

Hilltop Highlights

DECEMBER 2009

Laurie Rudel, Pastor
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Any intelligent fool
can make things bigger,
more complex,
and more violent.
It takes a touch of genius—
and a lot of courage—
to move in the
opposite direction.
—Albert Einstein

Then there will be a great celebration, O Beloved, as the peoples come into the Light—

The singers in front, the musicians will follow, the children will join the procession:

“Bless the Beloved before the peoples, the Holy One, the Giver of Life!”

—Psalm 68, *Psalms for Praying*

WOVEN TOGETHER IN LOVE

Dear Friends,

Each season of the church year invites us to notice and engage a particular kind of energy and in Advent, these four Sundays before Christmas, that energy could be summed up as longing—not wanting or needing—but longing.

Longing seems to embody a deeply heart-felt quality that invites us to sink down and discover desires lying dormant.

Imagine for example the Christmas longing for “peace on earth.” So simple. What could be easier? But we know it is not:

peace eludes us at stop signs,
as we wait in long lines,
as dear friends tell us the same
story for the hundredth time,
as our partner leaves the dish rag
crumpled up in sink for the
thousandth time,
as our politicians seek the best for
their particular party and
ignore the common good,
as our country puts self-interest
first and ignores the true cost of
violence on civilian lives around
the world and upon our
veterans and their families at
home.

Unless you live in a cave you have
already been bombarded with messages

about Christmas. Amid jingling bells and cute puppies, animated elves, and lots of holly each message will tell you what advertisers would like you to do: buy a gift, from us, and you will be happy.

What the church would like you to know is this: that the capacity—even the longing—to offer our gifts to one another is a consequence of being created in the gracious image of God.

What the “cultural” celebration of Christmas tamps down “with stuff” is this deep, deep longing to be of service one to the other, to promote the greater good, to be instruments of God’s peace upon this most amazing and beloved earth.

Each Sunday in Advent we light four small candles: hope, peace, joy, and love. It seems such a small thing, but perhaps this simple action will shed light on our dreams and longings. Perhaps it will lead us along the path for giving more deeply of ourselves.

I pray this is the case for us at Queen Anne Christian Church for the world needs simple gifts wrapped up in you and me and offered—no strings attached—out of the generous and genuine yearning of our hearts.

blessings + peace,

Laurie



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QACC SINGERS!

Come add your voice as the Choir sings each Sunday during Advent and on Christmas Eve.

The Choir will meet for rehearsal at 9AM on Sunday, December 6, 13, and 20, and on Christmas Eve at 4pm.



Everyday, think as you wake up:
Today I am fortunate to have woken up.
I am alive. I have a precious human life.
I am not going to waste it.
I am going to use all my energies
to develop myself to expand my heart
out to others for the benefit of all beings.

—His Holiness
the XIVth Dali Lama

DID YOU KNOW?

- Lydia Scott's sister Edith Aper and her husband Don just celebrated 66 years of marriage.
- Maggie Ridgeway sends us her love!
- Carolyn Ho & Tristan Spiceland return to Seattle in December. Their baby is due January 20!
- Jan Eckstedt has concluded his work as pastor in Hampton, Iowa. He and Elaine send their love and greetings to us and ask for our prayers as Jan enters the process of "search and call" for a new ministerial setting.
- Congratulations to Lisa Schroder and her husband, Gloria and Wayne Dykstra, and Kara and Matt Markell who are all expecting babies in the spring!
- Kasey and Tessa Kitchel sang with the Whittier Choir to open a meeting of the Seattle School Board.
- "Sounds of the Season" a production of the Tacoma Symphony will feature Amy (Bils) Mahoney, Saturday, December 5, at 7:30 and Sunday, December 6, at 2:30.

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Deacons: Alina Rossano, Barb Scamman, Lydia Scott, Edith Stanwood, Mike Tower

December 6 - The Second Sunday of Advent
Luke 3:1-6

Elder: Lori Hutchings

Coffee Hosts: Karen Bonnevie, Towers

December 13 - The Third Sunday of Advent
Philippians 4:4-7

Elder: Devin Kitchel

Coffee Hosts: Dimmers-King, Scamman-Rudel

December 20 - The Fourth Sunday of Advent
Luke 1:39-55

Elder: Juanita Kirkland

Coffee Hosts: Vera Baumgartner, Edith Stanwood, Joyce Yoder

December 24 - Christmas Eve, 5pm

Findlay Street Christian Church joins us for a combined service of carol singing and candlelight. Invite your firends - it will be lovely.

