

Hilltop Highlights

January 2008

Laurie Rudel, Pastor



Grace does not free us from our weaknesses and our suffering, but it does free us from the feeling that these difficulties make life complex. Grace begins a newfound sense of simplicity . . . Through the presence of grace we know what is wanted of us and we are able to respond. Problems decrease in importance. They are still around, but they do not present themselves as limitations or obstacles. . . . Grace divests us from what seems to be ours, so the presence of grace is often accompanied by our sense of being less in control and of possessing nothing. As we continue to clear away what we feel are our private possessions, grace increases.

—Robert Sardello
Silence

WOVEN TOGETHER IN LOVE

I pray that, according to the riches of God's glory,
God may grant that you be strengthened in your inner being
with power through God's Spirit, and that Christ
may dwell in your hearts through faith,
as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

—Ephesians 3:16-17

Dear Friends,

During Advent I have been blessed to be reading a book called *In the Spirit of Happiness* written by The Monks of New Skete.

I first came across these monks through the book, *How to be Your Dog's Best Friend*. I can't say the first book helped me in dog training but I'm finding this current book quite helpful in terms of soul-training.

In the Spirit of Happiness is written to help those of us not living in monastic community sense the opportunities for spiritual growth that lie all around us.

Most recently I have been intrigued with their idea that the purpose of our life is to allow our knowledge of God to penetrate us and change how we live. They ask: when we say *I believe in God* what do we mean by that? Who is this *I* that believes in God?

They observe that, "without this kind of self-knowledge, our knowledge of God will remain shallow and superficial, just another fact in the vast assortment of information we catalogue in our heads." So what do we mean by self-knowledge?

Self-knowledge involves ongoing growth in a realistic understanding of

the self. It asks us to bring to light parts of ourselves that we would rather hide, but it also asks us to celebrate the essential core, or soul, of our being encased in a garish layer of *shoulds, oughts, and supposed tos*.

Self-knowledge is the grace to let ourselves off the perfectionist hook and really see the beauty that surrounds us. Self-knowledge allows us to apologize more quickly; to increase our capacity for compassion and forgiveness. Self-knowledge allows us to wonder more and pontificate less!

As a congregation we also hope to increase our community self-knowledge through participation in the *New Beginnings* process (you can read more about this elsewhere in the newsletter). **Our first meeting takes place Tuesday, January 8, at 7pm in the Fellowship Hall** and you are invited. That evening our *New Beginnings* consultant will help us name the strengths and gifts of our congregation.

This will be a great time to be together. Child care is provided. Please come . . . we are not complete without you.

blessings + peace + love,

Laurie



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Twelfth Day of
Christmas
Celebration:
*A Pageant
and A Feast!*



Sunday, January 6

Children's Pageant – 10am
End-of-Christmas Feast! – after worship

Main dish is supplied.

Please bring salad, dessert, or bread.

THANK YOU!

- Advent Candlelighters: Kathie Hopkins, Mary Wieneke, Lara Maxwell, and Andy Phillips
- Music during Advent: Barb Scamman - voice; Emily Nelson and John Lenti - voice and lute; Maria Drury and Barb Scamman - duet; Barbara Balatero - cello solo; Kara Markell - accompanist; Maria Drury and Karen Bonnevie - voice and violin; Barb Scamman prepared the choir to sing in Advent and on Christmas Eve; thanks to all our singers and accompanist Lori Hutchings!
- Devin Kitchel videotaped our worship service on December 23 are part of data gathering for *New Beginnings*.
- Vera Baumgartner coordinated the reception for Stan Larsen's memorial service on December 15; thanks to everyone who helped out that afternoon to create such an amazing gathering. Vera also prepared the worship space for Christmas Eve and the following Sunday.
- Tom Kirkland dealt with a number of property issues in the past month around heating and plumbing.
- Joan Dennehy, Laurie Rudel, and Barb Scamman prepared 100 origami peace crane ornaments for the Christmas Eve service participants to take home.
- To the newsletter volunteers who assembled this newsletter just for you!

