

The Link

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
1220 NE 68th Street
Vancouver, WA 98665-0508
360.693.1476
Website: www.vancouverucc.org



Volume 34 No.21

God is Still Speaking,

November 13, 2012

Giving Thanks for the Fish in Your Life

Dear Church Family,

Last week I attended a grief counseling training at The Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado. It was an emotionally demanding week as I and 23 other students practiced our newly acquired skills on each other in mock counseling sessions. When it was all over, I spent a day in Denver with my family before flying home. Along with two other families with children, we visited Denver's Downtown Aquarium. Of the more than 500 species of animals at the aquarium, what sticks out most vividly in my memory isn't the shark tank or the tiger prowling next to pools of water. It is a fish tank packed with relatively small, brightly colored fish swimming in a myriad of different directions.

For reasons upon which it is hard to place a finger, the sight of these fish filled me with a sublime happiness. Perhaps, after a week of thinking about death, these fish gave me a renewed appreciation of life. In that moment, they represented for me joy and vitality in abundance.

I offer this image of a tank full of teeming fish now as an image to spur reflection. Imagine that each of the fish in this tank represents something in your life for which you are thankful. Take a moment to not only feel gratitude for the individual fish before you but also for the tank as a whole. Let yourself experience an abundance of appreciative joy. You may then find yourself offering up a prayer of thanksgiving for a life packed with blessings.

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Brooks

PS: Remember that we will be dedicating our stewardship pledges in worship this Sunday. We will also conclude our worship series on the theme "A Family of Love" as we receive seven new members into our church.



WORSHIP IN NOVEMBER

November 18, 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 11:15 a.m. in the Triangle Room

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Lynn Hunt and Judith Dahlen
Worship Leader: Harriet Anani
Ushers: Ken Rowe and Cory Saum-Blystone
Mike King and Duke Charpentier

**Congregational Meeting on the Capital Campaign
Immediately following Worship**

November 25, 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.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Mary Ellis and John Hannon
Worship Leader: Kim McNally
Ushers: Tom and Josiah Renner
John and Joe Eckroth

Thanksgiving Baskets for our Church Family

Contributed by Pam Osborne

The Mission and Outreach Committee is offering you an opportunity to provide Thanksgiving baskets for five members of our church family. A table has been set up in the narthex with sign up lists for items for each of the baskets. You are asked to bring your donated items just prior to the church service on either November 11th or November 18th, when the baskets will be prepared for the recipients. Thank you for your generous support of our community members.

Save This Date... December 2, 2012 The Advent Festival is Back!

Circle the date on your calendar and come to Bradford Hall from 3:00 until 5:00 as we celebrate the start of Advent with crafts, auctions and lots of fellowship. More information soon.

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
Opal Chapman

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DATES FOR "The Link"

Link Deadline

November 25, 2012

Link Mailed

November 27, 2012

Arts & Crafts Groups

We are off and creating!! There will be 2 opportunities per month to participate in the newly formed arts and crafts group. Fourth Tuesdays and First Saturdays, meeting from 1-4 pm in the Plymouth room. The next meeting will be Tues., Nov. 27th. We will be trying our hand at making a banner for the church and others will be painting in watercolor and acrylics. You are welcome to join us. Bring your own project and supplies or join the fabric art group. The first Saturday group will start on Jan.5th from 1-4 also in the Plymouth room.

Come and explore your creative interests, learn from others, try new mediums and share your skills. Any questions, call Marilynn Jones cell 360-601-6263 or home 360-574-2653

Pastor Brooks Office Hours

My weekly office hours are at the following times:

Tuesday 11 am to 1 pm
Wednesday 4 pm to 6 pm
Saturday 3 pm to 5 pm

If possible, please contact me before visiting. I occasionally have irregular meetings, events, and emergencies that take me away from the office at these times.

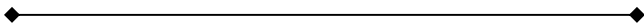
Doug Smith Concert Results

Contributed by Nancy Fite

The Doug Smith concert on October 20th was a big success, a simply delightful evening all the way around. Approximately 196 people attended, so it was a full church. We made \$3200 on the ticket sales. The wonderful baked goods gave us \$376 in revenue.

The ticket sales will go towards the principal on our church mortgage which includes the new roof and skylight renovation. The cookie money goes toward the pulpit supply when Brooks is on his sabbatical. Doug and Judy really enjoyed our beautiful church venue. They hope to come back next year for another concert. We will work towards that end.

Thanks to all of you in our congregation who wholeheartedly supported this fundraiser. Many of you bought tickets, baked fancy cookies, served on the committee, provided sound, created the program, ushered, sold tickets and refreshments, or participated in some other way. We really appreciate it! A special thanks to Jean Beary Stolle who had the idea of a Doug Smith concert and helped bring it to life.



