

# The Bell



May 2010

The Monthly Newsletter of St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church



## In the Interim

We made an important step forward in our interim period this last week; the Vestry chose the Search Committee and its co-chairs. Their first meeting will be with Canon Michael Barlowe from the Bishop's Office on the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month and they will begin the first phase of the search for your new Rector. That means the committee will, in the near future, be organizing round table sorts of discussions about what it means to be the church of St. Francis; where we have been, where we are now and where we are going.

Meanwhile, for some people, St. Francis doesn't seem quite the same. Now I hasten to add, for lots of people church continues to feel just fine, but that's not true for everyone. When things change or become uncomfortable, people sometimes choose to stay home or get too busy to come to church, it's understandable. However, when we choose to go through a transformation like this together, we have a shared experience that forms bonds that are long lasting and powerful.

Most especially, there is an opportunity here for us to grow spiritually together. Instead of understanding this time as something to be endured, or to avoid, or as 'work' to get on with, spiritual transformation asks us to sit with this time, however it manifests itself to us - not in a macho endurance sort of way - but a quiet 'sitting with' way. We are called to notice what we like, what we don't like, without reacting or actively trying to change something and we are called to allow God to stretch our boundaries. Instead of labeling things 'good' or 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong', we are asked to just notice and to sit with our church and with each other as we seek to hear where it is God is calling us. This doesn't mean we don't do anything that we just sit around contemplating; what it does mean is as we move forward, we continue to stay open and prayerful in our thought and action.

This sort of opening up to God is most often done in contemplative prayer; I will be offering a time for us to practice Contemplative Prayer beginning this summer; it will be a time for us to sit together in silent prayer. If you wish to know more about contemplative prayer, please talk to me or Br. Steve or Dortha or Joan Flanagan; we are all practicing it more or less and would be happy to talk about it.

People often say to me that they do not want to bother me because I am too busy. You are never a bother, and I am never too busy for you.

## Education Committee

As a vestry member, my "job" is to look at programs in Christian Education. I welcome all who share this interest. I will have various, very specific, small committees, for awhile, as we have some programs that are in need of immediate attention. Therefore, if you wish to help me on a committee, the commitment can be fairly short, which works well for many of us, with our busy lives!

We have begun to discuss how to reinstitute our wonderful program of Godly Play. We began as a small group, who have somehow been involved in the program before, but we welcome any interested persons (men or women :-)) who have ideas to share. Please contact me via e-mail and I will gladly add you to our meeting notifications and e-mail discussions!

Next, we will be discussing Vacation Bible School. If you would like to be help in the program or in just helping build ideas as to how we can run a successful, one-week program this year, I would love your involvement!

Thank you,  
Pam McMurphy  
alibiangel@comcast.net





## Vestry Doings – May 2010

At this month’s Vestry meeting on May 5, our first order of business was to elect the Parish Profile and Search Committee. Vestry members have worked over the last couple of months to recruit and interview prospective members from our Parish community to serve on this important committee. Out of the forty people who either came forward on their own, or were contacted by our Vestry, the twelve who were selected to serve are:

- Jennifer Baldwin
- Jane Burr
- Linda Dickes
- Al Ferrando
- Joan Flanagan
- Susan Kenny (Co-Chair)
- Bob Kuchem (Co-Chair)
- Chuck MacLellan
- Matthew McMurphy
- Emily Power
- Ellie Spence
- Teri Moss (Vestry Representative)

Canon Michael Barlowe will return on Thursday evening, May 20, at 7pm to meet with the Search Committee, the Vestry, and M. Susan to begin the training process. We look forward to working together through this “journey of discovery,” a time of discernment, a time to assess, renew, and grow as we prepare the Parish Profile and begin the Search for a new Rector. More communication will come about this process as we move forward, but briefly, it will contain four distinct phases of work for the Search Committee:

- Committee organization (after Canon Michael’s visit on May 20)
- Conducting a congregational self-study and preparing a Parish Profile
- Receiving and evaluating applications
- Making recommendations to the Vestry of final candidates

Over the next few months the Vestry will return to work on the goals that were set during our Vestry Retreat, most importantly working together on sprucing up our physical property and making sure communication and hospitality is felt in our community during this time of transition for St. Francis. We are also looking at an Area Ministry here in Marin County with other Episcopal Churches to create, staff, and provide weekly food pantry, where families in need can come to a farmer’s market-style operation to choose from food that is provided by the San Francisco Food Bank, grants, and donations. You’ll be hearing more about this from our Outreach Committee in the weeks to come.

