



Fairfax Community Church

Interaction

March 2009

Calendar of Events

| Date | Time | Event |
|---------------|------------|--|
| Weds. in Mar. | 7:00 p.m. | Unleashing our Capacity to Love! Lenten Series. Contact Ruth Schweitzer-Mordecai |
| Sun. Mar. 1 | 10:30 a.m. | Sunday Morning celebration. Luke 17: 20-21 –The kingdom of God is within you |
| Fri. Mar. 6 | 6:00 p.m. | Women's group: potluck dinner and discussion. |
| Sun. Mar. 8 | 10:30 a.m. | Sunday Morning celebration. Romans 7: 15-20 – I do the thing I do not wish to do. |
| Sun. Mar. 15 | 10:30 a.m. | Sunday Morning celebration. 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 – If I don't have love... |
| Sun. Mar. 22 | 10:30 a.m. | Sunday Morning celebration. Luke 6:27-28, 32-36 - Loving enemies |
| Sun. Mar. 28 | 10:30 a.m. | Sunday Morning celebration. 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 – Superior and inferior parts |
| Mon. Mar 23 | 6:00 p.m. | Deadline for March Interaction |

Pastor's Palatte Changes



It has been a pleasure to listen to those gathered during our House Meetings in February. In personal story after story I heard how each had navigated a path through changes in their life companioned by this congregation. I am honored to share a bit in the FCC story now – hearing the personal strength the community has found in the past.

The skill of spiritually navigating change is a good one to have – as people and as a congregation. I think the wisdom that comes from all the changes of interim ministry is some of the most valuable gifts pastoral transition can offer a community. Individually and as a community I know FCC has lived through changes; but I wanted to lift up what others have learned coming



through the changes of interim ministry.

I invite each to take a gander at these 8 stages of change and see if a number

(or numbers) fit their situation. Where would Fairfax Community Church stand? (*This is from the Interim Ministry Network's "Eight Stage Process of Change".*)

Stage 1 – Feeling Unsettled.

This first stage is when the change is announced, or becomes obvious, or happens unannounced. We admit this may be out of our control and have to allow ourselves to feel unsettled. In this stage we learn we can handle pain and discomfort.

Stage 2 – Denying/Resisting.

This stage is marked by reluctance to talk about the past and resistance or denial of what is true. Once through it we learn how denial or resistance are our own attempts to protect ourselves. We learn there are better, more truthful ways of protecting ourselves. We learn we can manage our fears.

Stage 3 – Facing the Present Situation.

In order to see realistically we have to let go of our old pictures of who we are or how we thought things should be. Moving through this we acquire a nonjudgmental, nonblaming attitude. We learn we can move ahead into the unknown without triggering more denial/resistance.

Stage 4 – Letting Go into the Unknown.

This stage is grieving over issues connected with saying goodbye, including what we lost by hanging on

too long to an inappropriate situation. We find an ability to feel sadness and we learn the ability to tolerate uncertainty. In this stage we learn we can handle not knowing where we are heading or needing to know exactly how things will turn out.

Stage 5 – Envisioning the Desired Future.

In this stage we let go of the safety of sticking with what is familiar. We learn to trust that something new and more life giving can emerge out of the chaos. We let go of easy answers: "We used to have..." nostalgia and we dig deeper. We visualize what we believe God wants for our ministry here and how that future will be fulfilled.

Stage 6 – Exploring New Options.

We explore new options we have envisioned. We experiment with new behaviors and feelings. We let go of having to be good at everything. We learn, and experience, the ability to take risks.

Stage 7 – Committing to Action.

This is marked by exploring new options and experimenting with new behaviors and feelings. We exercise an ability to take risks. We learn we can envision something new and actually make it happen.

Stage 8 – Integrating the Change into the life of the community.

This level of integration is when the change is part of the rest of church life. We act on more than one impulse at a time. We also have a sense of loss with choosing one option instead of another. We learn that we can continue to learn and grow.

Blessings now and in all our changes to come!

Robert

Blessed are the Poor in Spirit

by Anne Sutherland Howard

(Submitted by Lynn Bauer)



For Christopher Wendell, the first beatitude--"blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"--is about a third way of seeing poverty and wealth: instead of ignoring the divisions that wealth and poverty create or being paralyzed into inaction by them, we can see how they unite us, not just divide us. This third way of seeing means choosing a spirituality of abundance in the face of a culture of scarcity.

A recent graduate of Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Chris is now serving a suburban parish in Wellesley, Massachusetts. He admits it's not the kind of church or community that might come to mind when one hears "blessed are the poor in spirit." He is keenly aware of the privileged community he serves.

"I work in a materially rich parish," he says. "While not everyone is financially stable, looking at it from a global perspective I serve a wealthy congregation in a wealthy community in a wealthy state in a wealthy country."

