

Interim's Corner

Sabbath Economics

By Rev. Won-Jae Hur

The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew *shabbat*, which means "to cease" or "to rest." The biblical teachings on the Sabbath emerge within the context of the Israelites' experience of slavery and liberation. In this light, the word *shabbat* takes on special meaning. Rest is not possible under slavery. As slaves, the Israelites were cogs in the imperial economic system that reduced them to forced labor and framed creation as something to control and exploit for profit. Keeping Sabbath in remembrance of God's rule and provision expresses an alternative worldview that opposes the Egyptian economy of scarcity and domination.

Ched Myers, biblical scholar and activist, offers a penetrating analysis of an alternative economy revealed by God in the Sinai desert. Examining the story of God giving manna as food to the Israelites, Myers writes,

[I]t is a test to see whether Israel will follow instructions on how to realize Yahweh's alternative economy (Ex 16:4). The instructions are threefold (Ex 16:16-26): 1) everyone should gather just enough bread for their needs – this is an ethos that proscribes both 'too much' and 'too little'; 2) the manna cannot be stored up – a prohibition against the economics of surplus accumulation; 3) the people must keep the Sabbath – a communal discipline that concerns the setting of limits that privileges being over doing.¹

Myers points out that the instructions concerning manna set clear limits on economic activity. First, the people are to gather only enough to meet their needs. Second, they cannot reserve extra manna. These two instructions prohibit hoarding in order to meet actual need and prevent excessive accumulation. The third instruction about keeping the Sabbath reminds the Israelites of their reliance on the land and the economy of grace. Whereas the Egyptian economy demanded ceaseless labor in order

¹ Ched Myers, "Led by the Spirit into the Wilderness: Reflections on Lent, Jesus' Temptations as 'Vision Quest'." *BCM ENews*, 2005. Web. 14 Oct. 2009. <<http://bcm-net.org/wordpress/theological-animation/articles/>>.

Celebrate Thanksgiving at St. James Thursday November 26



10:00 a. m. Liturgy
11:30 a.m. Social hour in Parish Hall
12:00 p.m. Turkey dinner and fellowship!

Everyone is Invited!

For details, check the sign-up sheet
on the Parish Hall bulletin board

to exploit the land, the divine economy restores a cycle of rest and labor founded on a relationship of trust between Creator and creation.

The Sabbath is more than just a weekly affair. God teaches the community to institute a larger rhythm of Sabbath-keeping with the observance of the Sabbatical Year every seventh year and the Jubilee every 50th year. During the Sabbatical year, the people must let the land lie fallow (*Lev 25:1-7, Ex 23:10-11*) and forgive debt (*Deut 15:2*). Whatever grows in the field is left for the poor and the wild animals. In the Jubilee year, the people are released from debt, forfeited land is returned to the original owners, the land enjoys rest from cultivation, and slaves are freed (*Lev 25:8-55*).

These teachings on the Sabbath were intended to correct social inequalities, justly distribute material wealth, and remind the people that all creation belongs to God and not to human beings (*Lev 25:23*). At the center of the vision of the Sabbath was the belief in a loving and just God who rules over creation and cares for its needs (*Lev 25:18-24*). The promise of provision, however, rested on the people's observance of the teachings. The teachings in

turn sought to protect the natural environment, the community from over-consumption, and the society from exploitative practices. Such observance continually turned the people back to their relationship with God as the primary source of sustenance and cultivated responsible stewardship of the land.

What does the biblical vision of the Sabbath have to say to us today? Recent reports in the media say that the recession is at an end. This is welcome news. Yet those who follow Christ still grapple with the question of whether the recent crisis revealed something fundamentally wrong with our economic system. The biblical teachings on the Sabbath interrogate the ethical and long-term viability of our current economic system. The teachings offer a radical critique of excessive accumulation, unjust distribution of wealth, exploitation of nature and human labor, and a host of economic values and practices that have become accepted as part of the norm in contemporary society. More fundamentally, they ask the question, "Where will you put your faith: God or wealth?"

For the community of faith, the Sabbath vision of a caring and just God is as true today as it was in the wilderness of Sinai. While much of society may go with business as usual if and when the economy fully recovers, the community of Christ has a different vocation. Christian communities have the responsibility to proclaim the alternative reality which the Israelites received in the desert and which, for Christians, found its normative expression in the person of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, we have the responsibility of living into this reality and demonstrating the relevance of faith by our own witness. For the Christian community is called to be a sign of God's grace at work in the world.



SPECIAL CALL FOR SERVICE AT MARTIN DE PORRES HOUSE!

Always wanted to join the "Martin's faithful"
in serving food to the homeless once a month?

November would be a great month to start!

On **November 8**, with many of the "faithful" away
at the parish retreat, **more volunteers are needed**
for this rewarding, family-friendly service.

