

Hilltop Highlights

MARCH 2010

Laurie Rudel, Pastor
Jeremiah Oliver, Editor



Every blade of grass
has its angel
that bends over it
and whispers,
“Grow, grow.”
—The Talmud

WOVEN TOGETHER IN LOVE

Dear Friends,

A little over two years ago our congregation entered into a program called New Beginnings. With the help of consultant Patti Case from Church Extension and Rebecca Hale, Interim Regional Minister, our New Beginnings Team set out on this path in order to get a clear snapshot of our church in that particular time.

Our consultant gathered data, talked with us, explored our building, watched a videotape of our worship service, and delved into finances. When all was said and done we received an extensive report filled with demographic data about our neighborhood and analysis of our situation.

Through four sessions of cottage meetings our New Beginnings Team shared the information from the report with as many folks as possible.

In fall of 2008 we acted on one of the recommendations from the report—clearly identify our core mission and values. Sandy Messick, Interim Pastor for the Sabbatical, walked with us through the process of calling out our core values:

- a heart for children
- a welcoming spirit
- the desire to grow and deepen our faith, and
- an openness to the leading of God.

One year ago in the month of March our Core Values Tasks Groups began to meet. Each group was made

up of active participants and prayer participants. Altogether about fifteen people committed themselves to be active participants in one of the Task Groups.

Since that time the groups have held a combined total of thirty-three meetings. Each group has explored their core value by listening to one another, listening for God, and seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit

About two weeks ago two of the core values task groups met together. It was clear that their paths were converging on some similar activities. In the article *On Our Lenten Journey*, inside this newsletter on page three, you can read the fruits of that discussion:

- an evening coffee & dessert forum on forgiveness led by a Professor of Psychology from Seattle University
- a Sunday potluck and forum on schools in Afghanistan and
- a pancake breakfast to raise funds for schools in Afghanistan.

Each Task Group began with the question: is this truly one of our core values? At this point in time I think we can say yes.

Each Task Group has laid an excellent foundation for our future. I am filled with gratitude for your work and for your love of this community of faith.

Blessings + Peace,

Laurie



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THANK YOU!

- to all the members of Core Values Task Groups who have faithfully met this past year . . . it is a joy!

DID YOU KNOW?

- On Sunday, February 14, we held a baby blessing for Lillian Mei born to Caroly Ho & Tristian Spiceland on December 21, 2009. The family is now back home in Quito, Ecuador. Carolyn will be back in Seattle sometime this summer.
- Toriann Strauss, beloved teacher of our children, returned to Seattle for one Sunday to wish us well. She will on her way to Korea in the next month to work as a teacher.
- Congratulations to Rev. Jan Eckstedt, who served as Intern Pastor at QACC. He has been called to serve as Pastor of Broadway Christian Church in Wichita, Kansas. Jan & Elaine send us their best wishes and hold us in prayer.
- Late last fall the AdMinistry Team, Pastor Laurie, and Barb applied to participate in the nine-day, all expenses paid, Summer Collegium Project in Support of Small Congregations to be held at Virginia Theological Seminary. In early February we learned that out of 175 applications QACC has been chosen to be one of the 24 congregations to participate in the Collegium. Congratulations QACC!
- In 2009 our outreach giving came to \$6,497. In addition to special offerings we give 10% of our weekly offerings to outreach: Queen Anne Helpline, Compass Housing Allinace, Gwinwood Camp and Conference Center, Disciples Mission Fund, and the Church Council of Greater Seattle.
- In 2009 our average worship attendance increased from 37 to 42.

