

The Link

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
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Volume 36 No. 22

God is Still Speaking,

November 25 , 2014

Wow! 86,400 Seconds!

Dear Church Family,

I have decided that this week I am not going to say, "Have a happy Thanksgiving!" Instead, I am going to say, "Have a fantastic 86,400 seconds!" I already know what you're thinking: "Huh? Is Brooks a few nickels short of a dollar? He's lost his cents!" But, no, I can assure you I am operating at full cranial capacity. The inspiration for my new Thanksgiving slogan is a quote from the writer Annie Dillard who once declared, "My God what a world. There is no accounting for one second of it." Dillard was giving voice to an inexplicable sense of awe and wonder. From her perspective, every second was cause for jaw-dropping amazement.

So, why 86,400 seconds? That's how many seconds are in a day. My wish is that your Thanksgiving Day will have as many jaw-dropping seconds as possible. Our world is infused with the mystery and magic of the divine. Let's celebrate that this Thursday. Have a fantastic 86,400 seconds!

Your brother in Christ,

Pastor Brooks

WORSHIP IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

November 30, 2014 First Sunday of Advent

10 a.m. Communion Worship Service. Rev. Roger Fuchs 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:

Greeter: Judith Dahlen
Worship Leader: Joan Blair
Ushers: John Hannon and John Bradley

December 7, 2014 Second Sunday of Advent

10 a.m. Rev. Brooks Berndt preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 3 yrs. - Grade 7.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Sandy Mathis and Joy Gerlitz
Worship Leader: Leslie Chapman
Ushers: Trent Corey and Rory Martindale
Wayne and Doris Fletcher

**Advent Festival/Hanging of the Greens,
Potluck, immediately following worship**

December 14, 2014 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: Sharon Kenoski and Jean Beary Stolle
Worship Leader: Harriet Anani
Ushers: Dwight Chapman and Carol Pendergraft

December 21, 2014 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:
Worship Leader: Opal Chapman
Ushers: Ken Rowe and Cory Saum-Blystone
Mike King

December 24, 2014 Christmas Eve Service

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

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Ed and Ruby Frank
Worship Leader:
Ushers:

December 28, 2014 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
Agnes Alexander
Gloria Ross
Dorothea Johnson

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DATES FOR "The Link"

Link Deadline
Link Mailed

December 7, 2014
December 9, 2014



Annual "Adopt A Family" Gifts Due December 7th

We have "adopted" a family through SHARE and will be collecting gifts as requested by the family. We will also give them grocery store gift cards so that they can have a nice holiday meal. **All gifts must be new and must be unwrapped.**

Look for the Giving Tree in the narthex with gift tags. Take a tag, purchase your gift or gift card, tape your tag to the **un-wrapped** gift and return it to church by Dec. 7th. We will then take your gifts to SHARE where they will be wrapped and distributed to the family. **December 7th is the absolute cut-off date per SHARE.**

Questions? Contact Karen Kulm at 360-991-5774 or lk.kulm@gmail.com.

An Update on our Mortgage and our Recent Building Improvements

From Richard Trefren, Treasurer

As home owners, most of us find that our mortgage payments usually include more for interest than for principal. I'm proud to say that after ten months in 2014, while our mortgage interest payments were \$24,074, our total principal reduction was \$32,074 -- \$5,000 from our operating budget and \$27,074 from our Capital Campaign! We still owe about \$559,258 (down from a total amount owed after the sanctuary improvements of about \$970,000).

We have also paid out over \$48,900 for improvements to our building and parking lot through our capital campaign funds: repairing and re-striping the parking lot, re-roofing the education wing, replacing the flooring in the Plymouth Room and replacing carpet. (Note: the recent upgrade to our sanctuary entrance was entirely funded by donations made for that purpose, outside the capital campaign).

After all of this work, our capital campaign balance is nearly depleted. Please be sure to make you capital campaign pledge payments! If you are not currently pledging to the capital campaign, but you are pleased with the recent improvements to our building, your contributions to help pay for this effort would be greatly appreciated. Please put "capital fund" in the memo line on your check.

Your generosity is appreciated!

