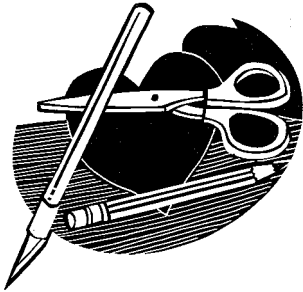


# Hilltop Highlights

FEBRUARY 2012

Laurie Rudel, Pastor  
Barb Scamman, Editor



In being with dying,  
we arrive at a natural  
crucible of what it means  
to love and be loved.  
And we can ask ourselves this:  
Knowing that death  
is inevitable,  
what is most  
precious today?  
—Roshi Joan Halifax

## WOVEN TOGETHER IN LOVE

Dear Friends,

In the short space of two months, two of the oldest members of our congregation have died. Both served the church and their community in ways that made a difference. Both came faithfully to worship each Sunday until very shortly before their deaths.

Held within the embracing love of family and friends, and sustained by the prayers of their community of faith, their deaths at home became holy moments, a transition from the old to the new just beyond our physical sight.

As a community it has been our privilege to walk with them through their life up to their final moment of breath.

As a community it is now our privilege to walk with our grief and to notice the difference their lives made in our own.

The Buddhist teacher Joan Halifax asks, *Knowing that death is inevitable, what is most precious today?*

And the poet Mary Oliver asks, *Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon? Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?*

For me at any rate, these kinds of questions cause me to toss and turn at night; they unsettle my dreams. They agitate my heart, which is not entirely a bad thing for I've found that on occasion I need moments of agitation to prompt a deeper into my life, my motivations, and to ask if there is "more to life." Perhaps you have this need as well.

Sometimes that "more to life" might be hidden in plain sight and can be released by a simple expression of gratitude, an act of love, or the gradual or sudden realization that a larger reality surrounds us.

Sometimes that "more to life" might require that we dig deep and take an honest look at our motivations, our habitual patterns of relating, and our reflexive judgments of others.

Sometimes that "more to life" might mean taking a deep breath and setting off on a path towards a distant but clear vision.

If I had to find one word to describe what I'm trying to get at here I think that word would be reverence, that somehow the presence of death immerses us in the wonder that holiness, the spirit and presence of God, pervades all of life.

In the nearness of death we remember that our life, our attitudes, and our choices make a difference in the quality of our own life and in the lives of our family, our friends, our neighbors, and our enemies.

Death has left a hole in our community that can never be erased or completely filled, but this hole can help us appreciate a precious reality: our time here on earth has limits and what we do now, how we express love matters a great deal.

Be kind, dear friends, be kind.  
Blessings + peace,

*Joan*



queen anne christian church

(disciples of christ)

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## Olive Fordham Larsen

April 25, 1918 — January 13, 2012



A memorial service will be held at  
Queen Anne Christian Church  
on Saturday, January 28th, at noon.  
A reception follows the service.

## IN OUR PRAYERS

- We pray for grace and strength and comfort for Olive Larsen's family following her death.
- We give thanks that Gabriel Dimmers-King continues to recover from a very serious eye infection.

## THANK YOU!

- Devin Kitchel shoveled snow off the narthex roof, cleared the drains.
- Laura Kitchel compiled and printed our new Directory.
- Eric Liljegren and Scott Shiebler, dear friends of Peter and Maria Drury, created a beautiful brunch for coffee time on New Year's Day in honor of Peter and Maria's 10th Wedding Anniversary.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The Larsen Family has created a website of photos, stories, and memories of Olive's life. You can find it at: <http://www.olivelarsen.com/> If you would like to contribute a story or a memory please send an email to the following address: [oliveflarsen@gmail.com](mailto:oliveflarsen@gmail.com)
- Each Sunday after worship we offer a time for sermon feedback and scripture reflection. Please join in the alcove in the Fellowship Hall.
- The Welcoming Spirit Group meets after worship on Sunday, January 29.
- Pastor Laurie will be away Monday through Wednesday, February 6 - 8, to attend the Northwest Association for Theological Discussion in Oregon.
- The In-Care Committee for Ruth Jewell meets after worship on Sunday, February 26.

## PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

**Deacons:** Cheri Bowles, Ken Bowles, Virginia Coester,  
Laura Kitchel

**February 5 - The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**

**Worship Leader:** Ruth Jewell

**Preaching:** Laurie Rudel

**Elder:** Peter Drury

**Coffee Hosts:** Vera Baumgartner, Edith Stanwood

**February 12 - The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany**

**Worship Leader:** Laurie Rudel

**Preaching:** Kate Sweet

**Elder:** Marietta Tower

**Coffee Hosts:** Martha Dimmers and Stephen King,  
Barb Scamman and Laurie Rudel, Rose Scamman

**February 19 - The Last Sunday after Epiphany**

**Worship Leader:** Ruth Jewell

**Preaching:** Laurie Rudel

**Elder:** Devin Kitchel

**Coffee Hosts:** Ken and Cheri Bowles, Lori and John  
Hutchings

**February 22 - Ash Wednesday** (service details to be announced)

**February 26 - The First Sunday in Lent**

**Worship Leader:** Ruth Jewell

**Preaching:** Kate Sweet

**Elder:** Valerie Lyson

**Coffee Hosts:** Karen Bonnevie, Michael and Marietta  
Tower

## Coffee Hosts Next Month

**March 4:** Lori Olin-Evans, Laura and Devin Kitchel

**March 11:** Peter and Maria Drury, Alina Rossano

**March 18:** Tom and Juanita Kirkland, Tom Baker and  
Kat Robinson

**March 25:** Ruth and John Jewell, Mary Wieneke

## DIRECTORY CORRECTIONS/ADDITIONS

- Address for Toriann Straus: 3150 Catamore Lane, Dallas, TX 75229; email: [straustj@hotmail.com](mailto:straustj@hotmail.com)
- Email for Marietta Tower: [mariettamichael@msn.com](mailto:mariettamichael@msn.com)
- Email for John Hutchings: [johnhutching234@comcast.net](mailto:johnhutching234@comcast.net)



## CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

Three Thursday evenings—  
February 2, 19, and 16  
from 7:00 - 8:30pm  
in the Fellowship Hall of QACC

The Growing and Deepening Faith Task Group invites you to a series of creative writing workshops led by Nicole Miller.

These sessions will emphasize the form of writing commonly called creative nonfiction – in other words, you'll be invited to tell your story in a friendly and supportive space.

During our time together and throughout the week, we'll practice using the page to think, dream and play. We'll investigate the tools of image, voice, character, setting and story and practice using them in the service of our narratives.

Short take-home reading assignments will serve as focal points for our discussion and models for our own writing. Creative-play assignments will give you the opportunity to imagine and communicate your story in new ways. All are welcome!

Nicole is the 2011-2012 Milton Fellow at *Image* journal and Seattle Pacific University and attends Queen Anne Christian Church.

## IN THE MAIL

Dear QACC,

Happy New Year! I hope you are all doing well and had enjoyable holidays this past year.

I am still in Dallas, Texas and working as a Pre-K teacher for a great group of students. Mark and I are still together and doing great. We escaped to Cozumel, Mexico for Christmas which was a lovely vacation and break from work.

I have recently moved out of my sister's place and into a house owned by my new roommate, Jennifer. Things are going well but I do miss Seattle and spending my Sunday mornings with all of you.

I wish you all the best in this new year and look forward to seeing you this summer.

Love, Toriann Straus

## CHILDREN & YOUTH

### Regional Youth Retreat

Chi Rho (grades 6-8) and CYF (grades 9-12) youth and their adult sponsors are invited and encouraged to attend this year's Winter Retreat, March 9-11 at Koinonia Camp and Retreat Center in Cle Elum, WA.