**To volunteer, contact Ted Ira (415-831-8678)
or Sue Caragol (415-933-6840)**



From Our Senior Warden

By Doreen Canton

Kindness is a great gift, and I am ever mindful of the good nature and generosity of the people of St. James and how kind and supportive we are to each other and the community. We are fortunate to have this environment, especially in these difficult times when work is less than certain and money is tight in many households.

By now you will have received your stewardship letter and pledge card for this year. Please notice our brand new look and the beautiful pledge card and stationery. Please thank Noreen Huey, as I do, for her gift to us of this wonderful design. The Stewardship Committee has worked hard and well at putting together the activities for this year. You can help us by returning your completed pledge card as early as possible. We know that some of you may not be able to make your commitment now, but will be in a better place to do so at year's end. If this is the case, please let a Committee member know. This way we can honor your needs and check in with you closer to the time you specify. However, as with any business, the more we know about what our income will be, the better we are able to plan.

Once again we have a number of people stepping forward to host a fellowship meal. If you have never attended one of these meals, I strongly urge you to do so. It is a great opportunity to get to know people on a different level and start some new friendships. For those who have enjoyed these gatherings in the past, consider hosting one. The rules are very simple: you choose what works for you. It might be pizza, brunch, lunch, or dinner. The food can be as simple or elaborate as you wish. The most important thing is for you and your guests to have fun. This year we will post sign-up sheets with the names

of hosts and locations, and the date and time of each event. This way you can sign up for what works best for your schedule, and it will cut down on coordination needed from the Committee. Please talk with Nancy Newmeyer or Doreen Canton if you would like to host a meal.

In other news, the Parish retreat on November 6-8 is almost upon us. A social evening for the Parish and Preschool is also coming up on Sunday November 15th. Please take this opportunity to get to know another side of the St. James community. We have a group working on setting up a dance in our church on Friday evening, November 20th. Rumor has it that we may have a masked ball! And don't forget our Thanksgiving service, followed by a reception and turkey dinner with all of the trimmings, on the 26th.

Have you had the chance to rest and feed your soul? Many opportunities are coming up again this month with the continuation of the Lectio Journey through the Gospel of Mark, Compline, and sacred hours at St. James. Look for more details on the Calendar at the back of this Journal and in the Weekly News, or talk with Won-Jae.

As always, thank you for your continued support and prayers. Please talk with me or with any Vestry member if you have questions or concerns. We are here to listen and serve you as we walk through this transition time together.



Town Hall Meetings Complete—and Great!

By Ann Rieger-Matthews
and Jan Vennari, Co-Chairs

Thanks to all who attended one of the Rector Search Committee's town hall meetings. Response was strong from a variety of people—eight o'clockers, ten o'clockers, Youth Group and Preschool members. Between the meetings and the online survey, we've heard from more than 100 individuals, which is wonderful.

Your input was both thoughtful and thought-provoking—and, in many ways, quite consistent. We are compiling it now for representation in our Parish Profile.

Thanks again!

A Call to Prayer: Wisdom from Louise

Long-time St. James member Louise Jones got the "last word" at the Search Committee's final town hall meeting. Several people asked to see her words in print, so she wrote them down for us.

"Changes are very hard to accept. This change at St. James is our wake-up call. This is the largest transition since I have been at St. James, and each individual has to compromise, move forward, and pray, asking God for wisdom and understanding through this transition. Remember, *compromise*—and remember that four-letter word: *PRAY*."



Your Rector Search Committee

Please contact any member if you have questions, opinions, or information to share!

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Capital Campaign Transition Committee Update

By Carla Cooper



In the midst of these tough economic times, the Transition Committee is blessed to have the opportunity to work with the funds raised through the dedicated work of the Community Learning Center Capital Campaign, its volunteers, and its leader, Mary Moore Gaines. Although the new building will not become a reality, we can continue the work of strengthening St. James and its service to the community.

We have spent time consulting experts as well as our St. James constituents, and are currently in the process of presenting donors with two options for funds previously given or pledged to the building project. It's important that donors' wishes be recognized, since the exact purpose for which the donors gave the funds (the new building) is not moving forward.

The first proposed use is an outreach fund for program support. As many of you know, ASPIRE, Saturday Learning Time, and the Homework Help Center all continue to assist under-served children and youth from the surrounding neighborhood. The St. James community reaffirmed its dedication to the mission of the CLC at the Annual Meeting in January and the Semi-Annual Meeting in June. This program fund would support that mission.

The second use is a St. James building fund, to ensure that the "bones" of our buildings can continue to serve for many

years. We have a list of 20 prioritized infrastructure projects that would update the facility, providing an even warmer and more welcoming environment for worship and programs. This fund would be used to repair the existing buildings to better serve the whole St. James community: parish, Preschool, and CLC programs.