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Deacons: Barb Scamman, Edith Stanwood,
Mary Wieneke

January 6 - Epiphany Sunday
Elder: Marietta Tower
Community Feast!

January 13 - The First Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 42:1-9 and Matthew 4:1-9
Worship Leader: Mike Tower
Scripture Reader: John Hutchings
Elder: Juanita Kirkland
Coffee Host: volunteer

January 20 - The First Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 49:1-7 and John 1:29-42
Worship Leader: volunteer
Scripture Reader: volunteer
Elder: Devin Kitchel
Coffee Host: volunteer

January 27 - The First Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 9:1-4 and Matthew 4:12-23
Worship Leader: volunteer
Scripture Reader: volunteer
Elder: Lori Hutchings
Coffee Host: Juanita Kirkland

DID YOU KNOW?

- At the AdMinistry Team meeting in November we adopted a plan put forth by the Finance Team to consolidate our three loans with Church Extension and begin a winter Capital Campaign to renew our pledges toward paying off these loans. This process begins after worship on Sunday, January 13, when the Capital Campaign Team meets with Church Extension advisor Bill Bass. We are fortunate to have Bill as our advisor! He was worked well with us in the past and knows our congregation. You will be hearing much more about this as we go along. For now please keep this group in your prayers.
- Pastor Laurie will be on vacation beginning January 15. She returns to the office on Tuesday, January 22. On Sunday, January 20, please welcome guest preacher Rev. Rick Reynolds, Executive Director of Operation Nightwatch.

NEW BEGINNINGS

On Tuesday, January 8, at 7pm you are invited to attend a community meeting to kick-off New Beginnings.

So what is *New Beginnings*? *New Beginnings* is a process to help us choose a new path for our future. It begins with a thorough assessment that helps develop a strong, creative future vision.

For some time the AdMinistry Team had been searching for ways to do long term planning and get at the heart of the mission of our church. *New Beginnings* is the process we choose to do this work.

Where are we in the *New Beginnings* work?

- First, we are in the process of sending in profile information about our current participants and our financial history over the past three years.
- Second, on **Tuesday, January 8**, Patti Case, our consultant from *New Beginnings*, will come for a visit to: make an assessment of our property with Tom Kirkland; tour the surrounding community with our pastor; hold a financial review with Kathie Hopkins and Laura Kitchel; have dinner with Mike Neal and the pastor; and then **meet with you at 7pm!** We will receive a 20-page report from this visit.
- Third, before the final report is given there is a conference call with our key leaders to review the report for accuracy.
- Fourth, in a Friday - Saturday retreat setting, 5 to 8 of our key leaders will attend a Cluster Meeting with the leaders of other participating churches. There we work on developing a compelling vision of the future and a strategy for engaging the congregation in Cottage Meetings.
- Fifth, on either a full Saturday, or a series of weekly meetings, the key leaders will lead the congregation through the Cottage Meeting process which ends with the church formally adopting a vision for the future.
- Sixth, after this vision is adopted, Church Extension will provide a list of trained coaches who can work with key leaders to implement the vision.

WELCOME GUEST PREACHER

On Sunday, January 20, please welcome our guest preacher The Rev. Rick Reynolds, Executive Director of Operation Nightwatch since 1994.

He is a Free Methodist Chaplain. Married with one adult son, Rick is a resident of the Central Area. Operation Nightwatch has been in existence since 1967 serving the night community in the name of Christ.

Here is one of his stories from his work dated November 27, 2007.

Background: three weeks ago I got a phone call from Sr. Mary at Swedish. She's concerned about a local homeless woman with her three shopping carts of stuff. The lady doesn't seem interested in going in, but the weather is getting worse. Can I talk to her?

So I drive around first hill for 30 minutes, up and down nearly every street, no sign of her. Later in the week I see someone in line for dinner at St. James that may fit the bill, but couldn't stop. Then three days ago she pops up in my neighborhood.

Today: Mayor's office calls the neighborhood worker Ted. Ted calls me (I guess I'm three phone calls removed from the Mayor. Not sure if that is good or not). I guess a neighbor was worried about the woman being warm enough. So I go check her out.

