

The AGAPE News

February 2008

Vol. 3, No. 2

Town Hall Meeting

On Saturday, Feb. 2, we will have a town hall meeting from 10 am till noon. This meeting is for everyone to get up to date on all the happenings both within and outside St. Andrew's. Bring your questions, bring your ideas, or just listen...this is your meeting. Interesting and important conversations always take place, so don't be left out!

Stewardship Dates 2008

- **Feb. 2, 10 am** – Town Hall meeting – open forum for questions and ideas related to all of St. Andrew's
- **First week in Feb.** – letter and pledge card go out about Dedication Sunday
- **Feb. 17** – After church gathering to get any questions answered related to our budget and program
- **Feb. 24** – Dedication Sunday – dedicate pledge cards in the service
- **Feb. 24** - Ministry Fair – get the scoop on all the different St Andrew's ministries and projects

(For more detail, see "Stewardship Emphasis" on back page)

Playing Doctor

Jesus said that the first task in confronting evil is to remove the log in our own eye. This is a very strange saying. Shouldn't we fight evil wherever we find it?

Jesus knew human nature very well. When conflict arises, we tend to picture ourselves as the kindly doctor responding to a sickly patient. We are surprised when our patients resent our loving diagnosis of their illness. Eventually, we are stunned to realize that our patients see themselves as the doctors and us as the sick ones!

To get out of this vicious circle, we must step out of such small viewpoints. I read an interesting book on the philosophy of Aikido, a martial art which claims to respect its opponents. Aikido warns about the rigidity of vision which occurs when we have a fixed viewpoint about our opponent. It teaches that we should move from "a viewpoint to a viewing point."

This shift in perspective does not imply we should be "wishy-washy." It does imply we should not let our fears and frustrations blur the fact that we are tied to our enemies as essentially as we are to our friends.

The splinters Jesus may have in mind for removal are possibly the fragmented views we have of each other. In a time that liberals oppose conservatives by becoming more liberal and conservatives oppose liberals by becoming more conservative it is no wonder that no one can find their balance.

Like Jesus said, we must stop seeing each other in such limited ways. Our fates are tied together by reality itself. Like escapees on a chain gang, it doesn't really matter if we like each other, our fates are intertwined. The world needs us to stop playing doctor and look at each other with the eyes of Christ.

Love



Notes from Your Congregational Nurse

Donna Rutherford, RN

Dear Church Family and Friends,

January is a difficult time of the year for many of us. The holiday season is behind us, we may have gained a few pounds, gotten tired and run down from visiting with family and friends and we have probably been exposed to flu's and colds. Ugh! How do we get back on track with our healthy life style or make the change needed to live healthier this year?

Living healthier requires commitment. That commitment can be just getting back to a few basics in small but concrete steps. Taking the time to shop for and prepare healthy foods each day is a start. Devoting at least 30 minutes to moving your body is essential and making prayer and meditation a daily practice, can do wonders to cope with life's stressors.

Studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between weight gain and stress in our life. When we eat on the run, eat anywhere other than sitting at the table or eat in response to a "bad day," we tend to gain weight. Over the years these few pounds add up. To avoid gaining weight, we should consume 100 fewer calories a day for each decade past 40. As many of us have experienced, our metabolism, the rate at which our body burns calories, gradually slows down as we age. Consuming the right foods is essential for good health. Adequate fiber from fruits and vegetables (21 grams for women and 25 grams for men) is a necessity along with adequate protein intake (60 to 70 grams) for healthy bones and muscles. Healthy fats help to preserve our bones and heart. Fat intake should be 20 to 35 percent of our daily intake. Careful attention to diet and reduction of calories each day will soon get you back on the path to healthy living.

My prayer this year is that you find a quiet space each day for prayer and reflection, that you breathe deeply and gently... that you take time to let go of the past and future...and that you find gratitude, healing and hope each day with the help of our all Loving God.

