

Pastor's Reflections



There's a small plaque that sits above my computer in the office, with the saying, "*Our life is a gift from God, what we do with our life is our gift to God.*" In this season of Lent I have been meditating on this gift that has been given me. Questions abound: Am I living it as a **gift** from our Creator, or do I think it to be **my** own; to be used however **I** please? Do I treat it like a precious gift, like one given by a beloved friend? Is it put on a shelf, like the plaque, that I dust off every once in a while? Do I stand for something, or do I cower when the going gets tough? Yet am I flexible to get off of my principles and give in for the sake of peace?

I imagined God plopping me down on earth and saying, "Go to it – remember what I taught you – make me proud!" What an awesome charge! How could any of us live such a challenge? And yet, that is what God does with us: plops us down on earth, saying, "Go to it; make me proud!" With the few remaining days left in Lent, imagine that for yourself: God plopping you down on earth. What are God's parting words to you? What is the charge given to you?

What are some of the questions that come to your mind as you reflect of this gift of yours from God? How would you answer some of my questions above and what is the gift that you are offering up back to God?

Jesus had such a life, coming to earth hearing the words from God, His Father, "Go to it – remember what I taught you – make me proud!" And Jesus sure made God proud! He used his gift of life. He used it in obedient and faithful service, trusting God every step of the way; even when that life led to the cross. While he cherished his life, he didn't put it on the shelf, to be dusted off every once in a while. He used it as God would have wanted. He confronted those scribes and Pharisees, even though it meant his death on the cross. His heart ached with despair and sadness as he saw his beloved people being separated off into those who belonged and those who didn't. He held the latter in his arms, so that they would know that God doesn't do that. "All are welcome. All are a part of God's

beloved family," he would tell them. And how his heart cried as he saw the violence and hatred that stemmed from man's heart; a heart God once filled with love. "How could this be," he must have thought. "We must fix this. I must bring the love of God back into peoples' hearts. I must bring them back to God, where the connection of love would flow from God to humans; so that they may flow God's love to others, in a heart changing, life transforming way."

Such is what is about to take place. Believe it in your heart that such a transformation is possible in the Spirit; not just for others but for **YOU!** The God of the Resurrection, who rose Christ from the dead, can raise all of us to new life, to a new cleansed and transformed heart. The Apostle Paul wrote in the book to the Romans, "*Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*" (Romans 6:4-8)

What would it mean to your life, to you, for that to take place? Are there barriers in the way for such to take place? How do you get rid of those barriers, those walls that keep God from entering your heart? The resurrection is a gift to you from God. This resurrection is not the one time deal that takes place after our earthly bodies die. But it is an ongoing journey of daily renewal and transformation, if we allow the Spirit to move us into that new life. With God all things are possible!

"Happy Easter" and may the love of God fill your heart with love, comfort your soul with peace, and empower you to be a faithful disciple of God. For your life is a gift from God, what you do with it, is your gift to God." What is the Easter gift you will give to God?

Blessings,

Barbara



In and Around Lake Park

By Sachi Kajiwara



With our best wishes, 15-year old Nicole Raynor left for a 2-week tour of Spain with her Spanish class at Maybeck school on March 17th. Nicole is an excellent student and an outstanding musician; Lake Park heard about her efforts to raise money for the class trip and decided to help. She came to Lake Park and provided Special Music for us. She sang the spiritual "Over My Head," and "The Virgin Slumber Song." She has a beautiful voice, and when she hits those high notes, someone said, "it sends shivers up and down your spine." That's true! Then to top it all, she played the violin for the Postlude, accompanied by Jim Meredith. Lake Parkers raised \$1,789, including Ron Fujie's \$500 matching donation to add to the money she had been raising by singing at Starbucks. Nicole expressed her appreciation for the financial help she received from us. Her mother also was so happy for our support.

Amun Taharka is again in our headlines. He took 2nd place in the Science Fair at his school. Amun, his brother Naten, and their friend, Austin, were so impressed with Nicole's singing, they asked for her autograph on their Sunday's Worship Bulletin.

