

Hilltop Highlights

NOVEMBER 2011

Laurie Rudel, Pastor
Jeremiah Oliver, Editor



A lack of a daily tonic
of gratitude results
in an anemic soul, which,
in turn, contributes
to a physical sense
of listlessness.
A grateful soul,
on the other hand,
is vibrant and animated
and so permeates your body
with zest and
with an enjoyment
of a life littered
with gifts.

—Edward Hays
Prayer Notes to a Friend

WOVEN TOGETHER IN LOVE

Dear Friends,

About two years ago we purchased a microplane, one of those rasp-like kitchen tools used to finely grate lemon rinds or parmesan cheese or the tender skin of your fingers if you are not careful.

What I love about the microplane grater is the moment when the fragrance is released from the thick skin of the lemon and suddenly the air is filled with a burst of citrus oil. The tiny particles hang in the air, fill my nose with bliss, and gently return to earth to be added to whatever I am cooking. The quote from Edward Hays on this same page has me thinking about gratitude as a sort of zest for of the soul.

For some of us the expression of gratitude can be directly contingent on how our day goes, on the weather, on the flow (or lack thereof) of traffic, on our finances, on the quality of our relationships, on how people have pleased or displeased us, on how we have pleased or displeased ourselves. Unless things are going "right"—whatever that means in the moment—we reserve the right to be ungrateful, to whine, to wish it was otherwise; in short to withhold gratitude for what is good and pleasing.

When we think about gratitude in this way it becomes a surface reality that comes and goes; however, what if we imagined giving thanks as a core reality, as the truest expression of our lives as children of God?

What I have noticed in myself is that I tend to get stuck in ruts of my own making and find myself thinking the same thoughts over and over. I have the same reactions to the same situations

which gets really tiring over the long haul.

Biologically (at least so far as I understand it) we are fully capable of wearing ruts in our brains; the same thoughts travel over the same neural pathways and we get the same results over and over because we never think differently. So it seems to me that in a month with a word like Thanksgiving at the end of it this might be the perfect time to practice a new way of thinking.

What if we began a daily practice of writing down three to five things that bring us joy, things we find to be life-giving?

I wonder if noticing our gratitude could be kind of like a tonic for our brain, a way to appreciate life anew, to jog our minds out of their ruts and into new ways of seeing the world, of loving our neighbor, of finding God in unexpected places like the sudden tang of citrus oil.

I don't know that anything would change but it certainly seems worth a try. I, for one, would love to try out some new ways of thinking and being.

Here's my list from Sunday, October 30: the deep yellow-orange flesh of a butternut squash; a clean kitchen floor; heartfelt hugs from our grandchildren; healing conversation around our dining table; being with you in worship.

Quite a harvest for one day I'd say...care to join me?

Blessings + Peace,

Jawiri



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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Would you know what to do or what supplies to have in your house in case of an earthquake or other emergency?

On **Wednesday, November 16 at 7pm**, JoAnn Jordan from the Seattle Office of Emergency Management will speak to us on that very subject. There will be time for questions after her presentation.

Our goal is to learn some specific steps the church can put into action. We have many children, in different programs, using the church daily and we need to know what supplies to have, how to care for them and keep them safe in the case of an emergency. I'm sure we will learn about our own personal safety and what supplies we need to have in our homes as well.

We need a minimum of 20 people to attend this presentation. There is a sign-up sheet on the table in the narthex.

Looking forward to seeing you on the 16th,
—Vera Baumgartner

HANGING OF THE GREENS

Please join us **Sunday, November 20**, after worship when we will prepare the church for Advent with our annual *Hanging of the Greens*



In addition to hanging the greens we'll be cutting snowflakes to decorate the sanctuary windows.

