

# The Pilgrim

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*"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment."*

*— Philippians 1:9-10*

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Dear Friends,

As Heraclitus said, "you can't step into the same river twice," and this is all the more true for communities of faith in 2018. Both the gospel and basic science remind us that we are always dying and always being born again, and thus the possibilities for new life and new becoming must always be explored with fresh eyes and fresh ears. What is the Still-Speaking God saying to us now? I have been serving First Congregational Church as Senior Minister since November 1, 2014 —just over three years. The world has changed a lot since I started; the church has changed and I have changed, too. Inevitably, what it is

we are all called to do and be must be re-examined.

Along with our Church Council, Rev. Elizabeth Durant and I are exploring a new church-wide discernment process, a kind of strategic visioning for the road ahead. My parish-minister mentors told me that the three-year mark is a good time for senior ministers to do this, and as it happens, this coincides with my own evaluation process (as scheduled by our church bylaws). Collectively, this means that part of 2018 is a year of deep thinking and dreaming as a church family. And because we are a "Priesthood of All Believers," we won't just be asking what the church is called to do and be, we will asking what *each of you*— our congregants and our staff— are called to "live into" as part of our spiritual community. Following our January Council meeting, we're setting up a working group to help design this process, and we're currently reaching out to potential volunteers to help lead it. If you would like to be part of this work team to help create and lead a church-wide mutual discernment process, please reach out to our Church Moderator, Sarah Vasquez (sarahbellur@gmail.com).

Such work calls for the deepest kind of spiritual practice. UCC Minister Donna Schaper always likes to say, "action proceeds reflection," which is another way of saying that sometimes we learn best by doing: some of this will happen quietly and personally, and some will happen through our shared work in the world. In the coming year, our various threads of service and public witness will be woven together in support of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival (poorpeoplescampaign.org), and it's our hope that this, too, will begin as a kind of public discernment process: If all budgets are moral documents, we'll be asking our city, state, and national officials what our current budgets say about us. What is the state of the American Dream in 2018? Is it still available to the poor, the tired, and the huddled masses? Or, like a game of Monopoly, are all the resources are designed to drift into the hands of a very few players, where clear winners and losers emerge over time? This national campaign leads us back to the deepest teachings of Jesus, who reminds us that the timeless truths of God could not be separated from questions of how we live our lives in community.

In this time of multilayered spiritual questioning, I am reminded of Detroit activist and intellectual Grace Lee Boggs (now deceased), who always used to ask her students, "What time is it on the clock of the world?" This was her code for, "What does the world need us to do?" or, "What is it that we are now called to be?" These questions are all the more pressing for disciples of the Gospel, and I look forward to searching for the answers together.

*In faith,*  
Rev. Michael Ellick

# Moderator Note

*Sarah Vazquez*



Dear Friends,

Thank you for welcoming me in to my role as moderator for our church council in 2018. I'm deeply grateful for the individuals who have been elected to council and have volunteered their time and hearts in service with me.

Though this is my first term on council, I feel as though I have been serving much longer, thanks to the help of past moderators and other council members. In picking up where Peace Young left off, we've started this new year with much momentum and positive energy.

Personally, this year feels a little different than last—socially, we are on the precipice of a global cultural shift; I believe that it depends on us to remain awake, engaged, and impassioned in order for that shift to turn toward a more just society, rather than one poisoned by greed and selfishness.

As a church council who recognizes the need for action, accountability, and a common vision, we will be spending some time updating our council meeting structure and group consensus model in order to for us to be more effective leaders. We will then begin to lay the groundwork and set the sails for the direction that we as a church choose to navigate in the forthcoming months.

**So, where are we headed?** We recently held our first church council meeting of the year where we spent some time discussing how to plan and design a congregation-wide strategic visioning process, and three-year evaluation of Rev. Michael Ellick's role as Senior Minister.

We see this as a two-part process, beginning with us as a community arriving at a common church vision to include: who we are now, who we want to be, and what we want to live into. Then, this shared church vision and/or behavioral covenant (read: compassion

Our visioning process will begin promptly. We will have a Common Vision sub-committee to include a key coordinator, at least one council member, both Rev. Ellick and Rev. Elizabeth Durant, the Senior Minister PRC, and potentially our core ministry facilitators. Council has recommended names of individuals to fill the key coordinator position. Our ministers will reach out to these individuals and arrive at a consensus for a coordinator to lead the visioning process.

