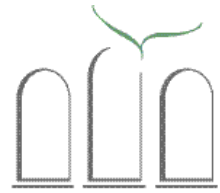


SARATOGA FEDERATED CHURCH FEDERATED FAMILY



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AUGUST 2009

THE HAND BY JIM BLEVINS

A few decades ago I became the Director of a church choir. I don't remember how or why it happened, only the existential "that" it happened. I had no formal music training. I sang in the choir with my parents and received some basic instruction from my mother. I had a "good ear" for music and had learned to play the piano, actually composing a few things.

Beyond having a good ear for harmonic sounds, I had a "feel" for music and felt that a good choir director should be able to "interpret" the music with his musicians. The members of the choir were, of course, voluntary and able, for the most part, to read music. We started with some well known hymns, and I used that time to develop and teach a way of directing that we could all relate to and follow. They became excited with what I was trying to do, and their willingness to join me was encouraging. It became apparent that "we" were becoming "one" and our efforts were being challenged with more difficult music.

At some point the hand began to attract my attention and it seemed so, largely because it attracted the attention of the choir members. There seemed to be a synergy between them that was unconscious or, if you prefer, subconscious. I do not wish to imply some mystical force at work here but only to suggest that the hand is, as most of us know, the most important physical instrument possessed by mankind. The synergy between eye and hand has been studied at length and, I daresay that a similar phenomenon exists between "the director" and "the directed" via the hand in the expression of choral music.

I have no desire to explore this any further but I have studied the outward appearance of the hand sufficiently to be able to produce its likeness on paper. Yes, God made these hands of ours, and I think He probably made our hands in accordance with the work He wants us to do ... as a gift to us.

This is the way King David saw things:

*And, let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us,
And establish the work of our hands for us;
Yes, establish the work of our hands.*

Psalm 90:17

CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC!

There are some things that an economic downturn can't touch - like music. Expressing worship can be done in a myriad of ways, and music is one of those powerful avenues of connecting with God. It's a great thing to do for your own spirit, too. One worshipper said, "Music is a gift from God. I thank Him for this present! When I'm depressed, discouraged, tempted, lonely, or in any way struggling, God uses music to break through to me. He uses it to encourage me, love me, convict me, and hold me."

Whatever kind of singing voice you have, it's the one that God put inside of you, and He delights in hearing it! He loves the sound of instruments played for His glory. Whether you sing in the choir or on a worship team, play in the band or the orchestra, sing in the congregation, or just in the shower, music will enhance and express and allow you to exhale whatever you hold in your heart.

Want to multiply those benefits, and bless others at the same time? Consider some of the opportunities for making music corporately at any age or stage of life. Here are some ways that SFC encourages you along that path: Celebration Choir & Orchestra, Worship Teams, Kidz Choir, Handbell Choir, Student Ministry Music Groups, Short-term commitments for special events like Christmas or Easter, the Voice Class (every Wednesday evening in August), and singing as a congregation in every one of our services!

For more information on how to get involved at any level, call Bill or Diane Allison at 867-1000, ext. 238, or email bill@saratogafederated.org. The Fall season is a great time to start something new, or to make a fresh start at something you love. Consider this your personal invitation to come on board, 'cuz you can't stop the music!



WE'RE MOVING...

During the month of August we will be vacating our rented offices in the Cox Building. While this move will save us \$30,000 per year, another benefit is that it will put many of the staff closer together. The closeness will facilitate some new dynamics and should serve as a catalyst for renewed energies in many ways.

The relocation involves Keith Potter and his administrative assistant, as well as, Sally Bryant, Jerry Bruce and their shared administrative assistant, Olivia DCosta. All five will be moving into the first floor of our main building, under the Sanctuary in the area also occupied by Children's Ministries. Sally will be moving into a renovated office next to the playground and adjoining the Nursery. The other four will be moving into the main office suite which is found directly inside the primary downstairs entrance.