Incidentally, during the Children's Sermon, Rev. Barbara asked the three boys and Kayli (Diane Shigematsu's granddaughter) how they show their love for God. Wow! their answers were so good and so impressive. How would you answer this question?

The Lenten Breakfast for the United Methodist Women from Alameda and Berkeley met with the Lake Park UMW, on March 10. They had a perfectly wonderful breakfast prepared by Rev. Barbara and Tsugi Oshika. This was followed by a Quiet Day Service---"A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial." There were 33 women present. This was the time to remember past

and present Deaconesses and Missionaries. An Offering was taken and everyone wrote a postcard expressing their gratitude for all their services wherever they were asked to go, and though some are retired, they continue to serve in the communities wherever they live. Sharon Tsuruta (Berkeley) helped a lot in setting up the program.

February 24th marked what would have been the late Rev. Horikoshi's 97th birthday. So in his memory, Mrs. Horikoshi brought 4 boxes of Japanese desserts for tea time after the Sunday Service.

On March 4, Rev Barbara had flowers on the altar for her 17th Anniversary. No, it wasn't her Wedding Anniversary. It turns out that exactly 17 years ago on this particular day, she attended Sacramento Japanese UMC and experienced the Holy Spirit in a very profound way. It led to her eventual call to ministry.

After 12 chemo-therapy treatments plus surgery, Kenta Maniwa finally is through with the chemo now. After a few more months he will have a complete check-up to make sure that there are no more cancer cells. In the meantime, he will be going for physical therapy. His family gives thanks to all of you who have been praying for him.

Please continue to pray for all our other friends who are ill, and for families who have lost loved ones. And best of all, if someone is too tired to give you a smile, just give him or her one of yours.



“Thank You,” Trustees!



“Thank You” to the members of the Board of Trustees: Chairperson Moses Oshima, Steve Derreberry, Tsugiye Oshika, Hugh Lee, Leo Saito, and Miye Takeuchi for getting and reviewing the bids for work to be done at Lake Park. Steve, who got most of the bids, said they have all been working as a team to ensure these repairs are done.

More Thank You’s

A special thank you to Tsugiye Oshika, Sachi Kajiwara, Karie Yamashita, and Leona Narita for putting together the BEST United Methodist Women Lenten Prayer Breakfast ever!



Easter Egg Hunt

Yes! There will be an Easter egg hunt after service on Easter Sunday for children of all ages. This will be a B.Y.O.E. and B.Y.O.B. event (bring your own eggs and bring your own basket).



Please bring one dozen hard-boiled, colored eggs to church on Easter. Put them into the refrigerator with the label “for egg hunt”. And remember your baskets!

Adults without children in the house: we haven’t forgotten about the kid within you – there just might be some special no-cholesterol eggs for you, too!



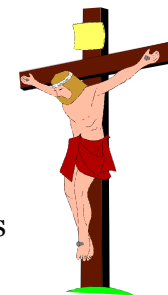
Tea Fellowship for April

Sachi Kajiwara and Margaret Tsujimoto



Good Friday Service April 6th, 7:00pm

Please join us for a deeply moving Good Friday Service, as we meditate on the part we play in nailing Christ to the cross. Come nail your burdens, your sins, onto the cross for God to take care of. One’s experience of Easter is meaningless without the experience of the Christ’s cross. For without the crucifixion, there would be no resurrection.



Scripture Passages for April 2007

April 1:
Hosanna

Palm Sunday
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40
“Are We Like the Crowds?”

