

# Hilltop Highlights

JANUARY 2010

Laurie Rudel, Pastor  
Jeremiah Oliver, Editor



If there is anything  
I have learned  
about men and women,  
it is that there is  
a deeper spirit of altruism  
than is ever evident.  
Just as the rivers we see  
are minor compared to  
the underground streams,  
so, too, the idealism  
that is visible  
is minor compared  
to what people carry  
in their hearts  
unreleased  
or scarcely released.

—Dr. Albert Schweitzer

Give thanks to the Beloved with your whole heart; tell the story of Love's way;  
Be glad and dance with joy; Sing praises to the Name above all names,  
as illusions are dispelled, as they fade away before Love's face.  
For You, O Beloved, are ever-present, ready to enter open hearts.  
—Psalm 9, *Psalms for Praying*

## WOVEN TOGETHER IN LOVE

Dear Friends,

One year ago in November, with the help of Rev. Sandy Messick, Pastor for the Sabbatical, QACC identified three core values: a heart for children; a welcoming spirit; and the desire to grow and deepen our faith.

Eleven months ago we formed three core values task groups to explore each value, to determine, in part, if these really were our core values. Each person could choose one group which best reflected their passion. Each group was made up of active participants and prayer participants.

Nearly one year later, what has been the result? First of all each group met regularly, usually once a month but sometimes more than that. Each group took time to reflect deeply on how our church culture would shift if we dove whole-heartedly into that particular value. Each group has been faithful to the intention of their value. Here is a short summary of the work of each core value task group:

### A Heart for Children—

This group began with the strongest foundation so well-laid by Vera Baumgartner. With the support of the core value task group this value can be seen most clearly in our commitment to offer quality nursery/pre-school care and Christian education classes for all our children and their guests. Currently we are running three different classes to meet the

needs of our various age groups. Our Advent and Christmas celebrations lifted up the gifts of our children as worship leaders, singers, musicians, and bell ringers.

### A Welcoming Spirit—

This core values task group has focused on three areas: offering a genuine welcome to all guests on Sunday morning; offering a clearer witness to our community about who we are as a congregation; and exploring ways to offer a welcome outside of Sunday morning. They have identified a group of “natural greeters” who met once for an initial conversation. They intend to engage in a three session study on *Radical Hospitality* to deepen their theological grounding and understanding of welcome.

### Growing and Deepening Our Faith—

Over the year this group has held significant conversations about how faith grows and changes over time. They just completed the seven session series *Living the Questions* which they hope to offer to the congregation at some point in the new year. Their next step will be to engage in a three session study on *Intentional Faith Development*.

If you find you are intrigued with one of these core values please let me know. This is a good time to link up with a core value group as we begin our next stage of congregational transformation.

Blessings + Peace,

*Laurie*



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(disciples of christ)

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## DID YOU KNOW?

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- Lillian Mei Spiceland, born to Carolyn Ho & Tristan Spiceland, chose to enter this world almost five weeks early on December 21. Everyone is well and Lillian was able to go home on Christmas Day to be greeted by Carolyn's parents who had flown in to spend Christmas with Carolyn. Baby, mom and dad currently live just east of Green Lake in their temporary Seattle home. In about six to eight weeks they will return to Quito, Ecuador where Tristan works for the State Department and Carolyn tele-commutes as a consultant in the United States. Over the next few weeks we will be providing meals for the family. Please speak with Barb Scamman or Pastor Laurie if you would like to help.
- On Sunday, December 13, we hosted 22 children in worship.
- On Christmas Eve QACC and Findlay Street Christian Church over 120 friends and guests gathered together.



## THANK YOU!

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- Alina Rossano danced the Christmas Eve message while Jeremiah Oliver improvised on the transverse wooden flute and singing bowl.
- Vera Baumgartner organized Christmas crafts for our older and younger children each Sunday in December.
- Peter Drury assisted the older children in serving as worship leaders each Sunday in Advent; he also helped with the Christmas Pageant as our roving reporter and prayer of praise reader.
- Barb Scamman created a Children's Choir that sang during Advent and on Christmas Eve, worked with the handbell ringers, and led the adult singers.
- On Christmas Eve Jacob Tower served as our Christmas Eve worship leader; Hannah Tower was our Jr. Deacon, and Meghan Tower lit the Christ Candle. Michael & Marietta Tower served as greeters.
- Tessa Kitchel offered violin duets and solos during Advent and Christmas.
- Kasey Kitchel, Julia Field, Hannah Tower, along with Rocky, Jen, Evan, and Kaia Hrachovec all played handbells during Advent or on Christmas Eve
- Maria Drury offered her gift of music numerous times during Advent and Christmas as our cantor and as a soloist.

## PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

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**Deacons:** Amy & Sean Gillespie, Lori Olin-Evans, Joyce Yoder

**January 3 - Epiphany Sunday**

**Elder:** Maria Drury

**Coffee Hosts:** Gillespies, Kitchels

**January 10 - The First Sunday after Epiphany**

**Elder:** Lori Hutchings

**Coffee Hosts:** Alina Rossano, Drurys

**January 17 - The Second Sunday after Epiphany**

**Elder:** Devin Kitchel

**Coffee Hosts:** Lydia Scott, Kirklands

**January 24 - The Third Sunday after Epiphany**

**Elder:** Marietta Tower

**Coffee Hosts:** Karen Bonnevie, Towers

**January 31 - The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**

**Elder:** Lori Hutchings

**Coffee Hosts:** Vera Baumgartner, Clossons, Edith Stanwood, Joyce Yoder

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## FROM OUR SEMINARIAN

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Greetings from Texas! We experienced the first Texas white Christmas in eighty years - what an adventure! While many Fort Worth churches cancelled their activities, Alliance United Methodist Church was one of the few churches to keep its worship scheduled Christmas Eve (three services) amid the piling snow and hardening ice. One of the handbell choir members volunteered to take me home in his four-wheel drive—my usual 15 minute drive stretched to 50 minutes; but we made it safe and sound. We were blessed to spend Christmas with both of our families on Christmas Day this year!

Our joy was mingled with sadness, though. My sister-in-law, Marnie's father passed away just two days before Christmas. We were reminded yet again that the hope given to us at Christmas sustains us throughout all the seasons of our lives.

As snow falls outside again today, I am working on my *Theology of Ministry* paper and enjoying a few relaxing and quiet days at home. I am looking forward to spending a few days in January at a retreat/conference center in central Texas for an inter-faith seminarians conference and then the beginning of my last regular semester at Brite beginning January 12. I look forward to seeing you all at the end of January! Blessings and peace in the New Year!

—Kara Markell

## WELCOME NEW MEMBER!

On Peace Sunday, December 13th, Valerie Lyson transferred her membership from her home congregation in Georgia to Queen Anne Christian Church. Valerie, originally from the Seattle area and a former member of First Christian Church, is ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She has recently moved to Lake City with her teen-aged daughter, Kaitlin. Welcome Valerie!

### JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Saturday, 8th – Gabriel Dimmers-King  
Saturday, 8th – Genesis Dimmers-King  
Friday, 15th – Mary Closson  
Friday, 15th – Jacob Tower  
Friday, 15th – Mary Wieneke

## CHILDREN IN-SERVICE DAY

On Friday, January 29, when the Seattle Public Schools hold a teacher in-service day, we are inviting families to bring their school-age children (ages 6 and over) to a Children In-Service Day.

The current plan is to meet at Food LifeLine in Shoreline at 10am where we will be assigned service work: helping to sort, label, and repackage food for distribution to food banks, shelters and meal programs in Western Washington and learn more about hunger in the Seattle area. You can read more at: <http://www.foodlifeline.org/>

After our time of service we'll head just a little further north to Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park for lunch (lots of choices) in the Commons area.

We'll have maps and more information on the table in the narthex in the next week or so.

Please feel free to invite your friends and classmates to join you!



## CHILDREN'S CORNER

December was a busy month for the children of QACC and their friends. Their joy-filled voices were heard singing in the choir on Sundays as well as at the Christmas Eve service, and they shared readings, prayers and other musical talents.



On Sunday afternoon, December 20 about 25 adults and children spent that afternoon ice skating at Seattle Center.

Children of all "ages" had a great time presenting the Christmas Pageant on Sunday the 27, dressing in costume and presenting the Christmas story with the help of reporters Peter and Pastor Laurie.

On November 21, I attended a Godly Play workshop held at St. Marks Cathedral. The featured speaker of the day was Jerome Berryman, the creator and author of the Godly Play curriculum we use. It was great to see and hear this gentle man, whom you have heard so much about. What a treat! As a follow-up, on December 7th, I was invited to spend an evening with the Godly Play teachers from Bethany Presbyterian for a meal and discussion of Berryman's presentation.

It was wonderful to be with and gain from others who teach and work with children, using the same material that we do.

—Vera Baumgartner

## LOVE & LOGIC FOR PARENTS

ALL parents of children ages toddler to 6 are invited to our four week **Love and Logic** class with Amy Wilson on Monday nights in the sanctuary of Bethany Presbyterian Church. Cost is only \$10.00 per person for the whole course (quite the deal) so that you can pay for babysitters for your children at home and still attend!

