

Hilltop Highlights

JANUARY 2012

Laurie Rudel, Pastor
Barb Scamman, 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

WOVEN TOGETHER IN LOVE

Dear Friends,

Inside the pages of our newsletter you will find lots of reflections on various aspects of the new year from a personal perspective; I want to tell you a little about what the new year holds for us as a congregation.

First I want to review some recent events. As of December 1st we made our last loan payment to Church Extension.

Over the past twelve years we had undertaken four capital campaigns to finance various building projects, the largest one being the sanctuary remodel. In that time our church community raised over \$320,000.

This, when seen as a large chunk of money, is incredible to me!

If we had known at the beginning of our remodeling work the entire scope of the additional building projects that emerged, I'm not sure we would have begun it; sometimes knowing just enough for the moment is enough.

Second, even in a shaky economy we have kept our pledges for 2012 steady and new folks have added their pledges. This is very good news.

Truly this congregation rests on a foundation of generations of generosity—including our own.

In the new year Ruth and Kate continue their internships for the next quarter or semester. As we have for the past few months, the three of us will meet once a week for supervision as

well as reflection on pastoral work and congregational life.

Each intern now works closely with one of the core values task groups: Ruth with *Growing and Deepening Our Faith* and Kate with *Welcoming Spirit*. They also meet with the Elders and other groups as time allows.

Beginning in January Kate will join Ruth in the practice of preaching on a regular basis, or about once a month. Their preaching will allow me to sit in your midst—this is a rare gift for a pastor.

As a teaching congregation we will want to offer feedback to our new preachers with clarity and grace. This is an opportunity to ponder what makes a sermon “work.” In addition to your informal comments we will also offer opportunities for structured conversation to aid us all in our learning.

Finally the Seeds of Knowledge, our class for youth and older children, has expressed great interest in learning more about baptism, the bible, and other religions. This group is inquisitive and bright and we will be blessed by their insights and learning.

From my perspective there are many bright spots in the year ahead for our church community. I am filled with gratitude for our continued exploration of faith and of our work together.

Blessings + peace,



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THANK YOU!

- Devin Kitchel patiently keeps the church lights burning.
- Ken Bowles continues to track the progress of the potential new development on the corner of Galer Street and 3rd Avenue West. In December he attended the Queen Anne Community Council Land Use Meeting to formally express our concerns through a written letter.
- Tom Baker and Vera Baumgartner cleaned the carpets in the Fellowship Hall between Christmas and New Year's.
- Maria Drury donated the beautiful poinsettias that graced our chancel during Advent and Christmas.
- As a church community we collected over \$600 in donations—enough for 40 pairs of new shoes—for the homeless and low-income women of Church of Mary Magdalene and Mary's Place. In addition we collected 70 pairs of new socks for the men of Operation Nightwatch.
- Maria Drury, Rowan Drury, Ruth Jewell, John Hutchings, Lori Hutchings, Tom Kirkland, Alina Rosanno, Laurie Rudel, Barb Scamman, Leslie Smith, Jacob Tower, Hannah Tower, Meghan Tower, and Mary Wieneke all offered their gifts on Christmas Eve.
- On Christmas Day Tessa Kitchel led Karen Bonnevie and Laurie Rudel in a violin and recorder trio of Christmas carols. Maria Drury, John Hutchings, Ruth Jewell, Devin Kitchel, Lori Olin-Evans, Barb Scamman, and Mary Wieneke all offered readings that morning while Maria Drury and Lori Hutchings prepared an amazing solo soprano piece from *The Messiah*. Peter Drury was able to skype the service with Wayne and Gloria Dykstra in Dublin, Ireland! Vera Baumgartner coordinated our coffee time and many of you brought Christmas treats to share. Thank you all for a most beautiful Christmas Day!
- We received Christmas greetings from: The Barrett Family, Hally Heiden, Lara Maxwell, Maggie Ridgeway, and Andrea Vaught.

IN OUR PRAYERS

- Olive Larsen was hospitalized just before Christmas with various medical conditions and has now suffered a stroke. We pray for grace and strength and comfort for her and her family.