April 8:

Easter
1 Corinthians 15:19-26, John 20:1-18
“New Life – Now and For Eternity”



April 15:

Revelation 1:4-8, **John 20:19-31**
“Peace Be With You”



April 22:

Revelation 5:11-14, **John 21:1-19**
“Feed My Sheep”

April 29:

Guest Preacher



Story from David, Eureka First UMC

Sent by Pat Saito-Hecht

The following are excerpts from Rev. David Samelson, Pastor at Eureka First UMC:

“While the church belongs to Christ, it is the congregation that is entrusted with the responsibility of ownership. If you (the congregation) decide to give of your presence, your prayers and your gifts – the outcome is a vibrant church. If you decide to withhold your presence, your prayers and your gifts – the outcome is that the church disappears. It is as simple as that. While pastors can make a difference, it is God working through the congregation that ultimately builds the church. . . My doctoral dissertation was a study of turnaround churches in our Annual Conference. In the successful turnaround churches there were four key factors that led to growth (both numerical and spiritual).

First, for a church to grow there needs to be a strong commitment on the part of the pastor and the congregation to make growth a priority. The truth is, the New Testament church is designed to grow. Evangelism and outreach (seeing people finding Christ through the church) must never become ‘optional’. It is a core part of who and what we are. We must remind ourselves of this regularly. As the church, we do not simply exist for ourselves – we exist for those beyond our walls.



Second, growth happens through worship that is vital, relevant and enriching. Such worship can happen through a number of different forms of styles – and increasingly churches are discovering that making worship increasingly ‘contemporary’ is not necessarily the best direction to move. Yet, we must make worship something that we are willing to invite others to come and experience.

Third, the programs and ministries of the church must reflect excellence. Programs and ministries (children’s, youth,

women’s, Bible studies, etc.) simply that are simply motivated by a need to fill a gap rarely are successful. Yet, programs that focus on effectively meeting deep spiritual needs (& often social & physical needs as well) do grow.

Fourth, churches grow as their members deepen their faith. This usually happens through stepping out in faith – often through one or more of the following:

- A renewed commitment to worship weekly;
- Participating in a bible study, prayer group or serving ministry;
- Participating in a spiritual renewal experience such as Cursillo or Walk to Emmaus.”



Native American Ministries Sunday April 22, 2007



Six times throughout the year, United Methodist congregations celebrate churchwide Special Sundays with offerings. The second Sunday after Easter is dedicated to recognizing the gifts and contributions made by Native Americans to our society. Half of the special offering receipts are kept by our Annual Conference to develop and strengthen Native American ministries in our own area. The other half goes to provide scholarships for Native Americans attending U.M. schools of theology, and to expand the number of cities in UM’s Native American Urban Initiative.

Please give generously to this important ministry.

Highlights from the Administrative Council Meetings on Feb & March 7, 2007

Correspondence received: From Aldersgate UMC: they are collecting for their building program. From St. Vincent's Day Home: a thank-you for our Adopt-A-Family donation in 2006.

Reports:

- Spiritual Growth: No report from committee; but Lenten studies are being offered.
- Finance/Treasurer: Handed out the reports for Jan. and Feb. Refer to the reports for more details.
- Care & Nurturing: Committee met on Jan. 28. For inward-facing project, will do Care Cards once a month during worship service. For an outward-facing project, Souper Bowl Sunday collection was done. No money allocated in the 2007 budget for this committee. Council approved moving \$100 out of Christian Ed/Spiritual Growth into Care & Nurturing. See committee report for additional details.
- Staff/SPRC: Received Rev. Barbara's request for vacation. A job description was found for the custodian; the committee will update it.
- Trustees: There was a walkthrough on Jan. 13th by Moses, Tsugi, Hugh, and Steve after the church cleanup. Lists of tasks needing attention were distributed, and discussed. Council authorized the a termite inspection. The idea of an overall facilities plan was brought up. Ron to ask Sonos to move their equipment into a classroom; it should have a lock on the door. Upstairs hallway walls are getting dirty and with crayon marks; they need to be painted. Trustees to talk to Montessori. Nichigo o.k. now with the tidying up in the Horikoshi Chapel. Nichigo microphone isn't working, so would like to purchase a cordless one. Ron to lend that type of microphone to Nichigo to try. At March Ad Council meeting, information sharing and discussion about items on the list of needed repairs. Some of these repairs are major, but are in need of immediate repair before things get worse. In the past, Trustees have submitted repairs that are needed and never heard anything back. Also, contractors have called wanting to know the status of their bids and there isn't an answer. This has happened a few times (fixture replacements in the chapel, repaving of the parking lot, etc.). The most pressing repairs were discussed and action as follows:

Highlights of AdCo Meetings, continued

- Roof leaks (including 24 cracked tiles, bad flashing) – initial estimate \$1,200; approved
 - Termite treatment – approx. \$8,000 (price discounted by \$2,000) and \$625/year maintenance contract; approved
 - Toilet replacement – approx. \$3,150 for 5 toilets that continually run and have been fixed numerous times; approved
 - Outlet replacement in the parsonage – approx. \$150; (congregation members to do as a group activity, saving approx. \$1200-1750. this labor savings to be redirected to other projects); approved
 - Parking Lot – motion made that Trustees get bids to repave and restripe the parking lot; motion carried.
 - Chapel lighting – tabled for now
 - Window replacement (have water leaks) – tabled for now
- The Council approved the transfer of \$25,000 from the Trustees account to the General Fund for these and future repairs. For all estimates, Trustees have obtained multiple bids. Refer to the reports for more details.

- Worship: Of the 3 pulpit substitutions to fill, somebody for April 29th is still needed. For the other, Rev. Washington will speak on Mother's Day, May 13th. Bishop Sano to speak on May 20th.
- Music: Nicole Raynor is trying to raise money for a tour of Spain with her school. She is an incredibly talented young singer and violinist and will be performing during worship on March 11th. (Compelled by her story, Ron will match church contributions up to \$500. He didn't say that at the AdCo meeting, but mentioned it earlier in worship.)
- JASEB: In process of having an audit performed. Some people are still thinking of purchasing property. The annual crab feed fundraiser was held on Feb 11th.
- Pastor's Report: Thank you to Steve and Ron for setting up the office DSL. From July 1 Renae Extrum-Fernandez will be our new District Superintendent. Thank you to those who helped at the JASEB crab feed. Motion to approve Rev. Barbara's vacation was made, voted upon, and passed. Donations are being requested for the National Japanese American UM Caucus; approved to send \$50. On Feb 27th had phone problems again (no dial tone, but could get email) after much rain and wind. Technician [continued]

Highlights of AdCo Meetings

[continued from page 9]

could not find anything, but speculated fallen debris temporarily shorted out the line. Thank you to Steve Derreberry and the Trustees for all of their work. Helen Campbell/Montessori wrote letter about flooding in the basement kitchen and its affects. Suggestion about trying to raise funds for special projects. Will have Easter breakfast if Frank Takeuchi is willing. For egg hunt, bring own eggs and baskets - Marlene to coordinate. Neighbor's car was stolen, which was parked in front of church; news given as a caution and for awareness. Refer to the reports for more details.

Items to follow:

Church usage – kitchen	Referred to the new Task Force on opening church to others.
Annual Church Conference items	Met with District Superintendent on Wed. Dec. 13 th at 7:30pm DS and SPRC met at 7:00pm. Full minutes forthcoming.
Lake Park's future	Theme for 2007 is "Heaven on Earth". March series on healing.
Horikoshi Chapel not being tidied after use	Notice to be posted. Cleaning tools to be made available. Nichigo satisfied with cleanliness now.
Church office	Trustees committee completed installation of office computer DSL so now the church phone can ring/be used when Rev. Barbara is on the computer.
Church structural repairs	roof leak repairs approved, termite treatment approved, parsonage outlet replacement approved, window replacement (water leaks) – tabled for now basement kitchen flooding – letter from Montessori
Church – other repairs	chandeliers – tabled for now, toilet replacement approved, parking lot repaving (safety) – bids to be solicited

Please contact church, Marlene Y., or Rev. Barbara for items you want to see tracked here.

