

# NEWS ON HIGH

*The New Beginning: Our Story* by Linda Gruel

Words have the power to do good or evil.

Words can give birth to new beginnings or can destroy what is beautiful and vibrant. Words can be painful or can give blissful joy. The words I cherish the most are those that challenge me to greater heights or call me to deeper life. These are the norms, if I may say.

Mark 1-1 “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” The Word who became flesh and dwells among us. The Word was foretold by the prophets, entered our world, proclaimed by the angels, celebrated by the shepherds, and continues to be celebrated by the church worldwide. You see, God spoke the Word. God gave us a “word,” and the celebration of God’s gift has become known as Christmas. “Christmas,” what a word!

The beginning of our story as Christians starts by learning that Jesus is found in a “broken” setting; for God does not despise the broken hearted. Jesus goes where he can help. Jesus will be found among those who need help trying to make it in life, as he helped the man who could not make it into the pool of Siloam for healing. Jesus is where people are hungry, without a roof over their head. Jesus goes to the outsider, the foreigner and helps, as he did with the woman from Phoenicia. Jesus goes where life is needed when there is death; where a woman lived in the shadows of noonday to get water because she was ashamed to get water from the well any other time.

I want to believe that our beginning in 2012 is grounded in this Jesus, the Word who is in our midst and is actively reaching out to us. Choose newness. Choose blissful joy. Choose peace. Choose Jesus, who is calling you by name.



“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” *Revelation 3:20*



# DOES GOD HEAR OUR CRIES?

*Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Psalm 22:11*

*But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Psalm 22:19*

*Lord, you have seen this; do not be silent. Do not be far from me. Psalm 35:22*

*LORD, do not forsake me; do not be far from me, my God. Psalm 38:21*

Do these verses sound like you today? Are you crying out to God - do not be far from me? I can assure you we have all been there, crying out wondering if God hears our hearts, asking if God is here with us. The Psalms are filled with groans, questions and then as you continue to read, you find praises and acclamations that God is with us. I love the option to question God. God allows this to happen – while we question God, God continues to stay beside us. We are allowed to pull away, but God continues to draw us back. God allows us to command and demand and even get mad...yet God continues to provide a covering of love that penetrates even our ugliest selves. Forgiveness is always close at hand. Love is always close at hand. Strength is always close at hand. Answers to your questions are always close at hand.

Usually when we question, "Is God here, are you far away?" it is because we have pulled away from our Maker. I pray that you spend time in the Psalms, find closeness and strength. I assure you, God is not far - God is right with you. Hold on to the promise of God's undying love for you. With the kind of love God has provided, believe me...God is near. Please call on God now. Allow yourself to feel God's presence as you read the Bible verses. God bless.

---

*I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. Isaiah 42:16*

This particular verse truly ministers to my deepest heart. Blind, unfamiliar, darkness....words many people are receiving recently. We have allowed the lies from Satan to penetrate our hearts so deeply that we do not see any way out. But friends, read the rest of the words, guide, light, rough places turned smooth, will not forsake. These words are powerful and a direct promise from God! God has not given us the spirit of fear. God provides the spirit of power and might. We have a friend and deliverer, Jesus is His name. Seek Him and all the blindness, the darkness, the rough places and all the things that bind us will seem small and unimportant. If we will feel God's presence and have the assurance that God is with us through it all, our hearts and spirits are alive again and hope can abound.

There is that phrase again - THROUGH IT ALL. Yes, Jesus is right here with you. Jesus may not remove the obstacles and burdens, but He has promised to be with us through it. The things He does are a mystery to us - but I love the last words in the verse above....Jesus will not forsake them - You are part of the "them." Receive this promise, no matter what you are facing, the promise He proclaims throughout His Word, you are not alone. My rough places are being made smooth this time, are yours? The answer is YES - if you allow God to be in them. Are you allowing Christ to go through it all with you? God bless.

**Giving**

**"WHY WE GIVE, IT'S NOT BECAUSE GOD NEEDS OUR MONEY – IT'S BECAUSE GIVING HELPS US GROW AS CHRISTIANS." Karl Travis.**

## PONDERING ON...NOEL

One of the carols we sang on 12/25<sup>th</sup> morning says “Sing we now of Christmas, Noel, sing we now Noel! I can’t remember anything else from the carol and from the other carols. But this one brings a smile in my heart and images so vivid and recent to me.

High Street Presbyterian Church moved through the season excellently. I felt joy. I felt warmth. I saw the smiles. I heard “Beautiful, it brought tears to my eyes.” And “it was peaceful and nice.” I say, that’s what’s all about!

Advent and Christmas are about the expectancy of the “Babe so dear,” as the carol says. It is not about the imperfections we experience and mortify us deeply. It is about the joy of whom we were called from and to move us forward in that breathtaking relationship with Christ.