We hope that donors will embrace our two proposals for use of their donations. We have sent letters to all donors, and will be making calls to hear donor wishes and share information. We invite the St. James community to contact any of us with questions; we are all listed in the Parish Directory. The committee members are Anne Purcell, Bethany Baugh, Carla Cooper, Claudia Lewis, Ebe Metcalf, and Judy Spain. All of us are current or former Vestry, CLC Board, or Capital Campaign Cabinet members.

We are deeply grateful for the community's support of the CLC capital campaign. We are proud of the vision that was born, and of the progress that the campaign made. The St. James community continues to make a strong contribution to its neighborhood, and the Community Learning Center's outreach programs are vibrantly carrying out its mission.



Faith, Hope and Charity

Stewardship
and Giving
By Barbara Burgess



"Yes we can" is a refrain we heard constantly during last year's Presidential campaign. It seems that now the refrain has become a question: "How can we?" It's a question that comes up each time Jesus teaches his disciples. They ask indirectly, how can we go among the lepers, how can we be safe in the tiny boat with these huge waves around us? And each time, Jesus' answer is basically the same: he asks us to trust him and to trust God.

In these difficult economic times especially, the question resonates: "How can we?" How can we pay our bills when our income is lower? How can we afford to support the church? As an unemployed teacher, I know well the pit of "How can I?" It seems that every time my mom and I decide to increase our pledge to Saint James, two things happen. At first we feel really good, because at the time I'm gainfully employed and agree to help contribute. Then,

Getting a lot of **cards and calendars** as "free gifts"?
Wondering what to do with them all?

Bring them to St. James!

Carole Jan Lee will make sure they get to people who need them –

- ~ clients of a Tenderloin community center
- ~ patients at the VA hospital
- ~ visitors to the Seafarer's Center in Oakland



Your junk mail can be a REAL gift to someone in need!

**Look for a "Cards and Calendars" box
in the Parish Hall**

when the time for actually paying the pledge comes around, I'm unemployed and unable to contribute. Somehow we find a way to budget the money.

Why do we contribute financially to Saint James even when I'm unemployed? The answer is that Saint James is a part of our family. I went to preschool here, I was confirmed here, I had my first teaching job here, I acolyte and serve on the Flower Guild and now the Stewardship Committee, and one day, God willing, I will be married here. Even when unemployed, how can I not afford to help, even a little bit?

Another parishioner recently told me that when they made their pledge last year the same thing happened: part way through the year they became unemployed. This person also found a way to continue to pay their pledged amount. The bottom line is, we both had faith and hoped that we could continue supporting the charitable community of Saint James. This is not to say that the only thing required to help support the mission of Saint James is to pray to God for the money. If it worked like that, nobody would ever have to worry about finances because we'd all be independently wealthy.

So what's the solution? How can we continue to support the church financially when our own financial status is uncertain? For one thing, I think we need to add a word to the end of the question and ask, "How can we *not*?" How can we not afford to pay for qualified help in the nursery on Sundays, so that parents can come and enjoy the service knowing their infant or toddler is being well cared for? How can we not afford to pay for the materials for the Sunday Clubs? How can we not afford to pay for the wonderful music program on Sundays? Saint James has cut everything it can cut; as I said recently at a Stewardship meeting, if we cut any more we'll be doing a spinal tap.

I put the question to you: How can you not afford to help Saint James financially? By now you've all received your Stewardship letters. Financial support in the form of stewardship is big way you can help support Saint James.

In one of my favorite movies, *Apollo 13*, the Chief of Operations (played by Ed Harris) has one of the best lines: "Failure is not an option."



Feasting on the Word

A Journey through the Gospel of Mark



Evening meditations on the Scriptures, using the ancient art of Lectio Divina, followed by a simple meal. We meet bi-weekly in the nave on Thursday evenings. Dinner follows in the Parish Hall.

All are welcome!

See the Calendar on the back page for November dates.

News from the Diocesan Convention

By Barbara Webb, Delegate

The 160th Convention of the Diocese of California was held on October 16 and 17 at Grace Cathedral. The delegates from St. James were Won-Jae Hur, Mary Balmana, Mary Ann Faris, Carole Jan Lee, Barbara Webb, and Warren Wong. Along with enjoying the bluegrass band on Friday night, the country-western band on Saturday, the excellent food, and the "to die for" weather, the Convention conducted a lot of business.

Friday night, after registration and dinner, a short business meeting was held in the Cathedral nave, followed by Eucharist at which our own Won-Jae was one of the servers.

The Convention was called to order on Saturday by Paul Evans, Chair of the Standing Committee. Because of Bishop Marc's recovery from surgery and the resignation of Bishop Charleston, neither were in attendance. Bishop Marc addressed the convention on screen. His talk focused mainly on Area Ministry, what has been accomplished and his hopes for the future.

