

Interim's Corner

Keeping Sabbath

By Rev. Won-Jae Hur

Proper rest is an elusive thing today. A globalized economy brings, along with many other benefits and dangers, an increase in social stress and anxiety.¹ The current recession does not make things easier. Whether the source of our stress is imbalance between work and personal life, or the loss of work and economic impoverishment, we need inner and outer rest to survive and thrive.

Rest has a special place in the Scriptures. The theme appears very early, in Chapter 2, in fact, of Genesis: "So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that God had done in creation." Later, the Book of Exodus tells us how Moses receives God's word on Mount Sinai after the Israelites are liberated from slavery (Exodus 20:8-11). In the wilderness of their newfound freedom, God teaches the people the sacredness of resting with God on the Sabbath.

The understanding of rest continues to evolve in the Scriptures. Jesus promises rest when he speaks as the personification of Divine Wisdom, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) He offers friendship with him as the gift of rest. The Biblical understanding of rest reaches completion in Revelation. John receives the vision of final rest when God "will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more." (Revelation 21:4) God's justice is established in the cosmos, and the whole creation finds its fulfillment in the *shalom*² of God. The whole story of our faith in the Scriptures is in a sense about our journey from the original rest in God on the seventh day of creation to the rest of final peace at the end of time.

The Biblical understanding of rest is different from taking breaks or vacations. Finding its primary expression in the

¹ See Gregory Kolodko, ed., *Globalization and Social Stress* (NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2005).

² *Shalom*, the Hebrew word for peace, is cosmic in scope, embracing the personal, social, and environmental dimensions. According to Mennonite theologian William Swartley, *shalom* becomes possible only when steadfastness, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice are present. See William Swartley, *Covenant of Peace: The Missing Peace in New Testament Theology and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2006).

Jewish communal practice of the Sabbath, rest is a time set apart to wonder, bless, and thank God as the giver of life. For Christians, we set aside Sunday for this purpose in celebration of Christ's resurrection and the gift of new life. We remember to celebrate this gift and simply enjoy *being with God*.

The promise of rest is the promise of life. Taking the time to stop what we are doing and enjoy rest with God is an act of trusting God's governance and provision for all creation. When we are able to trust in God's care for us in this way, we find a measure of inner and outer freedom from the many worries that hound us. This freedom, in turn, gives us the peace and joy to worship God.

Keeping sabbath is also the practice of giving our whole attention to our relationship with God, community, and creation. Without an intentional practice of spending time with God, our lives are often too crowded with activities or concerns to accommodate the soft voice of the Spirit. We all know that our relationships require our time and

Feasting on the Word A Journey through the Gospel of Mark



Regular evening meditations on the Scriptures, using the ancient art of *Lectio Divina*, then sharing a simple meal.

Meets bi-weekly in the sanctuary
6:00 – 8:00 on Thursday evenings
(see the Calendar for October dates)
Dinner follows in the Parish Hall.

Join us!

attention. Our relationship with God is no different. In fact, it is the most important relationship, for God is the very source of life and love.

Sabbath is both a personal and a communal affair. We practice it alone to deepen our awareness of God's presence and renew ourselves in it. We also observe it together as a church community, family, and friends. The rhythm of keeping sabbath and honoring our work creates a pattern of personal and communal living that is nurtured directly by the infinite graciousness of God. What naturally flows from this rhythm is greater wholeness, a better integration of the many parts of our lives in God.

Keeping sabbath is a practice of trust and freedom. It turns us to God as the center of our lives and helps us to entrust ourselves to God's care. It frees us from the illusion that our work is the sole source of life.³ Through it, we open the door for God to enter and re-create us.

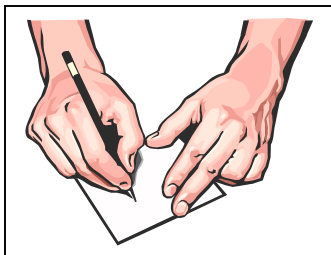
My next two articles will discuss the economic dimensions of the sabbath in the Bible, and some ways we can practice keeping sabbath individually and communally.



Letters to the Journal

Got a thought about something
you've read in the Journal?
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 October 15th to:
elizabethn@jfc.org
or to: Elizabeth Nelson – LTJ
578 26th Avenue #6
San Francisco, CA 94121
(or hand it to me at church on Sunday)

From Our Senior Warden

by Doreen Canton

Thank you to the Rector Search Committee for all of your work in preparing and conducting the town hall meetings and survey. Having attended the first town hall on September 13, I am reminded of how blessed I am to be a part of this loving and generous community. I hope that you have also had the opportunity to attend one of these meetings. If not, I encourage you to fill out the online survey or contact a member of the committee to provide your input. Every voice is important as we discern who we are and the attributes we are looking for in our next rector.

