

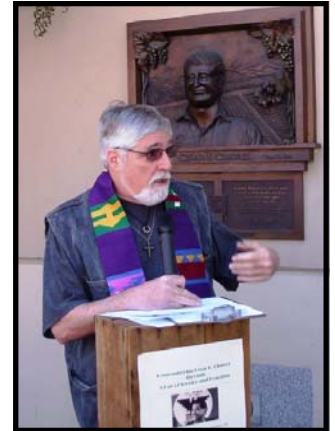
CONNECTIONS

A Word from John...

August 2009

Empathy vs. objectivity, reason vs. subjectivity, we've heard much of this in the confirmation hearings of Judge Sonia Sotomayor. And I am led to wonder once again, what in the name of self-righteousness this all means

Much of the pre-hearing hype from folks like Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama was concern that Judge Sotomayor's empathy represented a bias that made her unfit for Supreme Court Judgeship. And I wondered then how these same hypesters reconciled the shift in the Court's decisions of the last 15 years that have rolled back legal precedents on civil, labor, and consumer rights. During the hearings, former Republican and still current Senator Specter of Pennsylvania spoke of the mountain folks have made of the mole hill, empathy. He pointed out that were it not for empathy in legal interpretations of the constitution, we would still have slavery and Judge Sotomayor would not be sitting before the Committee precisely because she is a Latina Women, wise or otherwise.



Ironically, as the hearings ended, Senator Sessions and others who complained of Sotomayor's empathetic bias whined because she wouldn't reveal any biases in answering their biased questions. (I was beginning to expect one of these professed keepers of moral purity and "family values" to ask whether or not she believed one should pay taxes to Caesar).

Several years ago I watched a talk show that trotted out a panel that included a representative of a white supremacist organization that subjugated manipulated statistics of their own creation to prove "with reason" the inferiority of "non-whites". In fact they portrayed themselves as non-racist because they presented their bigotry as being based on "reasoned evidence". Also on that panel was an African American civil rights veteran, who understandably became impassioned in his response to the "reasoned" nonsense that was oozing forth in cool demeanor from what I reasoned was a soulless shell of pasty arrogance. The response from the wannabe virtual bigot was to point to the emotional displays of the civil rights worker as proof of "non-whites", inability to deal with "reasoned" truth. It was a vicious and ugly cycle.

A few weeks ago I received a copy of the May/June issue "Theology Matters", the newsletter mouthpiece of the "Presbyterian Coalition", a coalition of Presbyterians against homosexuality. Although they are self described as a coalition advocating the theological integrity of the Presbyterian Church USA it is their fear and ignorance of GLBT people that created and sustains this grouping of people who in all likelihood might disagree on everything else. The lead article in this newsletter is titled, "Marriage and the Public Good: Ten Principles". In the opening paragraphs of the first subsection titled Executive Summary we get this:

In recent years, marriage has weakened, with serious negative consequences for society as a whole. Four developments are especially troubling: divorce, illegitimacy, cohabitation, and same-sex marriage.

"The purpose of this document is to make a substantial new contribution to the public debate over marriage. Too often, the rational case for marriage is not made at all or not made very well. As scholars, we are persuaded that the case for marriage can be made and won at the level of reason. "

Note the inclusion of "same-sex marriage" in the paragraph listing developments that have weakened marriage. That inclusion (not the kind of inclusion we are struggling for), we are led to believe, is "reasoned" and "rational" just because this group, that refuses to hear any arguments other than its own,

Need an extra pair of hands?

Call the Hayward Day Labor Center
510.782.WORK (9675)

Dispatching available Monday—Saturday
6:00am—11:00am

The Hayward Day Labor Center is a non-profit organization under the agency South Hayward Parish. All wages go directly to the workers.

Please support your community!



Opportunities to Serve Your Church Community

Family Resource Center — 510.782.2947
Light receptionist work

USDA Food Distribution — 510.785.FOOD (3663)
Help pack and distribute food

South Hayward Parish - 510.785.FOOD (3663)
Data Entry
Help bagging baked goods (Tues&Thurs)

Westminster Hills Presbyterian - 510.782.5795
Help maintain the grounds with the Garys.
Contribute articles for the newsletter
Joy group teacher, VBS leader
Church Garden
Set up new children's library



The Nurture and Growth Team Needs YOU!