Come from 7:00-8:30 pm on January 25, February 1, 8 and 22 (March 1 is our snow date if needed). There will be a Q&A session from 8:30-9:00 pm each week for those who wish to stay later.

You may register by returning the registration form you will find on the table in the narthex or by paying on the first night. You are encouraged to invite friends, neighbors, relatives to this very practical, helpful and often humorous class.

Questions? Contact Holly Royston of Bethany Presbyterian Church at: [sulajune@yahoo.com](mailto:sulajune@yahoo.com)

## IN THE MAIL

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Dear QACC,

We just received the November Hilltop Highlights, and I wanted to write and say "Many Thanks!" for asking your readers to pray for a new ministry for Elaine and I.

We have moved from Hampton to Cedar Falls, which combined with its next door neighbor, Waterloo, makes a city of about 100,000, which for Iowa, is big. I continue to play first violin with the Waterloo/Cedar Falls Symphony, which is one of the reasons we moved here; to be close to work. We moved our membership to First Christian Church, in Cedar Falls, where Liz Woodward is the pastor.

The winter has started to get serious here. We have about four inches of snow on the ground with more on the way.

I have my search and call profile out with Disciples and the UCC, so I expect to receive a call to a new church, eventually. In the meantime, I am doing some work as a non-CPE chaplain at a Lutheran home, here in Cedar Falls, and music with the symphony. I have a string quartet that also does work around the area; the Brandenburg String Quartet, named after our violist, Ute Brandenburg. We do what we can to make the season bright!

Elaine continues to run Ekstedt Entertainment/Seattle String Quartet as an Internet business, and although the "recession" has affected her business to some degree, we thank God for blessing it as much as has been the case (eating is still a good thing).

We send our love to you and the Queen Anne Christian gang, and pray for God's blessing for us all in the coming year. God bless you!! AND, we have a **new address!**

Blessings,  
Pastor Jan and Elaine

Rev. Jan Ekstedt, MDiv,  
2210 Thunder Ridge Blvd., Apt. 2B  
Cedars Falls, IA 50613  
Cell: 206-276-5529

To my family at QACC:

As I seek the words to write, I am reminded there was a moment over a year ago when I questioned if I may still be here today.

A great deal has happened over the past 18 months. I would not change it for the world. I am more alive and grateful to be here than I ever was before.

I thank each and everyone of you for your heartfelt prayers and good thoughts that helped to get me here. I hope everyone has a wonderful and safe holiday season.

Andy  
ps: I broke down and bought a cowboy hat. Watch out Texas!

Dear QACC,

Thank you so much for the very, very generous Christmas gift.

I am so honored to serve as your pastor and deeply appreciate this gift.

You are a delight!  
Blessings + peace, Laurie



## WELCOME GUEST PREACHER

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Please welcome Rev. Valerie Lyson as our guest preach on Sunday, January 17th. Valerie is the newest member of our congregation and was our guest preacher this past fall.

Pastor Laurie & Barb will take a few days of vacation to fly to Los Angeles to visit relatives. They leave on Thursday, January 14. Laurie returns to the office on Wednesday, January 20.

## ELDERS' MEDITATION

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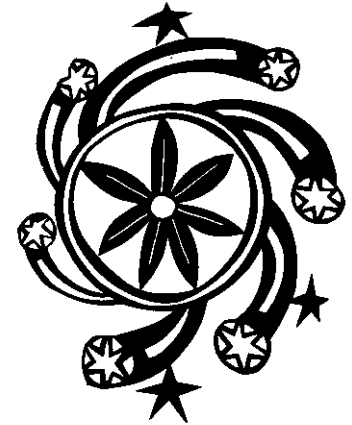
We must be willing  
to get rid of the life we've planned,  
so as to have the life  
that is waiting for us.  
—Joseph Campbell

The weekend after Thanksgiving we flew down to Los Angeles for my sister-in-law's wedding. We had originally planned to be in Hawaii for Thanksgiving (my favorite vacation destination and somewhere we haven't been in almost three years), but when the wedding got scheduled for the same time our Hawaii trip had to be put aside for another couple of years. Additionally all three of our kids were in the wedding, so it cost us hundreds of dollars for flower girl dresses and the tuxedo rental; to put it mildly I had a bad attitude about the whole event. We tacked a trip to Disneyland on to the end of our time in California in an attempt to make it a fun family vacation, but in the weeks approaching the wedding I couldn't stop thinking about what would have been. No one was more shocked than I was that 3 of my best gifts this Christmas season would come from that wedding.

