

# The AGAPE Newsletter

April 2009

Vol. 4, No 4



The Thursday before Easter has traditionally been a time to commemorate Jesus' final meal with his disciples – the "Last Supper." St. Andrew's will hold a service Thursday, April 9, at 7 pm, to celebrate communion and share thoughts about this meaningful ritual. St. Andrew's choir will sing a few pieces and we'll have plenty of congregational singing interspersed with readings. Come be a part of this celebration!



The One Great Hour of Sharing offering will be received on Palm Sunday, April 5. Children, please bring your Fish Banks. Offering envelopes will be provided for the congregation. As we prayerfully consider our contributions please be aware that as we approach this offering's sixtieth anniversary, we see many troubling parallels in the world today. However, unlike sixty years ago, the needs reach deeply into our own towns and cities. Your gift of \$10 can help start a small Moringa tree nursery with 10 seedlings; \$20 can provide mosquito nets for a family, helping them avoid malaria. \$65 can buy a treadle pump to help a farmer irrigate fields. \$125 can provide an emergency life pack consisting of basic humanitarian supplies to meet the immediate needs of families displaced by disaster or \$350 can provide emergency shelter and food to a homeless youth for an entire year. So what is your treasure? The offering is split between Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Self Development of People and the Presbyterian Hunger Program. Thanks for your offerings.

## Easter Thoughts

It's probably because my grandparents were morticians, but the idea of a body getting up at Easter has never been particularly inspiring to me. I much prefer to believe that the disciples discovered something bigger than a resuscitated cadaver at Easter. I want to believe they experienced the secret of life itself.

By getting hung up on the facts of the story we can easily miss the whole point of Easter. The stories of religion are not records of particular miracles, but are symbolic illustrations of the mysterious principles that give us life and being. Biblical stories illustrate the mysterious lattice work of intelligence which is invisible to our dim senses but which underlies our very existence.

In the Christmas story a child is born in the bleak midwinter to remind us that the light of life shines out of what seems like dark emptiness. The point of the symbol is to remind us that painful or lonely events are still important parts of our larger life.

Easter is Christianity's version of a timeless story where a beloved child is taken from a loving parent and carried to the underworld. The story was told at the vernal equinox (beginning of spring) so people could remember, even as they celebrated the beauty of spring, to remember that everything will be given back to the one larger life.

I realize that many people become religious so they won't have to think this deeply about life. Some people get so wounded or frightened that they just want to be reassured, but closing our eyes to reality will not comfort us for long. At some point we must turn to face our own mortality. When we die, our bodies will not get up again, they will be recycled. Our only honest consolation at that point is to love the whole circle of life.

I believe that the Christ people experienced at Easter was not a walking cadaver, but the spirit of life the disciples discovered in Jesus and now saw in each other. When the risen Christ calls us, we are not being called to the Christian Church, but to the one life of us all.

Love,



Dear Church Family & Friends,

Many of us have experienced senior moments, those mental glitches that sometimes lead us to think, oh my, I am losing it....am I totally stressed out and don't know it or am I getting Alzheimer's disease? I had one of those moments this past week when my hospital, without notice, changed the numbering of the levels in our parking garage. When I parked in one of my usual spots, upon exiting my car I had no idea where I was. The numbers did not correspond to the usual walk-way that allows entrance into the hospital. When I finally got to the elevator, I was quickly reassured by a kind person that the hospital had decided to re-number the garage levels. The project was only half complete which led to my now obvious confusion. I was greatly relieved and able to reassure myself that I was not having a senior moment and I was OK to go to work.

How quickly our self-assurance can go down the drain when our memory is challenged. During those brief moments in the garage, I could feel my heart racing. I felt lost in a familiar place, nervous and totally unsure of myself. Something so routine had suddenly become quite difficult.

Senior moments are real for everyone. They happen at every age. As we get older, the brain often experiences some normal age-related memory loss. People with this type of memory loss, i.e. forgetting names, phone numbers, misplacing the car keys or forgetting why you went into a room are common examples. Usually with small adjustments, such as lists and memory aids, most people can learn to compensate for memory changes. These types of memory changes generally do not impair daily function or prevent a person from living independently.

