

The AGAPE Newsletter

June 2008

Vol. 3, No 6

Children's Programs This Summer

VBS Peace Camp 2008 will be Sunday through Thursday, June 8 – 12: 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

Please register by June 1. Registration fee is \$15 per child and includes a meal, all activities and a T-shirt.

Sunday School classes with the Godly Play curriculum and Children's Church will continue through the summer.

Honoring Our Graduates

Sunday June 1, we will be honoring this year's high school and college graduates during the 10:45 worship service. A brief presentation will be made. If you have a graduate in your family and have not yet contacted the church office, please call 251-0698 or e-mail staopen@sbcglobal.net.

The One Sermon That Matters

Bob Shelton, who taught preaching at Austin seminary, used to say every preacher has one sermon they do in a hundred different ways. A preacher may think she or he is preaching differently each week, but Dr. Shelton maintained that they were usually doing variations on a theme.

I used to resist the idea, but I realized Sunday that most of my sermons could probably be melted down to the idea that love is the fulfillment of all healthy religion. I don't like to admit it, but I probably have one theme with many variations.

When we say that God is our heavenly parent, we are not so much saying that we know things about the inner life of God. More to the point, we are saying in theological language that all human beings are brothers and sisters. At the level of our personal experience we find plenty of people that do not seem to fit into the human family. Theology lifts our thinking above the level of personal experience. We no longer need to sweat about who's in or who's out. The symbol "God" lifts us to a higher love. We do not know that there is a large invisible person named "God". We can know that the universal love "God" symbolizes is absolutely real.

A theology of love sounds heretical to those who have reduced religion down to partial responses to life. For example, if I have reduced theology down to mere beliefs, as so many in our own denomination have done, there are plenty of people outside my group. In fact, anyone who asserts a different creed cannot belong to my group. Love recognizes beliefs for what they are - personal attempts to make sense of things. St. Paul says even if I have enough faith as to move mountains, without love I am nothing (1 Cor. 13). It is love that allows us each our own efforts to understand, while calling each of us beyond our limited understanding.

It is a similar situation when people have reduced religion down to rituals. Repeated words or actions can feel very meaningful to the group that performs them, but they forge no bond with those outside the group. More often they insulate us from others. Paul called such gifts a "clanging gong" if they do not issue from love.

When people reduce religion down to rules they are usually unable to distinguish between rules that are reasonable and those that are arbitrary. It was Jesus who taught us that to honor the spirit of the law we must sometimes violate the letter of the law.

Of course a religion of love will still need beliefs, rituals and rules because human beings need those things. But love is the goal and we must never let any part of love replace the whole. It can be argued that Jesus spoke one sermon in many ways - that love fulfills the law and the prophets. Love preaches one theme not because it lacks imagination, but because it is the one sermon that matters.



Dear Church Family and Friends,

As we approach the summer solstice, the days get longer and we begin to think of a time for relaxation with family and friends. This season can be a time for growth, renewal and hopefully a time of freedom from some of life's routine. I would like to convey a few health and safety ideas for you this summer season. There are other tips on the Health Ministry Bulletin Board this month.

Here in Texas we are blessed with many hours of sunlight. While it is a joy to have so many days filled with sunshine, it is also a time when our skin always needs to be protected from the sun's damaging rays. Limiting direct exposure to the sun each day is important. Wearing a hat, a long sleeved shirt, sunglasses and sunscreen will help to protect the skin. How we use that all necessary sunscreen is key to how well we are protected. Use a sunscreen with 30 UVA. Most people apply about 25-75% *less* than needed. An adult in a bathing suit needs 2-3 tablespoons for protection. Be careful to check the expiration date on the bottle. When in doubt, throw it out after 2 years.

Another safety issue to consider, especially if you are headed to the rugged outdoors and have not been vaccinated in a while, is to get a Tetanus shot. The CDC now recommends a TDAP for adults as well as children. The TDAP inoculates for Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis (Whooping cough). The guidelines for TDAP are on the Health Ministry Bulletin Board. If you do get injured, clean the wound carefully with mild soap and water. Many ER's are now using baby shampoo for cleaning wounds. Apply antibiotic ointments sparingly as they can impede healing.

"Ice or heat?" is a frequently asked question for a sprained ankle, chronic back pain or pulled muscle. In general, ice what's swollen, and apply heat to what feels sore and achy. Twenty minutes is the recommended time for either. For low-back pain there is no good evidence to favor either ice or heat so use what feels best to you.

I hope that you will be able to set aside time for yourself this summer season. I pray that your summer be blessed with peace, joy and renewal.

Love and Blessings,
Donna

*To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven.
Ecclesiastes 3:1*



We send our thoughts and prayers of love and comfort to those in our congregation who have lost loved ones.

On April 23, Dr. Rebecca Shank-Gill, daughter of Ernestine Donnell died in a motorcycle accident on Sunday, May 20, at the age of 49. Dr. Shank had recently moved her home and neurology practice to Granbury from southwest Fort Worth.

Raymond "Bub" Moxley, died on May 17. Death may have been caused by bee stings while he was working in his yard. Raymond and his wife Ann have been members of St. Andrew's for 50 years. Ann and Raymond children, George, Raymond and Beverly, grew up at St. Andrew's

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AGAPE Ministry Team Meetings - Change of Regular Date First Tuesday - June 3 at 7 p.m.

Artist Team

Meditation & Peaceful Awareness

By Delia Trujillo

There are endless numbers of books about meditation that describe how to meditate better and how to integrate it into our lives better. There are also many books about "living in the present moment." The only problem is that it is so easy for it all to become an intellectual pursuit. I have lost track of the number of books I have read and the countless hours I have spent on the meditation cushion in this endeavor.