Help Vancouver Mark the
24th Annual World AIDS Day

“Remembering with Hope”

Friday, November 30, 2012
beginning at 7:00pm

Clark County Elections Office
1408 Franklin Street
Vancouver, Washington

This program will feature opportunities to remember family, friends, and neighbors and a presentation on breakthroughs in AIDS vaccine research by Dr. Nancy Haigwood.

Thank You

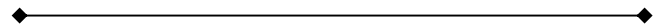
To Our Church Family,

Following the passing of our brother, Cliff Boydston, our hearts have been touched by the display of warmth and compassion demonstrated by our church family.

Thank you for the cards, phone calls, notes and hugs. Also, thanks for the contributions to the Church Memorial Fund on Cliff's behalf. Also, we would be remiss if we didn't thank the Deacons for the awesome reception following the service.

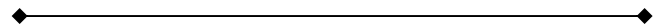
Thanks for EVERYTHING!

Bev and Ken Boydston



November Mission Offering

The November Mission Offering goes to Support and Caregivers Resources for Dementia. This is a new nonprofit organization that provides support groups for those coping with the pressures of giving care to loved ones suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The organization holds weekly meetings and is open to everyone. It provides invaluable information and resources about dementia. Those who attend the meetings find it to be a tremendous source of encouragement.



Congregational Meeting Scheduled for This Sunday

Contributed by Joan Blair

Immediately following worship, we will hold a Congregational Meeting to determine how we will disperse the Capital Campaign funds.

Your vote is very important to our church's future so if you cannot be in attendance, please call your vote in to the church office or you may call Joan Blair at 573-6505.

I Will Vote for Option One

Submitted by Jeff Osborne

At the Congregational meeting scheduled for Sunday, November 18th, I will cast my vote in favor of aggressively paying down the mortgage, Option One.

As mentioned in the end-of-October Link Special Edition about the upcoming meeting, I have been looking into the history of the Skylight project financing, the current situation and what the future might hold based on how we approach paying off the mortgage. I am convinced that we cannot afford to treat the church's mortgage the same way we treat our home mortgages. Aside from the sheer size of the mortgage the two main distinctions are the wastefulness of paying interest and the source of income to make payments.

Interest

Homeowners receive a home mortgage interest deduction against their income which means that the government helps pay a portion of the interest by reducing taxes. The church, however, pays no taxes and can receive no benefit. Every dollar we spend in interest payments is a dollar we raised in a capital campaign or an annual budget pledge that does NOT help reduce our debt. From our perspective, it is simply wasted.

In June, 2011, we started making the expected mortgage payments of \$5097.77 each month. When I began looking into the mortgage in September we had made 15 monthly payments from our capital campaign funds totaling **\$76,467**. At the end of those 15 payments we had reduced our debt by only **\$10,932**. This ratio, \$10,932 of benefit at a cost of \$76,467, is what I refer to as our **payment efficiency**. During this period it was **14.3%**. The strategy of making only minimal payments resulted in spending **85.7%** of our funds on interest. We continued to make minimum payments in September, October and November.

The only way to make the funds we contribute more efficient in paying off the mortgage is to make regular, large additional principal payments each month. It is particularly advantageous to make a very large extra payment just before refinancing the loan as planned in Option One.

Income

Every dollar we use to pay for the mortgage, which paid for the Skylight project, comes to the church through our voluntary giving to capital campaigns or to the annual budget. I want to see us choose to use these funds wisely. While we are currently in the stewardship season for next year's operating budget, we need to remember that stewardship addresses both the use of our personal gifts to support the church as well as the church making every effort to use our contributions to their best effect.

My desire to see our contributions used most effectively for the job at hand, paying off the principal balance of our mortgage, drives me to support Option One and the follow-on efforts to develop a complete plan that will get us all the way to a paid-off mortgage as quickly as feasible.

Cornerstone

In closing I want to make it clear that without The Cornerstone Fund we might never have been able to carry out the Skylight project. Commercial lenders were not and probably are still not anxious to lend money to churches, nor would they have become partners in this work as we have found Cornerstone to be.

The beauty and esthetics of our sanctuary continues to be an important part of who we are as a church. Many church members who attended the Marriage Equality celebration on November 7th have passed on comments from community members who felt welcomed and at peace in our sanctuary. It is part of our outreach.

I do not begrudge the interest we pay to The Cornerstone Fund because their mission is to use those funds to help other churches in the same way we have been helped. However, from **our** perspective, I don't want to spend any more on interest than is absolutely unavoidable. Even with very aggressive payback plans, efficiencies level out at about 75%-80%. Our goal is to pay back the principal that made our project possible. Good stewardship, I believe, calls for us to do so in the most efficient manner possible.

I am open to questions and comments about my position and am willing to share the reports and presentations I have put together about this topic.

