

CONTACT

November 11, 2015
Montclair Presbyterian Church

FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN

Friends,

I hope you will forgive me if, in my *Contact* space this week, I take another celebratory rhetorical victory lap in response to the music we had in celebration last Sunday. It was amazing. We are blessed.

After church on Sunday, I got to thinking about the connection between social justice and the use of beautiful music in worship, and it seems to me that there are at least two important reasons for progressive, social justice oriented, faith communities like ours to make beautiful music in celebration.

The use of wonderful music in church democratizes that music. It is a fact that tickets for most quality musical performances are priced beyond the means of many people who live in Oakland, especially for elderly folks on fixed incomes and for families with children who survive on low-to-moderate paychecks. By performing Bach for free in the welcoming space of worship, we made beauty available across socioeconomic strata. And that, to me, is really important, and it leads to the second reason music in worship is an important implement in the tool chest of social justice.

When we are exposed to beauty, we grow impatient with all in the world that is ugly. If, for example we hear the deep, rich tones of a 350-year old double bass, or the soaring blend of a well-rehearsed chorus (as we did on Sunday) then, perhaps, we will be increasingly dissatisfied with the ugliness of racism or economic inequality or the violence of war.

I am pleased to be part of the MPC family, a community of faith so dedicated to the practice of beauty. May that beauty lead us into a world of goodness, peace, and joy.

May God's beauty and peace be forever yours,

Ben

TALITHA'S TAKE

My job really hasn't shifted much since my ordination. I do appreciate it when you call me Rev., of course, and relish the opportunity to wear fancy stoles (Advent is coming soon!) but in the day-to-day business, not much has changed. I have however taken on some of those "extra duties as assigned," and here's the newest one: Presbytery service.

Yes, Presbytery, those daylong regional gatherings of pastors and elders, where much is discussed, and many (many) reports are given. Gone are the days when I could stroll in fashionably late, because now I'm in charge of PowerPoint slides for the whole meeting!

Running a slideshow is good for me because I'm easily distracted if my mind is allowed to go free-range and cage-less. It is hard for anyone to stay fully present for an 8-hour-long meeting, but some find it easier than others, and I definitely count myself with those others. If my hands and mind aren't

sufficiently occupied during a meeting, they usually end up on my phone and social media - at first I do this to share an insight from the meeting, but then I look at videos of cats falling down, and on and on. It's hard to stay focused and I need some interventions. One is to just keep my hands busy by knitting or drawing. But another tactic I use is to give myself lots of little jobs to do, and Powerpoint is perfect for this; I have to keep track of business and edit motions as they are amended (and sometimes, the amendment to the amendment of the main motion...). At the very least, I have to sit in the front row looking like I understand what's going on as I click through the slides. So I'm happy to give up my late Presbytery arrivals in exchange for this small but important role.

To me, the difference between sitting through a meeting vs. Powerpointing through a meeting is like the difference between silent meditation and walking meditation. I've never been fantastic at the totally silent kind of meditation. My monkeymind is just too active for that. But walking slowly and mindfully, perhaps repeating a word or prayer with each step, is the kind of meditation that allows me to truly relax and open up. I am grateful that we know both kinds of meditation - contemplative and active. I welcome you all to find the kind that suits you, whether that's keeping your hands busy by coloring in church on Sunday morning, or by taking on a bigger role such as a service position at church. We don't have Powerpoint here, but we do have sound system operators, lay readers, ushers, and a large group of unofficial newcomer greeters who keep their minds busy even as they participate in Celebration.

I will end with a quick thanks for you, the MPC congregation, because when I talk about Presbytery or other conferences I've been to, nobody has ever asked "how long will that take you away from work?" Yes, these meetings take me and Ben away from the office, but not away from work. You all understand that this kind of wider church participation and service is not separate from, but is indeed a part of our work here as pastors, and that it is important for us to be so connected to God's mission work both near and far.

Every Blessing,
Talitha

Coming Soon!