This woman could withstand a blizzard. She has three shopping carts and a buggy full of stuff. Cardboard for insulation. Plastic tarps, blankets; plus she's layered up. She was pleased when I told her that the neighbors were concerned enough to call the mayor and that the mayor was concerned enough to call me. She wanted to know where the mayor's office was, in case she needed something.

Her dilemma is that the shelters won't let her stash her stuff. She isn't going to leave all the stuff or keep it with her even when she's in the shelter. She didn't seem opposed to going in for shelter, but at an impasse; without her survival stuff and personal goods she wouldn't go into shelter.

She knew about Nightwatch, knew where it is and all that. In fact she had a list of community resources that Nightwatch distributes. I encouraged her to go inside, gave her a new knit hat; we parted friends.

—The Rev. Rick Reynolds

ELDERS MEDITATION

Silence:

One of my favorite films is *Into Great Silence*. It is a documentary about the monks at the French monastery The Grand Chartreuse. The filmmaker spent several months filming the monks in their daily lives as they cooked, cleaned and prayed.

Silence:

The film is titled *Into Great Silence* because most of its 160 minutes is total silence. Very little dialogue and no soundtrack music, just the sounds of life: the music of water flowing and dripping, an occasional bell ringing, snow crunching, and birds singing.

Silence:

For me, the best part of Advent is silence. Tuning out honking horns, thumping car stereos and voices of hatred. A time of waiting in silence for Christ to be re-born in me.

Silence:

Let all mortal flesh keep silence as we await the birth of the beloved who invites us to this table.



—Marsha Wilson
Findlay Street Christian Church
Joint Christmas Eve Service

WE PRAY FOR:

- Ruth McLaughlin (Lori Hutchings' mom) – receiving hospice care at home
- PattiAnn (Andy Phillips' aunt) – cancer, prayers for her children
- Kara & Matt Markell – awaiting the birth of their first baby
- Devin Kitchel – job search
- Our friends residing at Queen Anne Manor – Virginia Bozarth, Hally Heiden
- Sharon Watkins – General Minister and President
- Rebecca Hale – Transitional Interim Regional Minister

IN THE MAIL

Dear Laurie,

Thank you and everyone at Queen Anne Christian church for allowing us to play in your beautiful sanctuary. It means so much to have such a “home” nearby, and such wonderful people as you.

We have been blessed in this way for many years now, and want you to know you grateful we (and all our audiences!) are, always.

Much love,

George Bozarth & Tamara Friedman
Gallery Concerts

Dear Queen Anne Christian Church,

Thank you so much for your help with our sock drive. *Sock it to the Homeless* has been a huge success. We have exceeded our goal of collecting 15,000 pairs of socks. Currently we have over 18,000 pairs! These will be distributed to homeless people over the winter.

There is nothing like a clean dry pair of socks in the night!

We appreciate your help with our work. Every night we're seeing 140-160 homeless people, providing food, shelter, blankets and basic toiletries. And socks!

Blessings on you all from the staff at Operation Nightwatch.

Rev. Rick Reynolds

Dear Friends,

We thank you for your recent contribution in the support of *The Church Council of Greater Seattle* which helps us make the love of god visible in 21st Century America.

The Council continues to do very important work as we build unity among congregations, reach out in compassion to those in need, and take action to form a just society.

As our long cold nights continue, we are increasingly mindful of the need to end homelessness. With your help and support the Church Council looks forward to increasing its role of leadership in achieving measurable goals toward ending homelessness in King County.

Again, thank you so much for your support and contribution.

Rev. Dr. Sanford “Sandy” Brown

IN THE MAIL, CONTINUED

Dear Pastor Dennehy, Rev. Dr. Dornhecker & Pastor Rudel,

Thank you for compiling the *Advent Daybook* for all the congregations of the Christian Church. My previous pastor forwarded it to all her contacts (me included), and I downloaded and printed it for our use throughout the season.

My husband and I are living in the Middle East, and new Advent material is difficult to come by (if at all), so we really appreciated your gift.

