

theSEER

AUGUST 2018



REMEMBERING HIROSHIMA – August 6, 1945

If you ever go to the Bradbury Science Museum in Los Alamos, where the Atomic Bomb was turned from idea to matter, stand quietly, unobtrusively, in a corner. You could stand just behind the bright yellow replica of Fat Man, the bomb that blasted Nagasaki, or over by the jumble of placard displays and brightly colored interactive kiosks. Stand there and you will hear the whispered mythology everywhere—the story we have absorbed and take for granted.

You will see the father with the hand in his son's shoulder, the woman gently leading her elderly mother, and the girl scouts and the two 10 year old boys, and you will hear these words like a litany, "...ended the war, saved lives; What if Hitler got the Bomb?" And sometimes they say a name like they are pronouncing the name of Gabriel the Archangel, "Oppenheimer." J. Robert Oppenheimer, the tall slender man with the sad lashed eyes on whom we pinned our conscience and our guilt – Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb. He was head of the lab at Los Alamos. There is a biography of him titled: "American Prometheus."

He who was proud of his bomb and afraid of it all at once. He who was described as taking a prizefighter pose the night of the bombing of Hiroshima. He who was terrified at the Trinity test, breathed a sigh, and quoted the Bhagavad Gita. He who flirted with communism and made enemies by being a bit snarky in public. He who read poetry and chain smoked, and died of cancer of the throat. He who had torrid affairs with married women and wore a crumpled wide-brimmed hat everywhere. He who oversaw the most elaborate secret a country ever kept and eventually lost his security clearance bedeviled by his own frankness and foolishness. But it was this man who took a phalanx of scientists, a phalanx with an average age of 25, and pushed them to succeed at creating this thing. This thing upon which we have built a world of terror, danger and the potential catastrophic

destruction of this planet. And a "thing" no one wants to talk about. Not its past or its future.

It's not like the "duck and cover" days of the fifties when I was in grammar school, when nuclear bombs were the currency of chatter. Today, ordinary words over coffee or breakfast may sometimes touch on how many warheads countries have. The latest figure is around 17,000. And the upshot of such conversations will often end with, "Who needs that many? We can destroy the world many times over." At that, there is nothing more to say. Some knowledge, too large or too unimaginable, can disempower by overwhelming...by making us small in comparison, and thus feel powerless.

I have always imagined that work at Los Alamos as both a jocular and serious, where young men equipped with science, a few hand tools, old fashioned calculators, and the support of their women toiled together chain smoking, and solving the "problem" of the atom. I picture them using a sort of Physics erector set to build three bombs. I see those bombs, in stages and in pieces on a garage floor. A stop motion film could show their progression from shell to sleek covering, screw drivers and loose screws everywhere. I see them being loaded on the back of somebody's station wagon, rolling over dirt roads into the desert as if they were getting ready for box car races. It never occurred to me to also imagine a vast secret factory where the uranium and the plutonium came from. I had not realized that the Manhattan Project encompassed not just desert physics but our industrial capacity. Two huge "secret" plants were built in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Hanford, Washington. Getting to the big bang first (before Germany) was a result not just of ingenuity but of our confident capitalism, so nimble and so embedded with our government that we were well able to build vast factories in secret and begin production...immediately! This is the reason why Germany didn't get the bomb first. They had the science, or just about had it (A fact used to scare all of us over and over, then, and in hindsight.), but it was our own *sui*

generis and overarching production capacity that Germany lacked.

On one of my visits to the Bradbury Science Museum there was a woman leading what could have been her frail and partially blind elderly mother. The younger woman was cheerily chatting about everything at the museum, describing all that lay around them like a smorgasbord of visual wonders even to the color of the lettering on the displays. With a sigh that spoke of hours of listening to the world enumerated into banality the older woman said, “I don’t need to know everything I just want to be led.”