Prayerfully,

Dortha Kuhlman

Senior Warden



## I wish I had halos...

... I could give to people who have done something particularly angelic. Until I find a way to make halos, this award will have to do. I call it the Halo award.

Dick Hall is getting a platinum halo this month - he's got tons of the other kinds - for something he did way back on Palm Sunday; he took all the long palm fronds home and made about a thousand little Palm crosses for us all. Usually a bunch of us sit down together to do this, but it didn't work out for that to happen this year and Dick took it upon himself to make it happen. Thank you Dick.

Liz Vernon is also getting a halo for buying flowers for the Mothers on Mother's day. They were just beautiful and everyone got to choose from a glorious bundle. Thank you so much Liz, for your continuing dedication to the flower ministry (which she is now sharing with Pam McMurphy) and for remembering the moms.

The Dickerman's, who have just returned from Assisi, are also getting halos; while in Assisi they found the most exquisite tapestry of the San Damiano cross and have brought it back for the Church. We are working on finding a way to make it into the new banner for St. Francis.

Thank you all for your dedication to St. Francis. You have displayed the kindness and devotion of angels. You look so good in halos.

### Married 50+ Years?

Couples married 50+ years are invited to the annual 50+ Wedding Anniversary Celebration on June 13th, hosted by Bishop Marc, the Diocese of California and the Department of Elders at Grace Cathedral.

This is a service celebrating life-long unions and the power of abiding love.

Please call Amy in the office at 892-1609 if you are interested in attending this service.

## Financial Corner

**For the month of April 2010**

Pledge Anticipated: \$ 12,747.30

Pledge Actual: \$ 10,856.

Plate Anticipated: \$ 2,8846.60

Plate Actual: \$ 2,544.

**Thank you for keeping your pledge current.**

## St. Francis Campout

Spring Lake from Friday June 25- Sun June 27.

We have reserved several sites. Anyone interested should contact Kathy Henderson at 598-4240

## Jesus or a Squirrel?

The story is told about a pastor who was into telling stories to the children. He'd bring all the children up, and they'd sit on the floor, and he'd tell them a story. One day he said, "Boys and girls, I want to tell you a story about someone who likes to live in the woods, but sometimes we can see him in our yards. Anybody have any idea who I am talking about?"

No takers. He said, "I want to tell you about a creature that lives in the woods and sometimes in our yards, has a big bushy tail, likes to eat nuts. Anybody have any idea what I'm talking about?"

No takers. He said, "I'm talking about a creature that lives in the woods, sometimes in our yards, big bushy tail, eats nuts, likes to climb trees, jumps from tree to tree--now, does anybody know what I'm talking about?"

One kid raised his hand to take him out of his misery. The pastor said, "Do you know what I'm thinking about?"

The kid said, "Yeah. I know the answer should be Jesus, but it sounds like a squirrel to me."

## May Calendar

### Weekly meetings:

**AA meetings:** Mondays and Fridays 2pm & 8pm

**Alanon meeting:** Thursdays at 7:15pm

**Craft and discussion meeting:** Tuesdays at 9:30 am

**Choir practice:** Mondays at 6 pm & Tuesdays at 7 pm

**Christian Formation :** Tuesdays at 7:00pm

### Important dates:

**Vestry meeting** — Wednesday, April 7 at 7 pm

**Youth Group**— Sundays, Grades 4-8: 4:30pm-6:30pm

Grades 9-12: 6:00pm-8:00pm, Dinner shared by all at 6pm.