The first gift was that I got to meet three of Michael's cousins from Florida. We didn't know that they were going to be able to make it to the wedding, so it was an unexpected joy to meet them and hear stories of Michael when he was young. Since I was 21 and Michael was 26 when we started dating, I loved hearing the cousins reminisce about when they were children together and to get a glimpse from a third party of what Michael was like. One cousin in particular, Johnny, was full of joy and light, and although he has no children of his own he spent a lot of time really talking to my children and getting to know them. He is definitely someone who lives life fully and loves wastefully, if you remember my elder's meditation from a few months ago. On the dance floor at the reception it was Cousin Johnny who got Jacob onto the dance floor and convinced him not to be embarrassed and to just get out there and have fun. There will definitely be a family trip to Florida in our future.

The second gift I received was that the wedding reception gave me an opportunity for all five of us in my family - myself, Michael, and our three children - to dance together for hours. We danced to rock music from the 60's and 70's, to Latin music (even though none of us really knew how to do that), did a conga line around the dance floor led by my 11 year old daughter Hannah, and probably most notably for me, I got to slow dance with my almost 13 year old son. With Jacob being on the cusp of his teenage years and Hannah not far behind, I know that there aren't going to be a lot more opportunities for all of us to interact like that before they leave the house; in fact the next time I slow dance with Jacob could easily be at his wedding. To spend four hours laughing and dancing together without Michael and I being an embarrassment to them and with everyone getting along is a memory I am going to treasure and hold on to forever.

The final gift was the words of my father-in-law in his toast to his daughter and her new husband, and I want to pass that gift on to you today as it is just as relevant for all of us here. He stood up and simply advised the newlyweds that no matter what happens if they hold each other's hearts as tenderly as they were holding each other's hands that day, they will be fine. Words of wisdom from a man who has been married for over 50 years. In good times as well as bad, with close friends and family as well as casual acquaintances, let us hold each other's hearts with that same tenderness.



—Marietta Tower

## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS: GLOBAL MISSIONS TRIP - REV. SANDY MESSICK

On November 30, seven Regional Staff of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and two Global Ministries staff met in Newark, NJ for a time of Orientation and Mission Interpreters training in preparation for their pilgrimage to Lebanon, Syria, and Israel & Palestine. On December 1, the group traveled to Lebanon on the first leg of their journey. They returned to the U.S. on December 11. Below are two journal entries from Rev. Sandy Messick, our Regional Minister.

### Day 2 Journal

Our second day in Beirut was a study in contrasts...from despair to hope, from the fruits of war to the longing for peace.

First thing after breakfast we were met by Mrs. Sylvia Haddad from the Department of Service for Palestinian Refugees (DSPR). She showed us around two of the 11 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, Sabra and Shatilla. The latter was the sight of the massacre in 1982 that left 1500 Palestinians dead. Two memorials stand in remembrance. The first marks the resting place of the 800 victims that could be identified. The second, an open grassy field, marks the mass grave where the rest are buried. Neither Sabra or Shatilla should rightly be defined as camps. The word "camp" implies impermanence, yet these settlements have existed for more than 60 years now and the hope for a life beyond the boundaries grows more dim with each passing generation. In Shatilla, plumbing and electrical wires hang jumbled together above the narrow passageways. Work is now being done to build the infrastructure for this community but it comes with mixed feelings: It will improve life for the residents, but also indicates a permanent status and that leads to despair.

In the afternoon we visited a Chaldean church providing food for Iraqi refugees. Scores of people lined up to receive boxes of food and supplies. We heard first hand the heart breaking stories of three Christian families, all with young children, who were forced to flee Iraq. Like the Palestinian refugees, they left behind homes and possessions but unlike the Palestinian refugees, they do not hope to return. As one said, "It is too dangerous," and they do not see hope for a stable society there. There are some 8,000 Chaldean Iraqi refugees in Lebanon and 15-20 more arrive each week. It was easy to see despair.