Although, I’m exhausted after all the celebrations, the hope I felt in all of us energizes me. I’m moving toward the next step God has for each one of us and the church because you are ready. You made the hope visible. You showed love that will bridge our work within ourselves and our families strengthening our faith and relationship with God.

Keep on the faith. Keep on the work. Keep on believing together.



## THANK YOU

Each one of you who took time to make a difference this Christmas. The Council prayerfully asked each High Street Presbyterian Church members and friends to make Jordan, Morgan, Christina, and Shonda our Christmas and you embraced it fully. On 12/25<sup>th</sup> right after our Lessons and Carol, they opened their gifts. Their joy, smiles, and “Awww,” were the greatest gift we have received.

What can we say about Salvador Zaragoza’s Pozole? He not only was a reader in the Lessons and Carol but also sang. He said that he hasn’t sang in a choir since his 7<sup>th</sup> grade. How about that? Sal, your Chicken Pozole was a total success!!! Thank you.

## Family Jazz Sunday Worship

**FEBRUARY 15TH – 10:00 A.M.**

**Pastor Linda Gruel and High Street Presbyterian Church family would LOVE to have you join us for worship for our Jazz Worship on February 15<sup>th</sup> at 10 a.m. and our fellowship at 11:30 a.m.**

Dear Members and Friends,

Yes, it's that time again – the time when we ask you to pledge (hopefully TITHE) to our little church in Oakland on High Street. Your Council has High Hopes for our congregation and for our neighborhood. Our pastor, Rev. Linda Gruel, continues to come up with more and more creative ways we can make our community and our church more peaceful and productive.

We ask now for your pledge for 2012. We also ask that when you can, you come by to see us. We love nothing better than to greet our long-time friends. Please know that even if we don't see you on Sundays, you are always on our hearts and in our prayers.

As for those of you who are regular members or visitors, thank you for your continued presence in our midst. One only has to stay after service one time to see what love there is shared at our Social Hour. Of course, you don't have to wait that long to see the love —there's always the Passing of the Peace during the service! You can't be in our Sanctuary during that time and not receive numerous hugs -- isn't it wonderful?! Did you know that one of our former members, Karen Relephord, renamed our church? She calls us "HUG STREET CHURCH"!

And so, dear friends, I ask you, on behalf of our lovely church and our loving congregation, to open your hearts to this request for your pledge for 2012. God bless you and keep you!

Your servant in Christ,

Anore Shaw,  
Chair, Stewardship Committee

HIGH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
2012 PLEDGE FORM

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of Pledge \_\_\_\_\_  
weekly monthly quarterly annually (Circle one.)

- Other Pledge(s):
- ~ Sign up to help with Sunday Services \_\_\_\_\_
  - ~ Help with Transportation \_\_\_\_\_
  - ~ Serve as Elder \_\_\_\_\_
  - ~ Serve as Deacon \_\_\_\_\_
  - ~ Other \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE RETURN THIS TO HIGH STREET ASAP!

MY/OUR COMMITMENT TO  
HIGH STREET CHURCH

\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
weekly monthly quarterly yearly

- Other commitments:
- ~ Sunday Services \_\_\_\_\_
  - ~ Transportation \_\_\_\_\_
  - ~ Elder \_\_\_\_\_
  - ~ Deacon \_\_\_\_\_
  - ~ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Keep this portion as a record of  
your commitment for 2012.

# BIRTHDAYS

## January

1. Linda Gruel
2. LaShonda Pace
- 13 Walter Carmelo (Wally) Gruel
- 15 Anore M. Shaw
- 23 Jordan Cook
- 26 Tabitha Zagoza



## February



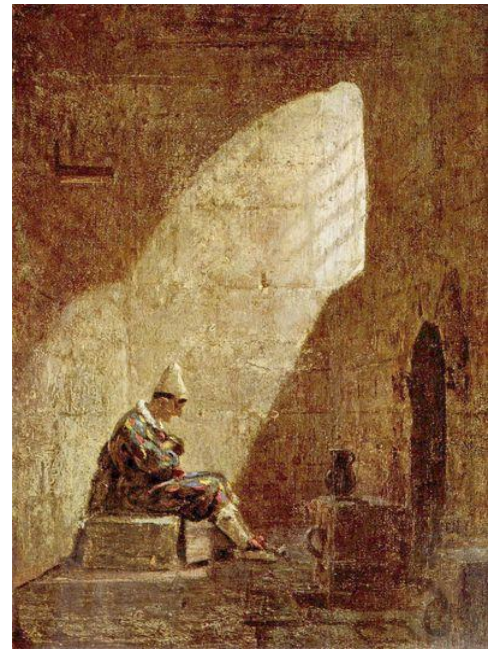
- 5 Ruth Miner (Marjory Stewart 's mother)