In reflecting on the discussion that we had on the 13th, a couple of points jump out at me. The first is our commitment to grow our church and to continue building programs that serve people inside and outside St. James. The other is a challenge by one of our members for each of us to step a little outside our comfort zone and try a different ministry. As we move forward, we are trying very hard to build a system where you can feel safe in stepping forward to volunteer. At the same time, we also want to honor the limits you put on your time and commitment and to let you know that if it does not work out, for whatever reason, you can step down. If you have a good idea or are interested in helping us set this up, please let me know.

We also spoke about getting to know the people at the California Counseling Institute and the Preschool better. When I attended the Preschool Board meeting this month, we spoke about some possible ways of being in communion together socially and also collaborating on some projects, so stay tuned.

Stewardship season is coming up, and thank you to Nancy Newmeyer, Helen Lantz, Bill Newlin, and Barbara Burgess for stepping up as the core committee. We are still looking for a few more people to spread the work load, so if you are interested please either see me or speak to any of the committee members named above. To help us out, please be thinking about your pledge for the coming year—both in dollars and in what ministry you might like to participate in or lead. It can be something new or one of the existing events that we hold on an annual basis. For me, asking someone to pledge money is very hard, but being active on the Stewardship committee is the challenge that I am personally taking on this year. Come join in, and we will have some fun.

A very big thank you is due to Liza Colton, our fabulous Junior Warden, and to Martha Gregg for organizing our recent Parish workday and purchasing supplies to paint much of the interior of the office building. Thanks to Martha's guidance we have a beautiful, fresh look with

³ This insight comes from Marjorie Thompson's *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), p. 63.

fabulous colors on the walls. Please add your own thanks to the people listed below for their time and effort; many of them were present for 6 to 8 hours. Those in attendance were Liza Colton, Martha Gregg, John Gallagher, Ryszard and Elia Pochron, John and JJ Harrison, Roger Wickstrom, Anne Purcell, Mary Ann Faris, Elizabeth Nelson, Andrew Hom, Nancy Newmeyer, and Barbara Webb. My personal thanks go to you all for a job well done. We accomplished so much!

Now to complete the job we need those black and white photographs to decorate the walls, so get busy with your cameras. I know that many of you take photographs, so bring them to church so we can vote for our favorites.



Update From Your Rector Search Committee

By Ann Rieger-Matthews, Co-Chair

September was a busy month with our town hall meetings. We had a wonderful turnout at the town halls and would like to thank you all for helping us, by giving us valuable information about your hopes and dreams for St. James and the qualities you would like to have in our new rector.

If you were not able to attend a town hall meeting, it's not too late to provide your feedback! Every voice is needed to help us write a Parish Profile that's truly reflective of who we are at St. James.

If you couldn't attend a town hall meeting, please fill out an online survey at <http://tinyurl.com/stjamesurvey>. (Please use the survey ONLY if you didn't get to a town hall!) This survey will only be active until October 16, at which point we will begin to draft the information into our profile. You may also call one of the committee members

to share opinions or questions. Our contact information is in the box on this page.

Our next step will be compiling information from the town hall meetings and pulling together existing parish information to draft a profile which we will present to the Vestry.

Thank you for your support. We appreciate your willingness to share and help us in this process.



Your Rector Search Committee

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

Giselle Bosc

bosc@pacbell.net (415) 751-2842

Ann Rieger Matthews

reigermatthews@pacbell.net (415) 759-8131

Louise Newlin

nvnc.id.vides.nvnc.ne.vides@gmail.com
(415) 242-5224

Carol Overman

windgoddess_sf@yahoo.com (415) 812-9494

Elia Pochron

eliapochron@gmail.com (415) 221-5004

Judy Spain

jespain@aol.com (415) 387-5093

Elizabeth Sturcken

esturcken@edf.org (415) 440-4955

Jan Vennari

jdvennari@comcast.net (415) 664-3139

Roger Wickstrom

rogewick@hotmail.com (415) 386-1628

Ed Wilcox

edward.wilcox@sbcglobal.net (415) 412-6723

Warren Wong

wjwstjames@aol.com (415) 823-3222

Sunday Club News

By Helen Archer-Dusté

Welcome back from summertime! Our Sunday Club (K-Grade 6) has resumed, and meets during the 10:00 a.m. service. We gather in the Caldwell Room, off the Parish Hall. Our team of teachers will work with the children to explore ideas of faith in an age appropriate way. This year we are using the Episcopal Church USA curriculum for young children, and incorporating a strong world service approach. We will continue with our wonderful crafts program guided by Elia Pochron. The children will join the congregation each week for Eucharist in the sanctuary.