But in the midst of despair, God provides hope, and

that hope was also easy to see. Hope was in the faces of the children in the kindergarten run by the DSPR as they sang "The Wheels on the Bus" in Arabic. It was in the faces of the young women as they learned to style hair and in the young men training in computer and electronics, and in the older women as they learned to read and write. Hope was found in the three young adults, two Christian and one Muslim, giving their time and talent in the pursuit of peace through the Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD) as they provide Youth Exchange opportunities for Lebanese and Iraqi youth and conflict resolution training for young adults and programs to teach young journalists how to be self-critical about their own bias in how events are reported. It was found in the Peace Camps also offered by the FDCD that bring youth from around the world to build relationships and teach about human rights, and in the Women's Project that brings together women from other countries to discuss their role in Christian-Muslim dialogue. Hope is found in the Medical Center being built to serve Iraqi refugees and others in need, and in the commitment of the Arab Group for Christian-Muslim Dialogue to continue to engage each other in the challenging work of communicating through conflict. Hope was found in knowing that some of these are supported by Week of Compassion and Church World Service and all are our mission partners through Global Ministries. And hope is found in the recognition that we are interconnected. As one member of the AGCMD panel said, "Your salvation is in us, and our salvation is in you." It was a long day, and a difficult one in many ways, but in the end....there is hope. In this Advent season may we cling to that most precious gift...the power to hope.



## JOURNAL REFLECTIONS: GLOBAL MISSIONS TRIP - REV. SANDY MESSICK

### Day 9 Journal

At the start of this journey, we were asked to name our hopes for the trip. I said I wanted to hear stories that I could share with my region and the wider church. That hope has more than been fulfilled. On our last day in Israel we heard yet more stories of hope, despair, and ministry being done by faithful, committed people with our support and on our behalf.

First thing, we visited Rawdat El-Zuhur, a primary school operating in East Jerusalem. This is a Child Sponsorship program of Global Ministries. There we met Salwa Zananiri, the principal who showed us around the school. In each classroom we saw the beautiful faces of children eager to share with us a song, or practice their Arabic reading skills, or demonstrate their Palestinian dance or music skills. The children are taught Arabic, French and English. As has been true throughout the trip, hospitality was abundant as we were served tea or coffee and cookies, and welcomed enthusiastically by students and staff. Mounting the stairs, we came upon a value tree with paper ornaments naming some of the values they are trying to teach: peace, responsibility, compassion, respect, public welfare, and optimism.

Sabeel was our next stop. Sabeel is the Palestinian Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center. There we met the founder and director, Naim Ateek. He shared with us their three areas of focus: Building up the Body of Christ through ecumenical conversations among women, youth, and clergy; Christian-Muslim Relations; and Peace and Justice through introducing people to Palestinian Liberation Theology. He said, "It is not enough for just peace or justice, we need to move on to reconciliation."

Our last stop before heading to the airport was to visit Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. It was rightfully a moving and troubling visit and a reminder of a shameful part of humanity's history. It was also a reminder of what happens when racism is not only accepted but legitimized and legalized and a call to prevent such an event from happening again.

As we headed to the airport, the stories from the

past 10 days washed over us. We shared some that were most significant for each of us, and we promised to tell what we have heard and seen. One of the questions we often asked as we met with our mission partners was "Where do you find hope?" The answers varied, but one of the places I found hope was at the Rawdat El-Zuhur school. When the class of older students were asked what they wanted to sing for us, they responded without hesitation. Then they stood and sang together in English, "We shall overcome, we shall overcome, we shall overcome some day, O deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome some day." By God's grace, may we overcome the walls that divide, may we live in peace, and may we walk hand in hand. In closing, I share with you Salwa's request of each of us, "Pray for us, for hope, for peace, to keep loving each other."

—Rev. Sandy Messick



Church of the Nativity  
Bethlehem

## BODYPYPSALM FOR THE NEW YEAR

The New Year is not outside you  
inside is a hundred new years  
built of sentences and syllables  
of spacious possibilities

it is not the weight on your body you need to lose  
but the thoughts which carry far more gravity  
than any pounds or kilograms of extra flesh  
you are being called to a  
flesh of the heart  
a heart of flesh  
where body and mind and soul  
sing alleluias in crisp air  
and you are ushered  
to a season of c o m p a s s i o n

on just about everything and everyone  
you could imagine and not imagine  
compassion on judgments and unmet expectations  
for yourself, unfinished projects and  
humans beings in all shapes, sizes, and forms in your life  
your untidy house, or untidy heart, or untidy car  
and find it within you

to take joy, eat joy, drink joy  
of small beauties within you  
and in front of you  
and become wide awake  
to the adventure of your own life  
waiting, wooing, wanting  
Y O U  
to BE in the life you are in

so take off your socks or put on your socks  
and walk into this New Year  
with the levity  
of giving yourself  
a break and brake  
from the constant demands  
of what you think you should do  
and BE  
the glorious YOU  
only you can be.

Celeste Snowber 2009

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

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Gratitude  
invites  
a sense  
of sufficiency.

Wayne Muller

We gather for worship  
on Sunday at 10am.