Another Angel Identified:

Contributed by Joy Gerlitz

It's that time of year when we are asked to reach deep into our pockets to support the operation of our precious church. This church has supported me at the lowest time in my life, allowing me to carry on with my head held up. (I am sure the congregation is aware of that story) Then this past year the church gave me another unexpected gift---the opportunity to thank the person who forever changed my life.

About 6 months after my husband's death in 1992, my walking started to deteriorate. I could no longer hide that my MS was in charge of my life. I went to a drugstore and to buy a beautiful, carved, exotic cane so I would look eccentric not handicapped, but all they had were ugly canes one of which I was forced to buy. Well, my doctor thought the cane wasn't quite right and sent me to a physical therapist at the old Bess Kaiser Hospital. There, this wonderful young enthusiastic lady PT, after putting through my paces (torture), agreed that I needed walking assistance. I told her about my wanting to look exotic not crippled. She said, "I'll show you what you need." She went to a closet and pulled out two old arm crutches!! She noticed my reluctance and she took my hands and with the warmest smile said "Now, Joy," and she lectured me that adapting to life is what takes the "dis" out of the word disability. She said, "These two canes will keep you upright and steady. Come on try 'em, you'll like 'em!" So I did and she was right. It was easier to move with two arm crutches. I could stop and talk to someone without having to put aside my cane. I could continue to express myself with my hands. (You've probably noticed, I can't talk without my hands in motion!) She then asked what color, so I chose pink, and two days later I walked out of that hospital with the confidence that I could face anything MS handed me. I never saw that woman again until-----

A couple of months ago I was cleaning out my files. I was going through my health files when a business card fluttered to the floor. I picked it up and read the name and realized it was the card for the PT who so inspired me. I read the name again---Lynn Renner. Could it be the same Lynn Renner from church?

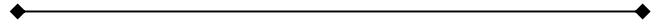
I had heard her presentation on her travels to Asia and I remembered her saying she was a physical therapist. Sure enough, she was the physical therapist who had changed my life. After 20 years, I was finally able to thank her personally and give her a big hug for helping me realize if I was disabled it was because I did not have the right adaptive mind set !

I know I was blessed that God crossed our life journey paths so many years ago and again today so I can

personally say "Thank you, Angel Lynn Renner, for saving the quality of my life!"

Because of the support and opportunity this church has given me, I will always tithe as much as I am able to support the operation of this precious church.

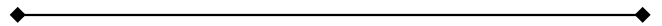
Joy Gerlitz



Intergenerational Day of Service

Contributed by Joan Blair

Our church is known for giving back through service to our community and this Saturday was no exception. Twenty-five members and friends of our congregation arrived at the Columbia Springs Fish Hatchery to volunteer 4 hours of their time. We arrived to meet leaders that put us to work refurbishing and building a new compost/recycling outdoor classroom. We dug sod to create a new pathway, finished building an arbor, cleared blackberry bushes, raked leaves and spread mulch with smiles and encouraging words. Through sweat and hard work, it was completed on time. Greg Saum cheered "Let's do it again next year" to a rousing applause. Of course, we ate together at Leonardo's pizza afterwards and patted ourselves on the back. Thanks to Ellie, John and Nancy, Greg and Corey, Jackie, Kelly, Jeff, Pam and Jeff, Hugh, Josiah, Tim, Garrett, Tammy and Angus, Claude and Joan, Janessa and Jayden, Aaron and Lisa, Ed, Claudia and Isaac for showing their support and coming. We'll be back next year and we hope you can join us!!!



Leave Us Your Leaves

Bring your leaves to the church garden this fall. We can use them for compost. Either distribute them on bare soil or set them in bags at the side of the garden. If you have no way to deliver them, call or text Ed Martin at 360 852 7602. I can't promise that I can pick up all, but will get as many as I can and will try to find others to help with pickup.

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Hugs for Hailey

Contributed by Doris Fletcher

Wayne and Doris Fletcher's 4 year old Great-Granddaughter, Hailey Gaston, was diagnosed with a genetic neurological brain disease, Leukodystrophy, in 2011. There is no cure...there is no treatment. But, there are medical bills, prescriptions and supplies not covered by insurance. There are out of state doctor's appointments and surprise expenses that would take a toll on any family.

A fundraiser to assist in these expenses will be held in Bradford Hall , December 8, 2012 from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. All you can eat spaghetti dinner, Silent Auction, Raffle and more. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance for adults, \$6.00 for 5-12 year olds and under 5 are free. Slightly more at the door.

For tickets in advance call Doris Fletcher, (360) 574-7698 or Brenda Fletcher Gaston, 360-901-4595. Hugs for Hailey necklaces made by Hailey's Mom, Jessica Gaston, will be on sale for \$10.00. Each necklace sold represents a Hug for Hailey.

This is an event for friends and family...YOU are both!