



The Advocate

Growing the San Diego First Church of the Brethren

Have you ever thought about what is it going to take to “grow” the San Diego Congregation? That question is in the forefront of my mind almost every week. I wonder what we mean when we use the word “grow.” Thinking about church growth involves first and foremost, numerical growth. For example, “What is it going to take to increase the Sunday worship atten-

dance by 5% and the weekly offerings by 10%?” While meeting budget is critical to the ongoing function of the church, I struggle with an understanding of “church growth” that encourages a congregation to fill the pews so that someone somewhere can see a numerical increase in a Sunday morning worship service. Spiritual Growth measures the church’s mission. At-

tendance and financial data simply miss the point.

Churches grow when they join together with others on a shared faith journey. This means more than attending worship on Sunday morning. We need to be Christ to those we meet. Church growth engages individuals at the level of spiritual need, develops a caring

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Celebrating Beloved Sisters of the Church

The San Diego First Church of the Brethren has celebrated the lives of two valued members during January: Carmen Torres Boaz (1927 – 2006) and Anna Lee Harshbarger (1931 – 2006). Sister Carmen was honored in a service at Hope United Methodist Church on January 28, 2006. Sister Anna was honored at the Greenwood Salli Lynn Chapel on February 1, 2006. They were dedicated servants of Christ who provided service, love and compassion to everyone they met. Sister Carmen and Sister Anna were truly saints in the congregation. More detailed articles about their lives and contributions to the faith will appear in the March 2006 Advocate.

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Special points of interest:

- Feb 18: Work Day
- Feb 18: Prayer Vigil
- Feb 16: Fairmount Park Neighborhood Association
- Feb 21: Sunshine Social Club
- Mar 10: Conversation Group

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relationship and shares how Jesus has met a personal need in a similar situation. Relationships, interaction and conversation bring spiritual growth and from that spiritual growth, the church will grow. It may mean that a new member of the Body of Christ attends Bible study on Thursday night, or choir on Wednesday night, or AA on Tuesday night rather than choosing to attend church worship on Sunday.

San Diego is a dynamic church. We are an incredible body of Christ offering the love of Jesus to those we encounter. Many of those encounters do not occur on a Sunday morning. That work is not included in our "worship count" or in amount of our offerings. We have 15 youth who come to MGC twice a month. We are out and about leafletting high schools inviting youth to engage

in a thought process that helps them know their options for selective service registration and other draft issues. We have a new Bible study that invites us to engage the biblical text learning from one another and the Biblical story. We offer an alternative worship format many times a year that reaches the worship needs of an intergenerational group who seek non-traditional ways to worship. We are developing a new ministry opportunity called The Gathering Place. The Gathering Place will be a spiritual space for individuals to gather and enjoy being a community. It will be a place where we gather in Christ presence and worship is informal. The church is growing through activities that minister one to another during the week. Anytime we gather together in Christ's love, we are church, not just at 10:15 a.m. on Sundays.

Yes, we are a growing church. Growing during the week with activities that engage the spirit of indi-

viduals and build relationships – with each other and with the Christ. Invite individuals to come share our spirit, our peace emphasis, our bible studies, our AA groups, our MGC Group, and our love for life! In fact why not start a small group in your home and invite people to enjoy coming together? What about a group that gets together to enjoy motorcycling, and appreciates the beauty of God's creation on a ride? What about a movie group that gathers to explore the battle of good over evil? What about a toy train club that gathers and plays with the trains and talks about life and the struggles we continually face? That is church. That is being the Body of Christ. That is growing the church in the 21st century. That is who we can become. Look ahead with joy; anticipate what God is creating.