"Making things better" has been Chris's priority through school and now in his parish ministry. He says that "making things better" in the global sense begins with the transformation of people--their souls, their minds, their hearts--and it is this that drew Chris toward parish ministry.

"The transforming Spirit of God comes not just through individuals deep in prayer, but to communities working for growth and change together," Chris says. "Parishes are unique communities of trust, places where people can begin to take risks of all kinds with each other."

One kind of risk that the church invites us to take is to see a wider range of the economic spectrum--to open our eyes to how interconnected the financial realities of the well-off and the destitute really are. Parishes are places to come to Jesus, literally in the sharing of a simple meal and figuratively in the sense of finding the strength to recognize that material wealth can create spiritual poverty."

Chris is quick to point out that he does not interpret "poor in spirit" or spiritual poverty as a spiritualization of the beatitude or any kind of attempt to sidestep the harsh realities of economic poverty. He sees spiritual poverty as an avenue for the materially rich to recognize their relationship to the materially poor--the third way.

"For people like me, who have enough to eat, who live in stable circumstances, it can be hard to recognize the ways in which we are poor, the ways in which we still have unmet needs," he says. "The myth of affluence is that it's completely satisfying. But we are all poor in some ways, we are all poor in spirit--that's what the first beatitude is all about. When a person of social privilege can become aware of their spiritual poverty, of their distance from those who are materially poor, it gives him or her an experience of need, of incompleteness. This is the fundamental first step in creating the space for growth and for more just relationships."

"The disparity of rich and poor is very apparent and very visible even when you live in communities that you'd assume are homogeneously wealthy, like the one I grew up in, because you see people at different levels of the economic spectrum in your daily life. The rich may never see where the poor live, but they interact with them daily. The working poor see the rich every day. The question is, how do you respond to the disparity?"

For those in the "upper bands" of the spectrum of wealth--that is, anyone with education, work, enough to eat, and a place to sleep--Chris sees three possible choices.

"First," he says, "There is denial. You can deny that the poor exist, you can turn your back. You can reduce yourself to living only within your own economic band; you can keep with 'your kind.' You can say: 'I do the best I can within my band.'"

"A second possibility is that you are unable to deny the difference in economic disparity, but you don't know how to engage it. You are aware of inequality, you are aware of suffering, and you experience a sense of responsibility for this system in which you see the suffering of many. You know that you are not 'the many,' but you don't know how implicated to feel, how responsible for it you are. This whole can of worms can be overwhelming. You can choose whether to enter or not, so you choose not to."

“But there is another possibility, a third way,” he says. “You can respond with awareness to the spectrum of suffering—identification with people who are suffering to the point that you can’t choose not to be implicated. This identification is the opposite of guilt or shame. It is rooted in a sense of solidarity with everyone who suffers at the hands of forces they cannot control—in the recognition that we are part of everyone.

“I think Christianity invites us into that third way of being. It’s a way of being connected, a way of starting to close the distance in life experience between our own sufferings and the sufferings of the poor. It’s acknowledging that suffering is real and I’m part of it: both creating it and experiencing it. I call that third way ‘poverty of spirit.’ I want to help wealthy persons understand this third way so that they don’t jump back to denial or think that they have a choice about getting involved. I want to help people get from step two to step three, to see that as members of the human family we don’t really have a choice but to acknowledge our connections to each other.”

Taking this step requires a new understanding of abundance and scarcity.

“In affluent American communities, it is often the case that our material abundance creates a kind of spiritual poverty in which the sufferings of life cannot be acknowledged and God’s blessings cannot be celebrated or cherished,” Chris says. “There is instead an anxiety, a fear that what we have today will be gone tomorrow. There is a fear that we’re not doing enough to protect ourselves or to give our children an advantage. This outlook leads to a spirituality of scarcity where we cling tightly to what we have, unable to embrace God’s transforming mercy, unable to trust that there is enough for all. Holding on to what we’ve got keeps us from moving beyond charity to advocacy, moving beyond seeing the poor as ‘other’ to seeing ourselves in solidarity with these brothers and sisters in Christ. Holding on in fear keeps us from experiencing abundance, the abundance of God’s kingdom.

“My calling is to invite people to recognize their spiritual poverty and start telling stories not only about their affluence but also about their need. That’s the first step toward justice.”

But it’s not an easy step, he acknowledges. “Taking this step wounds your spirit,” he says. “This wound of knowledge really connects you to some kind of experience of suffering, some lack or need or hunger that you don’t have as a wealthy person, a hunger

that takes you to the edge of survival. Telling your story—saying out loud what’s really going on instead of saying ‘everything’s fine’—makes you vulnerable. It wounds your spirit and it transforms your soul. It’s an ‘aha’ moment that takes you out of yourself, out of your comfort zone, and then you can see that you are part of the beloved community—you enter a wider band of the spectrum than you ever thought you could be part of.”