If you have suggestions of individuals to join the sub-committee or lead this evaluation process, please email me at [moderator@uccportland.org](mailto:moderator@uccportland.org)!

For those who do not feel called to participate in the modeling and planning of the visioning process, please pray for your leadership team as we spend time in great discernment, preparing to support our church in the setting of our moral compass.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have comments, concerns, and/or questions regarding the life of our church. I will be giving a moderator update on the third Sunday of each month during the service in order to continue our transparent and open communication.

I so look forward to traversing this year with all of you!

*Leaning in,*  
*Sarah Vazquez*



## Celebrating (with) our Children & Youth!

Our children had a wonderful holiday season: baking and frosting cookies, walking the candle-light Advent spiral together (thank you, Paris Hancock!), and joyfully performing our Posada play. Our posada play this year was led by our youth group and focused on building welcome within our city, community and world. The innkeepers held signs that read “Make Judea Great Again” and “Bethlehem First!”, and the last inn was blocked by a wall (made of cardboard bricks) which the children exuberantly knocked down to welcome Mary and Joseph and declare “All people are welcome! Bethlehem is for Everyone!”. Afterwards we enjoyed delicious tamales made by our families, thanks to the generous hospitality and hard work of the Gavilanes and Rosete families.







During Advent this year, a different family in the congregation lit the Advent wreath and our children were invited to reflect on how we bring hope, faith, joy and peace into our lives today. We also shared a special Advent devotional book as a resource for parents and families. Our Godly Play stories included two new ones written by Maggidah Batya Podos about The Wise Ones and the Holy Family's Flight into Egypt. We remain deeply grateful for our Godly Play teachers: Anne Sullivan, Rev. Amanda Guthrie, Chris Clark, Daniel Hunter and Eileen Deerdock. We celebrated Christmas Eve morning with regular Sunday worship at church. While the snow fell outside, we had an "Instant Christmas Pageant" telling of the nativity story in Luke, with everyone playing a part in the story.

We rang in the New Year with "star words" which the children distributed to the congregation on Epiphany Sunday. Our Godly Play stories until Lent will focus on those boldly called by God: Samuel, Jonah, Esther, and Elijah. Youth group continues to meet twice a month (see our website for a list of events). In January, Rev. Amanda Guthrie and Michael Overman led youth group on an outing to the Chinese Garden, while Rev. Elizabeth taught youth group in the Kiva (silly props and superhero fun). We'll be serving at Hard Times Supper in early February, and doing a lock-in with youth from Cedar Hills UCC and Vancouver UCC in March.



**We invite all parents to a gathering before church on Sunday, February 25th in the church library (see calendar for details). Thank you for celebrating, nurturing and supporting our children, youth and families!**

*Peace,  
Rev. Elizabeth Durant*

# Meet & Greet

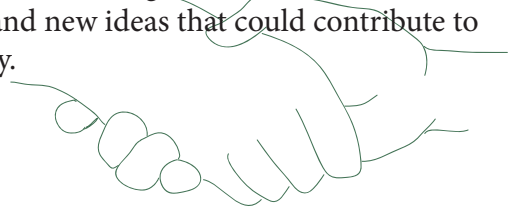
## *Introducing our new Core Ministry Facilitators*

Our calling is to live into the kingdom of God by cultivating community, practicing hospitality, and publicly demonstrating and advancing God's peace. Thanks to Alice Forsythe, Karen Hurst and Nanci Tangeman for stepping into their roles as this year's Core Ministry Facilitators and helping build our spiritual life!



### Alice Forsythe

Alice Forsythe first walked through the doors of First Congregational Church some seven years ago in response to the social justice message of the wider FCC. Eventually became active in the wider mission of the Church participating in a variety of activities, beginning with the Social Justice committee. Most recently, she is a member of the Justice and Witness Committee. Alice is honored to serve, to continue and build upon the excellent service of her predecessors, most recently Stephanie Mullen. She looks forward to facilitating the current actions of our church as well as help others develop brand new ideas that could contribute to FCC's positive impact on our community.