We welcome new and returning members of the teaching team. We will have an orientation session for all teachers on October 18 from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. in the Caldwell Room. Please join us! We also appreciate anyone who'd like to serve as a teacher's assistant. If you are interested in either role please contact Elia Pochron, who maintains our teacher rota.

We have several special programs and events to add to your family calendar:

October 4	The Feast of St. Francis and the Blessing of the Animals
October 18	Bread for the World (bread.org)
October 25	Trick or treat for UNICEF (in your Halloween costumes)
Advent	Santa for Seniors Program (www.beasantatoasenior.org)
December 6	St Nicholas Day
December 20	Christmas Tableau
January 6	Feast of the Epiphany and Potluck Supper
February 16	Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
March 14	Feast of St. Patrick
April 4	Easter Sunday
May 2	May Pole and Dance

We are blessed to have these children in our lives and as members of our St. James community!



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.

Time and Talent: Judy Spain

By Barbara Burgess

If you have ever served in any of the ministries on Sunday, then chances are you have talked quite a bit with Judy Spain. Judy came to Saint James in October 2000, and was attracted first by “the big blue St. James banner out in front. Then it was the spirit of community I felt during the liturgy and at coffee hour. I appreciated the Statement on Inclusivity, which had been approved, I think, the January prior to my arrival. Jane Hansen invited me down to the Parish Hall for coffee hour, and that was the clincher.”

Currently Judy is in charge of the challenging task of coordinating and creating the Rota, finding volunteers to serve in each Sunday’s ministries without “over-using” people. This task was given to her several years ago by then-Rector Mary Moore. Judy says of the Rota, “I always want more acolytes, Eucharistic Ministers, ushers and counters to put on. The new challenge is getting people to volunteer for coffee service. And to think that a small group of us took turns hosting coffee hour once a month until this past January!”

Judy is also on the Capital Campaign Transition Committee, the Membership Committee, and the Healing Ministry Team. She is one of Joan Gascoyne’s drivers, helps get the St. James Journal to the post office, orders the coffee for coffee hour, and volunteers for many other parish activities. Previously she was selected to be on the Vestry and served as for several years as Senior Warden. Most recently, she parlayed all her experience at St. James into a successful application to serve on the Rector Search Committee.

One of Judy’s most recent memorable moments at Saint James occurred at a Rector Search Committee meeting, when Ann Rieger-Matthews and Jan Vennari were selected as co-chairs. “We prayed, spent a great deal of time talking about the role of the co-chairs, then went around the room and each indicated whether we were interested in the position and/or what our other talents are. Selecting the co-chairs was a smooth process—we know the Holy Spirit is with us on this major assignment. It was very helpful to hear what each committee member can contribute to the task. Everyone, whether or not they’re on the committee, can contribute their input to the Parish Profile and their prayers for the committee’s work.”

Judy says the most rewarding thing about her work in the parish is “knowing I am contributing to the special feeling of community we have at St. James, and knowing that I am doing my share to keep St. James a good spiritual home for others and for me.”

Judy says what she would like people to know about Saint James is that, “although we are struggling a bit right now, with the ending of the capital campaign and our sanctuary not being as full as we would like on Sundays, St. James is still a loving, caring community and an important spiritual home for each of us. God’s love for us has not changed, even though we may be going through major transitions. In fact, God surely loves us more, and we need to be open to that love.

“It is an easy time to stay away from St. James,” Judy continues, “to not pledge, or to decide that St. James will take the cut in our personal budgets. It is an easy time to not be involved, not ask questions or give opinions. In other words, this time of transition at St. James is an easy time to tune out until things seem more settled. But what we really need is for everyone to show up and be part of the Sunday liturgy, to be actively involved, to reach out to one another, to ask the hard questions and to give opinions. We need everyone’s time, talent, and treasure. And we all need to smile and laugh and pray together in thanksgiving for God’s blessings on St. James.”



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**

Aspirations

Social Justice in San Francisco Public Schools

By Jon Owens

This past month has been an eye-opening experience for me. With my small promotion at the YMCA, I have become a before- and after-school program coordinator, which has put me in the position of working side by side with the San Francisco Unified School District and having an office on school property.

Within SFUSD there is a lot of diversity in school set-up and curriculum, and the school district is not that unified in how it puts things together. After-school programs, for example, are designed to help kids succeed and provide care for children of working parents, but the programs are run differently at each school. Some are administered by community based organizations such as the YMCA. Some are tuition based, while others are funded by city or state grants. The result is that program standards are very different at each school.

