



**FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL**
United Church of Christ - Portland

The Pilgrim

August - September 2018 Vol. XXV, Issue 4
A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION



*"See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness
and streams in the wasteland." - Isaiah 43:19*

Beloved,

God is doing a new thing among us at First Congregational UCC! Do we see it? Let's keep our hearts open so that we can glimpse the work of the Holy One. I'm excited at all that we will discover together.

As I did last year during Rev. Michael's parental leave, I am again serving this summer as Acting Senior Minister of our church. Many of you have stepped up in big and small ways to offer your time, talent and prayers to support our church in this time of change and transition....thank you.

This fall as we head back to school and work, we are invited to join together in a new way as church. Led by our Hospitality Core Ministry Facilitator, Karen Hurst, we will be gathering in small groups for a meal and intentional, spirit-led conversation in each other's homes. Many of you have asked me about these groups. No, these gatherings are not a visioning project or a social club or even a revival of our old clusters.

These gatherings are something new: a chance to experience listening to each other deeply in a Spirit-filled, Spirit-focused way. I hope that each one of us is able to participate in this opportunity to glimpse the "new thing" that God is doing among us.

Times of change and transition require us to show up with our best selves, face our fears, and trust God to provide for us. I know this isn't easy, and yet I am also confident, that the One who began a good work among us will continue to lead us on.

In faith,

Rev. Elizabeth

MODERATOR NOTE

Sarah Vazquez



Friends and family,

My family has been traveling for the past few weeks and it is just so good to be home. Home meaning, here with you. In my recent travels, the message in Philippians that He who began a good work in me, in you, in us will be faithful to complete it,

was made abundantly clear:

From backpacking in the Wallowas, to an unplanned trip to be with my mother who is undergoing treatment for a rare sarcoma, the very God who was climbing those mountains with me and in the valley of cancer and the unknowns created those sheer granite cliffs and stunning open meadows. Expanse open meadows with Pearly Everlastings, a flowering perennial hugging the trails. Pearly everlasting--He began a good work and it is everlasting--he is yet at work. In our hearts, our bodies, and our circumstances. His work is spectacular, majestic, thorough, and sometimes a little rough around the edges what with our impatience and incessant need of grace. But, his work is always on time and it is always our sustenance, that which is just what we need.

He will be faithful. And because of His faithfulness, I have good news:

In the months since Reverend Ellick's resignation, your Council has been hard at work planning and discerning for the future of this church. In our last update, we mentioned the start of the interim search process and your search committee comprised of myself, Anne Sullivan, Peace Young, Paris Hancock, and Cath Clark has found you an interim to join us in our search for a settled minister.

Reverend Dr. Janet Parker is delighted to serve First UCC as its Interim Minister and is excited about accompanying the congregation during its transitional period. Rev. Janet comes to us from a neighboring downtown faith community, St. James Lutheran Church, where she served as Interim Minister. Prior to that, she served as the Senior

Minister of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Salem, Oregon. Prior to that, she served as an Associate Minister for Parish Life at Rock Spring Congregational United Church of Christ in Arlington, Virginia. A native Floridian, Reverend Parker has lived most of her life on the East Coast but since her relocation to Oregon in 2013, she has loved discovering the beauty, wildness and weirdness of the Pacific Northwest and the Portland area!

Reverend Parker's education included seminary training at Princeton Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in Christian Ethics from Union Theological Seminary in New York in 2001. She also served as a Volunteer in Mission with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in Taiwan, teaching English for a year between college and seminary. Other way stations on her vocational journey included serving as Coordinator of 9/11 Disaster Relief for the New York City Presbytery, and two years as Assistant Professor of Religion and Society at Chicago Theological Seminary. Reverend Parker loves walking alongside people on their faith journeys and helping people connect with God, community and the natural world. A once and future dog-owner, she is always happy to meet people's canine kids. When not in church, you might find Reverend Parker walking, hiking, birding, catching a movie, or simply enjoying a good meal with her wife, Robyn Hartwig, and their good friends.

Some of Reverend Parker's passions include bringing people together to address human injustices such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and ALL the -isms... who better to lead us in Reverend Michael Ellick's wake?

Reverend Parker's contract has been completed and she will join us on September 1st, where she'll be introduced during worship on September 2nd. After the service, she'll be with us in the fellowship hall for greetings and refreshments.

She will preach on September 9th, our Welcome Back Sunday and she is thrilled to begin working with us. I am honored to be announcing her future arrival.

He who began a good work, He's faithful.

Thank you for your patience, prayers, emails, offers to help in many ways, shapes and forms. A special token of gratitude to the interim search committee who worked through the summer, with particular thanks to your treasurer Cath Clark who has worked tirelessly behind the scenes with our business manager Cara Rothe and Reverend Parker to create and finalize the interim contract process.

