

# Plymouth United Church of Christ

## Upbeats

News and Views  
from the  
*Jazz and Justice Church*



October 2011

### IN THE MEANTIME . . .

The neighbor who lives in the cottage behind our house has a dog named Bo – a black Labrador retriever with soulful brown eyes and enough rambunctious energy for five dogs.

On weekends, Bo and our neighbor go running or hiking or camping. We hear them heading out early on Saturday mornings, the musical jingle of Bo's collar and tags as he bursts out of the gate ("free at last!") and races up and down the sidewalk. "Get in the truck, Bo!" our neighbor admonishes him, a request that Bo routinely ignores as he busily goes about marking every bush and lamppost in sight. Bo doesn't take instruction well.

On week days, our neighbor works long hours at a demanding job, and Bo spends his days in a fenced enclosure in the backyard, perhaps 15' x 20', bigger than a cage or kennel, bigger even than most prison cells, but not nearly enough space for an energetic dog like Bo.

"Would it be okay if I let Bo out of his enclosure on the days I'm here, let him roam the backyard a bit?" I asked our neighbor one day.

"Oh, that would be great," he said. "He can run full-court!" And we both laughed.

Thus began a new routine. On the days when I don't have meetings at church or pastoral care visits, I let Bo out of his enclosure, toss him a tennis ball, sit in the backyard and pet him until he sighs and closes his brown eyes contentedly. It's been a fine arrangement until recently. Here lately, if I don't come out to toss his tennis ball and scratch him between his ears, Bo sits at the gate to his enclosure and howls. And he doesn't just howl. He warbles. He moans. He sings a canine

blues, loudly lamenting his incarceration.

"Cry aloud to the Lord!" it says in the Book of Lamentations. Bo does indeed, all day long, non-stop, until I come out to play or until I come to the window and shout, exasperated, "Bo, for the love of God, be quiet!" This request he appears to contemplate with downcast eyes, and then he starts up again until his demands are met.

Recently, a group of us gathered outside the church on the corner of Oakland Avenue and Monte Vista to hold a vigil on the day that Troy Anthony Davis was executed by the state of Georgia. We were quiet. We were prayerful. We were dignified.

Later that evening, driving home, I listened to KPFA as they reported on the horrible details of Davis' execution. I wept and wept. Four blocks from home, I pulled over and pounded on the steering wheel. I moaned. I said some very bad things, unrepeatably, about the state of Georgia. It was pretty undignified. Bo would have been proud of me.

Dignity, someone once told me, is the final refuge of the downtrodden. I beg to differ. God is the final refuge of the downtrodden – "our refuge and our strength, a present help in times of trouble," according to Psalm 46.

It's time to abolish the death penalty here in the land of the free and the home of the brave. It's time to stop killing people. It's time to get loud about it, to howl and moan and lament and demand. For the love of God – the One that Jesus tells us to love with all our heart and soul and mind – we cannot be quiet.

Blessings,

*Rev. Marjorie*

# What's Happening Within the Plymouth Community

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## Our Community in Life Together

### Birthday Blessings in October

1	Crystal Hall	10	Liz Eastwood
2	David Sturdevant	13	Haywood Gilliam
4	Tom McCall	16	Estela Lopez
7	Mwanza Furaha	24	Jeannette Brantley
9	Phine Simms	28	Marcela Conley

### Prayers for the Congregation

#### Prayers of Concern

**Marilyn Tracy** - Recovering from surgery

**Welda Murphy** - Adjusting to her move from her home of many years

**1st Congregational Church, UCC, Oakland**, - Facing a new time of transition

The **unemployed** and **under-employed** people of our congregation

#### Prayers of Thanksgiving and Congratulations

**Rachel and Zane** - married on August 12th and created a new last name from a combination of their old ones. They are now Rachel and Zane Haxtema. They will soon move from Berkeley to our neighborhood, on Linda St.