“This is about the experience of being part of a beloved community,” he says, “not just being beloved as an individual. Congregations can talk a lot about how God loves you, but it’s only good if we see that God loves us all—and wants us to love each other.”

God’s love for all, the beloved community, is revealed in the beatitudes, says Chris. “The real purpose of the beatitudes is to reveal the solidarity among all people, despite the vast differences in human circumstances on this planet. The beatitudes aren’t just about ‘those other people’ who are different because they are poor or hungry or persecuted. They are also about how our own lives are made spiritually poor by the suffering of others.”

Adapted from *Claiming the Beatitudes: Nine Stories from a New Generation* by Anne Sutherland Howard, copyright © 2009 by the Alban Institute. All rights reserved.



BUILDING IMPROVEMENT FUND WILL PAY FOR PAINTING!!!

Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus and we are it! Some FCC members have started up contributing to a new FUND called Building Improvement. Although we have a generous maintenance budget this year, it will not stretch for larger ticket items that need doing. With the current level of donations, we will be able to pay Sam for the painting he is doing (see "Solving Our Maintenance Concerns") plus some major plumbing costs but there is so much more that could be done: like new doors for Bergar Hall out to the courtyard, etc. Please consider either a one time gift or a monthly contribution to this fund. Be sure to mark you checks so Toni Marie will know where the money belongs.

CLEANING OUT THE CLOSETS

This interim year is the perfect time to clean up the corners of our building. This will free up space for new activities and projects, clear out old stagnant energy, create an uncluttered welcoming aspect to our church and let the Spirit roam free! We have made an excellent start by tidying up and organizing the two closets at the front of the sanctuary – this took 3 women (Cara, Nancy H. and Margaret) four hours to complete!

You will be invited to pick a closet or room and help a team toss out and tidy up one space at a time! If you have a particular area that's bugging you and you want to help with it, please let Toni Marie or Nancy Hanson know. We'll be scheduling half day clean ups through out the year as people are available.

The first space to clear out will be the little room to the left as you enter the church. We invite everyone to take a look at it Sunday. It is so neglected and cluttered that there is only about 4 square feet of space left when you open the door. That room needs our love and attention.



SOLVING OUR MAINTENANCE CONCERNS

Since we have had no elected Maintenance Person in charge of our building and property for some time now, we have sadly neglected our infrastructure and ongoing maintenance has either fallen by the wayside or fallen on the shoulders of members already busy with church work.

All this is about to change! Because we have hired Reverend Robert Shively only half time, we have extra maintenance money in the budget this year. Plus some members are continuing to support a Building Improvement Fund with extra pledges. Your council and some elders have already set some much needed repairs in motion. You'll see our faithful Sam Case touching up the exterior paint over the next few weeks. He'll also remove the mildew, repair stucco cracks, and reseal the deck in the courtyard.

We are also attending to plumbing problems with the kind assistance of one of the Daycaring Dads. We have an evaluation of the entire plumbing system and will be acting to rectify any problems.

Other areas will be evaluated over the coming months so stay tuned and be sure to let a council member know if you feel something is in serious disrepair and should be considered.

The final piece of the Maintenance Pie involves YOU! We are currently developing a list of ongoing/recurring maintenance tasks, what

when how who, etc. For example, the furnace filters need to be washed or changed, the carpets need to be cleaned, the windows need to be washed at least annually. Someone has to do these kinds of tasks or hire, schedule and supervise a contractor to do them and be sure FCC has their invoice to pay.

When our task list is complete, you will be asked to choose one or more and be responsible for completing them. Toni Marie will call you once to remind you when it is time for your task(s) to be done and tell you what the rental schedule is. You will see that the task is completed within a specified time frame and call TM back when it is done so she can check it off the current list. If there is a task you want to claim now, contact Toni Marie.

We are very excited to be taking charge of our building as a community so that we and all who come here will benefit from a well-maintained, attractive church.

Pastor's Office Meeting Times

While this is a season of change for FCC, I want to share I too am experiencing many changes in this interim time. I have never before navigated the issues of half time ministry.

I'm hired at 20 hour a week. That means I have 2 other part time jobs. I've had to learn better ways of tracking details moving through my different jobs and ministries in the cycle of each week.

To help me with that the Pastoral Relations Committee and I offer the following office hours for meetings, and ask the community to let my other hours in the office be for other tasks like administration, worship preparation, and interim facilitation.

My office meeting hours are Thursdays 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

Robert Shively

Notes from Our Office Manager Toni Marie

As you all know by now, I have transitioned into Molly's job as office manager in addition to my job as building use coordinator. I look forward to serving in this capacity for a long time. I will normally be in the church office on Wednesday afternoons and Thursdays. I will also be coordinating building maintenance with Nancy Hanson. More about that later. Because of the many hats I will be wearing, you may have occasion to contact me. My email address is Toni-Marie@comcast.net. Please put "church business" in the subject line so that it won't be deleted as spam in case I don't recognize your email address. You can also leave messages for me on the church machine or if it is more urgent, you can call me at home. There is also a plastic hanging file next to the door to the office. You can drop notes to me in there.

