

The Link

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
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Volume 36 No. 17

God is Still Speaking,

September 9, 2014

The Long House: Clues to Our Spiritual Health

Dear Church Family,

Recently, I finished the novel *Still Life* by the bestselling mystery writer Louise Penny. The book is the first in her Inspector Gamache series. The metaphor that lies at the heart of the novel comes from a remembrance that the inspector has. He recalls someone explaining to him how each of our lives is like a long house. We enter at one end of the house as babies and move through it until we exit the other end at our death. All the people we have ever encountered are in that house. Gamache's recollection of the long house metaphor continues:

Until we made peace with the less agreeable parts of our past they'd continue to heckle us from way down the long house. And sometimes the really loud, obnoxious ones told us what to do, directing our actions even years later.

One of the main characters of the novel deals with both the good and the bad characters of her long house by literally painting the scenes of her life on every wall, ceiling, and floor in her actual house. Her work is stunning, and upon seeing the inside of the house for the first time, Inspector Gamache is overcome with emotion: sadness and melancholia as well as joy and delight. As it turns out, Gamache is also convinced that the clues to a murder are located in the paintings that provoke this response.

If each of us were to paint the scenes of our own lives, we hopefully would not find the clues to a murder, but we would likely find the clues to our spiritual health and wellbeing. We would find the clues to what unravels us as well as the clues to what lifts us up. For my part, one of my joy-filled paintings would be a large mural of our church and all the people within it. I imagine this painting would help me to forget and drown out the hecklers in my long house.

Whether or not any of us paint, we can each be artists in how we handle both the difficult and happy moments of our lives. I invite you to think about how you would paint the scenes of your life. Think especially about the scenes that would reveal the clues to your own joy and delight.

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Brooks

WORSHIP IN SEPTEMBER

September 14, 2014 CE Kick-off Sunday

10 AM Worship Service, Kristina Martin, preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. Kick-off Luncheon following Worship.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Pat Degerstedt and Joanie Nelson
Worship Leader: Children of the Church
Ushers: Carol Pendergraft, Dwight Chapman
Darrell and Shirley Brandenburg
Children of the Church.

September 21, 2014

10 AM 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: Carole Elizabeth and Adina Tarpley
Worship Leader: Laurie Parafinczuk
Ushers: Ken Rowe and Cory Saum-Blystone
Mike King

September 28, 2014

10 AM 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: Jim and Beverly Crossman
Worship Leader: Dwight Chapman
Ushers: David Macko and David Harrington

New Spanish Language Children's Choir

Our church is excited to announce a new Spanish language children's choir that will begin practice on September 21st. The choir will be led by church member Dr. Kit Stowell. Kit has the perfect background and ability for this choir. In terms of Spanish, Kit has taught Spanish and Latin American Studies as a college professor.

The choir will practice before Sunday worship from 9:30 to 9:50 on Sundays starting September 21st. Practices will go until a Christmas performance in worship on December 21st. If you have a child that you would like to have join the choir, let us know by calling (360)693-1476.

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
Gloria Ross
Jerry Mathis

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DATES FOR "The Link"

Link Deadline
Link Mailed

September 21, 2014
September 23, 2014

CE KICK-OFF is This Sunday!

Sunday, September 14th, will be a fun and exciting day at our church and I hope you plan on attending. Children of our church will do several aspects of the service, the CE Coordinator/Youth Director (Kristina Martin) will give the sermon, and there is a yummy lunch of pulled pork or shredded chicken sandwiches following the service. The CE ministry hopes each and every one of you will attend and make Kick-Off 2014 a joyous celebration! (If you can donate a plate of cookies or sweets for lunch, that would be appreciated. Let Kristina know by emailing her at Kristina@vanucc.org or phone her at (360) 635-1075.)

Faith Action Network Meeting

At 2 pm on Sunday, September 14th, local members of the Faith Action Network will be meeting in Bradford Hall. The Faith Action Network is a statewide advocacy organization devoted to advancing economic and social justice. Our church is a member of this organization, and this meeting will be an opportunity for local congregations to share about their current advocacy work, to learn about what FAN is doing statewide, and to strategize about how we can work together in the coming year.



Saturday, September 13th
Esther Short Park
9 am to 5 pm ~ free!

SAVE THE DATE! Activities include music, poetry, vendors, and children's activities. Food of all kinds is available next door at the Farmer's Market.

