

E-Portion ~ September 2007

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Fall Schedule

- + Return to regular worship schedule ~ Labor Day Weekend, September 1 & 2
Saturdays at 5:00 p.m. Sundays at 8:00 & 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday nights at 7:00 p.m.
- + Choir Rehearsals begin on Thursday, September 6th at 7:00 p.m.
- + Church School Move-Up ~ Weekend of September 8th & 9th
- + Commissioning of Lay Ministers ~ Sunday, September 9th, at 10:00 a.m.
- + Youth Group meetings begin ~ Sunday, September 9th
Junior High Youth Group at 4:00 p.m.
Senior High Youth Group at 6:30 p.m.
- + Celebration of the Feast of St. Francis ~ Weekend of September 29th & 30th
- + Blessing of the Animals ~ Sunday September 30th, at 3:00 p.m.

Baptism Schedule ~ Saturday, September 15th, at 5:00 p.m. and Sunday, November 4th, at 10:00 a.m. are designated for baptisms this fall. If you are interested in scheduling a baptism on either of these dates please contact the church office for information and baptism forms.

Rector's Notes

Usually I share my summer reading plans in the July-August issue of *Little Portion*, but this summer the deadline came and went and I didn't get around to doing that. On the theory "better late than never," I do want to share with you as we enter into the fall season what I've been reading...

Not Fade Away: A Short Life Well Lived by Peter Barton (with Lawrence Shames) is about how Barton comes to grips with terminal cancer; he died in 2002 at the age of fifty-one. While not a conventionally religious person, the book is a memoir of faith in the truest sense—about what it means to "remember that we are dust" and then to live life as a gift one day at a time. While it's a quick read, there is real depth and I commend it to all—especially to anyone who may be living with a terminal illness or who loves someone who may be. (A gentle reminder: whether or not we are conscious of it, in the long-run we are all terminal!)

1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus by Charles C. Mann is a "transformative new look at a rich and fascinating world we only thought we knew." Mann carefully lays out the evidence that, contrary to what so many of us were taught in school, pre-Columbian Indians were not sparsely settled in a pristine wilderness but rather built cities and civilizations that rivaled those of Europe. I'm not sure what to make of his argument but it does challenge much of what I thought I knew.

I read a disturbing novel by Jose Saramago, *Blindness*, and I'm halfway through the sequel, *Seeing*. Saramago is a contemporary Portuguese writer who won the Nobel Prize for *Blindness*, in which he explores questions I continue to ponder—ultimately I think theological questions about both the capacity for evil and the human spirit that can transcend that evil. *Seeing* is a parable of sorts about the evils of which political systems are capable.

In a similar vein, I read the last book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. While I am aware that not all Christians are fans of this series for various reasons, my personal view is that Rowling is in the company of C.S. Lewis and J. R.R. Tolkien. Ultimately this book (and the entire series) are about growing up in the midst of good and evil, and whatever Rowling's personal views may be about "organized religion" (I honestly don't know), as a believer I find helpful connections between the story she has told and the Christian story. That is especially true of the last novel, and while I will not spoil the ending for those who haven't yet read it, I'll simply say that the willingness to lay down one's life for one's friends is a familiar notion to Christians. I am very sad to see it all come to an end.

Finally, I have been fascinated with Abraham Lincoln since I was a teenager and first read Carl Sandburg's *Lincoln*. So it was with great anticipation that I read Ronald White's *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural*. White teaches at San Francisco Theological Seminary, where he is professor of American Intellectual and Religious History. I know that sometimes people dismiss "rhetoric" in our pragmatic and active society, but I think that before we can act as a society (or faith community) we have to be able to articulate what is possible: both our shared fears and hopes need to be verbalized. I have always believed that an effective leader must be a great communicator, which is not simply about technique but about content, and that Lincoln was a master at this in a time and place that needed a word of healing and hope to be spoken. As a preacher, Lincoln's 703 words at his second inaugural (like the Gettysburg Address) remind me to strive for brevity. (You can try to hold me accountable to that aim!)

I am always curious to hear about what you are all reading and I am particularly interested to hear from anyone who has read any of the above books and would like to discuss them.

Peace,
Rich

Vestry Notes: In May, Allen Beck generously offered to gift our property with the American and Episcopal flags. All gifts to St. Francis must be approved by the vestry before they are accepted and so, this gift was brought before the vestry in June. In order to give vestry members time to think and pray before making a decision, the vote and discussion were tabled to the August vestry meeting.

