First Church Responds with Love

Last Sunday, First Church responded to a disturbing and challenging week — in which two more black men were killed by police and five Dallas policemen were killed at an otherwise peaceful protest — with a powerful worship service and a demonstration of love and support afterwards at the Ashby BART station.

Senior Minister Molly Baskette preached an impassioned sermon entitled “Boiling Point” based on the Good Samaritan story (Luke 10:25-37) in which she called the congregation and the country to be the ones to stop and provide care rather than walk on the other side of the road. First Church member Angela Arnold sang moving versions of Fauré’s “Pie Jesu” and the spiritual “Deep River.”

At the end of the service for the blessing, congregation members read a list of ways that people can help dismantle systemic racism. You can read the list at http://goo.gl/G6WG0e.

After worship First Church folks went down to the Ashby BART flea market to reach out with love to the wider community. With handwritten supportive posters, notes of blessing and Black Lives Matter signs, they received warm acknowledgment and hugs, had healing conversations and sang chants, accompanied by the Ashby BART drum circle. The BLM signs were much appreciated.

As Molly said, “When times are hard, we need to be as soft as possible — to be the tenderness vulnerable people most need. If you are a person of color reading this: we see you, we love you, we are your family and want to do anything in our power to protect you and shield you from harm. If you are a white person reading this, reach out in prayer and embrace today the people of color in your life and path. This is a very scary time. Make them a cup of tea. Hold their hand. Send the full force of whatever Love God has ever shown you in their direction... More calls to action will follow, but for right now: can’t go wrong with LOVE embodied.”

Big thank you to Constance Dixon-Sorogane, Kara Korbel-Chinula and all who organized, made signs and showed up to show God’s love.

To read more about the morning’s events and see photos, go to http://goo.gl/QICS69.

Operation Love Notes this Sunday

The Ministry of Care, Fellowship and Invitation is sponsoring another card writing session after worship on Sunday, July 17, at 11:15 am in the Sm. Assembly, and invites you to join them. Operation Love Notes (OLN) sends out love to people in our congregation who need to hear from us. Look for the OLN table, which will have cards, envelopes, addresses and a brief note about the needs of each person who’ll be receiving a card.
Congratulations to **Kenneth Leitch**, who turns 98 on Thurs., July 14! Cards can be sent to his home.

Prayers for **Chris & Mike Hamill** in the death of Mike’s brother **Tom** on July 2.

Prayers for the family of the **Rev. Theodore K. Nace** who passed away in April at the age of 90. He served his first pastorate at First Church back in the 1950’s. His daughter Martha Nace Johnson wrote that all his life her father was a passionate advocate for social justice — race relations, women's rights and, above all, the Palestinians’ plight. Cards may be sent to Martha at her home.

**John Fox** would appreciate cards — he is living and working in Paraguay; please be sure to include his telephone number in the address on the envelope as this is how he will be notified that he has mail. Contact the church office for address details.

Please help provide meals for **Larana McVay** following her recent surgery and the **Sparks family** following the birth of their new baby. Contact **Linda Sawyer** (FCCB.Helping.Hands@gmail.com) to sign up.

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**New Parish Nurse**

— **Demetrea Terrien RN, Parish Nurse**

I am very happy to have completed the requirements to be a Parish Nurse, and I am now joining **Robin Kempster** as we both work to serve the church in this role.

I retired from Kaiser Permanente after 18 years in various positions, which had followed previous nursing work in other settings. But I knew I was not finished with my nursing career. As I move into my 41st year of nursing I am grateful to be of service with our church community.

I preached on Sunday that this is a moment God is calling us to step up and into as a progressive community of faith. It's time to take that desolate road to Jericho, to see who else might be on it, bleeding and bruised, and offer aid.

But ironically, I am off to Boston. The movers come and take our belongings to a new home. And then we will get in the driver’s seat and take a leisurely cross-country road trip by covered (Prius station) wagon.

And sometimes, the road radically redirects us. We were on the way to one place, on a heavenly path, enjoying the scenery, in the driver’s seat, and all of a sudden we find ourselves in the back of a pickup truck bouncing down a dirt road from hell, heading we have no idea where. All we can do is surrender control, and trust the Driver.

And sometimes, we have a choice as to whether we’ll take the comfortable road, piloting our own course, or allow ourselves to become passengers, giving up the perks and privileges of being in the driver’s seat.

A whole new level of civil unrest is unfolding nationwide. Last week, thousands of people — black, brown and white, mostly under 30 — shut down highway 880 in downtown Oakland to peacefully protest the killing of two innocent black men in Louisiana and Minnesota. In Dallas at the same time, five police officers were killed by a sniper, who used the cover of another peaceful protest to vent his rage. The world has gone wild.

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**The View from Here**

**Molly Baskette**

*Senior Minister*

We often speak of faith as a journey, which is about right: it’s not a place we stop and stay for good, but it is always moving us along. Sometimes we carry baggage on that journey — a lot of it. Sometimes we travel light.

And sometimes the road radically redirects us. We were on the way to one place, on a heavenly path, enjoying the scenery, in the driver’s seat, and all of a sudden we find ourselves in the back of a pickup truck bouncing down a dirt road from hell, heading we have no idea where. All we can do is surrender control, and trust the Driver.

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First Church Goes Solar

The Ministry of Stewardship, Finance and Administration (SF&A) and the Green Team are excited to announce that a 22.9kw AC array of 95 solar panels will be installed on the church roof above the Large and Small Assemblies.