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Tuesday, 2nd – Hally Heiden
Wednesday, 3rd – Karen Bonnevie
Monday, 8th – Kasey Mae Kitchel
Friday, 12th – Hope Strong
Monday, 22nd – Ruth Carpenter
Wednesday, 24th – Jordan Bowles
Wednesday, 31st – Katie Strong

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Deacons: Cheri & Ken Bowles, John Hutchings,
Tom Kirkland

March 7 - The Third Sunday in Lent

Isaiah 55:1-9 and Psalm 63:1-8

Elder: Lori Hutchings

Coffee Hosts: Lydia Scott, Kirklands

March 14 - The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Psalm 32 and Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Elder: Maria Drury

Coffee Hosts: Karen Bonnevie, Towers

March 21 - The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Isaiah 43:16-21 and John 12:1-8

Elder: Devin Kitchel

Coffee Hosts: Vera Baumgartner, Mary
Closson, Edith Stanwood, Joyce
Yoder

March 28 - Palm Sunday

Luke 19:28-40 and Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Elder: Marietta Tower

Coffee Hosts: Dimmers-King, Scamman-
Rudel

Always be on the lookout for the presence of wonder.
— E.B. White, Charlotte's Web



ON OUR LENTEN JOURNEY

Daily Devotional

If you would like a devotional practice during Lent we invite you to join Pastor Laurie in prayer with the book *The Awkward Season: Prayers for Lent* by Pamela C. Hawkins.

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Forum on Forgiveness Wednesday, March 3, 7pm

What does forgiveness look like, feel like? Does forgiveness have a shape? How does one begin to forgive another?

On Wednesday, March 3, at 7pm please join us for a forum and discussion on forgiveness led by Dr. Steen Halling, professor of psychology at Seattle University, to be followed by dessert and coffee.

Dr. Halling has done extensive research into the process of forgiveness and infuses his presentations with compassion and grace. Please invite your family and friends to join you.

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Education Forum on Schools in Afghanistan Sunday, March 14, 11:30am - 12:30pm

Education is a powerful tool for eliminating poverty, oppression and extremism. How can we begin to educate and empower Afghan children, ultimately building bridges of understanding between Afghans and Americans?

Join us for a Potluck Brunch and Educational Forum on Sunday, March 14, after worship. This presentation will be geared toward children.

Please bring salad, bread and cheese, or dessert.

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Pancake Breakfast Saturday, March 20, 8 - 11am

Pancake Breakfast coming soon! On Saturday, March 20, we'll host a pancake breakfast with donations to benefit schools for the children of Afghanistan.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

During the month of March we have two opportunities to help our children, and ourselves, develop the practice of loving their neighbor and engaging in service on behalf of others.



Just to the left you can read more about each opportunity; the potluck and educational forum about schools in Afghanistan and the Pancake Breakfast to raise money to support the local schools.

In addition as you go through the Lenten Season you might want to take some time before your evening meal or before bed to say prayers together as a family. These prayers can be quite simple: *Thank you God for . . .* and each person names one or two things for which they give thanks; or *God, tomorrow I need help with . . .* and each person names an occasion where they would they would like to remember and call upon God's presence.

It is never too early to cultivate love and service. We look forward to growing together in faith.

—Heart for Children Core Values Task Group

IN THE MAIL

Dear Congregation:

We appreciate your donation of \$108.44 to Queen Anne Helpline. Many of our neighbors are experiencing economic difficulties in paying rent and high utility bills and your generous donation will allow us to assist one of these families.

Thank you for your continuous support for the Helpline and the families we serve.

Sincerely,

Donna Hegstrom



WHAT A DIFFERENCE

from the Church of Mary Magdalene newsletter

What do a crossword book, a couple of eggs, a night in a hotel and a bus token have in common? They are each simple reminders that someone cares. They are small indications of being valued. Around Mary's Place, it's the little things that go a long way towards making women feel whole, valued, appreciated and worthy. For some women, coming and participating in Mary's Place is literally the difference between addiction and recovery, brokenness and healing, life and death. The women who come to Mary's Place receive the help and resources they need because of the generous donations provided by our caring community. The donations of time, resources, finances and prayer are what truly make the difference in the lives of the women of Mary's Place.

Imagine the difference preparing her own breakfast makes to a woman's sense of accomplishment. Marie shares that being trusted is rare for homeless women. "Having someone say, 'You are free to cook your own eggs,' that's something you don't get other places." Even the simple task of making breakfast can empower women. In 2009, Mary's Place served 20,968 hot meals, many of which the women themselves had the opportunity to cook.