My school, the Chinese Immersion School at De Avila, just opened its first year. When the parents were working to build the type of school they wanted, the subject of after-school programming came up. In many schools there may be more than one after-school program in competition, usually one that is free and one that is fee based. The De Avila parents debated for a while and came to the conclusion that wanted a fee based program so they could offer better things. However, they did not want to divide the school community into those who could and could not afford the fee, so they developed a sliding scale.

SFUSD school score cards have to include after-school programs, and the score cards must measure objectives formulated around three components: achievement, accountability, and social justice. As we talked in a meeting at De Avila about our new model of after-school program, we began to realize that we were living out a sense of social justice in our own school. By not having competing after-school programs, all our kids were receiving equal access to the same program, and the school was not divided into those who have money and those who don't.

My hat is off to the parents at De Avila, and to a school that says it's about community and not individual interest. It is too common that—since we all want the best for our children—those who can afford it are willing to pay to provide the best. They may then donate some money to help those with lower income, but does that truly provide the same access to quality programs? State-funded ExCEL after-school sites in our city are totally free to everyone, and the state pays \$7 per day per student. Other programs that are fee based may calculate up to \$38 per day per child, usually allowing for matching grant money.

If you think about it, who do you think has the greater access to quality programs, and which programs have to “stretch” their dollars?

When building community, it is so important to be mindful that not everyone has the same means to travel or be in a program. Many people work the same number of hours, but there are huge salary gaps; a \$100 fee that is a drop in the bucket to one family might be a huge financial imposition to another. The Gospel message in all this is to remember the concept of charity and equality that is clearly expressed in the Sermon on the Mount and other scriptures. In a passage from the Letter of James that we read back on Sept 6th, for example, the writer asks: *What good does it do to tell a person to go and be well, if they need food and clothing and you did not provide it to them?*

We should stay in dialogue about how to keep our doors and our programs open to all, realizing that money can

St. James Hike & Potluck Luncheon Saturday October 24th, 2009

Starting from the home of Jon Owens
850 Pointe Pacific #5, Daly City



10:00 a.m. – Leave Jon's house to hike in San Bruno Mountain County Park—a 3-mile trail over small hills, not too rugged

12:00 p.m. – Back to Jon's house for lunch

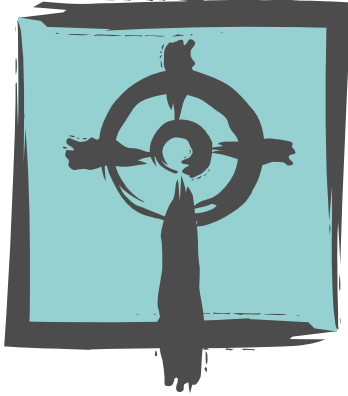
Parking: along the road in any spot labeled “Guest,” or a block past the building at the Pointe Pacific Club House

Bring: Food to share at lunch, and a camera for the hike—you will see outstanding views of San Francisco

Optional: There is a hot-tub at the clubhouse—bring a swimsuit if you'd like a soak after lunch

**Call Jon at 510-289-9407
with questions, or to RSVP!**

often be a great barrier to participation—not just in our schools but our churches, our colleges and universities, our medical care, and elsewhere. Only in doing so will we truly realize that we are carrying the ministry of Christ in the world.



On Mental Illness

By Christie Higgins

My beloved fellow parishioners,

I am mentally ill. A lot of you may have heard me announce this in front of the congregation years ago. I announced it because I felt the need to share with you, inspire you, inform you.

A number of you have subsequently come up to me and shared that you have relatives or friends who are mentally ill, or that you yourself, in fact, have experienced mental illness. It brings me great joy that you have felt comfortable enough to share with me and allow me to help you.

Mental illness is genetic. You are born with it. In my case, it became full-blown while I was serving in the United States Army. I have a 100% Service-connected mental illness (Stress Disability). This happened even though, before I was sworn in, extensive psychiatric testing was done.

Mentally ill people may or may not be very intelligent. They may or may not be very accomplished. I knew of a director of a veterans' hospital who was mentally ill; I met a mentally ill psychiatrist just recently. I read a book about a psychiatrist who was severely mentally ill, and had to stop working when her symptoms would interrupt her practice. A lot of the mentally ill people in our church have been or are now very accomplished; many have held high-caliber positions prior to their mental illnesses erupting in (and disrupting) their lives. The aforementioned are some of the people who

