

The AGAPE Newsletter

August 2008

Vol. 3, No 8

A report from the 218th General Assembly, June 2008, Part I:

by Barbara McCarty

In June I had the privilege of attending the General Assembly of the PC (USA) in San Jose California. I was one of over 3000 visitors and observers. There were 752 commissioners and another 200+ advisory delegates. I arrived in time to watch the introductory speeches of those nominated for Moderator. Bruce Reyes-Chow was the most dynamic and probably the most progressive of the four nominees. He won the vote by a significant margin. I felt encouraged that I could have lived with any of the nominees, but am most hopeful that Reyes-Chow will add some vitality to the denomination in the next two years. His blog is www.mod.reyes-chow.com.

It took at least a day for me to get my bearings and figure out what was happening. By that time I had missed the cut-off time to testify about any of the overtures and resolutions that were sent to the 17 committees. As I sat in the committee meetings I was impressed that the general attitude was one of working hard to hear one another and find common ground. They often used a method of discussion called quasi-committee-of-the-whole and passed microphones around for everyone who wanted to be able to speak.

I followed carefully the work of the Committee on Church Polity (committee 04). They addressed overtures to change the definition of marriage (04-08) in the Book of Order (BoO) and equal rights for families of same-gender partners (04-13). The definition of marriage remained as between a man and a woman; the equal rights for families were approved in the assembly by a vote of 516 for – 151 against – 13 abstentions. The committee wrestled with the overture from Mission Presbytery concerning the adding of membership vows to G-5.000 in the BoO (04-02). The only testimony given was by Rev. Kannwischer from 1st Church San Antonio where the overture originated. It was at first amended with only one question required of members: “*Who is your Lord and Savior?*” with the response “*Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.*” The committee voted 37 for – 19 – against – 1 abstention. There was discussion of a minority report at this time, but the next day a motion to reconsider was made by the prevailing side and the committee again worked together at the end of a very long day to create the final proposal which reads: *After new members are examined, affirming their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and are received by the session, whether by profession of faith, certificate of transfer, or reaffirmation of faith, they shall be presented to and welcomed by the congregation during a service of worship where they shall make a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as do confirmands (W-4.2003a, b, and c).* The general content of the questions is listed in W-4.2003, but not a script. The committee approved this by a vote of 50-2-0. The assembly passed this with a voice vote. This change must be approved by two thirds of the presbyteries.

I visited the committee on Peacemaking and International Issues (11). I heard heart-wrenching testimony from people from Zimbabwe and others who spoke to issues in Israel, Palestine, Iraq, Colombia, Philippines, North Korea, Iran, and on human trafficking, war mercenaries and profiteering, support for Conscientious Objectors, and the global food crisis. The list of issues addressed with recommendations made and approved is impressive. Some motions were amended and were not as strong as those who proposed them had wished, i.e. removing troops from Iraq. Others were wholeheartedly approved.

The committee on Health Issues (10) recommended supporting single-payer universal healthcare reform that passed in the assembly by a vote of 377-250-12. Copies of the resolution will be sent to appropriate committee chairs in Congress. A congregational resource material on abortion (both sides of the issue) was approved by a vote of 472-180. A policy statement on mental illness was approved as well.

(Continued on back page)



Selena Martinez , Josh Adair and Julia Martinez at the death of their father and grandfather, Arturo Martinez. Danny Choate and his wife Leigh at the death of his father, Danny Choate.



Dear Church Family & Friends,

As we enter the month of August, our thoughts turn to the beginning of the new school year. Getting our children to the doctor to up-date those necessary vaccines is important. It is also important for adults to consider what immunizations might need updating. If you are over 60, many of the vaccines below can be obtained for a fee of \$10 at clinics in town. See the Health Ministry Bulletin Board for the phone number and clinics that provide this service.

At you next visit with your health care provider, take some time to discuss what vaccines might be necessary for you. Here is a list of vaccines to consider.

Tdap (tetanus-diphtheria-whooping cough) new guidelines suggest making sure you add the “p” *pertussis* next time you get vaccinated. There is no harm in getting this updated as long as 2 years have passed since your last vaccination. TDAP is good for 10 years. If you can’t remember when you had one last, it is best to just get one.

Shingles If you are over 60, get vaccinated. Your risk of shingles increases with each decade of life. Shingles can progress to agonizing nerve pain and nerve damage that can last for years. For some it is the worst pain they have ever endured.

