

The Link

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
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Volume 35 No. 23

God is Still Speaking,

December 10, 2013

A Commitment that Gives the World Hope

Dear Church Family,

Those of you who were at the worship service when our most recent new members joined the church will remember that many of them had a strong commitment to the environment. Those same new members are now leading the way for us as our church starts an exciting environmental initiative for the year 2014. Six of our new members have taken “The Planet Earth Pledge.” This pledge marks a commitment to take action against global warming for each week of 2014. A weekly action might be as simple as signing an online petition or sending an email to your legislator. The action might only require 15 minutes of one’s time each week. This is a small price to pay in the fight against one of the most pressing problems of our time.

The Planet Earth Pledge project arose out of our church and now has a growing number of local people outside of our church who have made the pledge as well. The motivation for this project is that people often feel powerless and alone in the face of the global warming crisis. With the Planet Earth Pledge, people can feel like they are a part of something bigger than themselves. When one writes one’s legislator, for example, one can state that one belongs to a group of people who have made a pledge to fight global warming. In fact, one can give the exact number because it will be updated every week on the website for the pledge. Moreover, there will be a weekly email digest of potential actions that will provide an updated number. To pledge or learn more, visit www.planeteearthpledge.org.

Our new members were asked why they made the pledge. Here is how they responded:

“There is no PLANet B.” —David Macko

“The reason that I took the Planet Earth Pledge is that the fate of the Earth is in our hands and God gave us stewardship of this magnificent home planet we call Earth.” —David Harrington

“We try to live what we believe.” —Kit and Trixie Stowell

“I believe that God called us to care for His Creation and that one day we will be held accountable.”
—Alona Steinke

“If we don’t make major cuts in greenhouse gas emissions soon, we will cross the tipping to irreversible global warming leading to the end of civilization as we know it.” —Don Steinke

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Brooks

WORSHIP IN DECEMBER

December 15, 2013 Third Sunday of Advent

10 a.m. **Choir Program** . 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: Joy Gerlitz and Carol Pendergraft
Ushers: Ken Rowe and Cory Saum-Blystone
Mike King and Duke Charpentier

December 22, 2013 Fourth Sunday of Advent

10 a.m. **Children's Program**. No Bible Adventures or Youth Group today. Infant and Toddler Care available.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Marjorie English and Daryl DeSilva
Worship Leader:
Ushers: David Macko and David Harrington
Tom Renner

December 24, 2013 Christmas Eve Service

8:00 pm . Worship Service. Infant and Toddler Care available.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Ed and Ruby Frank
Worship Leader:
Ushers:

December 29, 2013 Family Christmas Brunch

10:00 AM in Bradford Hall. No Bible Adventures or Youth Group this morning.

REMEMBERING OUR FAMILY IN PRAYER

Prayer requests for:

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

CONTINUING PRAYER
REQUESTS FOR:

Farley Maxwell
Joan Blair

There will be a Celebration of Life for **John Lee Dugger**, a member of our church family, on **Saturday, December 14th, 3:00 PM** in the Sanctuary.

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DATES FOR "The Link"

December 20, 2013

Link Deadline

December 23, 2013

Link Mailed

Please note this Link will go out on Monday instead of Tuesday.

January 12, 2014

Link Deadline

January 14, 2014

Link Mailed

Blue Holiday Service

Pam Osborne will hold a Blue Holiday service in the Sanctuary on Sunday, December 15, at 3pm. What's a Blue Holiday service? This time of year can bring back memories of past pain and sorrow and heighten new experiences of suffering. It can give us a case of "the blues." A Blue Holiday service is a place and time when we can allow feelings of pain, loneliness, worry, sadness, and experiences of dark memories, anxiety and fear to be lifted up in faith to The One who can help us relieve our pain. Come and join us as we seek peace in this service and take comfort in knowing that we are not alone.

Annual Choir Christmas Concert

The choir will present their annual Christmas music concert during the worship service on December 15th. Selections, this year, will center around familiar carols such as; O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM (with audience participation), THE FIRST NOEL, GOOD CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, REJOICE and JOY TO THE WORLD! and more. Some of the carols will be accompanied by tone chimes. Also on the program will be ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH played by Nancy Fite, flute; Cary Pederson, clarinet and Dr. Christopher Schindler, piano. Pam Osborne will be the narrator.

You won't want to miss this service of beautiful music so invite your friends to join you.



The Mission & Outreach Ministry Team thanks you all for your incredible support of our "adopted" SHARE family for our Giving Tree. All the gift needs were fulfilled including two wonderful bicycles!

We also want to thank you for your generous support of our Thanksgiving Baskets. Your gifts have helped lessen some of the stress of the holidays for these families.

Dessert of the Month for December

Well, can you believe that we have sold the dessert of the month for a full year now? We are all looking forward to seeing what our finally total raised for 2013 at the end of December.

Our Dessert of the Month for December will be made by Kristina Martin, her famous Rum Balls. The drawing for this will be held on December 22nd just in time to have for your holiday guests. We also will have a 2nd drawing on that day for one of Ed Franks adorable Santa's. Please buy your tickets early and let's make this our best month yet for our fundraiser.

We will do this again for 2014, I need sign ups for desserts, and help with selling tickets, please see me a.s.a.p. and let's get this going for 2014, We will announce what the funds will be going towards after we finish out 2013 with our totals to Who/Share and the flooring contribution for this first year sales of Dessert of the Month.