December 27 - The First Sunday after Christmas
Congregational Pageant!

Elder: Marietta Tower

Coffee Hosts:

Bring your Christmas treats to share.



IN OUR PRAYERS

- Susie Allen — stroke rehabilitation
- Jan Eckstedt — seeking new ministerial work
- Sandy Messick — safe travel to Palestine/Israel with Global Ministries

CORE VALUES TASK GROUPS

A Heart for Children

Our winter inter-generational worship Sundays take place December 20 - The Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 27 - The First Sunday after Christmas, and January 3 - Epiphany Sunday. On Friday, January 29, we hope to offer "Children In Service" which coincides with the teacher in-service day for the Seattle Public Schools. More later!

A Welcoming Spirit

This group invited a number of other folks to join their particular mission and on November 15 that group met for discussion. Their intention is to meet again in the middle of December and explore a group study of "Radical Hospitality."

Growing and Deepening our Faith

This group continues to preview the video series "Living the Questions" which they hope to offer to the church at the beginning of the new year.

They have now completed five of the initial seven sessions and have scheduled two more for the month of December. They will also review a group study called "Intentional Faith Development."

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Thursday, 3rd – Kathie Hopkins

Friday, 18th – Barb Scamman

Wednesday, 30th – Stephen King

THANK YOU!

- Devin Kitchel — more burned out lights, more opportunities for service
- Peter Drury and Juantia Kitchel — working with the older children to coordinate the Stone Soup potluck
- Vera Baumgartner — organized Christmas crafts for our older and younger children following the potluck
- Tom Kirkland — headed up Hanging of the Greens
- Barb Scamman — creating a Children's Choir to sing during Advent in addition to leading the adult singers
- The Elders of QACC: Maria Drury, Lori Hutchings, Devin Kitchel, Juanita Kirkland, and Marietta Tower, along with Jeremiah Oliver, Peter Drury, Joan Dennehy, Celeste Snowber, and Laurie Rudel— meditations, prayers, and poems for the Advent daybook

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Each Sunday in Advent the children who wish to sing will join the adult singers to help lead us in worship.

Together they will sing an Introit, *Prepare, Prepare the Way of the Lord*, a fun upbeat gospel-style song.

On Sunday, December 6, they will again join the adult singers to sing a song about peace, *Sim Shalom*, and on December 20, to sing *Advent Lullaby*.

In addition the *Seeds of Knowledge* class taught by Peter Drury will lead the congregation in prayers and readings.

Meanwhile, mark Your Calendars now for a four-week *Love and Logic* parenting course taught by Amy Wilson and held at Bethany Presbyterian Church who has invited us to be a part of these classes.

Classes will be held on Monday nights, January 25, February 1, 8 and 22 from 7-8:30 in their Fellowship Hall.

Cost is just \$10 per person for all 4 weeks. Though helpful for all ages, Amy will be especially targeting toddlers through 6 year olds.



SERVICE PROJECTS ENDING SOON!

This is the last week for our donations! We need to finish up by December 6!

Church of Mary Magdalene – Each Christmas the staff at Church of Mary Magdalene work to secure donations of \$15 to be used to purchase new shoes for the homeless and low-income women they serve. We have 40 tags for new shoes. Checks for shoes can be made out to Church of Mary Magdalene and places in the shoe box on the table by the display in the Fellowship Hall.

Soap for Hope—AAA and KOMO Newsradio are kicking off their 2nd annual Soap for Hope toiletry item donation. Acceptable donations include sample or regular size, **unopened**: shampoo, conditioner, soap, body wash, shaving cream, razors, toothpaste, toothbrushes and deodorant. There is a large basket in the Narthex for your donations.

Sock It to the Homeless—Thanks to everyone who contributed **new** white socks for the homeless men of Operation Nightwatch. QACC collected over 130 pairs! So far Nightwatch has collected 8,000 pairs would love have 25,000 by the end of the year.