**Men's Breakfast**— Saturday, May 8 8-10 am

**Clean-up Day**—Saturday, May 15 9am-12 noon

## A Story of the Desert Fathers

The desert fathers were gifted storytellers. One story that circulated among them tells of three friends who had a reputation for hard work. Each of the three had staked out for himself a way of life he believed faithful to the Christian Gospel. The first one took to heart Jesus' beatitude "Blessed are the peacemakers" and chose to spend his life reconciling those who fought one another. The second adopted as his life's work the care of the sick. The third went out to the desert to live a life of prayer and stillness. The first, for all his efforts, found himself unable to make peace in a world bent on hatred and vengeance and war. Disheartened, he sought out his friend, the healer, to see if he had fared any better. But the second was equally dispirited. So the two went to the third. They told him of their own lives, how they had pursued the noble ventures of peacemaking and healing but had somehow, along the way, lost heart. They begged him to guide them, to tell them somewhere to go, something to do. The three sat in silence a while. Then the third, the desert dweller, poured water into a bowl and told them to look at the water. It lapped up against the sides, agitated, swirling and bobbing up and down. They sat a while. Then he said to them, "Look how still the water is now." When they looked again, they saw their own faces. The water had become a mirror. And so the desert dweller said to his friends: "It's that way for someone who lives among human beings. The agitations, the shake-ups, block one from seeing one's faults; but once one becomes quiet, still, especially in the desert, then one sees one's failings."

Early Christian desert dwellers, like the third man in the story, chose to explore the art of stillness and prayer. These first monks who, in Athanasius' famous phrase, "made the desert a city," ignored or even fled from other noble Christian paths, the hard work of peacemaking or healing or any of the thousand other ways of being a Christian that were possible in their time. And the message they offered their world - and perhaps, ours - was that to learn about stillness and prayer meant seeing harder and humbler things first, like one's true face, and one's failings.

May you cultivate the art of stillness and prayer. Perhaps you will see your failings, but more important, I believe, is that you see your true face and the spark of the divine that is within.

Br. Steve





## The Caring Corner: Stephen Ministry at St Francis

### **Stephen Ministry Featured on PBS**

The PBS "Religion and Ethics" news show recently aired an eight-minute feature on Stephen Ministry that vividly describes the life-changing ministry happening in thousands of congregations. [View the Stephen Ministry feature on the PBS Web site](#), where you'll also find several other features--including a nine-minute interview with Stephen Ministries' founder and executive director, Kenneth C. Haugk.

NOTE: Our 2010 Stephen Ministry training is completed at Novato Presbyterian Church, and of the nine trainees, two are from St. Francis—Jane Mock and Steve Sayles. We will commission them at the 9 o'clock service on Sunday, May 16.

Remember....if you are in need, or know someone who would benefit from Stephen Ministry, or for more information about Stephen Ministry, contact Dortha Kuhlman at [dorthakuhlman@comcast.net](mailto:dorthakuhlman@comcast.net) (telephone 897-6578), or Mother Susan at the Church.

### **Pastoral Care Committee Update**

In April our newly-formed Pastoral Care Committee met to discuss ways we as a Parish can be of assistance in identifying and reaching out to people in our community who are in need of assistance. We agreed that we don't need to be formally organized, but instead all of us, and we're counting on you, too, will let M. Susan or Dortha know that we need to swing into action in one of the following areas:

Stephen Ministry

Prayer, a Card, or a Telephone Call

Meals, Rides, Visits to those experiencing illness, death, or other emergency

Nurse Advocate to assist with interpreting medical instructions, prescriptions, hospital visits

12-Step Programs

Eucharistic Visits to those who can't come to Church

And...for a start, Judy Kenyon has for several years been our faithful Card Ministry person. If you have some extra cards, she'd appreciate adding them to her supply.

You'll see her in the 9am choir most Sundays, or drop them by the office marked with her name. Thank you.