The conversation at vestry ranged from concern for the upkeep of the flags, to the appropriateness of flags on church grounds to the wide variety of opinions as to what flags symbolize. The custodial issues were easily resolved as the flags will remain illuminated and thus will not need to be taken down each night. Needless to say, it was less easy to resolve the other concerns. Our vestry, like our community as a whole, holds opinions from every point on the continuum on this issue as on most issues of importance. This diversity is reason for celebration, not dismay and makes for vital, careful exploration of the issues brought to the vestry table. All sides were heard and respected. However, the one point of true consensus, and the attitude that permeated all areas of the discussion was that of gratitude; gratitude for a gift that was given graciously and in a spirit that is truly reflective of our community. It was with this attitude of gratitude that the vestry voted to accept the gift.

The flags will stand on the grass between our church and the St. Clare house. We hope that they will serve as intended: as symbols of our gratefulness for the freedom to worship as we choose.

Refresh, Renew, Rejoice! Capital Campaign

The Capital Campaign entitled Renew, Refresh, and Rejoice has allowed us to do just that.

In June we began the renovation of our worship space. The pews and all other furnishings were removed to be refinished and refurbished. After some demolition, asbestos removal, and flooring repairs, the Sanctuary received new flooring tile, carpet and hardwood. New energy efficient clean glass windows with a new design for better circulation were installed. The entire church was plastered and painted. A large portion of roof was replaced.

A special gift was received to upgrade the sound system. New speakers and wireless equipment was installed. Our many thanks to Mark Apholt for spending countless hours doing electrical work.

In July the much-needed work to the rectory had been started. The roof was replaced and carpentry repairs and painting of the rectory were completed mid-summer.

St. Clare House received carpentry repairs and a new roof. She awaits new siding.

The heart warming generosity of our St. Francis family has allowed us to complete Phase 1 in a short amount of time and to glorify these precious spaces.

Nancy Pope, Implementation Committee

The capital campaign was in full swing until the end of June, but we have continued to receive pledges, as well as significant payments throughout the summer. We have received a total of \$289,200 in pledges towards our goal of \$325,000. We are grateful to have actually received in hand \$130,000 to date! Thank you all for being so diligent in making these payments and keeping the cash flowing into our various projects. It has been very helpful to receive the payments in the GREEN envelopes for ease of posting.

The fruits of our labor and offerings are apparent in the completion of so many of the various segments of our campaign. The worship space renovations are nearly complete, numerous roofing, painting and repair projects have been accomplished, our mission trip to discover our opportunities with Fundación Cristosal in El Salvador is planned for November, and planning for the Memorial Garden is in process.

The campaign committee has worked tirelessly on communications, forums, calls, and calculations and we are hopeful that those who have not yet made a pledge will do so by September 15th so that vestry can approve the next segments of our planned projects---more repairs, bathroom renovations, significant Memorial Garden landscaping and accommodations for accessibility, musical and sound enhancement. Please remember that your pledge can be paid over three years time, so that every family can have their pledge make a difference!

We also want to acknowledge Darrell Huddleston's invaluable expertise and contribution to our campaign committee...we will miss him!

Kathleen O'Connor, Fundraising Committee

The Church School program is available for children who are in preschool (age 3 by September 1st) through grade 6. Classes will begin with "Move Up" parties on the weekend of Sept. 8th and 9th. Children should arrive 15 minutes before the 5:00 PM or 10:00 AM services and join their classes in the following rooms:

Saturday One-Room School house: Upstairs Faith Room

Sunday Preschool/Kindergarten: Upstairs Faith Room

Sunday 1st/2nd grade: Upstairs Hope Room

Sunday 3rd/4th grade: Upstairs Charity Room

Sunday 5th/6th grade: *St. Clare House

Students in Grade 6 may choose to participate in the Rite 13 program rather than Church School. Rite 13 will meet in the St. Clare House from 9:30-10:30.

Registration begins on August 25th. **Forms need to be completed on all students**, even if they are not new to the program, since these forms are given to the child's teachers. If you have any questions about this program, please contact the Church School Coordinator, Susan Bastardo, at (508) 829-0600 or SMBslp22@hotmail.com.

Fall Start Up Schedule:

Aug. 25/26: Registration begins

Sept. 8/9: Church School Move-Up Day

Sept. 15/16: Classes begin

The St. Clare house is the small blue house at the end of the parking lot.

Saturday Workshop Leaders Needed

This year, a new teaching method called the "Workshop Rotation Model" will be used for both the Saturday and Sunday programs. The lessons will be based on stories from this year's Revised Common Lectionary. Themes will be presented in several ways over a period of 3-6 weeks. Our hope is that the children will not only enjoy the varied activities (including art, drama, puppetry, cooking, games, and videos) but will also gain a deeper understanding of the stories through multiple presentations using a range of modalities.

