

The AGAPE News

April 2008

Vol. 3, No. 4

St. Andrew's Youth Bake Sale and Fundraiser for Darfur

April 13, St. Andrew's Youth Group will be kicking off their spring/summer service project to raise awareness and funds for the people of the war torn Darfur region of Sudan.

In a civil war that many around the world are calling genocide, the people of Darfur have been brutally forced from their homes by guerilla groups sponsored by the incumbent government. The state department has estimated that anywhere from 60,000 to 160,000 people have been killed in this violence. Other counts have put that number at 400,000.

To commemorate this conflict, the youth will be collecting coins of any denomination to represent each individual who has lost their life. Our goal is to collect anywhere from 60,000 to 400,000 coins – and the proceeds will be donated to the Save Darfur organization. As a kick off event to this fundraiser, we will be holding a bake sale after the church service on Sunday April 13.

We need your help! Please consider donating baked goods for the bake sale and coins for the coin drive. The youth will provide a jar for your coin donations, and would greatly appreciate your contributions. For more information about this conflict, please visit www.savedarfur.org.

Foundation for Living A new sermon series starting March 30

When we get past our immature understandings of religion, our real spiritual work begins. Religion helps us lay a foundation for everything else in life. The work is not always easy, but it is the most fundamental aspect of our lives.

When we stop believing in scripture as fairy tales, the symbols of religion can reveal aspects of life that we will never live long enough to discover. The Bible does not replace our brains or our conscience. It deepens and broadens our understanding of life until we realize a much larger view of life. This kind of religion is not a creed that we carry around. It is a more basic understanding of everything that happens to us. From this point of view, we do not have to strain to be more loving. We need merely remember how fundamentally connected we are. I can be much more reverential to others if I remember that we are parts of a common body.

Our next sermon series will deal with life at this fundamental level. Learning from the book of Peter we will learn to transfer the wisdom we have from other areas of our lives:

- March 30 "The Architect: Use whatever happens as an opportunity to build your character" (1 Peter 1:3-9)
- April 6 "The Traveler: Be open to what happens" (1 Peter 1:17-23)
- April 13 "The Student: Whatever happens is an opportunity to learn" (1 Peter 2:19-25)
- April 20 Break for Earth Day sermon
- April 27 "The Accountant: Count trials as future joy" (1 Peter 3:13-22)
- May 4 "The Teacher: Whatever happens is an opportunity to teach" (1 Peter 4:12-14)

Love



Dear Church Family and Friends,

The Easter season is a time for the resurrection of our spirit, a time for the greening of our earth and a time for the rebirth of living things that have been dormant over the darkness of winter. As we approach the celebration of our earth during the month of April, it is a perfect time to celebrate new life and believe that joy will come from the greening of our planet. It is also a good time to think about some small ways that we might improve our life on this planet.

From a health point of view, experts suggest that going to bed earlier and getting more rest will help us decrease our appetite for food, improve our mood and overall health. Going to bed earlier will also reduce our consumption of electricity. By turning off all of those gadgets we use each day, and by simply turning in earlier, we can help to save energy and improve the quality of our everyday life.

Studies also show that how we dispose of medications can contribute to the pollution of our water. Never flush medicines. Place medication bottles, with the ID taken off in the regular trash. If there is medication in the bottle, add a little water or some kitty litter to the bottle before disposing. Always check the expiration date on medications you are taking and dispose of all expired meds.

Walking and biking are always good options. It may not be practical to bike to work but think of other times in your daily life when instead of getting in the car, you could just use foot power. This has the added bonus of burning calories and works wonders for our brain chemistry.

What we eat also affects our planet. Growing our own food, buying locally, fresh food improves our health. Eating fish with omega-3 is good for the brain and heart. Being conscious of what we eat and where it comes from is important.

Let this season of rebirth help us to be more mindful of our daily habits and how what we consume and what we discard might affect our health and the health of all who share our beautiful earth.