We are looking for people to nurture and support growth in the knowledge, experience and the expression of the love of Jesus Christ for the children of Westminster Hills Presbyterian Church.

If you want to see our church with spiritually enriched children living out the love of Christ please consider volunteering some time to teach Sunday School or care for the infants and toddlers.

If you have any questions please contact:

Amy Rickard
Director of Christian Education
510-782-5795
OR
925-984-1692

Via email: whillspresbyterian@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATE!

October 10, 2009
All day
All Church Retreat!

More information
to come!

Minute for Mission: Homelessness/Affordable Housing
(August 9, 2009)

The Lord's Day

Though challenging to imagine, the National Coalition for the Homeless estimates that 3.5 million Americans, 39 percent of them children, go without shelter each year due in large part to systemic social and economic factors such as chronic unemployment and lack of affordable housing. As a college student, and this year as a Lutheran Volunteer, I've had the opportunity to meet many individuals who are or who have been homeless. I always ask what I, as one person, can do to help. The most frequent answer continues to surprise me: Just see me. Just recognize that I am there on the street corner, on the bus, in the park. Just say hello.

In Luke 10:29-37, Jesus tells the story of the Samaritan who stopped to help a beaten man on the side of the road who had been ignored by both the priest and the Levite. Jesus challenges the lawyer seeking eternal life to "go and do likewise."

Each day on the streets and in the parks of our cities and towns, millions of Americans who lack adequate shelter are ignored because of our assumptions about why these people are homeless. But we don't know each person's story. By ignoring these individuals who are a part of God's family, we submit ourselves to the ignorance that perpetuates our lack of action.

So the next time that you see a homeless person on the sidewalk or in the park or on the bus, remember that the least that you can do, just acknowledging that person's presence, is also the greatest. Today must be the day we begin to "go and do likewise."

—Elder Patricia Massey, Coastal Carolina Presbytery, former co-moderator of the Presbyterian Youth Connection, Washington, DC



As a personal mission at home, please consider making a donation to a homeless shelter or to an agency that works with the homeless. If you need help finding an agency, please talk to John or Amy.

Betty's Corner
Director of Community Ministries

A SNAPSHOT WHILE WAITING FOR THE LIGHT TO CHANGE

The police were there... lots of them on the corner. Four black and whites, a narc car with its lights still flashing and one small civilian compact model pulled to the curb with all four doors standing open. Odd, on a sunny Monday afternoon, even in South Hayward. Lots of folk and officers milling around but what caught my attention were the children. Maybe three of them; young, under ten, standing and staring, swinging around the street sign post, doing what children do while they wait... wait without judgment or expectation, wait for what happens next, wait for grown up to decide what will become of them.. just wait.

A large officer held a tiny boy, maybe 18 months old, on his hip while he spoke into the walkie-talkie on the shoulder of his uniform. The baby was bare foot with his little toe hooked into the officer's service belt just above the holstered revolver. As he talked on the phone, the officer patted his little passenger on the back; the automatic comfort gesture of an experienced father.

What was going on? I have no idea. My guess is that it had something to do with adults behaving badly and with children who were going to feel the brunt of whatever "badly" meant. But it was also about a small act of comfort offered in the midst of craziness. In the big picture, that doesn't fix much of anything of course, but sometimes it is all we have to give. And it matters.



As you have heard by now, Rev. Lee Williamson died early Wednesday morning August 29. In the past month he had been having serious trouble breathing and tests were being run by doctors. A diagnosis had not been made before his passing on Wednesday.

Lee and Arlene have been officially involved at First United Methodist Church ever since Lee retired from what is now South Hayward United Methodist Church. Rev. John Chamberlain, a seminary classmate and longtime friend of mine had just been transferred on July 1 to 1st UMC, Hayward from Alum Rock UMC in San Jose. Lee had been a mentor and friend to John for almost 30 years. I will be working with him in updating folks on any events or needs. Lee was such a significant person to so many.