Volunteers will be needed on Saturday nights to be workshop leaders for 3-6 week rotations. Topics and rotation weeks will be as follows:

- Oct. 28-Nov.18 Zacchaeus
- Dec. 2, 9, 16, 23 Advent (Isaiah)
- Jan 6- Feb 3 Epiphany, Disciples
- Feb 10 – March 9 Nicodemus
- March 16 Matthew's Passion Narrative
- March 30-June 1 Rich Man, Builder and Feast

Training and preparation sessions will be offered. The first training session (for the "Creation" workshop) will take place on **Sunday, Aug. 26th** after the 9:00 service. Anyone who is interested in taking a session should contact Susan Bastardo.

Mission Matters

Mustard Seed ~ The teams that serve at the Mustard Seed will be looking to add new servers this fall. If you are interested please contact Eleanor Bird at 978-464-5564 or email her at birdwes@earthlink.net

The next Mission Meeting is Monday, September 10th. Come join us.

Hats and Mittens ~The cooler weather this week reminds us that fall the real cold stuff is on its way. In a new project, the Mission Committee is asking folks to watch for the sales and pick up a winter hat and some gloves or mittens to be distributed to children who otherwise would not have them. The home-knitted variety is welcome as well. We'll be collecting later in the fall for distribution in late November and early December.

The Details Move El Salvador Trip from Idea to Reality

We've all made plans for the future that have never been more than that: plans for the future. The parish trip to El Salvador is looking very real, however, as the summer draws to an end. The dollars and the dates are pretty much set and the agenda is evolving. Even more importantly, the "why", the rationale, for the journey is beginning to emerge.

At this point, it appears that four members of the parish are committed to leaving Boston for San Salvador, the capital city, on Friday, November 9 and returning on Thursday November 15. The cost will be about \$1,000 for each participant, and efforts are underway to secure some pretty significant subsidy. While the maximum number is ten, the optimum number is seven (7), because that is a breakeven cost for ground transportation. If there are fewer than seven, the cost for moving around the country will have to be renegotiated. Flight reservations need to be made relatively soon, if the best available prices are to be secured. So, if you have been *thinking* about going, decision time is fast upon us.

The "what" of the trip is coming into focus, as well. We will be met there by the Very Reverend Richard Bower, Executive Director of Fundación Cristosal. Dick will be El Salvador already, but will make time for the St. Francis' group. Home base will be a dormitory at the Church of San Juan Evangelista in San Salvador. The agenda will include a pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Salvadoran Martyrs, meetings with church and community leaders, and extensive time with the projects currently supported or planned by Cristosal.

Those conversations will really explain the "why" of the trip, but outlines are beginning to appear even now. Elsewhere in this edition of *The Little Portion*, you will find some "*Reflections of Solidarity*", prepared by Cristosal for those about to be "pilgrims among the people of El Salvador". Solidarity may be a new word, but it is an ancient concept, expressing the idea that Christ's presence among us makes us all brothers and sisters, that our shared experience is much deeper than that which might separate us. We need to walk with these brothers and sisters, accompany them on their journey and realize that is our journey as well. Then, when we come home, we need to tell their stories as well tell our own stories of what we've seen, what we've done, and what we've felt.

All of that could be a live-changing experience, something that life does not frequently offer. If you're interested in that sort of risk....talk to Rich or Jim Bourque at 508-829-9275 or jbourque66@verizon.net.

The Anglican Church of El Salvador and the Fundación Cristosal welcome your personal and communal reflections on being a pilgrim among the people of El Salvador.

Some brief reflections on solidarity [Thoughts to share together before you make your visit]

Grounded in the belief of our common humanity and our interdependency, and in our being loved - all of us -- by God in Christ, the Anglican Church of El Salvador, the Fundación Cristosal, and all of our visitors, seek to discover relationships of friendship that can be signs of the Reign of God in our time. We want to develop relationships of mutuality, trust and understanding in which we share the call for transformation: personal, communal, religious and social.

1. Understand that as followers of Jesus and as members of the human family, we are all pilgrims together, each with his or her gifts, each with his or her needs. HUMILITY is the value that nourishes pilgrims.
2. Our visits are expressions of Solidarity: that is, of a mutual giving and receiving as sisters and brothers, as family together.
3. In visits to El Salvador we learn more by listening and watching than we do by explaining and controlling. We need to be guests who have far more to receive than we can give.
4. There is an old saying: comparisons are odious. Try to accept persons, the culture, the experience and events just as they are, not as they compare to who you do back home.
5. Remember that you carry the burden of coming from the wealthiest county in the world, to one of the poorest. Just by bringing yourself to El Salvador you bring the identity of wealth and power. Historically Central Americans have experienced the wealth and power of the North in mostly destructive ways. Be careful in how you present yourself in terms of the signs of wealth and power.
6. A good practice before coming to El Salvador is to take time along and with your group to deepen your own self-understanding and your critical understanding of your history and culture.
7. In each place you visit, each person with whom you spend time, look for the special gift that person or place has to offer. The Prayer Book Baptismal Covenant asks us to "seek and serve Christ in every person." This is the attitude and commitment we are invited to bring on our visits.
8. Do not make financial or other kinds of material commitments without working through the Bishop or Cristosal. You will discover mountains of needs that cry for help. Working through the church offers us a way to give where the priorities are, and to share justly. Giving to one area often means not giving to another. The Bishop or Cristosal can help you find your way to offer support where it is most needed, and where support is giving in fair and transparent ways.
9. We are pilgrims together on this road, this visit. Come in the love and humility of God's Spirit. We will pray for you, and hope you will ask others, too. You will find Christ crucified and risen in every corner of the country.