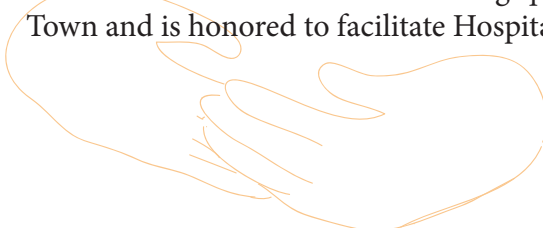
### Nanci Tangeman

Nanci Tangeman is a freelance writer working with organizations that are doing good things in the world. She is active in The Soul Box Project and the Executive Women's Golf Association and is a neighborhood emergency team (NET) member. In addition, she blogs at [myyearinmuseums.blog](http://myyearinmuseums.blog). Prior to coming to First Congregational, she and her husband lived in the UK, Uzbekistan, the Netherlands and Switzerland.



### Karen Hurst

Karen is a retired language teacher for whom the classroom and the church have been her primary communities. It is in these places that she sees connections and understandings being built and nurtured in ways that shape both us and the world we inhabit. She volunteers in a sewing/quilting class at the Maybelle Center in Old Town and is honored to facilitate Hospitality this year at First Congregational.





# Life in Our Church

## Eve's Circle's Year (So far)

With Elaine Molskness at the helm and plenty of helpers to plan programs, Eve's Circle has had a little bit of everything this year: henna painting on hands, hosted by Ruth Abbott; a tour of the Jewish History Museum hosted by Nanci Tangeman; a tour of the Wyeth exhibit led by Elaine Molskness; a presentation of Mary Maxwell's story quilts and a screening of *Lady Valor: The Kirsten Beck Story* about a transgender Navy SEAL, hosted by Judy Bishop.



In between, Eve's Circle managed to collect almost 500 pieces of underwear, socks, mittens and hats for area social services during their annual Undies the Tree drive.

If you're interested in joining in on the fun – or the work – Eve's Circle usually meets the fourth Saturday of each month, from 10am – noon in the Fellowship Hall. Watch the church media or stop by the pencil

table during fellowship hour each week to find out what's next. If you think a group of interesting women of all ages is your kind of crowd, join us!

Here's what's in store for the rest of the year:

February 24 - Revisit our 2017 retreat with a return to the Desert Mothers. Margaret Baldwin will continue the discussion. The discussions will be interesting whether you attended the retreat or not.

March 24 - One of our most popular annual events, Eve's Reads, brings booklovers together to share what they've loved – or not – on the shelves over the past year. Lou Severson hosts the discussion.

April 28 – Jan Holt, artist and docent at the Portland Art Museum, will discuss, demonstrate and give us a hands-on experience in printmaking. \$5/person, hosted by Elaine Molskness.

May 19 – Annual Women's Retreat hosted by Eve's Circle.

June 23 – Let's talk books again with Julie Wallace of Wallace Books in Sellwood, hosted by Sandy Hill

July 28 – Planning for the upcoming year's programs

## Women's Retreat Planned for May 19

Mark your calendars! The 2018 Women's Retreat at Camp Adams will be May 19. We'll have a full day's schedule of learning and reflecting (led by Pastor Elizabeth), sharing, socializing, eating (three meals), exploring, and seeing the Holy in all that we do and are.

While the programming is only on Saturday, participants are welcome to arrive Friday afternoon and/or stay until Sunday morning. Carpools for those traveling on Saturday will be arranged for all who want or need to travel with someone.

Details and registration will be forthcoming, but all church women should mark their calendars now and plan to attend. Especially those of you who have not yet been to Camp Adams or participated in a retreat led by Elizabeth will not want to miss this occasion!

*Thank you, Eve's Circle and planning committee leaders, Janine Vaughn and Karen Hurst, for the hard work going into this popular event. If a group of interesting women of all ages is your kind of crowd, join us!*



### Thank You First Congregational!

You did it again! Your generous donations to this year's Undies the Tree drive helped children across Portland. We delivered 150+ items – new underwear, socks and gloves – for families who did their Christmas shopping at the Human Solutions holiday store. We dropped off 130+ pieces at the Portland Public Schools PTA Clothing Center and we gathered another 150+ items in time for the Portland Homeless Family Solutions holiday party.