A memorial service will be held September 12 at 11 a.m. at First United Methodist Church (Second and B St.)

As can be expected this is a very difficult time for Arlene Williamson. Our deacons have communicated this congregation's readiness to be of assistance as well as letting her know that she is held closely in our thoughts and prayers. In the meantime, if you wish to send cards and or notes that might include stories or memories of Lee to Arlene, the address is:

Arlene Williamson
29179 Delgado Rd.
Hayward 94544

Lee has had a huge impact on the life and ministry of this congregation, the South Hayward Parish and issues of peace and justice though out the region as well as globally. The space left by him is huge. The pain of missing him is deep. Thoughts of not being revived and encouraged by that deep voice that seemed to come from the center of the earth is hard to accept. Yet I find comfort in considering what we have become and what the world is because of his life.

I am deeply grateful for the support and compassion I have received from my wife and members of this congregation as we pastor one another in this time of grief



John and Lee at Fort Benning during the School of the Americas Watch in November 2008.



Lee is gone. What can we do? And who are we to do it? All I have to do is look at a calendar and begin to see the spaces. Who's gonna cook the pancakes on Strove (Fat) Tuesday? Who's gonna assist with communion at the Christmas Eve service? Who's going to do the Good Friday Service of Diminishing Light? Who's going to put our feet back on the ground with the occasional life rooted sermon? Who's going to be the wise old mentor to frustrated clergy of a social justice persuasion? Just who is going to make it real?

Perhaps the answer is in this poetic narrative "No One But Us" by Annie Dillard, which Lee turned me on to:

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in

this holy place? There is no one but us. There is no one to send,

nor a clean hand, nor a pure heart on the face of the earth, nor in

the earth, but only us, a generation comforting ourselves with the

notion that we have come at an awkward time, that our innocent

fathers are all dead—as if innocence had ever been—and our

children busy and troubled, and we ourselves unfit, not yet ready,

having each of us chosen wrongly, made a false start, failed,

yielded to impulse and the tangled comfort of pleasures, and

grown exhausted, unable to seek the thread, weak, and

involved. But there is no one but us. There never has been.

Thanks Lee, thanks a lot. Really!



AUGUST 2009: Calendar of Events

DATE	DAY	EVENT (As well as lectionary selections for the Lord's day)
02	Sunday	2 Sam. 11:26-12:13a; Ps. 51:1-12; Eph. 4:1-16, John 6:24-35
04	Tuesday	The Message 630pm
05	Wednesday	Good News Story Hour, 10am, Sanctuary open (silent prayer and meditation) 530pm - 800pm
06	Thursday	Study Group at Betty's House 7:00pm
07	Friday	Música Comunal Coffeehouse (Local and Global talent) 7pm
09	Sunday	2 Sam. 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; Ps. 130; Eph. 4:25-5:2; John 6:41-51 (Homelessness and Affordable Housing)
10	Monday	Vacation Bible School 9am-12pm, The Message 630pm
11	Tuesday	Vacation Bible School 9am-12pm
12	Wednesday	Vacation Bible School 9am-12pm, Sanctuary (silent prayer and meditation) 530pm - 800pm
13	Thursday	Vacation Bible School 9am-12pm, Study Group at Betty's 7:00pm
14	Friday	Vacation Bible School 9am-12pm
15	Saturday	Amy Robinson from Pasos de Fe will speak at a luncheon at W. Hills, 11am
16	Sunday	1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14; Ps 111; Eph. 5:15-20; John 6:51-58 (Higher Education)
18	Tuesday	The Message 630pm
19	Wednesday	Sanctuary open (silent prayer and meditation) 530pm - 800pm
21	Friday	Ramadan Begins
23	Sunday	1 Kings 8:(1,6,10-11) 22-30, 41-43; Ps 84; Eph. 6:10-20; John 6:56-69 (Family Worship)
25	Tuesday	The Message 630pm
26	Wednesday	Sanctuary open (silent prayer and meditation) 530pm - 800pm
30	Sunday	S. of Sol. 2:8-13, Ps. 45:1-2, 6-9; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8,14-15, 21-23

*** All events subject to change. Details will be posted on our Website, Facebook, Twitter and blog.



Sylvia and Karen share a nice moment at Don Castro Park during Worship in the Park

Westminster Hills Presbyterian Church is now on FACEBOOK and TWITTER!

