



**“GOOD NEWS AS I SEE IT ...”** *By Bettina Blake*  
3-year member of Old South and serves on the Membership Committee

Jesus is a Jewish man living in Israel two thousand years ago whose life and work is recounted in the four Gospels. He was a son born into a human family but also he was also the son of God—God in human form, living in human time. Jesus, through what he said and did, through his death and reappearance after death, revealed himself to be Christ, the Anointed One, representing the intersection between mortal time and eternity, between the imperfect human condition and God. Western calendars—used today worldwide—count years forward (the Common Era) from that pivotal revelation of God to human beings.

The message that Jesus modeled and taught is both simple—love God first, then love others as you love yourself—and complicated, often apparently contradictory. Jesus challenges simplistic human ways of thinking in an effort to help us realize that God’s activity, justice, love are beyond our comprehension. His parables contain complex paradoxes; he demonstrates childlike openness but he shows complete mastery of ancient Hebrew texts and acute powers of reasoning; he displays both anger and mercy; many of his teachings are starkly absolute (abandon your parents) yet he shows compassion for human frailty. Jesus is no longer with us in the flesh but the Holy Spirit, God as a spiritual presence, is in us and among us always.

Has the expansion of human knowledge since the time the Gospels were written—and the dominance of scientific reasoning—left room today for the Holy Spirit, for Jesus, for God? Yes, because God is love, after all. Love (in the sense of agape, compassion, empathy, mercy) exists beyond the sciences, beyond human logic or language. Only God’s love can save the world and that love is spread through us: through our openness to God’s grace, resulting in the love that we share with others. To be a follower of Christ—a Christian—means to be as transparent an instrument of God’s will as possible, hoping that God’s grace will do the rest.

**“IF I HAVE TO CHOOSE JUST ONE, I PICK LUKE ...”**

*By Liz Olson*  
7-year member of Old South

... Luke points to ways to be followers of Jesus and children of God: he makes the commandments of “Do Not Judge” and “Love Your Enemies” clear and explains the story on hospitality reminding me that when I give to others, I should not expect something in return (this helps put anonymous dollars in the offering plate). Lastly, he states, “Do Not Worry” about what to wear or what to eat for God will provide, and in today’s material world of fashion and nutritional health “Do Not Worry” remains beautiful and ever important to me ...

**Old South Church in Boston**  
An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

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**The Heart of  
Our Life Together:  
These Sacred Texts**

Old South Church in Boston  
United Church of Christ

Sixth Sunday of Lent  
April 5, 2009

**TODAY**

**Welcome**

**Lecture**

The Text on Our Tongues and in Our Hearts  
Rev. Prof. J. Mary Luti

**Small Group Discussion**

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING  
TO OLD SOUTH**

For six weeks, we have journeyed together through the holy season of Lent with God’s holy scripture on our tongues and in our hearts. For six weeks, we have read, discussed, and prayed through four distinct versions of God’s “good news,” the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, explaining why Christians typically gather together in community for worship, gives this simple, perhaps surprising reason: we worship in community in order to proclaim the Gospel one to another with our own words, in our own voices.

And so, here it is: the “good news” of the Gospel according to Old South!

**Looking  
Ahead**

**Tenebrae Service of Shadows**  
Thursday, April 9 at 6 pm

**Good Friday Services**  
April 10 at 12 noon & 6 pm

**Easter Festival Worship**  
Sunday, April 12  
Identical worship services at  
9 and 11 am. ASL Interpreter.

*Prelude music begins a  
half hour before worship time.  
Featuring the Old South Choir  
with organ, brass and percussion;  
Congregational singing of  
“Hallelujah Chorus”; and  
the world premiere of  
Erik Gustafson’s  
“Alleluia! Christ Is Risen!”*

**“THIS IS WHERE JESUS STANDS ...”** *By Annamarie Ross Shu*

*Member of Old South for 21 years and serves on the Christian Education Committee*

... Jesus stands in the neonatal intensive care unit as the one pound child struggles for breath, and he holds the parents as they agonize over her future and question whether she will be a blessing or a burden to the world.