Thank you to Natalie Cantrell for her Lemon Cheesecake and we hope her oven survived this event! Congratulations to Susan Ross who won this lovely dessert for November.

Thanks to all of the bakers, the ticket purchasers, the winners, and the support of the entire church.

Sincerely,
Teresa Everist
360-921-0611

Women's Saturday Breakfast

Contributed by Connie Oppel

Remember Ladies, our tables will be ready and waiting for us on Saturday, December 14 at 9:30 a.m. at the Red Lion Inn at the Quay. We continue to meet on a regular basis on the second Saturday of every month.

All are welcome for a great time of fellowship and good food. Just show up.

Questions? Call Connie at 573-8997 or 567-5528

Christmas Fund

The Christmas Fund offering being collected in December is one way that we, as UCC lay members, can embody God's love for one another. The money we donate this Christmas Season will be used by the national UCC Pension Board's Ministerial Assistance Program to provide emergency assistance grants. When giving remember the ways that a retired pastor, a retired Sunday school teacher, a retired church secretary, or a retired minister of music have touched your life. Giving envelopes will be in the pews all during this month. Your contributions will be gratefully appreciated.

The Mission and Outreach Committee

Year End Giving Opportunity

We are beginning to plan for an exciting 2014 with projects to protect and enhance our facilities. A new roof over the Education Wing, painting and repairs to the outside of the building, new carpet in the lower and upper corridors and new signage are all possible and planned depending on bids and funding. The Capital Campaign will provide for most of the financing of these projects, but not all. If you would like to make a year-end gift or one year pledge to the Capital Campaign it will help provide funding beyond the pledged Capital Campaign level.

Please call John Greenauer, Interim Chair to discuss how you can help at 360.608.3674

Children's Christmas Program

Please plan on attending the Children's Christmas Program on December 22nd. The theme for this year is "Christmas is Our Gift" and will feature the musical talents of the Bible Adventures children.

Spiritual Growth Audio Book Group

This is a book club for people who don't have time for books! To participate in this book club, you do not have to set aside any extra time in your busy schedule to read. Our book next month will be Brian McLaren's *"Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?: Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World"*. We will be meeting at Little Italy in downtown Vancouver Tuesday, January 7th at 6 pm. Sign up in the narthex to join us or email Pastor Brooks (brooks@vanucc.org).

Christmas Eve Service

The Christmas Eve Service will be at 8:00 pm. The theme of this year's service is "Images of a New World."

Reflections and meditations will be interspersed with selections by the choir and congregational carol singing. The service will end with the candlelight singing of Silent Night. The congregation will then gather in the Narthex for wassail and cookies.

Christmas Cookies Needed

The Bible Adventures children bake cookies to serve after the Choir's Christmas Music Program; however, they can't bake enough cookies for the whole congregation during class time. If you would like to donate a plate of cookies to serve that day, please bring them on Sunday, December 15th and place them on the tables in the narthex. Any extra cookies will be served on Christmas Eve. Thank you so much and if you have questions, please phone Kristina Martin at (360) 695-4545.

Mary Jo Ebel Circle

The Annual Christmas Luncheon will be **Wednesday, December 18th, 11:00 AM at the home of Ellie Bradley.** Please bring a salad to share and a donation for F.I.S.H. of warm gloves, hats or non-perishable food items. RSVP Ellie at 944-7838

Mazi Conference Lock-In

The CPCUCC is hosting an overnight lock-in at Ainsworth UCC on Friday, December 20th. Bring a sleeping bag, pillow, toiletries, a wrapped white elephant gift (no more than \$10), and a pair of socks to be donated to the homeless. We will gather at Ainsworth at 6pm for dinner, have lots of fun activities, and then spend the night. Breakfast will be served in the morning and we'll head home at 10am. This is a GREAT way to reconnect with conference friends (Camp Adams, WRYE, NYE, etc.) and meet the kids who will be going to Seattle for NYE this June. Let Kristina know if you plan to attend!

Feminine Faith Formation And Fellowship

We will meet this Thursday, December 12th, at Kristina's home to discuss the remainder of the book, *Take This Bread*. If you haven't finished the book, please come anyway for the wonderful conversation and time together. You may phone Kristina for directions (360) 695-4545, but she'll be sending out an email as well. See you at 7pm on the 12th!

From Joanie Nelson

Greetings from Ft. Myers, Florida!

Our alligator has moved on – permanently, I hope. **MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

Joanie

Mission and Outreach Focus for Christmas Eve: The Discretionary Fund

The Christmas Eve offering goes to our discretionary fund for the upcoming year. This fund is used to assist church members in times of need and crisis. In a difficult economy, our ability to help people in hard times is often a true blessing for those who receive it.

All-Church Action on Background Checks

Our All-Church Action for 2014 will be to run and walk in support of background checks on all gun sales in the state of Washington. The event will be part of the Faith Action Network's Interfaith Advocacy Day on January 30th in Olympia. For those walking, there is a 5k walk or the final quarter of a mile to the legislative steps. For those running, there is a marathon, a half-marathon, a 10k, a 5k, or the final quarter of a mile. For those who want to support and cheer our walkers and runners, volunteers are needed as well. Register at www.runnersforbackgroundchecks.org/register-now.

Like us on facebook at www.facebook.com/runnersforbackgroundchecks.