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Tuesday, 1st - Bernice Evans
Thursday, 3rd - Kaetlin Humphreys
Monday, 7th - Cheri Bowles
Friday, 11th - Matthew Nিকে
Saturday, 12th - Sandy Messick
Monday, 14th - Jeremiah Oliver
Tuesday, 15th - Camille Folweiler
Monday, 21st - Maurice Baumgartner
Thursday, 24th - Valerie Lyson
Saturday, 26th - Nate Sweet

PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

Worship Leader: Kate Sweet

Deacons: John Jewell, John Hutchings, Tom Kirkland

November 6 - The 21st Sunday after Pentecost

Elder: Maria Drury

Pancake Breakfast!

November 13 - The 22nd Sunday after Pentecost

Elder: Devin Kitchel

Coffee Hosts: Peter and Maria Drury, Alina Rossano

November 20 - The Last Sunday after Pentecost

Elder: Valerie Lyson

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

November 27 - The First Sunday of Advent

Elder: Michael Tower

Coffee Hosts: Ruth and John Jewell, Mary Wieneke

Coffee Hosts Next Month

December 4: Vera Baumgartner, Edith Stanwood

December 11: Martha Dimmers and Stephen King, Barb Scamman and Laurie Rudel, Rose Scamman

December 18: Ken and Cheri Bowles, Lori and John Hutchings

THANK YOU!

- Tom Baker, Ken Bowles, Maria Drury, Wayne and Gloria Dykstra all offered Sunday Sharing talks in our season of stewardship reflection.
- Laura Kitchel compiled the new Directory.
- Ken Bowles for his work in our neighborhood and Vera Baumgartner for her work in disaster preparedness.

faithful - hopeful - loving
Share the light

Our fall stewardship emphasis culminates

on **November 6** with our last

Sunday of Sharing

and

Pancake Breakfast.

IN OUR PRAYERS:

- Marian Siem has been admitted to hospice care at home. We offer prayers of comfort for Marian and peace for her family.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Last month Ken Bowles represented the interests of our congregation in a meeting with the City of Seattle and with the developer of the property on the corner of 3rd Avenue W and Galer Street. Our congregation, along with neighbor Dave Rosenblum, will host a **neighborhood meeting** in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, **November 9, at 7pm.**
- Sunday, November 13, will be Wayne and Gloria Dykstra's last Sunday with us before they begin their move to Dublin, Ireland. That morning we will offer a special blessing for this beloved family as they begin a new chapter in their life.
- Tom and Juanita will be away for two weeks in November to visit family in Florida.

ALL CHURCH WORK PARTY

Saturday, November 19, 2011

9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Fifteen members of the *Viva Vocalists Class of Fisher Ensemble Education Group* will join us for a work party at the church on the date above.

This group has been using our church on Monday evenings. They would like to work as partial payment for using the building.

This is an opportunity to get some much needed cleaning done in those neglected "nooks and crannies." It is also a great opportunity to practice our core value of hospitality and community outreach.

Bring a sack lunch and some energy for all or part of the time between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm on the 19th of November. Vera will lead you on what tasks are needed.

All are welcome. See you there!

—Property Upkeep Committee

CHILDREN & YOUTH

On Sunday, October 30, Pastor Laurie offered training for our new Jr. Deacons. We look forward to their contributions in worship.

With the start of Advent on Sunday, November 27, our children and youth will add their voices in worship to read scripture and lead prayers. Younger children will light the Advent candles.



CHOIR SINGING IN NOVEMBER

Along with friends from The Esoterics our choir will sing on Sunday, **November 6 and 20.** Please join us for rehearsal on both these Sunday mornings at 9am. All singers are welcome!



We bring food and hope to our neighbors...because there can be enough for everyone.

Welcome to *Breakfast At Sally's*

The story of one man's incredible journey

When he was homeless, Richard LeMieux frequented the soup kitchen at The Salvation Army of Bremerton. This Corps is part of The Salvation Army Northwest Division serving Washington, Northern Idaho, and Western Montana. At the Bremerton Corps, Richard came to know Major James Baker, the Corps Officer there. He credits Major Baker with saving his life by not only providing food and shelter but also respect and compassion. "From the first time I was there," Richard said of The Salvation Army, "I felt cared about." The Ballard Food Bank is pleased to invite you to hear Richard LeMieux speak about his journey!