Love and Blessings,
Donna



St. Andrew's Health Ministry will host a **Fall Prevention Class** on Tuesday, Feb. 19, at 11:15 am, directly following the Tuesday Morning Bible Study Class. Learn practical ideas for safeguarding your home to prevent a fall. Exercises to prevent falls will be demonstrated by a physical therapist to improve your strength and confidence. Representatives from **HTHomeTherapy** will be here to offer this instruction. A light lunch will be served. RSVP to Liz Bernstein bsteinbrs@suddenlink.net



The Shawl Ministry has been very busy and has already given away five shawls and a baby blanket. We meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. You don't have to attend the meetings to knit, crochet or sew the shawls or baby blankets but you'll miss out on the fun we all have getting together. Don't forget, you can donate yarn (or money to purchase more) and be a part of the ministry even if you don't know how to knit or crochet.

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New Adult Sunday School Class



Our new Adult Education Class “Common Threads” is discussing Walk in a Relaxed Manner: Life Lessons from the Camino by Joyce Rupp. Joyce Rupp calls herself “a spiritual midwife.” In this edifying and inspirational paperback, she presents her adventures on a 37 day pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago in Spain. At the age of 60, she took this arduous journey of 450 miles with Tom, a retired pastor and close friend. As an imaginative practitioner of spiritual literacy, Rupp has gathered together the many meanings of her experience so that fellow pilgrims can share in the bounty. The subtitle and theme is “Life Lessons from the Camino,” and each chapter is based on a way she grew due to the Pilgrimage. Walk in a Relaxed Manner: Life Lessons from the Camino is available through the St. Andrew’s bookstore. This class is being facilitated by Art Rutherford of the Educator Team.



Theology in Everyday Life meets on the first and third Monday nights of the month. These are not lectures

but discussions about articles, current events, poems, movies, sermons, art, excerpts from books and other sources. An individual chooses the topic and then becomes the facilitator for the next meeting. Participation averages from six to nine people each time which allows everyone an opportunity to contribute their opinion and thoughts. The meetings start at 7:15 pm and end at 8:30 pm. On Feb. 4 Wayne Rogers will lead the discussion. Following that will be the Feb. 18 meeting. Everyone is welcome.



Turn “Post-Valentine Blues into a Song.” Join Dr. Patty Stephens on Feb. 17 during the Sunday School hour, 9:30 – 10:30 am) for a life skills class on conscious loving. This class will help to turn a relationship of conflict into an opportunity to learn, to grow and expand.



"Reconnection with Nature"

A “Reconnection with Nature” retreat is being sponsored by St. Andrew’s on the weekend of May 2- 4. The schedule for the weekend will be loosely structured

to include relaxation, meditation and prayer, and gourmet vegetarian meals amidst breathtaking views, mystical sunsets and sunrises and the springtime flora and fauna of the John Knox Ranch terrain. Optional hikes along the Blanco River trail or into 105 million year old exposed coral reef with fossil beds round out the weekend offerings.

Accommodations include a limited number of separate men’s and women’s dorm-style cabins (\$150); screened shelters with ceiling fans where you choose your roommates from two thru eight persons (\$125); or primitive camp grounds for setting up your own tent (\$99). The price is per person and is all inclusive for the weekend. Please bring your own sleeping bag, linens, and towels.

If you are interested in attending, please e-mail Delia Trujillo at deltrujillo1@yahoo.com. and indicate what your preference for accommodations would be. For more information, call (512) 795-0946. A \$50 deposit is due Mar. 1 and the balance will be due Apr. 15.



The Spiritual Activist Study Group meets on the second and fourth Mondays at 7:15.

Currently we are focusing on study materials that can be accessed online at www.TransformationTeam.net. Visitors welcome.



Weekly meditation sessions are held every Thursday, 7 - 8 pm at the church. Insight Meditation, which is

practiced at these sessions, is a centering technique to quiet the mind and emotions by focusing on the breath and the body sensations. Special instruction for beginners will be provided prior to the session at 6:30 pm (For more information, please pick up an “Insight Meditation” brochure in the foyer.)



