

The Link

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
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God is Still Speaking,

February 14, 2012

Blogging the Marriage Equality March: Soft for the Heart—Day Four

Pastor Brooks has been writing a daily blog at vanucc.org about his experiences while marching from Vancouver to Olympia in support of marriage equality. Here is his reflection from this past Sunday:

When our church began worship this morning, I sent a text message to be shared with the congregation. I typed it out with my index finger while I was marching. The text read, "Tell them the march is hard for the feet but soft for the heart. Lots of drivers are honking for love this morning." By the time worship began at 10 am, our day had gotten off to a wonderful start, but it was not without some anxiety. That morning The Daily News of Longview had published a story about our march. As we marched our way out of Longview, a number of people would know who we were. The question in my mind was "how would they respond?"

While a few people neglected to raise four of their five fingers when they waved, the overwhelming response was positive. A member of our church's youth group counted 25 affirmative honks during the course of a day on which we encountered a relatively small amount of traffic. After we left Longview and Lexington, we spent the rest of our time in rural areas passing farms.

Even though our interactions with the public were limited today, two interactions stand out as moments that softened the heart. In one instance, a woman came out of her trailer home to ask us who we were. Upon hearing, she said, "I thought that's who you were. Thanks!" She then proceeded to tell us that she had a son, a grandson, a granddaughter, and a nephew who were all either gay or lesbian.

In perhaps my favorite moment in the march thus far, we were in the middle of farm country when I saw two men in the distance standing by the road at the end of a driveway. They appeared to be about 70 years of age. It looked like they were waiting for the mailman to come, even though that struck me as an odd thing to do on a Sunday afternoon. When we reached them, one of them asked if we were the marchers, and we responded that we were indeed the ones marching for marriage equality. With a sincere and grateful smile, he reached out to shake my hand as he thanked us for marching. These two men had been together for thirty years. Since reading the newspaper that morning, they had been waiting for us. (Hopefully, they were not outdoors for all those hours.)

These two men were not satisfied with simply thanking myself and my walking partner as we led the pack. They waited until all of our walkers passed by. This included two walkers who were an hour behind us as a result of seeing a car crash and staying to serve as witnesses for the police.

In talking with these two men, I can still remember the happy glint in the eyes of one of them as I reported that our youth had thus far counted 20 honks. This was truly a day that softened my heart with each honk for love.

WORSHIP IN FEBRUARY

February 19, 2012

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Brooks Berndt preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 3 yrs. - Grade 7. Adult Education in the Plymouth Room after Worship.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Jim and Beverly Crossman
Worship Leader: Gwen Moscoe
Ushers: Ken Rowe and Cory Saum-Blystone
Mike King and Duke Charpentier

Wednesday, February 22 Ash Wednesday

Soup Dinner at 5:45 PM in the Plymouth Room

Distribution of the Ashes at 6:30 PM

February 26, 2012

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Brooks Berndt preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 3 yrs. - Grade 7. Youth Group Meets at 11:30 a.m. Adult Education in the Plymouth Room after Worship.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Marilyn Jones and Doraine Kohler
Worship Leader: Marnie Wright
Ushers: John Bradley and John Hannon
Tom and Josiah Renner

11:15 AM

First Lenten Luncheon in the Plymouth Room

Ash Wednesday Dinner February 22,

Before our Ash Wednesday Service this year, we will be gathering for a soup dinner in the Plymouth Room of our church. The dinner will begin at 5:45 pm. The Ash Wednesday service will begin at 6:30 pm.

Lenten Luncheons Begin February 26

We will be holding our annual Lenten Soup Luncheons in the Plymouth Room following worship beginning February 26th through March 25th.

We will be honoring the following people for their long term contributions and dedication:

Feb. 26 Mary Maxwell and Farley Maxwell
March 4 Wayne Fletcher and Ed Frank
March 11 Opal Chapman and Dwight Chapman
March 18 Shirl Zent and Beverly Boydston
March 25 Dorothy Mathews and Doraine Kohler
Please join us in honoring these wonderful people.

REMEMBERING OUR FAMILY IN PRAYER

Prayer requests for:

Our sons and daughters overseas, and the people of the Middle East;

CONTINUING PRAYER REQUESTS FOR:

Yahriel Harrigan	Al Ebersole
Martha White	Clarice Fossen
Pat Degerstedt	Gloria Ross

We are happy to tell you that **Gloria Ross** is improving and is now undergoing rehabilitation at **Marquis Mt. Tabor**, 6040 SE Belmont in Portland. The zip code is 97215 if you would like to send cards.

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DATES FOR "The Link"

Link Deadline
Link Mailed

February 26, 2012
February 28, 2012

Link Deadline
Link Mailed

March 11, 2012
March 13, 2012

Calendar Information

It's really easy to keep up with what's happening at First Congregational, Vancouver. We have a virtual calendar on the website.

To view the calendar, go to www.vancouverucc.org and click on the church calendar link. From the list version you may then click on Google Calendar and view the next few months.

