

Plymouth United Church of Christ

Upbeats

News and Views
from the
Jazz and Justice Church



February 2012

IN THE MEANTIME...

"I love to tell the story," is the refrain of an old hymn. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, we love to tell the story. Every Sunday, we read a scripture, a portion of the great story that is the Bible. At least once a month, we gather at the communion table to tell the story of the Last Supper. Year after year, following the liturgical calendar, we tell and retell the stories of Jesus, beginning with Advent and the story of Mary's pregnancy, continuing through Christmas and the story of his birth, and on through Epiphany and Lent and Holy Week and the great celebration that is Easter. We tell and retell the stories of our faith. We remember. We recollect. And in our remembering and recollecting, our spirits are refreshed.

In February, designated as Black History Month, we tell and retell the stories of African American people – the Middle Passage and slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation and Reconstruction, the Jim Crow South and the Great Migration to the North, the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement, the election of this country's first-ever African American president. We recount the deeds of our heroes and she-roes, remembering Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass, Rosa Parks and Martin King, Fannie Lou Hamer and Malcolm X, and on and on. And we remember, as well – or at least, we *ought* to remember – those whose names are not found in history books, the unsung heroes and she-roes of our families and communities.

Because February is also the month when we celebrate Valentine's Day, I often find myself recounting stories of love. This year, there's a special poignancy to the recounting because it was my late grandmother, a wonderful storyteller, who told those stories best. One of her favorites was the story of her grandparents'

courtship.

During the 1880s, my grandmother's grandmother, Sally Fife, was a school teacher living near Muskogee, Oklahoma. She was a woman of mixed heritage, Creek Indian and African American, a young widow with four small children.

Nearby lived a farmer named Johnson Lee, the son of former slaves. He'd never been married, but he'd taken a liking to the young widow who taught Black and Indian children in the one-room schoolhouse not far from his farm. He wasn't certain, however, of how to approach her. She was a literate woman, and while he could count, he'd never learned to read or write. Undaunted, he began showing up at the schoolhouse each morning. He'd wipe down the old chalkboards, sweep the hardwood floors, start a fire in the wood-burning stove so that Sally and her students could stay warm. "In other words," my grandmother would always say, a twinkle in her eye as she recounted her grandparents' romance, "he made himself indispensable to her."

Sally Fife and Johnson Lee eventually married. They had three children together, and in between the demands of farming and teaching and raising children, she taught her husband to read, starting with children's primers and then graduating to the King James Version of the Bible.

"I love to tell the story," is what we say and sing. May February be for all of us a time of telling the stories – stories of our families, our heritages, our faith, and our love. May we find in those stories, again and again, testimonies to God's grace and evidence of the Spirit's movements in our lives.

Blessings to you all,

Reverend Marjorie

What's Happening Within the Plymouth Community

Our Community in Life Together

Birthday Blessings in February

4	Jennifer Moxley Mechelle LaChaux	11	Carmelita LaRoche	25	Cotys Winston-Sandefur
5	Erin Lovejoy-Guron	14	Suzanne Bernhard	27	Chiara Lundin
6	Sonja Ingebritsen	18	Gayle McWilliams	28	Mathieu Gallagher
8	Carol Camlin Shayden Robichaud	19	Shirley Robinson Lisa Freitas	29	Dolores Turner This year Dolores gets to celebrate on her actual birthday!
		20	Selena Wilson		
		22	Nancy Taylor		
		24	Leonard Turner		

Prayers for the Congregation and for Our Community

Our Joys and Concerns

- Jeremy Armstrong who is facing gall bladder surgery.
- Patricia Goff whose home was foreclosed and who has continuing health challenges.
 - Congratulations to Raymond Holkko who has finally moved to Strawberry Creek Lodge in Berkeley!
 - Jessi & Pamela Koritz, Mary Lou Watson's son and daughter-in-law, who are facing foreclosure. (See a special note on page 9)
 - For all who are unemployed or underemployed and for a just and equitable economic system.