Saturday, November 12, 2011

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church

2400 NW 85th Street

Seattle, WA 98117

Bring a donation of shelf stable food for our neighbors in need as your entrance ticket. Gently used clothing donations will be shared with a local clothing bank.

GROWING AND DEEPENING FAITH



As I sit here at my window I am amazed that November is nearly upon us, and with it comes the holiday season. For me November means the end of the school quarter and the completion of way too many papers. But it also means that all too soon will come the holiday rush of shopping, parties and family gatherings.

As we enter into this busy time it is important to take the time to remember this is also a time of waiting and anticipation. It is with that in mind that I would like to offer a gift to you. Well actually two gifts.

Often after the morning's sermon people have questions about the scripture and sermon, therefore **my first gift** will be to lead a sermon discussion on November 13 and 20. The discussion will be held in the library alcove of the fellowship hall during coffee hour for anyone who would like to ask questions or is interested in more information about the scripture.

My second gift is a time of contemplation during the Advent season. This gift will have two sessions and you may choose which ever one fits into your busy schedule. **The first session begins on Sunday, November 27**, the First Sunday of Advent and continues through Advent. I will lead a half hour of quiet prayer from 11:30am to 12 noon. At the beginning of our time in prayer I will offer a short scripture to contemplate and we will take 15 or 20 minutes of silence and 10 to 15 minutes to discuss our insights. **The second session will take place each Wednesday of Advent** beginning November 30 from 10:30am to 12 noon. We will use the same scripture offered on Sunday morning but we will use Lectio Divina to go deeper into the text.

All are welcome to join me on either Sunday after worship or Wednesday morning. If you know someone in the community who would be interested in joining us please extend an invitation.

And now a word about spiritual practices or disciplines. Yes, you are right this is a spiritual infomercial. A spiritual practice is just that, practice. It is taking time to learn how to listen for God and taking the time to see God's work in our lives. A spiritual practice is the art of setting aside our own individual desires and seeking the desires that God has placed in our hearts. It is becoming aware of things that distract us and learning to let them go; as we repeat the practice over time we become more skilled at seeing all that God does in our lives.

One of the goals that I have for this year's internship is to provide the space for all of us will be able to explore

different spiritual practices or disciplines. One reason to present more than one type of discipline is that not everyone will be comfortable with every spiritual practice offered. It doesn't mean that sometime you might not return to a spiritual practice you did not like and try it again; it just means it's not a good fit for you right now.

This season of Advent we will practice two types of spiritual practices; the first one is a modified centering prayer using scripture as the focus point, and the second is Lectio Divina. You are welcome to try out one or both of these practices. You may find you prefer one over the other and that's fine. The idea is that you are taking a little time out of your day or week to listen for the still small voice.

Thanks for listening,

—Ruth Jewell, Intern Pastor

ELDER'S MEDITATION

54 Ways You Can Help the Homeless

(here are a few from the book by Rabbi Charles A. Kroloff)

- Understand who they are
- Educate yourself about them
- Respect them as individuals
- Respond with kindness
- Give clothing
- Give a bag of groceries
- Play with kids in a shelter
- Employ the homeless
- Stand up for the civil rights of the homeless
- Join HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
- Write to organizations
- Contact your government representatives
- Push for state homelessness prevention programs
- Give Welcome Kits (basic necessities for a new home)
- Volunteer at a shelter
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen
- Volunteer your professional talents
- Volunteer your hobbies
- Tutor homeless children
- Publish shelter information
- Enlist community organizations as advocates
- Educate your children about the homeless
- Recruit local businesses
- Create lists of needed donations
- Prepare food and gifts
- Donate admission fees from an event
- Teach about the homeless

—Lori Hutchings

WELCOMING SPIRIT

Reviving the Practice of Hospitality

With the holidays right around the corner, I'm sure many of us are preparing to open our homes to the onslaught of family and friends who are bound to show up on the doorstep. The word *hospitality* conjures up images of these gatherings:

second-helpings, pleasant exchanges, warm fires.