Love and Blessings,
▶ Donna Rutherford, RN



For six decades, Presbyterians have joined with other Christian denominations throughout the nation in supporting One Great Hour of Sharing. That support makes a tremendous difference to people around the world who are experiencing need. The ministries of One Great Hour of Sharing – Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Self-

Development of People, and the Presbyterian Hunger program – provide a range of responses that quickly address the most immediate and urgent needs while working patiently, in partnership with those in need, to address the underlying causes of chronic problems. During the month of May you will hear about “Sharing Resources and Changing Lives” and how your support can help.

▶▶▶ **Parking Reminder** Parking at St. Andrew’s for our friends with special needs is limited. Please reserve the circle area for those who need to be closer to the door. We encourage you to use this area for quick use if you are just dropping off items at the church. Please note also that we now have a wheelchair in our Sunrise area of the sanctuary for those who might need assistance.

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AGAPE Ministry Team Meetings - 2nd Tuesday, April 8 at 7 p.m.

Session Summary

“Living and Sharing Progressive Christianity” was the simplified statement adopted by your session to describe St. Andrew’s. As a progressive faith community, we want to be able to communicate who we are to others and this statement seemed to best capture the message we wanted to send about who we are. Just saying we are St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church does not convey that we truly are striving to be a progressive faith community that has a relevant message for today’s world.

Our Guardian Team along with our other ministry teams continues to fine tune the budget for this year. We are currently dealing with a deficit cash flow situation for the first part of this year and we want to be sure the budget strikes the right balance between being fiscally responsible and continuing to support the dreams and plans for our church community. (Your clerk has the opinion that church budgets should be more of a faith statement than a reflection of what a good number crunching might produce.) Pledge cards have been received from many of our families, but we are still hoping that more cards are yet to come. If you have not turned your pledge card in, you can still mail or drop your pledge by the church office or put it in the offering baskets during worship. This will help us complete our budget planning.

We have been asked to join a group of concerned churches to talk about the recent PJC ruling that takes away the right of Presbyteries to decide who they will ordain. Historically this job has been assigned to Presbyteries because they are the ones in the best position to make that determination. The recent ruling by the Permanent Judicial Committee of the General Assembly takes that right away from presbyteries and allows GA to dictate to presbyteries that in no circumstance is it allowed to ordain a GLBT person to the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament. In the past, individual presbyteries have decided this issue on a case by case basis. This ruling takes away that right and the group of concerned churches will be meeting to develop a plan to address that concern to our Mission Presbytery.

We are looking forward to the Seder meal which our Poemia friends are bringing to St. Andrew’s on April 19. In April we will have the opportunity to celebrate two baptisms during two different worship services. The exact dates for the baptisms will be set later.

Submitted by Babs Miller, Clerk of Session

Glimpses

This month’s selection is a poem by Jane Marawar. If you have ideas for inclusion in this space, please feel free to share them. These could include poetry, essays, quotes, artwork, or anything else you might find that provides a glimpse of an answer to the big questions.

*From the window’s kitchen
the maple
scarlet
the rain whispers
to wet
its grey bough
from which a row of droplets
cling
I am telling you, I am telling you
I would give away the morning
just to watch
those nine watery worlds
Drop.*



A Serendipity Children’s Festival is set for Saturday, April 12, 10 am to 4 pm at Community Montessori School in Georgetown. There will be family-friendly music, including Sara Hickman, Staci Gray, Mr. Johnny, Neal Kassanoff, and the CMS Choir. The Texas Juggling Society will also perform. There will be arts and crafts activities for the kids, food vendors, and informational booths from various non-profit organizations. Admission is \$12 for adults (13 and older), \$8 for children 3-12, and free for children under 3. For information, directions, or to purchase tickets, go to <http://www.community-montessori.org/>.

CMS is a school community that shares many values with St. Andrew’s, and several of our children are currently attending CMS, or have done so in the past. In the interest of reaching out to the community, St. Andrew’s will have an informational booth at Serendipity. We are looking for six to eight volunteers to help set up, operate, and take down the booth; talk with others about the principles and missions of St. Andrew’s; and lead an artsy/craftsy activity for the kids. If you can help out, and have some fun as well, please

contact Matt Hiland

(matt_hiland@hotmail.com or 512-736-7001).