For the Senior Pastor this is a return to what was the Senior Pastor's office for decades. Keith will be in the corner office of that suite. Adjoining offices will be occupied by Debbie Sturm, our Director of Children's Ministries (in her current location), and by Jerry, our Senior Director of Church Administration.

The administrative area in that office suite will undergo a redesign. When completed, it will provide an updated, more functional area for two administrative assistants. Olivia, supporting Jerry and Sally, will be one of those two assistants. The other position will be filled by a new person, in a new role. We are currently interviewing for, and may have hired by the time you read this, a full time position supporting both the Senior Pastor and the Director of Children's Ministries. We are excited about the opportunity to provide administrative support once again to the Children's Ministry Director. Debbie has served in a dual role for several years now and we are delighted to provide her this much needed support.

We ask for your patience during the transition and for your support as we move forward. If you have an appointment with one of us during the month of August we will make every effort to ensure that you know where to find us as the move unfolds. We are excited about the move and all the positive energy it provides.



FINANCIAL UPDATE

Our year-end results are still being finalized, but some keys facts are clear. As we move into the new fiscal year (July 2009-June 2010) we want to give you a snapshot of our situation.

First, this congregation continues to be very generous. During the past 12 months this church family tithed and donated to the work of the church at a level just 10% less than the previous year, while donating the majority of the amount needed to buy an important piece of property and continuing to give generously to special outreach offerings as they arose. Thank you very much. We pray that the testing of your faith is having a beneficial impact on your life.

Secondly, we made a significant adjustment to our spending at the end of January. As predicted, this has lowered our spending RATE to an amount just below our ongoing income. Also as predicted, the adjustment was not able to be made in time to prevent a loss for this past fiscal year. In fact, our net spending was higher than net revenues by approximately \$250,000 (slightly better than our January forecast).

Third, this net loss for the past year, combined with several other factors, has led to a situation where the General Fund of the church is in a net negative cash position. The overall church still has a positive cash position, but the designated funds are in essence loaning money to the General Fund to supply the day-to-day cash needs of running the church.

Fourth, the Elders have adopted an operating budget for the current fiscal year which aims to keep our ministry operations at their current reduced level for another year. It is our expectation that this budget will be essentially a "break even" budget where revenues equal expenses for the year. They feel that this year is not the year to be trying to rebuild a reserve. We hope to replenish our cash reserve to a positive position in future years as the economy and/or people's tithing rebounds.

We believe the overall church is healthy. We want to continue investing in lives and in programs that help develop, train and care for those in our congregation, community and the world. None of this is possible without prayer and your involvement. Thank you for your part in building and maintaining our vibrant faith community.

UNSHAKEABLE

Twenty-five years ago, a couple asked me to perform their marriage ceremony. The church I was serving, like most, required pre-marriage counseling with the pastor prior to the wedding. They were in their thirties. I was twenty-two, newly married and fresh out of school.

Already, the realities of marriage were testing my idealism and proving my naivete. How in the world could I counsel this couple on marriage?

After getting to know each other, I simply asked, “What are the building blocks of a strong marriage?” They took turns suggesting possibilities. Trust. Honesty. Love. Communication. Compromise. Forgiveness. They made a marvelous list.

Then I asked, “What is trust, and why is it important?” Then we did the same with every building block on their list. They began to talk and share and compare their definitions and commitments to their core values. I threw in some observations and scriptures and asked more probing questions whenever it seemed apparent that there were some vulnerable differences between them. We ended up having a very meaningful time. We all learned and they felt better prepared for marriage.

So I did things the same way the next time.

Now, four hundred and twenty weddings later, I’ve been doing the same thing for twenty-five years. Yes, with some added exercises and topics. But that one primary discovery process has been very rich and fruitful. And I’ve walked with hundreds of other couples through seasons of crisis and recovery—and sometimes loss.

