



A United Church of Christ/
United Methodist Church
& a LGBTQIA
Welcoming Congregation

UCUP

March Newsletter

2021

.....Lent, Holy Week and Easter.....

We turned the corner to the liturgical season of Lent on Ash Wednesday in the middle of February as we acknowledged our mortality and began our Lenten journey. We are exploring the themes of a book written by Eric Elnes, **Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics and other Wanderers.**

The experience of waking up in the Dark Wood – a place of failure, emptiness, uncertainty, temptation, and loss – is an unavoidable part of being human. But while the Dark Wood is commonly understood as a place to be feared and avoided, it is one of the surest places to meet God and encounter Divine Presence. According to the ancients, spiritual awakening is not something that presents itself in the absence of struggle, but deep in the heart of it. We will continue to explore how God's presence remains with us, providing opportunities for new growth and transformation. On the first Sunday of Lent, we journeyed with Jesus into the wilderness where he was tempted, not by good vs. evil, but by good vs. the good he was meant to do.



A special thank you to Nancy Moffett for gathering the "Dark Woods".

All Sunday worship services are at 10 am.
Holy Week Services are at 6:30pm in the evening.

Lent 2 - 2/28 *Uncertainty can help us let go of our fear of the unknown.*

John 5 - "Do you want to be healed?" Jesus asks the paralyzed man at the pool.

Lent 3 - 3/7 *Thunderstruck moments can offer insight.*

Job 37 - God's Thunder; Mark 4 - Jesus calms a storm

Lent 4 - 3/14 *Getting lost invites us to heighten our awareness.*

Joshua 1:9 - "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Jeremiah 6:16 - This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."

Lent 5 - 3/21 *Emptiness can leave room for new possibilities.*

Psalms 22 - My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.

Palm Sunday - 3/28 *Reaching out to other "misfits" on the journey enriches our experience of life and love as we recognize that God is with us.*

Luke 19 - Jesus enters Jerusalem with his chosen band of misfits.

Maundy Thursday - 4/1 *The Gift of Disappearing - Worship at 6:30pm*

We enter the story of those who knew Jesus. We bring to our worship space, elements for Holy Communion as we remember the Last Supper Jesus spent with his disciples.

Good Friday - 4/2 *Simple worship and prayer at 6:30pm*

Good Friday is a day of mourning for the church as we remember the crucifixion and death of Jesus. We will come together for a time of simple worship and prayer.

Easter Sunday - 4/4 *"Where We Go from Here" From Darkness to Light*

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed! Join our celebration of worship on this Holy Day.

FROM OUR PASTOR

Facebook is reminding me of all of our celebrations from February 2020 - the month before our lives changed - of how we used to gather as a church: the choir singing together, the congregation worshipping in the same pew, Mardi Gras feasting with different kinds of masks, a small group celebrating Win Bjarke's 24th Leap Year Birthday (it's 24.25 this year). How many of us participated in unmasked hugging, not knowing those were the last hugs that we would receive from loved ones at UCUP for a long time. Our lives in the PNW had not yet been impacted by COVID-19.



It will take time to assess what changes in our lives will be lasting and we won't know the answer until we are "out of the woods", so to speak. This year has changed us all in profound, long-lasting ways. The last 12 months we have experienced a pandemic that has taken more than 500,000 lives in the US and 2.5 million in the world; a movement toward being antiracist as we learn how to stand up to white supremacy; increasing awareness of income inequality and access to basic healthcare; and climate change. On top of this, many have had to cope with grief, loss, and anxiety about what the future holds.

Theologian and scholar Soong-Chan Rah, in his book *"Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times"* reminds us of the theological basis of lament from the Book of Lamentations.

- In praying prayers of lament, we sink deeply into the heartbreaking reality of this moment.
- In acknowledging the brokenness – our own and that of others – we cry out to God for relief.
- We pray for and walk with those who are suffering in body, mind and spirit.
- We own our individual and corporate role – by our actions and our failure to act – and offering confession and repentance for our part in the reality of this world's pain and suffering.
- We pray for awareness to see that God is at work, even when we do not perceive it, and pray that we might find a deep well of refreshing water to quench our thirst and nourish our souls.
- We ask God to make us an instrument for God's transforming and healing work in the world.

