This is an election year, you can’t escape it. Our votes are important this year, but we know that a very small percentage of those eligible to vote will actually do so. That is a tragedy of our free society. But God desires 100% “voter” response to the call to serve His Kingdom. If you embrace our Mission to honor God by helping people to become fully devoted followers of Jesus, vote affirmatively with a full commitment to Him and the work this congregation does in His name.

What’s going on in the PCUSA?

Informational meeting
with Pastor Shannon
February 12th, 11:00am, Lighthouse



Why Ash Wednesday?

by Annette Tornborg

Growing up, the only people I remember seeing with the smudge of a cross on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday were Catholic. Over 15 years ago, FPCSM began celebrating this ancient practice. So it begs a number of questions: Isn’t this a Catholic day? What is this about smearing ashes on our foreheads anyway? How does this help us to live as faithful Christians?

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent. We use ashes during Ash Wednesday worship as part of a practice called the Imposition of Ashes. According to this custom, ashes (traditionally made by burning palm fronds used on Palm Sunday of the previous year) are mixed with a small amount of olive oil and applied to the forehead of each worshipper. We receive the sign of the cross on our foreheads to focus our attention on who we really are. In this way we remind ourselves that we are bound for death—and that we are bound to the death of Jesus Christ. Ash Wednesday and the whole of Lent provide a time to focus our attention on the mystery at the heart of the Christian life: that through death, the death of Jesus Christ, we have entered new life.

Lenten Offerings-Past and Present

The season of Lent (the six weeks between Ash Wednesday and Easter) has traditionally provided a special opportunity for giving toward a specific mission project and through these we have supported a variety of amazing ministries that have brought the Gospel to people all over the world.



The 2011 Lenten Offering of \$25,865 was given to *She Is Safe*, an organization with the primary goal of extending God's love to at-risk, unreached women and children, changing their lives through the spread of the gospel. Our offering helped fund training for Transformation Group leaders in the country of Indonesia. Transformation Groups are indigenously-led groups that provide holistic training to women, offering discipleship, literacy, health and vocational training with micro-loans. Additionally, the offering supported outreach programs for children. In Indonesia many of the poorest children, especially vulnerable girls, are denied a childhood. *She Is Safe* works to send and resource local workers to share God's love and teach lessons regularly.



The Global Missions Team has placed copies of SIS's Life Change Report 2011 and a copy of the latest specific news from the SIS Area Director for South Asia in the Narthex/lobby. The report is also available on-line at: www.ShelsSafe.org under the Media/Resources tab. We encourage you to read and reflect on our amazing God and the impact of his love on the women participating in these transformation groups. Please continue to pray for these women and their families.

We are pleased to announce that this year's Lenten offering will be used to continue the critical, life transforming work God is doing in the lives of vulnerable women and children through *She Is Safe* in Indonesia.



More information will be available soon, in the meantime, visit www.ShelsSafe.org to learn more about the organization.

A story of Healing through Prayer by Jan Klein

Have you or a loved one ever been given devastating news about your health, and felt like you needed a miracle? That's how I felt when the doctor told me I had to have irreversible surgery that was going to radically change the quality of my life. I was really scared. I needed comfort, direction, and a miracle. There was no other place to go but to my Bible.

James 5:14-16 says "Is anyone of you sick? He should call on the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

I decided that James 5 would be my plan. The next Sunday, after the sermon, I got out of the pew, and walked forward holding the clinical report, with a picture of the lesion which was the cause of the needed surgery, and asked the Elders to pray over me, and anoint me with oil. I fully believed the prayer offered in faith, could make me well.

For the next three months, I was blessed with mighty, prevailing, unified, very specific prayers (sometimes called "soaking prayers") by others. I was humbled when people began fasting for my healing, without me even asking them. Continuing with James 5, I began a deep Bible study involving prayer, confession, and forgiveness that proved to be instrumental in healing.

When I saw my doctor three months later, she told me that things looked better than she had expected, the lesion was gone (she had not excised it, it was simply gone), and because of that, I would not need the surgery! Hallelujah! I believe in, and am grateful for, the power of God to heal and for God's gracious mercy when He does so when we go before Him in prayer!