Passover Seder Meal

Artist Team

Come for a Passover Seder, Saturday, April 19, 5-8 pm. Poiema, A Presbyterian Community, and the Artist team invite you to a celebration of Passover to be held at St. Andrew's. The celebration centers on the ancient story of Israel's redemption from bondage in Egypt, the story of the Exodus. The event has many purposes and opportunities: It is a time of teaching and learning, retelling the old stories, putting the old stories into today's context, reflecting on what Passover may have meant to Jesus, praying for redemption and deliverance for us today. There will also be music and maybe some dancing, and lots of good food.

This is a family gathering and we are invited to feel at home, taking care of needs for our children and ourselves, taking part or taking a break when needed. It is structured yet informal with something for everyone including a hunt for the Passover bread, the Afikomen. There will be an activities table for children.

This event is a sit-down dinner. It is important to know about how many to prepare for and set a place at the table for everyone. Ways you can help are with set-up that afternoon or clean up afterwards. Items that can be brought include grape juice (no wine please), grapes or other finger fruits, parsley (karpas), grated horseradish (maror), hard-boiled eggs, apple salad (haroset), wild or yard flowers for the table, a vegetable dish or salad dish for the meal, tofu dishes. Bring your musical instruments. Also, you are invited to bring guests. We will need to have a place for everyone at the table so please let us know if you are coming by Sunday April 13 or soon thereafter. Contact Poiema (Barbara) at 468-4012 or bm272-54@earthlink.net with your questions or reservations.

St. Andrew's Web Site Design Committee

A committee is currently forming to update our web site. Cliff Tylick has volunteered to manage the project and Mara Kelly has volunteered to do the graphic design work. We are holding a project kick-off meeting at 12:30 PM on Sunday April 27. In this meeting, we will brainstorm ideas for content and functionality, establish the guidelines within which the new site will be built, and set target dates. We would like to have, at a minimum, one representative from each of the AGAPE teams, but all are welcome to participate and provide input.

Pastoral Care Team



Ambassador Team

On Tuesday, April 1, at 7 pm, St. Andrew's is showing a very special film called USA vs. Al-Arian. This film, a winner of the "Best Film" at the 2007 New Orleans Human Rights Film Festival, recounts the story of Dr. Sami Al-Arian. Dr. Al-Arian was a professor at the University of South Florida and Palestinian Activist. He advocates for the overthrow of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Engaging in Free Speech, he was arrested by the US Government and charged with terrorism. They have held him for over 5 years. This documentary is the story of his 6 month long trial, seen through the eyes of his family. The judges at a Norwegian Film Festival said "The film shows precisely how a common man becomes a victim of the situation in the contemporary world, where the Big Brother is watching you even when you are ordering pizza. The film combines all the elements any documentary needs: a powerful story, strong characters and an emotional journey well crafted together." After the film is shown, there will be a discussion facilitated by Dr. Melva Underbakke of The Friends of Human Rights.



Spiritual Activism Study Group

The Spiritual Activist Study Group

meets on the second and fourth Mondays at 7:15. Come discuss how activism and spirituality intersect.

Food Pantry



Shower Ministry

The Pantry was open twice during March, and a total of 53 adults and 19 children were provided food on these occasions. Twenty-two showers were taken by homeless people from our neighborhood. A regular community of 15 to 20 individuals has developed that come for services every time the pantry is open, with all but two of these being homeless. Eleven volunteers have worked the total of six hours the pantry has been open, at an estimated time investment of 30 work hours per three hour pantry shift. Thanks to our volunteers who have shared their time and energy. The sign-up board with many unfilled openings for shifts in April and May will be in the lobby every Sunday morning; please join us if you can.



Preparing for Difficult Transition, a workshop offered by the St. Andrew's Health Ministry and the Pastoral Care Team, will be offered at St. Andrew's, on Tuesday, April 15 at 11:15 pm. We accept that change is a fact of life. Some changes are positive and others sadly, are difficult, but inevitable. One way to show our love to our family is to prepare for our own death.