Hepatitis A - is the most common form of Hepatitis and is usually contracted by contaminated food. Hepatitis A does not lead to long term liver disease but can make you very sick for an extended time. **Hepatitis B** is a serious liver disease spread through contaminated blood, needles or body fluid.

MMR Booster (measles, mumps, rubella) If you were born before 1957, it is presumed that you have been infected or exposed. If you were born between 1957 and 1967 you are less likely to have had the mumps and may have had an ineffective vaccine. Consider getting a single dose of the current MMR to bring your protection up-to-date.

Pneumonia - If you are 65, or if you suffer from any chronic breathing conditions, you should receive this vaccine to prevent or lessen complications from pneumonia.

Flu – Each year 5%-20% of the population get the flu. 200,000 people are hospitalized with complications and 36,000 people die. Why risk it? Get the shot in November.

I hope that this summer season has brought joy and renewal into your life and that the days ahead are filled with the wonder of new possibilities.

Love and Blessings,
Donna

The AGAPE News

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Andy Becker
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Joyce Sloan

AGAPE Ministry Team Meetings – 2nd Tuesday, August 12 at 7 p.m.

Join one of the **AGAPE** teams and see how the work of the church is done. All are welcome.

A - Artist Individually we each need to find the source of our own creativity whether it is singing, cooking or just appreciating the beauty in nature. When we come together, this need is met by worship, our music program, spiritual development, resting and playing.

G - Guardian Each of us must learn how to care for the roots of our community. At the community level we talk about leadership development, taking care of our building and grounds, sharing our resources and using them wisely.

A - Ambassador Each of us has a responsibility to take the message of love out into the world in our own way. Our Mission and Social Justice issues fall under this category.

P - Pastor We take God's love to the church community-by welcoming all; identifying and meeting personal concerns in times of need; and educating and fostering community. To empower our physical, emotional and mental well-being and prevent unnecessary suffering, we offer educational information programs, and groups

E - Educator We invite our members to establish a lifelong habit of learning and sharing that learning with others, particularly our youth.

Artist Team



The Third Annual St. Andrew's Variety Show is set for Saturday, August 23 at 6

pm. This will be an end-of-the-summer opportunity for us all to get together, share our performing talents, and enjoy each other's company. So, whether your passion is singing, playing an instrument, dancing, drama, comedy, magic, or just about anything else you can think of, please share it with the rest of the congregation. If you don't want to perform, we also need volunteers to help with set-up, drinks, snacks, and clean-up. Of course, audience members are always in demand, so feel free to just attend and/or invite your friends and families!

Sign-up sheets are posted on the Artist board in the hallway. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact Matt Hiland (matt_hiland@hotmail.com, 512-736-7001).



This October 10 -12, members and friends of St. Andrew's will have a rare opportunity to spend a weekend of relaxation, introspection and renewal in the healing energies of nature

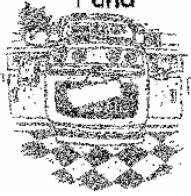
at the John Knox Ranch. The schedule for this weekend retreat will be loosely structured to allow time for fellowship, woodland hikes, or just to be in silence and meditate amidst the autumn flora and fauna. Gourmet vegetarian meals, yoga, mystical sunsets and sunrises and campfire sing-a-longs round out the schedule.

Registration will be limited to 25 participants and any proceeds from the retreat will benefit St. Andrew's. Accommodations include a limited number of separate men's and women's dorm-style cabins (\$150); screened shelters with ceiling fans where you choose your roommates for two thru eight persons (\$125); or primitive camp grounds for setting up your own tent (\$99). The price is per person and is all inclusive for the weekend. (Please bring your own sleeping bag, linens, and towels.)

If you are interested in attending, please e-mail Delia Trujillo at deltrujillo1@yahoo.com. to receive more information. Also please indicate your preference for accommodations, your phone number(s) and if you have any special needs. A \$50 deposit is due by August 17 and the balance will be due by September 28

Guardian Team

Kitchen Stove Fund



Good news! We are over half way to completing the fund drive to replace our energy-hogging, dangerous gas range. Each month the seven pilots use \$24 worth of gas! If you can help out, please note “Kitchen Stove” on your check to

St. Andrew's and place it in the offering or mail to the church.