NURSERY SHEPHERD PROGRAM BEGINNING IN JANUARY

Contributed by Kristina Martin

We are excited to create a mentoring program for middle school youth who are interested in volunteering in the nursery under the direction of Angie Wason Hill. Shepherds will help in the nursery on the Sundays with no Bible Adventures (Communion Sundays and in the summer months) and every Sunday until the children are released for Bible Adventures class. Applications will be sent to all middle school families in December. If you are the parent of a middle schooler and have questions, please don't hesitate to talk to either Angie or Kristina Martin.

Update on our Current Year Operating Budget

From Richard Trefren, Treasurer

We are quickly approaching the end of our 2014 operating year. This is a gentle reminder that it would be so helpful if your final payment of 2014 pledges to the operating budget could occur before the end of December.

Also, any extra contributions to support our 2014 operating budget would be gratefully received! Even though we approved spending church reserves toward our operating budget this year, I will be thrilled if our need to do that is minimal!

Thank you for your generous support of our church!

Drinks in the Sanctuary

Council - October, 2014

Contributed by Jeff Osborne

Recently Council has been reviewing the issue of whether drinks (coffee, tea, etc) should be allowed in the sanctuary. On the one hand, the possibility of a spill reminds us that we want to keep the pews, chairs and carpet looking their best as part of the overall ambiance of our worship space. On the other hand, the coffee culture of the Northwest has acclimated us to having one hand devoted to our cuppa. In order to preserve the friendly feeling we all share and to avoid a "thou shalt not" feeling for visitors (and members) who enter the sanctuary with their cuppa, Council requests that there be no more "policing" of drinks in the sanctuary. At the same time, Council reminds all that a lidded-cup and proper attention to not spilling will go a long way toward preserving our sanctuary's good looks.

Post Office Box Information

With the addition of a secure mailbox onsite, the church is **no longer maintaining a PO Box**. Please address all your correspondence to 1220 NE 68th Street, Vancouver, WA 98665.



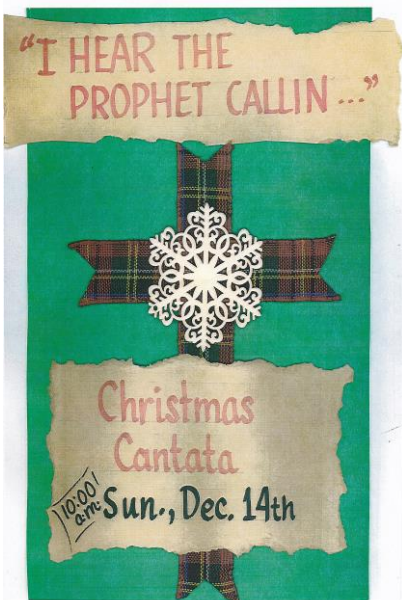
Mission & Outreach Special Offering for December is the UCC Christmas Fund

The generous gifts of UCC congregations and individuals to the Christmas Fund enabled the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance program to provide some form of assistance to impact the lives of hundreds of persons during the past year.

Our retired clergy/lay employees relied on this income supplementation for basic needs such as food, utilities, and living and medical expenses.

Christmas "thank you" gift checks were given to 543 retired UCC clergy/lay church employees last year. This special gift at Christmas time reminds these Veterans of the Cross that they have not been forgotten and that the Church is grateful for their service.

Please support this important UCC fund by writing a check to our church and putting "UCC Christmas Fund" in the memo line.



The choir is venturing forth in a folk style this Christmas Season. On December 14th, during the worship service, the choir will present the Christmas story in a fresh, new way. 'I Hear the Prophet Callin' by Pepper Choplin is a gathering together of musical flavors: Appalachian, Irish, Latin, Cajun and Early American. I quote the composer: "It seems a natural fit to pair this authentic and sometimes earthy music with the story of the Gospel. Be sure to mark your calendar for Dec. 14th! You won't be sorry!

The Masterpiece Santas of Ed Frank

Our very own Ed Frank has been carving masterpiece Santas, lovingly painted by Ruby, for a number of years. We would like to celebrate and display his Santas during Advent. If you have one of Ed's Santas, you are invited to bring it to the narthex before worship on December 7th. You can then take it home after worship on December 14th.



December Updates

Every year thousands of people in Clark County experience homelessness. During the cold winter months their need for shelter is even more important, so in 2003, the Council for the Homeless and SHARE partnered with the Greater Vancouver Interfaith Association to create the Winter Hospitality Overflow (WHO), a program committed to providing safe shelter during the winter months.