Youth This Generation

Youth Groups

Now is a great time to join youth group and to bring a friend. Middle school youth group starts with dinner in Geneva Hall and goes from 5:30-7:30pm. High school starts in the Lighthouse and goes from 7:00-9:00pm. Both groups meet together between 7:00pm and 7:30pm for a worship time with the youth band.

Ignite Youth Conference

We are bringing a group of young people to the Ignite Youth Conference, February 24-25, at Tapestry Church in Redwood City. There will be worship bands, inspirational speakers, and we will be challenged to be more passionate for God. Our youth will also be performing the Lifehouse "Everything" skit, from Youth Sunday, at the conference.

Spring Mission Trip

High school youth are partnering with City Impact Ministries for 24 intense hours of ministry in San Francisco, March 24-25. Our ministry opportunities will include a homeless dinner, youth group, street ministry, and children's ministry.

Summer Mission Trip

We will be once again partnering with YouthWorks and ministering at the Yakama Reservation in Washington State. Service opportunities will include Kid's Club, and various work projects for residents. A fundraising bake sale will be held after worship on Sunday, March 4.

Please contact Brad Brown at bradb@fpcsm.org, or (650) 345-1633 x229 for more information about any of our youth ministries.

FUN CAMP FOR KIDS!



JULY 9-13, 2012

Our annual summer VBC in July will be an adventure in flight for children ages 4-years-old through 5th grade graduates! During their Sky adventure, kids will discover that Everything is possible with God! Parents: take advantage of the Priority Registration for FPCSM families and sign your children up by Feb. 26th. Check with the Children's Ministry Office to get brochures and forms for friends and to sign up to be a part of the leadership team!

Space is limited so be sure to sign up early so that you don't miss out!

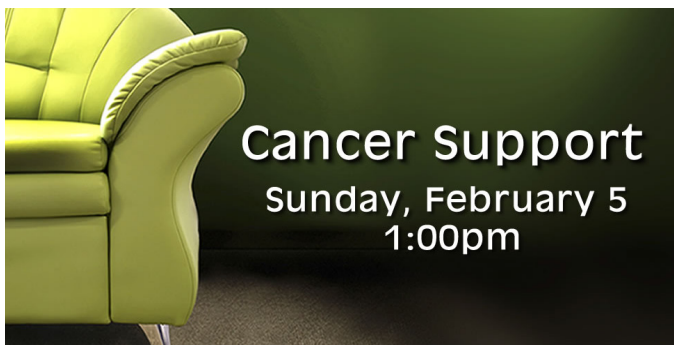
Make a Joyful Noise!

One of the most joy-filled communities within the larger FPCSM family is our choir, and you can be a part of it! New voices are always welcome (especially men!), and now is a great time to join because you'll get to be a part of our Holy Week services!

Leading the congregation in worship and praise of the Almighty God on Sunday mornings is wonderful, and Thursday evening practices (from 7:30-9:30) are enriching and fun as we enjoy valuable vocal instruction, lots of laughs, an inspiring devotional and a deep time of prayer together. (If you have young children, childcare is available.) The Choir is truly a family.

Come share the joy—join the Choir! Contact Steve Jones at 345-1633x228 or stevej@fpcsm.org to find out more.

P.S. And if you happen to **play an instrument**—keyboard, rhythm, strings, brass or woodwinds—see us about playing in the Easter Orchestra or the Worship Band!



HOME & HOPE February 12-19

Help by providing meals, playing with children or staying overnight. Contact Angela Comstock at bellcomstock@pacbell.net

Meet your Deacon Day!



Sunday, February 12
after worship in Geneva Hall



Ash Wednesday

February 22

Worship • Prayer • Ashes

Noon and 7pm

Childcare available at both services

First Presbyterian Church San Mateo

194 West 25th Avenue

San Mateo, CA 94403

www.fpcsm.org

**Join us for Worship, Fellowship &
Teaching that transforms lives!**

SUNDAYS

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| 9:30am | Worship |
| 9:45am | Power Station for Kids
Middle school Sunday school |
| 10:30am | Fellowship Time |
| 10:50am | Adult Classes |
| 11:00am | Youth Confirmation Class |