After a long period of research and discussion, Cooperative Community Energy (CCE) of San Rafael was chosen for the job. According to CCE, the system should help to reduce FCCB’s electrical bill by over $10,000 in the first year alone and this savings will continue to go up as rates from PG&E increase over time. Over 30 years, the system should help to save FCCB over $500,000 in electrical costs, cut the church’s electricity use by 31% and offset over 12 million pounds of greenhouse gas emissions (CO2).

The solar project also dovetails with the need for repairs on the same part of the roof. Numerous leaks and frequent patching has necessitated a more significant reroofing project. Berkeley Roof Service will take on this job, which will begin July 25 with the hope that it will precede the solar installation. Work will be completed by September. SF&A will work closely with the contractors to minimize the impact on people coming in and out of the church during this time.

Photos and stories of progress will be shared with the congregation as the project is carried out.

The solar installation is only one of several projects that have been taken on to reduce the church’s carbon footprint. Earlier this year, First Church worked with a local non-profit to install more energy efficient lighting in several areas of the church. The church is already reaping both the economic and environmental benefits from these changes.

In November 2015, the Church Council endorsed the Paris Pledge on behalf of the congregation. The Pledge establishes an aspirational goal that our Church will seek to reduce our carbon pollution 50% by 2030 and to become carbon neutral by 2050.

Members of the Green Ministry Team and others in the church hope to meet those goals well before the deadlines. The solar project will be a solid step toward meeting the pledge.

Anti-Racism All Ages Learning Hours in August

On Sundays, August 17 & 24 after worship, we’ll explore putting on our “white privilege glasses” together as a church. With short videos, theatre games and other embodied activities, Kara Korbel-Chinula and Molly Baskette will facilitate our competency in seeing, understanding, and dismantling this core building block of racism in America. Children and adults will learn together and from each other.

As preparation, we strongly encourage everybody to watch at least two of the five free webinars offered by the UCC on White Privilege: Let’s Talk, including one by UCC General Minister and President John Dorhauer, and others by Molly’s friends Day McCallister and Stephen Ray. Videos can be viewed at http://goo.gl/XgwBx.

Did You Know...?

...that Amare Gebreyesus, our parking lot “pastor” and point person, sends his greetings to First Church from Ethiopia? He and son Abram are visiting family until Aug. 25. Beginning Sun., July 17, there will be an attendant in the parking lot from 9 am to noon, while Amare is away.

Mental Health Group: Next Steps

— Robin Kempster, Parish Nurse

The Mental Health group met for three Sundays in June, reviewing the book A Pelican of the Wilderness by Robert Griggs. Over 30 people attended each gathering, and our small group discussions were meaningful and rich. Comments included:

• This was a rare opportunity to share experiences within our community on a topic that is all too often hard to talk about.

• I appreciate the church’s welcoming inclusion of all of us, even those struggling with mental health issues.

• It’s surprising how many of us have experiences with mental health challenges, both ourselves and our families and friends.

We are continuing to explore ideas of how to raise the awareness of mental health in our church community, including: creating a Mental Health Ministry, exploring local resources, starting a mental health support group (led by a mental health professional), bringing in speakers and workshops.

We will meet for a Mental Health Planning Session on Sunday, August 21, 8:45–9:45 am in the Small Assembly. All are welcome.

Coming Up!

“Truth & Reconciliation” Events
Sat., Aug. 27, 2 pm, Lg. Assembly
Sun., Aug. 28, 11:30 am, Loper Chapel

More news at www.fccb.org
Spiritual Discipline: Baking Bread
— Dottie Hutch

For decades I have felt that the sharing of bread affirms the familial love of those who consume it. This opportunity of making bread for communion has allowed me to go deeper in my understanding and see the process also as an opportunity to embrace the Holy Spirit.

But how is bread making a spiritual discipline? I give of my time and my material wealth when I make bread. I give thanks to God for the gift of wheat and water and salt. I humbly give thanks to all those who grow, harvest, process and package the flour I use. The discipline of following a recipe keeps me in the present moment. The rising time, while the bread is growing, gives me a few hours of quiet time for thought and scriptural reflection.

While moments of doubt creep in — am I or my bread worthy of celebrating the Lord’s Supper? — my faith enables me to continue to the final product.

These are a few of the bread-thoughts that bubbled up in my mind as the yeast was raising the flour. May my bread and thoughts be acceptable to God, and to you.

Bits and Pieces

Farm Work Day at Urban Adamah

First Church is partnering with Urban Adamah for a farm work day on their urban farm Sun., August 21 from 2-5 pm. The event will begin with a farm tour where we will hear about historical Jewish farming practices, Urban Adamah’s education programs and their food justice efforts. Volunteer work may include weeding, planting, harvesting, moving soil, mulching, watering or chicken care and is open to those 12 and up. Carolyn Ash is working with a farm fellow to create activities for children of all ages while their parents volunteer.

Urban Adamah is an educational farm and community center in Berkeley that integrates the practices of Jewish tradition, sustainable agriculture, mindfulness and social action to build loving, just and sustainable communities.

If interested, RSVP at http://urbanadamah.org/events/volunteer-day-august-2016.

Young Adult News

- Sun., July 17: LGBTQ+ Country two stepping @ Sundance Saloon in SF w/ Sonny (ALL welcome)
- Thurs., July 21, 4:30-6 pm: Rev. Kit’s Office Hours: Jupiter, 2181 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley
- Sun., July 24: Hike to the Big C w/Tom and Erin Chia, leaving from FCCB after church (11 am) For more information, contact Kit at knovotny@fccb.org.