### The Soul Box Project

On October 1, Portland artist Leslie Lee went to bed, full of grief like so many of us after the shooting massacre in Las Vegas. She got up the next morning with an idea. She wanted to reveal the horrific numbers of people killed or injured by gunfire – 168,558 people between 2014 and 2017. She would do it by folding origami boxes, one box for every person killed or injured. By the time Leslie spoke to us at First Congregational a few short weeks later

in December, The Soul Box Project was already in motion. Since that Sunday, our church has folded around 500 Soul Boxes. Some of us have participated in a visit to Salem with Moms Demand Action on February 13 to lobby our lawmakers on tighter gun regulations. Others have written letters and made phone calls. Many continue to fold boxes to be used in an art installation in Salem in 2019.

Leslie says, "There's something deeply moving about taking a piece of paper and making it into a three-dimensional vessel that holds a soul." There's also something deeply meaningful when we come together to remember victims and take action, small or large. Thank you for your continued commitment to this project and stay tuned for more opportunities to make Soul Boxes. More information on The Soul Box Project can be found at [www.soulboxproject.org](http://www.soulboxproject.org)





## Fellowship Hour

Fellowship Hour has a new look and a new organization!

The new look includes a reconfiguration of where the tables are in Fellowship Hall. It features an Allergen-Free table so that everyone who comes downstairs after worship can be confident that there will be foods safe for them to eat. And it offers soup--or something akin to soup--each Sunday, along with finger foods and a sweet.

The new organization is designed so that everyone in the church family can both give and receive during Fellowship Hour over the course of the year. Birthday Teams will host each month, each team being composed of everyone in the church family whose birthday falls during that month.

All those whose birthdays fall in February, for example, will host February Fellowship Hour. They are the February Birthday Team. At the end of January, they will have gathered in the library during Fellowship Hour and have signed up for the various things there are to do to make Fellowship Hour a success each week: bring food or drinks, make food ready to put out, set tables, clear up afterwards....Each person can do as much as they would like on as many Sundays as they are able.

And so it will be each month, with a planning meeting and then the sharing of Sunday responsibilities for a month. By the end of the year, each of us will have made new friends, worked with new acquaintances, enjoyed being the givers during one month of the year, and appreciated the efforts of the givers during the other eleven months.

Happy New Year to us all!

## ArtReach Gallery

Art Reach Gallery currently features an installation by the Soul Box Project, as well its ongoing February/March exhibition, *Corita and the Begotten Word*, featuring work by Sister Corita Kent and over 40 poetry broadsides. Corita Kent (1918-1986) was, in some significant ways, an artist of the word. Last

year's exhibition of her work at the Portland Art Museum was a splendid presentation of her particular spiritual sensitivity to both word and color within the context of Pop Art; it was equally illustrative of her contemporary relevance. A 1982 work, "community," seems as prescient today as it was 35 years ago; it incorporates a quote by the late Barbara Ward: "...either we are going to create a community or we are going to die."



Corita Kent. community, 1982. Serigraph, 24" x 18".  
Reprinted with permission of the Corita Art Center, Immaculate Heart  
Community, Los Angeles, photograph by Arthur Evans.

The exhibition at ArtReach Gallery expands an understanding of Corita's art by exploring its relationship to the art of poetry broadsides. Twelve of her serigraphs, including "community," highlight her swaths of color and bright announcements. The more than forty poetry broadsides in the show offer an opportunity to compare the collaboration of poet/artist/designer/printer in presenting "word."

Word and image are at the core of "Corita Kent and the Begotten Word." They function together to invite a consideration of the value of ideas that shape our city and our lives. The public is invited to explore word and image in this exhibition and to consider how we build and maintain community here in Portland.



# Upcoming Events

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## **GIVING OPPORTUNITY**

We are accepting donations of blankets and warm clothes, which can be placed in the FISH barrel (located in the table storage closet of Fellowship Hall). Check with building staff if you need assistance finding the barrel, or if you have questions. Thanks!

## **FEBRUARY 24**

### **Eve's Circle**

*Fellowship Hall 10 am -noon*

In May 2017 Eves were introduced to the Desert Mothers, women who withdrew from their established roles and lives to live in the desert to develop spiritual discipline both alone and in community.