When memory loss makes it hard to manage the activities of daily living, this can be an early warning sign of Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. People with ALZ cannot remember what the car keys are used for and are unable to recall information at any time. Those with ALZ lose the ability to manage their own personal hygiene and are less able over time to follow instructions. As many as 5 million people have this disease and by 2030, as our society ages, as many as 16 million may be affected.

On Sunday, March 28, during the 9:30 am Sunday school hour, St. Andrew's member, Amy Blackmon, Ph.D. will be hosting a time for information and discussion of Alzheimer's disease. Please join us for Amy's presentation. Stop by the Health Ministry Bulletin Board during April for the numerous articles and hand-outs on Alzheimer's disease. The Alzheimer Disease Association web site [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) is a very helpful resource for current information and support for this disease.

May this season of Easter keep you mindful of God's loving presence. May your heart be filled with hope and open to renewal as we witness the greening of our glorious earth once again.

Love and Blessings,  
Donna

**Two Printed Sermons** from the current series, *The Biblical Roots of Activism*, are now available. (Good News to the Poor / Care For the Earth) Look for the display in the church foyer. Sermons in this form may also be downloaded from the church's website.

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## Artist Team

### Spring\* Retreat

A nature retreat is scheduled for Saturday, May 2 at the Poiema Community, six miles southeast of Manor. Opportunities include a nature walk, yoga, labyrinth meditation, walking or sitting in any of the nature areas in groups or solitude, and the use of the beautiful straw-bale room for meditation. There will also be plenty of time during the day-long retreat to relax and renew in the restorative energies of the post oak/eastern red cedar woodlands. A limited number of overnight accommodations are available for those wishing to stay over on Friday and/or Saturday. Primitive camping is also available. Organizers are Delia Trujillo, Yvette Shelton, and the Poiema Community. More details will be forthcoming in the Sunday announcements. If you are interested in attending this retreat, please contact Delia Trujillo at [deltrujillo1@yahoo.com](mailto:deltrujillo1@yahoo.com).

### Open Ears Concert

Open Ears Concerts will present a Tom Lehrer Hoot Night. According to Wikipedia, as of the late 1990's, Tom Lehrer had performed only 109 shows and written 37 songs over 20 years. Nevertheless he developed a significant following in the U.S. and abroad and his satirical and topical songs influenced numerous musicians and songwriters who followed him. Some of those devotees will gather in honor of Mr. Lehrer's birthday to perform their favorites of his songs. Some of the confirmed artists are **Marilyn Rucker, Jean Synodinos, Jan Seides, The Therapy Sisters and Gary Feist**. The **Tom Lehrer Hoot Night** will start at **7 pm, Saturday, April 25**, and won't end until all either have busted a gut laughing or have successfully sung the periodical chart of elements.

### *The Importance of Sabbath Rest*

Our body, mind, and spirit were not designed by nature to perform nonstop without resting. Observing the ancient tradition of Sabbath rest can help us take the first step in coming into alignment with the wisdom of nature. This observance was originally established in the Jewish tradition to help restore sanity, vitality, and enthusiasm and to renew the alignment and connection with the Most High, the Universal Creative Force.

Wayne Muller tells us in his book, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*, that the Sabbath observance invites endless beginnings. He says, "We begin again anew each week, renewing our pre-conceptions, indeed our very life—a beginner again and again." The Sabbath can be a time to find a greater peace. Muller states, "Sometimes, when we feel trapped by a problem, we must surrender to not knowing the solution. Sometimes, it is only when we let the problem alone, when we back off in unknowing, that it has the space to solve itself."

In the Jewish tradition, the Sabbath begins at sundown the previous day (Friday) by lighting some candles and ends at sundown on the Sabbath (Saturday). After a simple evening meal that is consumed slowly, savoring every bite, do something nurturing and relaxing for your physique. Perhaps you could take a walk and then sit outside under the stars or listen to soft relaxing music. Observe how tension is draining away from every cell in your body.