Treasurer's Report Cash Flow January – June 2008

Cash Receipts	\$141,729.00
Cash Disbursements	<u>168,237.00</u>
Difference	(\$ 26,508.00)

Doug Arnold, Treasurer

Ambassador Team



Food Pantry Update

On the five occasions our food pantry has been open since early May, our food pantry has fed 92 adults and 40 children. During that

same time 31 showers were provided to homeless people from our area. We have seen an increase in large families coming in regularly for food as children who are fed by programs at their schools during the school year are home this summer and hungry as usual. Thanks to all who donate food, time, and effort to these ministries.

Items to bring on Sundays include canned vegetables and fruit (except tomatoes), hearty soups, tuna, chili, boxed mac and cheese, canned pasta and meat meals, peanut butter, cereal, canned spaghetti sauce and dried spaghetti, small bags of rice (store packaged please) and razors. For clothing please only bring t-shirts, new underwear, and socks. You can also make monetary donations to the Food Pantry so that we can fill in the items we are missing.



T Don Hutto Forum

T Don Hutto Forum (sponsored by the Immigration Reform Effort) The first opportunity for a public discussion of T. Don Hutto Family Detention Center will be held Sept. 24, 7 pm, at the Georgetown Public Library, 402 W. 8th St. Panelists confirmed are Barbara Hines, clinical professor of law and director of the Immigration Clinic at UT School of Law and co-counsel in the lawsuits challenging conditions at T. Don Hutto; Scott Medlock, Attorney; Prisoners' Rights Advocate in the Austin office for the Texas Civil Rights Project; Bob Libal, Texas Coordinator, Grassroots Leadership, which works to abolish for-profit private prisons and Jose Orta, President, LULAC Council 4721, longtime Taylor resident and critic of T D Hutto. Panelists to be invited are John Carter, United States Congress, 31st District of Texas, in which T Don Hutto is located; Dan A Gattis, County Judge, Williamson County Commissioners Court, who serves as chief administrator for T Don Hutto pass-through contract with CCA; Julie Meyers, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and John Ferguson, President and CEO of Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), which owns, and has the contract with ICE to operate, T Don Hutto. Volunteers are needed to blog/contact media and press, set up registration lists, assist with registration at event, speedy set-up and take-down, sound-system manager, ushers, time-keeper, program design and production. To volunteer contact Mary Ellen Kersch: (office) 512-863-7174, (mobile) 512-426-2589 or maryellenkersch@verizon.net.

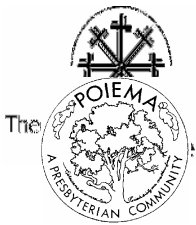
Pastoral Care Team



Compassion Fatigue Workshop - "Keeping the Light on in the Dark Night of the Soul: Identifying and addressing Compassion Fatigue and Burnout" is a training designed specifically to address the common struggle of volunteers in church settings to maintain balance and peace in the face of the hard work of keeping a church running and growing.

This workshop has been developed specifically for St. Andrew's by two social service professionals with long experience with these issues. Introductory session will be following the late worship service on Sunday September 14, from 12:30 to 1:30 pm, with the main training to occur the following Saturday, September 20, from 9:30 am until noon. Mark your calendars and be on the lookout for more information.

Educator Team



Theology in Everyday Life will meet August 4 and 18 at 7:15 pm and conclude at 8:30 pm. The group averages 12 to 13 people who discuss various topics selected by the individual members on a rotating basis.

The good news of the gospel comes through in many forms often without any religious language at all. It is through these real life experiences that we learn what it means to have faith even though that word is not mentioned. Look for the print out of the upcoming subject in the basket in the church foyer. Read it ahead of time and come join the discussion. Everyone is welcome

The Poiema Book Study is reading Citizens of the Empire: The Struggle to Claim our Humanity by Robert Jensen. The study will continue on July 20, August 17 and September 21. We begin with a meal hosted by Poiema at about 5:30 pm in the McCarty home. The book study begins at 7 pm. All are welcome. For more info contact Barbara at 468-4012, barbaramc@pvco.net or www.poiemacommunity.org.

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, Tamara Iyer, at 251-0698 or email Tamara.Iyer@gmail.com.

◆ Dates to Remember:

Special Recognition, August 24 Sunday School Teachers from this past year, and all those who have been involved with Children's Church, will be recognized on Sunday, August 24, in the 10:45 worship services. We honor them for their outstanding commitment of time and the love they offer to our children, youth and adult learners.

Kick-off of new Sunday School Year, August 31

◆ **Godly Play Sunday School resumes on Sundays at 9:30 am beginning August 3.** The **Godly Play** approach uses an open classroom with selected, developmentally appropriate story materials. 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.