However, lately I've been reading two books, *I Was a Stranger* by Arthur Sutherland and *Making Room* by Christine Pohl, that have challenged me to reconsider my own understanding of hospitality. In the process, I've discovered that the rich tradition of hospitality within Christianity is much deeper than pleasantries exchanged among friends.

Hospitality was an integral aspect of the ancient society in which our faith began. Without the luxury of safe hotels, restaurants, cell phones, and interstates, travelers depended on the hospitality of strangers they would encounter along the way to ensure their safe travel. An offer of physical shelter and food was expected because it would be reciprocated should the traveler someday find him or herself in the position to welcome in a stranger. Because it was so essential, to give and receive hospitality was considered a cardinal virtue. Today, however, to rely on the provision of strangers is often viewed as shameful and only necessary for those who are in the most desperate of situations. It is easy to dismiss this ancient understanding of hospitality in today's fear-filled, fast-paced, consumerist and individualistic society. How, in this time and place, do we begin to consider what it means to embrace authentic hospitality?

Sometimes looking back helps us to see the way forward. Hospitality as a tradition reaches all the way back to our Jewish heritage. A people rescued by God out of slavery and despair and brought wandering through the desert for forty years, the Jews were exhorted by God to remember their own experience of being a stranger when it came to welcoming the outsider. Exodus 23:9 says, "You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." This message was carried through into the Christian tradition.



In the New Testament, the Greek word we translate as hospitality is *philoxenia*. This combines the word *phileo*, which means love for those who are connected by faith or kinship, and the word *xenos*, which means "stranger". Therefore, at the heart of Christian hospitality is a love of and care for the stranger. Furthermore, Christian hospitality took on the distinction of welcoming those who were in the most need and the most unlikely to be able to repay the favor. Caring for the "least of these" included physical needs, but it did not stop there: it also reached deep into the human condition, acknowledging the dignity and common humanity of the outsider. Jesus' greatest commandment reveals to us that loving God means loving our neighbor; just as Christ showed us hospitality when we were once strangers to God, so too we show hospitality to God by caring for the stranger as though they were our closest neighbor (see Matthew 22:34-40, 25:34-36).

Extending genuine grace and care for a stranger is not easy or comfortable; this is especially true in 21st century America, where the stranger evokes fear and expressing need connotes shame. Our ability to offer hospitality, like any other virtue, is something that must be practiced. To begin the practice of hospitality, we must begin with cultivating eyes to *see* the stranger as kin. Pohl says, "Whether or not we can always find room in our houses, welcome begins with dispositions characterized by love and generosity. Hearts can be enlarged by praying that God will give us eyes to see the opportunities around us, and by putting ourselves in places where we are likely to encounter strangers in need of welcome." We must begin to ask ourselves: What does it mean to be a "stranger" in our culture? What does it feel like to be an "outsider"? Who has the "least" in our neighborhood, community, or workplace? And what would it mean to begin to move toward these people, offering them appropriate care with dignity and respect? As we near Thanksgiving, may we consider who is the stranger in our midst, offering them deep hospitality out of the richness of gratitude for what God has already done with delight on our behalf.

—Kate Sweet, Intern Pastor

REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Becoming a Critical Presence

In case you haven't heard, our Global Ministries missionaries, Doug and Liz Searles, will be visiting our region starting in October and lasting through December. Their schedule for Disciple church in the Seattle area is listed below and can be found online at www.disciplesnw.org. We are fortunate to be in partnership with them, and even more fortunate to be ecumenically sharing their visit with our wider family in the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

The mission of Global Ministries is to be a "critical presence" which they define as meeting God's people and creation at the point of deepest need: spiritually, physically, emotionally, and/or economically. Global Ministries does this through our missionaries and mission partners (churches, organizations, and groups) throughout the world. I believe we are blessed and I am grateful for the ministry they are offering on our behalf in God's name.