Pastor Sara

Notes from Pastor Sara

March Conversation Group
Friday, March 10, 2006, will be the final Conversation Group with Pastor Sara. This opportunity is a chance to reflect about 2005, and look forward to 2006. Pastor Sara will ask you to think about and share what brought you to the church. What are our positive traits? What do we need to do better? Join her for a potluck meal at 6:30 pm. Pastor Sara will provide the meat and beverage. You are asked to bring a

dish to share. Everyone is invited to attend!! RSVP to Pastor Sara so she knows how much main dish to prepare.

The Pastor Spouse Retreat
Pastor Sara and her husband will be enjoying the Pastor/Spouse Retreat the weekend of February 10-12. Pastor's from all over the district will be coming to San Diego to enjoy our wonderful weather. The weekend will be led by Scott

and Chris Douglas. It is being planned by a leadership team from the district.

Office Staffed Sunday Mornings
Beginning Sunday, February 5th, Rae Stern will be in the office for a half an hour after worship. This provides an opportunity for you to talk to her about calendar dates, and any other church business items about which you may have questions.

Friends Center Progress Report

While we are waiting for the framing steel for the building, volunteers on the Friends Center Project have been working on landscape and maintenance. Irrigation systems have been installed and forty-nine fruit trees were planted on the slope near the north gate of the church lot. Peace Corps Association volunteers and young people from San Diego Project Choice spent a Saturday planting trees including citrus of various kinds, avocado, guava, peach, apple, nectarine, plum, persimmon and pomegranate. The volunteers also replaced a few of the ground-cover shrubs on the slope around the building site that had not survived since they were planted in 2004. Forty more fruit trees were also purchased with the same grant money and these are now decorating the area around the current Peace Resource Center office until a planting area is prepared for their permanent home. Another Saturday was spent shredd-



Ken Aeschbacher and Alvin Stern in front of the Friends Center

ding brush removed from pepper trees on the orchard area and from the bank above the church parking lot. Additional time has been spent on maintenance of the planted trees – watering, weeding, control of harmful insects, fertilizing.

We have recently acquired a used forklift which will be useful for unloading the framing steel and other materials from trucks when it is delivered. It will also be used for elevating workers to assemble the wall framing, straw bales and roof panels of the building.

Ken Aeschbacher

I Needed Bread and You Sent a Bomb.

As of May 31, 2005, the U.S. had spent **\$173 billion** on the war in Iraq. Instead we could have:

- Built 1.6 million new housing units;
- Sent 23 million children to Head Start for a year;
- Funded global AIDS programs for 17 years;
- Funded global anti-hunger efforts for 7 years;
- Provided basic immunizations for every child

in the world for 57 years; or

- Provided health insurance to 104 million children for a year.

Does the U.S. budget reflect God's call to care for people in need?

For more information, visit www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace.

Be in prayer for the winter term mission of *Companeros en Ministerio* in Mexico. Projects this term will include distribution of blankets, health and school kits, guiding three encounter teams, and distributing Bibles.

Martin Luther King's Dream Alive and Well

The 2006 Martin Luther King Parade took place on Saturday, January 14th, in the area of PETCO Park. Over 200 contingents from all over San Diego County marched in the parade. Both the Peace Resource Center and the San Diego Coalition for Peace and Justice participated in a lively display of music, dance and messages of peace.

Brethren Sally Kurzdorfer represented our church and Eric Kurzdorfer drove the Coali-



tion truck, which was covered in flowers, flags and quotations of Martin Luther King, such as "And this is the beauty of non-violence:

you can struggle without hating, you can fight without violence."

The Super Sonic Samba band filled the back of the truck and filled the air with wonderful rhythmic music. At the front of the contingent were teams carrying the banner of the Coalition and a number of colorfully costumed dancers. A large number of peace activists streamed behind the band carrying messages against the War in Iraq. Spectators along the mile-long route cheered and flashed peace signs in solidarity and appreciation.

Vigil for Kidnapped Christian Peacemakers

In December 2005, four members of a Christian Peacemaker Team in Iraq were captured by the Swords of Righteousness Brigade. First Church of the Brethren joined numerous churches throughout the country in hosting a prayer vigil for the CPTers on December 11th.