Many blessings for a wonderful Christmas and New Year.

Angela & David Deller

Dear Joan, Douglas, and Laurie:

I wonder if you know what you have really done. I know you prepared an Advent Daybook that we could read and ponder but you have done so much more. You see, I have recently experienced an Advent in my life. A time when the 'Christ is coming' became a 'Christ is here' moment.

As a new Associate Regional Minister in North Carolina, my utmost desire is to please God through servant-leadership. Recently, I have been called back to a second reading of Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*. This book helps me return to myself when the busy-ness of ministry crowds me but there seemed to be something else I was waiting on....another reading that would help sanctify my imagination for the possibilities of witness in this chaotic world.

Then your *Advent Daybook* appeared in my mailbox. For a few days it sat on my desk among the other periodicals and junk. And (can I be honest) at first, I was not attracted to it because it did not have a pretty colored cover. I guess you might say it was Messianic in that it came with no form or comeliness that I should desire it and yet it contained the ransom for my captured soul.

I do not quite remember what attracted me back to this booklet except maybe that Advent was approaching and I needed to connect with the moment. After flipping through the pages, I landed on p. 23 and my eyes fell upon the prayer about God's leading me through times of fear into

obedience. That did it! I took this little meditation piece home with me and read every word...cover-to-cover.

And this brings me back to my 'Christ is here' moment. These carefully and prayerfully selected readings of the lives of the saints have caused an awakening within me concerning my journey and witness. Christ is alive in my everyday tasks of ministry. This I had forgotten. I was focusing my attention too much on the public side of ministry (I tend to be an event-oriented person) for a soul satisfaction that it could not provide. As Eugene Peterson says in *Under the Unpredictable Plant*, "Most pastoral work involves routines similar to cleaning out the barn, mucking the stalls, spreading manure, pulling weeds. This is not, any of it, bad work in itself, but if we expected to ride a glistening black stallion in daily parades and then return to the barn where a lanky groom our steed for us, we will be severely disappointed and end up being horribly resentful. There is much that is glorious in pastoral work, but the congregation, as such, is not glorious."

With this work, you have quieted my spirit to hear the voices of the saints who have gone on before me. I have very clearly received their message of servant-leadership which invites me to pour out love in innocence and vulnerability, witness and service with the understanding that the outcome of such 'pouring' is up to God.

Joan, Douglas, and Laurie: I pray for your abounding favor with God in the earth. I pray for your families, your health, and your ministries. You have blessed this novice in Regional ministry. Keep collaborating, keep writing, but most of all, keep praying!

With Love and Appreciation,

Rev. Valerie J. Melvin
Associate Regional Minister
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
in North Carolina



A MODEL FOR AN ANNUAL SPIRITUAL CHECKUP

Here are ten questions any person could use as an annual review of his or her discipleship and ministry:

1. Prayer

How has your prayer life been this year? Blossoming? Fading? Faltering? Open? Routine? Is this an area that needs more focus for you?

2. Learning

What have you studied this year (formally or informally)? What have you learned?

3. Worship

Are you worshipping at least weekly? How has that time been? Highs? Lows? Are you taking time to prepare or "just showing up"?

4. Leader Skills

Do you sense that your capacity to lead has increased? Are you observing the leadership of others? What have you been learning?

5. Community Building

How are you helping your congregation to thrive, formally and informally?

6. Action

Where have you been visible in your faith? What blocks you from action?

7. Serving Others

Where have you served God this year?

8. Sense of Growth

Where do you feel you have grown this year-spiritually, emotionally, in terms of relationships, or in terms of knowledge?

9. Balance

How is your sense of living a balanced life? Do you keep the sabbath?

10. Growing Edge - Stretching Beyond the Comfort Zone

If we accept that we are not living in the fullness of the kingdom, where are you called to focus in the coming year?

From the *Alban Weekly* - 4/4/2005

queen anne christian church (disciples of christ)

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My religion is very simple.
My religion is kindness.

- The Dalai Lama

We gather for worship
Sundays at 10am.