ELDERS' MEDITATIONS

Ever since the school year started in September I feel like I've been on a never ending roller coaster ride that just won't slow down. I race through each day going from school to work to soccer practice to gymnastics to making dinner to helping with homework, and then finally to bed. I keep waiting for things to slow down, but that hasn't happened yet. In our elder's meeting a couple of weeks ago we started with a time of centering prayer and it was such a relief to sit for a few minutes and let my mind settle I realized that was what had been missing from my life these past few months. Feeling nourished and rejuvenated and centered for the first time in months, I decided to attempt to add a few minutes of centering prayer to my daily routine to see what would happen.

After a few days of this practice I had an epiphany...that being present, the goal I am always striving for, is not in itself a spiritual practice, but more of a destination I can only get to through concentrated spiritual practices. I had to laugh at myself as I realized that my frustration at not being more present in my life could be compared to someone who stated often that they wanted a washboard stomach but then didn't spend any time doing abdominal exercises and mused "I wonder why I don't have that washboard tummy yet when I've said repeatedly that I want to have one!". I realized spending time in centering prayer is the best way for me to strengthen my spiritual core and become centered, thus allowing me to be truly present. We need to quiet the human chattering of our minds in order to be able to hear what God is whispering to us, and to really hear the people we encounter in our lives.

I have to admit that for the first few days of my practice it was all I could do to force myself to sit still for even five minutes, knowing there was so much to do – I had dishes in the sink, a lunch to be preparing, laundry to put in, work to get to...the list was endless. My mind never really settled down during those first few attempts, although I did feel nourished just by a few minutes of sitting and doing nothing but "being". My ability to sit in quiet and put aside

my mental "to do" list hadn't been worked for quite a while and was weak. I've gradually learned new ways to quiet down the chattering of my mind, and have started to find a few moments of true silence for the first time in a long while. The length of time I am able to sit in silence before I get distracted has increased rapidly and after spending a few minutes in centering prayer I find I move through my day with more grace than before and don't feel so rushed and overwhelmed even though my schedule hasn't changed. I think it's ironic that the answer to solving my problem of not having enough time in the day is to sit down and spend a few minutes doing nothing, but it has worked. I encourage any of you who feel like you don't have any time in your life to be quiet and catch your breath to work on strengthening your spiritual core as well.

—Marietta Tower
November 15, 2009

FROM OUR SEMINARIAN

Greetings to you all from Fort Worth! It is time again for finals and term papers, and in the midst of these requirements and pressures we attempt to find the quiet of Advent.

Quiet waiting seems antithetical to the rush of the end of the semester and the bustle of church activities and social engagements. But, therein lies the blessing of Advent. Stillness waits for us and comes in ordinary things: Saying prayers with Annika before bed; spending a quiet weekend at my parents home in the North Texas countryside; the clicking of my computer keys late at night as one more assignment is finished; savoring a hot cup of tea and watching the flames in the fireplace on the rare chilly, Texas evening. Stillness waits for us and when we find it there is space for joy to blossom.

We are especially joyful this year for our second child, due in May and ask your prayers for a healthy pregnancy and safe delivery. We are joyful, too, to be part of the QACC family of faith and pray that Advent is a time of stillness and joy for you!

—Kara Markell

NEWS FROM OUR REGIONAL CHURCH

OCOME ALL YE FAITHFUL

This year's Christmas Offering highlights the ways we are developing faithful leaders through our ministries in the Northwest Region. 100% of the Christmas Offering stays in the Region to undergird our ministries.



(A continuing series of articles from our Regional Minister reflecting on the Objectives outlined in our Regional Mission Plan)

Where does it Go?

A pastor recently asked me what ministries are supported by giving to the Northwest Region.

As I attempted to answer his question, I realized that the answer is valuable for all of us. In a time of economic difficulty, with so many of our congregations and individuals struggling to meet their budgets, we all find ourselves weighing carefully where we will share our outreach dollars. Is my giving having an impact? Is it being gratefully received and carefully and faithfully used? Is it supporting ministries and missions that are valuable, life-changing and in-line with my values and commitments? These are important questions, and ones I am happy to answer in relation to the Northwest Regional Christian Church.