For years, I’ve wanted to compile a book that would represent lessons learned on those building blocks, and present a curriculum for marriage renewal and pre-marriage preparation. That desire was fueled in recent years by the hardship of strained and failed marriages in my extended family and friendship circles. Add to that the Holy Spirit’s steady conviction, during California’s controversial marriage initiatives, that the primary problem with marriages in America is that they aren’t enduring. All the while, my wife so often encouraged me, “Keith, we’re learning so much through so many seasons. You really need to put some help into people’s hands.”

So this summer, a new book is being published by Credo Communications titled, *Unshakeable: The Building Blocks of an Enduring Marriage*. This is a labor of love,

even for Sue. Her steady voice in the process has reminded me, “Be real...be transparent...don’t give the impression that our marriage is perfect, but give people hope that marriages can grow and endure.” The book is filled with teaching, ideas, exercises, probing questions and very personal anecdotes and life lessons. This book will help people. I believe it will help you and those you love.

FROM OUR SENIOR PASTOR

The last thing I want to do is use the church as a marketing instrument. So, in pondering how to launch the book and stimulate readership, we’ve decided to have a “Go and Tell” on August 30* in the sanctuary after the third service. At that “Go and Tell,” you’ll hear my vision for reaching and teaching people in our church, the community and beyond. Instead of asking you to help me market a book, I’m inviting you to be participants, prayer partners and emotionally invested with us in the quest to see marriages find enduring health and commitment.

So I invite you to join us. Hear the vision. See the material. If you’d like, buy copies, read the book and spread them around.

One more thing: Please consider coming to the first Unshakeable Marriage Workshop on Friday, September 25 and Saturday, September 26. We’ll feed you more details in future venues. Every married couple, every almost-married couple and everyone who thinks that marriage might be in their future would benefit from coming.

Years ago, the whole church went through Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Warren suggests that every Christian has a purpose. Specifically, he says that we each have a ministry (in the church) and a mission (beyond the church). Personally, my ministry and mission is renewal...personal renewal, church renewal and marital renewal. God keeps opening doors and my heart fills with passion about making a difference in, and beyond, the local church. As you hear my heart, I ask for your prayers and welcome your participation.

All for Jesus,
Keith Potter

* *Editor’s Note: The date of the Go and Tell has been moved to October 4, 2009.*



FAITH, NOT FEAR (PART 2)

BY SALLY BRYANT

As I write this, I have just returned home from my trip to Africa. You may remember that this trip brought up all kinds of fears for me. I did not know what God had in store for me in Africa but I trusted that he was continuing the process of healing me from fear, of giving me a clearer understanding of who God is, and bringing me into a more intimate relationship with him. This faith was not misplaced: God met me in amazing ways while I was in Africa.

For the first time, I had a sense of God's delight, pleasure and joy in creation. As I watched zebras, giraffes, elephants, ostriches, lions and cubs, buffalo, rhino, monkeys and baboons in their natural habitat, I realized how much fun God must have had when he created all these astounding animals. I could visualize God laughing as he gave the zebra its stripes, the elephant its supple trunk, the giraffe its long neck and even longer eyelashes, and the lion its majestic mane. I could see his joyous anticipation of Adam's enjoyment when God gave him the responsibility to name the animals.

Each morning, a symphonic chorus of birds woke me up – so many birds and such varied and beautiful bird songs. It seemed like a heavenly choir singing sweet praise to their creator. For the first time, I had a sense of “everything that has breath” praising the Lord (Psalm 150:6). And I realized that if God took such care and delight in the creation of the animals, how much more care and delight went into the creation of man and woman, the only part of God's creation created in the image of our maker, God himself.

In light of this outpouring of God's love for us, I realized that there is only one response that I can give to God: my love. I love because he first loved me and reached out to me through the life, death and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ. My soul pours out a love song to my creator. And love casts out fear. I John 4:18-19 says, “*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us.*” Through this trip to Africa, I see that God is always working to bring us closer to him, to replace our fear with faith and confidence in his perfect love. All creation cries out praise to its creator – and as I join in the chorus, I find that fear is replaced with faith.