The Regional Youth Commission is working hard to plan another great retreat.

The 2012 theme, "The Circle of Life", celebrates healthy relationships with God, in families, with friends and love.

The cost for the retreat is \$110/person and includes all meals beginning with Friday dinner through Sunday lunch.

Please let Pastor Laurie or Peter Drury know if you are interested in attending.

Registration forms can be download from the Region's website: [www.disciplesnw.org](http://www.disciplesnw.org)!



—Heart for Children

## ALSO IN THE MAIL

Laurie,

As I sit here and read Hiltop highlights I sense real growth in Queen Anne Church. From paying off debts to inquisitive youth.

Jesus said to his disciples, *feed my sheep.*

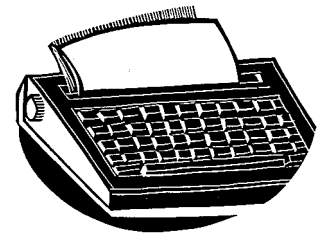
Please share with the youth the beginnings of the Disciples of Christ Church in about 1805 in America, the first Christian Church in America. Tell them the stories of our founders, Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

Bill Cooley, a former pastor of Queen Anne Christian Church, steered the way and you helped me along in addition to others.

I still take time to talk with God and find solace.

I feel very sorry that I was not able to attend the Christmas Eve Service.

Please share my thoughts with all.  
Love, Norman Dodge



## INTERN PASTORS: RUTH JEWELL AND KATE SWEET

### *A Metaphor of Amma Synclctica, a Desert Mother:*

The life of faith looks like a mother bird brooding her eggs and waiting expectantly for them to hatch. For all we know, the mother bird has moments when it seems like nothing is happening. There are moments when real boredom sets in and the temptation to leave the eggs and do something more interesting arises.

—Mary C. Earle, *The Desert Mothers, Spiritual Practices from the Women of the Wilderness*

This week with all the snow and my inability to get out and about has reminded me of Amma Synclctica's story. Here I am "stuck" in the house and brooding about when this stuff will melt. Amma Synclctica would tell me this is an opportunity to sit and listen for a word from God and I'm sure she would say quit wasting your opportunities!

Two of the most frequently asked questions about spiritual practices are "how do I quiet my mind and how do I stop fidgeting? These two questions are as old as meditation itself and all spiritual practices, and the only answer I've ever heard for either of them is "there is no right way to do this except practice, keep doing them until you discover for yourself that which draws you into your deepest being." My problem with this answer is it's so vague, it could mean anything, but I also know that it is true and right. The only way to become proficient at any Spiritual Practice is to "practice" that's why it's called a practice.

In the last four days I have sat and quieted my mind and stilled my heart but suddenly I am remembering something I have to do, only I can't because I can't get to where I need to be. Such moments in our lives are sources of frustration and are filled with "have to's" and "need to's." I have been, we have been, given the opportunity to slow down and listen for that quiet word of the Spirit being whispered to us every day, but for which we are often too busy to listen for.

Yes being still is a problem, especially when you have an active family, or a job that provides our



families with the things we use to survive. If you only take five or ten minutes out of your day to sit and stare out the window at the white wonderland, over a cup of steaming coffee or tea, letting the days troubles take care of themselves for a few moments, you will find you are more centered within and able to cope. Don't worry about mental intrusions, acknowledge them and let them go, let the stillness of the winter's day, enter into your life for just a moment. It might take a few days, and for some of us a few weeks, to get to that still point, but when you do you may just hear the whisper of the Spirit.