Imagine the difference a bus token or bus pass can make in a woman's ability to get around to appointments, interviews and even to Mary's Place. Bus tickets are more than just a ride around town. As Sylvia says, "Being able to board with a bus ticket in hand means I am able to board that bus with dignity! We already have enough labels on us, and we are constantly up against discrimination. But having a bus ticket means that I am not seen as just another homeless person looking for a free ride."

Imagine the difference a night in a hotel makes for struggling, homeless mothers. One mother came into Mary's Place explaining that she had spent the last two nights sleeping at the airport. Another woman shared how she and her son stayed up all night at a Denny's Restaurant, just so they could feel safe. Having a clean, safe room where a mother can take her children to sleep can make all the difference. A good night's rest means a mother can focus her energy the next day on finding housing for her family. In 2009, through

generous donations, Mary's Place was able to provide 102 nights of emergency shelter for weary mothers and their children, who otherwise had no place to go.

The list goes on. From volunteers who visit women in the hospital to bring a crossword puzzle and a prayer; to the nurses who volunteer time and talent to bring health and well-being to homeless women; to the donations of new lingerie and clothing; it isn't hard to see that each and every contribution can make a big difference.

ALSO IN THE MAIL

Dear Friends,

When we open our mailboxes this month, we will most likely pull out a few valentines. You yourself will probably send some to family and friends utilizing the US Postal Services, right? Well here at Compass Housing Alliance, we have our own "post office" called the CSO (Client Services Office), and your "valentine" of \$108.44 will help keep it operating at high efficiency—**Thank You!**

But why is a Client Services Office important? Consider these figures: in 2009, between the months of July through December, our mailing services delivered approximately 80,906 pieces of mail. That's around 13,484 a month! If we break down the kinds of mailings we deliver to our clients, in a span of six months we distributed 22,479 important DSHS documents, 2,706 government documents, and 293 voting ballots. Just think—without this important service, 293 American citizens could have possibly lost their chance to vote! Beyond that, clients receive letters from family and friends, which is a key in keeping them connected to their communities.

It takes a lot of people, and a lot of support to run the CSO: **support like you have just shown.** We will keep you up to date on the growth and impact of this, and all Compass Housing Alliance programs. In the meantime we invite you to visit our website, and read the features and client stories in our newsletters.

Thank you again for your partnership—we **couldn't do it without you!!**

Sincerely,

Cindy Jackson, *Development Director*

ELDERS' MEDITATION

A couple years ago my daughter announced that she was buying a peke-a-poo puppy. Soon to be named "Felix," he was a 3 lb. bundle of fluff. Sitting on my lap during the ride home, he didn't behave like a wide-awake puppy. He wasn't curious; didn't wiggle or try to explore. He lay on my knee and once in a while rolled his eyes back so he could see my face. When we arrived at home, our pugs Bosley and Bianca bounded up to greet us. When Felix saw the other dogs, he immediately jumped out of my arms! Squeaking with delight, he bounced all over the room, sniffing, chasing; playing. The other dogs showed him the water bowl and toy box. Then he jumped into one of the bed baskets. The others jumped in with him, and they became the "Three Musketeers." The change in Felix was amazing when he was introduced to his own kind.

Though it's obviously more complicated for humans, we want to be with our "own kind" as well: maybe other Christians, people of similar age, other parents, good friends, conservatives, liberals, etc. During the summer Rev. Sandy Messick was our Pastor at Queen Anne Christian Church, she made frequent use of the words "us" and "them" in one of her sermons. As she spoke, the message became clear: how easy it is to take sides, become judgmental, intolerant, or even consider someone with different views your enemy.

Many years ago I rudely reprimanded an intoxicated person who tried to trick me into giving him money. My father, a recovered alcoholic, was with me, and I can still feel his disappointment in my attitude. I was one of "us"—the righteous.

When my son entered school I experienced the shock of being considered one of "them"—the bad parents. In kindergarten the teacher said "He's the worst child I've had in 30 years." In 3rd grade another Mom called me and said "If I hear one more Philip

story I'm going to scream." In 5th grade the Principal said "Take him back to that doctor and get some medicine that works." A counselor asked me "Was he a 'wanted' child? Was he planned?" A therapist wrote "Mother denies use of alcohol or drugs during pregnancy." A hospital psychiatrist told us "I've never seen behavior this bad in a child who wasn't abused." When another psychiatrist heard about some very nice things Philip had done for others, she said "Hmmm. I wonder where that came from?" as if he couldn't possibly have learned anything good from his parents.