## The Church Mouse (Our gossip column)

We said goodbye to one of our favorite people this last month; **Trish South** one of the members of the 10:30 service died somewhat unexpectedly this last month and certainly before any of us were ready. Her family gathered with us at the church towards the end of April to remember and celebrate her life and we all saw a short video of her life that left us crying and smiling all at once. We will miss Trish so much.

**Paul and Virginia Terry**, who are old enough to know better, were out hoisting and moving boxes around and Paul fell and broke his hip. After a few days at Kaiser, he's been doing time in rehab up in Petaluma and the Mouse has it on good authority that he'll be back home by the time you read this. **Art Knutson** has also been doing time in the hospital and rehab this last month - he had a fall or two and other exciting things - and though he's back at home, he's having some problems walking. All these folks are telling the Mouse that prayers are what they could use most right now.

The Mouse is having trouble keeping up with all the people traveling around, but can report that **the Dickes**, regulars at the 10:30 service, are in Kentucky right now welcoming their new grandson, Jacob Michael...

Meanwhile, St. Francis made a big showing at an essay contest sponsored by the **Sunrise Rotary Club** in Novato. The wisdom and writing skills of our Middle and High School students was particularly obvious; **Julien Tipton**, who wrote on the topic of truth, won the contest. Julien is the son of our very **Craig Brannon and Chris Granucci**. **Tarah Connelly** was a finalist and **Scott Mcleod** was the teacher of 5 of the other finalists. **Jackie Bonner Ring** gave the opening speech and **Katherine Henderson** was a judge. Yes, indeed, St. Francis was well represented.

And speaking of contests, we'll all want to make a point of checking out the knitting competition at the Marin County Fair this year. **Jackie Walton, Linda Woodward** and **Liz Vernon** have all entered their beautiful creations in the Fair this year.

The Mouse has confirmed that the rumor is true! **Annette Rankin**, our favorite 'almost deacon' will be returning to St. Francis in June. She has been at St. Stephen's in Belvedere for the last year doing an internship, and graduates from the School for Deacons in Berkeley on May 23rd. She's making a guest star appearance at St. Francis on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May to preach at the commissioning of the **Stephen Ministers**.

Last month, the Mouse offered you a tidbit of information about a Vestry member that was a 'secret'. The point was for you to talk to the Vestry members and find out which of them is a hit and run driver. Apparently no one cared that one of their leaders might still be out there randomly hitting stuff and driving away.

This month the tidbit is this; someone in this parish has jumped out of a plane more than a hundred times and thinks it's great fun. It's not necessarily a Vestry member this time. Also, if you get the answer, we'll go out for the refreshing beverage of your choice. Now get out there and talk to someone at coffee hour. Ask them if they are afraid of heights...

### Birthdays

We are updating our database and would like to have your birthdate. If you have children attending St. Francis, please include theirs.

Call Joan Flanagan at 707-763-6401 or e-mail her at joanoa2105@aol.com

### Thank You!

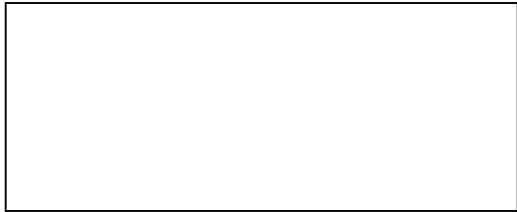
I want to thank everyone for their generous offers of help and prayers during my recent hospitalization. It meant so much to Virginia and me.

Sincerely, Paul Terry

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### Worship Opportunities

|          |          |                        |
|----------|----------|------------------------|
| Sundays: | 7:30 am  | Holy Eucharist Rite I  |
|          | 8:50 am  | Contemporary Eucharist |
|          | 10:30 am | Holy Eucharist Rite II |
|          | Noon     | Children's Service     |

### Educational Opportunities

|          |         |                     |
|----------|---------|---------------------|
| Tuesdays | 7:30 pm | Christian Formation |
|----------|---------|---------------------|

St. Francis of Assisi Episcopal Church  
Visit our website at [www.stfrancisnovato.com](http://www.stfrancisnovato.com)  
415-892-1609