Peace and Blessings to you all, Ruth



As I stare out my window at the swirling snow, a result of this rare, late January storm, I am reminded of growing up in Wisconsin. I remember waking up to a world blanketed in white, and racing over to the television to see if our school district's name would be scrolling across the bottom of the screen. A two-hour delay was the worst; it meant that we would have to bundle up and shovel the driveway in order to get to school on time. The full "snow day" was the real goal: it meant staying in pajamas until you wanted to go out to play in the frosty wonderland, and then coming in with tingling toes and a drippy nose to hot tomato soup, grilled cheese sandwiches, and hot cocoa. I would stand transfixed as the names rolled by in alphabetical order. If I took my eyes off the flashing screen for a second, I could easily miss seeing what I so desperately hoped for: "McFarland Schools—closed".

Unfortunately, "snow days" were relatively rare, because in the Midwest we were well prepared to deal with the snow. Snowplows running 'round the clock with salt and sand kept the roads open and school busses running. So on those few occasions when Mother Nature outsmarted even the best attempts to plan ahead, seeing that fateful message bearing the good news "closed" would bring such a surge of joy.

As a child, I had an unencumbered willingness to

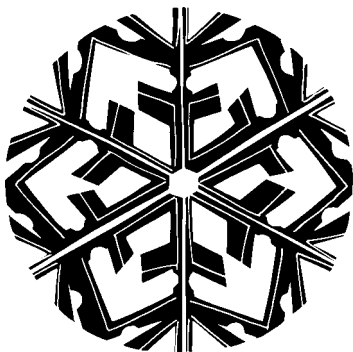
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## INTERN PASTOR - KATE SWEET, CONT.

leap for joy. Snow meant play and wonder. At the time, I had no idea that such a lovely gift could also carry with it such danger, a danger that we were shielded from by the declaration of a “snow day”. As an adult, this danger is one of the first things to pop into my mind when I hear about an impending storm like the one we’ve had this week. How many accidents will there be out on the roads? Do we have enough food in case we can’t make it to the store? Is there any chance the electricity will go out?

Unfettered joy is elusive, but bright glimpses of possible joy are hiding around us at every moment. This morning when I woke up there was clean, white snow on the ground, and flakes falling softly from the sky. My heart leapt a little and a smile flittered on my lips. I was connected, however briefly, to the little girl inside of me who delighted in a snow day. The next moment, the Seattle Times reported a winter storm warning and the perils that threatened to accompany. Our lives hold this tension, that every moment holds the potential to bear both great joy and great sorrow.

And so, I am thinking of this because February is a unique month in which we experience through our church calendar this seemingly dichotomous reality of our lives. For most of the month, we are celebrating the season of Epiphany, a time to joyfully proclaim the coming of Christ’s light into this world. Then on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, we will transition into Lent, a time normally associated with contrition and introspection as we prepare ourselves for the crucifixion of Jesus. As a community, and with God present in our company, we have the opportunity to reflect on our participation in this cycle of joy and sorrow.



## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

*Wednesday, 1st* - Peter Drury  
*Thursday, 2nd* - Matt Markell  
*Thursday, 9th* - Devin Kitchel  
*Monday, 13th* - Alina Rossano  
*Tuesday, 14th* - Kate Sweet  
*Thursday, 16th* - Roy Smith  
*Thursday, 23rd* - Paulina Montiel  
*Thursday, 23rd* - Amy Ray  
*Monday, 27th* - Carys Dimmers-King  
*Monday, 27th* - Martha Dimmers

## ELDERS REFLECTION

Stan & Olive – Just saying their names fills me with poignant and pleasing images and feelings. I feel close to them, even though – in all honesty – I hardly knew them. They lived with dignity, grace, integrity and warmth. And their very living touched me.

I will not recount here the many ways they have touched our community. Each one of us has individual experiences and private memories, and they will be far more telling than any “general” story I could tell here. But my hunch is that if we all sat around a warm fire and shared stories, each would reflect consistent qualities.

If you think about it, watching those ahead of us can be a powerful teacher – whether for successes, mistakes, or a combination thereof. I feel truly inspired by the constancy of character I witnessed in Olive & Stan Larsen. I will never forget them. And I’m just one person who was somewhat peripheral on their own life’s journey.