Church Mouse Fair

Like All in God's Creation, the "St. Francis Church Mice" discovered that they, too, can become tired from time to time. As many of you know, The Church Mouse Fair requires a great deal of talent, time, and commitment by those who choose to offer themselves for this ministry. For many good and honorable reasons, the Church Mice did not begin working on the Fair earlier this year, as they always have in years past. With some of the Mice unable to totally commit their "time and talent" toward a Fair for this October, Donna Alarie, one of the Church Mice, has stepped forward to offer her leadership toward a Fair for this October 20th.

The Church Mouse Crafters will meet Wednesday mornings at 10:00 am in the parish hall. Please consider joining with them for a "fun" time ~ no talent is too small to be offered.

Adult Ed Programs

The Prophetic Imagination Six Tuesday Nights at 7 PM, September 25; October 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 Led by the rector, at St. Clare House

When Jesus asks his disciples at Caesarea Philippi, "who do people say that I am?" (and before Peter gets the correct answer by responding, "you are the Christ!"), they share with Jesus what others are saying about him: some think he is John the Baptist or Elijah and others think he is "one of the prophets."

What was it about Jesus' ministry that reminded people of Amos or Hosea or Isaiah or Jeremiah? This notion is lost on many contemporary Christians because we do not know as much as we perhaps should know about the role of the prophet in ancient Israel. Some of us tend to think that the prophets' ministry was about "predicting the future." But in fact the prophets were, first and foremost, social critics who called the people of their own time and place back to the covenant. In fact one Biblical scholar has argued that the key to understanding the prophets is that they had "imagination"--they could imagine the world through God's eyes, both as it is and as it might yet be. We'll begin our time together by consulting two Biblical scholars: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Walter Brueggemann. The first is a rabbi who wrote The Prophets; the second is a Christian theologian who taught Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary and wrote, among other books, The Prophetic Imagination. These two scholars will help to prepare us to enter into a conversation with the prophets of old, both before and after the Babylonian exile.

Finally, and most importantly, we will want to raise questions about the church's prophetic voice and ministry in our own day.

As these six sessions will build upon each other it will be helpful for this study if participants can commit at least to attending four or five sessions if not all six for continuity's sake. All are welcome, beginner and "scholar" alike.

“God’s Mission in the World” An Ecumenical Study of Global Poverty and the Millennium Development Goals

On four consecutive Wednesday evenings, beginning October 17, members of St. Francis are invited to gather with members of Immanuel Lutheran Church for a mid-week study series called “God’s Mission in the World.” Using a resource developed by a partnership of our two traditions (which has a nominal cost of \$5) the sessions will take a look at the reality of global poverty and listen to Holy Scripture to ask how we are being called to respond as Christians. The study includes an exploration of the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by more than 190 nations, including the United States, and The Episcopal Church to end extreme poverty in the world.

The first two sessions (October 17 and 24) will be held at St. Francis, following the 7 p.m. Service of Holy Eucharist. The final two sessions (October 31 and November 7) will be held at Immanuel, also beginning at 7:00 p.m. but *ending* with Holy Communion at approximately 8:00 p.m. Look for the sign-up sheet in the narthex and/or feel free to talk with Rich.

Thursday Morning Bible/Book Study

Starting October 4th at 9:30 a.m. Topics up for discussion. Babysitting will be provided. Please contact Donna Mann if interested: (508)210-3142 donna@mannclan.us

Biblical Languages

Craig Miller, who was confirmed at St. Francis last spring, is a scholar of both Biblical Greek and Hebrew. He loves these two languages and is willing to offer a class for anyone at St. Francis who might be interested in doing so.

Rather than try to set something up only to find out later that a person with a keen interest in this topic can't make that time, it seems wise to invite anyone interested to contact the church office or contact Craig directly at csm7373@verizon.net. If there is a critical mass interested, a time can be set for later this fall or early winter.

The deadline for the next Little Portion is Thursday, September 20th

Please have all information to the office by this date. You can leave it in the Office mailbox or email it to stfran@verizon.net. The Little Portion will be mailed on Thursday, September 27th.