



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

The Pilgrim

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A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION

“Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it..” – Luke 12:28

This fall our national politics – and our national culture – took a dramatic turn. As anyone who has been in Sunday services since this election day, you know that my own view is that this isn't about a conservative victory over a progressive one, this is about someone utterly unqualified for the position essentially hoodwinking the American people. But it's worse than this: it's about some of our most fundamental values as Christians being publicly questioned, mocked, and dismantled. From women's rights, to immigrant rights, and even to the degradation of Creation itself, we have entered into a surrealist landscape that none of us could have properly foreseen last summer.

In the face of this, it is my contention that our communities of faith have become more relevant than ever. Not only in the supportive network of relationships that we have always enjoyed, but also by stepping into the prophetic tradition we inherit, and actively advocating for the least, the last, and the lost. During the first part of our year we'll be exploring this call to prophetic witness through our study of the Book of Luke, but more importantly our church will be finding new ways to step into the public sphere together. Given how our country's homogenizing turn toward the alt-right has been particularly hateful towards people of color in general, but also toward undocumented immigrants and Muslims in particular, we will be pursuing a variety of ministries to help us better engage with all our neighbors here in the wider Portland area. Here are a few key examples of work we'll be pursuing in 2017, along with key contact information on how to get involved with each if you are interested.



1. **Ongoing organizing and educational opportunities with SURJ** (Showing Up for Racial Justice), a group dedicated to helping white folk stand in solidarity with people of color. To learn more or get involved reach out to Assistant Minister Rev. Elizabeth Durant (edurant@uccportland.org, 503.228.7219), or Stephanie Mullen (peacemaking@uccportland.org, 208.704.4174).

2. **A renewed “immigration taskforce”** has been put together by congregants interested in pursuing the idea of offering physical sanctuary to undocumented immigrants. In conjunction with our partners at IMIRJ (Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice), this group will hope to educate the congregation on related issues, and help us deliberate on how to move forward together. For more information reach out to Rachel Short (short.rachelg@gmail.com, 319.936.1113).

3. **Our upcoming ArtReach offerings** will double as a way for us to better engage with diverse communities throughout the Portland area. In addition to renewed inter-church reflections on the art in our Fellowship Hall, there will be opportunities to meet and learn more about our neighbors (and ourselves) with the “Cambodian Resilience” exhibition in Feb/Mar, and the exhibition on “Islamic Calligraphy” after that. To learn more, contact our new curator Rev. Dr. Sheldon Hurst (drsheldonthurst@gmail.com, 503.748.9419).

4. Interfaith Outreach and Organizing. In an effort to build public support and power for civil rights, restorative justice, and environmental integrity, First Congregational Church – with the help of former UCC Conference Minister Rev. Hector Lopez, who we have hired as a part-time consultant – has been organizing something we’re calling “The Beloved Community of Oregon.” Still in its early stages, this renewed interfaith gathering in Portland and beyond will continue to offer special programs and community events like the 9/11 Memorial, the community conversation at the Muslim Educational Trust, and the “Silent Prayer in the Public Square” event, but we will hopefully also be building better community relationships so that we can “be the change we wish to see in the world,” right here in Oregon State. For more information reach out to me (ellick@uccportland.org, or 646.734.0162).

To help us with all this new work, along with all the other important ministries we continue to support, I also want to introduce you to our new “core ministry facilitators” for 2017. This January in worship service we re-introduced you to what each of these core ministries are and who will be organizing them, but I think it’s worth repeating here for those who may have been away with all our crazy weather. If you want to learn more about any of these areas, or if you have ideas for new ministries that you would like to see here at First Congregational Church, please reach out to one of our lay leaders below.

1. Community Core Ministries. This includes all the ministries that focus on our own internal community here at the church, and insure our own Christian walk together is a health one. For a list of current ministries check out our website: uccportland.org/community/, or reach out to our new Community Core Ministry Facilitator Grant Helbley (community@uccportland.org, 541.600.2382)

2. Hospitality Core Ministry. This includes all the ministries that welcome new people into our church culture, educate us on our root calling to “welcome the stranger,” and demonstrate “radical hospitality” in action. For a list of current “hospitality” ministries check here: uccportland.org/hospitality/, or reach out to our new Hospitality Core Ministry Facilitator, Rev. Alison Kileen (hospitality@uccportland.org, 651.485.9849)

3. Peacemaking Core Ministry. This includes all the ministries that publicly demonstrate, and advocate for, our Christian values out in the wider world. For a list of current “peacemaking” ministries, check here: uccportland.org/peacemaking/, or reach out to our new Peacemaking Core Ministry Facilitator Stephanie Mullen (peacemaking@uccportland.org, 208.704.4174)

I’m rapidly running out of space for this installment of my Pilgrim article, so I will wrap up quickly. But let me say that in the face of some very scary news on the national level, I remain deeply inspired by all of you on the local level. It is a rare gift to find a community of such wonderful people, each who – in their own way – carry God’s love and light into the world every day. Let us be glad in our hearts for this place and these people, who are blessed by hearing the word of God and keeping it.