New Members Orientation Dinner Planned

If you are considering joining our church family, then come to Bradford Hall on Sunday, March 4th for a New Members Orientation Dinner from 5 until 7 p.m. Childcare will be provided if needed.

Visitors Welcome

We are a church committed to supporting each other in leading lives full of meaning and purpose. Through our ministries, we provide opportunities for enrichment, service, and action. If you have not already received an orientation packet, please ask an usher for one. If you are interested in becoming a member or have questions about us, please let Pastor Brooks know. By becoming a member, you can affirm that this is a community to which you belong. Pastor Brooks enjoys meeting one-on-one with prospective members if they are interested. He can be reached at brooks@vanucc.org or 693-1476.

Adult Education "Inspired Aging"

Our final Adult Education Offering for February entitled **Aging Inspired** will be presented this Sunday. The series will continue following Lent for a final presentation on April 15th.

Feb 19 John and Carol Greenauer will lead a humorous discussion on the emotional aspects of aging.

April 15 Kay Kipp and Joan Barber will lead a discussion on how to achieve serenity near the end of life experience.

Bonnie Hennessey is coordinating this exceptional offering that introduces findings from the MacArthur Foundation Study of Aging in America, a ten-year study that shows how participation in a church community promotes successful aging.

Aili Kahvi for Aili Ray

I wanted to thank members of the congregation for their cards and kind recollections of Aili Ray who passed away on January 19th after a long battle with dementia. We will be holding an open house "Aili Kahvi" on February 18th from 1-3. The Finnish 'Coffee Table' is a traditional social event common in Finland. Those that remember Aili will recall her love of baked goods and strong black coffee. If you have time and can join us, please do. Our address is 506 E. 22nd Street in Vancouver. For more information, call Mark Ray at 360-907-7561.

Mission & Outreach Lenten Focus "Drink Water for Life"

The "Drink Water for Life" idea originated as a Lenten observance of the 1st Congregational United Church of Christ in Salem, Oregon, which is committed to serving the poorest of the poor by funding community water and sanitation projects. The idea is simple: covenant to "give up" all pricey beverages during Lent (lattes, soda, etc), and drink water instead. Then donate all the money you have saved to a water project (wells, purification, etc) in a needy part of the world. Salem's first year of the project raised \$3,500. Since then, their idea has spread to other churches, high schools, and universities.

We invite you to participate in "Drink Water for Life" and turn your beverages into clean drinking water to save lives in Haiti. You can learn more at www.drinkwaterforlife.org.

Women's Fellowship on Hiatus

Contributed by Beverly Crossman and Ellie Bradley

After many years of spring sales, bazaars and luncheons, Women's Fellowship has decided not to have a sale in April or a luncheon in May of 2012. Enthusiasm for these events has not declined but time constraints and physical limitations have taken a toll on the members who plan them. The sales have been successful over the years and the spring luncheons have been great fun, with informative community programs which our church supports.

Sale proceeds have most recently benefitted the church with comfy folding chairs, new pews and numerous kitchen items, as well as scholarships to retreats for women in our congregation. We have contributed annually to the UCC Women's Board Central Pacific Conference and the Rev. Anne Smith Loan/Grant Fund for many years and will continue that support this year.

Women's Fellowship has always appreciated all of the volunteers who have helped with these events and the contributions that have been made to our sales. But for now, we say "many thanks" and we will see what the future holds for us. We couldn't have done it all without you!

**Columbia Pastoral Counseling Center
22nd Annual Spring "Sundae" Concert
Sunday, April 15th, 6:00 PM
Trinity Lutheran Church, 309 W. 39th St**

Featuring Lutheran, United Methodist and
Unitarian Church Choirs.

Tickets are \$7.00

Sundaes really will be served.

Call 360-696-1615 for more information.

Columbia Pastoral Center is a faith based pastoral counseling center in Vancouver since 1981. Our staff is Christian and is respectful of our clients; different faith backgrounds. We provide individual, couple and group therapy as well as anger management. We also offer pre-marital and marriage enrichment workshops.

**Celebrating 20 Years of Being
Opening and Affirming**

For our worship service this Sunday, we will welcome back our marriage equality marchers and we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of our church's vote to become Open and Affirming. Please come for this special occasion.

A Call for Art

Submitted by Pastor Brooks

Ash Wednesday is on February 22nd this year, and our worship service on that day will once again feature art by church members and friends. We are inviting members to submit works of art related to the following quote from a 19th century Hassidic rabbi: "Human beings are God's language." In thinking about this quote, you might consider how persons in your life have revealed God's love to you, how they have accompanied you at crucial times in your life, or how they have helped point you toward God. Similar to last year, our Ash Wednesday service will give people an opportunity to reflect upon works of art with the accompaniment of music.

Art submissions can be drawings, paintings, photographs, sculptures, collages, quilts, carvings, or almost anything you feel called to create. Members of all ages, including kids, are welcome to participate. Please bring your artwork to the office by February 19th. Don't forget to put your name on it!