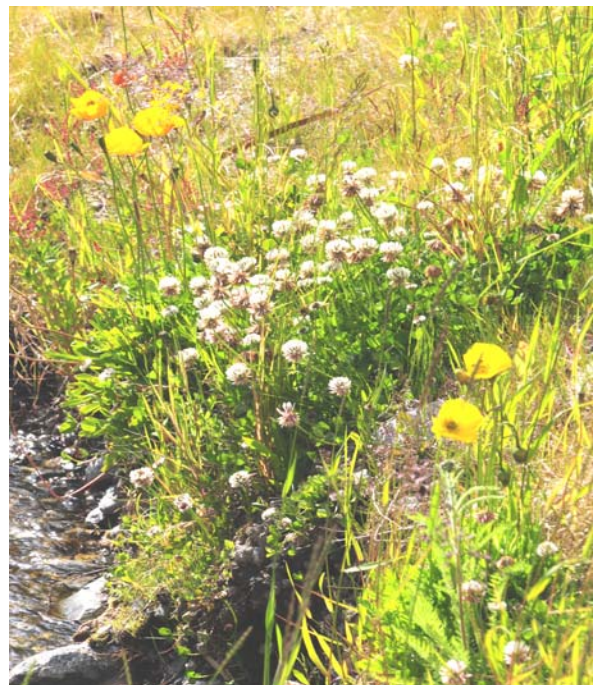
have inspired me. In my own case, I've been honored with many awards, including Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges, Who's Who Among American Women, Who's Who in America, and Who's Who in the World.

The mentally ill can also be very creative. Some famous celebrities are mentally ill, such as Patty Duke, Dyan Cannon, and Dick Cavett. Also, one of our greatest Presidents ever, President Abraham Lincoln, dealt with chronic, serious bouts of depression all his life. I myself played Katherine Hepburn's role in "Long Day's Journey into Night" such that the audience proclaimed, "That was Katherine Hepburn!" I have sung on the radio. (The DJ even asked me if I had ever considered a career in show business!) This was long ago, when I had a very high voice. I have a wise-crack sense of humor, and I love to make people laugh. I am a published poet, and here's an example of my work: "Surprise me with delight! Dripping flowers, all polite. Then let's dance, all night long...To the Dances of our Song." I am a photographer, and I love to interior-decorate.

Despite my mental illness, and by going straight through it, I have been able to accomplish what I have.

In future articles I'll let you in on what mental illness means and has meant for me, and the form my mental illness took in the Service.

In Him,
Christie



Photograph by Christie Higgins



San Francisco Village

OUR GENERATION. OUR CHOICE.

OCTOBER EVENTS

for San Francisco Village Members and Prospective Members

Tuesday, October 6

Lunch Bunch Deluxe – for all SF Village zip codes

1:00-2:30 p.m. Sutro's at the Cliff House, 1090 Point Lobos Avenue (www.cliffhouse.com)
Cost: Prix Fixe Lunch is \$20.09 Hosts: Dawn Ming and Marilyn Campbell

Thursdays starting October 8

Beginning Yoga for Older Adults (Weekly)

10:00 - 11:15 a.m. 120 St. Germain Street (near Glenbrook)
Cost: SFV member \$7/class; non-members \$13/class
Hosted by Aurele Carlat; call her at 415-425-5086 for information and reservations

Thursday, October 8

Second Thursday Seminar Series on Smart Choices in Retirement

"Focus on Fixed Income - A Steady Stream of Income"

Presented by Tammy Haygood and Jenipher Chiang of Edward Jones

6:00 - 7:30 p.m. 2654 Union Street near Divisadero

Cost: Free, bring a dish for potluck dinner Host: Jeanne Lacy

Wednesday, October 14

San Francisco Symphony Open Rehearsal with Itzhak Perlman

Playing Bach, Elgar, and Tchaikovsky

8:30 a.m. - noon (refreshments and lecture at 8:30, rehearsal at 10:00)
201 Van Ness Avenue Cost: Unreserved seats are \$20 Host: Dawn Ming

Monday, October 26

Debut of Serious Sports-watchers Monday Night Football Group

5:30-8:30 p.m. Cost: Free, limited to 12 attendees

Host: Phil Faris Call 415-387-1375 to RSVP and get location of event

Call (415) 387-1375 to RSVP for any program ~ Visit www.sfvillage.org for a complete list of programs

Living With Loss

By Elaine Chan-Scherer, LCSW
California Counseling Institute

Recently I flew with my daughter out to the East Coast to help move her into her new dorm room. This is her second year in college, so I didn't think it would be a big deal. But now I realize that it is. She was home for the summer, and I got used to the familiarity of having her close by (even if she was out with her friends all the time), so having her away again pulls at my heartstrings.

Missing my daughter is not so logical—I know I can talk with her on the phone, or skype with her (for those who don't know, skyping is a way to talk with someone anywhere in the world, seeing them on your computer screen, for free), or send her packages. I know this is a good thing for her and for me. Yet even when the intellect understands, the soul takes time to adjust to the new

reality. And so there is a yearning inside me, an emptiness that I would rather avoid feeling.

How do we live through loss? How do we tolerate that restless, empty feeling? What do we do with our yearning and our longing?