Daesene Willmann from *AMBIS*, a non-profit, non-sectarian volunteer run association, will educate us in how to embark on advance planning for funerals and memorials. Along with advance planning, we will learn how to deal with funeral directors, clergy, churches, and cemeteries and how to save money in the process.

Amy Prackac, founder of *On the Record* will help us learn what documents we need to have at hand and how to organize those documents. This process for record keeping is most essential at the time of death, but is valuable knowledge for all of us to have in any stage of life.

Both presenters will have materials available for a fee, which will assist participants in reaching the goal of preparing for end of life.

~A complimentary lunch will be served at the end of the presentation. To make a reservation, please contact Donna Rutherford, at the church, or Liz Bernstein at 670-0934 or bsteinbrs@suddenlink.net



The Shawl Ministry meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. You don't have to attend the meetings to knit, crochet or sew the shawls or baby blankets but you'll miss out on the fun we all have getting together. Don't forget, you can donate yarn (or money to purchase more) and be a part of the ministry even if you don't know how to knit or crochet.



CPR classes for the resuscitation of the Infant, Child & Adult will be offered on Saturday, April 19, 9 – 11 am. The AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) will also be taught. Classes facilitated by Save-a-Heart Austin. The cost is \$35 – payable to Save-a-Heart Austin on the day of the class. Sign-up via the web: www.staopen.com. Go to Congregational Nurse and send a message or sign-up before or after church on the sign-up sheet in the entryway. Please let us know if you need childcare.



Educator Team

The Adult Education Class "Common Threads"

is studying the story of the passion of Jesus in The Last Week by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. These two scholars discuss what they believe the "passion" of Jesus was really about. Using the Gospel of Mark as the basis for this study, they repeatedly attempt to answer the question, "What does then have to do with this now, our now?" The book looks at each day of the final week of the life of Jesus both historically and theologically. Join us as we look at this old story with new eyes. The Last Week is available through the St. Andrew's bookstore. This class is facilitated by Molly Hornbuckle.



Theology in Everyday Life

Theology in Everyday Life will meet Mondays, April 7 and April 21, from 7:15 pm until 8:30 pm. On April 7 the subject will be the film, "Billy Elliott." This is a film about a coal mining family in Wales. It is their struggle to improve their working conditions and about one boy's yearning to dance. It is a story about growing, loving, failing and succeeding...about life itself. The topic for April 21 has yet to be announced. Please join in the discussions. All are invited. Any questions, call 336-1800.

Come see our own Tiffany James in a football documentary "Playing with RAGE, a heartwarming documentary about a women's football professional team here in Austin. Sports Illustrated calls it the "Rocky for Women." The film explores the gender roles and opportunities for women in American society as well as domestic violence and sexism in sports. These pioneering women come from different walks of life but with a similar desire: to play the one sport that they have been denied. Most importantly, the film has a feature on our own Tiffany "Crash" James! The movie will be shown after church on April 6. Discussion will follow

Children's News

If you have questions or would like to be involved in any of the programs listed, please contact our Children's Christian Education Coordinator, Tammy Iyer, at 251-0698 or email Tamara.Iyer@gmail.com.



Godly Play Storytellers and Doorkeepers will have a short meeting on Sunday, April 6 after church to schedule Godly Play volunteers. Please bring your day-timers so we can get a schedule through May. If you cannot attend the meeting let Tamara Iyer know when you are available.

Godly Play

The ultimate goal of Godly Play is to teach children the art of using the language of our Christian tradition so that they may encounter God in a personal way and begin to find direction for their own lives. Rather than giving pat answers or teaching doctrine, Godly Play seeks to support the child's own spiritual quest and enable the child to develop a faith that is continually growing. Central to this way of teaching is the assumption that children do have encounters with the mystery of the presence of God. What they do not have is the language to communicate about their experiences.

Sunday, April 13, at 12:30, there will be a planning meeting for VBS PEACE camp.

Everyone is invited to be involved on any level. Peace Camp 2008 is scheduled for Sunday through Thursday, June 8 – 12.