However, I recently came across these words of wisdom that perfectly summarize what it means to be in the present moment in peaceful awareness of our connection to Source (Father/Mother God; the Universe). These steps allow all our waking moments to be a meditation.

- 1) In any situation as your day unfolds recognize what is happening.
- 2) Allow your consciousness to pay full attention to that situation. (We generally push it away when it is not what we like.)
- 3) Investigate the situation by observing your breath, observing the sensations in your body, observing your thoughts and the images in your mind and also observing your emotions.
- 4) This last step allows us to transcend the illusions and drama emanating from the ego, and instead become connected to our higher Self. All that is left to do now is learn to do this process more and more skillfully. This comes with practice.

Guardian Team

Financial Update

January – April 2009

	Actual	Budget	Variance
Income	\$ 94,990	\$111,766	(\$16,776)
Disbursements	<u>114,987</u>	<u>113,052</u>	<u>(1,935)</u>

(Including Capital Equipment

Net Cash Flow	(\$19,997)	(\$1,286)	(\$18,711)
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As can be seen, we are approximately \$20,000 behind in our budget for the first four months of 2008.

Ambassador Team



The Food Pantry is in need of a volunteer or volunteers to provide 8 half gallons of milk and 8 loaves of sandwich bread once each month for donation to people who come to the pantry for help. Please contact Susan Wukasch, 930-0114, if you can help. Thank you.



The Spiritual Activism Study Group meets on the second and fourth Mondays at 7:15. Come discuss how activism and spirituality intersect.

Pastoral Care Team



The knitting group will not meet during the summer. Meetings will resume in mid September. All knitters and crocheters are encouraged to keep working at home because our supply will not last even a month without being replenished

Educator Team



Adult Sunday School Class

Curious about Buddhism? It is estimated by some that there are about a billion Buddhists in the

world today -- 6 million in the USA. Who was the Buddha and what did he teach? What is meant by the terms karma, dharma and nirvana? What is meditation and do all Buddhists meditate? What beliefs are held in common across all Buddhist traditions? What does it have in common with other religions? What is unique about it? Starting on June 8th, the "Common Threads" Adult Education Class will spend 4 Sunday school classes exploring Buddhist beliefs and philosophy. The class will be taught by Nancy Maclaine.



Theology in
Everyday Life

The Theology in Everyday Life Group will only meet once in June, Monday, June 16, from 7:15 pm until 8:30 pm.

The class meets in the adult classroom in the children's wing. Topics for discussion are selected by individuals in the group on a rotating basis. That individual then becomes the facilitator for the meeting. A facilitator does not teach, but opens and closes the meeting on time and insures that all participants have time to speak. Subjects include sermons, thoughtful essays, excerpts from books, poems, movies, current events, art and scripture among others. The purpose is to apply theological concepts to our everyday life experiences. We grow and learn from one another. Handouts are available in a basket in the church foyer and everyone is invited.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Living and Sharing Progressive Christianity

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Open Minds Bookstore

Open 1st and 3rd Sundays

How to Believe: Teachers and Seekers Show the Way to a Modern, Life-Changing Faith by Jon Spayde. \$20. This book has chapters featuring our own Rev. Jim Rigby and Gerald Gafford.

Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy, Kraybill, Nolt, et al. (\$21) "This book tells a story of forgiveness informed by deep faith, rooted in a rich history, and practiced in real life. In an American society that often resorts to revenge, it is a powerful example of the better way taught by Jesus." (Jim Wallis) This book depicts how the unique view of life, death, and forgiveness that is such a strong part of Amish culture and religion transformed the Nickel Mines tragedy.

Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing and Dying by Ram Dass. (\$13) The man who blazed the spiritual trail for his generation brings his wisdom and humor to the path that takes us to the end of life and beyond. Here he is wiser, more sober, more humble, and funnier than ever. Here and now we're not as young and it's not so easy, and he's still teaching us how to age with courage and compassion.

The Great Awakening: Reviving Faith & Politics in a Post-Religious Right America by Jim Wallis, (\$21) Inspirational and substantial, this book invites us to become part of a new spiritual and social movement and make a difference. It is a hopeful guide to how we can put things right.

Welcome to the Wisdom of the World by Joan Chittister. (\$16) This book is a helpful guide to life's most pressing questions and draws from the following religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

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. 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.

Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith, Anne Lamott (\$16) Like Lamott's earlier spiritual nonfiction, *Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith* is a collection of essays. The familiar topics are—Mom; her son; illness; death; addictions; Jesus; Republicans. It's Lamott's zany attitude that is so endearing. She's the kind of woman you'd love to chat with over coffee. With gentle wisdom refining her signature humor, Lamott explores helpfulness, decency, love, and especially forgiveness.

How Then, Shall We Live?: Four Simple Questions That Reveal the Beauty and Meaning of Our Lives by Wayne Muller (\$14) This 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. Reflections on 60 favorite Bible passages.

Taking Our Places: The Buddhist Path to Truly Growing Up by Norman Fischer, (\$12) 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.

Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in Our Busy Lives by Wayne Muller, (\$14) A wise treatment of stress, this book gives permission to slow down from the busyness of our lives to rest, reflect and appreciate. All of us need to heed this wisdom. If we don't take care of ourselves in this way, we will not be equipped to give to others.



The Poimea Book Study group will meet on third Sundays this summer: June 15, July 20, and August 17. The study begins with a meal hosted by Poimea about 5:30 pm in the McCarty home. The book study will begin at 7 pm. The group has not yet selected the next book. When a decision is made, information will be posted on Poimea's website www.poiemacommunity.org. For more info contact Barbara at 468-4012, bm272-54@earthlink.net.