I can tell you what *not* to do. Don't just get busy and forget about it. Emotions are funny things. If you hold them in, they morph and squirt out in unexpected forms. Last year, after saying goodbye to my daughter, I was unaware weeks later that I was still sad and yearning. My unexpressed grief squirted out as anger at someone I dearly treasure. (She was understanding and forgiving, as is her nature.)

Feelings are just energy that passes through us. Our minds attach value to that energy, and judgments as to the acceptability or unacceptability of its expression. So, based on past experiences, we may repress the expression of grief or anger, or even love and pleasure.

The problem is that this energy gets blocked or held in our bodies (causing chronic tension), or pops out unexpectedly (e.g. when you are angry at your boss and can't express it, then go home and yell at your kid when she spills the milk). Equally problematic, especially for us "nice, pleasing" people, is when an undesired feeling is held in and the energy used to hold it in holds in other feelings too. This may lead to depression (Freud's "anger turned inwards").



If we make time and space, our feelings can emerge more naturally; the energy can pass through us. Our bodies and psyches are geared towards helping us be healthy. Ironically, if we do not address feelings that need expression, our bodies can make us sick in order to get the attention we need. Don't wait and force your body to get sick so you can learn to be healthy!

Allowing the expression of our feelings is different from getting distracted so that we don't feel the feeling anymore. Grief unexpressed, for example, will remain somewhere inside us, using up energy that could be used to give us more patience, or to do something fun and rejuvenating. Sitting with friends in their sadness might be more healing than cheering them up. (I am speaking of



uncomplicated grief, which is different than being chronically stuck in sadness, a condition deserving the attention of a trained professional.)

I used to work at and am still connected with a Presbyterian-sponsored community center and service agency, Donaldina Cameron House. Their effective and deeply respected Executive Director is retiring soon. I wonder how the community will go through its grieving

process. After the retirement celebrations, will there be people like me who, unaware of lingering sadness, end up displacing this feeling as anger (during a committee meeting, for example)? Will the community have occasional "check-ins" during the year to come—times to look inward and process how they are "metabolizing" their loss? How does a community, all experiencing the same loss, move forward intellectually, while giving their souls time to adjust?

There are no easy answers. Grief requires time, space and awareness. I am reminded of this quote from Rainer Maria Rilke:

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves ... do not seek the answers which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them and the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.

Much as I resist it, I need to live my loss, to feel it now. Wish me luck.



Health Care In Crisis, Part I

By James A. Turner

In this issue of the Journal, I interrupt my usual essay series to address instead the current crisis in health care—not to promote a particular solution to that crisis, but instead, as a physician, to present some factual material that I hope will lead to a better understanding of the factors that make it a crisis. Time and space constraints unfortunately prohibit anything but a very brief overview of this important issue. I have documented what I write here with appropriate reliable references.



We are the wealthiest country in the world, yet we are the only Western industrialized country that seems unable either to control the dramatic rise in health care costs or to provide a means for all of our citizens to have access to adequate health care. Figures from a 2002 analysis revealed that, in comparison to the health care systems in France, Canada, and the United Kingdom, each of which



provides some type of universal health care for their citizens, the United States spends \$5267 per capita per year for health care, essentially twice what is spent by these other three countries.¹ Yet our life expectancy is less, our infant mortality per 1000 births is the worst, and hospital beds per 1000 people are the least in the U.S. compared to the other three

Western democracies. We spend a great deal of money on health care, but our system of mostly for-profit health insurance does not give us better health care overall.

As the cost of health care and health insurance has risen dramatically (119% in the last decade), fewer and fewer of our citizens can afford it.² The Census Bureau reports that in 2008 there were 46.3 million uninsured in the United States, 15.4% of our people, up from 45.7 million in 2007. The President just reported that the ranks of the uninsured are now growing by 14,000 each day.³ The middle class has been hit by this disproportionately, “as the growth in health insurance premiums and medical costs has far outpaced that of wages.” Almost 25% of the nation’s 45 million non-elderly uninsured are middle class.⁴ Furthermore, the Census Bureau just reported that the 2008 poverty rate was the highest in twelve years at



13.2%, and is expected to rise even higher this year. They confirmed also that median household income in 2008 fell to \$50,303 from \$52,163 in 2007—whereas, they noted, the median income was \$51,295 in 1997, with all figures adjusted for inflation.⁵ And if that isn’t enough, consider that Harvard University researchers found that 62% of personal bankruptcies in this country in 2007 were caused by expenses related to medical problems and that 78% of those bankruptcy filers had medical insurance.⁶