It might seem that that statement encapsulates our own situation but it’s too simple. It’s not that we don’t want to know, or that we want to be told what to believe. We like believing in our own powers of perception and analysis. That’s part of why some stories are so persuasive. They are simple to digest and to retell with authority. If we get confused or need reassurance we can easily remember them, especially if they correspond with our fundamental beliefs about ourselves and how the world works. Telling them over and over absorbs them into our personal histories and they eventually transform into our own original works. That’s how all the people who find their way to the Bradbury Science Museum are so able to explain the bombs to themselves and others. They don’t really need a tour. The story is already on their lips before they even see the first exhibit.

* * * * *

I wrote a draft of this this four years ago in Santa Fe. It’s part of a larger piece. I have been shadowed since childhood of the story the “atom bomb. The first adult book I ever read, sometime in third grade, was John Hershey’s “Hiroshima.” I think I picked it off the shelf in my house because it was small and green and had no pictures and the first sentence grabbed me...

At exactly 15 minutes past eight in the morning on 6 August, 1945, Japanese time, at the moment when the atomic bomb flashed above Hiroshima, Miss Toshiko Sasaki, a clerk in the personnel department of the East Asia Tin Works, had just sat down at her place in the plant office and was turning her head to speak to the girl at the next desk.

Hershey had been given the assignment from his editor to write about Japan after the bomb. Before he landed in Japan, he knew he would focus his story on individuals.

That frame and his attention to the detail of ordinary lives lived in the midst of large events has influenced journalists ever since.

On the other hand, I have always been interested in how individuals removed from an event retell the story. We who are removed from the bombing by geography and time have retold its story often setting ourselves as the reluctant bombers. This interests me because, as a people, we have knit this “event” into a larger narrative depicting us as holding some greater good in the DNA of our history. I love this country but I also think if we are ever to be fully cast as peacemakers we need to understand the painful, violent and even cruel bits of how we “won” this land and the ways in which we, as a people, have caused suffering. We do this so that we might stop future suffering and so we might better understand ourselves.

I write this as those who are paid by our tax dollars are wrenching children from parents on our borders causing suffering beyond this moment, casting trauma on the lives of thousands. What is hard for us to grasp is that this is not the first time we have done this.

Our Bible calls out individual and collective responsibility for suffering, joining them in the anguish of prophetic poetry and the pointed life of the one crucified. Like Hershey, Jesus gathers all beings into stories about individuals and says, “These, what you do to these you do to me.” And, Paul the Apostle, tells us that the resurrection is dependent on the crucifixion. You can’t have one without the other. Optimism in the face of systemic cruelty removes us from the equation. Yet, we are part of everything. We carry both the responsibility and the hope.

Because of my age, I often hear the refrain whispering, “When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?” Yet, about this time, this moment, I believe that the yeast of the kingdom is working its power deep inside the dough of everything...rising.

I pray for us the ability to feel the yeast at work in us and in the world. May it rise to this occasion and indeed become bread for the world.

—Anne

KEEP YOUR RECYCLING CLEAN

China Tightens Recycling Import Rules

Did you know that 60% of the recyclable materials collected in the U.S. go to China to be recycled into new products?

Historically, China accepted up to 5% non-recyclable contaminants (garbage or food waste) in bales of recyclable materials. As of March 2018, the Chinese government is now enforcing a policy called National Sword, which severely restricts the import of recyclable plastics and paper. China will only accept bales containing less than 1% contamination and will return any shipments that fail to meet that standard.

This is a big change and has had a crippling effect on recycle markets around the globe. **We need your help!**



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Keep your recycling clean and free of contaminants.
- Food containers, like pasta sauce jars or yogurt cups should be empty and dry. Use dish water to swish, or a used napkin to wipe them out (napkins are compostable).
- Do not place recyclables in plastic bags. They will not be opened at our sorting facility. This means they will be sent to the landfill as garbage.
- Plastic bags, film plastics, coffee cups, and Styrofoam belong in the garbage.
- Greasy pizza boxes and other food soiled paper should be placed in your green compost cart, not the recycling cart.
- Don't be a hopeful recycler. Visit our website, send us an email, or give us a call. When in doubt, check it out!