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Deacons: Lori Olin-Evans, Edith Stanwood, Mary Wieneke

January 1 - The First Sunday after Christmas

Worship Leader: Laurie Rudel

Preaching: Ruth Jewell and Kate Sweet

Elder: Devin Kitchel

Coffee Hosts: Peter and Maria Drury, Alina Rossano

January 8 - The First Sunday after Epiphany

Worship Leader: Kate Sweet

Preaching: Laurie Rudel

Elder: Valerie Lyson

Coffee Hosts: Lori Olin-Evans, Laura and Devin Kitchel

January 15 - The Second Sunday after Epiphany

Worship Leader: Kate Sweet

Preaching: Ruth Jewell

Elder: Michael Tower

Coffee Hosts: Karen Bonnevie, Michael and Marietta Tower

January 22 - The Third Sunday after Epiphany

Worship Leader: Ruth Jewell

Preaching: Kate Sweet

Elder: Maria Drury

Coffee Hosts: Tom and Juanita Kirkland, Tom Baker and Kat Robinson

January 29 - The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Worship Leader: Ruth Jewell

Preaching: Laurie Rudel

Elder: Lori Hutchings

Coffee Hosts: Ruth and John Jewell, Mary Wieneke

Coffee Hosts Next Month

February 5: Vera Baumgartner, Edith Stanwood

February 12: Martha Dimmers and Stephen King,
Barb Scamman and Laurie Rudel, Rose Scamman

February 19: Ken and Cheri Bowles, Lori and John
Hutchings

February 26: Karen Bonnevie, Michael and Marietta
Tower

MARY'S PLACE

Thank you! As 2011 comes to a close, we want to wish you a very happy, safe, and warm New Year and say "thank you". Because of YOU, we are able to offer safety and support, dignity and hope to homeless women. Did you know that Mary's Place is the only day center in King County that accepts homeless women with children?

There is a critical need in our community for emergency shelter for homeless families. Mary's Place has responded to this need for the last three years through our Family Services program. So far this year we have served 90 families with 175 children, providing 635 nights of shelter in addition to the day services we provide at Mary's Place - a 382% increase in our services to homeless women with children. Last month Mary's Place had to turn away 14 families with 31 children for whom we could not provide night shelter.

We are gratified that so many have responded to this critical need! People like you, who are willing to help, keep the doors open, the lights on, and food on the table at Mary's Place. If you have wanted to help and haven't yet had a chance, you can mail a check to Mary's Place at PO Box 1711, Seattle WA 98111-1711.

We will put your donation to work immediately saving lives, restoring hope, and empowering women and their children to reclaim their lives.

Thank you again for being in relationship with us and making our work possible!

Happy New year!



A NOTE FROM YOUR PASTOR

Dear Church Family,

I was stunned to receive your very generous Christmas gift! Thank you so much; it will be put to good use.

Blessings + peace,
Aamir

CHILDREN & YOUTH

We want to thank all our children and youth for their participation in worship during Advent and Christmas.



Everyone had a chance to sing together and lead the congregation in "passing the peace."

Our candlelighters included: Molli Evans, Megan Bowles, Maggie Greenleaf, Kelsey Bowles, Rowan Drury, and Leslie Smith.

Our worship leaders were: Jordan Bowles, Camille Folweiler, Kasey Kitchel, Tessa Kitchel, Leslie Smith, Jacob Tower, Hannah Tower, and Meghan Tower.

Many thanks to Kate Sweet who coached our worship leaders.

We had hoped to schedule a volunteer opportunity with Food Lifeline towards the end of December. The good news was that Food Lifeline had more volunteers than they could use that week; however they would love to have us come in February.

Meanwhile our group, Heart for Children, met at the end of December. As we talked about our core value words like play, joy, and service began to surface. We're excited to see where these words might lead us as we seek grown in depth as a church with a heart for children.

—Heart for Children

SAVE THE DATE:

Regional Youth

WINTER RETREAT 2012

Circle of Life

March 9-11, 2012

Koinonia Camp & Retreat Center, Cle Elum

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Sunday, 8th - Gabriel Dimmers-King

Sunday, 8th - Genesis Dimmers-King

Sunday, 15th - Jacob Tower

Sunday, 15th - Mary Wieneke

Sunday, 15th - Mary Closson

Tuesday, 17th - John Jewell

Friday, 20th - Annika Markell

ELDERS REFLECTION

Well, it has been about a year since my last newsletter article. Last January, I wrote about the inevitable holiday season's anxiety and ended with a quote from an encouraging prayer card I discovered while visiting my parents before the holiday season:

Put your anxiety aside and focus on the joy of this holiday season.

"We must be on guard against this most insidious enemy of our peace and soul. Instead let us foster confidence in God, and thank Him ahead of time for whatever He chooses to send us."

—Fr. Solanus Casey

Last year, one of my New Year's resolutions included a plan to spend more time with the loved ones in my life and to grow a more joyous spirit filled with love, kindness, and understanding. So, I thought this year, my newsletter article's focus should be on New Year's resolutions.