Do you live in a way that – even for someone in your periphery – another might be inspired to live their life with greater excellence, greater joy, greater warmth? Wow. There’s a thought. Well, it is what the Larsens have done for me, and I suspect for most of us. We’d be all the poorer for not taking notice of the lesson.

I trust the Spirit will comfort each of us in our grieving, as well as inspire us in our living. Let us remember Stan & Olive through carrying forward their lessons for us.

Grace & Peace,  
Peter Drury

## REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

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### *Many Reasons to Give Thanks*

It's January and time for those New Year's resolutions. How are you doing so far as we move into the middle of January? This year I have the usual: lose those last few pounds, spend less, exercise more. We'll see. I'm also renewing one from a couple of years ago. This one came out of my experience traveling to the Middle East with Global Ministries in December of 2009. As I lugged my suitcase through several different countries (and up several staircases) my resolution for 2010 became a mantra: "Pack lightly and leave room." I was thinking in terms of travel of course, but the mantra came to have meaning in other areas of my life as well. Pack lightly. Hold the things of life lightly. Don't try to cram commitments into every space of my day or week. Don't try to cram expectations, "shoulds and oughts" into every corner and lose the opportunity for embracing the unexpected.

Leave room. Leave space for wonder.

Leave space for moments of grace.

Leave space to be able to respond to people (and congregations) without the distractions of the "shoulds and oughts."

Leave room to be able to recognize the Spirit of God moving in our midst.

As our congregations are thinking about transformation and ministry for a new day, I'm asking them to consider the same kinds of questions: What are the essentials we must take with us into the new day; practices values, traditions? (And no, not everything is essential! Not everything will fit in the suitcase!) And what kind of space can we leave for the new things God wants to bring into our lives?

Pack lightly. Leave room.

Blessings,

*Sandy Messick, Regional Minister*



THE  
Northwest Regional Christian Church (*Disciples of Christ*)  
TRANSFORMATION TEAM  
*presents*  
**One Gathering  
in  
Four Places**  
Saturday, March 24, 2012  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

- Exploring the Heart of the Missional Church
- For Pastors *and* Lay Leaders
- Presentation & discussion via Google+
- Locations:

- Lake City CC
- Puyallup FCC

- Kennewick FCC
- United Church of Moscow, ID

SAVE THE DATE  
MORE INFO TO FOLLOW!



## MUSINGS ON MISSION...

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### Tithing

*Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.* —Malachi 3:10

“Pay yourself first” is a popular bit of financial advice. It refers to the idea of having part of each paycheck automatically transferred into savings or an investment account as a way of ensuring that you keep your commitment to investment. However, for us as Christians, a better aphorism might be, “Pay God first.” Over and over, the scriptures speak about dedicating the first fruits of what you receive to God.

As Christians, we are generally less focused on religious laws we must follow in the way that our Jewish and Muslim sisters and brothers are. Instead, Jesus called us to focus on the spirit of the law more than the letter of the law—usually in a way that is even more demanding on us. But we do have spiritual practices that support us in living as people of God. One of those is the practice of tithing.

Tithing is first referenced about Abraham, following a military victory, in Genesis 14:18-20: “And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!’ And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.”

If we think of our giving to church as part of our overall spiritual practice, it shifts our relationship with giving. We are expressing gratitude to God for the abundance God has blessed us with.

My personal experience has been that tithing is more a gift to me than a giving up. It has changed my relationship with money, and I feel far wealthier now than I did before I began it. I currently give 8% of my income as a pledge to my church, 1% to the Northwest Region, and 1% to my church by purchasing and giving things the church needs. Above this, I give to a variety of non-religious charities. I contribute to the general church only through my contributions to the Disciples Mission Fund. I would encourage every Disciple to contribute to their region about a tenth of what they contribute to their church,

whether by direct contribution or through the special offerings.

