

The Link

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
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Volume 36 No 8

God is Still Speaking,

April 22 , 2014

Excerpt from the Pastor's Annual Report: Unleashing Our Energy and Passion

Dear Church Family,

Year after year our church shows signs of vitality. This can be seen both in how we care for each other and how we care for those suffering in the broader world. This past year I recall hearing a member say, "Our members do a better job of caring for each other than any church I have been in." At the same time, we intentionally involve ourselves in the world beyond our walls through our service, advocacy, and action. A few months ago the director of a non-profit organization told me that he frequently cites our church in conversations with office staff because of our example of social engagement. One of the fruits of our vitality is that we continue to attract and gain new members with twelve joining in 2013 and seven joining already this year.

While our church has prevailed against the common trends of shrinking membership sizes among mainline churches, we would be wrong to assume that we do not continue to wrestle with the same troubling issues with which many churches contend. One of these issues pertains to how churches are structured and organized in ways that impact the time commitments of members. Scholars tell us that one of the factors behind membership decline since the 1960s pertains to how individuals and families arrange and dedicate their time. Key factors include women entering the workforce in large numbers and families making Sunday at-home time to be together. Mega-churches have responded to this situation by turning to a Walmart model in which those who attend are consumers for whom the church staff provides various products and services on a large scale without necessarily requiring much from attendees in the way of time. This is far different than the traditional model in which the church survives due in large part to the high participation of members in making the church operate. In this model, a church cannot be composed of a significant number of passive consumers or else it won't be able to function.

I believe churches at their best should be participatory. Church should not be a spectator sport, and while charity has its place, Christianity is a lifestyle and not a matter of paying others to do good deeds on our behalf. With this said, I am not convinced we face an either/or situation: either we mimic the Walmart model or we continue with traditional models of organizing church participation. For this reason, I am particularly excited that our church decided to address this issue head-on at our all-church retreat last year. Next month, we will begin to experiment with conducting many of our committee and ministry meetings on the same night with potluck food and childcare adding a greater degree of spiritually nurturing fellowship and family-friendly assistance.

One of the keys to being a strong and vital church is how we gather and unleash the energies and passions of our members. This is essential to how we fulfill our callings. Our sense of fulfillment and our future depend upon it. We are poised to be successful in this regard because of the dedication and talent of both our members and staff. The year ahead is full of promise and potential.

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Brooks

WORSHIP IN APRIL AND MAY

April 27, 2014

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Brooks Berndt preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available.
10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 4yrs. - Grade 8. Youth Group Meets at 11:30 a.m.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Sue and Marvin Benson
Worship Leader: Lynn Renner
Ushers: David Macko and David Harrington
Tom Renner

MAY

May 4, 2014 Communion

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Brooks Berndt preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 4yrs. - Grade 8. Youth Group Meets at 11:30 a.m.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Beverly and Jim Crossman
Worship Leader: Susan Ross
Ushers: Rory Martindale and Trent Corey
Wayne and Doris Fletcher

May 11, 2014 Mother's Day

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Brooks Berndt preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 4yrs. - Grade 8. . No Youth this Sunday.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Joan Blair and Norma Priel
Worship Leader: Sue Benson
Ushers: Carol Pendergraft, Dwight Chapman
Darrell and Shirley Brandenburg

May 18, 2014

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Brooks Berndt preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 4yrs. - Grade 8. Youth Group Meets at 11:30 a.m.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Cheryl and Will Lowe
Worship Leader: Dwight Chapman
Ushers: Ken Rowe and Cory Saum-Blystone
Mike King and Duke Charpentier

May 25, 2014

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Brooks Berndt preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 4yrs. - Grade 8. No Youth Group this Sunday.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Virginia Ebersole and Janet Hunter
Worship Leader: Laurie Parafinczuk
Ushers: David Macko and David Harrington
Tom Renner

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
Yahriel Harrigan
Nancy Phelps
Gloria Ross

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DATES FOR "The Link"

Link Deadline
Link Mailed

May 11, 2014
May 13, 2014

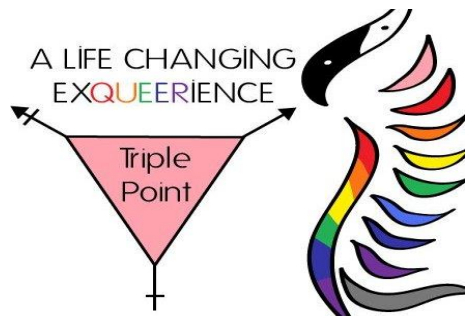
Birthdays in May

May 01	Kristin Martindale
May 05	Isaac Martin
May 07	Jim Crossman
May 07	Alona Steinke
May 21	Laela Brittain
May 22	Jean Matthews
May 24	Greg Ralph
May 25	Ruby Frank
May 29	Kathy Woolley
May 31	Boean Marquardt