Sunday Fellowship Team Forming

Are you a St Andrew's Martha Stewart? Do you like awake at night,

excited by the recipe you just read? Need an outlet for your culinary creativity? Now's your chance! We'd like to put together a team whose focus is solely on Sunday Fellowship. We have just formed a group to help wash dishes, now we need a group to put food on them!

The fellowship time after church is a great way to greet and connect, and food is an important part. Except for our First Sunday Potluck, in which everyone is invited to bring dishes for lunch, the goodies week by week have been brought by our AGAPE Teams. Now we'd like to find all our folks who love fixing (or buying) our snacks for Sundays and take the weight off our AGAPE Teams. (figuratively speaking, of course)

If you enjoy purchasing or making snacks, and would like to be a part of this team, please contact David. Many hands make light work, we know. Let David know if you'd like to help. 251-0698, david@progchurch.com.



“Real dishwashers” needed for “real plates.” Would you like to help St. Andrew's use “real plates” to conserve the earth's resources? The nitty-gritty is that these dishes need washing, and the AGAPE Teams who facilitate the food service and cleanup after worship could use some help. The Ambassador Team is forming a “pool” of dishwashers for this purpose. If you can help occasionally or frequently, please contact Martha Rogers at 345-3969 or rogers33@swbell.net. Six volunteers are already on the list!!

Tax help is available from the community tax centers. They provide free, quality tax preparation to individuals making \$25,000 or less and households making \$50,000 or less. There are nine area locations available. Go to www.communitytaxcenters.org, call 211 or check the St. Andrew's bulletin board by the soft drink refrigerator for more information. You can also call Peggy Rackley at 990-2426.



Your Dinner is Served! Round Table Dinners

WHO: All members and friends of the St. Andrew's community

WHAT: Round Table Dinners are held in the private homes of volunteer host(s). Some are only for adults and others include children. Some are formal and some are highly informal. The dinners are an opportunity for members of the church community to connect on a personal level.

WHEN: Friday, Feb. 8 and Saturday, Feb. 9

WHERE: Homes of Volunteer Hosts

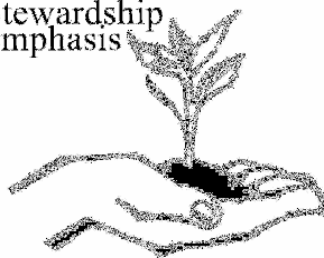
GUESTS: Sign up on Feb. 3 for the day and dinner that will be their best match. After signing up, they will be contacted by their host and be asked to provide a contribution of food for the dinner they will attend. This is a wonderful chance to connect to the friendly people who make St. Andrews; a warm and welcoming place. Please contact Liz Bernstein @ 670-0934 or bsteinbrs@suddenlink.net, if you have any questions



We have received huge bags of rice that will be hard to donate to any one household; they would need to be broken up into smaller bags in order to make them useful. Breaking a large bag of a foodstuff like rice or beans is problematic for us; it increases the chances we'd get into trouble with the Health Department for handling the food items ourselves, plus having open bags of rice or beans sitting around can draw bugs and rodents. Smaller bags are less economical and involve more packaging, but as long as we are a small food pantry we need to stick to prepackaged things to avoid these issues. Something we could economically buy in large size and repackage into smaller, more easily used packages would be laundry soap if we had a volunteer to do the scooping/repackaging into smaller plastic bags. To volunteer with sorting and packaging, contact the church office or leave a message on the office answering machine.

At the present time the food pantry needs: spaghetti sauce • deodorant • toilet paper paper towels • smaller boxes laundry soap • boxes of saltines • diapers • tooth brushes • feminine hygiene products. We don't need: tuna • corn • canned pasta • canned beans • canned tomatoes • tomato sauce • bar soap • hair conditioner. We are also swamped with personal size toiletries.