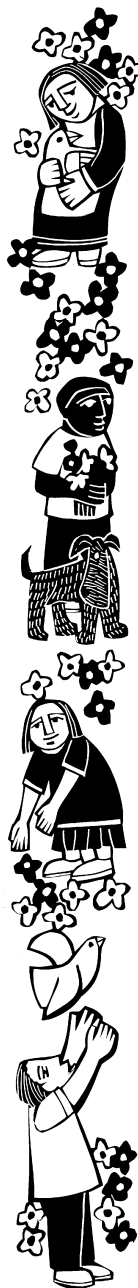
Jesus stands with the youth critically injured in gang violence, and he holds the surgeon whose hands shake with alcoholic tremors as he seeks to heal this child who has mortally wounded another and who now is destined to imprisonment.

Jesus stands with those whose tears mark parched ground seeking one green stem as a sign of hope and promise, and he holds those soldiers who bar the way for seeds and water and aid to reach these starving people, frightened that nourishment and strength in others might threaten their own strength and wellbeing ...

**“THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A FOLLOWER ...”** *By Sharna Barnabas*

*New to Old South since November 2008*

... To me, being a Christian has meant answering his call “I came to you as ... and what did you do for me?” And he has come again and again and I have thought ‘Lord you come too many times.’ I have not worked for an organization that helps the needy but being a Christian has meant giving of oneself to others and being sensitive to all the living creatures as well as the physical world ...



## “GRACE AND TRUTH”

By Gregg Plummer  
Joined Old South in 2008 and serves as a  
Docent

‘The law indeed was given through  
Moses; grace and truth came through  
Jesus Christ.’ (John 1:17)

Atoms collided.  
The flood subsided.  
Grace and Truth? Never resided.

Temples defected.  
Prophets injected.  
Grace and Truth? Was soon expected.

Angel inspired.  
Virgin desired.  
Grace and Truth? Wise men admired.

The water splendid.  
A dove descended.  
Grace and Truth? The One intended.

Parables guided.  
Bread was divided.  
Grace and Truth? On earth presided.

Hate soon erupted.  
A cross constructed.  
Grace and Truth? Wow! Resurrected.

New-sprung faith arrived.  
Robust hope revived.  
Grace and Truth? Forever alive.

## “THIS IS WHY JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD ...”

By Bev Hanna  
New to Old South since 2008 and is active in our  
weekly Bible Study

... Jesus came into the world to turn it upside down  
by teaching us forgiveness and love for the  
unforgivable and unlovable. It is his unconditional  
love for us that we need to emulate. Boy, he sure is a  
tough act to follow!

Jesus suffered so we wouldn’t have to. He did so  
expecting nothing in return but always hoping that  
we would act with grace, compassion, and love for  
those in need. When I have a hard time with that, I  
try to at least smile.

Jesus reminds us, lest we forget, that life itself is a  
miracle filled with miracles. Good thing! I need them  
just to get through my day ...

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## “JESUS IS A RADICAL ACTIVIST ...”

By Jim Perry  
Has been attending Old South (from Cape Cod) since  
2005

... My liberal view of things at this stage of my life  
(thank God that we change with age and maturity  
since I was a very conservative college kid) is that  
Jesus is a radical activist who came into our lives to  
shake us up and force, persuade, convince us to help  
create a heaven on earth; to leave our campsites  
better than we found them ...