Since I am also a member of this wonderful congregation, you will be seeing me on most Sundays. Please remember that on Sundays, I will be there as a member to worship and enjoy community. I know that seeing me sometimes serves as a reminder of something you want to tell me or ask me about church business, but please refrain unless it is an emergency. On Sundays I need to be just me sans office duties. I know that you all will do your very best to respect this boundary that I am creating to protect my personal relationship with the church.

Blessings on you all,

Toni-Marie (aka tm)



Going to the Inauguration

TellOurLifeStories.com:

By Margaret Randall



I wrote two stories in my website newsletter about the Inauguration, one about getting ready for it, the two days ahead of the event after I arrived in Washington, seeing the sights and enjoying the concert on Sunday along with a half million others. The other story is about the Inauguration itself. Here are excerpts and you can read the full stories in the TellOurLifeStories Collection.

The Inauguration: Getting Ready

What I see in this administration is an opportunity to throw open the windows and challenge the prevailing despair. This candidacy and this presidency represent to me an opportunity to allow our own treasured very

American ingenuity to rise to the forefront, a spirit of collaboration of ideas to address the crisis facing our nation. As the world looks on, my hope is that we see new businesses, new solutions, born every day and as a result of debate and collaboration the change sought will be embraced by the many who contributed their two cents and were heard in the process.

Why did I go? I was inspired on an impulse initially and after I talked to my cousin Craig who lives in Washington, the reservation turned into a ticket and I was elated.

To read the rest of the story, if you are a subscriber, [log in now](#), or [subscribe for a free trial](#)

If you want to receive my complimentary newsletter, [click here](#).



Inauguration Day

By Margaret Randall

We left the condo building at about 7:45 a.m. Of course, Craig had seen on the news that hundreds of thousands of people were already there. We were all bundled up in our warm clothes. He had his new gloves on. Before we took off, I called my brother Jim in Wisconsin.

It was an hour earlier there of course, 6:30 a.m. His alarm goes off at 7 so he was still asleep. He told me later, he has his ring tones programmed. My ring tone is the Star Spangled Banner. So he awoke to the Star Spangled Banner, opened his eyes and focused and thought to himself, "well, there is my sister, the Star Spangled Banner on Inauguration Day of the first African American President," now there's a start to the day."

The day before Craig had said we needed to decide between the parade and the inauguration because we couldn't do both. Hands down, it was the inauguration.

I felt rested and ready for whatever was going to happen. I held no expectations. I only hoped to be able to be close enough to a speaker somewhere so that I could hear the swearing in and the inaugural address. I love great speeches.

We walked down to the metro underground train station and hundreds of people were there and they were letting people down onto the platform in waves. We got down to the platform about a half hour later and four filled trains came and went. I didn't see how you could jam one more person into those cars. I was starting to give up. But then a train came by and the doors opened and suddenly Craig hopped on, then he pulled me by the coat and I hopped on. We were on the train!

Read the rest of this story in the story Collection available to [subscribers](#).

Or you can click here for a [free trial subscription](#).

Here is another link to some [absolutely wonderful photos from the event](#)

If you want to receive my complimentary newsletter, [click here](#).

Margaret Randall

Founder

<http://www.tellourlifestories.com>

Good Bye Molly!

Molly Barnett, one of our church secretaries, is leaving us. Molly writes:

"As for my next step, the final step of my doctoral program is a full-time internship. I will know more this next week WHERE my internship will be (it's a matching process). Hopefully, I'll either be at Napa State Hospital, School-based Health Center in Oakland, Center for Group Counseling in FL, Regional Institute for Children and Adolescents in DC or Oakland Children's Hospital and Research Center-Dept of Psychiatry. My last day will be March 8th."

Thank you so much Molly for all you have done for us and our church during your time with us. We all wish you the best of everything in the future!



The Return of Love

by

Sam Case

Sometime, somewhere in the afterlife

We will stand before the

*Misty radiance of the Mother
Goddess*

*And ask forgiveness for the love that
we misread,*

*Misused, mistook, misled and
ultimately*

Misunderstood...

There we will stay - all of us -

*Not just unhappy lovers, but
mothers,*

Fathers, sons and daughters,

Brothers, sisters, friends...

And we will stand transfixed

As all the love we pushed away -

*The love we could not see with
mortal eyes -*

Flows back to us full force

*Transmuting anger, disappointment
and despair*

Into shimmering rainbow light -

*The Love that passeth, all and ever,
understanding...*