Other activities to enjoy either that evening or on the actual day of rest are spending extended time in meditation or prayer, perhaps journaling about things you are grateful for and/or priorities and goals for the coming week. Other options include enjoying the sunrise and/or the sunset; taking a nap; doing some yoga stretches and/or light exercise; playing fun and frivolous games and/or spending time in conversation with loved ones.

You will be amazed at what you will experience if you will just allow yourself this healing ritual. Once you find ways to simplify your life, it will become easier to take one day out of the week for renewal of energies. At the beginning, you might have to settle for only half day of Sabbath rest or maybe just three or four hours until your life is better organized, but every thing helps. Of course, this day of rest can be on any day of the week that fits with your schedule. Without a doubt, the ultimate Sabbath rest activity is spending time in nature either alone or with loved ones. This can be a time of great healing and restoration. Your connection with nature will impact your life in marvelous, mystical ways. On Saturday May 2<sup>nd</sup> the St. Andrew's community will have a wonderful opportunity to spend the Sabbath in nature with other like-minded seekers by registering for a day-long Poiema Retreat. Check your upcoming Sunday bulletins for more details.

(This article is excerpted from Delia Trujillo's book *The Transformation of (Y)our World: Finding Serenity and Optimism during These Difficult Times*, available from the St. Andrew's bookstore or online at [www.thetransformationbook.com](http://www.thetransformationbook.com)).

## Guardian Team

### Stewardship Matters



Thanks to your grateful giving, we had a positive cash flow in January **and February**, reversing the 2008 pattern.

Our 2009 budget is in place, well-funded by your generous pledges.

\* Your online shopping can create a donation to St. Andrew's. Go to [www.GoodShop.com](http://www.GoodShop.com), select your organization – St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (Austin, TX) - then select your merchant. Amazon donates 1.5%, Home Depot 2%, Sears 1%, to name a few. There are already a few dollars in our GoodShop account.

\* Our Randall's Good Neighbor # is 6403 - 1% of your Randall's sales will be donated to St. Andrew's if you use our number with your Good Neighbor card.



Can you help with setup before or cleanup after Sunday fellowship? The “Real Plates” mission has grown from avoiding disposable dishes by washing the “real plates” to cleaning up both kitchen and fellowship space on Sundays. The AGAPE teams are no longer facilitating the Sunday fellowship setup so more helping hands are needed! Serving some food each Sunday contributes to our sense of community and using “real plates” is part of our faithful living by conserving resources. On First Sundays all are invited to contribute to a potluck.

If you can help with setup, contact Lyn Whitcomb at 506-8621 or [deuxfleurs@sbcglobal.net](mailto:deuxfleurs@sbcglobal.net). If you are willing to take a turn “at the sink” contact Martha Rogers at 345-3969 or [rogers33@swbell.net](mailto:rogers33@swbell.net). The rotation is about two months. Think of it as Kitchen Ministry!

## Ambassador Team

### **Fighting Goliath: Texas Coal Wars**

**Thursday, April 16 at 7 pm.**

Narrated by Robert Redford and co-produced by The Redford Center at the Sundance Preserve and Alpheus Media, *Fighting Goliath: Texas Coal Wars* (run time 34 min.), follows the story of Texans fighting a high-stakes battle for clean air. The film introduces the unlikely partners—mayors, ranchers, CEOs, community groups, legislators, lawyers, and citizens—that came together to oppose the construction of 19 conventional coal-fired power plants that were slated to be built in Eastern and Central Texas and that were being fast-tracked by the Governor. Ryan Rittenhouse, a member of SEED, Sustainable Energy and Environmental Development, appears in the film and will lead a discussion and question period afterwards.