The CPTers remain alive, but are still held as hostages. In response, First Church will host a second prayer vigil on Saturday, February 18th, 7-7:30 pm. All are welcome to join in a special candlelight service, to remain afterwards for a period of fellowship and refreshments, and to sign a petition to the captors, urging them to release the four peacemakers.

Cox Channel 4 Highlights Local Stories from *Chicken Soup*

The Cox Channel 4 "San Diego Insider" program will profile San Diego authors who contributed to *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Stories for a Better World*. The first show highlights Church of the Brethren's Linda Williams, Con-

gressman Bob Filner, Azim Khamisa, and Sylvia Boaz Leighton (Carmen's daughter). The program will air at 8:00 and 10:00 p.m. on February 12. Second program about additional San Diego authors will be presented on March 12.

Sign-up Time for Interfaith Rotational Shelter

Every year our congregation participates in the Interfaith Rotational Shelter of the San Diego Ecumenical Council. We serve the homeless by providing five dinners at Our Savior's Lutheran Church. This year, we have an opportunity to help during the February 19 through March 5 rotation. If you would like to help provide and serve a meal during this time period, please contact Sally Kurzdorfer at (619) 445-6319. For information on the shelter program, visit www.interfaithshelter.org, or call (619) 702-5399.

Board Meeting Summary, January 5

The Treasurer's report showed a positive cash flow of \$4,886.31 for 2005, with a balance of \$8,806.25 in the operating account and \$27,193.96 in the MIR account. The year-end Memorial Fund report showed \$14,023.81 in unrestricted cash reserves and \$28,676.60 in memorial funds.

The balance on the Brethren Foundation investment on November 30, 2005 was \$139,876.27. The investment is distributed among: Balanced Fund (\$37,155.71), Bond Fund (\$35,849.58), Domestic Stock Fund (\$35,347.11) and Short Term Fund (\$31,523.88).

The Executive Committee reviewed and approved contracts for the pastor, church secretary and choir director/church musician. The Executive Committee will review the procedure for security checks of church members working with youth at its January meeting.

Pastor Sara presented her ideas about possible directions for our church. Church means more than attending a service on Sunday mornings. It involves a variety of ways to encounter Christ through small group events that occur at different times of the week. Church is about building relationships. Pastor Sara also presented her requests for Sunday's off, vacation days and spiritual retreat days for 2006, which will be reviewed by the Executive Committee.

John Mortimer reported that the Stewards Commission did not meet in December. Members are looking into the shortage of hymnals in the sanctuary. There will be two work projects in January for the Friends Center: one to chip branches (January 14) and one to plant fruit trees (January 21).

Mary Aeschbacher summarized the Nurture Commission's work during Advent. This included the preparation of Christmas tree ornaments, each having the name of someone from the church. Members of the congregation were urged to take an ornament at the end of Advent and hold the named individual up in prayer throughout the year.

Margi Secor reported that the commission raised \$200 at the Holiday Bazaar. The proceeds will be used to paint The Gathering Place. A group will be meeting weekly on Thursdays to read the New Testament in a year. Dottie Marsden will serve as a contact for the PSWD newsletter and other outside publicity.

The board approved a designation of \$4,000 out of Pastor Sara's base salary in 2006 as allowance for utilities and furnishings, with one member in opposition.

Stewards Plan to Paint Church Office on February 18

If you have entered the church office recently, and noticed the improved furnishings, you may also have seen that we are "putting new wine in an old wineskin". The walls, with one exception, have not been repainted for years. The wear and tear are showing.

The usual suspects, Ken and Alvin, have begun the repainting task. They have patched and repainted one of the worst-looking

walls. But, they are a bit busy with building the Friends Center and making more urgent repairs around the church. Let's help them out!

Church work day for February is Saturday, the 18th. Stewards has decided to focus on repainting at least one more wall in the office. Piecemeal repainting is less disruptive, and gives more people the opportunity to par-

ticipate. Like you!