Follow us on Twitter: @whillspresby

And on Facebook, search Westminster Hills Presbyterian Church, Hayward, CA



facebook

says so.

In an interview on NPR's radio program Market Place Betsey, Stevenson, Assistant Professor of Business and Public Policy at the University of Pennsylvania, referred to a comment Chief Justice Roberts made in his confirmation hearings: "The role of a Supreme Court Judge is much like the role of a baseball umpire."

Professor Stevenson referenced a study where computers were used to measure the accuracy of umpires' calls on balls and strikes. A striking phenomenon was revealed. When pitchers and umpires were of the same race, the pitcher almost always won the game. The opposite was true when the races differed. And likewise in basketball; white refs called more fouls on black players and very often ignored obvious fouls by white players. The opposite was true of black refs.

Justice Roberts' believes he is as objective as a baseball umpire. He is.

Bias is most dangerous when it is unacknowledged. And religious groups are as adept at hiding unacknowledged bias behind "reasoned" theology as Senators from Alabama are with their reasoned bigotry.

Thank God for wise Latino women.

Think I'm not being reasonable? I never claimed I was!

John



Pictured above: Pastor John uses the conch for the call to worship.



Pictured above: Gary, Sr. works the grill!

Below: The kids celebrate John Calvin's 500th Birthday during Worship in the Park at Don Castro Regional Park.



Pictured below: Gloria Wilkinson, Adriaan and Frida tenBosch, Dorene Halseth and Adrienne Knowlton enjoy the beautiful day during Worship in the Park.



**WESTMINSTER HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
...A WELCOMING AND AFFIRMING CHURCH...**

Reverend John F. Wichman

27287 Patrick Avenue
Hayward, CA 94544

510.782.5795



Westminster Hills Presbyterian Church is a member of the South Hayward Parish. These churches include: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Mount Eden Presbyterian Church, Saint Clement's Catholic Church, South Hayward United Methodist Church, Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, United Church of Hayward and Congregation Shir Ami.

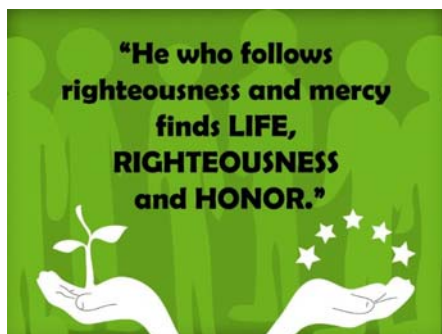
All are welcome!

Worship Celebration	Sundays, 10:00am
Children's Joy Group	Sundays, 10:00am
Mid-Week, Evening Worship	Tuesdays, 6:30pm
Study Group (Call church for info)	Thursday, 7:00pm

Success

To laugh often and much
to win the respect of intelligent people
and the affection of children;
to earn the appreciation of honest critics
and endure the betrayal of false friends;
to appreciate beauty;
to find the best in others;
to leave the world a bit better,
whether by a healthy child,
a garden patch
or a redeemed social condition;
to know even one life has breathed easier
because you have lived.
This is to have succeeded.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



Pictured above, The Rev. Lee Williamson posed with Bishop Warner H. Brown, Jr. after receiving the 2009 Bishop Talbert Award for Racial Justice at Annual Conference Session in June.

Throughout his years of ministry, Williamson himself said his work was guided by two things, learned from others: "To locate myself in venues and on issues that include folk with whom I might not immediately feel comfortable, [and] to listen and watch how folk are working for their rights and dignity - and, when possible, help to apply the Living Word of the Gospel in those situations."