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

Faith and Works: Which Is It?

Join us at 9:00 am for a lively and interactive exploration of Ephesians and James. This class meets Sunday mornings through August 30 and is taught by Jeff Davis.

Listening for Heaven's Sake

This class, taught by Mike Garner, meets weekly in Douglass Hall from 4:00 to 6:00 pm, beginning August 9 and ending August 30. The goals of this class are to help build healthy relationships and provide basic training for Christian caregivers. Class format includes teaching, role playing, small groups, prayer and lots of laughter. This class is cosponsored by the Care and Adult Ministries.

COMING IN THE FALL:

Four Days in the Life of David: An Authentic Life Lived in Relationship with God

King David is described as a man after God's own heart. Yet he was not perfect. He led a life that was at times heroic and at other times all too human. He conquered foes and built a kingdom, and yet disappointed his wife, committed adultery, neglected his children and then lost his kingdom for a time. Through it all, he was at God's doorstep sharing his life in the most impassioned way. This study explores the interplay between David's life, as found in I & II Samuel, with the inner life of David, as found in the songs and heartfelt cries of the Psalms. In the process we will discuss what it means to live a life of successes and failures, yet always in concert with God's will for our lives. This six week class is taught by Bob Connors and begins September 20 at 10:30 am.

Unshakeable: The Building Blocks of an Enduring Marriage

This weekend seminar on September 25 & 26, taught by Pastor Keith Potter, offers couples the opportunity to develop and enhance a strong foundation for their relationship. Stay tuned for more details.

NEW SMALL GROUP FOR MOMS

A small group for Moms will be starting in the fall on Monday mornings. We will be going through the book *All I Need is Jesus and a Good Pair of Jeans*. Child-care will be provided. Contact Dorothy Araldi at (408) 828-1667 or dorothy_araldi@yahoo.com for details.



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

A quick update during the summer break. Our first Men's Breakfast will be on September 19. Keep your eye on the Men's Ministries web page at www.saratogafederated.org/ministries/mens.htm for details.

Another key event is our Men's Retreat at Mission Springs on January 29 & 30. Our speaker will be Ben Patterson, current Campus Pastor at Westmont College in Santa Barbara. Ben has served in various positions at both Presbyterian and Baptist churches and several colleges. Watch for more information in the coming months.

The board continues to look for new board members and coordinators of events. God has been very good to our ministry and we continue to reach out to men of the church and their friends.



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP NEWS

We hope everyone is having a great summer. We will meet again at the September 15 circle meetings. Please mark your calendars for our Kickoff Luncheon on Tuesday, October 6. We welcome all women. If you would like more information on Women's Fellowship, please call Joan Leonard (408) 741-0213.



MORE SUMMER READING SUGGESTIONS

Renewal as a Way of Life: A Guidebook for Spiritual Growth by Richard Lovelace

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah

Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity ... and Why It Matters by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons

Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God by Gordon Fee

Safely Home by Randy Alcorn

Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust by Immaculee Ilibagiza



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NEWS

The 2009/2010 school year is almost here! Summer goes by so fast! The new Children's Ministry Sunday school year begins on September 13. If you love kids and would like to be part of sharing the love of Jesus with them, please contact Debbie Sturm at (408) 867-3456 or debbie@saratogafederated.org. We are always looking for people to join in the fun.

Parents of children ages 3 months through fifth grade, please be on the look out for our 2009/2010 Children's Ministry registration form. We like to make sure contact information is correct and up to date for every child in our program. You'll see the new bright orange forms in September. Thank you for returning them to the Children's Ministry office promptly.



THINGS OUR KIDS SAY:

From Fay Knight: My little grandson was listening to his mother reading the story of the Israelites in Egypt. After hearing all the horrors of the ten plagues he piped up, "Mommy, why do they call him Pharaoh? Shouldn't it be Meano?"