Even more, I think the idea of being a critical presence is one we can adopt in our own communities and congregations. While many of us are not called to be missionaries to foreign lands, we are called as people of God to be a critical presence in our neighborhoods and communities. We are called to meet God's people at their places of deepest need and be in relational ministry with them in whatever way that may be. To do this, we need to engage with our communities with open eyes ready to see the needs of those around us, open ears ready to hear the stories of those we meet, and open hearts ready to enter into relationship. I know that many of you, and many of our congregations, already know this and are living it out; being God's presence in your communities. May God's light continue to shine in and through each of you.

Blessings,

Sandy Messick, *Regional Minister*

Douglas and Elizabeth Searles began serving a three-year term with the Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland July 1, 2008. This is a joint appointment by the Common Global Ministries Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church (USA). The Searles' will serve as mission workers for church growth and outreach. Their prior service was in China. The Searles will be visiting UCC/DOC Churches in November and December of 2011.

Locations near us:

December 4 - in the AM at University Christian Church, Seattle

December 7 - time TBA at Lake City Christian, Seattle

MUSINGS ON MISSION...

Book Review: Missional Communities

Missional Communities: The Rise of the Post-Congregational Church, by Reggie McNeal (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011)

The idea of missional church has been spreading rapidly, and dozens of books on the topic have been published since the first book by that title published in 1998. The missional church concept is being adopted by Christians of every stripe, from evangelicals to mainliners, from megachurches to house churches. Our Disciples of Christ denomination has made it a priority in many ways. Not only did they offer a learning track on missional church at this year's General Assembly, but they also announced a new ministry called The Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation, and we in the Northwest Region will be one of their first pilot project groups.

The idea of missional church can be understood in the light of Jesus' saying, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." We are a people sent to be the light of the world, and to be the salt of the earth. We are sent to demonstrate and embody God's realm here on earth. We are sent to love God and to love our neighbor. We are sent to bring good news to the poor. We are sent to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.

Many of the books on missional church or missional communities are theological in nature, but this one is not only eminently practical, but it consists largely of inspiring descriptions of missional communities. As the subtitle makes clear, not all of these look like churches in the conventional sense, but all are involved with living the gospel and witnessing in the wider community around them. I found this an exciting book, one that I strongly recommend.

To give you an idea, I will give a summary of Chapter 5: "Mission Houston: Missional Communities for Spiritual Formation and Community Transformation."

Mission Houston is a missional community in Houston, TX. It began four years ago this

MUSINGS ON MISSION: MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

month with a group of 18 people who came together for a three-day retreat. It was based on two ideas—first, that the church needed to be making more of a positive impact in the community beyond its walls, and second, that personal transformation results in and accelerates community transformation. They had two questions: “What is a disciple of Jesus, and how do you make one?” and they ended up putting together a process of deep spiritual formation called *Faithwalking*.

People come because they have met others who have been transformed by this process. It begins with a 3-day retreat, called Faithwalking 101. When that is over, participants are invited to participate in a 26-week small-group experience called Faithwalking 201, which is further supported by weekly conversations with a personal transformation coach. These experiences not only ground participants in spiritual practices of solitude, worship, prayer, fasting, study, confession, giving, and celebration, but also prepare them to join or establish a small missional community that both continues the spiritual formation process and also focuses on community transformation through the group’s contribution to the common good of the city.

