

The Link

First Congregational
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Volume 35 No. 4

God is Still Speaking,

February 26 , 2013

Receiving a Compliment

Dear Church Family,

As some of you heard at our Ash Wednesday service, I have recently been listening to an audio book called *Buddha's Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love, and Wisdom*. In this book written by a neuropsychologist and a neurologist, the authors talk about how the human brain is biased toward focusing on the negative. They note that the brain "preferentially scans for, registers, stores, recalls, and reacts to unpleasant experiences...it's like Velcro for negative experiences and Teflon for positive ones." If we wish to improve our mental health, the antidote to this bias is to internalize the positive by taking note of the good around us, by savoring pleasant experiences, and by thoroughly "absorbing the emotions, sensations, and thoughts" that accompany these experiences. The authors note that a sense of healing can occur as positive feelings and memories counteract and soothe negative ones. For instance, when a supportive person provides "comfort, encouragement, and closeness," it can infuse our mental processing of a difficult experience with a neurological balm.

It can be difficult to overcome the inclinations of our brain's wiring. The authors, for example, note a poignant case in which humans often manage to turn a positive into a negative. This occurs when we receive a compliment, but instead of allowing ourselves to absorb the feeling of appreciation, we begin to think, "Oh, I'm not really that good a person. Maybe they'll find out I'm fraud."

During our advocacy day in Olympia, our church was paid a number of compliments for our fast. My first response to such kind words was to minimize any sense of significance or special regard. With a dismissive wave of the hand, I wanted to say, "Oh, it's no big deal," but then I realized what I was doing, and I said to myself, "Brooks, why shouldn't we feel really good about what we are doing. Social justice work is difficult stuff, and here we are being complimented for it. You might as well let it soak in." The day after our trip to Olympia I received a wonderful email from a minister in Seattle named Vincent Lachina. In it, he wrote, "I was so impressed and inspired when we were told yesterday about the 24-hour fast some from your congregation were doing in support of food assistance care. For me, it was the high point of the day, and I think it motivated other activists to think about how personal some of these legislative decisions are. All I can say is 'BLESS YOU!'"

When I asked for permission to share his email, Lachina responded, "If I were there, I would stand and loudly applaud and whistle. This is a remarkable example of Christ in the world doing what is just and right." I would encourage all of you to let these compliments sink in. We deserve to feel good about our accomplishments. I certainly do not think God wants us to feel miserable about what we have done. Imagine how hard it would be to end child hunger if every child advocate felt glum and dismal along the way, even as others pat their backs. Instead, allow the appreciation of others to give us strength and encouragement for our future endeavors and inevitable successes.

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Brooks

WORSHIP IN MARCH

March 3, 2013 Third Sunday in Lent

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: Judith Dahlen and Connie Oppel

Worship Leader: Bert Martin

Ushers: Rory Martindale

Wayne and Doris Fletcher

Lenten Lunch Series

March 10, 2013 Fourth Sunday in Lent

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.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Wayne and Doris Fletcher

Worship Leader: Alicia King

Ushers: Carol Pendergraft, Dwight Chapman

Darrell and Shirley Brandenburg

Lenten Lunch Series

March 17, 2013 Fifth Sunday in Lent

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.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Joan Blair and Ruth Hammer

Worship Leader:

Ushers: Ken Rowe and Cory Saum-Blystone

Mike King and Duke Charpentier

Lenten Lunch Series and Potato Feed

March 24, 2013 Palm Sunday

8:30 a.m. Pancake Breakfast to benefit Youth
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.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Carol Elizabeth and Adina Tarpley

Worship Leader: John Fite

Ushers: John Bradley and John Hannon

Tom and Josiah Renner

March 28, 2013 Maundy Thursday

**6:00 Lamb Dinner in Bradford Hall followed by
Worship at 7:00 in the Sanctuary.**

March 30, 2013 Easter Sunday

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.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Jeff and Kimberly McNally