The Tower minivan travels from Bellevue to Queen Anne each Sunday morning. Along the way, we tend to talk about what we plan to do for the day, what is needed to accomplish our list of kid and adult activities, and sometimes we will recount the coming week's events. In December, these discussions have tended to supplant our favorite NPR radio segment (Will Shortz' Puzzler) with a longer list of incomplete tasks and errands. As we near the turn off on Denny, I can usually predict if we will make it to the church on time. Announcing this prediction usually increases a sense of anxiety and anticipation, along with some resolve to leave our house on time the next Sunday.

A couple of Sundays past, Peter Drury shared an interesting insight with us during his offering meditation. Each Holiday Season, we are in a state of great anticipation for the arrival of Christmas and we make resolutions for the coming New Year. What if, Peter suggested, we switch and resolve to fully enjoy Christmas and to anticipate the New Year?

A resolution is a goal someone sets for oneself for the coming year. It is something one always wanted to do. The goal may be anything from the trivial to life changing. Here are some typical New Year's resolutions:

1. Go back to school.
2. Get a better job.
3. Get in shape.

4. Make a difference – volunteer and you will feel useful and connected.
5. Go somewhere – travel.
6. Quit smoking.
7. Reduce debt and save more money.
8. Get organized.
9. Find someone special for companionship.
10. Focus on important relationships.

As you reflect on your past and look forward to the future, ask yourself if this resolution will improve some aspect of your life. Take time to ponder, gather your thoughts, and consider what you'd like to change. Choose what you want to achieve in 2012. And try to make it a lifetime commitment, not just for a year. If possible, find some ways to pray and meditate for God's guidance. For example, if you believe that reading is a great way to increase your overall enjoyment of life, you might resolve to read a book each month. Or, if possible you could resolve to read the Bible, starting with the New Testament. I'm not suggesting you make it your New Year's resolution to read the bible from cover to cover this year. Instead, resolve to read more of anything (books, magazines, newspapers, etc.) and if that includes reading this week's bible verse before it is read aloud during worship, then you are on your way to more fully enjoying reading and anticipating Laurie's sermon for that week's bible verse. On a side note, I'm guessing that if you are reading this newsletter, it is possible you may have already read the bible from cover to cover, more than once.

On a more humorous note, here are a couple of quotes to make you laugh.

A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other.

Past New Year's resolutions:

- 2009: I will go to church every Sunday.
- 2010: I will go to church as often as possible.
- 2011: I will set aside time each day for prayer and meditation.
- 2012: I will try to catch a late night sermon on TV.

I look forward to seeing you in church this Sunday, in anticipation of the first day of the New Year!!

—Michael Tower

INTERN PASTORS - RUTH JEWELL & KATE SWEET

A New Year has come and with it all of the hopes and dreams we have for our lives in the next twelve months, and of course the inevitable resolutions we rarely keep beyond the 2nd week of January. I was sitting in church the last Sunday in Advent and Peter offered us a challenge and that was to make a resolution that we would actually keep, a challenge that would make us better members of the body of Christ and not just better looking, or richer, or even healthier. I was struck by the idea and began to think what might I change in my life as a Christian that would make me a better follower of God. I realize that if I want to succeed then I have to take baby steps and pick just one thing out of the huge grab basket that exists in my life.



Over winter break I've been reading an excellent book by Mark Scandrette titled *Practicing the Way of Jesus, Life Together in the Kingdom of Love*, (I highly recommend this book to anyone of you who might be looking for ideas on how to live a new life in today's world) and I think I will take a page out of this for my resolution.

One of the activities he suggests centers around all of the "stuff" we have in our homes and lives called "Have 2 give 1." The author doesn't call for us to "sell all of our possessions and give them to the poor"; he realizes that is impractical in this day and age, but he does recognize we all have a great deal of things we don't really need. And that is what he takes into account: what is it that we need to live our lives and what is it that we simply want, and can we learn to differentiate between the two.

So how do I differentiate between wants and needs? Well first I am going to simply look around my home and make an inventory of the things in my house that are gathering dust; they could be the first to go. Now that doesn't mean I am giving away family treasures that will be handed down to our grandchildren or very personal items that mean something to me, but it does mean I am going to get rid of clothes I don't wear, and "toys" such as baking pans and cookware I never use anymore. These things

alone make a good start; where I go from there I will have to see.