Elections were held for Standing Committee, Ecclesiastical Court, Secretary of Convention, Treasurer of the Diocese, and the Nomination Committee. Many of you may remember Luran Pifke, a former parishioner and seminarian from St. James and now Rector of St. Anne's in Fremont; she was elected to the Executive Council.

Two proposed **Amendments to the Diocesan Constitution** were read and voted on. To become effective, amendments must be heard and approved twice. They were approved last year, and again this year. One amendment provides that the Executive Council



will now be described in the Constitution as one of the primary governing authorities in the Diocese. Another amendment allows new rectors who have been leading their parish for 30 days to be voting members of the Convention. Previously they had to be on board for six months.

Several **changes to the Canons** were proposed, discussed, and passed, including one allowing parishes to notify their members of parish meetings using means of communication other than U.S. Mail.

Four Resolutions were presented and passed. Two were responses to resolutions passed at General Convention in July: one calling for *A Study on the Complicity of the Diocese of California in the Institution of Slavery*, and one *Supporting Health Care for All*. The "local" resolutions were as follows:

Restructuring of Diocesan Convention. This will change the process of convention to, among other things, promote transparency, establish an effective process for the preparation of resolutions, and provide for budget priorities by the convention.

Continuation of the Deaneries Task Force. At the special convention held in May 2008, a task force was formed to study the six deaneries in the Diocese. The task force needs another year to complete their report.

The proposed budget for 2010 is almost identical to the budget for 2009. Because of the economic situation, parishes are having a hard time meeting their Diocesan assessments. It was proposed to the Bishop, and he agreed, that in January 2010 there will be a one-time rebate of 10% to each parish.

We were shown an excellent film on Episcopal Charities. Hopefully we can borrow a copy and show it at St. James.

We also heard a report and saw a short film on Episcopal Community Services.

More details about any of the resolutions, changes to the Canons, and Diocesan budget, as well as other reports to the Convention, can be found at www.diocal.org/convention.

I want to close this report with big thanks to Warren Wong. Warren is the "Dean" of St. James delegates. He shepherds us along, making sure we are informed about all aspects of the Convention. He organizes a conference call with the delegates before each Convention to discuss the resolutions and candidates for election, and to answer any questions. Your delegates go to the Convention well informed, thanks to Warren.



Time and Talent: Elia Pochron and Family

By Barbara Burgess

Like so many Episcopalians, Elia and Ryszard Pochron came to this Church from different religious paths. "Ryszard and I were married by an Episcopal Reverend and Attending Canon in a chapel at the House of Saint George," Elia says. "Ryszard was raised Catholic and I Greek Orthodox, and we found a religious home that would bless our union. I love the fact that members of the Episcopal Church are of all nationalities, unlike the Greek church community I was brought up with."

Shortly after their marriage the Pochrons were expecting a son, Erazm; Andre was born six years later. In 1993, when their youngest son Taylor was on the way, the family was guided to Saint James by Doreen Canton, who invited them to the annual Parish Picnic. "We met so many wonderful members there," Elia remembers, "people who are still our close friends. From that day on we just never left. The community welcomed us with compassion and a vision for the future. Our three sons were baptized here, with family and new friends to witness the ceremony.

"We wanted the boys to be happy coming each week, offering their individual characteristics and making friendships," Elia says of the family's early experiences at St. James. "The youth group was so rewarding for our first son, Erazm. At thirteen he attended their activities, learned about the Church, and then wished to receive Confirmation. Andre would be in the children's program, learning along with me about the Bible stories. Taylor, still

a tot, didn't mind scooting backward up the aisle at Easter just to be present." Group discussions and the individual attention they received from former Co-Rectors Peter Lawson and Mary Moore Gaines provided the Pochrons with more reasons "to raise our children and ourselves as Episcopalians."

Most Sundays you will find the creative and capable Elia in the undercroft of the church with the Sunday Clubs kids. "The children's program was close to my heart from the start, and the parents were so dedicated, yet we had less than a dozen children attending," Elia remembers.

"Doreen first asked me to help create art projects to complement the Bible stories that the children were learning. With time we realized the need for ministry leadership. Eventually our call was answered; an angel—Shari Young—came to us, and the program flourished."

Now, Elia says, "there is a need once again for renewal, like the changes of the seasons. We still have dedicated parents who want to help build up the program again. We just need a few seeds of inspiration to grow. I feel hopeful that we will have a garden of children to listen and be heard. Their voices are the life of Saint James' future."

Elia says the most rewarding part of her service is "seeing the children grow with wonder about seasonal changes. They look forward to the holiday activities of Christmas and Easter. I just enjoy visiting with them each week, with their bright ideas and the ways they find to express themselves in art projects and drama games." Her obvious love of teaching children came into play again when Reverend Merry Chan recruited Elia this fall to succeed her in running the ASPIRE after-school program at Saint James during the week.