**February Is
African American History Month**



**Join us for a special worship service celebrating
African American Heritage
Sunday, February 12**

Policy on Homeless People

“Wes,” the homeless neighbor on our doorstep from June to December of last year endeared some people and occasionally frightened others. One gift we all received was a heightened awareness of this complex problem and the difficulty we have as individuals and as a community in responding adequately.

Our Church Council sought to come to grips with this by appointing a committee, chaired by Rev. Marjorie, charged with working with Wes to transition him to more stable housing, and with developing an overall policy for the church to guide future situations.

Through the generosity of several members, Wes has been staying at the Avondale Hotel since December 14th. He has completed an

application for a Section 8 housing opening. He has also completed an application for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) which could give him stable income and health coverage. All of this was accomplished with the dedicated and compassionate help of several Plymouth members.

Our committee has had to face the realities of our lack of facilities and resources for a major project, few models from local sister churches and our lack of insurance coverage for people camping on our grounds. The proposed policy is as follows:

We will not allow homeless persons to camp on our property. We will not allow unauthorized solicitation of money, goods or services on our property. We will offer homeless persons referrals to

See “Policy” on page 6

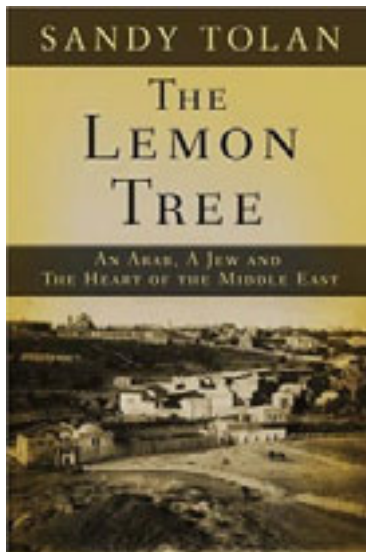
Plymouth Church, Plymouth Church, How Does Your Garden Grow?

(No, we won't even attempt to add a rhyming line.)

But you are invited to attend a general planning meeting for all who are interested in helping with our community garden. The meeting is scheduled for **Saturday, February 4 at 10:00am.**



The purpose of this meeting is to discuss and make plans for our garden for the coming Spring and Summer months. Everyone is invited, church members and friends alike. The meeting will be held outside at the garden on Monte Vista, rain or shine, so be sure to dress appropriately.



Book Study Continues

Thursday Evenings - February 2, 9, 16

7:00pm in the Fireside Room

Interested in learning more about Israel/Palestine? Interested in hearing more of Staci's stories from this summer? Interested in just reading a really good book? A book study group on *The Lemon Tree* may be just what you're looking for. The story focuses on two families, one Arab, one Jewish and an unlikely friendship that encompasses the entire modern history of Israelis and Palestinians and that holds in its framework a hope for true peace and reconciliation for the region.



The **Souper Bowl of Caring** will be held on the Sunday of the NFL Super Bowl. This year the *Souper Bowl* is on **Sunday, February 5.**

The vision of the *Souper Bowl of Caring* is to transform the time around the Super Bowl into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving. We will ask for a special donation on February 5 to help support the work of Rev. Theresa Freeman's community feeding program. We hope you will contribute generously.

It's Time for Dinner!



Plymouth members are graciously opening their homes for intimate community meals throughout the month of February. In order to get to know each other better, we hope that most (if not all) of our community members will participate in one of these meals and facilitated conversation.

Please see the sign up sheet in the Fireside Room and sign up to attend the meal that works best for you. For further information contact Estela Lopez at (510) 326-2124 or via e-mail at lopez_este@hotmail.com.

Bay Association Ecclesiastical Council

Ayanna Moore, one of our members in discernment, will have her Ecclesiastical Council on Saturday, February 11. This important meeting gives the members of the Bay Association an opportunity to examine Ayanna for her fitness for ministry. The Ecclesiastical Council is the final step for Ayanna in her preparation toward ordination in the United Church of Christ. Everyone is encouraged to attend and support Ayanna.

The Council is scheduled as follows:

Saturday, February 11 - 9:00am
Eden United Church of Christ
21455 Birch St., Hayward

Mardi Gras Sunday is February 19

Our annual Mardi Gras celebration will be held during our regular worship service on Sunday, February 19. In a manner very fitting for the *Jazz and Justice Church*, this exciting and inspiring worship service will be our “last fling” before we enter the sacred season of Lent. Plan to be there in full color with all the stops pulled out!