Our church is again sponsoring a table and we would love to have your help in telling the community about how we are involved in peace, justice, and trying to make our world a better place. Join us in the park for a fun day!

To volunteer for our table, call Karen at 991-5774 or email at: lk.kulm@gmail.com. A sign-up sheet is available in the narthex.



Many people in Vancouver are experiencing homelessness year round. Many others may have a place to stay, but are unable to afford food and basic necessities. Dave Slocum, his wife Judy Enders and friends from Judy's church have started a street ministry to fill this void.

Dave & Judy serve 30-67 people every Sunday evening in downtown Vancouver. They provide a hot meal, green salad, fruit, milk, juice, pastries, clothing, hygiene products, blankets, sleeping bags, tarps, socks and underwear. So far this summer, they have served a total of 734 people!

Doraine Kohler has also helped supply milk and hot meals, and Virginia Dunbar has made several warm blankets.

In addition to the Sunday ministry, Dave & Judy are also doing a foot soaking at the Giving Grace Ministries house in downtown Vancouver every other Wednesday evening. Folks get to soak their feet in Epsom salts, then apply foot powder and new socks. This program is greatly appreciated.

If you would like to support this vital ministry in any way, or just learn more about it, speak to Dave Slocum or email him at: dslocum72@aol.com. Thank you Dave, Judy, and friends for putting love into action!



REGISTER NOW TO GET AN "EARLY BIRD" DISCOUNT

Secure on-line registration is now open for the Central Pacific Conference UCC Annual Meeting. Click here for [Registration](#). Although you can register up to the day of the event, the "early bird" discount ends September 12th. Everyone is invited to attend; however if you would like to be a voting delegate, please contact Richard Trefren.

Fun new activities this year include a recycled art project, open-mic on Saturday night, and much more. To read all about it click here: [Information](#).

Over 30 workshops are available in addition to the plenary sessions with Dr. Larry Rasmussen, one of the foremost Christian ecological ethicists. Still have questions about attending? Call or email Karen Kulm at 991-5774 or lk.kulm@gmail.com

A Call to Veterans: Help Send Josiah to Boot camp

If you are a veteran, help us send Josiah to boot camp. Josiah's last Sunday with us will be September 14th. On that Sunday, the veterans of our church will help compose a blessing for Josiah. Please send a one sentence contribution to the blessing to Pastor Brooks by emailing him or placing it in his mailbox at church. Begin your sentence contribution with the phrase, "May you..." For example, "May you serve your country with pride, dignity, and the highest of ideals." The deadline for submissions is September 12th. The blessing will be read during the children's sermon on September 14th.



Mission & Outreach Special Offering for September is Jubilee USA

Jubilee USA Network is an alliance of churches, labor, environmental, and community organizations. In the late 1990s, people across the map joined together to form the global Jubilee movement to call for debt cancellation for impoverished countries and for just economic policies. From this, Jubilee USA was born. Since then, we have won critical global financial reforms and more than \$130 billion in debt relief for the world's poorest people.

Our church voted to become a Jubilee Congregation several years ago. As part of our commitment, we take an annual offering, educate ourselves on debt issues, and conduct action campaigns.

After church on September 14th, we will connect with "neighbors far" by participating in a Jubilee global petition drive calling on lenders to halt debt payments from the Philippines, which is paying billions more in debt than it is receiving in aid in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan. Aid should be given in the form of grants – not loans – to avoid placing an additional debt burden on future generations of Filipinos.

To support Jubilee USA financially, make your check out to our church and note "Jubilee" in the memo line.

More information about the critically important work of Jubilee Network can be found here:
<http://www.jubileeusa.org/home.html>

Mary Jo Ebel Circle to Meet

All women of the church are invited to the annual picnic of the **Mary Jo Ebel Circle** on the Labyrinth at 11:00 AM on Wednesday, September 17th.

Everyone is reminded to bring a sack lunch and beverage. Also, you will want to bring a lawn chair if you have one. Dessert will be provided.