A total of \$360.00 was donated to the 2009 CROP Walk for Global and Local Hunger Issues. On March 8, hundreds of Austinites representing many, many faith communities gathered at Roy Guerrero Park to “Walk because they walk.” St. Andrew's is to be commended for pitching in this generous amount in solidarity with hungry people around the world. If there is someone in our congregation who feels the passion for this particular mission, come forth and let us know now. We'll put you to work a lot earlier next year in hopes of raising even more. Thank You!

## Pastoral Care Team



*Pastoral Care Team Member*

The Pastoral Care Team at St. Andrew's welcomes new member and volunteer, Pamela Wagner, to our team. Pam is a seminary graduate and trained hospital chaplain. She is volunteering her time to minister in our church community to those who are ill, hospitalized or home-bound. Pam will be doing pastoral care visits with Rev. Rigby and Donna Rutherford, our Congregational Nurse, and other members of the Pastoral Care Team. Members of the Pastoral Care Team wear purple stoles on Sundays. Please let them know if you have a concern or call the church at other times if you need assistance.

## Open Minds Bookstore

*The bookstore is open the first and third Sundays, following the 10:45 service.*

Visit the Super Sale on CD's by our own Marilyn Rucker, \$5 each! We have received a carton of **Inclusive Language Bible**. They are available for \$28 while they last! Besides the selections below, which can be ordered, there are also many books to take home with you, including books by Wayne Muller, Joan Chittister, and William Sloan Coffin.

**The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Final Days in Jerusalem**, \$12 by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. What was the "passion" of Jesus really about? Using the Gospel of Mark as the basis for this study, these two scholars attempt to answer the question, "What does 'then' have to do with 'now' – our 'now'?" The book looks at each day of the final week of the life of Jesus both historically and theologically.

**Jesus for the Non-Religious**, John Shelby Spong, \$13.

**The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity and Caring**, Parker J. Palmer, \$14.50 *The Poema group is currently studying this book.*

**When Things Fall Apart**, Pema Chodron, \$11.50

**New Seeds of Contemplation**, Thomas Merton, \$14.

**The Road to Peace**, Henri Nouwen \$17.

**Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why**, Bart D. Ehrman, \$13

### **Children's Books**

**Listen to the Wind, Greg Mortenson**, illus. by Susan Roth, \$14.50 This book is a wonderfully illustrated (with textile collage) children's version of Dr. Greg's Three Cups of Tea, the story of a mountain climber who stumbles into a Pakistani village, regains health, and returns to build a school for the village boys and the girls.

**Peaceful Piggy Meditation**, Kelly MacLean, \$7.

**The Three Questions**, based on a story by Leo Tolstoy, and Muth, illus, \$14.50

**The Old Turtle and the Broken Truth**, Douglas Wood, \$15.50

**The Sun in My Belly**, (A Plum Blossom Book) Sister Susan, \$10

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## St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Living and Sharing Progressive Christianity

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## Educator Team

"Common Threads"  
Adult Sunday School  
Class



In a previous item in the AGAPE Newsletter about Spiritual Formation Classes, I asked for what folks would be interested in hearing about. One was an interest in how families might conduct worship services as a family unit. After an introduction and some definitions, the first class on April 5 will be just that. Resources and methods will be subject of the discussion.

The following three sessions will be based on interests expressed by the class members in discussion during the first session from the following subjects;

- \*Personal spiritual growth, \* Practical praying
- \*Discovering one's spiritual type,
- \*. Lectio Divina ( Holy reading )

I hope to see lots of folks and have lots of lively discussion.

Dick Galloway, Facilitator



Theology in  
Everyday Life

You're invited to attend the Theology in Everyday Life discussions on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of each month.

The discussion title for April 6 is "An After-Life?" Resource readings are available in the basket in the church foyer. All are invited to pick up the reading material and come to the discussion which always proves to be lively and helpful as we seek to make theological inquiries relevant to our everyday lives.