PHOTO CONTEST STILL OPEN!

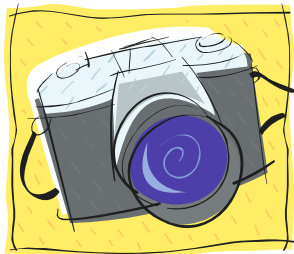
Submissions accepted through November and December! Final judging at Annual Parish Meeting in January.

Box for submissions is in the narthex.

Put your name and phone number on the back of each photo. Black & white shots preferred!

Finalists will have their photographs enlarged and framed to decorate the parish office!

Questions? Contact Rose Scarff at 415-460-1615 or Rose.Scarff@gmail.com



"The best way to learn more," Elia believes, "is to be in and behind the scenes of each ministry. Our family takes pride and pleasure in serving the parish community." While Elia is downstairs with Sunday Clubs, Ryszard serves upstairs—most often as crucifer, drawing on his Catholic upbringing and prior experience as an altar boy. The whole Pochron family have served in the care and support of the children's program, the acolyte ministry, coffee hour hospitality and housekeeping, and assisting the Altar Guild. They are leaders at every parish camping trip and every parish work-day. Eldest son Erazm is now Parish Administrator and Director of Operations and, as his proud mother says, serves as St. James's "computer wizard and all-around handyman tinkering service."

What would Elia most like folks to know about our parish community? "At Saint James you can share thoughts and dreams, and feel balanced on common ground. We are all here to make a difference for ourselves and our community. We share moments of joy and revelation during the best of times, and comfort each other during times of hardship. Our church's door is open to you, and its members welcome all with compassion and guidance as we seek to walk God's path together."



Aspirations

Hard Lessons About Our Schools

By Jon Owens

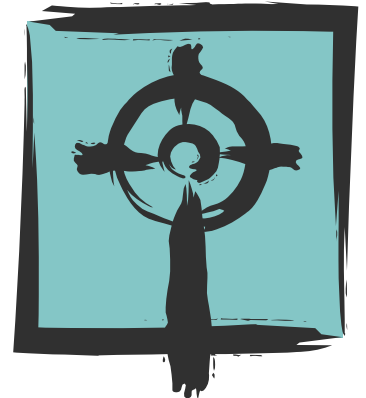
As a church, we support the Millennium Development Goals.

One goal is to make sure our children have access to education.

Often when people talk about these goals they think of needs in Africa

or elsewhere. It is easy to forget the faltering American education system. As state and local budget are cut and funding stagnates, we tend to hurt the future of what drives the economy.

The California education system was founded on the principle that if you fund and provide the best public education, that will create a strong workforce and the effects will lead to a strong economy. I think sometimes that we Californians bite off more than we can chew by creating more social services and pet projects through various voter initiatives, thus changing the funding formula for items like education. This kind of funding destruction



has affected the state education system since the Reagan era, and has led to rapid decline.

California schools were once the best in the nation. In San Francisco we still have a few top high schools, but as a whole California now ranks among the bottom ten states in education. I compare our schools to the ones back in Oklahoma, where I grew up. Oklahoma was rated 38th in teacher pay when I was a kid, and funding for supplies was awful. So Oklahoma created funding initiatives and is now closer to mid-range in teacher pay, and among the top 5 states in computer-to-student ratio. Oklahoma was rated the most recession-proof state in today's economy by *Forbes Business Magazine*. In California I find we lack enough technology in our public schools, considering that Silicon Valley is just down the road. Children in cultures like China are exposed to computers in school as early as age 2 or 3. I highly recommend going to www.youtube.com and typing in the video search: Did you know? It will serve as a wake-up call.

After-school programming is another big need in California, especially since state and nation have been hit hard by recession. Check out these facts provided by the National After-School Alliance (an organization I work with):

- 22% of California's students (1,483,431 children) are unsupervised after school. Now, just think about what has been in the news about Chicago. Look at the violence that breaks out after school. If we were to fund more programs, wouldn't it make our communities safer?
- Only 12% of California K-12 youth can participate in an after-school program. 37% of those children would participate, if given the opportunity.
- On average, 75% of California students qualify for free/reduced-cost lunch. 35% have limited English proficiency; 9% have special needs/disabilities.
- 97% of after-school program leaders report that recession is affecting their community. Six out of 10

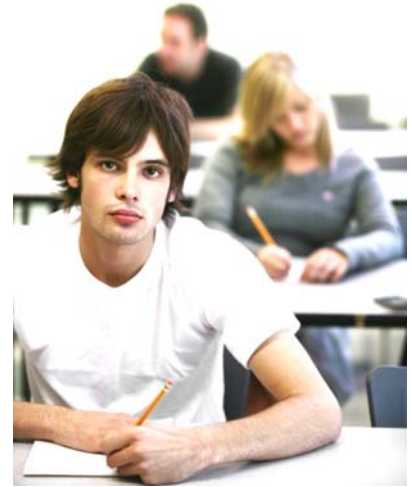


programs lost funding due to recession. 56% of funding has decreased from two years ago.