SUMMER OF GRATITUDE BOARD

This summer, we recognized various Ministries, Committees, and groups within our church with toasts of appreciation. In addition, we collected notes of gratitude during the worship service and posted them to a colorful "Summer of Gratitude" board. Over 400 notes were written and posted, demonstrating we are full of love and gratitude. Here are a dozen randomly selected notes of gratitude:

- For my daughter. She shows me every day how to grow.*
- Second chances and grateful for GOD.*
- The children for bringing joy and hope to us all, it is contagious.*
- It's all about family (biological and church family)*
- Karen Kulm – grateful for her passion in advocacy.*
- Being able to have fun and enjoy life.*
- Faith, family, and the Mystery.*
- Finding this UCC church and learning about community.*
- The sacred oceans covering most of our planet—so much unexplored and unknown.*
- The music program is unbelievable! Virginia and Christopher!!!*
- I woke up this morning. Church. Friends., My dog.*
- That God loves everyone equally.*

Dates to Get on Your Calendar

As we get settled back into our fall routines, please add the following dates to your calendars:

9/14: Kick-Off for the Christian Education year

9/21: Religious Education (Bible Adventures) resumes for children preschool-grade 8

9/21: Children's choir begins with Dr. Kit Stowell, 9:30 am in Classroom 6.

9/26-9/28: Annual Meeting of the Central Pacific Conference, Pendleton, Oregon

11/30: Advent Festival

12/14: Choir Cantata at Worship

12/21: Children's Christmas Program

12/28: Family Service and Brunch in Bradford

Tell CE What to Do!

At the CE Kick-Off Luncheon immediately following the service on 9/14, you have a chance to tell CE what is important to you for the Christian Education of our church. Here's what you need to do:

1. Come to the luncheon!
2. Hanging on the walls of Bradford Hall will be large sheets of paper identifying the various activities CE typically does each year. Please take this opportunity to "vote" for what CE will focus its energies on for the 2014-2015 year. Put your name on every activity you feel is a vital part of our church year. And if you want to be part of a conversation on how to make the activity even better, put an asterisk next to your name.
3. For example, you might love the Advent festival but really want more craft stations this year, so sign that sheet and put an asterisk next to your name. You think children's education is important so you sign that sheet. And you don't really enjoy the Children's Christmas program so you skip signing that sheet.
4. There will also be a sheet dedicated to activities we don't currently do but you'd like to see happen. (Be sure to add your name with any activities you suggest so we know who to talk to for more information.)

CE hopes that this approach will allow us to have a clearer idea of what this church is really passionate about. If you have questions, please let Kristina Martin know at Kristina@vanucc.org!

Vacation Coming for Kathy

I will be out of the office on **vacation** (!!!) September 29th through October 10th.

If anyone has some free time to come into the office and help during that period, it would be deeply appreciated. The office hours are:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday: 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Wednesday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
Friday: 9:00 AM – 12:00 noon

Please let me know if you are able to help so I can arrange access to the building. You don't have to sign up for the whole day, anything will help.

"Summer Music Thank-you

Our church is so fortunate to have so many willing musicians. During the summer months, many of them provide music for the worship service. This year we had song leaders as well as the soloists or small groups. Please take time to thank the following folks for their participation: **Linda Wear, Dr. Christopher Schindler, Richard Trefren, Judy Dahlen, Will Lowe, Lucie Murchison, Kaye Kipp, Shirl Zent, Susan Ross, Leslie Chapman, Alice Rowe, Kristen Trefren, Philippe Chantreau, Dr. Kit Stowell, and Jerry Mathis.**

Sponsor a Bible for a 6th, 7th, or 8th Grader

In October, the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders of our church, will be beginning a new program called "The Quest: A Three Year Faith Journey." To mark the start of this program, they will be receiving a special Bible in worship on October 12th. This Bible will be a New Revised Standard Version known as *The Discipleship Study Bible*. If you would like to sponsor the purchase of a Bible for this occasion, please let Pastor Brooks know by September 23rd. The Bibles cost \$28 each. On the opening page of the Bible, the name of the sponsor will be written, so that our young persons can feel a personal connection to a supportive adult in our faith community.

Prophetic Action Book Groups Announced

We have 3 different books related to our Prophetic Action offered as day and evening book groups. The books are: ***Unbowed: A Memoir*** by Wangari Maathai Thursdays at 7 PM. ***Reason for Hope: A Spiritual Journey*** by Jane Goodall and Philip Berman Thursdays at 1:30 PM. ***Rachel Carson and Her Sisters: Extraordinary Women Who Have Shaped America's Environment*** by Robert Musil. All books are available at the public library, or from Powell's or Amazon. Sign-up sheets for the book groups are in the narthex. Groups will begin in late September.