In faith,
Rev. Michael Ellick

Cookies, Candle-light Magic, Posada Play & Epiphany Stars!



Our children and youth celebrated the holidays with our cherished traditions. We decorated tasty, colorful Christmas cookies in early December. In mid-December, Paris Hancock created a fragrant, evergreen Advent spiral for us to walk by candlelight, after which the youth joined Rev. Elizabeth for donuts and Pictionary in the Kiva. Thanks to the generous hospitality of the Gavilanes (and supplies brought by the Rosetes!), we had a full house for tamale making, game playing, and being together. Batya Podos led our children and youth in writing a custom “rap battle” Posada play, which we performed in worship on December 18, after which we had tamales and a piñata. Many thanks to our parents for their help in making the posada pageant a success!

Many families joined us for our traditional candlelight Christmas Eve service, and a few even came out for carols and a lively sermon with Rev. Michael on Christmas Day. Then on New Year’s Day, our children helped Rev. Elizabeth to celebrate a new tradition: giving each member of the congregation a paper Epiphany star with inspiring words to lead us into 2017 in hope!

Although the unusual snow and ice forced us to reschedule one of our January events, our middle and high school youth continue to gather regularly with our ministers for service projects and time together. We are in the process of creating a new “youth lounge” in the Kiva, with plans to launch it on a movie night later this Spring.



“Priceless” Film & Discussion with Middle-Schooler Jeremy Clark

On Sunday, January 29, we were proud to host a screening and post-film discussion of “Priceless,” an episode of National Geographic’s “Year of Living Dangerously” in the Fellowship Hall. The episode includes an appearance by First Congregational member Jeremy Clark, a seventh-grader and climate activist who writes his own blog. After the film, we discussed the ways that putting a price on carbon pollution can help to slow climate change.

Jeremy shared his passion for climate activism. In his own words: “This August, I traveled to Iceberg Lake in Glacier National Park. There were enormous icebergs in the sky-blue lake, surrounded by a huge rock wall thrusting thousands of feet above the water. But as I sat there, stunned by the lake’s beauty, I remembered that by the year 2030—when I’m 26—all of the glaciers in Glacier National Park will have melted. Climate change is happening now, and it’s happening fast. For example, the ten warmest years ever recorded have all occurred since 1998. Antarctica has been losing 134 gigatons of ice every year since 2002. We are at a tipping point. Climate change is scary, but not inevitable. There is something we can all do to turn this around.”



Photo Directory Now Available

Thanks to all those who updated their information and sent in photos. Our “First Congregational Member & Friends” Photo Directory is now available! Use the directory to make friends and keep in touch. Pick up a copy in the Fellowship Hall or contact the church office. You can also access a copy on the “Members” section of our web site. Go to uccportland.org/members and enter the password “belltower.” If you need to update your information, please contact Joey Rodriguez, Communications Coordinator, at jrodriguez@uccportland.org.

Do-It-Yourself Lenten Devotional

Deadline: Monday, February 13, 2016

This year we’re creating our own, homemade, 100% authentic First Congregational devotional book for use in the season of Lent (early March to Easter). Lent is traditionally a time for introspection, inner journeying, and exploring the “wilderness space” at the outer limits of our usual perception and experience. In Lent, we reflect on how our expectations fall short of reality. We are called to reconsider our priorities and center on what matters most in the long view of planetary life.

So, imagine yourself as the proverbial desert island castaway: what essential, life-giving words of wisdom or insight would sustain you?

Send your short poems, prose, or excerpts of sacred scripture (from any faith tradition, not limited to the Bible) to Joey Rodriguez at jrodriguez@uccportland.org by Monday, February 13. Our DIY Lenten Devotional will be available (in PDF and print) by Ash Wednesday, March 1.

Special Delivery!

Thanks to one and all for the overwhelming response to Undies the Tree drive in December. Eve’s Circle was able to make three very special deliveries. The first was to Human Solutions, a 24/7 shelter at 160th & Stark. We were struck by the clean and orderly common room, which contained cots, bunks and Pack ‘n Plays, a kitchen that was bustling with preparations for dinner, a section of sofas and chairs complete with a TV, games and other interactive options and an outdoor area for play and fresh air. The manager said the snow required huge patience on everyone’s part since all, including school children, were stuck inside for days and everyone was sick.