The Poiema book study group meets on third Sundays. Our next gathering is Sunday, April 19. We will continue *in The Active Life, A Spirituality of Work, Creativity, and Caring* by Parker J. Palmer. This month's study is Chapter 7: "Loaves and Fishes": Acts of Scarcity or Abundance. The story is from Mark 6:30-44. Palmer stresses that it is harder for us to catch new meanings in these familiar stories. This is one of Barbara's favorite chapters. It is easy to pick up this book at any point, so, come join us. The study begins following a vegetarian meal or meal with vegetarian options, hosted by Poiema about 5:30 p.m. The book study will begin at 7:00 p.m. For more info call Barbara McCarty at 512-468-4012 or [barbaramc@pvco.net](mailto:barbaramc@pvco.net). Poiema's website is [www.poiemacommunity.org](http://www.poiemacommunity.org).



We have started a new Bible Study Group to look at how the Bible came to be and then beginning with Genesis work our way through an overview of each book of the Bible. This will not be an in depth "Let's parse every word" kind of a study. We will stop from time to time to take a closer look at issues raised by the class. Our goal is to become more familiar with all the books of the Bible.

We will meet on the first and third Sundays of each month during the Sunday School hour (9:30 am) to help hold ourselves accountable for our study and to discuss issues raised by our readings and look ahead to our next book. This should allow folks to join in at any point and travel with us for as long as you like. The class will meet in the Library and Babs Miller will serve as convener. You can contact her at [babs-miller@sbcglobal.net](mailto:babs-miller@sbcglobal.net) or at 577-4801 (cell). Our first meeting will be Sunday, March 22. Come and join us!



It's been a fun winter for the youth group, and it's been great to meet some new faces joining us for some of our events! We started the year off with a trip to the Chaparral ice rink in January, went bowling at 300 lanes, and participated in the San Marcos River Cleanup a couple of weeks ago. It's always fun to get out and try some new things, and these trips have all been a blast. As the months get warmer, we'll be looking outdoors for some interesting ideas. If anyone has any suggestions for great activities in which the youth can get involved, please let me know!

As always, I hope to continue to involve the greater church community in our youth events. If you have something you'd like to share on a Sunday morning or an activity that you'd be interested in leading on a weekday evening, we'd be excited to hear your ideas! It's really important that the youth get to connect with others in the community, so if you have an interest in contributing, shoot me an email at [jfollin@gmail.com](mailto:jfollin@gmail.com). Thank you!

Justin Follin, Youth Director



If you enjoy singing, you're invited to sing with the choir on Easter! We have two great pieces to share with the congregation.

Just start coming to rehearsals, and we'll look at Easter music first, then you can leave. The choir rehearses every Wednesday at 7:15 pm. This is a good way to enjoy singing and celebrate the holiday, without committing to an ongoing practice schedule. If we can get enough people who want to, we'll also sing at the 8:30 service.



St. Andrew's will have its annual Easter Egg Hunt for children on Easter Sunday (April 12) directly after the 10:45 service. This year we

are working on ways to have this fun activity be less about competition and acquisition, and more about cooperation. Another difference this year, is how the Easter Eggs will be stuffed. We are asking for your help with filling eggs, but we will provide the filling! The stuffing will not be candy this time around, but some fun non-edible items, such as stickers or silly trinkets. Watch and listen for announcements about how you can help fill the eggs.

### March Session Summary

The Guardian Team reported to Session that we had a positive cash flow through February of \$2,552. This was particularly good news compared with recent years at this point. Jim emphasized that we should continue to fully support our Children and Youth programs as a high priority both financially and in all other ways.

As part of David Marks report, he said that "summer should not be written off". This was in reference to the fact that anticipating a downturn in participation in attendance and scaling back summer programs becomes a self fulfilling prophesy. He affirmed that this would not happen for the children's programs.

As reported last month, Session had agreed to a 6 month trial period for parents and children who home school to use the church facilities for a weekly time of enrichment and socialization. That period has determined to be July through December of this year.

Also reported last month was a task force to "propose an organizational structure that would best handle certain responsibilities" which fall outside the scope of AGAPE Teams. That group met and made good progress discussing how to approach the process for welcoming new visitors and for new member assimilation; also at that meeting responsibility for volunteer coordination was accepted. The discussion will continue with another meeting scheduled for April 21.