OPEN MIC BRUNCH: This Sunday, Nov 15, 11:30 am in our Thornhill room. A unique window into the soul of our writers and storytellers as they share original pieces (under 6 minutes) on "Shades of Autumn" or whatever experiences have touched their hearts. To be included in our next anthology, bring contributions on 8.5x11" white paper: copyready, signed, unstapled.

TAIZÉ MEDITATION SERVICE: Next Wednesday, November 18, 7-8pm in the Sanctuary. The theme will be "Choosing Gratitude," even amidst challenges we may be dealing with. Immersing yourself in music, meditative singing, readings, prayer, and silence will be good preparation for the season of Thanksgiving. For child care (available upon request), contact the church office by November 13.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING – Sunday Nov. 22. We will have our annual congregational meeting on Sunday, November 22, immediately following Celebration, for the purpose of electing five members to the church's Nominating Committee. The nominees are: Gloria Alexander, Kristin Dwelley, Carol Ekberg, Sari Kulberg and Beth Sutkus.

Digging Deeper...

MPC CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE:



We are officially kicking off the ***Building a Sustainable Future*** campaign this week. Session approved an ambitious \$900,000 goal for this campaign. The funds will go towards exciting new capital improvements, retiring our debt, and completing accumulated maintenance. You will be receiving a letter about it this week with more details. If you have questions, please contact Linda Spencer (510) 763-2274, Leslie Louie (510) 551-3702, or visit our table during coffee hour.

SMALL GROUPS: It's time to create a new set of Family Life Small Groups for the spring! Please contact me if you have an idea for gathering MPC'ers together to create, talk, walk, see or...? Gretchen Garlinghouse ggarlinghouse@aol.com or (510) 482-1157

FAITH TRIO Harvest Action 2015: Marking a Decade of Friendship

Saturday, November 21, 2015 from 10am-3pm in Oakland near Lake Merritt Amphitheatre

This event is part of an international mobilization effort prior to a meeting of world leaders in Paris who will be making decisions that will affect the planet into far future. The Northern California Climate Mobilization is meant to show mass support for a global climate repair agreement that will be effective and binding. Join us at any of the following times:

10-10:45 am - Shabbat service near the Lake Merritt Amphitheater at 12th Street & Lake Merritt Blvd

11:00 am - Assemble with Northern California Climate Mobilization at the Lake Merritt Amphitheater

12 noon - March to Oakland City Hall / Frank Ogawa Plaza

1:00 pm - Rally by Northern California Climate Mobilization

2:00 pm - Move to the Islamic Cultural Center at 1433 Madison Street, Oakland. Bring a bag lunch and eat together.

FILM SALON: Saturday Nov. 28, arrive at 6:15pm for 6:30pm showing, Thornhill Room. **The Black Orchid** (B&W, 1958, 96 Minutes) - Anthony Quinn and Sophia Loren star as longtime widower Frank and recently widowed Rose, lonely hearts who discover something special in *The Black Orchid*, a sensitive comedy romance. Bring snacks that you like for others to share with you. Contact Jeanne Dunn 510-834-7559

SAVE THE DATE - Sunday, Dec. 13 - POETS AND STORYTELLERS EVENT: Come to "Mr. Emerson's Revolution:" a book launch-brunch on Sunday, Dec. 13, 11:30am to 1:30pm in the Thornhill Room. Editor and contributor, Jean Mudge will present Ralph Waldo Emerson as more than merely the global public intellectual he was in his lifetime. Come for a short video intro, reading of excerpts, and a Q and A. Copies of the book with 166 color illustrations will be available. See more at www.openbookpublishers.com, Thanks very much. Jean

MPC at Work

AUTHOR TALK: This Friday (the 13th!) at 7pm. Join author and illustrator **Maira Kalman** at MPC when she presents her latest book *Beloved Dog*. She's illustrated covers for New Yorker magazine, written books with Michael Pollan and Daniel Handler, and designed exhibition catalogs for the Cooper-

Hewitt National Design Museum. This Friday, she'll be with us, and hopefully you will be too. Details on the MPC website or see Steve McKiernan.