**Kathy Denzer** - has returned safely from Afghanistan

**Channing Wayne** - was named co-chair of the NCNC-UCC Annual Gathering Planning Team

## Welcome New Members!

We are excited that we received six wonderful people as members on Sunday, September 18th. They are:



**Kate Looby**



**Vladimir Oblak**



**Valerie Baptiste  
Bruce Schmiechen**

Also joining us on September 18 but unavailable for a photograph were **Arturo DeRobles** and **Joy Axelson**

## Some Items of Special Interest and Concern

**Do you enjoy playing chess? Do you enjoy playing chess?**



**Vladimir Oblak** (658-3033) and **Bernard Lubin** (663-1901) are interested in forming a chess club here at church. If you want to join in, please talk to one of them.



**Are you able to spare a few hours once in a while?**

We sometimes need some extra help in the office on Wednesdays. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Rev. Lois:

510-654-5300 or [revlois@sbcglobal.net](mailto:revlois@sbcglobal.net).

### Coffee Hour Following Worship

*"It's not just coffee and it's not just an hour."*

And beyond all that, we depend upon your generous monetary donations in order to be able to bring you so many wonderful and delicious foods each week. There is always a basket on the buffet table. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

**Healing Services** - Our monthly healing services will resume on **Tuesday, October 4, at 7 p.m. in the Fireside Room**. Members of the Plymouth community offer one another prayers and support. Folks come to ask for God's healing for themselves, their friends and family, and for the larger community. We share personal concerns in a quiet, confidential setting. Using Taizé music, prayers, and silent meditation, we lift our burdens to God. These services take place on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Fireside Room.

### Advent Planning Workshop

FatherMother Time keeps on rollin' along! We know we haven't had Halloween, All Saints or All Souls days yet, but we need to look ahead to Advent. **A special workshop will be held on Tuesday evening, October 18, 7:00 - 9:00pm in the Fireside Room.**



## Spiritual Formation Ministry

### Parent Workshop

Friday, October 21

6:00 to 9:00pm

#### In the Fireside Room

All parents and families are invited to join Pastor Lois and Ministry Co-Chair Alicia Van Riggs for an evening workshop to learn how to support your child's spiritual formation at home. Prayers, rituals and other practices can strengthen your whole family's Christian journey together.



Dinner will be provided for a suggested donation of \$5.00. Childcare will also be provided. We do need to have reservations beforehand for both dinner and childcare. Please let Alicia Van Riggs know that you plan to attend by October 12. Send an email to Alicia at [avanriggs@gmail.com](mailto:avanriggs@gmail.com) or leave a message at the church office: 510-654-5300.

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### Feeding as a Spiritual Practice

Theresa Freeman coordinates a program that feeds dozens of people nutritious meals each week. Theresa brings to this process a deeply held belief that sharing food is a spiritual practice as well as engagement in social justice.

You are encouraged to join Theresa each Thursday from 10am to 2pm to prepare and distribute food and to reflect on feeding hungry people as a sacramental act.

Contact Theresa for more information at 510-227-4060 or [TFreeman7@sbcglobal.net](mailto:TFreeman7@sbcglobal.net)

## Justice Film Series

Thursday Nights Through November 10

6:30 - 8:30 pm - Fireside Room

### October 6

#### *The Economics of Happiness*

A documentary about the worldwide movement for economic localization



### October 13

#### *A Better Life*

A gardener in East L.A. struggles to keep his son away from gangs and immigration agents while trying to give his son the opportunities he never had.



### October 20

#### *At The Death House Door*

A documentary about Carroll Pickett, who served as the death house chaplain to the infamous "Walls" prison in Huntsville, Texas.



### October 27

#### *The Story of Bottled Water*

The story of manufactured demand—how you get Americans to buy more than half a billion bottles of water every week when it already flows from the tap.





## **Plymouth Goes to the Oakland Care Center**

Members from Plymouth Church visit, pray and sing with residents of the Oakland Care Center each month. Join us during our next visit:

**Saturday, October 22**

**3:00pm**

**3030 Webster St., Oakland**

This is always an inspiring and much appreciated time with some very grateful people.



## **Scripture Meditation**

This group meets in the Plymouth Fireside Room at 1:00pm each Wednesday. Different selections from scripture are used each week. Participants reflect on whatever might be on their hearts and minds as they share and reflect on these readings.