Those years weren't much fun, but I've had to "get over it"—because dwelling on my resentment of these people puts me in another group of "them"—the unforgiving grudge-holders.

If Childhood Bipolar Disorder was recognized 15 years ago, life would have been easier for our family. But we know that God doesn't promise that life will be easy, just that He is always with us on our journey. Psalm 118:1 – Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; His love endures forever.

—Lori Hutchings
February 14, 2010



ALSO MORE IN THE MAIL

Dear Laurie & members of QACC,

Thank you for your generous support of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Northwest Regional Christian Church during 2009. In this season of economic uncertainty when so many individuals and congregations are struggling financially, I especially appreciate your faithful giving to Disciples Mission Fund, the special offerings and the Northwest Region. In particular, I thank you for increasing your gifts to DMF over 2008, 67% of which is returned to the Northwest Region.

As you know, your offerings undergird the work we are doing here in the Northwest as well as throughout the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Your gifts are supporting the work of our missionaries and global mission partners, helping form and nurture new congregations, transforming existing congregations, and providing resources to churches and pastors alike who are in the Search and Call process. And that list barely scratches the surface of all we are doing through your gifts and the gifts of other faithful congregations throughout the region and the denomination.

I look forward to working with you in 2010 as we continue to live into our vision of being a “community of communities,” and “a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.”

Blessings and peace,

Sandy Messick, *Regional Minister*

Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



NEWS FROM OUR REGIONAL CHURCH

Reflections on the Journey...

Rev. Sandy Messick

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

Youth Ministries

One of our named priorities for this year has been ministry to and with the youth of our region. This includes both the camping program and the Regional Youth Council. We have been blessed by wonderful volunteer leadership to make sure our Winter Retreats and Summer Camps are life-giving, faith-full, safe, and enjoyable events for our youth. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find information about the Winter Retreats to be held in March, and later this month we will be training our Camp Directors as they prepare for the summer camping season. These events couldn't happen without faithful, committed volunteers who serve in the planning process, offer leadership as adult sponsors or counselors, or volunteer to direct or keynote our winter retreats and camps. We are also blessed with quality leadership from our youth members on the Regional Youth Council. These 9 high school students give up 3-4 weekends/year in order to plan the Winter Retreats, in addition to the time spent leading the retreats and participating in summer camps. The RYC provides not only an opportunity for high school youth to develop their leadership and ministry skills, but is also a gift for all of us in the region as we receive their leadership and insights.

Even as planning is taking place for 2010 though, longer range work is being done to address our ongoing issues and challenges surrounding camps and retreats. Declining attendance at camps, rising costs, and the challenge of securing and training quality adult leadership has led us to look seriously at how we will do camps in the future. Even more, with the increasing ethnic diversity within the region and within our congregations, we want to ensure a welcoming, hospitable atmosphere that encourages participation from our ethnic congregations. An additional consideration is our relationships with our Regional Campgrounds, Zephyr and Gwinwood. We have a unique situation in the Northwest Region in that our campgrounds are owned not by the region,

but by the congregations within our region. We are aware and sensitive, therefore, that decisions we make regarding the camping program may impact Zephyr and Gwinwood and we are seeking input from their governing boards as we continue to gather information and explore possibilities.

Many ideas have been put forth about different kinds of camps that could be offered that may draw in diverse groups of young people, and it has been exciting to dream about the possibilities. However, one of the main challenges, and one of the next the long range team will have to consider, is how to provide oversight to the Youth Ministries program when our regional budget does not provide resources for a salaried staff person. This is where creative thinking will need to take place as we consider different models for overseeing and structuring the camping and youth programs and consider different ways to financially support this important ministry. I invite your conversation about this Regional Priority, and as always, I covet your prayers for me, for Debbie Little and Dixie Carringer, co-facilitators, and for the rest of the Youth Ministries Team.