Happy
BIRTHDAY

Teacher and Graduate Recognition Sunday is June 1

Graduation time is nearly here and we want to celebrate! If you have a graduate you would like recognized on June 1st, please let Kathy in the office know the graduate's name and plans after graduation so we can add him/her to the bulletin that day. You may drop off your announcement in the office until May 25th or email it to kathy@vanucc.org.



Mission & Outreach May Special Offering TRIPLE POINT YOUTH GROUP

Triple Point is a local youth group for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and straight ally youth, ages 13-21 years old. They provide a safe space, support, education, information and referral services through Children's Home Society of Washington (CHSW.) Triple Point also provides youth with a meal and structured activities during each meeting. The Vancouver chapter currently meets at the CHSW building at 1112 Columbia St, downtown Vancouver, but they are in the process of planning and fundraising for their own building.

Triple Point meets every Tuesday from 3:00 – 6:00pm for Drop-In and the Support Group meets in the evening from 6 p.m.-8 p.m. Volunteers provide a meal for the kids and mentoring. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Spring Dowse, Triple Point Program Coordinator, at 360 695-1325. You can also check out:
<http://childrenshomesociety.org/triplepoint.html>

Please consider making a donation to this wonderful group of youth by writing a check to our church and noting "Triple Point" in the memo line.

Congregational Meeting

The annual Congregational Meeting for the election of new officers and members of ministries and committees will be held immediately following worship this **Sunday, April 27th** in the sanctuary.

Women's Breakfast Group

The Women's Breakfast Group continues to meet on the second Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. at the Red Lion Inn at the Quay. Our next gathering will be on Saturday, May 10th.

All women of the church are invited to celebrate sisterhood, fellowship, friendship and family.

Spiritual Growth Audio Book Group

The description for our next book reads, "Heavily tattooed and loud-mouthed, Nadia, a former stand-up comic, sure as hell didn't consider herself to be religious leader material-until the day she ended up leading a friend's funeral in a smoky downtown comedy club. Surrounded by fellow alcoholics, depressives, and cynics, she realized: These were her people. Maybe she was meant to be their pastor." The author of the book is Nadia Bolz-Weber, and the book is "Patrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint." We will meet at Tommy O's in downtown Vancouver on Wednesday, May 14th at 6 pm. Sign up in the narthex to join us or email Pastor Brooks (brooks@vanucc.org).

Spring Outdoor Cleanup Scheduled

Mark your calendars for this Saturday, April 26th for our annual outdoor clean/spruce up. We plan to get everything even more beautiful before Mother's Day. We will begin around 10:00 a.m., work until we're done and we hope that you will be able to help us out. Bring any appropriate tools that you have; i.e.; rakes, hoes, pruners, chainsaw, etc.



**PRIDE SEASON IS ALMOST HERE
HELP US CELEBRATE!**

The Portland Pride Festival & Parade will be June 14-15. All of the local UCC churches are signed up to march together in the parade on June 15th. Step off time is 11:00 AM, but we will start line-up in the North Park Blocks with an outdoor worship service at 10 AM led by Parkrose UCC Pastor Don Frueh. Exact details of our line-up location will be available in June.

We will also have a table at the festival at Waterfront Park on June 14-15. Tabling at this event is an incredible experience as we share our radical welcome and love with the public. There is a federal court hearing on April 22 in Oregon on the constitutionality of Oregon's marriage ban on same sex couples, and it's possible we will have the results by June, so it is especially important this year to be out and proud as people of faith who support marriage equality!

Stay tuned for further details. Questions? Please contact Karen Kulm at 360-991-5774 or email at lk.kulm@gmail.com.

Do You Volunteer in our Community? Then We Want You!

The CE ministry is looking for people in this church to come forward and share with us the many ways they are involved in the community by taking part in our **Activism Expo on May 18th!** During this past year, we have looked at who we are as a national church, how we function as a church in our conference, and how we want to highlight the big part of who we are as a local church - folks doing works of justice and compassion in the community. Participants are asked to bring pamphlets, display boards, etc. to set up in Bradford Hall. A "portable" lunch will be served by CE. If you are interested in participating or have questions, please email Kristina (kristina@vanucc.org).

Concerned about Money Corrupting Government?