A popular saying of our Jewish siblings is: *"We survived Pharaoh, we'll survive this too."* Ever since slavery in Egypt, in the face of every calamity and distress, this has been a Jewish motto as a way to draw strength from their faith, and knowing they had survived under insurmountable odds. A good tag line would be the question, *"In what manner will we manage to survive this?"* Our hope, both as individuals and as a faith community, is to not only survive in the face of multiple pandemics, but to demonstrate resilience and flourish. The natural impulse, as it was for our ancestors in the faith, is to return to life as normal (return to Egypt), or whatever we remember as normal. And yet, as people of faith, God is calling us anew - 2 Cor. 17: *"So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"* And this from Phil. 1:6 - *"God, who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."* What treasures will we discover and what blessings will be revealed? What positive changes – on a personal or communal level – will we see? What can we hold onto theologically, even as we realize that life is changing?

I offer this prayer by Rev. Stephen Garnaas Holmes from UnfoldingLight.net:

Beloved, you have not given up on us. Shine your light within us.

Crucified One, you have been here before. Sustain us with your presence.

Give us the wholeheartedness to mourn our brokenness and then to rise and get to work.

Give us the resilience to stay faithful, even in the shadow of evil, to do justice and to love mercy.

Loving One, lead us. Redeem our fear, redirect our despair and revive our spirits.

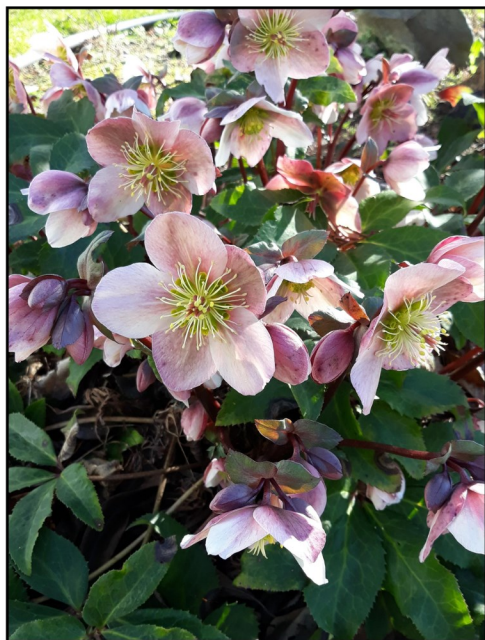
Give us hope and dissatisfaction. Give us strength and patience.

Give us humility and courage. Give us love that will not quit in the face of evil.

Be among us, be with us, be in us.

Faithful God, hold our hearts in yours, and grant us your peace. Amen.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Of Lenten Roses, Snow and Rain

It occurs to me that the Pacific Northwest is a very “Lentey” place to be in the season of Lent. In our front yard, my beautiful hellebore plant is in full bloom. These “Lenten Roses” were completely buried in the February snowstorm, but they emerged relatively unscathed. The green shoots of daffodil and tulip bulbs are popping up, as well, and new buds are evident on the shrubs and trees. The songbirds are plentiful and fun to watch. Meanwhile, the yard is a muddy, puddled mess.

It’s a common scene in late February and March. We find numerous hints of spring, but can’t venture out without fleece, Gore-tex rain jackets, hat, and gloves. Even for seasoned Northwesterners, it can feel like a long and soggy late winter will never yield to a warm and sunny spring. This seasonal slow-down has parallels with the weeks of Lent in our church calendar, and also with the slow progression through the pandemic.

Consider the pace of the pandemic. There are definitely signs of progress and hope. The number of COVID infections is dropping steadily, people are getting vaccinated, and businesses and schools are slowly re-opening. But we just reached a terrible milestone of 500,000 deaths in the U.S. Scheduling vaccinations is challenging for many, and still out-of-reach for the majority. We’re a bit weary of Zoom and would really like to hug a friend. We’re in that in-between place where we see and celebrate progress, but still feel sequestered. It’s raining on our Lenten Roses.

In the church calendar, Lent brings us to a similar in-between place in which we are called to slow down, reflect, and prepare for the good news that is Easter. It doesn’t take much imagination to picture oneself in the dark wood, where surely the skies are grey and the air is damp. Here, too, it’s raining on our Lenten Roses. But the earth smells rich in the woods, and the path, while muddy, entices us to venture further. With a nod to Robert Frost, the woods are lovely, dark and deep, but we have promises to keep, and miles to go before we sleep. We sturdy Northwesterners can travel through these woods – just don the fleece and raincoats and open your senses to the journey.