- Unemployment, failing or shrinking businesses, high food prices, and increased homelessness are the top ways in which communities are affected by recession.

So what do we do with this information? First, we should take time to write to legislators and remind them of the importance of funding education and after-school programs.

Funding must increase, and the infrastructure must change. In addition, we can volunteer or



donate money to after-school programs, or do business with companies that support after-school programs such as our own Community Learning Center, which sponsors ASPIRE, the Homework Help Center, and Saturday Learning Time. Other groups working to support education legislation on a national level are the YMCA of the USA, the National PTA, the National League of Cities, AARP, Time Warner, IBM, and sports leagues such as the NBA, NFL, NHL, and MLB.

In the Bible paraphrase *The Message*, there is a passage from Proverbs (1:29-33) that I like to see as a prophetic voice of wisdom for our community: *"Because you hated Knowledge and had nothing to do with the Fear-of-God, because you wouldn't take my advice and brushed aside all my offers to train you, well, you've made your bed—now lie in it; you wanted your own way—now, how do you like it? Don't you see what happens, you simpletons, you idiots? Carelessness kills; complacency is murder. First pay attention to me, and then relax. Now you can take it easy—you're in good hands."*

Can we work to improve our education system? Absolutely. Is it part of our Christian ministry? Absolutely. We as Christians strive to respect the dignity of every human being and to love others as ourselves. We strive to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. This is an action that helps us bring the kingdom of heaven on earth.



Searching-Line Drawing and Diversity Dialogue

By Julie Terraciano, MFT
California Counseling Institute

I began to explore the subject of drawing and artistic expression in my article for the Journal last spring. I described what it is like for me to be engaged in this process, and in what ways it is changing me. Since I am still working with this medium and looking differently at my life and our lives together here on this planet, I continue to explore what this stance, this practice, and this process have revealed to me to this point.

The emphasis that has shifted for me in the ensuing months is that, while I know that I have not been able to stop time by taking time to draw during a typical working week, I am no longer preoccupied by the frustration of not having enough time, as I was a short year ago. I am learning that we make space for what calls us.

Currently I am able to set aside enough time in my mornings for exercise, some drawing, and some writing about this process of opening my senses and being more awake in the world. I have chosen pencil, pen and ink in my artistic expression, and a memoir-type collection of stories in my writing endeavor, to honor the desire that I have for internal integration.

The most intriguing aspect of my recent drawing exercises is the practice of searching-line drawing. We first learned this with pen and ink, but we can use pencil as well. The basic principle is to search for the form that I am looking for by going over the outline again and again. What is so refreshing is that I can make mistakes; mistakes are part of the process. They form the inner framework upon which I can hang my ultimate rendition.

This fall I have begun to help facilitate discussions that deal with general diversity issues for a parent education group at Cathedral School for Boys. In our first dialogue, we looked at the importance of point of view and how we



COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER ONGOING CLASSES AND EVENTS

For Children and Youth

Saturday Learning Time

Call 415-751-1199 for information.

Kindermusik and Advanced Kindermusik

Contact Dee Dee Lawton at 415-561-9754.

ASPIRE After School Program

Call 415-751-1199 for information.

Suzuki Music Lessons

Call 415-412-6723 for information.

Homework Help Center

Contact Nayad Abrahamian at 751-1198 to volunteer.

For Adults

“Always Active” Senior Exercise

Mondays 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.
Wednesdays 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. in the Parish Hall.

Buddhist Meditation

Wednesdays 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

Overeaters Anonymous

Sundays 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. in the Caldwell Room.
Tuesdays 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall.

Debtors Anonymous

Tuesdays 6:00 – 7:00 in the Caldwell Room.

pass that on to our children, how we see our own identity and help foster a healthy perspective for our children.



Certain aspects of these two different parts of my life seem to connect in a compelling way for me. In my drawing and writing I search for what is real before and within me, what it is that my eye, hand, and memory are translating. In the dialogues we search for who we are, given our backgrounds, experiences, current openness, and desire to see who is really sitting in front of us and what our own experiences bring to the table.

The table seems to be a literal and figurative unifying metaphor here. I choose my dining room table as a place to draw because I like the view behind it, through my French doors and out onto my deck, my garden, and my Oakland neighborhood. For our dialogues we choose a long table in the third grade room, where we bring a blending of potluck cuisines, our minds, and our hearts to search for lines that let us know where we've been, how we connect, and where we want to proceed to continue thriving as a community that is part of an ever-evolving world.