I feel it is important that congregations, too, tithe, and I know that many of them do. Sending at least 10% of a congregation’s income to support the larger church, through region, Global Ministries, and ministries of the general church, lets us join forces to accomplish together things beyond the capacity of any single congregation.

For someone who is not doing it, the idea of tithing is frightening. Many of us feel that we are barely scraping by as it is, and it’s not clear what we could give up to allow us to tithe. There is certainly an element of trust in God in taking this step. For those willing simply to take the leap, I suspect you will be surprised at how God opens doors for you and enriches your life. But for those not quite ready to take that step, a good practice is simply to decide to contribute 1% more of your salary this year than last year. In other words, if your family income is \$50,000, and you have been contributing \$100/month to your church, by adding 1%, or \$500/year, your new contribution would be just under \$142/month.

Many of us feel shy about asking for money in church, and so “stewardship moments” are often safe and generic. But if we shift our perspective from thinking that we’re trying to get something for our church, to realizing we are trying to help congregation members by encouraging them to be better Christians and to lead more of the abundant life God has planned for them, it may change the way we approach these conversations.

Certainly stewardship is about much more than money. We are called to be stewards of God’s creation, of our vocation, of our church. As Disciples, we recognize that the earth and all it contains, and our very life itself, are all gifts from God, and we model our life and our stewardship on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Through this model of stewardship, we build up the Realm of God that Jesus initiated on earth. Being a Disciple means offering our very life to God. Dedicating our material well-being to God and in service to our love of our neighbors is only one way of expressing this, but it is an important one, and for many of us, may help us to understand more fully the other aspects of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

—Wahhab Baldwin, *Chair Regional Mission Council*

## WEEK OF COMPASSION OFFERING

Have you ever stopped to contemplate that literally *all* that we are and *all* that we have is of God? What an awesome concept! Therefore, our response to that Creator God is to give back. There is no greater joy than being in a position to share our gifts and resources with those in need. If we have enough, but others are lacking, we remind ourselves that God already created a world of plenty, and that it is up to us to distribute and share what we have with those who don't have enough. I vividly recall this remote village in northern India and the looks in the eyes of the children and the woman, pictured above, when they received a goat from Week of Compassion. This goat would change their lives! One goat! How wonderful it felt in that moment to know that what Disciples had given was now improving the lives of an entire community. What joy!



This Week of Compassion special offering season, February 19-26, we continue to discern how "Sharing Brings Joy." This Week of Compassion we hope you will lift up how that sharing blesses, transforms, and brings joy to *others*. In a time of uncertainty, fear, and continuing economic hardship in our country and in our world, I can think of no better offering to give back to God than our profound joy in knowing that we do, indeed, have all we need—and more. For "the point is this: the

one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:6-7) The early Christians are encouraged here to share the joy in giving by letting others witness their generosity so that all may see how God is being glorified and how others' lives change as a result of our generosity.

For more than six decades, Disciples of Christ in the United States and Canada have shared material resources with a hurting world through Week of Compassion, bringing glory to God as well as joy to others. God's people giving of their resources—prayer, money, time, talent—remains *the* propellant behind Week of Compassion. The act of giving back to God is simply a matter of faith. It is the natural reaction to our saying "yes!" to following Christ. Sharing with others invites God more fully into our lives. As we reach out in love, we open the way for God to reach more deeply into us. Sharing will joyfully transform you as you help transform the world.

This year, as you share your tithes and offerings with Week of Compassion, remember all the ways your gifts bring joy to others. Sow bountifully and share abundantly, knowing that you are not only helping change the statistics, you are also helping change lives. May we all give cheerfully and multiply the joy!

**Week of Compassion:** sharing resources,  
changing lives, spreading joy

**queen anne christian church** (disciples of christ)

1316 third avenue west • seattle, washington 98119-3312



The important thing  
is not to think much,  
but to love much;  
and so, do that which  
best stirs you to love.

—Saint Teresa of Avila

We gather for worship  
on Sunday at 10am.