Notes from the Family

THANK YOU: Thank you for the many phone calls, notes, cards, hugs, meals, and flowers; we have felt so supported during this difficult time. We have a long road ahead of us and so appreciate your love and support. Minda and Joe Lucero.

Notes from the Office

Hello, this is Shane, the new administrative assistant at MPC. First of all, I want to thank all for welcoming me so warmly. I am being stretched by my new job and am gaining new skills. MPC is a great place to work! I have also really enjoyed the music at services on Sunday and Jeanne Dunn's movie night was a hoot!

Here's office business that I would like to announce.

- Deadlines for Contact are Tuesdays at Noon and for the Bulletin they are Wednesdays at 3pm. It's important that submissions to these newsletters be sent to me before the deadlines, so that I can budget my time well. Please edit your newsletter submissions for brevity. Longer pieces can go up on the website.
- I am aware that there is a light in the Sanctuary that is out. Changing the current bulbs requires scaffolding and the people who do this will be in Southern California for several weeks, but we'll take care of it! With funds from the new Capital Campaign, we will be able to change these lights to long-lasting LED lamps.
- Ben and Talitha are both out of the office on Fridays, but one of them will always be on-call for pastoral care needs. You can call me to find out.
- Thanks for being patient with me if/when I don't remember names and thanks for your gentle mentorship when I'm new to a task.

Praying and Celebrating

CELEBRATION CALENDAR:

Sunday, Nov. 15 at 10am: Pastor Ben is preaching, "Mighty Mite"

Sunday, Nov. 22 at 10am: Pastor Talitha is preaching, "Give Thanks"

Sunday, Nov. 29 at 10am: Pastor Ben is preaching, "Champagne With You"

THE POWER OF PRAYER: Each Sunday, as we share our prayers, the whole community commits to keep them in our hearts and carry them through the week, in love and concern. And on Tuesday mornings, your staff (Ben, Shane, and Talitha) will pray again for any prayer requests made known to us. Do feel free to email, text, or call any one of us with prayer requests, and make it clear if you **do not want us** to share the request in the Praying and Celebrating section in Contact.

WE PRAY FOR:

- Veterans, especially those who still suffer from the pains of war
- Those who work for peace
- Those who are recovering from surgeries
- Those who are looking for housing
- All who mourn

WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR:

- The service of our veterans
- The work of peacemakers everywhere
- Rain and cold
- Snow in the Sierras
- Those who support and care for us in times of need
- The work of our Presbytery
- The love of God

If you have additional prayer requests that you would like included in Contact or during the Sunday Celebration prayer time, do feel free to contact Pastor Ben, ben@mpcfamily.org.

DEADLINES: To submit announcements for the Bulletin and Contact, please send them to office@mpcfamily.org. The deadline for Contact is **Tuesdays at Noon**, and the deadline for the Bulletin is **Wednesdays at 3pm**.

MPC Calendar:

<http://www.mpcffamily.org/getting-involved/calendar/>

MONTCLAIR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

5701 Thornhill Drive, Oakland, California 94611, (510) 339-1131

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00am-4:00pm

Rev. Ben Daniel, Pastor, Office hours Monday - Thursday, 10:00am -4:00pm (*Friday is his day off*)

Rev. Talitha Phillips, Associate Pastor, Office hours Monday - Thursday, 10:00am-4:00pm (*Friday is her day off*)

Shane Brodie, Administrative Assistant, Office hours Monday - Friday, 8:00am-4:00pm

Kim Rankin, Music Director & Marcia Roy, Organist

Gil & Maria Chiguila: Caretaker and Janitor

Rev. John Hadsell: Theologian in Residence

Rev. Kathy Ray: Parish Associate

Allen Todd, Brad Hestir, Linda Spencer & Adrian Santos - Sound Technicians