

The AGAPE Newsletter

September 2009

Vol. 4, No. 9

“HELL”

Last Sunday I mentioned that I don't believe in hell in the traditional sense. Obviously, a loving God would be incapable of torturing people for eternity. So why do we even open the Bible, if it has such horrible images in it?

First of all, the images of scripture are not false, they are symbolic. They paint concrete pictures of abstract realities. Some parts of reality are painful and scary so we need symbols that allow us to put those vague intuitions into words. Secondly, most of our images of hell come from literature, not from scripture. Ninety per cent of what most people think scripture says about hell, actually comes from poems like Milton's Paradise Lost or Dante's Inferno. In scripture, there are no red devils with horns, no torture racks, and no pitch forks.

Like every other symbol in scripture “hell” refers to a deep aspect of our ordinary experience, not some hypothetical reality somewhere else. What follows are some random musings on the symbol “hell.”

In many cultures, hell was that place at the center of the earth where everything was broken down and renewed. Scripture borrowed that image to teach an important lesson. Hell became a symbol of the pain we experience when we become lost in existence and forget that everything changes. The torture of hell is the agony of thinking we are our possessions, and then watching everything we care about devoured by the fire of time. The torture of hell is the pain of ten thousand contradictory desires pulling us in different directions with no greater commitment to hold ourselves together. The only “smoke” in hell is the fog of empty rhetoric. In hell, “speech communicates nothing and silence feels like an accusation.”

Some say hell is the absence of God. If that is true, hell cannot be a “place” because God is everywhere. Hell is anywhere the heart is closed to the sacred. It is not so much that we are locked in hell, as that we block the door to heaven. In hell we are like flower bulbs, unable to receive the sun's light only because we are turned in on ourselves.

Hell is a place not of captivity, but of unbridled freedoms. “Hell is that place where you can touch everything and feel nothing. Here you are unencumbered by any commitments. Hell is the unraveling of meaning itself. Hell is that crowded hall where no one has a face. Hell is that sickness of stomach when a person cries in the night for help and every neighbor pulls back in naked terror.”

And the way out? At every nook and cranny of hell is a door or window to God. Hell is a false nightmare of abandonment. The lions of greed and lust appear to block the door, but in truth they are only disguises for our fear. The pangs of hell are our fitful grasping at life because we have not recognized the loving presence behind the movement of time. We do not need to escape hell because hell is actually our attempt to escape from God. Be still and you will know God, even in hell. Any single being you still love however faintly, will be your door to remembering the God in which you live and breathe and have your being.*

Love, Jim

*(*The parts of the article in quotations are from my notebooks. I can't remember if I wrote them, or copied them from someone else.*

Jim Rigby will be speaking at the “Real Voices for Change Forum”. The subtitle for the Forum is “The Moral, Ethical, Economic, Medical and Policy Ramifications of Doing Nothing!” It will held at First United Methodist Church this coming Saturday at 3:00 p.m.

Lessons in Living: If you want a printed St. Andrew's sermon to read or share with a friend, go to the church foyer and pick up copies of last month's series by guest preachers Barbara McCarty, Tom Spencer, Chuck Freeman and Neil Blumofe. There are still a few copies of Jim Rigby's “Monty Python” series as well)



Dear Church Family & Friends,

There is so much confusion in the media about the upcoming flu season. Now that school is starting and children will be exposed to others who might be carrying viruses, I would like to share a few health safety tips to help you and your family avoid getting ill this season.

Begin by making sure you have a thermometer. There are all kinds out there. A basic thermometer does not cost much and will be effective for your needs. It's not enough to just feel the forehead and say... "I think I have a fever"...concrete numbers are important. If anyone in your household has a temp over 100 degrees, body aches, runny nose, coughing, loss of appetite etc., you should suspect flu. The best advice is to call your health care practitioner or go to Urgent Care. The antiviral meds help to lessen the illness if you take them soon enough. If there is fever, stay home from school, work and yes, church! It is time to return to daily activities only when temperature is normal without the use of fever reducing meds for 24 hours. If there is no fever and you are taking antiviral meds, do not return to normal activities until the antiviral med is complete. You can have the flu without fever.