However, the hardest part will be resisting the temptation to replace what I've given away and developing the attitude of 'do I really need something?' when I go to the store. Our consumer society tells me that not purchasing needless articles is radical and dangerous and so I will have to be strong.

You know I'm rather excited about this experiment of living into the Kingdom of God and I will keep you posted on my success and failures in the coming months. Maybe one of you is curious about this little experiment and if so let me know; such things always work better in small groups where we can support each other.

Have a Happy New Year, everyone, and may God bless whatever you do in the coming months.

—Ruth Jewell

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January sneaks up on me every year. Just when I have finally found myself in the spirit of Christmas, it is suddenly the New Year. It will take me multiple tries before I successfully fill in "2012" on my checks without first having to cross off "2011". But I have to be honest...maybe one of the main reasons that January always surprises me is that celebrating a New Year has never really been "my thing". I find that it is actually usually rather disappointing. On the first of the year, we're told that suddenly everything is supposed to be new, yet in reality everything seems strangely the same.



I remember when I was little, I asked my father one time why everyone made such a big deal about celebrating the New Year. Even back then it felt like the holiday had little meaning for me. "Well, Kate," he said, "New Years is important, especially for us adults, because it helps us feel some sort of rhythm in our lives. When you're an adult and out of school, you don't have the natural breaks in routine like summers off to celebrate the end of the

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INTERN PASTOR - KATE SWEET, CONT.

year. Celebrating January 1st gives us a chance to mark the end of something old and the start of something new.”

His words stick with me as I think about coming up on 2012. Being a seminary student, I still have the luxury of marking years by exams finished and papers handed in. I get to sigh with relief at the end of a semester of hard work well done, and prepare for the unknown experience of a new semester as I anticipate the many books that I ordered from Amazon.com to arrive. This year, my school calendar works out so that the new semester starts only a few days after the first day of the New Year. I don't know if it is because of this coincidence or for some other reason, but this year I feel compelled to try to join the majority of American adults for whom the New Year actually marks something new.

Yet I think that this “new thing” will not be some kind of resolution to take up or an attempt to break some bad habit. Instead, I want to see it as a time when I get more in touch with what's already here in my life and try to see it in a new way. We are a people of routine and rhythm; I hope to spend some time looking at my own routines and rhythms with new eyes, to wonder about how I spend my time and how God may be working in the middle of it all.

Maybe this year nothing drastic will be changing for you as you enter 2012. There will still be the regular board meetings at work, soccer practices to run to, friends to have over for dinner, concerts to attend, emails to check, and some worry lingering around the edges for good measure. In my own life, there is nothing in my foreseeable future that seems to be changing dramatically, other than an onslaught of new courses to take. Yet I hope for all of us that even in the midst of the ordinariness of life, the day in and day out grind of the everyday, that we would find moments to stop and reflect. I choose this year to hope for a new thing: that God will be working in and through the rhythms of my life, refining them and shaping them to bring freedom and peace as I come to terms with the reality of my own experience.

—Kate Sweet

REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Many Reasons to Give Thanks

This is supposed to be the quiet time for Regional Ministers! That's what they told me anyway. Advent and Christmas, and the weeks before and right after Easter are supposed to be the down times for Regional Ministry because so much is happening in the local congregations. Somehow that isn't happening this year. There is activity all around the region. Most of it is Good News!

Our Leadership Team for a new church start is meeting to begin thinking about leadership. Our Transformation Team and Youth Ministries Team are meeting to continue planning for 2012. I'm meeting with Search Committees as they launch the search for new pastoral leadership and as they say goodbye to pastors and plan for the interim time. All of this is good news as our congregations continue to seek new ways of being church.

Some of it isn't such good news. It seems that many of our congregations are struggling with budgets this year; trying to make them balance before the new calendar year begins. Some of these struggles have called for creative thinking and others for tough decisions. As Regional Minister, I try to walk alongside to provide resources and guidance, and most of all, encouragement.

This has certainly not been a quiet season for me. And I know it hasn't been quiet for you as well. Congregations around the region are busy providing shelter for the homeless on these dark, cold winter nights. Others are providing hot meals and welcoming spirits to warm their neighbors' lives. Others are preparing joyous worship services and throwing open the doors to welcome in the strangers who may be seeking a bit of connection and community and a taste of grace in the Christmas story. It's a busy season.

Through it all, I hope you will take time to pause, reflect, and give thanks for the gift that came into the world so long ago and that we celebrate this time of year; the gift of God's love wrapped up in the birth of a child in Palestine and given for all the world. May you find in the gift of Jesus and his ministry a taste of

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REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY - CONT.

hope, peace, joy, and love. May your Spirit be renewed.