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, February 25
3:00pm

3030 Webster St., Oakland

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

The Front Porch Senior Center

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).



Lent Begins on Ash Wednesday

February 22

Join us as we gather in the
Fireside Room at 6:00pm for a
soup supper and Ash
Wednesday service at 7:00pm

Healing Waters

These special healing services will
resume

Tuesday, February 7 - 7 p.m.

in the Fireside Room.

Questions? Please call

Carolyn Collins, M.Div. at 530-8198.

“Policy” cont’d from page 3

shelters and services. We will offer homeless persons limited, short term aid, at the Pastors’ discretion.

This policy will be implemented by the Moderator and pastoral staff. We, as a Council Committee, will appreciate your input on this policy; about what types of short term aid we might offer and about how Plymouth might become more involved in addressing homelessness in our community.

You may contact anyone on the Council, especially Rev. Marjorie Matthews, the Homeless Policy Committee chair, Mary Lou Watson, chair of our Justice and Witness

Scripture Meditation

This group meets in the Plymouth Fireside Room at 1:00pm each Wednesday.

What’s Happening in the Wider Church In & Around Our Neighboring Communities

Northern California Nevada

Conference UCC

Annual Gathering

April 26 - 29, 2012

Sofitel Hotel

223 Twin Dolphin Drive, Redwood City

Registration can be completed on line:

<http://www.ncnuc.org/event/ncnc-ucc-annual-gathering-2012>

This year’s keynote speaker is Rev. Tony Robinson. Tony is an ordained UCC minister. He currently travels throughout North America as a speaker, teacher, preacher, consultant and coach serving congregations and their leaders. Tony is the author of ten books including his most recent, *Stewardship for Vital Congregations*.

The Gathering will also include workshops and a proposal from Plymouth to endorse the SAFE California Act, ending the death penalty in California.

Plymouth Church Calendar

February, 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Scripture Meditation 1:00 pm Choir 7:00 pm	2 Spiritual Feeding Practice 20th St @ San Pablo 1pm to 3pm The Lemon Tree Book Study 7:00pm	3	4
5 Worship 11:00 am Communion	6	7 The Front Porch 10am to 12 noon Healing Service 7:00pm	8 Scripture Meditation 1:00 pm Choir 7:00 pm	9 Fellowship Luncheon 12:00 noon Spiritual Feeding Practice 20th St @ San Pablo 1pm to 3pm The Lemon Tree Book Study 7:00pm	10	11 Ayanna Moore Ecclesiastical Council Eden UCC 9:00am
12 Worship 11:00 am African American Heritage Sunday Birthday Sunday	13	14 The Front Porch 10am to 12 noon Church Council 6:00pm 	15 Scripture Meditation 1:00 pm Choir - 7:00 pm	16 Spiritual Feeding Practice 20th St @ San Pablo 1pm to 3pm The Lemon Tree Book Study 7:00pm	17	18
19 Worship 11:00 am Communion Mardi Gras Sunday	20 Today is the deadline for submitting material for the March newsletter	21 The Front Porch 10am to 12 noon	22 Scripture Meditation 1:00 Ash Wednesday Soup Supper 6pm Ash Wednesday Service 7:00pm	23 Spiritual Feeding Practice 20th St @ San Pablo 1pm to 3pm	24	25 Oakland Care Center Worship 3-4pm 3030 Webster St.
26 Worship 11:00 am	27	28 The Front Porch 10am to 12 noon Justice & Witness Ministry 6:30pm	29 Scripture Meditation 1:00 pm Choir - 7:00 pm			
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Plymouth UCC and Oakland Community Organizations

A Powerful Justice Ministry Throughout Oakland

Plymouth Church is now a member of the community organizing project, Oakland Community Organizations (OCO). OCO is a federation of congregations, schools, and allied community organizations, representing over 40,000 families in Oakland. OCO leaders share common values from our diverse faith, racial, political, and social traditions. We bring these values into the public arena through action on concrete issues. One of OCO's efforts is highlighted here.