# ASH WEDNESDAY

February 22, 2012

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent and it is marked with a special liturgy. The theme for the day, though not for all of Lent, is that we stand as sinners condemned to die, but for God's grace. This is symbolized by the imposition of ashes on the forehead, with the words, "You are dust and to dust you shall return." In the Old Testament, ashes were a sign of penitence (feeling regretful at offenses) and mourning. Ash Wednesday is one of two days of special observance (the other being Good Friday) for which fasting is recommended. While this usually refers going without food for the entire day, this practice is not practical for all persons, including, but not limited to, diabetics. Use your own discretion in determining how you can best observe this day.

*High Street Presbyterian Church invites you to our Ash Wednesday Services at 7:00 p.m.*



The Stations of the Cross are depictions of 14 incidents in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' death from Pilate's house to being placed in the tomb. They are used for the service called the Way of the Cross, which visits each station in turn with a brief reading, response, collect and on some occasions, a meditation. This is particularly appropriate for Good Friday and all Fridays in Lent.

# PRAISE AND PETITIONS

Praise for our men who helped serving our Christmas Dinner to all. Praise for the leadership.

Praise for Janette's new great-grand daughter!

Lift up Lucy who is struggling with stage four cancer.

Lift up Janet who is struggling with her health. For the doctors to provide the proper treatment.

Praise for the help during the Advent and Christmas season.

Lift up Dolores' daughter in law who lost her mother.

Praise for Nancy Holve desire to prepare and practice her ministry skills while waiting for a call.

Lift up Nancy Joseph, Dolores Sullivan and those who lost their loved ones. May God continue to provide comfort and love.

“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” *Matthew 28:20*

Lift up Karen Rulephord who is recuperating from a total hip replacement

Praise for Kathy Ingram's sister benign breast biopsy result.

Praise for Janet's children painting and fixing her home before the holidays.

Praise for January's and February's birthdays. Happy birthday to you all!

Praise for Lyle and Cece in worship visiting.

Praise for the visitors during the Christmas season.

Lift up silent prayers for health and family togetherness.

Lift up the deacons for helpers to coordinate their ministry in our church.

Lift up military personnel returning from duty abroad as they reintegrate to life in the USA.

Praise for High Street Presbyterian Church as we trust in the promises “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

*(Jeremiah 29:11)*



## Scripture Readings for Sundays' Sermons:

1/1 Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7 & Luke 2:22-40

1/8 – *Baptism of the Lord Sunday* - Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7 & Mark 1:4-11

1/15 *Martin Luther King, Jr., Sunday* - 1 Samuel 3:1-20; Psalm 139:1-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 & John 1:43-51

1/22 Jonah 3:1-10; Psalm 62:5-12; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 & Mark 1:14-20

1/29 *Criminal Justice Sunday* - Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 & Mark 1:21-28.

2/5 Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-20; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 & Mark 1:29-39

2/12 2 Kings 5:1-14; Psalm 30; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 & Mark 1:40-45

# Receiving Blessings: Giving

Like any other new years, 2012 will not be any different from the others. It is time for resolutions. We make resolutions or retake on old ones which we couldn't fulfilled. High Street Presbyterian Church also is in making resolutions. Our resolution is about giving. Yes, it is about money. It is about making a yearly budget and put to meaningful work every penny entering to the church's pocket.

Why do you give? We start by understanding two main concepts that as Christians is important to know: Tithes and offering.

Tithes are distinct from offerings, because offerings are a voluntary giving out of that which the Lord allows us to keep. "The tithe...is the LORD'S." (Leviticus 27:30) It isn't ours, it belongs to the Lord. We like to think that we own the world and everything we have. Easily, we forget that those that have been bought by the blood of Christ the earth is the Lord's and that WE are the Lord's.

I never cease to stress the fact that God has made a good deal for us. God has promised to bless the ninety percent if we recognize God's ownership by giving what belongs to God. According to Malachi 3:8 to keep the tithe is to be a thief and a robber. Now, another concept is that first-fruits. First-fruits are the Lord's, as well. (Exodus 23:19) To give the first-fruits is to recognize God's ownership and that whatever we receive and whatever we gain and whatever we get from our labor, from our life, is God's provision and we give God the first-fruits.

Therefore, giving in its truest form is inevitably tied to Christianity. It is inseparable. When you are giving to God, you are not giving in a reluctant way. You're giving to God because God sees your heart and sees your mind and because this is what pleases God. It is important to know that God doesn't want us to give everything.