Sunday, April 20, there will be a short meeting after church to schedule Children's Church volunteers. Please come with your schedule so we can cover all the Sundays through May. If you can not attend the meeting but would like to be involved please contact Tamara Iyer.

Children's Church is where every child is valued and encouraged to safely explore their own experiences of God. Children ages 4 to 10 are invited to participate in their own worship service. They have rituals, songs, activities and small groups. Children's Church curriculum is based on the same scripture references used in Jim's sermon.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Loving ♦ Progressive ♦ Presbyterian

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The Poiema book study group will meet Sunday, April 13, the second Sunday in April. The study begins with a meal hosted by Poiema about 5:30 pm in the McCarty home. The book study will begin at 7 pm. We are studying Living Buddha, Living Christ by Thich Nhat Hanh. April's session will focus on Chapter 9. Come for just the 4 pm worship, the meal or the book study or come for the whole evening. All are welcome. For more info go to www.poiemacommunity.org or contact Barbara at 468-4012 or bm272-54@earthlink.net.



OPEN MINDS BOOKSTORE (Open the 1st & 3rd Sundays of each month.)

How to Believe: Teachers and Seekers Show the Way to a Modern, Life-Changing Faith by Jon Spayde. \$20.

This book has chapters featuring our own Rev. Jim Rigby and Gerald Gafford, as well as chapters on John Shelby Spong, and Joyce Rupp - among many others.

After seeing Christianity become increasingly defined in the media as a narrow and punitive political movement, Spayde (former editor of *Utne Reader*) began to wonder: Are religions now just combatants in the culture wars? Should he leave the organized church? How are ordinary people using faith positively to search for the truth and improve their lives?

Spayde takes a journey across America that introduces him to an array of believers, eminent and obscure, who relate their personal stories of active and living faith - "how they balance Jesus' love and judgment, the church's dictates, and their own free will" to live and love completely while on Earth. His odyssey brought him to a new understanding of why action is more important than the intellect in faith, how true solace is found in forging a personal relationship with God. This is a crucial book that reveals the different paths that can lead to the same inspiring place, a book that teaches "how to believe" in ways that honor individuality, allow for personal journeys, and spiritually enrich not just our own lives but the lives of those around us.

The Last Week by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. (\$18 hardcover; \$12 paperback) What was the "passion" of Jesus really about? Using the Gospel of Mark as the basis for this study, these two scholars repeatedly attempt to answer the question, "What does then have to do with this now, our now?" The book looks at each day of the final week of the life of Jesus both historically and theologically. This book is the basis for study by the Common Threads Class, facilitated by Molly Hornbuckle.

How Then, Shall We Live?: Four Simple Questions That Reveal the Beauty and Meaning of Our Lives by Wayne Muller (\$14) We all long to experience a sense of inner wholeness and guidance, but today's notions of healing and recovery too often keep us focused on our brokenness, on our deficiencies rather than our strengths. Wayne Muller's luminous new book gently guides us to the place where we are already perfect, already blessed with the wisdom we need to live a life of meaning, purpose and grace.

A Wind Swept Over the Waters by John Nichols (\$13) As our lives change, even the most familiar words of the Bible can strike us in new and unexpected ways.

Walk in a Relaxed Manner: Life Lessons from Walking the Camino by Joyce Rupp, (\$12)

This well-known author presents her adventures on a 47 day pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago in Spain, which she took at the age of 60, with Tom, a retired pastor and close friend. One of the main points of a pilgrimage is not knowing what will happen on the journey. Another part of it is living in the Now. This inspirational book is the basis for upcoming discussion in *Common Threads*, one of our adult SS classes.

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

This hands-on guide provides a surprising new perspective that can turn old ideas on their heads and reinvigorate our understanding of what it means to be mature.

Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer by Richard Rohr. (\$14.50)

Fr. Rohr offers that God is found in all things, even the most painful or sinful things. And it is through contemplative prayer that we are able to "see" and to hold the paradox of the good and bad within each of us and throughout human history.