In Peace,

Marilyn Thompson,
President



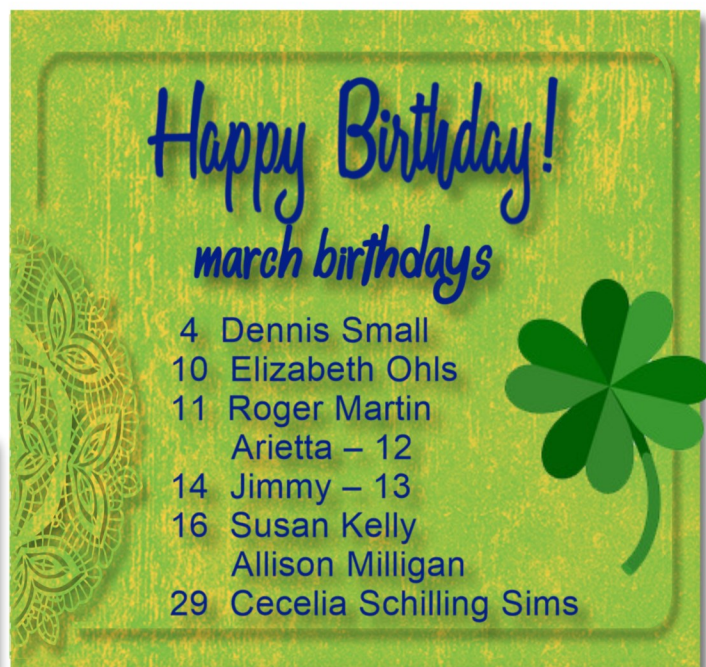


Were you at the ZOOM Fellowship time last Sunday (the 21st) when 'the light' went on for Roger Balcom and he realized that the author of "Gifts of the Dark Wood" by Eric Elmes (the book Pastor Cathy is basing her sermons on) was in pre-school with his little brother. It's surprising what some pre-schoolers grow up to be/do/write! There's still time to hear some of Pastor Cathy's sermons based on this book.

We are so thankful and grateful for all those that pull the Sunday virtual services together - Pastor Cathy, Jeff Andersen, Neva Laurie-Berry, all those who have helped over the months with prayer and scripture readings, and those that continue to teach Church School – all via ZOOM! Get your COVID-19 vaccine shot and continue to wear your mask...and pray for the day we can gather again at United Church on Grandview Drive.

Elizabeth Scherman's son, Sanders, fell during our recent snowy weather and broke his right hand, please keep him in your prayers...pray for improved health for Kathleen Kenna and Laura Balcom's mothers...Leslie Ann Knight and Vic Bodie's 16 year old granddaughter, Grace, having a 2nd surgery on her spine....and a job for Traci's grandson, Ben....we give thanks that 4th grader, Sophia (and others) are having some time back in their classroom, with a teacher and other students.

Take a drive by the 3900 block of Grandview Drive and look for the daffodils that Janet Wicks, Judy Thierry, and crew, planted last year...and maybe drop an item off for My Sister's Pantry.



JOIN US!

SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 10AM FOR OUR LIVE ZOOM WORSHIP SERVICE!



From Faith Action Network:

On Thursday, February 11, Faith Action Network held its Interfaith Action Day. This was an online event. In the morning, we heard from a legislator, we met with our fellow constituents from the 28th district, we attended two, (from a choice of ten) breakout sessions dealing with particular issues, and then we met with our legislators. Attending from United Church were: Cathy Law, Chris Berry, Neva Laurie-Berry, Cathi Cline, Marilyn Thompson, Don Thompson, Roger Martin, and Robert Brown. The six overarching issues that FAN is concerned with include: advocating for a biennial budget that reflects our values, reforming policing and criminal justice systems, creating housing opportunities and preventing homelessness, addressing climate change, protecting immigrants while enhancing civil and human rights for all, and ensuring health care and mental health access for all.

This group, along with others from the 28th district, had constructive conversations with Dan Bronoske, Mari Leavitt, and T'wina Nobles. We feel quite good that all our legislators are supportive of our issues and many of the bills we support will find a successful conclusion.

My thanks to all who participated. I think we made a positive difference. If you wish to follow the FAN agenda, look up online at fanwa.org to see our issues listed with greater detail and bill numbers.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Brown



**Thursday
February 11**

**2021 Interfaith
Advocacy Day**

Folks from the 28th District
participating in Interfaith
Action Day



OGHS and UMCOR Sunday

During the month of March, UCUP will receive a special offering to help fund One Great Hour of Sharing and the United Methodist Committee on Relief. This is a once-a-year special offering that we take to help us all be a presence of compassion and assistance in a world torn by disasters, poverty, climate change and violence. Those who are severely impacted by these things need our help, our love, and our prayers. This church has always been generous with all of this and I know we will continue to do so. But on this special Sunday, we have an opportunity to give financially as generously as we can in order that the assistance needed can reach those who need it most. Especially with climate change causing more severe natural disasters, such as the extreme cold and snow across southern states last week, this offering is more necessary than ever. Thank you all.