Worship Leader: Harriet Anani

Ushers: John Bradley and John Hannon

REMEMBERING OUR FAMILY IN PRAYER

Prayer requests for:

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

CONTINUING PRAYER
REQUESTS FOR:

Kathleen New
Farley Maxwell
Bev Boydston

Mary Craford
Charlotte Warren
Jean Matthews

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DATES FOR “*The Link*”

Link Deadline
Link Mailed

March 10, 2013
March 12, 2013

New Member Orientation

If you have decided that we are the church family for you, you can attend a two-hour orientation class and dinner from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm on Sunday, March 3rd. Once you have completed this class you will be ready to join! The class meets in Bradford Hall which is located on our lower level. If you are interested in attending, let Pastor Brooks know or call the church office.

One Great Hour of Sharing

March is the month set aside by U.C.C. to highlight the good works of many throughout the world.

We ask for whatever financial assistance you can provide. Millions of people in this world survive from day to day without proper food, shelter or clean water. They have nothing left over from their meager incomes to rebuild a house after war or a natural calamity.

One great hour of sharing provides both disaster relief and education to help people be able to provide more abundantly for their families. Thank you for your support.

Alice Rowe
Mission & Outreach Committee

Birthdays in March

March 02	Bob Schmidt
March 04	L. Marilyn Ross
March 04	Patty Yates
March 08	Irma Slocum
March 09	Garrett Ralph
March 11	Patty Ralph
March 12	Kristin Mauke-Wiswall
March 15	Emma Schnabel
March 21	Alice Rowe
March 21	Connie Oppel
March 23	Ed Frank
March 26	Sharie Lewis
March 28	Ira Hoover
March 28	Dorothea Johnson
March 30	Kathleen Williams



Interiors Committee News

Contributed by Shirl Zent

A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE is the new catch phrase being tossed out by the Interiors Committee. They are on the move again!

In the next few weeks, things will be happening. Which ones will you notice? Be aware, there may be a surprise right under your nose!

Your Interiors Committee:

Joan Blair, Marilyn Jones, Carole Greenauer, Daryl DeSilva, Marni Wright, Virginia Dunbar and Shirl Zent.

Mary Jo Ebel Circle to Meet

The Mary Jo Ebel Circle will meet Wednesday, March 20th at 10:30 a.m. in Bradford Hall here at the church.

Our very own Harriet Anani will be the featured speaker, so plan to have a wonderful, informative time with this fascinating woman.

All women of the church are invited to attend.

Easter Sunday Bulletin

Once again we will honor and remember loved ones in a special insert in the Easter Sunday bulletin. We are asking a minimum donation of \$5.00 per name on your list. All proceeds will go to Good Samaritan Ministries/Zambia and to our church interior improvements.

If you would like your loved ones honored or remembered please fill out a form in the narthex, place the form and your donation in one of the white envelopes, and place in the basket on the sideboard.

The deadline for names for the insert is Palm Sunday.

Two Meals to Support the Youth Group

Contributed by Kristina Martin

On **March 17th**, the youth of the church will be holding the annual Baked Potato Bar following worship. A suggested donation of \$5.00 per person or \$20.00 per family will be collected. Please consider donating a dozen cookies to add to the fun.

On **March 24th**, please come early for a Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast in Bradford Hall. Session 1 is from 8:30 – 9:00 and Session 2 from 9:00 until 9:30. The kitchen will close at 9:45. Again, a suggested donation of \$5.00 per person or \$20.00 per family will be collected.

PLEASE SIGN UP IN THE NARTHEX FOR ONE OR BOTH OF THESE FUND RAISERS FOR OUR YOUTH. GOOD FOOD, FRIENDSHIP AND FUN WILL BE THE ORDER OF THE DAY.

Maundy Thursday

Be sure to pick up your tickets for the Maundy Thursday Lamb Dinner prepared by Jeff and Pam Osborne and John and Carole Greenauer.