When you give to the Region, either as individuals or as congregations, you are helping to undergird the many ministries that fall under the regional umbrella. To name just a few:

Leader Development: These include ministries to children and youth such as our camps and winter

retreats. We provide leadership development opportunities not only at the events themselves, but through the Regional Youth Council. The Commission on Ministry helps shepherd and encourage our seminary students as they move through their education and work towards ordination. In addition the Commission oversees the nurture and support of our licensed ministers and grants standing and encouragement to our ordained ministers. In the coming year, the Commission will be offering Boundary Training for all clergy with standing in the Region and will begin to require it of our licensed and ordained pastors.

New Church and Congregational

Transformation: Though New Church ministries and Transformational programs such as Journey of Discovery and New Beginnings are largely supported through designated funds, your gifts to the general fund of the region help provide the staff support for these programs as well as the administrative costs of providing and encouraging these programs.

Connecting and Resourcing Congregations: As with most local congregational budgets, the largest portion of the regional budget provides for staff salaries including the Regional Minister, Office Manager, and Accountant. Many of you know Amber who runs our church office and have appreciated her gifts in keeping us connected by keeping the website current, maintaining lists of clergy and lay volunteers, providing resources to congregations on request, administering the registrations for events such as Turner Lectures, summer camps, winter retreats and Regional Assembly, and a myriad other activities she performs largely behind the scenes.

As your Regional Minister, I am coming to see that the most important part of my job is connecting with congregations. To that end, in the last 6 months I have been present with 27 of our 59 congregations, either in worship or in a significant meeting setting. I have met with search committees as they perform the important work of seeking and calling a new pastor;

celebrated with congregations at installations, anniversaries, and ordinations; helped congregations deal with conflict, or do the hard work of facing difficult realities; and joined in worship for times of singing, prayer, and preaching.

Reaching out beyond ourselves: Our Regional ministry is not just about supporting and connecting our congregations. The Region itself is church and therefore is called to reach out beyond itself. A portion of our regional budget goes to support our work among our ecumenical partners including School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University, Alaska Convention, Washington Association of Churches, and Campus Ministries in Higher Education. In addition 10% of the Christmas Offering is given to Yakama Christian Mission to support the ministry they are doing on behalf of the whole church. Designated funds help provide support for Global Ministries.

All of these ministries, and more, are helping us live into our vision as expressed in our mission statement:

Called by God and sent by the Living Christ, we the Northwest Regional Christian Church intentionally engage with one another rejoicing in our diversity and shared gifts, deepening our spiritual life, building true community, acting courageously in ministry and mission, and sharing God's good news with a fresh voice and a new song. We seek to "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

Thank you for your support of the region, both through your financial gifts and through your prayers and participation. We literally couldn't be the Northwest Regional Christian Church without you. (Next month: Where does your DMF giving go?)

Blessings,

Sandy Messick
Regional Minister

REGIONAL MINISTER IN PALESTINE/ISRAEL

From November 29 to December 11, our Regional Minister, Sandy Messick will be traveling with other Regional Ministers and Global Ministry staff to Palestine/Israel. This is part of the series of trips sponsored by Global Ministries to lift up the idea of becoming a Global Mission Partner Region.

We voted to become a partner region at our Special Regional Assembly in May 2009 and are beginning work with the Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ to identify our joint Global Mission Partner.

Please keep Sandy in prayer as she prepares for this trip, and remember her family while she is away.

FIRST MISSION COUNCIL GATHERING

The weather on the pass cooperated just enough to allow representatives from many of our ministry teams to gather in Yakima for our first Mission Council meeting. Edie Rice-Sauer, interim Mission Council chairperson, led us through a time of sharing, brainstorming and visioning. We heard the stories of ministry taking place around our regional priorities: Youth Ministries, New Church support and nurture, Stewardship, and Regional Facilities. We brainstormed ways to live into our commitments to be a pro-reconciling region and to knit the Mission and Sending priority into the fabric of our work, and made plans to move forward into being a Global Mission Region. We heard reports of our current ministry teams including Turner Lectures, Regional Assembly, and Commission on Ministry, and we talked of other areas, priorities, and ministries we hoped to address in the future. As important as the business work was, we also took time to share a meal together, and worship together through silence, prayer, readings, and song. The Mission Council is part of our new structure as Region and provides the place for holding the vision and creatively imagining new ministries. We are off to a great start!