Letters to the Journal

Got a thought about something you've read here?
Want to share it with the St. James community?



Drop the editor a note,
and you could be in print next month!

Send your letter by November 15th to:

elizabethn@jfc.org

or: Elizabeth Nelson – LTJ
578 26th Avenue, #6

San Francisco, CA 94121

(or hand it to me at church on Sunday)

Health Care In Crisis, Part II

By James A. Turner

"The measure of a country's success is how it treats its most unfortunate citizens."

-- Gjertrud Myrestrand in the *New York Times*, September 20, 2009

Why do we have a health care crisis in our country? Here are some of the reasons. There is a health care crisis because too many people in this country do not have and cannot get health insurance or health care; because health care in this country is unevenly provided among the general population, with some receiving better care than others; because the costs of health insurance and health care have risen so dramatically in the last decade that fewer and fewer can afford it; because doctors tend to practice expensive medicine, and patients tend to demand it; because the medical profession's fear of malpractice suits often drives doctors to do extra tests to protect themselves from litigation rather than to help the patient; because we have politicians who do not have the courage or political will to generate effective changes in the system; and, last but not least, because our health insurance system is not only broken but corrupted by greed and avarice.

In 2009 spending on health care nationally is expected to reach \$2.5 trillion, which will account for about 17.6% of our Gross Domestic Product (U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services). Why have the costs of medical care so



dramatically increased? One reason is that our medical knowledge and technology have increased astronomically. When I first went into practice in 1969, there were no MRIs or CAT scans. Total joint replacement was not available. Research on the immune system had not yet reached the point at which heart and other organ transplants were practicable. Today we know more and can do more, and it all costs more! People want the latest and the best, and doctors tend to accommodate them. For instance, during my years in practice I witnessed many instances in which doctors ordered expensive MRIs for patients in cases where ordinary, much less costly X-rays would have sufficed. Patients demand, and doctors comply. Thus, both patient and doctor play a role in the steady rise of health care costs.

But what about the health insurance companies? What role have they played in the current crisis? First let me remind you that insurance of any kind is based on pooled risk. The costs are to be spread over the whole, so that

premiums paid by the many will be sufficient to pay for the medical care of the few. However, that is not quite how the health insurance industry in the United States has operated. Many companies seek to increase their profits at the expense of ordinary people by doing three major things. One, they cherry-pick the members of their pool by excluding anyone who has a pre-existing illness or who might be expected to become ill. Two, they deny legitimate claims by their policy-holders if they can find any excuse to do so. Three, they deny people entry to their insured pool for spurious reasons. Thus, in many cases, they have limited their insured pool to the young and healthy in order to limit their expenditures on medical care. Most of these insurance companies are for-profit corporations. Any means they can find to limit their expenditures means more money in the pockets of executives and shareholders. When that happens, we all suffer the consequences.

While many examples of this behavior are available, one will suffice to make the point. In 2008, it was discovered that Blue Cross of California and its parent company WellPoint, Inc. had established a practice of asking physicians to carefully search copies of insurance applications filled out by new patients in an attempt to find even the tiniest discrepancy that would allow Blue Cross to deny the applicant insurance, even “pre-existing pregnancies.” This caused such outrage that they had to rescind the practice.

It has been well publicized that the health insurance and pharmaceutical industries are spending \$1.4 million a day to lobby members of Congress in opposition to health care reform. Bloomberg News has reported that there are 6 health care lobbyists for each Congressperson. We’ll see what our squabbling Congress will do with this mess.

Once again, time and space permit only a brief discussion of what this crisis is all about. There is much, much more that could be presented.



Thoughts While Shaving

By Ray Muñoz

Umpteen years ago (when I could stay up later than, say, nine o'clock) I was watching “The Jack Parr Show” when they started a very funny skit. It was funny but also so instructive that I remember it to this day.

This is what happened: Jack got a small group of volunteers from the audience and put his side-kick and piano player, José Melis, on the very end. José, I should note, was a talented musician but he had learned English recently when he came to the U.S. from Cuba.

Jack told a story to the first guy in line, heard by the two of them and the audience but not by the other volunteers. That guy whispered it to the next, and so on. It was José’s job, as last person in line, to tell the audience what the story was about. It was hilarious. We who knew the original story were convulsed by how it had changed. Poor José....

The memory of this skit resurfaced recently when I picked up a copy of Marcus Borg’s *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* and started to read it again.

Research tells us that the Gospels were written toward the end of the first century—many decades after the death of Jesus. Taking a hint from the Jack Parr story, I’ve always wondered how much of Jesus’ message made it through the decades. Some I thought had to have been changed, added to, massaged by people who might have meant well but were perhaps reacting to local conditions and customs ... or to their hopes for the future ... or to fear of the present ... or—my thought—the need of a nascent organization (church?) for the written word, a formal document.