Tickets are \$8.00 per person and may be purchased from members of the Parish Life Ministry in the narthex following worship on Sundays through March 17th.

Remember: ***Maundy Thursday Lamb Dinner
6:00 Thursday, March 28th
Bradford Hall***

Thank You To Our W.H.O Volunteers

Contributed by Karen Kulm

Special thanks to: Harriet Anani, Ken & Alice Rowe, Richard Trefren, Marnie Wright, Jerry & Sandy Mathis, Marv & Sue Benson, Claude & Joan Blair, Michael Wu, Wayne & Anne Kamp, Pastor Brooks, Barb Harlan, Pam Osborne, John & Nancy Fite and Ellie Bradley for volunteering to work shifts at the men's Winter Hospitality Overflow (WHO) shelter this week.

Thanks also go to all who have donated money, clothing and food to the shelter. We are also grateful to all the volunteers from Kol Ami who have partnered with us, and to Sue Meyer for coordinating their schedule.

Finally, we want to thank Dave Slocum & Judy Enders for once again being St. Paul Core Group leaders. They are at the shelter several days a week every week while the shelter is open. They also prepare weekly meals and have helped organize sleeping bag/blanket drives for the men. Their tireless efforts every year help keep the program open and running smoothly. They exemplify the core values of WHO which are: compassion, acceptance, accountability, dedication, teamwork, respect, and integrity!



Angel Silhouettes.

Contributed by Harriet Anani

In mid-late January, the small angel silhouettes, twenty-seven in all, were staked just west of our church sign. These were posted in response to the shootings in Newtown, Conn. on December 14, 2012.

I would like to thank Mike and Alicia King who procured the materials, cut the angel silhouettes and prepared them for staking; John Hannon for repairing a couple of broken ones and lending moral support; also two young Mormon gentlemen who were walking on 68th St. and insisted that they would be glad to help with pounding the stakes into the ground. Most of them were up by then, but I had started to re-stake some in order to be precise in the location of each angel. They were kind, mindful of the deed, and a delight. A prayer of sorrow for those whose lives were lost as well as love and patience for those friends and loved-ones impacted by that sudden devastating event was given.

An exact time to remove the angels and how to honor the losses they represent has yet to be decided. Let us also not forget about those lost at Clackamas Town Center just three days prior. If you have any interest in communicating with your state or federal legislators about revision of gun laws please let me know, I will be glad to help you correspond either by e-mail, snail mail, phone, or FAX. There are several bills pending in the House and Senate in Washington to develop "more sensible gun laws". Your voice should be heard.

Sabbatical News

As Pastor Brooks prepares for his sabbatical leave this summer, so too is the Council thinking of how we're going to fill the pulpit and celebrate ourselves.

The Council is forming two committees to accomplish these goals. The first one is the Pulpit Supply Committee. They will be charged with planning the worship services for the 13 weeks that Brooks will be gone. The second committee is the Sabbatical Activities Committee. They will plan the fun events such as all-church picnic, Camp Adams Retreat, visitations to other churches, etc. during the summer.

If you are interested in being on either committee please let Joan Blair know ASAP because we are planning on having our kick-off meetings the first of March.

We plan to be reenergized and refreshed while Brooks and his family are doing the same.

The Tree

by Harriet Anani

The tree caught my attention that day.
Not more than 10-12 feet tall.
So it was short as trees go.
I felt a pull, an immediate need to pay attention.

It was December and it left a distinct
and vivid memory, which has become indelible.

Its beautiful green cloak for
spring and summer was yet a few months away.
Appearing naked making a statement
not unlike a skeleton gathered there in this
pioneer cemetery
where many other much taller evergreens
resided. Shading
guarding and protecting.
Sentinels speaking.

I was fixated on The Tree's strong knurly,
curvaceous trunk of dark brown.
Its main trunk was like a spine, mostly erect,
certainly substantial and seemingly very strong
given the slight height of this old/aging tree.