Often I hear "I don't know if I can make it. I don't know if I can participate in with tithes, offerings and first-fruits." The answer is always "would you would make it with God on your side, or make it alone



with God against you?" In another words "do you want it your way or God's way?" I've chosen God. Join me. Join us. Let's have our ninety percent blessed and our offerings multiplied.

*Malachi 3:8-12*

*"Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, 'How are we robbing you?' In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me – the whole nations of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing."*

## Bible Study

We are restarting our Bible study  
Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

Join us!

Come and let's learn together the Word of  
God.

# Lent

Lent is a season of preparation leading up to Easter. It is the forty days plus the six Sundays before Easter. For centuries, it has been observed as a special time of self examination and penitence. Lent is a time for concentration on fundamental values and priorities, and is not a time for self punishment. Throughout Lent, the worship services of the church take on a simpler tone, appropriate to this season. The custom is to mark the season of Lent by giving up some things and taking on others. Both can serve to mark the season as a holy time of preparation. Some examples of things people give up for Lent include sweets, meat for all or some meals, and alcohol. In most cases, giving up something for Lent can be made more meaningful by using the money or time for another purpose. For example, meal times on fast days could be spent in prayer. Another example is that if you give up meat during Lent, the extra money that would go to meat dishes can be given to a group, such as the Food Bank, which works to end hunger. Some things added during Lent are daily Bible reading, fasting on Fridays, times of prayer, taking a course of study related in some way to spirituality.

Lent begins when you can say "Help me Lord!"

As Lent begins, we should set out specific spiritual goals we would like to reach before Easter and decide how we will pursue them—for instance, by going to every Friday service when we can and receiving the Word more often.

## Journeying through Lent

Starting Friday, 2/24<sup>th</sup> will observe Lent every Friday @ 7:00 p.m. through prayer and meditation.

Join us to get better when we are tired of not being better. Let God walk with us.

The distribution of ashes reminds us of our own mortality and calls us to repentance. In the early Church, Ash Wednesday was the day on which those who had sinned, and who wished to be readmitted to the Church, would begin their new life. The ashes that we receive are a reminder of our own sinfulness, and many believers leave them on their foreheads all day as a

Join the Choir  
We will have a special program for Easter Sunday  
April 8, 2011 – 10:00 a.m.

### The Season of Epiphany (January 6 – February 21, 2012)

Epiphany: January 6

Baptism of Our Lord: January 8

Transfiguration (Last Sunday in Epiphany): February 19

Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras: February 21

To Love is to Live  
by BarbaraAnn Varner.

For to be is to be  
But to love is to live;  
To have and to hold,  
Be hurt but forgive,  
To laugh and to cry,  
To work and to play,  
Sharing your love

Tender hearts and the avaricious,  
Woe, do not go hand-in hand.  
For while the former are idealists,  
The latter fail to understand  
Their neglect of the weak and  
Dispossessed  
In this supposed equal land.  
BarbaraAnn Varner



"Bearing the fruit  
and growing in the  
knowledge of God."  
Colossians 1:10

## COUNCIL MEETS

January 22<sup>nd</sup> – 12:30 p.m.

### Fellowship Hall Floor

Our church was designed one hundred years ago by the famed architect of Hearst Castle, Julia Morgan. The fellowship hall needed repair yesterday. We have acted on faith and the floor repair is completed by now. The total cost of the floor replacement is \$15,000. Though the school will pay half per agreement we still need to raise approximately \$4,000 since we have budgeted only \$3,500 only.

### Congregational Meeting

Our annual congregational meeting will be held in February - most likely the later part of February. It is during this meeting that our annual budget is brought to the congregation for approval and other business of the church. Be a participant of this important business side of the church.

*Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve.*

Presbyterians affirm that God comes to us with grace and love in the person of Jesus Christ, who lived, died, and rose for us so that we might have eternal and abundant life in him. As Christ's disciples, called to ministry in his name, we seek to continue his mission of teaching the truth, feeding the hungry, healing the broken, and welcoming strangers. God sends the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, giving us the energy, intelligence, imagination, and love to be Christ's faithful disciples in the world.



## **HIGH STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

Is a diverse group of leaders and people. Visit us. We would love to welcome you any Sunday.

### **Sunday Schedule:**

9:15 a.m. - Sunday School

10:00 a.m. - Worship

11:30 a.m. - Fellowship

12:30 p.m. - Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Men, Presbyterian Young People Bible Study every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month

We celebrate communion every first Sunday of the month.

## **High Street Presbyterian Church**

### Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 18917  
Oakland, CA 94619

**Phone:** 510.533.2366

**[highstreetpres@yahoo.com](mailto:highstreetpres@yahoo.com)**

### We Worship at:

1945 High Street  
Oakland, CA 94601

*(Please do not use this address  
to mail. Thank you.)*

**[www.highstpres.com](http://www.highstpres.com)**