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## “THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ME”

By Jon Geldert  
Has been attending Old South since 2005, joined in 2008, and serves as a facilitator for our Lenten conversations

As I have gotten older, and lived through more of life’s hard times, one of the cornerstones of my faith has become the understanding that God can take even the worst of tragedies and use it as an opportunity to bring goodness ... renewal ... resurrection. That to me is the truth of the cross. Think about it: God’s own Son, God’s very self, a blameless man, rejected, abandoned, humiliated, and nailed to a cross. I can’t think of a more horrible scene. And what does God do? He *uses* the cross as an opportunity to bring new life and make a new covenant with His people. I do not believe that God *causes* the tragedies in our lives—cancer, the loss of a job, the house destroyed by fire—they are simply the reality of living in a sick and fallen world. But God *does* use them as opportunities for transformation. The Jesuits have an insight that every situation in life is an opportunity to experience God. My relationship with Jesus has taught me that no tragic situation—and no tragic life—is beyond God’s ability to redeem and transform into triumph. That’s what happened on the cross. And—this is the good news of the gospel—it’s what can happen in our own lives, if we, like Jesus, cry out to our Father in heaven from the crosses of our lives, and entrust ourselves to God’s redemptive, renewing, resurrecting love.



## “JESUS IS A GOD BEARER ...”

By Kate Silfen  
Member of Old South for 7 years  
and serves on the Membership  
Committee

... Luke opens his story by telling  
us about two pregnant women.  
Elizabeth bears John, the man who

will prepare the way for Jesus. Mary bears Jesus, God’ Son. In both cases, these women have agreed to nurture something of God inside themselves. This seems to me a strong symbol or metaphor for the idea that God dwells within us all. Like his mother, Jesus is a God bearer, and Luke emphasizes this by saying several times that Jesus is “filled with the power of the Spirit.” Luke’s Jesus, with his concern for justice and inclusivity, clearly recognizes that everyone has a spark of divine within themselves. He sees something of God in the greatest outcasts of that period of time—prostitutes, tax collectors, and lepers. Jesus is constantly inviting them to take a “place at the table.” Even as he is dying he tells two criminals that they are worthy to join him in paradise ...



## “THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL IS JOY ...”

By Ken Orth  
18-year member of Old South and serves as our Healing Prayer  
Service Minister

Recently a group of friends asked ourselves what one word would sum up the whole gospel. This challenging (and some say futile) question gave us much to ponder. Some favorites were “love,” “grace,” “forgiveness,” and “hope.” For me the word I would choose is “joy.” Luke captures this reality for me best by giving us the scene in the temple where Jesus begins his ministry: “to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free.” For me this kernel of “good news” brought joy to my heart even in the conservative German Congregational church I was part of in South Dakota. As a young person growing up gay in a world (and church) that would have no part of even discussing my experience around that truth for me, the issue of Jesus as being despised and rejected for taking a stand on the part of the outcast offered me the possibility of hope and even of joy, for there was one who would at least attempt to explore my experience of my life without having to immediately turn away. He understood what it was like to be rejected ...

... For this, my thanks is always to God for the good news of the story of Jesus, which gives me the possibility of hope and joy!

## “WHEN I SAY I AM A CHRISTIAN ...”

By Tracy Keene  
Joined Old South in 2007

I have struggled with what it means to be a good Christian. When I came out to my family, I thought I was no longer a good Christian, for my Baptist upbringing told me so. But my good Christian cousin wrote me a letter saying what it means to be a Christian. I refer to this letter (and to this poem by Carol Wimmer) time and time again:

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I’m not shouting, “I’ve been saved.”  
I’m whispering, “I get lost,”  
That is why I chose this way.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I don’t speak with human pride.  
I’m confessing that I stumble,  
Needing God to be my guide.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I’m not trying to be strong.  
I’m professing that I’m weak,  
And pray for strength to carry on.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I’m not bragging of success.  
I’m admitting I have failed,  
And cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I don’t think I know it all.  
I submit to my confusion,  
Asking humbly to be taught.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I’m not claiming to be perfect.  
My flaws are too visible,  
But God believes I’m worth it.

When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I still feel the sting of pain.  
I have my share of heartaches,  
Which is why I seek His name.  
When I say, “I am a Christian,”  
I do not wish to judge.  
I have no authority;  
I only know I’m loved.