Recology.com/SonomaMarin
RecologySonomaMarin@recology.com
 800.243.0291

NR0163 NCJ07Y PR00 NR0163 NCJ07Y NR016302 R 1873 7 3649

How 's Our Sunday Attendance?

DATE	10:30	Dinner Church	Total
July 1	72/11		83
July 8	69/8		74
July 15	60/7		67
July 22	71/4	8/11	94
July 29	74/12		86

Adults/Children

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED!

In 1987, Fred and Mabel Hall established the endowment fund that is the source of monies that enables us to offer post-high school scholarship grants. The first scholarship was granted in 1990. The endowed funds from the Halls are invested in the UCC Foundation's Divested Common Investment Fund.

For the **2018-2019** school year, the Scholarship Board is delighted to offer these scholarships to the following individuals:

Sarah Andersen: \$500.00 for final semester of teaching credential

Morgan Hamlin: \$1,000.00 for 2nd year of 2-year grant (\$1,000.00/year) to complete SRJC

Alya Owaidat: \$4,000.00 for four years (\$1,000.00/year) of undergraduate work at San Francisco State University

Jonathan Kendall: \$2,000.00 for two years (\$1,000.00/year) for graduate work

Joseph Williams: \$2,000.00 for two years (\$1,000.00/year) to complete undergraduate work

It is a joy to grant these scholarships and see how the love of the Halls continues to touch lives in this church.

-The Scholarship Board

Dana Alexander, Mark Adams, John Derby, Maggie Robinson, Hannah Wallstrum

Council Highlights July 15, 2018

We have scheduled tree work to be done on Sept. 4 and 5.

Due to increased disrespectful use of our property causing possible safety and health issues, we have decided that it will be appropriate to call the Santa Rosa Police Department to intervene with people using our property without our permission.

Next Council meeting August 19, 2018.

August 2018 Calendar

Meetings & Events

August

8/4	Companions in Grace, 9:00-11:15	<i>Friendship Hall</i>
8/12	Ranting Meeting, 3:00	<i>Fireside Room</i>
8/13	Ranting Meeting, 6:30	<i>Fireside Room</i>
8/19	Council Meeting, 12:15-2:30	<i>Fireside Room</i>
8/28	Dinner Church, 4:00 – 7:00	<i>Friendship Hall</i>

Regular Building Use

Sundays

Choir rehearsal (5 th , 12 th , 26 th) 9:00	<i>Sanctuary</i>
Morning Worship 10:30 – 11:30	<i>Sanctuary</i>
Coffee Hour, following the service	<i>Friendship Hall</i>

Mondays

Caring Hands Knitting, 10 – 11:00	<i>Friends House</i>
<i>for information, email Nancy Turner nancyturner7614@att.net or call Betty Scherfee at 576-6605</i>	
Choir Rehearsal (20 th , 27th) 7-8:30	<i>Sanctuary</i>

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

Church Office is open 9:00-1:00
Pastor's Office Hours 10:00 – 2:00

Tuesdays

Poetry Group, (7 th , 21st) 6:30 -8:00	<i>Fireside Room</i>
---	----------------------

Wednesdays

Bible Study, 10:30 – 11:30	<i>Fireside Room</i>
----------------------------	----------------------

Thursdays

Fridays

Saturdays

First Saturdays--Companions in Grace, Centering Prayer, 9:00-11:15	<i>Friendship Hall</i>
--	------------------------

First Congregational United Church of Christ
2000 Humboldt St., Santa Rosa, CA 95404 • 707-546-0998
email: firstuccsr@gmail.com
10:30 a.m. Worship Celebration- Children's Sunday School

Visit us at fccsr.org