Do you have a short story of something wonderful, funny, or even profound that your child has said? Send your story to Nicki at nicki@saratogafederated.org.

BRIDGE BUILDERS RESPITE DAY

The next respite event will be on Saturday, August 29, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. (Volunteers arrive at 8:15 am for breakfast and training.)

Pre-registration is required for participating children. Volunteers are encouraged to sign up as early as possible. Contact Debbie Lillo at bridgebuilders@saratogafederated.org or (408) 252-4160.



Celebrations!

THANK YOU TO

Beverly Douglass for organizing the Women's Craft Night.

Libie Cilker for opening her house for the Women's Prayer Retreat.

Dorothy Araldi and *Stacy Lewis* for organizing the Moms' Night Out.

Joy Carlough for organizing the Women of the Bible small group study this summer.

CELEBRATING AN *Anniversary*



8 years - *Dave & Stacey Lewis*, July 21

65 years - *Joe & Muriel Russell*, August 8

61 years - *Robert & Phyllis Culp*, August 15

56 years - *Dave & Ann Fisher*, August 8

53 years - *Marilynn & Doug Nagel*, August 24

52 years - *George & Donna Lee*, August 10

52 years - *Ted & Elaine Clabeaux*, August 30

52 years - *Alan & Loretta Marks*, August 31

48 years - *Don & Gale Sturdevant*, August 19

45 years - *Carl & Sharon Liljenstolpe*, August 15

44 years - *Ron & Dianne Shanholtz*, August 14

37 years - *Dave & Mary Norton*, August 26

36 years - *Jeff & Kathy Nickel*, August 4

31 years - *Ed & Laura Laughlin*, August 12

31 years - *Dick & Lynn Rowe*, August 19

30 years - *Erick & Debbie Sturm*, August 4

30 years - *Jeff & Becky Davis*, August 4

27 years - *Mike & Linda Gallagher*, August 14

26 years - *Jeff & Barbara Cage*, August 26

17 years - *Greg & Pam Holsen*, August 22

16 years - *Don & Sue Campbell*, August 28

2 years - *Ben & Diane White*, August 11

Celebrations shares events and milestones of our church family. If you have a wedding, birth, baptism, new job, graduation, anniversary, etc. to share, please send the information to Nicki at the church office, (408) 867-1000 or nicki@saratogafederated.org.

BOOK CLUB

Looking forward to our new season. We will begin meeting again on Thursday, September 18 at the home of Ellen Hogue at 12:15 pm. Call 867-2481 for further information.

Carolyn Cage

800 Blossom Hill Road
Los Gatos, CA 95032

Doreen Oliver

14300 Fruitvale #2140
Saratoga, CA 95070



WE'RE MOVING

Phyllis Soergel

14500 Fruitvale #61A
Saratoga, CA 95070

Please let us know if you move or have changes to your contact information. Be assured this information will be used only for SFC business. Send your changes to Kathy Hensley at kathy@saratogafederated.org or 867-1000 or go to the community tab on our website to update your personal profile. Thank you.



CARE MINISTRY FOCUS

THE DEACON'S PANTRY

The Deacons' Pantry was born out of the need to have meals ready for those in our congregation and community who are in a life situation that makes the daily preparation of meals difficult. It was organized as a support service for the Care Deacons who generally are apprised of the existing needs as soon as the church is notified.

The Deacon's Pantry is a group of approximately 12 church members. They meet on the fourth Tuesday at 1:00 pm in the church kitchen to cook and freeze nutritious meals. This group also provides fresh and tasty cookies for Memorial Receptions held at the church.

A very important aspect of this service is the prayer time held at each meeting. During this time there is prayer for the recipients of the meals being prepared and for other prayer concerns.

Should you have interest in joining this group, please contact Doug Forbes at (408) 370-6362.



September Newsletter

Deadline

Wednesday, August 12, 2009