I am sure you all know about hand washing. It does work. Washing hands with plain soap and water for 20 seconds is the best defense against bacteria. At home, use paper towels or assign everyone their own hand towel for drying. Equip the kids with sanitary wipes, gel and tissues to take to school. Encourage them not to share foods and drinking cups with their friends. After an illness, be sure to replace the tooth brush!

It is expected that the Swine Flu vaccine (H1N1) will be available in mid October. The guidelines suggest that immunization is especially important this year for all children, teens, college students and pregnant women. The regular flu vaccine will be available in September. Make plans to partake of both vaccines this season. If you are over 60 or have chronic illnesses you should get both flu vaccines and the pneumonia vaccine. See the Health Ministry Bulletin Board for info about vaccinations available through the city clinics for a small fee to those over 60.

It has been an especially long hot summer in Texas this year. We all look forward to the changes that this fall season will eventually bring. My prayer is that as the season changes you will have some time to pause, welcome stillness and be aware of God's loving presence each day.

Love and Blessings, Donna

The next Sunday blood pressure screening will be August 30 before and after worship.

Pastoral Care Team



Fill Up Your Bucket, Self Care for the Spirit" on Saturday Sept. 5, 8:30 – 9:30 am. You are invited to partake in an hour designed to help bring peace and joy into your life. This time of renewal, discovery of spiritual pathways and sustenance begins with quiet gentle breathing, meditation, readings and music. We share conversation if the spirit moves us. We close with prayer and thanksgiving. Please join Barbara McCarty and Pam Wagner for this time of community.

The AGAPE News
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June Session Summary

Submitted by Wayne Rogers, Clerk of Session

Randy Cook reported for the Treasurer that we have a negative \$6,668 cash flow for the year to date, which is significantly better than at the end of summer last year. Experience indicates that income picks up in the fall. Expenses continue to be below the budgeted amount. Session voted to have the Stewardship Campaign run from Oct. 25 to Nov. 15. Martha Rogers will again head up that process.

Session (current members and new members) will have a leadership retreat on Nov. 6-7. The election for new Elders will be held at a Congregational Meeting on Oct. 4.

The Yoga class will move from daytime to Mondays and Thursdays 6-7 pm. during the school year. All church members are invited.

In order to enhance our music offerings, Session voted to purchase a set of Tone Chimes, which produce an effect similar to bells.

We had some discussion concerning how to ensure that our web site could be kept current on sermons and other items. Also, we discussed other content that could be added to the web pages.

Babs Miller's class on "What you want to know about St. Andrew's" has been very successful and new members have been added as a result. Another class will probably be held in the fall. The Ambassador Team is making good progress on the Spirituality and Activism Conference to be held next March. The probable theme relates to advertising's effect on children. A keynote speaker, who is an expert in this area has been identified. "Watch this space."

Artist Team



At the next Open Ears Concerts on Sept. 19, 7 pm, we will host Telegraph Canyon, a seven piece Folk/Americana band from Fort Worth. They have recently been nominated for music awards by the Fort Worth Weekly and the Dallas Observer, and they just completed a packed in-store performance at Waterloo Records as one of Waterloo's "Bands on the Brink" series. Between now and Sept. 19, Telegraph Canyon will release a new CD and will be playing some larger venues around the country such as Bass Hall in Fort Worth, The Jewel Box Theater in Seattle, and The Knitting Factory in Los Angeles. This may be your last opportunity to see this band in a small intimate setting like ours. You can link to more information about the band, listen to their music online, view the flyer for the show, and get information about other upcoming shows at www.staopen.com/open_ears.