For our meeting on February 24, we will revisit the teachings of these wise women, particularly the practice of humility and repentance. (Chapter 7 in the book, *The Desert Mothers*, by Mary C. Earle. The book was a resource for the retreat last spring and some of you may have a copy).

A quote from Chapter 7: "And in a society that is thriving on an inability to admit wrongdoing and take responsibility, the ongoing practice of repentance is a lost art." (p.49) We will examine this practice in the light of our own experience, and the context of the time we live in.

You are welcome to join us whether or not you attended the retreat. Reading material and writing material will be provided.

Our meeting is Saturday, February 24 from 10 am till Noon in Fellowship Hall. Coffee and tea provided. Bring a snack if you wish. **NEW NOTE:** Please enter through the Madison Street door from now on. Ring the bell if you don't have a key card.

## **FEBRUARY 25**

### **Parent's Meeting**

*Library, 9 am*

Parents, please join us for a time of sharing and support before church on Sunday, February 22nd. We'll explore how to nurture spirituality in our homes and family life. Childcare for children ages 8 and under provided downstairs. Hosted by Rev. Elizabeth, Batya Podos, and our FCUCC Family Ministries Team. RSVPs are helpful but not required...come as you are!

## **FEBRUARY 22 - MARCH 3**

### **Voices for the Voiceless**

*Sanctuary, evening performances 7 pm | matinees 3 pm*

Join us for Voice for Voiceless Theatre's production of *The Christians*. This 2016 Outer Critics Circle Award-winning play delves into what happens when faith is questioned, and a church becomes divided.

DATES: February 22-24 & March 1-2 @ 7pm

February 25 & March 3 @ 3pm

(get tickets here: <https://www.voiceforvoicelesstheatre.com/box-office/> )

Voice for Voiceless Theatre pairs a conscious and challenging theatre with humanitarian needs in this ever-changing and often traumatizing times in local and global communities. This season focuses on the theme of “breaking traditions,” taking a look at cultural, societal, and economic customs and creating dramatic presentations that address questions and highlight those that go against the norm. As a 501(c)(3) organization, Voice for Voiceless Theatre couples each production with other nonprofits that work in areas highlighted in the performances explicitly dedicating all net proceeds to those organizations.

This production’s recipient Water1st International unites people to end the global water crisis by supporting sustainable clean water, toilet, and hygiene-education projects for the world’s poorest communities.

### **MARCH 3**

#### **ArtReach: Curator’s Event**

*Fellowship Hall, 10:00 am to Noon*

One of the important works of art by Corita in ArtReach’s February/March exhibition, Corita & The Begotten Word, includes the quote from Barbara Ward: “ . . . either we are going to become a community or we are going to die.” During this Saturday gathering we will explore ways in which Word & Image shape community and affect the the way we create our life together. Sheldon Hurst will lead the session along with Elaine Molskness and others in our church family.

*For ongoing events in our church, please visit [uccportland.org/calendar](http://uccportland.org/calendar).*

## **Children & Youth Events**

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### **FEBRUARY 24**

#### **Youth Movie Night! JC Superstar**

*6:30 pm- 9:30 pm*

Lots of snacks and lots of rock opera Jesus!! Just in time for Lent.

### **MARCH 9**

#### **Lock-In & Movie**

*5:00-9:00 pm*

Cedar Hills UCC is hosting us in their youth room (the old chapel). We’ll gather for pizza and games around 6pm, watch a late night viewing of the movie at Cedar Hills Crossing (reserved seats so that we can all sit together), head to bed sometime after midnight (bring PJs, sleeping bag & pillow) and then have breakfast around their fire pit in the morning. Parents can drop off around 6pm and pick up by 10am. RSVP to Rev. Elizabeth.



## MARCH 25

### Palm Sunday Processional

10:00-11:00 am

Come early to church to get organized to join our palm processional! Children are invited to sit at the front of the sanctuary and lead us during our procession.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rev. Michael Ellick, **Senior Minister** | Rev. Elizabeth Durant, **Assistant Minister**

*Communications Coordinator*, [communications@uccportland.org](mailto:communications@uccportland.org)

*Church:* 1126 SW Park Ave. *Office:* 1137 SW Broadway Portland, OR  
97205

*P:* (503) 228-7219 *W:* [uccportland.org](http://uccportland.org)  
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