



## Meet Susan Updegrove . . .

Susan Updegrove, the chair of our Christian Education Committee, got involved in our Christian Education program as Sunday School assistant nine years ago — before she was a church member — when a friend coaxed her into helping teach the class that would include her then-three-year-old daughter Erin. Since then, she's taught Sunday School up through junior high and has been a guest lecturer in adult classes. She is serving her third year as an Elder, her second on the CE committee.

"There are lots of pieces to the CE picture," she observes. "In addition to trying to offer meaningful education and information at all age levels through the various classes, there are other responsibilities such as operating the church van, doing the Advent workshop and the grad night 'barbecue'."

The committee is "really looking at what is needed in terms of adult education," Susan reports. "Would people be better served by a mix of semester-long and shorter term classes, for example, to give them more flexibility in committing their time? Do we need some basic classes in how to study and use the Bible? Maybe some classes in reviewing the elements of our Presbyterian faith, which perhaps many of us have not seriously re-explored since our membership classes? To what extent can CE classes fill a need for fellowship as much as education? And, we welcome more volunteers for the CE committee," Susan declares. "We're open to fresh input and new ideas. And we still would like some more assistant teachers for some of the Sunday School classes."

Susan came to San Luis Obispo in 1982, when her husband, Dr. Craig Updegrove, took a position with the county mental health department. He now has his own family therapy practice. Susan devotes three days a week to her own practice as a licensed Marriage and Family Counselor.

Susan grew up in Maryland, where her father was a professor of microbiology and a dean at University of Maryland. But she graduated in nursing from University of West Virginia. "There was no way I was going to attend the college where everyone knew my father and be known as 'the dean's daughter'," she explains with a laugh. "Especially since one of



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his jobs as dean was handling student disciplinary matters." But she did return to University of Maryland for her master's degree in child psychiatric nursing.

Susan came to California in 1969 when her then-husband entered Stanford graduate school. She worked at the VA hospital in Palo Alto ten years, gave birth to daughter Alicia and obtained her Marriage and Family Counselor license during that period.

She and Craig were married in 1980 in Camarillo, CA while he was completing his service for his license at the state hospital there. They met while he was at Stanford as a psychology intern.

Susan grew up an active Methodist. "Church was a very important part of my life. Dad was very active in the church, and we were at the church two or three times every week." She became what she describes as a "casual attender" at First Presbyterian when Alicia became active in Joy Club and other church youth programs. She joined the church in June 1985, soon after son Graham was born.

Susan's own counseling work, like the CE program, involves all ages—children through adults—families, singles and, during the school year a large number of college students. "College can be a very difficult transition time in our young people's lives," she observes. She also teaches clinical psychiatric nursing at Cuesta College one semester a year.

Her personal interests include sewing, reading and physical activity. She is committed to regular running and swimming and occasional biking. She competed in the SLO triathlon when she first came here. Would she do it again? "Maybe." She also has enjoyed skiing when she drove our youth to their annual ski trip for seven years—"I had the same group of kids from their seventh grade through the high school years," she recalls, "and I really enjoyed them and the skiing." The Updegroves also like family camping—particularly in Big Sur—and visits to Yosemite. "Craig and I both are from the east coast, so we've travelled back there a lot to see family," she notes. "Now we want to explore the West."

She describes First Presbyterian Church as "a place with a lot of loving, caring people, and certainly a place where I've felt at home. People really have reached out to me."

Interview by **Bob Weed**

Photo by **Dewey Greil**