There was no question
that The Tree was very aware of its role.
It had remained strong and erect over the years
against all kinds of environmental and human
forces.

The tree was quite old approaching two centuries
I would guess, limbs bent, even broken in a few
places.
Lichen and moss were notable
Scars were noticeable where limbs have been
removed.

The Tree's roots appear to be deep in the adjacent
earth.
Knurled sprawling shaved roots atop of the ground
diving beneath the soil without pattern or
regularity.
Some were small while most were quite stout in
diameter especially close to the base.

The oldest deepest roots reflected
strength and tenacity
with circumferential tentacles reaching out to
unbroken earth,
seeking to absorb water and nutrients.
Roots which provided sufficient grasp to
maintain life and sustain the old tree.

The plethora of intertwined branches
limbs and twigs drew me into their web
revealing the complexity of their growth and
survival.

At the very tips of the year's growth
the tiniest of bulging greenish orbs were slowly
emerging.
Within weeks it will be covered with its new coat
of green finery.

Every day for over a week I passed The Tree.
I was intent on approaching it
to satisfy a longing to be close have time to just
be and bask in the luxury of the old tree's
energy.

On a beautiful spring Sunday afternoon
with camera in hand
I picked my way through an old wrought iron
gate
along the precarious small trail and partial brick
pathway
between the ancient headstones and grave
markers
toward The Tree.

It became even more amazing as I approached
Different from every viewpoint.

I slowly circled around it
I stood across the street from it
I lay beside and underneath it
I took the liberty of standing in front and back
and to each side of it
If only I could be a bird and sit in its top
branches or hover above.

I absorbed and understood
it's radical timeless message of endurance
strength and the circle of birth and death
while enduring the challenges of existence.

The Macaroni and Cheese Exploded!!

Our church family came alive last Tuesday night to celebrate our chosen social cause, child hunger. Thanks to the efforts of Kol Ami, St Andrews Lutheran Church and our church, we were able to feed 98 people, 40 of which were our members who came laden with macaroni and cheese, cookies, salads and bread.

I would like to recognize all those in our congregation who came that evening plus those that baked m&c, cookies, and bread or prepared salads for all of us to enjoy: Pam Osborne, Alice and Ken Rowe, John and Carole Greenauer, Harriett Anani, Marvin and Sue Benson, Brooks Berndt and Eunita Rankins, Claude Blair, Opal and Dwight Chapman, John and Nancy Fite, John, Kathryn and Joe Eckroth-Golden, Wayne and Doris Fletcher, Ruby Frank, John and Mary Ellis Hannon, Ed and Claudia Martin, Gina, Boean and Danya Marquardt, Kerry, Jane, Tom and Lynda Lambert, Kristin and Olivia McNally, Patty and Tom Ralph, Connie Oppel, Virginia Dunbar, Virginia Ebersole, Barb Harlan, Karen Kulm, Glen and Karen Owen, Tom Renner, Jerry and Sandy Mathis, Ellie Bradley and Kimberly Kangas and Sharie Lewis. Kerry Lambert and her family provided the bright balloon decorations that filled the room with color and joy.

It was truly an evening of full tummies, new friends, and miles of smiles. I was so proud of our church sponsoring this wonderful event.

Blessings to you all!

Joan Blair-chairman

P.S. The next day I took 10# of left over macaroni and cheese to the Share House and all they could say was WOW!! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!!



We Have a New Name!

You are cordially invited to the Plymouth Room **Monday afternoons at 2:00** for **Word Weavers** our **Scrabble Club**. Come join in the fun, fellowship and no pressure play.

Easter Flowers

With Easter falling so early year, everyone needs to start encouraging their flowers to grow so we have them to decorate our sanctuary on Easter Sunday.

Please bring flowers from your own garden or wherever, that would work nicely in the big Easter wreath.

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.

Oh No! It's Spring Forward Time

It doesn't seem possible but yes, it's that time again to 'spring forward'.

Don't forget to set your clocks forward one hour on Sunday, March 10th.