Blessing, Love, and Light,

Sarah Vazquez

Moderator

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

“SUMMER OF SHARING”

A big thank you to all of our church members who volunteered to spend time with our children ages 4 to 12 this summer! You shared your passions and gifts with our children: planting flowers, learning about indigenous religious traditions, building paper airplanes, making prayer beads, creating art and more! We are so grateful to all those who shared. Thank you to: Sandy Hill, Jack Allman, Paris Hancock, Dean Sigler, Tim Pollard, Karen Horn, Karen Hurst... and our regulars Anne Sullivan, Daniel Hunter, and Eileen Deerdock for all your time with our beloved, curious kids. A special thanks to Rev. Amanda Guthrie, who recruited volunteers and managed our program this summer!



Fun in Hawaii!



Youth Group in Bandon, Oregon

YOUTH GROUP SUMMER ADVENTURES

Our youth group had a busy summer! In June, high school seniors Brendan Sullivan and Macey Minor, accompanied by Annie Tarter, our Teen Ministry Coordinator, attended Western Regional Youth Event in Honolulu, Hawaii. Over 400 youth from United Church of Christ congregations in the western United States gathered in Honolulu for four days of worship, learning and service. Look for a report from our youth in the next issue of the Pilgrim.



Sierra Service Project



More fun in Hawaii!

Our youth group also partnered with Parkrose Community UCC under the leadership of their Director of Christian Education, Erica Martin. In mid-July we had a lock-in adventure in East County: first we volunteered at SnowCap, a non-profit that provides food and resources to neighbors experiencing hardship, then we headed back to Parkrose UCC for pizza, games (“four nouns” is awesome!) and a movie. In the morning we drove out to The Wreck of Peter Iredale (near Warrenton) and volunteered by doing some marine debris monitoring, a community project that helps scientists observe and respond to the impacts of climate change and human behavior on our environment.

In mid-August, we joined Parkrose UCC again for a crazy road trip to Bandon in Southern Oregon, where we volunteered with Washed Ashore, an organization that builds and exhibits powerful art to educate the public about plastic pollution in oceans and spark positive changes in consumer habits. We camped at the KOA Campground in Bandon and discovered just how many humans + camping gear + snacks will fit into Rev. Elizabeth's van. Shout out to Annie Tarter for chaperoning our group on this exhausting, whirlwind weekend!

Of course, no summer at First Congregational would be complete without a term of service with Sierra Service Project. Rev. Elizabeth and three of our youth/young adults (Christina Hellums, Vanessa Hellums and Eli Gavilanes) spent a week doing home construction, battling the yellow jackets, and sharing in sacred conversation with 70 other youth on the Spokane Indian Reservation in Wellpinit, Washington. Look for a report from our youth in our next newsletter.

THANK YOU for all your support of our FCC youth group. We look forward to more adventures this coming fall!

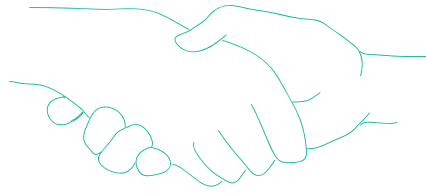
JOY IN THE LIFE IN OUR CHURCH



♦ Ruth Abbott and Patrick Fitzgerald share the happy news that their daughter, Elizabeth Fitzgerald was married to Joshua Hoppner on May 18, 2018 in Louisville, Kentucky. Liz and Josh make their home in Lexington, Kentucky. Matron of Honor was Samantha Keller Brevig. Fun fact - Liz and Sam became friends in our Sunday pre-school classrooms."

♦ Bruce & Jude Bishop celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on August 3! They were married in Mayflower Congregational Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Do you have a special occasion in the life of your family? We'd love to celebrate with you! Send your joys to communications@uccportland.org for inclusion in our next newsletter.



COMMUNITY CORE MINISTRY

SoulBox Project: We'll Take Sunday



Leslie Lee, founder of The Soul Box Project, returned to thank us for our commitment on Sunday, August 12.

Help us hold space for the 100 people who are killed or injured by guns every Sunday.

Yes, every day over 100 people are shot in the U.S. With a new commitment to The Soul Box Project, our congregation will take the time to remember and make visible the people who are shot every Sunday. We could have chosen any day of the week, but committing to fold 100 origami Boxes each week gives us a tangible goal and a small action we can take towards gun sense.

The Soul Box Project is a national community art project raising awareness of the U.S. gunfire epidemic by counting and honoring victims. The Project is collecting one hand-folded paper box – a Soul Box – for every person killed or injured by gunfire in the U.S. since 2014. Our congregation was instrumental at the beginning of the project, contributing around 1,500 Soul Boxes last winter. The total count of Soul Boxes is now over 15,000!

On February 15, 2019, the Project will fill the gallery of the Oregon State Capitol with 36,000 Soul Boxes – one for every person shot in the U.S. in a year. We're going to be a part of the push to fold those Soul Boxes with our new program.

SoulBox Project: We'll Take Sunday



Examples of finished SoulBoxes

100 Soul Boxes! Every Week?

Yes. That's 100 Soul Boxes total, as a congregation. For the next several months, we'll have everything you need to make Soul Boxes available during Fellowship Hour – pre-cut paper, art supplies, folding instructions.