Our church volunteers at the men's shelter located at the St. Paul Lutheran church in downtown Vancouver. The WHO guests are offered not only a warm place to sleep, but a hot shower, meal, and the welcome and warmth of a caring community working to address the most basic of human needs.

Although our church volunteer week is March 1-7, **you can help now** by donating men's socks, gloves, hats, thermals, and underwear. Just place your items in the big yellow basket in the narthex.

You can also help with serving a weekend meal. Dave Slocum & Judy Enders volunteer at the shelter every week and serve a warm meal to the men. If you would like to help serve or donate food, contact Dave at 360-573-5120

Reminder: Pledges Due

A friendly reminder to submit pledges either in the offering plate or in the main office. Pledges are a vital part of our planning for the next year. Your help with this is much appreciated.

December 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 6:00 VANUSA BRD 7:00 Spirituality NFL 7:30 Fireside PLY	2 9:00 WW BRD 9:30 Bible St. PLY 10:30 Staff PLY 12:00 Martha's Pantry 5:30 Conservation PLY 6:30 Sierra Board PLY 6:30 CE Cl 2	3 4:00 WW BRD 6:30 Tome Chimes CL2 7:00 Choir SAN	4 4:00 Pantry 6:00 Planned Pthd NFL 7:30 Fireside PLY	5	6
7 Second Sunday of Advent 10:00 Worship SAN 11:00 Advent Festival 11:00&1 MCC PLY 4:30 Fireside PLY	8 6:00 VANUSA BRD 7:30 Fireside PLY	9 LINK 9:00 WW BRD 9:30 Bible St. PLY 10:45 Staff PLY 12:00 Martha's Pantry 5:30 Parish Life NFL	10 4:00 WW BRD 6:30 Tome Chimes Cl2 7:00 Coal Free PLY 7:00 PC Board NFL 7:00 Choir SAN	11 10:00 Prayer Shawl NFL 4:00 Pantry PLY 7:30 Fireside PLY	12	13 1:00 Lena Recital 7:00 Sandy Recital
14 Third Sunday of Advent 10:00 Choir Cantata 10:20 Bible Adv. CL 4:30 Fireside PLY	15 6:00 VANUSA BRD 7:00 Spirituality NFL 7:30 Fireside PLY	16 9:00 WW BRD 9:30 Bible St. PLY 10:45 Staff PLY 12:00 Martha's Pantry 6:30 PCUsers BRD 7:00 Diaconate NFL	17 10:30 Ebel Cir offsite 4:00 WW BRD 6:00 M&O NFL 6:00 P&F PLY 6:30 Brady Group PLY 6:30 Tome Chimes CL2 7:00 Choir SAN	18 10:00 Memorials PLY 4:00 Pantry 7:00 Book Club NFL 7:00 Council CL2 7:30 Fireside PLY	19	20
21 Fourth Sunday of Advent Children's Program 11&1 MCC PLY 4:30 Fireside PLY	22 6:00 VANUSA BRD 7:30 Fireside PLY	23 LINK 9:00 WW BRD 9:30 Bible St. PLY 10:45 Staff PLY 12:00 Martha's Pantry 7:00 Communications SAN 7:00 Choir SAN	24 Office Closes at Noon 8:00 Christmas Eve Service	25 MERRY CHRISTMAS!	26	27
28 Holiday Worship and Brunch 10:00 in Bradford Hall	29 6:00 VANUSA BRD 7:00 Spirituality NFL 7:30 Fireside PLY	30	31			



ADVENT FESTIVAL POTLUCK: 12/7

Contributed by Kristina Martin

It's the time of year to gather with the people in your life and rekindle the Christian love in your heart!

Please join the church in celebrating Advent on December 7th immediately after church. Bring a dish to share with our church family, as well as your Christmas spirit. We will have various crafts (such as making Christmonds) and will culminate in decorating the sanctuary/narthex for the Christmas season. This is an intergenerational church event for all! If you have questions, please call Kristina Martin at (360) 635-1075.



CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Contributed by Kristina Martin

Please mark your calendars for the annual Children's Christmas program on December 21st. All children present will be invited to participate in a short presentation of "The Legend of Pepita", immediately following the Intergenerational Spanish Choir's concert. If there are any 5-8th grade students interested in reading aloud the script, please contact Kristina Martin either by email or phone. Email: Kristina@vanucc.org Phone: (360) 635-1075. Thank you!