## **Health Communities/Healthy Oakland**

Plymouth has a long history of support for foster care services in our community. Phine Simms is now a part of a program that provides foster and adoptive parent recruitment and retention services for the Alameda County Social

## **The Front Porch Senior Center At Plymouth**



If you are looking for a place to meet new friends and share old stories, the Front Porch is the place for you. Yoga, crafts, special speakers and just plain conversation and hospitality are available.

**Fireside Room - Tuesday mornings**

**10 a.m. to noon.**

Front Porch Questions?

Please call Marcella Conley (653-9880) or Joanne Grimm (451-4219).

## **Neighbors In Need**

**Special United Church of Christ Offering**

**Sunday, October 3, 2011**

This is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry(CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries(JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.

Services Agency. That Agency's Faith Initiative works with faith groups to recruit potential foster parents to provide loving and supportive homes.

Phine has arranged to have Mr. Earl Jacobs make a Grace Notes presentation On **Sunday, October 23**, about these important needs.

# What's Happening in the Wider Church

## In & Around Our Neighboring Communities

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### Plymouth Justice and Witness Ministry Active in the Community

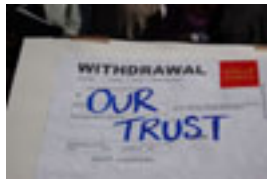
### Joining Hands With Our Neighbors Seeking Justice

#### Wells Fargo Bank Divestment Action



Plymouth was represented at an action coordinated by Oakland Community Organizations calling on community groups to divest their funds from Wells Fargo Bank.

Wells Fargo has been foreclosing on our families and communities in an irresponsible, inhumane manner. The bank has been unwilling to provide permanent loan modifications with principal reductions. This has forced many families into doing short sales.



92 vacant properties owned by Wells Fargo were subject to Oakland and State blight violations. Wells Fargo refuses to pay State-authorized fines for these blighted, foreclosed properties.



Wells Fargo Bank should:

- Pay State-approved fines for blighted properties
- Pursue across the board principal reductions
- Release data on how many Oaklanders have lost their homes.

For additional information go to:

<http://www.oaklandcommunity.org/>

#### Oakland Peace March & Rally

##### A Celebration of Life

An energetic and committed contingent of folks represented Plymouth at the recent march and rally for peace in Oakland.



Marchers stretched several blocks through City streets carrying a



message of peace and harmony.

Theresa Freeman, Zane Haxton, Rachel Medema, Linda Koren and Mary Lou Watson

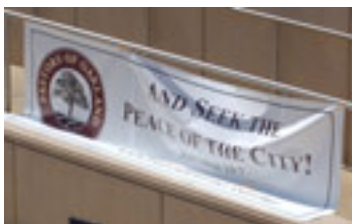
marched with the Plymouth banner, along with thousands of others, from Cesar Chavez school at 29th Ave. and

International Blvd. to City Hall Plaza. Kate Looby, Susan Ode, Rhina Ramos & Phine



Simms joined the group at the rally.

Sponsored by SAVE - Soldiers Against Violence Everywhere - the march and rally



brought together many of Oakland's diverse ethnic, racial and religious groups.

# Plymouth Church Calendar

## October, 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				Spiritual Feeding Practice 32nd St @ San Pablo 10am to 2pm		1
2 Worship 11:00 am Communion	3	4 The Front Porch 10am to 12 noon Healing Service 7:00 pm	5 Scripture Meditation 1:00 pm Choir 7:00 pm	6 Spiritual Feeding Practice 32nd St @ San Pablo 10am to 2pm Justice Film Series 6:30 pm	7	8
9 Worship 11:00 am Birthday Sunday	10	11 The Front Porch 10am to 12 noon Church Council 6:00 pm	12 Scripture Meditation 1:00 pm Choir - 7:00 pm	13 Spiritual Feeding Practice 32nd St @ San Pablo 10am to 2pm Fellowship Luncheon 12:00 noon Justice Film Series 6:30 pm	14	15
16 Worship 11:00 am Communion	17	18 The Front Porch 10am to 12 noon Advent Planning Workshop 7:00 pm	19 Scripture Meditation 1:00 pm Choir - 7:00 pm	20 Spiritual Feeding Practice 32nd St @ San Pablo 10am to 2pm Justice Film Series 6:30 pm	21 Parent Workshop on Spiritual Formation 6:00 pm	22 Oakland Care Center Worship 3-4pm 3030 Webster St.
23 Worship 11:00 am	24	25 The Front Porch 10am to 12 noon Justice & Witness Ministry 6:30 pm	26 Scripture Meditation 1:00 pm Choir - 7:00 pm	27 Spiritual Feeding Practice 32nd St @ San Pablo 10am to 2pm Justice Film Series 6:30pm	28	29
30	31 	All Saints Day 	All Souls Day 			