Stewardship Emphasis



Even though the stewardship of our time, talent and resources is a twelve month awareness, we talk a little more about it at the turning of the year, as we celebrate the past and plan for the future. In December we heard from our ministry teams about what they have done and are doing. Now we will focus our attention even more on our future. For the next few weeks, in the service each Sunday, we will hear from a different people about the exciting possibilities for 2008, and we'll be encouraged to think about how we want to participate in and support the continuance and growth of our ministries.

A letter will be sent out to all members and friends inviting everyone to our Dedication Sunday on February 24. This letter will contain a pledge card, and we'll be asked to think seriously about how we want to contribute our time, our skills, our ideas and our resources in 2008. On February 24th, we will dedicate these cards during the worship service. Also on the 24th we will have a Ministry Fair after church. At the Ministry Fair you'll be able to get the details about St. Andrew's ministries and projects. Find the area that ignites your passion and see how you can participate.

Although it may sound trite to say, there really has been no better time to be a part of what's going on here at St. Andrew's. Our ministries are growing, and there is a tangible feeling of both accomplishment and anticipation. Between now and Dedication Sunday on the 24th, let's all turn our full consciousness and imagination to the possibilities of the coming year. Let us all seek a way to contribute that nourishes our souls, enlivens our spirits, and connects with others in a special way.

With your help, our ministries can grow more, do more and be more. Our goals of personal, community and global transformation can be brought closer by your participation in the way that is most meaningful for you.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Loving ♦ Progressive ♦ Presbyterian

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Open Minds Bookstore

(Open the 1st & 3rd Sundays of each month.)

This month's new features:

***How Then, Shall We Live?: Four Simple Questions That Reveal the Beauty and Meaning of Our Lives* by Wayne Muller** (\$14) We all long to experience a sense of inner wholeness and guidance, but today's notions of healing and recovery too often keep us focused on our brokenness, on our deficiencies rather than our strengths. Wayne Muller's luminous new book gently guides us to the place where we are already perfect, already blessed with the wisdom we need to live a life of meaning, purpose and grace.

***A Wind Swept Over the Waters* by John Nichols** (\$13) As our lives change, even the most familiar words of the Bible can strike us in new and unexpected ways. Many of us were brought up to believe that a scriptural passage can have only one meaning. This idea limits our appreciation. Reading the Bible is like looking into a spiritual mirror. When we really absorb its language and images and give ourselves time to let them work their way into our souls, the ancient words can touch our live experience in unexpected ways.

***Jesus and Buddha: The Parallel Sayings*, ed. by Marcus Borg**, (\$12.50) This remarkable collection of parallel sayings reveals how Jesus and Buddha were guiding us along the same path, highlighting a remarkable synchronicity in early teachings from East and West. This book also delves into the mystery surrounding their strikingly similar teachings, and presents over one hundred examples on facing pages.

***Walk in a Relaxed Manner: Life Lessons from Walking the Camino* by Joyce Rupp**, (\$12) In this inspirational book, this well-known author presents her adventures on a 47 day pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago in Spain, which she took at the age of 60, with Tom, a retired pastor and close friend. As an imaginative practitioner of spiritual literacy, Rupp has gathered together the many meanings of her experience so that fellow pilgrims can share in the bounty. One of the main points of a pilgrimage is not knowing what will happen on the journey. Another part of it is living in the Now. This inspirational book is the basis for upcoming discussion in a recently formed Adult Sunday School class, *Common Threads*.

***Taking Our Places: The Buddhist Path to Truly Growing Up* by Norman Fischer**, (\$12) Most of us take maturity for granted, as if it comes naturally with age and experience. In fact, however, few of us are truly mature individuals, occupying our unique places in life. In this profound and engaging work, Norman Fischer explores the true mark of maturity and the attributes which can enrich and broaden our lives. This hands-on guide provides a surprising new perspective that can turn old ideas on their heads and reinvigorate our understanding of what it means to be mature.

***Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer* by Richard Rohr**. (\$14.50) Fr. Rohr offers that God is found in all things, even the most painful or sinful things. And it is through contemplative prayer that we are able to "see" and to hold the paradox of the good and bad within each of us and throughout human history. Prayer is "a way of living in the Presence and living in awareness of the Presence" allowing for transformation. A profound message that is to be read and reread.