Jim reported on the Presbytery meeting held in Corpus Christi earlier this month. There were two amendments in which we had a special interest: 1) the freedom to use gender neutral language for ordination of Elders and for baptisms; and 2) ordination of clergy regardless of sexual orientation. Both had a negative outcome from our perspective. However, the final vote is determined by the results from all of the Presbyteries.

A request was received from a non-profit organization to use our parking lot for a garage sale to raise funds, which would be used to build houses and take supplies to needy families in Mexico. Session agreed to the request for Saturday, May 2.

*Submitted by Wayne Rogers, Clerk of Session*



### Jesus Seminar

What difference does scholarship on the historical Jesus make for the way we think about the meaning of Christian faith in the twenty-first century?

Over the last four decades historical scholarship on Jesus and his times has arrived at a strong consensus about what this undeniably historical figure (born ca. 4 BCE, died ca. 30 CE) said and did, and how he presented himself and his message to his Jewish audience. Often that historical evidence about Jesus does not easily dovetail with the traditional doctrines of Christianity. This new knowledge of the Jesus of history requires and enables us to think differently about the significance of Jesus. These new understandings have implications for public worship, preaching, prayer and practice, and life in community. Christians of today are like Paul, Christianity's first theologian, who like us found himself standing at the intersection of two eras and knew that he had to let go of his past if he hoped to have a future. If you want to learn more, attend the Jesus Seminar on the Road, Friday night, April 3, and Saturday, April 4, here at St. Andrew's. To register and obtain more information, contact the Westar Institute, [www.westarinstitute.org](http://www.westarinstitute.org).

# April 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Sunday Schedule</b> <b>8:30 am Worship Service</b> <b>9:30 am Sunday School for all ages</b> <b>10:45 am Worship Service</b>			1 <b>7:15p Choir</b> <b>7p NA</b>  Lee Cox Tiffani Walker	2   Janelle Stalder	3 <b>7:30p Jesus Seminar</b>  Garrett Moxley	4 <b>9:30a Jesus Seminar</b>
5   <b>Palm Sunday</b>  <b>Blood Pressure Screening</b> <b>Potluck Luncheon</b> Anne Mirrop	6 <b>7:15p Theology in Everyday Life</b>  Payne Gillispie Michelle Zabriskie Beth & Paul Davis	7 <b>10a Bible Study</b>  Dennis Chapman Virginia Marks Marilyn Plummer Laney Rathgeber	8 <b>7:15p Choir</b> <b>7p NA</b>  Paula Rigling	9   <b>Musical Maundy Thursday Service</b> <b>7 pm</b>  Bart Noble Nan King	10	11 <b>10a Food Pantry Open</b>  Dick Galloway
12   <b>EASTER</b> Natalie Mendez Audrey Misner Jo & George Brown Anna & Bill Mitchell	13	14 <b>10a Bible Study</b> <b>7p AGAPE Teams</b>	15 <b>7:15p Choir</b> <b>7p NA</b>  Leslie Harper	16 <b>7p Coal Wars Film</b>  Karalei Nunn	17	18  Eric Cervini Jo Cochran Sonya Lowrance Emma Mele Jason Ziegler
19  Will Kniffen Terry & Stan Harris	20 <b>7:15p Theology in Everyday Life</b>  Larry Bolden Anne & Chris Mele	21 <b>10a Bible Study</b>  Kelley Coggin Chaille Fuquay Jerry Lester	22 <b>7:15p Choir</b> <b>7p NA</b>	23  Jill Gardner Betsy Pharis	24	25 <b>10a Food Pantry Open</b>  <b>7p Open Ears Concert</b>  David Wallingford
26	27  Terry Harris	28 <b>10a Bible Study</b> <b>7p Session</b>	29 <b>7:15p Choir</b> <b>7p NA</b>  Julie Carson & Tiffani Walker	30	<b>Church Office</b> <b>Monday – Friday 9 am – 1 pm</b> <b>Jim Rigby's day off - Fridays</b>	