◆ **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 and meets when the children leave the sanctuary after the Puppet Show. Children's Church resumes in August.

General Assembly Continued

I left the GA a few days before the conclusion. The only debate on the floor that I witnessed was the recommendation from Church Growth and Christian Education (12-08) “to produce adolescent human development resources based upon Scripture and the Reformed theological tradition. These resources would explore all facets of adolescent development including human sexuality.” The committee added a comment: “We choose to plant the seed of peace. We set aside our individual desires to ‘win’ and to further our own agendas and put our faith in God, and send this overture on without trying to advocate one position or another, trusting not only to God, but our fellow Presbyterians to do what is right not only for our children but for our denomination. . . .” The recommendation was approved 509-188-5.

To get an overview of GA go to www.pcusa.org/ga218. To get details on each action go to www.pc-biz.org/committee2.aspx. Choose a committee and click. Find “show detailed listing” on the right mid-way down the page and click for a brief overview of the votes. Click on the document title for all details.

In part II of my report next month I will share more on issues concerning ordination, social justice, ecumenical issues, and the revised form of government (FOG). A list of the committees and a brief description of the actions taken will be available in the foyer or on the bulletin board at St. Andrew’s.



Jim Rigby will be back from writing leave beginning August 1.
Church office hours will continue with the summer hours of 9 am to 2 pm.
Tuesday Morning Bible Study resumes August 5.



St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

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Open Minds Bookstore

The bookstore is open the first and third Sunday of each month
Below are our new offerings, which include many children's selections.

Dynamics of Faith, Paul Tillich (\$13) Paul Tillich has been recognized as one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century; Reinhold Niebuhr said, "Tillich is a giant among us". In his classic Dynamics of Faith, Tillich explores the idea of faith in all of its dimensions while defining the concept in the process. It is a primer in the philosophy of religion, and yet is very accessible, without requiring deep theological background to understand and appreciate.

Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why, Bart D. Ehrman (\$13) For almost 1,500 years, the New Testament manuscripts were copied by hand—and many mistakes and intentional changes are found in the various manuscript versions. Religious and biblical scholar Bart Ehrman makes the case that many widely held beliefs concerning the divinity of Jesus, the Trinity, and the divine origins of the Bible itself are the results of both intentional and accidental alterations by scribes. (Bart D. Ehrman is the James A. Gray Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina.)

Letters to a Young Doubter William Sloane Coffin (\$13) In a series of short letters and answers, Coffin uses the academic year to weave sage advice about faith, the difficulties of personal life, and the confusing and complex problems of today's world. In these letters, he demonstrates that religious faith despite doubt is far stronger than without doubts. An excellent, easily read book from a brilliant mind.

Jesus for the Non-Religious, John Shelby Spong (\$13) In this book, Bishop Spong challenges the traditional understanding of the historical Jesus. After stripping him of the myths we've grown up with, he offers a more approachable, more believable Jesus as the key to a new life and new humanity. It is a bold and hopeful book, providing a Jesus modern people can be inspired by.

Children's Books

The Librarian of Basra Jeanette Winter (\$13.50) Read the story of a brave librarian who loved her books and learn how she saved them, just days before the library was burned when war came to Iraq.

In God's Name Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (\$14.50) All living things on earth were given a name. And each of them had a different name for God. But which name for God was the best? Wonderful illustrations depict the many faces through which God is known and understood.

The Sun In My Belly, (A Plum Blossom Book) Sister Susan (\$10) Sad and lonely after a disagreement causes them to stop playing together, Jenny and Molly find comfort in nature and begin to understand the importance of friendship and forgiveness and how they are connected to everything in the world around them. Inspired by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh.

Peaceful Piggy Meditation, Kelly MacLean (\$7) Sometimes life is too noisy and too busy. And sometimes it's hard when things don't go your way – it can make a piggy frustrated and angry and sad. So how can young piggies find a way to relax and regroup? They can meditate! The author brings her experience as a children's meditation therapist to her unique storybook guide, showing how this simple ritual can do much for children and families.

Do Unto Otters: A Book About Manners Laurie Keller (\$15) A fun book with humorous illustrations about how to treat otters by following the golden rule, and learning some specific ways to do that! Children will enjoy the playful spirit of this book.

Enemy Pie Derek Munson (\$13.50) A wise dad shows his son how to get rid of enemies – Enemy Pie. But one of the secret ingredients is spending an entire day with the enemy. In this endearing story, one little boy learns an effective recipe for turning a best enemy into a best friend.