Administrative Council Calendar Review:

Mar. 27 – Lenten studies
 April 1 – Palm Sunday
 April 4 – Admin Council meeting 7:30pm
 April 6 – Good Friday service 7:00pm
 April 8 – Easter
 April 15 – UMW meeting
 April 29 – guest speaker
 May 2 – Admin Council meeting 7:30pm
 May 13 – Rev. Mary Washington speaking, Mother's Day
 May 20 – Bishop Roy Sano speaking

Next meeting is Wednesday, April 4, 2007 at 7:30pm



Idea Incubator / Caring Complaint Converter

There have been no new ideas or caring complaints submitted. At this point, we're not sure what will happen to this article. However, it does illustrate that although a lot of good ideas get communicated, it takes real work and real people for an idea to become manifested. If you have an idea, a caring complaint, or even an idea for the future of this article, please contact the church. Thanks!

Idea / Caring Complaint	Month first posted	Number of people who have expressed interest
The couches and lamps in the Wesley Room look really dated and could use some updating.	Feb*	one

Ideas posted 3 consecutive months. Contact church if interested or to submit additional ideas/complaints.

* This is the last month this idea will be posted

Care Corner

Continued prayers go out to those who mourn the loss of loved ones and those who are suffering ill health. May our God of love hold them with tenderness and compassionate care. May we all show God's love to them and others in our church family, in our broader community and around the world.

We hold those serving abroad, whether it be in places of violence or in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. Please hold those below in your prayers:

Yasuko Gamo & family
Haruko Narita
Hale Prather
Daniel Thompson
Margaret Tsujimoto & family



Ari Inouye
Ruby Ouye's brother
Cathy Saito
Lake Park's future

a poem for Spring . . .

The Trees

by Philip Larkin (1922- 1985)

The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again
And we grow old? No, they die too.
Their yearly trick of looking new
Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet still the unresting castles thresh
In fullgrown thickness every May.
Last year is dead, they seem to say,
Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

(from *High Windows* – 1974)

[© The Estate of Philip Larkin]

In a 2003 poll, several thousand poetry readers in England voted Larkin their favorite poet of the past 50 years .



Plowshare Acknowledgements

February 11 to March 4, 2007

Special Gifts

Alexander, M/M George	-	"Opie's Birthday
Derreberry, M/M Steve	-	Kumiko's birthday
Lee, M/M Hugh	-	Thank offering
Takaki, M/M Teruo	-	Terry's Birthday

In Memory of Min Tsujimoto

Chiang, Gary S.	Morizono, Rev/M Mike
Derreberry, M/M Steve	Nakayama, Nancy Fujita
Doi, M/M Darrell	Nicolson, William J.
Horikoshi-Firebaugh, Rev Barbara	Shigematsu, Diane
Iino, David	Tekawa, Toshiko
Imamura, Helen	Tsujimoto, Eric/Imamura, Dr. Cecilia
Inoue, M/M Ari	Tsujimoto, Dr. Karen
Iwase, M/M Dean	Tsujimoto, Margaret
Kajiwara, Sachi	Yamashita, Karie
Lee, M/M Hugh	Yamashita, Marlene/Kawabata, Doug
Miller, M/M Thomas	Yumae, M/M Tosh

In Memory of Florence Oshika Adair

Futagaki, Chiyo
Horikoshi-Firebaugh, Rev Barbara
Oshika, Tsugiye

Food Fund

Kajiwara, Sachi
Saito, Dr Leo
Takeuchi, M/M Frank

Conference Offering: One Great Hour of Sharing

Iino, David



Floral Acknowledgements

February 18 to March 11, 2007

Feb. 18:	Steve Derreberry, Kumiko's Birthday
Feb. 25:	Mrs. Hisako Horikoshi, God's Blessings
Mar. 4:	Rev. Barbara's 17 th Anniversary of Conversion
Mar. 11:	Theresa Narasaki, Glory to God