The Poima book study group will meet Sunday, Feb. 17. The study begins with a meal hosted by Poima about 5:30 pm in the McCarty home. The book study will begin at 7 pm. We are studying *Living Buddha, Living Christ* by Thich Nhat Hanh. Feb.'s session will focus on Chapter 7 and the beginning of Chapter 8. Delia Trujillo will lead the discussion. Join us at 4 for worship or 5:30 or 7 or come for the whole evening. All are welcome.

Children's News

If you have questions or would like to be involved in any of the programs listed, please contact our Children's Christian Education Coordinator, Tammy Iyer, at 251-0698 or email to Tamara.Iyer@gmail.com.

Children's Church meeting for volunteers and parents will be held Tuesday, Feb. 19, at St. Andrew's.

Children's Church is where every child is valued and encouraged to safely explore their own experiences of God. All children ages 4 to 10 are invited to participate in their own worship service. They have their own rituals, songs, activities and small groups.

Children's Church curriculum is based on the same scripture references used in Jim's sermon.



Saturday, Mar. 1, 10 am – noon there will be a parent orientation and training for Godly Play.

The Godly Play approach uses an open classroom with selected, developmentally appropriate story materials. The ultimate goal of Godly Play is to teach children the art of using the language of our Christian tradition so that they may encounter God in a personal way and begin to find direction for their own lives. Rather than giving pat answers or teaching doctrine, Godly Play seeks to support the child's own spiritual quest and enable the child to develop a faith that is continually growing. Central to this way of teaching is the assumption that children do have encounters with the mystery of the presence of God. What they do not have is the language to communicate about their experiences.

There are two Godly Play classrooms, one for elementary age and one for preschool. We want to welcome all children to join us. We deeply appreciate all the hard work and time that has been given to bring Godly Play to St. Andrew's.

AGAPE Ministry Team Meetings – 2nd Tuesday, Feb. 12 at 7 p.m.

Join one of the **AGAPE** teams and see how the work of the church is done. All are welcome.

A - Artist Individually we each need to find the source of our own creativity whether it is singing, cooking or just appreciating the beauty in nature. When we come together, this need is met by worship, our music program, spiritual development, resting and playing.

G - Guardian Each of us must learn how to care for the roots of our community. At the community level we talk about leadership development, taking care of our building and grounds, sharing our resources and using them wisely.

A - Ambassador Each of us has a responsibility to take the message of love out into the world in our own way. Our Mission and Social Justice issues fall under this category.

P - Pastor We take God's love to the church community-by welcoming all; identifying and meeting personal concerns in times of need; and educating and fostering community. To empower our physical, emotional and mental well-being and prevent unnecessary suffering, we offer educational information programs, and groups

E - Educator We invite our members to establish a lifelong habit of learning and sharing that learning with others, particularly our youth.



“Green” Ideas for 2008 from the Ambassador Team

The following is a list of general ways in which each of us can contribute to improving our local and global environment. Over the next few weeks/months, we will be providing more specific information on each of these items for your consideration .

- Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle
- Volunteer for dishwashing of St. Andrew’s “real plates”
- Buy more local products and shop at locally owned businesses
- Avoid petroleum products, including plastics and Styrofoam.
- Pledge to choose tap water over bottled water at <http://www.thinkoutsidethebottle.org/tob/>
- Calculate your carbon footprint at <http://www.climatecrisis.net/takeaction/carboncalculator/> and try to reduce it
- Buy energy offsets from Texas Interfaith Power and Light at <http://txipl.org/>
- Conserve energy at home, at work, and on the road
- Conserve water inside and outside
- Contribute to environmental organizations such as:
 - Presbyterians for Restoring Creation www.prcweb.org
 - Environmental Defense www.environmentaldefense.org
 - The Nature Conservancy www.nature.org
 - Earth Share of Texas - www.earthshare-texas.org - an umbrella organization of 70 local, state, national and international nonprofit environmental groups
 - Ecology Action – Austin recycling center <http://www.ecology-action.org/index>
- Try Alternative Giving
- Purchase Organic Fair Trade Coffee from Equal Exchange at <http://eetail.stores.yahoo.net/coffee.html>
- Participate in St. Andrew’s Spirituality and Activism Conference March 28-29