Blessings,
Sandy

Community Connections

Here is a sampling of what's going on around our regional Community of Communities. To add your congregation's story to this list, go to the website, www.disciplesnw.org and click on the Connections tab. Please limit your news item to 2-3 sentences.

- Opportunity CC, Spokane Valley – The Holy Spirit has been moving at Opportunity in January as they welcomed 8 new members, celebrated a wedding, baptism, and funeral.
- Country Homes and North Hill, Spokane – It's women against the men as the two congregations work together to fight hunger by collecting canned food for the local food bank. The competition between the genders is happening at both churches and results will be announced Feb. 28.
- First Christian, Kent recently initiated a "new and improved" Welcome Ministry to welcome visitors to worship.

- First Christian, Tacoma enjoyed shared evenings of worship in January with the Orchard Street Church of Christ, celebrating the shared heritage of the Stone-Campbell churches.
- University Christian, Seattle held a Congregational Retreat on Feb. 12-13 at Gwinwood. Noted church transformation coach, Anthony Robinson, was the resource leader.
- First Christian, Longview will celebrate the ministry of pastor Ron Naff on Sunday, Feb. 28 after worship. Ron will be ending his ministry with Longview as the congregation is seeking a New Church planter to start a new Disciples congregation in the community.

Peacemakers Emerging from the Underground:

A Young Adult Peacekeepers Conference

Disciples Peace Fellowship will host its first ever Young Adult Peacekeepers Conference. Held at Community Christian Church in Kansas City on March 11-14, this young adult event will be like no other. Designed with the specific purpose of young adults energizing one another, it will be a hands on "how to" for making lasting change in the work of peace and social justice—lead by young adults themselves. The keynoter is our own Janetta Cravens-Boyd, pastor of University Christian Church, Seattle.

An event that is designed for those 18-30, its leadership is comprised almost exclusively of those under the age of 40. This is not a "come get your name on our mailing list—here is your button—check out our web site—pat on the head because young people are so refreshing" event! DPF is looking for young adults ready to be the church NOW, not just in the future, who want to know the "how to" as well as the "why" and who are willing to spend the weekend formulating a real action plan of their own design.

Registration is \$100—with an early bird cost of \$75 if you register before March 1. More information about the event, including featured speakers and workshop leaders, as well as on-line registration can be found at www.dpfweb.org

GLOBAL MINISTRIES

Faith apart from works is dead. James 2:26

Many groups travel from the US to another part of the world on a mission trip. Some of these groups plan their trip with Global Ministries' People to People Pilgrimages office in order to maximize their spiritual experience as well. One group from Atlanta, GA recently traveled to India. One pilgrim wrote: "One month ago today we were ringing in the New Year sitting half way around the world in the Christian Church of Mungeli, India. Even though the words spoken were unrecognizable Hindi, there were some comfortably familiar sights as I gazed around the sanctuary: wooden pews filled with worshippers, Bibles and hymnals in their hands; the open communion table; a temperamental sound system that worked intermittently, and the cadence of the Lord's Prayer—recognizable even when spoken in a language foreign to my ears. My eyes came to rest upon the wooden cross on the table and I reflected on how this symbol of Christianity had taken on a new meaning for me recently. In learning of the concepts

of vertical and horizontal faith, I have come to look at the cross as a symbolic representation of these two dimensions of faith.

VERTICAL faith is about one's relationship with God; an awareness of God's teachings and his presence in your life.

HORIZONTAL faith is about sharing those vertical discoveries; serving outside our comfort zone; reaching out and touching others with God's love.

TRUE faith needs both components: our love and action (the horizontal piece) is grounded in the love we receive from God (which we discover through the vertical piece). Without the horizontal piece, there is a disconnect between faith and life.

For me, the cross has become a beautiful, visual depiction of vertical and horizontal faith."

Missionary Anil Henry shares this story. He works with the Synodical Board of Health Services of the Church of North India. He serves as Acting Director at Christian Hospital, Mungeli along with his wife, Teresa, as Senior Medical Officer.



Gratitude
is the fairest blossom
which springs
from the soul.
Henry Ward Beecher
We gather for worship
on Sunday at 10am.