MORE REGIONAL CHURCH NEWS

AROUND OUR REGION

North Hill Christian, Spokane – has called Michelle Mitchell to be their new pastor. Rev. Mitchell is set to begin her ministry at North Hill by at the first of the new year.

First Christian, Bellingham – co-hosted the 2nd Annual Multi-Faith Alternative Holiday Market on Sunday, November 22, 1 - 4 p.m., at Bloedel-Donovan Park. “Come join in the fun and the belief that we’re doing something good...loving God’s world and her creatures, while celebrating our holiest of days. And, we’re doing it together. Please bring: a can or jar of baby food to benefit the Bellingham Food Bank. (Other co-hosts are Assumption Catholic Church, Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship, Dharmakirti Buddhist Center, Islamic Society of Whatcom County, and St. James Presbyterian Church.)”

First Christian, Kent – celebrated the installation of their new minister, Bob Brooks, on Sunday, November 22.

Memorial Christian, Ephrata – has called Roberta Needles to be their interim minister.

Lake City Christian, Seattle – is working with 3 Story Church to redesign their web site. 3 Story Church is a unique web design company run by Will Boyd (whose wife is Janetta Cravens-Boyd, pastor of University Christian in Seattle.) Rod Smith is serving as Interim Pastor.

Bellevue Christian, Bellevue – is working with Habitat for Humanity to build homes at Snoqualmie Ridge. Mike Grogan is the pastor.

First Christian, Coeur d’Alene – experienced a burglary of their church building. A number of items were taken, including personal items belonging to their pastor and her family. Lauri Clark-Strait is the pastor.

First Christian, Bremerton – celebrated 90 years of ministry on November 8. Rev. Darryl Parr, ordained in 1987, brought the message and they welcomed many former ministers and friends.

GLOBAL MISSION PRAYER: ZIMBABWE

OK God, You know I didn’t go to preacher school. You know I can’t say those fancy preacher prayers. I never get all the thou’s and thee’s in the right place. You and I have always had an understanding about that. You don’t seem to mind that I don’t close my eyes or fold my hands when we talk. So here I am again, my jaw dropping at the wonderment of your Creation.

I walked to a village today along the ridge overlooking the valley. I’m sure you know the place.

Thank you for showing me the lush, deep green color of the tea plants, the tiny village on the reservoir and the border with Mozambique where only a few years ago there was war and violence but now there is peace and beauty.

Thank you for making the monkeys and boabab trees.

Thank you for making little children who yell greetings to the stranger.

Thank you for making spiders, snakes and cockroaches .. But if you could keep them far away from me, I would be oh so grateful.

You have somehow put me in this place, far away from my family and everything familiar. (Just how did that happen? We’ll discuss that later.)

Now that I am here, I am begging for the wisdom and discernment to do the work you ask of me. It is not hard to love the people I walk alongside (literally and figuratively), but help me, God, to go to a deeper level of love, honor, respect and understanding.

Give me guidance in ministry to the sick, heartsick and grieving. Help me as I comfort a woman in labor with a too-big baby. Stand by me when I hold a dying child.

Guide me as I comfort a mother, whose words I don’t understand, but whose wails are understood universally.

Thank you for trusting me to do your work, God. I won’t let you down. Amen.

PS: The music, dancing and drumming is great! Keep up the good work!

Prayer by Maryjane Westra

Maryjane Westra works as the Hospital Administrator at Mt. Selinda Hospital and Daisy Dube Children’s Home and serves the church through Global Ministries.

O Come all ye shepherds, wise ones,
townspeople, and angels!



Congregational Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 27, 10am

We'll sing lots of carols!

Bring your leftover Christmas treats to share after worship.

queen anne christian church (disciples of christ)

1316 third avenue west • seattle, washington 98119-3312



Feeling gratitude
and not expressing it
is like wrapping
a present and
not giving it.

—William Arthur Ward

We gather for worship
on Sunday at 10am.