Businesses small and large are also severely impacted by the rapidly rising cost of health care. Large corporations are finding it increasingly expensive to provide health insurance for their employees, especially for their retirees. The *Wall Street Journal* addressed the crisis for small businesses, stating that “rising health-care costs are pushing entrepreneurs to the limit. Some are changing coverage. Some are eliminating coverage. And some are deciding not to go into business at all.”⁷

How did our system of health insurance evolve? Before the 1940s, medical care was essentially fee-for-service. In 1932 Blue Cross and Blue Shield, *non-profit organizations* then, began offering health insurance plans which became increasingly popular. In the 1940s, with the nation fighting World War II, the government imposed wage and price controls. Companies found that the only way that they could additionally compensate their employees was by giving them “fringe benefits” over which there were no government restrictions. A major way of doing this was by giving employees tax-free *health insurance*. With that start, our system of medical care, based on for-profit private health insurance, grew into what we have today.⁸

I will address this topic further next month.



¹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Health Data 2004; also, information from the *Health Care Market Place Project*, Kaiser Permanente 2007-01-03.

² *Health Insurance Costs*, National Coalition on Health Care, www.nchc.org.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2008*, issued September 2009; President Obama’s speech to both Houses of Congress September 2009.

⁴ *Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured*: Publication No. 7951, 2009-07-24.

⁵ Eckholm, Eric, “Last Year’s Poverty Rate Was Highest in 12 Years” (*New York Times* 2009-09-10); Leonhardt, David, “A Decade With No Income Gains” (*New York Times* 2009-09-10).

⁶ Arnst, Catherine, “Study Links Medical Costs and Personal Bankruptcy” (*BusinessWeek.com* 2009-06-04). Harvard study originally published in *The American Journal of Medicine*.

⁷ Covell, Simona, “Sick and Getting Sicker” (*The Wall Street Journal*, 2009-07-13, pp. R1-R2).

⁸ *The History of Health Insurance In The United States*. Neurosurgical.com/history, July 2008.

Thoughts While Shaving

By Ray Muñoz

I find myself in a spiritual quandary. Mind you, I'm quite comfortable with it. Anyway, here's the thing: I rarely think of Jesus. Oh, I do think of him as a role model, the one person with whom I could sit down and just talk and not feel threatened; challenged, yes, but not attacked. Beyond that, I rarely think of him. Even during the worship service ... and even during Communion.



I do marvel at the wit, the insightfulness, the courage and strength of this man. I have tried to think of myself as a something like a tuning fork, humming with sympathetic vibrations, in tune with the feelings and vision of this charismatic man. This man who was able to extend himself into what some of those Irish wise people call "the thin place." This man who was able to see the God side of reality, the "other side:" Heaven!

Well, I take it back. I guess I really do think of Jesus more than I thought.

BUT ... in any case, I now think more and more on the "main event:" God and creation. On the God-Creating Spirit that Henri Bergson calls the "*élan vital*" or "vital spark," that true guiding force that we call God. I want to spring across the divide and actually see and touch that *élan vital*.



Who is It? What does It look like? I think of It in terms that I can understand, i.e., as a man. Do women think of It as a woman?

(I have suggested to youngest daughter Lily that she think of It as a woman ... a powerful woman, a smart, gracious woman.)

It didn't create just this little world. We are told almost on a daily basis that this world is only a tiny speck in an incredibly large (and expanding) universe. So, is It still busy creating other worlds ... experimenting? ... *poof* here and *poof* there. Is It seeing all with a benevolent smile, but letting each creation grow at its own pace? Does It really care? Will I really get to see this It, this Vital Spark?

I am well aware that these are all questions that others have addressed much better than I ... but since you have graciously invited me to visit with you, I thought I'd share.

One last thought: Jesus must be the rocket that we hop on in order to vicariously share in his experience of God, the God of the "other side." Until such time as we can live on the "other side," Jesus will have to be our "thin place" as he expands that opening and, looking over his shoulder, we can see a tiny bit of God. I guess....