Guardian Team



Through July, St. Andrew's experienced a negative cash flow of \$6,667.85. Cash on hand at the end of the reporting period was \$127,483.89. This figure is somewhat misleading because \$33,474.79 of that amount was a check from Church Mutual Insurance Company to replace the roof. These funds are shown as a pre-paid expense and should be expensed in the next 60 days when the roof is replaced. Income is running below budgeted amounts by \$14,382.30 while expenses are below budgeted amounts by \$13,516.60. Please feel free to contact Randy Cook if you have any questions.



We are seeking donations to cover the improvements made to the Children's Church Wing. The restroom walls are freshly painted, we have new water saving toilets, new sinks and cabinets and new doors. The donation drive so far has raised \$3,007. We still need to raise \$5,633 to fully fund these improvements. To donate, just note on your check the funds are for "Children's Church". We will make sure your contribution is properly recorded. Thank you for your contributions to make this area more accessible, cleaner, safer and more ecological.

Ambassador Team



The Fall 2009 Film Series will be “The Corporation” All screenings are on Sundays at 12:15 pm., after the 10:45 church service.

Is the current crisis of capitalism a temporary problem or do we face more fundamental flaws in our economic system?

The documentary film “The Corporation” investigates that question through a detailed examination of that institution that structures contemporary economic life.

Provoking, witty, stylish and sweepingly informative, “The Corporation” explores the nature and spectacular rise of the dominant institution of our time. Taking the corporation’s status as a legal “person” to the logical conclusion, the film puts the institution on the psychiatrist’s couch to ask, “What kind of person is it?”

“The Corporation” includes interviews with 40 corporate insiders and critics -- including Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, Milton Friedman, Howard Zinn, Vandana Shiva and Michael Moore -- plus true confessions, case studies and strategies for change.

The film is based on the book The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power by Joel Bakan. For more information about the film, go to <http://www.thecorporation.com>

.Sept. 13, Part I: Corporate Basics: History, Law and Harms

Oct. 11, Part II: Corporate Control: The Land and Our Minds

Nov. 8, Part III: Corporate Dreams and Nightmares: Citizen Resistance



Food & Shower Ministry

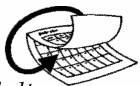
This summer, we have fed an enormous number of people, including many children and teenagers. Sometimes when we serve children most especially, one gets a feeling of shifting sand

beneath one’s feet. How can children go hungry in this wealthy country? How can this happen? Some peace can be gained as we realize St. Andrew’s is doing a great deal to feed our neighboring homeless population and others who are having a hard time in this economy.

It’s hard to know what we will be needing specifically, but we always need canned fruit, corn and green beans, canned pastas, canned meats of all kinds, soup, spaghetti sauce, peanut butter, Ramen noodles, boxed juices, artificial sweeteners for diabetics and toilet paper. Right now we have more than enough baby food and baby wipes.

Thank you for being so faithful in your giving! We hope you realize how grateful and supported our clients feel because of your generosity.

Educator Team



Adult Sunday School Class Schedule

Each Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m., Jim Rigby teaches a lesson that is closely tied to that day’s sermon.

Sept. 6: A Year Through the Bible with Babs Miller

Sept. 13: Seeking Wholeness Within with Pam Wagner

Sept. 20: A Year Through the Bible with Babs Miller

Sept. 27: Seeking Wholeness Within with Pam Wagner

Oct. 4: A Year Through the Bible with Babs Miller

Oct. 11: Seeking Wholeness Within with Pam Wagner

Oct. 18: A Year Through the Bible with Babs Miller

Oct. 25: Seeking Wholeness Within with Pam Wagner



Theology in Everyday Life

Theology in Everyday Life has altered their schedule this month due to the Labor Day holiday and will meet only once on Sept. 21.

Topic subjects are chosen by the participants on a rotating basis. The aim is to talk about what is real in our lives and how that fits with the theological understandings we have. Handouts are prepared in advance to be read prior to the meetings (or seen in the case of films). These handouts are available in a basket in the church foyer. Everyone is invited to join the discussion



The Poima Book Study continues the study of Falling in Love with Mystery: We Don’t Have to Pretend Anymore by Richard F. Elliott, Jr. The next meeting will be Sunday, September 20 at 5:30 pm. at Poima southeast of Manor. We will continue our discussion of Chapter 3, “Our religion. . . Separated From Reality: God, Jesus, Salvation, Revelation, Prayer”. Poima will provide the evening meal.