Cathi Cline
for Peace and Justice Committee



Total Clients Served Since COVID-19 Closure

December Dashboard Numbers

December

Total Unduplicated Clients Numbers - 332

Employment Services - Total Clients: 67

CHEER (0), CSF (58), LEP (5), Employment (3), Project Nightingale (5)

Advocacy Services - Total Clients: 66

Advocacy (57), Civil Legal (7), Case Closed (0), CLASA (13), COBC (0), Criminal Justice Advocacy (2), Emergency Financial Services (14), Housing Assistance (1), Immigration Assistance (16), Legal Process (0), Medical Advocacy (1), Legal Advocacy (2), All Therapy Session (66)

Immigration Services: Total Clients: 214

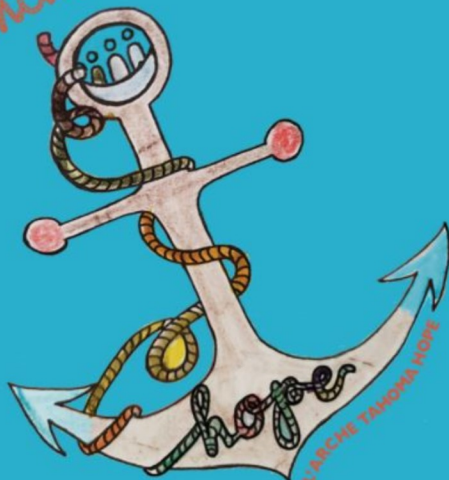
New Applications Submitted (26), Citizenship Class (14), US Citizens (0), Other (174)

Education Services - Total Clients: 120

Enrolled in ABE/ELA Classes (34), Technical computer support, connectivity and one-on-one student meetings (86)

Anchored in Hope: L'Arche's Annual Auction

Anchored In



GET ONBOARD
with
L'ARCHE

March 6th, 2021

SAVE THE DATE

and

Join Our Virtual Auction
Live stream begins at 5:30

Questions? Contact us at auction@larchetahomahope.org or (253) 535-3178.

Our Bishop of Greater Northwest Episcopal Office of the United Methodist Church Announces Retirement



On Epiphany, I requested voluntary retirement as a bishop in The United Methodist Church, effective December 31, 2021. It seems too early to announce my retirement long before it arrives, but the many steps that proceed the assignment of a new bishop demand it. This is truer this year, with denominational strife, the ongoing pandemic, and the financial consequences of each creating additional uncertainty for our United Methodist connection. While I regret that my retirement may add to the burden of others, I am convinced that this is the right time and the right action for me personally. I will continue to work diligently with conference leaders through the year to prepare for whatever and whoever comes next. And I trust that God continues to move in the hearts of the faithful to raise up leaders for the next stage of the journey.

With gratitude and hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elaine JW Stanovsky".

Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky

{ UCC Annual Meeting & UMC Annual Conference Dates }

PNCUCC ANNUAL MEETING 2021

April 30th - May 2nd, 2021 (virtual event)



Our theme will be Rooted in Love, same as this year's national UCC General Synod. We will have time to explore the ways we're rooted in love, and how that can ground and inspire us as we continue to live into all that God has in store for us. Pre-meeting video content will be shared in the weeks leading up to our virtual gathering to help folks prepare, and to ensure that our zoom time is fruitful, connective, and helps deepen relationships without having to be in zoom meetings for entire days.

GREATER NW ANNUAL CONFERENCE

2021 June 20-24, 2021 (virtual event)

General Conference will be held Aug. 29 – Sep. 6, 2022. The Council of Bishops called for a special online General Conference session on May 8, for the sole purpose of allowing the use of paper ballots for delegates to act upon 12 amendments to the Book of Discipline that would enable the church to effectively continue its work until the postponed 2020 General Conference is held in 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a pause in a process of separating one United Methodist Church into two or more church bodies, based on theology and human sexuality. We cannot wait forever to release the tension that currently distracts our attention and compromises our effectiveness," Stanovsky said. "With the shifts in denominational decision-making timelines, it's crucial that Alaska, Oregon-Idaho and Pacific Northwest Conferences meet this summer to listen to God and to each other as we carry out the important work of our mission and ministry.



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No matter who you are,
Or where you are on life's journey, **you're**
Welcome here.