# More Community News From Justice and Witness Ministry

## Working to End the Death Penalty

### Vigils for Troy Anthony Davis

Many vigils, demonstrations and rallies



were held throughout Oakland during the days and weeks preceding Troy Davis' murder at the hands of the State of Georgia.

Despite considerable evidence gathered since the time of Mr. Davis' trial and conviction that shows he was almost certainly not guilty of murder, the State of Georgia as well as the US Supreme Court refused to grant even a stay of execution. The

Supreme Court went so far as to say that he had already had his day in court; truth and innocence had, unbelievably, become irrelevant.



On September 16 folks gathered in front of the Federal Building in Oakland to call for justice for Troy

and the thousands of other people confined to death rows around the country.

About 25 people gathered outside Plymouth, on the corner of Oakland Ave



and Monte Vista, on Wednesday, September 21, the day that Troy was scheduled to be executed at 4:00 pm PDT. We held a prayerful and moving vigil.



We prayed together and each person offered a personal reflection on how they were feeling and about what they thought about Troy's execution and the death penalty in general. We read aloud the



names of the 715 men and women currently confined on death row at San Quentin. We cried

and we embraced one another in hope and solidarity.

There was a brief moment of joy when it was announced that a temporary stay had been issued by the US Supreme Court. That brief moment became days of grief when Troy was indeed murdered just a few hours later.



## Working to End the Death Penalty

On August 29, 2011, Taxpayers for Justice, a group of law enforcement professionals, crime victim advocates, and individuals exonerated from wrongful conviction, launched the SAFE California Campaign, to put before the voters an initiative that will replace the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole. **The SAFE California Act will:**

- Replace California's death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole;
- Require inmates to work and pay restitution to the victims' compensation fund; and
- Allocate \$100 million over three years to solve more murders and rapes in California and protect our families.

**The SAFE California Act is an important law because:**

- Murders and rapists need to be caught and brought to justice. But 46% of murders and 56% of rapes go unsolved every year. We need to use our limited resources to investigate and solve these crimes and keep our families safe, not on our broken death penalty.
- We remain at risk of executing an innocent. Nationally, 139 people have been freed from death row after they were found to be innocent. With the death penalty, we will always risk executing innocent people.

Since California voted to reinstate the death penalty in 1978, our State has spent \$4 billion dollars to execute only 13 people. If the SAFE California Act is not passed by voters on November 6, 2012, we will save \$1 billion in only five years.

If you are interested in helping with this campaign contact Rev. Bob Matthews: [revbobmat@comcast.net](mailto:revbobmat@comcast.net) or 510-697-7713

## More Items of Concern from the Wider Church

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### Bay Association Ecclesiastical Council Saturday, October 8, 2011

The Bay Association of Churches and Ministers is our local, East Bay Area, association within the Northern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ. One of the most important and sacred responsibilities of the Association is examining candidates for ministry through an Ecclesiastical Council where delegates gather to hear ordination papers, ask questions of candidates and vote whether or not candidates are fit for ordained ministry.

The council on Saturday, October 8, will be held at Plymouth from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. We are proud that **Rhina Ramos** will be one of the candidates examined that day. Rhina's is scheduled for **9:00am**. Whether or not you are a voting delegate, come and support Rhina and the other candidates.

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### A New Community Ministry

Rev. Bob Matthews has begun a new ministry providing end of life spiritual care and pastoral counseling for people nearing the end of life as well as their families, friends and care givers.

This supportive, non-sectarian ministry of presence is available to anyone in need without charge.

Contact Bob for more information:  
[revbobmat@comcast.net](mailto:revbobmat@comcast.net)  
510-697-7713

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