Shalom



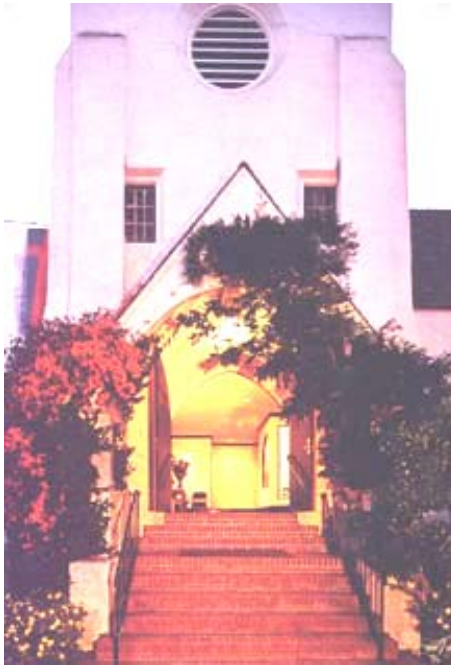
Hope and Saturday Morning

By Elizabeth Nelson

On a cool gray Saturday morning I arrive as usual in the St. James courtyard. My two fellow gardeners are absent, one busy with friends and the other recovering from illness, but they seem very present to me as I collect tools and plan the day's work. Something else is absent, music from the violin students who usually have their lessons in the sanctuary on Saturday mornings; today the sanctuary is being used for a Quiet Day of prayer. Quiet is not in effect in the preschool classrooms, where I can hear laughter and occasional wails from the Saturday Learning Time children. Outside the classroom windows, our rose plants—almost completely chewed away earlier this summer by saw-fly larvae, and nursed back to health by Peter Krag—are starting to leaf out again; as I re-anchor the climbing rose to its freshly painted trellis, I see a couple of brave new buds.



Weed and rake, clip and sweep;
familiar work on a cool gray morning.
Joyful concentrated quiet radiates from the sanctuary.
The lively Right Now-ness of childhood radiates from the preschool.
The goodbyes of autumn radiate from the empty nest in the rafters of the church porch, abandoned now by the mourning dove who spent the summer there tending one brood after another. The realities of late middle age radiate from the small of my back and the muscles in my thighs. Tension radiates from the young woman pacing with her cell phone in front of the apartment building up the block, while her friends and relatives unload the U-Haul truck parked on the sidewalk. Green life radiates



from each plant I touch, the silent insistent reaching for light and water, blossom and seed.

Weed and rake, clip and sweep. Six and a half days a week I may despise my body; here in the courtyard, busy with familiar work on a cool gray morning, I feel that body's strength and patience and grace. Six and a half days a week I soak up political news, following the actions and fretting over the safety of the President whose campaign button I wear (still!) over my heart; here in the courtyard I think about the new vegetable garden and the new puppy at the White House, and trust them to nourish and refresh the family living there. Six and a half days a week I fall in and out of prayer like a nine-year-old trying to pay attention to a sermon; here in the courtyard prayer isn't the Other Thing that I'm not doing enough of, it's Every Thing that I do.

Weed and rake, clip and sweep. "Never ends, does it?" a father greets me as he picks up his son from Learning Time. "It never does," I agree, and silently add, *thank God*. And a breeze picks up the leaves from my carefully swept-together pile and swirls them across the courtyard, and I shake my head and laugh and go after them again, busy on a cool gray radiant morning outside the doors of God's house.



Gracious God, Source of all wisdom,
we ask you to summon our dreams
and our courage.

As we search for our new Rector,
we commit ourselves to St. James's future:
the vision of what we might become.

Ground us in common love and Spirit,
and lead us into the ministry
you have called us to do,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



CALENDAR

- Oct. 4 Feast of St. Francis – blessing of animals at 10 a.m. service
- Oct. 8 *Lectio Divina*: Journey through the Gospel of Mark (see p. 1)
- Oct. 10 Diocesan Altar Guild Meeting
- Oct. 17 160th Diocesan Convention
- Oct. 18 Bread for the World (Sunday Club)
Vestry meeting after 10 a.m. service
Sunday Club teachers' meeting after 10 a.m. service (see p. 4)
- Oct. 22 *Lectio Divina*: Journey through the Gospel of Mark (see p. 1)
- Oct. 24 St. James Hike and Potluck Luncheon (see p. 6)
- Oct. 25 Trick or Treat for UNICEF (Sunday Club children come in costume!)
"The Night Shift" – St. James Youth Service, 5 p.m.
- Oct. 26 "A Scary Event" – Concert benefiting the Community Learning Center
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St. James Episcopal Church

Rev. Won-Jae Hur, Interim Rector
4620 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
415.751.1198
fax 415.751.1545
stjames@stjamesf.org
www.stjamesf.org

St. James Preschool

Roger Setterfield, Head of School
4620 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
415.752.8258
rsetterfield@stjamesf.org
www.stjamespreschoolsf.org

The Community Learning Center

at St. James
4620 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
415.751.1199
www.clcstjames.org

The California Counseling Institute

Elaine Chan-Scherer,
Executive Director
4614 California Street
San Francisco, CA 94118
415.752.1702
ccpsyche@earthlink.net
<http://californiacounseling.org>

**We welcome your articles
on or before the 15th
of the month.**

Submit articles to:
elizabethn@ifcs.org

Editor:

Elizabeth Nelson

Distribution:

Andrew Hom, Mary Ann Faris,
Elizabeth Nelson, Erazm Pochron,
and Judy Spain