You're welcome to fold after worship and at home or with friends, as well. Bring your Boxes to church and we'll watch a our new Soul Box display grow in the sanctuary.

Eve's Circle will hold a Soul Box-making gathering on Saturday morning, September 22 at 10am in the Fellowship Hour, to kick off the 2018-2019 season. Any other church groups are welcome to hold their own events. (Kids can fold, too!)

We'll Take Sunday is part of the new national effort for faith communities, We'll Take the Sabbath.

The Soul Box Project envisions a society where all people living in the U.S. are empowered to choose actions regarding gun use that reflect their values, priorities and beliefs so that we can live in safe communities, talk to resolve conflicts, have schools focus on learning, gather to worship in peace, and that foster trust and unity. www.soulboxproject.org

If you'd like to share this program with another congregation – or know anything else about The Soul Box Proejct, please contact Nanci Tangeman (Nanci@nancitangeman.com) or Cheryl Clevenger (clevenger2508@comcast.net).

More Than Books

There's a cozy room off the Fellowship Hall where many of us come together to meet, to pray, to play, to visit. The mantle usually has greenery or a holiday decoration. All around are books, logically organized and attractively arranged to encourage us to open them up and read.

It's easy to take for granted this room that alternates between quiet retreat and center of ideas. But it doesn't exist in its present state without a lot of dedication and management.

That dedication and management come from Carol Lynch, our church librarian. Ask her to show you around and you'll see the library with new eyes. For one thing, the books here are carefully curated. Other than one shelf of first editions with significant historical value to the church, if a book hasn't been checked out for some time, it's removed from the collection and donated.

Not surprisingly, there's a religious reference section— with a Koran, Santa Biblia in Spanish, the Jerusalem Bible and many other books. But there is also a section on Aging and Dying. There's a shelf dedicated to Politics and Religion and another with Self Help books. Jesus has his own section, as do Biblical History and Geography, Science and Religion, LGBTQ issues and Cooking. One shelf has Oregon History and books about Portland. There's an entire corner dedicated to children. For the past five or so years, Carol has tended the stacks, keeping them relevant, as well as dust-free. She's promoted the library during Fellowship Hour and hosted book signings for at least two of our church's own authors – Batya Podos and Don Sevetson.

Carol and her husband, Frank, have put a lot of time and energy into the library. Now it's time to find a new librarian.

If you think you'd like to be more involved and take the library into its next phase, please contact Carol for more information, email cwlynch47@gmail.com.



Carol Lynch in the Library



HOSPITALITY CORE MINISTRY

YOU ARE INVITED!

It is a time of transition at First Congregational UCC. In the coming months we will, as a church family, miss Michael's presence, embrace Elizabeth's leadership, welcome an interim senior minister, commission a search committee, begin to envision what skills and passions we will seek in a new pastor, and--most importantly--continue to support each other in the work we are called to do in this time and place as a committed church community.

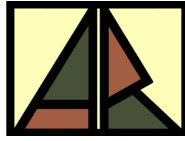
That is a lot!

But we are a church family, and together we will do all of these things well. One of the things we are being invited to do together to facilitate this time of change is to gather in small groups. We will share food, fellowship, and sacred conversation focused on this time of transition and our visions for the future of our church. We hope that, for every single one of us, it will be a time of sharing, learning, getting to know each other better, and knowing that we are part of a wonderful whole.

Perhaps you have seen and already responded to the e-mailed invitation by choosing a date when you will gather with others for dinner or tea and good sharing. If you haven't, it's not too late--you only need to RSVP on the link below or on an RSVP form on the Pencil Table at church. Our goal is 100% church family participation, so please plan to participate! Church family households have offered to host gatherings of 8-14 people; hosts will provide a main dish and others will bring the rest of the meal; children are welcome; we'll make sure that everyone can get to where they will be going; special needs regarding foods, mobility, or anything else will be accommodated as best we can.

The gatherings will be delicious, interesting, and fun! Your planning team looks forward to hearing from every one of you!

Karen Hurst, Hospitality Core Ministry Facilitator



ArtReach Gallery presents:

DISRUPTIONS

CAROLA PENN

August 5 - September 23, 2018



Carola Penn | Max Yellow Line

CURATOR'S EVENT

Saturday, September 8, 2018

10:00 AM - Noon

- ✦ Have you ever been disrupted by your Iphone?
- ✦ Are there other disruptions that come to you?
- ✦ What disruptions do you see the artist referring to in this exhibition?
- ✦ Do you know what to do with these social issues?

Join artist Carola Penn, curator Sheldon Hurst, and Elizabeth Durant, Minister at First Congregational UCC in reflection and discussion on DISRUPTION in our lives today.

Morning refreshments will be served.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rev. Elizabeth Durant, **Acting Senior Minister**

1126 SW Park Ave. Portland, OR 97205

Phone: (503) 228-7219 Website: uccportland.org

Email: first@uccportland.org

*Follow us on social media for event updates, news of our spiritual community,
and more. Find us on instagram, twitter and facebook (@uccportland)*