Contact Barbara McCarty for directions at 468-4012 or visit www.poiemacommunity.org.



Round Table Dinners

will be on

October 2 and 3, 2009

Sign up to host a dinner after 10:45 church on
Sept. 6 and 13

Sign up to be a dinner guest after 10:45 church
on Sept. 20 and 27

A fun, informal and purely social way to
get to know other St. Andrew's
members and visitors.

For information or to sign up,
contact Liz Bernstein
at 670-0934 or bsteinbrs@suddenlink.net



There will be a Youth Activities picnic on
Sunday Sept. 13. beginning around 11 am.
The picnic will be held at Katherine
Fleischer Park just up the road from the
church, 2106 Klattenhoff Drive. Park in the
main parking lot and we will have signs.

Youth, parents and families of youth are
invited to come for all or any of the time. We will grill
hamburgers and hot dogs and side dishes, beverages are
welcome. Bring lawn chairs and blankets for sitting. We
will have lots of activities and some prizes. We will be
celebrating being back in school, the fall youth activities
planned and hopefully cooler weather so we can enjoy the
outdoors more easily.

Come out and enjoy the afternoon. Show your support
and help us strengthen our youth program. We especially
invite those aged 12 to 18. Bring your friends It is a lovely
park with trails and a pond to enjoy with friends and good
food.

Any questions, suggestions or offers of help, please
contact Deanna Duplechain, Youth Activities Leader.

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Living and Sharing Progressive Christianity

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September 2009

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Sunday Schedule 8:30 am Worship Service 9:30 am Sunday School for all ages 10:45 am Worship Service		1 10a Bible Study	2 7:15p Choir 7p NA Travis Wilson Tracy & Rodney	3 9:30a Homeschoolers 6p Hatha Yoga Kate FitzPatrick & Glenn Kotulek	4 Jim Hunt	5 8:30a "Fill Up Your Bucket" 3:15p 1st Saturday with Mike Manor Bobbie James
6 Potluck Luncheon Gaye & Ed Kopas	7 6p Hatha Yoga Lyn Whitcomb	8 10a Bible Study 7p AGAPE Teams	9 7:15p Choir 7p NA Linda Bilstein Matt Hiland	10 9:30a Homeschoolers 6p Hatha Yoga Marilyn Plummer	11	12 10a 12:30 pm Food Pantry Open Ann Glenn
13 11p Youth Picnic 12:15 Film Series Claire Cauley Kathy Greer Kaitlyn Rigling Matthew Rigling Rita Stephan Linda & Randy Cook	14 6p Hatha Yoga	15 10a Bible Study Andrew Glenn Dennis Rogers Martha & Wayne Rogers	16 7:15p Choir 7p NA Eric Busche Dan Christensen Laura Mitchell Cassidy Williams	17 9:30a Homeschoolers 6p Hatha Yoga Regan Davis	18 Marilvn Love	19 7p Open Ears Concert Wil Nichols Holly Roff Rony Stephan Janet & Howard Hestand
20 Eleanor Davis Paula Ellis	21 6p Hatha Yoga Belinda Morris Mary Ann Palmer	22 10a Bible Study 7p Session Meeting	23 7:15p Choir 7p NA	24 9:30a Homeschoolers 6p Hatha Yoga Sydney Mock Jordan Raines-Bouquet	25 Ryan Olphie Mark Rigling	26 10a 12:30 pm Food Pantry Open Bill Saul
27 Tandy Hunt Mary Ann & Earl Palmer Rita & Camille Stephan	28 6p Hatha Yoga	29 10a Bible Study	30 7:15p Choir 7p NA Rachel Quay	<u>Church Office Hours</u> Monday – Friday 9 am – 1 pm Jim Rigby's day off – Fridays		