Their purpose of these small missional communities is to serve a need or people group for the long haul, not just work on “projects”—to enable the outer community to experience the realm of God coming on earth as it is in heaven. At their meetings, they focus both outwardly, with questions like, “What are the needs? Are we reaching our goals? What things are we measuring? What adjustments need to be made?” and also inwardly, with questions like “Whose story haven’t we heard? Can we do that over a shared meal? Is there any conflict we need to attend to? How are we each holding up under this load?” and “How can we pray for one another?” These communities too have a coach who supports them in their process and makes sure they are accountable, including seeing how each community has decided to develop metrics for measuring its activities and impact. The model that underpins their strategy and process has three components: Radical obedience, which leads to a missional life; a reflective life, where you increasingly co-create the world with God, and authentic community, which leads to shared vision.

In these last four years, Mission Houston has held

fifteen additional retreats with 191 participants, who have given birth to over thirty missional communities, many of them focused on children and their needs. So far, all 30 of these 30 communities are still going.

Social Justice

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

—Micah 6:8

As we contemplate vision and mission, there are a huge number of potential social justice issues that we might choose as our special focus. Picking just one of these and really becoming deeply involved in it creates the possibility not only of having a much greater impact, but also of we ourselves being transformed. Here is just a partial list, excerpted from the book *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World*, by Mae Elise Cannon:

List of Social Justice Issues Abortion • AIDS • Capital Punishment • Child Soldiers • Class Systems • Consumerism • Disaster Relief • Domestic Abuse and Violence • Drugs and Addiction • Environmental Justice • Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide • Female Genital Mutilation • Genocide • Globalization • Health Care • Homelessness • Human Rights • Hunger • Immigration • Incarceration • Microfinance • Physical Disabilities • Poverty • Prostitution • Refugees • Religious Persecution • Sex Trafficking • Slavery • Urban Decay • Water • White Privilege

Frederick Buechner, in his book, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker’s ABC*, says: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

This vocation, or calling by God, is what we need to discern. Looking at the place where our church is located, and seeing which of these issues is a real need, and which touches our hearts and matches our gifts, could lead to a profound engagement in mission that would both change us and change the world, helping to bring about the realm of God.

—Wahhab Baldwin, Chair
Regional Mission Council

GLOBAL MISSIONS: LIVING AND LEARNING IN TURKEY

*Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God,
believe also in me. —John 14:1*

Uskudar American Academy in Uskudar, Turkey is an historic mission school founded by missionaries in 1873 during the Ottoman Empire. Today it is a secular private school that strives to prepare students for a rapidly changing multicultural, multilingual, and religiously diverse world. Missionary Alison Stendahl has been working with the school for a number of years. She reflects: any school is a subset of its surrounding world, where its diverse community members learn to understand one another even in the face of conflict and disagreement. When a community truly and sincerely cares for its members, it can be a nurturing place where one should feel safe. Turkey borders a region caught up in strong social and political forces. The more the region destabilizes, the greater the effects on Turkey as it braces itself for an influx of refugees. We are particularly aware of how immense social pressure can eventually focus people on their differences rather than their commonalities. We focus on those who strive to build bridges of

understanding rather than to construct walls of fear.

Uskudar American Academy has one of the most respected Model United Nations conferences where 500 high school students from various countries come together in a forum to seriously examine the major issues facing this geographic region. Dedicated to preparing students for an increasingly intertwined and complex world, Uskudar American has a strong vision for the future and is also a supportive and caring community. Though the vast number of teachers and students are Muslim, several are also from Christian and Jewish backgrounds. Together this diverse community models how a common vision can give its members energy to strive for a better and more positive future.

We pray for students, who through social service projects, do what they can to help those who have needs beyond their imagining. We pray for teachers who work with the youth, as they explore what it truly means to be a global citizen in today's world.

Alison Stendahl serves the Near East Mission in Istanbul. She works as academic dean and math teacher at Uskudar American Academy

queen anne christian church (disciples of christ)

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Always be
on the lookout
for the presence
of wonder.

E.B. White
Charlotte's Web

We gather for worship
on Sunday at 10am.