December Session Summary

Session welcomed new members Mary Graf, Linda Rowold, Wayne Rogers, Ryan Ruta, Alice Ortiz and Randy Cook. It was good to have a full slate of officers once again. We noted that there has been a marked increase in attendees to worship this past year. Even the early service is showing impressive numbers for this first month of having this additional worship time. Our average attendance last year was 176 adults, youth and children in worship.

The first draft of a budget for 2008 was presented. Our stewardship campaign will be in full swing by the time you are reading this. There is much excitement on your session as we look ahead and begin working on long range plans to accommodate future needs based on our current situation of new programs and happenings in many areas of the life of our church. New improvements to our window treatments in the sanctuary will be coming soon as part of our continued efforts to beautify and improve our facility so we can better serve our growing community.

Don’t forget the Town Hall meeting February 2 at 10 am. We will also be conducting a Ministry Fair the last Sunday in February. This will give everyone an opportunity to find out more about the Ministry Teams at St. Andrew’s so that they can find a place to serve and utilize their own gifts on ministry.

Submitted by Babs Miller, Clerk of Session

St Andrew's will be observing the traditional Ash Wednesday ceremony Feb. 6 at 7 pm in the sanctuary. The ashes are a centuries-old symbol of remorse, repentance and mourning as we prepare to begin the 40 day observance of Lent that leads up to Easter Sunday. Lent commemorates Jesus' forty-day withdrawal into the wilderness prior to beginning his public ministry.

With a little planning and determination, we can choose to make time during Lent for reflection and taking stock of our lives and making needed changes. As a result of this preparation, Easter Sunday can indeed herald a time of renewal and new beginnings in our life.

2008 Lenten Season

This writing is to inform you all of a set of Lenten study guides that is a part of the January/February issue of "Presbyterians Today." As with the Advent worship guides, more will be left unsaid than will be said. There are no suggestions about any activities for the 50 days and 7 Sundays of Easter Tide. The study guide is concerned with the 40 days of Lent.

This year Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 6. The material provided then progresses through Easter Sunday, March 23. There are daily readings, prayers and discussion points for every day of the period.

The Easter Tide mentioned above continues until May 11. If any interest in Easter Tide or more details of Lent bubble up to the surface; we can dig up some information helpful to those who are interested

As before, the language policy of the study guide is not always inclusive. The outdated language does not override the value and benefits of encouraging "family worship" outside the confines of a building called a church. In the view of some, a family that prays together does more than just stay together. That prayer and open discussion encourages the growth of clear thinking and future mature adults grow out of such a family.

For those with more than passing curiosity, I recommend the book *Calendar: Christ's time for the Church* by Laurence Stoke (Abingdon Press, Nashville).

Peace, Dick Galloway

"The God Strategy: Faith as a Political Weapon" a talk by David Domke, Professor of Communication, University of Washington, will be presented at St. Andrew's on March 2 at 12:30 pm.

Religion has long been a significant part of American politics. For much of this history, the confluence of faith and politics has been a largely symbolic practice, without distinctly partisan motivations. But something has changed in recent decades. On issue after issue, U.S. public debate today includes — and often is dominated by — faith-based perspectives espoused by politically adept individuals and organizations. This lecture will examine how and why this occurred and what it means for democracy.

David Domke is a professor in the Department of Communication and head of journalism at the University of Washington. His research and teaching focus on how political leaders strategically craft their public communications and also how news media cover these messages. Domke, a former journalist, is the author of *God Willing? Political fundamentalism in the White House, the War on Terror and the Echoing Press* (London: Pluto Press, 2004). His new book, *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America*, was coauthored with Kevin Coe of the University of Illinois and was published in Jan. 2008 by Oxford University Press.