"All Kids, All Schools, Our Decisions Campaign"

OCO is beginning an educational reform initiative. The goal of this campaign is to get the Board of Education to adopt policies to create conditions that provide equity and opportunity for our kids and give school site communities clearly defined, local decision-making authority in the following four areas:

- **Educational Programs:** Local decision-making authority to develop and implement curriculum and instruction tailored to student needs.
 - **School Site Budgets:** Local decision-making authority to allocate site resources to best meet student needs.
 - **Staffing:** Local decision-making authority around hiring, support and retention of staff based on student needs.
- School Schedules:** Local decision-making authority to create school schedules - which could include additional time in the day and/or

school year – to best respond to student needs.

There is always opposition to change. Most likely opposition will come from the Oakland Education Association (teachers union) because, while it significantly empowers teachers at the local school site, it would require significant changes in the contract with the district. There are many details to be negotiated, but we are sure that people closest to the students need to be empowered to make decisions.

If you are interested in supporting this campaign, please sign the petition during coffee hour or online at:
<http://www.change.org/petitions/all-kids-all-schools-our-decisions#>

Non Violence Study Group

How can history inform social justice movements today?

A six week study group is underway, facilitated by Rev. Phil Lawson and Rev. Deborah Lee. The group meets Thursdays from 11:30am to 1:00pm at the East Bay Church of Religious Science, 4130 Telegraph Ave., Oakland.

Each session views a segment of the film *A Force More Powerful* which looks at six popular movements for democracy which used strategies of nonviolent conflict in the twenty-first century to overturn injustice and entrenched military regimes.

For more information, contact, Rev. Deborah Lee, dlee@clueca.org - 415-297-8222

**Faith in Times of Trouble:
A Night of Gospel & Praise Dance**

**Thurs. Feb 2nd @ 7pm
Mills College Chapel**

5000 MacArthur Blvd, Oakland

Featuring:
Oakland Interfaith
Youth Gospel Choir
Imani Community Church
Anointed Expressions

This event is free and open to the public. For more information or accessibility concerns for this event, please contact SRL@mills.edu or 510.430.3123

Occupy Our Homes!

We have a special opportunity to take action in the spirit of the Occupy Movement and help Mary Lou Watson's son and daughter in law who are facing foreclosure. Bank of America wrongfully foreclosed on their home and we can help them save it.

Please call Brian T. Moyhian, CEO of Bank of America and ask him to do the right thing by giving Jessi and Pamela Koritz a loan modification with a principal write-down, so that they can stay in their home. The phone numbers for Mr. Moynihan are:

704-386-5687 M-F 8a – 5p (EST)

704-386-5681 After Hours leave message

**Mark: A Gospel made for Telling
A Series of Talks on the Gospel of Mark**

Lead by Dr. Anne Wire

Monday Evenings, February 6 - 27

7:00 - 8:30pm

First Meeting at Calvary Presbyterian Church

1940 Virginia St., Berkeley

Questions? Email Hugh Wire: hughwire@yahoo.com or Rachel Haxtema - rachel.medema@gmail.com



NCNC Church Day

Saturday, March 3

First Congregational UCC in Palo Alto.
Registration and information is now available online at ncnccucc.org

Workshop opportunities will include:

- Accessibility for All
- UCC Faith Resources
- Faith Community Nursing
- UCC Worship and Music
- E-mail Newsletters & Workshops
- Stewardship Conversation with David Bergman-Hill

Authorized Ministers may complete the Basic Boundary Training Course to meet the continuing education requirement.

The \$10 registration fee includes a delicious lunch and other refreshments. Child care is provided by advance registration for children through age 12. (Older youth will enjoy the workshops!)

[Flyers for worship folders and an editable newsletter article are available online.](#)

Advance registration is vital for planning! Please take a minute and [register now!](#)

For more information contact Barbara Broadbent, Associate Conference Minister for Leadership Development, 510-247-8996 or

bbroadbent@ncnccucc.org

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DEADLINE FOR MARCH NEWSLETTER IS FEBRUARY 20