No matter! It’s still a holy book! We have been consoled and instructed by it over the centuries.

Still ... according to the Jesus Seminar (of which Marcus Borg is a voting member) there are echoes of the actual thoughts and words of Jesus throughout the Gospels. Based on the latest scholarship, they decide which echo rings true, which is the one with the authentic sound, the one where they hear the voice of Jesus.

Anything else is added concepts, accretions.

(The Gospel of St. James, interestingly enough to this non-scholar, is thought to have no content attributable in any way to Jesus.)

How thoroughly fascinating....

How thoroughly frustrating....

Shalom



Hope and the Dear Departed

By Elizabeth Nelson

Each individual, each family and community, marks personal seasons and holy-days on the calendar next to

the ones noted in print. The month of November is All Saint's Day and Thanksgiving; it's also when my mother died. That happened in 1978, a few months before my 21st birthday, and it's been on my calendar ever since.

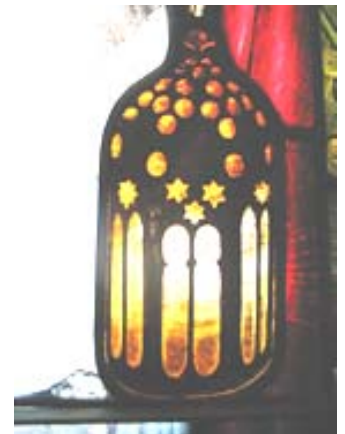
In the days and weeks following her death, I shed my share of tears and joined in the immediate rituals of grief with my family. But then—for reasons that I'll explain over coffee, if you're really interested—I postponed the long work of actually grieving. I focused on the right and necessary work of Getting On With Life, even while part of me went numb. I remembered Mom, of course, especially each November, but I rarely seemed able to attach much emotion to the memories. It was fifteen years before I realized the extent to which that numbness was affecting the rest of my life, and got ready to actually feel what I felt about the life and death of my mother.

I was smart enough to ask for help when I entered into this belated grieving process, and it's a good thing I did. The process was messy, and it hurt. Some days I wept over the pain of my mother's life, and raged at myself for not

having loved her enough to heal her; some days I wept over the pain of my own life, and raged at my mother for not having healed me. Some days I obsessed over the circumstances of her death, trying to understand exactly what had happened and why. Some days I simply remembered moments of her strength, her warmth, her eccentricity and humor, and wept because I missed her.

It took some time. It took a lot of tears. The old, familiar numbness was a tempting refuge; so, in odd ways, were the twin distorted images, formed by selective memory, of my mom as Parental Saint and Parental Monster. But what I eventually came to, with help and tears and time, is an understanding of her as a woman with parents of her own; a woman whose role as mother was one dimension—a central one, but just one—of her life; a woman who cared for herself and the people she loved as best she could, whose "best" was far from perfect on some days and 'way better than good on others; a woman whose life and death were her own story, one that I can know only in part. I still cry (and smile, and ponder) over my memories of that woman. It beats being numb.

Why am I telling you this? Because it's November, or will be when you read these words, and my heart and calendar are speaking to me. And because we're family, you and I—members of the St. James family, which has been going through its own grieving process during the past year or so. Individually and collectively we've been doing our best to cope with our parish family's losses—short of death, thank God, but losses nonetheless—and the changes that follow from them. A lot of our coping has centered around Getting On With Life, and that's necessary and right. Because it's November, though, and because my heart is speaking to me, I'm bold to tell you my own story of grieving, and to remind you of what your heart already knows. That grief claims space and time in our lives, whether we embrace or avoid it. That numbness and selective memory can be normal parts of the grieving process, but are not great places to get stuck. That the story of each person, and of each loss, remains written in mystery even when we strive to remember and learn as much of the story as we can. That help is there for us, if we seek it. That love abides; in November, through the winter, on every day the calendar shows us, love abides.



CALENDAR

- Nov. 4 St. James Players concert with Dr. Milton Maschiadri and Flavia Frazao, 7:00 p.m. in the Nave
- Nov. 5 *Lectio Divina*: Journey through the Gospel of Mark (see p. 5)
- Nov. 6-8 Parish Retreat at Bishop's Ranch
- Nov. 8 St. James serves at Martin de Porres—helpers needed! (see p. 2)
- Nov. 14 Quiet Day (prayer and meditation) at St. James
- Nov. 15 Vestry meeting after 10 a.m. service
Church-Preschool social event
- Nov. 18 Compline service at St. James, 7:00 p.m.
- Nov. 19 *Lectio Divina*: Journey through the Gospel of Mark (see p. 5)
- Nov. 24 St. James Masquerade Ball, 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 26 Thanksgiving Feast at St. James (see p. 1)
- Dec. 6 "The Night Shift" – St. James Youth Service, 5:00 p.m.
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