We'll say 9:00 am to begin, since I can't sleep late. But if you do sleep in Saturdays, come by later (say, by noon), and help out. The work done will be determined by who shows.

John Mortimer, Stewards

Multiple Opportunities for Spiritual Growth

Thursday Group Revitalizes Believers

‘San Diego Brethren give a lot of themselves in so many ways. By participating in the New Testament Group, they can be nurtured and revitalized in their faith!’ This was the sentiment expressed by participants at a recent New Testament Group meeting. The discussion centered on the many manifestations of humility called for by Jesus Christ: becoming like little children, extending endless forgiveness to transgressors, dropping preconceptions, and following the Lord with complete trust. In reading through the book of Matthew, readers were struck by the Lord’s call for faith above all things. Through faith, the crosses each person must bear in this world form an ‘easy yolk’.

All are welcome to join in this ongoing exploration of the important underpinnings of Christian faith. Meetings are held every 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Thursday at 7:00 pm in the Albaugh Room. Although participants are encouraged to follow a reading schedule which allows them to cover the entire New Testament in one year, they need not read at home in order to attend. Bibles and schedules are available at each session, and refreshments are served.

Bible Study Introducing the Biblical Stories

Carol Hayden will be hosting a bible study that will introduce the bible stories at her home, 4545 Collwood Blvd #19, on Friday’s at 7 pm. This twelve week study will highlight the major stories of the Old Testament and examine some of the basic faith stories of the New Testament. If you are interested in participating contact Carol. Those who attend will decide when it will start.

Camp LaVerne Banquet
Saturday, February 18, 2006,
5:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m
La Verne Church of the Brethren

Bible Study in a Contemplative Format

Pastor Sara will be offering a contemplative Bible Study on Sunday Mornings during the Sunday School hour. She will be introducing *Lectio Divina*, a contemplative method for Bible study, on March 5th. *Lectio Divina* is a method used to encounter the scriptures in a reflective way. The text is read three different times with the invitation from the leader to the participants to focus on different ideas, thinking, feelings or situations. After each reading a time of reflection is given. At the conclusion there is an opportunity to share individual reflections, insights with the group. We will walk through the passion narrative using *Lectio Divina* during the Sundays of Lent.

March 5	Introduction to <i>Lectio Divina</i>
March 12 (Mark 11. 1-11)	Jesus enters Jerusalem.
March 19, (Mark 14.32-42)	Gethsemane
March 26, (Mark 14, 53-65)	Condemned to death
April 2, (Mark 15.1-20)	Standing before Pilate
April 9, (Mark 15. 40-47)	Taken to the tomb
April 16, (Mark 16.1- 20)	The resurrection

Coffee House Worship

The month of February is another opportunity to worship in an interactive, informal format. We will gather for worship at 10:15 am in the Sanctuary. This space will be transformed into a coffee house arrangement, smaller tables for intimate conversation with a worship format that involves conversation and interaction around the theme for the day. Our music will be accompanied by the keyboard. Pastor Sara will provide leadership for three of the four weeks, and Pastor Donna Ford from the Hope United Methodist Church will be with us on February 12th. Invite your friends to share this different worship experience with us.

National Youth Conference March Fundraiser

The "Orange Toilet" is back! It seems that every NYC year we have orange toilet sightings. This NYC experience will not be different. The "Orange Toilet" is an opportunity to help the youth raise funds to attend NYC. This year, Toilet insurance, which guarantees the toilet will not show up on your lawn, is \$10. Now,

if you would like to have Dylan and Chelsea place the toilet on someone's yard (within our church family and participants) it will cost you \$20. If you have not purchased the insurance and the orange porcelain wonder ends up on your yard, it will cost you \$25 to have it removed. Dylan and

Chelsea will be collecting insurance until February 28th. To have the toilet placed on someone's yard talk to Dylan and Chelsea as well. They will be collecting funds up until the fundraiser is over. The "Orange Toilet" will begin to show up on lawns beginning March 1st.