And then, may you re-enter the world wherever you are, strengthened and fed to share and be that gift of love in your communities. This is my Christmas prayer this season. For you and for me. By God's grace, may we touch lives with grace.

Blessed to be on this journey with you,

Sandy Messick

Regional Minister

SAVE THE DATE: Regional Assembly 2012

May 18-20, 2012

First Christian Church in Olympia

MUSINGS ON MISSION...

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."

—Mark 16:15

My experience with Disciples in the Northwest is that evangelism almost seems like a dirty word to us. It's what those *other* Christians do—you know, the obnoxious ones. We're too shy to be evangelists. But what we should realize is that the word evangelism comes from Greek roots meaning "good news." If we have good news, we should be willing to share it. In fact, we should be excited to share it! And the good news of Jesus Christ is as good as news gets. As Disciples of Christ, we are called to share the Good News. It is an essential part of our role as Christians. The word gospel, too, means good news, so sharing the Gospel and sharing the Good News are synonyms.

Now every time I visit a new church, I listen to hear what the good news is that is preached and communicated by that church. Is it that the Book Club is meeting Thursday night? Is it that we raised \$483 through the bake sale? Is it that Jesus Christ died for our sins? Is it that our God is a loving God, forgiving, generous, welcoming us home with open arms? Is it that this community welcomes me as a child of God? Is it something else? Or do I even hear good news at all?

MUSINGS ON MISSION... CONT.

To share the good news, we need to be clear within ourselves what the good news is. We need to be able to share it with people who don't know it. In order to do that, we need to be able to share it without using churchy language, or canned speeches. In fact, we're usually best off by remembering the sentence attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." But still, there is a time when talk is necessary.

I go to many churches where the people are very friendly. Churches often use the word *welcoming* to describe themselves. But being welcoming is only half of our responsibility. We also need to be *inviting*. The days when we can say of churches, "If you build it, they'll come" are over. We need to invite people. Invite our friends. Invite new acquaintances. Invite strangers. Invite neighbors. And we need to invite them by communicating good news.

We don't need to go to foreign lands to act as missionaries. We need to recognize that we are living in a post-Christian culture. We can't assume that people we meet have ever heard the good news of Jesus Christ. Sadly, that's often true even for people who grew up Christian. I meet many people who have been wounded by the church, who wear the scars of their childhood encounters with it and want to stay far away. I meet many others who say, "I'm spiritual, but not religious." But there is good news these people are longing to hear. If we don't tell them, who will?

How can we change our church's culture from a culture of reserved politeness to one of sharing and invitation? How can we empower every member of our congregation to know they are called to be witnesses "from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth?" There are plenty of practical answers to these questions, from Bible study and education to having practice sessions in sharing good news with one another. But what is most important is that we ourselves remember the good news we have been given; reflect in gratitude on how much richer and fuller our lives are because of that; and realize that we have the possibility of loving and serving our neighbors by sharing that gift with them.

—Wahhab Baldwin, *Chair Regional Mission Council*

A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

by Sharon Watkins
General Minister and President



O God of infinite creativity . . .

At the beginning of this New Year –
winter for so many – the rich brown earth
is even now preparing to burst forth
with a spring of possibilities and new life.

Though the human eye cannot see it,
you continue to bless the earth
with new beginnings.

We praise you!

Bless us with new beginnings, we pray.

Where we have lost sight of your Reign breaking in –
even now at hand – renew our vision.

Where we have faltered in reaching out
to our neighbor in love, missing the moment
to extend a hand of wholeness,
renew our courage.

Where we have allowed cynicism to dry our bones
and sinews, renew our hope.

At this beginning of a New Year, dear God, our arms are
still warm from cradling the Babe of Bethlehem.

Help us to keep that memory strong.

Strengthen our arms to welcome your many children
into communities of love.

Prepare our hearts to burst forth
with a spring of possibilities and new life.

Stir us to be and share your love with the same
vulnerability, the same humble expectation
that brought you into the world in person.

Help us, your church, your disciples, to be harbingers
of your reign of justice and of peace fully emerged.

O God of infinite creativity, at the beginning
of this New Year, we know that you are about
to do a new thing.

Help us to perceive it. And to join in.

In the name of Jesus, your greatest new beginning, we pray.
Amen.

queen anne christian church (disciples of christ)

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The winds of grace
blow all the time.
All we need to do
is set our sails.

—Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa

We gather for worship
on Sunday at 10am.