WAmend is a coalition of grassroots organizations who believe that unlimited and anonymous money has corrupted our political system. WAmend's mission is to put the State of Washington on record as calling for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. They are seeking to do this through ballot initiative 1329. Learn more about this initiative and the work of WAmend after the congregational meeting on April 27th. The meeting will take place in Bradford Hall. Cookies will be provided.

Meditation: Another Form of Prayer

Have you experienced meditation in some form? Have you felt you would like to meditate.

Come join us to understand how meditation is another form of prayer and to experience some different kinds of meditation. This is a 3 part series, but feel free to join us at any point.

Led by Arlene Arnold, a Certified Spiritual Guide and Healing Facilitator since 1995.

Sundays May 18, June 1, June 15 8:30-9:30 am

May 18: Introduction to Meditation (Connecting to the Spirit Within)

June 1: De-stress Through Meditation

June 15: Inner Guidance through Meditation

Dessert of the Month for April

Will you be one of the lucky owners of your very own Freezer Jam lovingly made by Opal Chapman. Opal has donated 6 pint jars for our Dessert of the Month for April so we will be drawing 3 lucky names. The drawing will be held this Sunday, April 27th right after the Congregational Meeting.

Forum on Proposed Oil Terminal

Members of our congregation have proposed that our congregation address the proposed oil terminal for Vancouver as our social action focus in the coming year. Our Mission and Outreach Ministry is sensitive to the desire that our congregation's approach to any issue be one that is informed and well-considered. For this reason, there will be a facilitated discussion on the proposed oil terminal from 6 to 7 pm on Thursday, April 24th in the Nettie Fries Lounge.

May 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>4 10:00 Worship SAN 10:20 Bible Adv. CL 11:15 MAZI TRI 11 & 1 MCC</p>	<p>5 2:00 Scrabble PLY 6:30 VANUSA BRD 7:00 Spirituality NFL 7:30 Fireside PLY</p>	<p>6 9:00 WW BRD 9:30 Bible Study PLY 1:30 Seeking God Osborne Home 6:30 CE CL2 7:30 Seeking God Osborne Home</p>	<p>7 10:30 Staff PLY 4:00 WW BRD 6:00 Tome Chimes CL2 7:00 Choir SAN</p>	<p>1 4:00 Martha's Pantry NFL 6:00 Planned Pthd CL2 6:30 Sierra Board PLY 7:30 Fireside PLY</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>11 Mother's Day 10:00 Worship SAN 10:20 Bible Adv. CL 11 & 1 MCC PLY 4:30 Fireside PLY</p>	<p>12 2:00 Scrabble PLY 6:30 VANUSA BRD 7:30 Fireside PLY</p>	<p>13 LINK 9:00 WW BRD 9:30 Bible Study PLY 5:30 Parish Life NFL</p>	<p>14 10:30 Staff PLY 4:00 WW BRD 6:00 Tome Chimes CL2 7:00 PCusers BRd. NFL 7:00 CoalFree PLY 7:00 Choir SAN</p>	<p>15 7:00 Evening Book Club NFL</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17 8:30 Men's Bkfst BRD</p>
<p>18 8:30 Meditation CLC 10:00 Worship SAN 10:20 Bible Adv. CL 11:15 MAZI TRI 11:00 Adult Ed BRD 11 & 1 MCC PLY 3:00 Forney Recital</p>	<p>19 2:00 Scrabble PLY 6:30 VANUSA BRD 7:00 Spirituality NFL 7:30 Fireside PLY</p>	<p>20 9:00 WW BRD 9:30 Bible Study PLY 6:00 P&F PLY 6:30 PCUsers BRD 7:00 Council PLY</p>	<p>21 10:30 Staff PLY 10:30 Ebel Circle BRD 4:00 WW BRD 7:00 Choir SAN</p>	<p>22 1:00 Art Group PLY 4:00 MP 7:30 Fireside PLY</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24 CCMTA Romantic Festival SAN</p>
<p>25 10:00 Worship SAN 10:20 Bible Adv. CL 11 & 1 MCC PLY 4:30 Fireside PLY</p>	<p>26 Memorial Day Office Closed 2:00 Scrabble PLY 6:30 VANUSA BRD 7:30 Fireside PLY</p>	<p>27 9:00 WW BRD 9:30 Bible Study PLY 6:30 All Ministries Potluck BRD</p>	<p>28 LINK 10:30 Staff PLY 4:00 WW BRD 7:00 Choir SAN</p>	<p>29 4:00 MP 7:30 Fireside PLY</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31 1:00 Young Perf. Recital SAN</p>