Youth Ministry at San Diego Church

A new Youth Ministry has been formed at San Diego First Church of the Brethren. Born out of a discussion between Pastor Sara Haldemann-Scarr and high school senior, Dylan Haro, the group called MGC meets twice monthly in the sanctuary/meeting room on Thursday evenings from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

In the summer of 2005 Pastor Sara and Dylan were discussing his desire to be in some kind of ministry. He was especially interested in working with youth not necessarily in the church to help them experience Jesus. The others in his band of four, called PACI-

FIRE, were interested in the same kind of ministry. The use of the church building was offered with Pastor Sara as coach and mentor but the group to be peer organized and managed.

Dylan offered leadership with his band fully participating. They contacted friends and schoolmates from the San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts where they all attend and have had 12-15 attendees at each meeting since their first get-together in early September. Invitations were also extended to the church and neighborhood youth.

The gatherings of MGC (for Music-Games-Company) begin with get-to-know-you games and even physical games such as elbow tag. There is a time for sharing of poetry, or music, then the evening concludes with Dylan on Drums, Josh on Guitar, Jarrell on Keyboard and John on Bass Guitar performing songs they have written.

Dylan and his group hope their inspiration from God to have a safe hang out with others in 9 through 12th grade, share their experiences, and enjoy each others' company will grow and flourish.

Events in Community Surrounding the Church

The Fairmount Park Neighborhood Association will be hosting a visit from District 3 Council member Toni Atkins at their February meeting. She will bring everyone up to date with things in City Hall and how they will impact residents in Fairmount Park. That meeting will be held on February 16th at the First Church of the Brethren.

The annual Fairmount Park Whole Neighborhood Yard Sale is going to be held on Saturday March 25

from 8:00 a.m. to Noon. This is a fundraiser for the FPNA and is a great way to clean out the garage and get out to meet neighbors. A donation of \$20 to FPNA is requested to participate and to have your home listed in our advertising. To reserve your spot, call 266-7161 or email: fairmount-park92105@yahoo.com

The Sunshine Social Society meet on February 21 at the church.



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www.sdbrethrenchurch.org
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Church Women United Program for 2006

Church Women United encourages church women to come together in a visible community to witness to their faith in Jesus Christ, enabled by the Holy Spirit to go out into every neighborhood and nation as instruments of reconciling love.

The theme for 2006 is "His Commission is Our Commission Also – Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 1:8, known as The Great Commission in which Jesus tells his disciples "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age . . ."

Programs sponsored by Church Women United will be held on April 7, June 2, and October 6, 2006. Specific information on each program will be available in the Advocate for upcoming months and programs. In addition, Church Women United participates in the following celebrations:

World Day of Prayer, March 3rd
May Friendship Day, May 5th
Inspiration Day, September 2nd

An International Breakfast, October 14th
World Community Day, November 3rd

Although first Church of the Brethren is one of the smaller churches in the association, we have had and continue to have active participation in CWU. Jean McGary served as treasurer for many years, Anna Harshbarger chaired the Enabling Services Committee, faithfully checking in attendees and collecting lunch money for each event. Dottie Marsden is on the finance committee and chaired the planning of the World Day of Prayer celebration for two years. The church also regularly hosts Church Women United events, including the March 3 World Day of Prayer.

The current president of Church Women United is Faustine Wilson. Pat Perry is serving her second year as First Vice President and Program Chairman. Pat said she likes to be part of this organization because of its ecumenical and interracial emphasis. All women from our church are encouraged to attend and participate in CWU. It is an opportunity to study, speak and act on condition and issues in the community which involve moral, ethical and spiritual principles inherent in the Christian gospel. For further information contact Pat, Jean or Dottie.

Pat Perry 619-292-2543