Secondly, we dropped by the PTA Clothes Closet housed on the Marshall High School campus at 92nd and Powell. This option for families in need is open Monday and Thursday from 10-1 and provides clothing for all grades from toddler through high school. It is a well oiled operation, open since 1964 and made possible by a huge number of continual donations and loyal volunteers. Finally, we dropped off at Portland Homeless Family Solutions Goose Hollow location at First United Methodist at Jefferson and 18th. This is where our Church provides dinner, helping hands, and kid time once a month on a Saturday. All of our donations were enthusiastically welcomed. We can be assured that we have made a wonderful contribution. All in all we received \$155 towards the purchase of undies. Donations added up to 459 pieces of underwear and pairs of socks. We also received 16 stocking caps, 2 stuffed animals and 2 pairs of mittens.



OUR CHURCH FAMILY MADE THIS DELIVERY VERY SPECIAL TO FAMILIES IN NEED
THANK YOU FROM EVE’S CIRCLE

Moderator Moment

Thank you all for choosing me as your 2017 Moderator. I've been in this new role for approximately one month and I'm already appreciative of the wonderful, supportive and helpful people here at First Congregational Church. I will be making open communication and accessibility a key characteristic of my tenure as Moderator. In that spirit, in addition to written updates like the present letter, I will give a description of the latest and most salient activities relating to Church Governance during the church service every third Sunday. Furthermore, I will be at a table every third Sunday during Hospitality Hour (after service in the Fellowship Hall) in order to listen to your ideas, concerns, or even to just check in with you. Here are some updates and ways that I'm looking for your participation.



CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATES:

- We now make space for the Core Ministry Facilitators to be heard more directly by inviting each Facilitator to a Council meeting.
- We are in the process of finalizing the Core Ministry Policies.
- We had discussion about the Church Chapel Pews. Given the evolving use of the Chapel space and heavy lifting required to move the Chapel pews, we will be offering 8-10 Chapel Pews to the congregation for sale.
- We did some brainstorming and provided our ideas for the new Welcoming Taskforce that is being created to find ways to re-imagine how we welcome new visitors to the church.

For more information on these topics, please let me know.

REQUESTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION:

1. I'm looking for individuals who would like to be a part of our church's Financial Oversight Committee. As the name suggests, this group supports our church's financial wellbeing. Someone who loves spreadsheets, Excel files, fiscal principles, working with others, and learning, would fill this role perfectly!
2. I'm looking for individuals who would like to be a part of our church's Selection Committee. This gives an individual the opportunity to meet with many congregation members in a more formal way and to help be an important step in the selection process of our Church Council members.
3. I'm looking for individuals who would like to be a part of our church's Safety Team. Someone who would like to help determine methods for keeping our church safe and help in finding safety trainings methods for our church community would enjoy this team.
4. I'm looking for individuals who would like to be a part of our Church's Oliver Lecture Committee. The Committee finds and brings speakers who provide insightful lectures to our church community. Promotion of theses speakers is also one of the tasks of the Committee.

If you or someone you know fits any of these descriptions and/or if you would like more information on these groups, please let me know. In closing, this is an exciting year for me. I look forward to interacting with all of you. To be with you all in community tells me that I'm exactly where I need to be in life.

Peace,
Peace Young
Moderator
peace.ehibor.young@gmail.com

Please Welcome Our New Core Ministry Facilitators!

We are thrilled to welcome new Core Ministry Facilitators for 2017. Although the year is just getting started, the Core Ministry Facilitators have already met with Michael and Elizabeth for a half-day planning retreat. They are currently working on getting to know the various ministry teams under their core area of emphasis. Each facilitator was introduced to the congregation during Sunday worship on a different week in the month of January (Stephanie on 1/15; Alison on 1/22; Grant on 1/29).



Stephanie Mullen, Peacemaking Core Ministry Facilitator
peacemaking@uccportland.org – (208) 704-4174

Stephanie studies Social Science at Portland State University, has Yoga and Social Justice training from the Daya Foundation, and is a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Portland. She is passionate about justice work, and feels that this work is rooted in her spirituality.



Rev. Alison Killeen, Hospitality Core Ministry Facilitator
hospitality@uccportland.org - (651) 485-9849

Alison is a community organizer and UCC minister who loves big ideas, strategic planning, and building community. While not working at a local anti-hunger nonprofit, Alison spends time with her partner, Brian, and engages herself in the perennial struggle of trying to bake the perfect loaf of sourdough bread. Alison is thrilled to be serving FCC as this year's Hospitality Core Facilitator!



Grant Helbley, Community Core Ministry Facilitator
community@uccportland.org - (541) 600-2382

Grant Helbley is a qualified mental health professional and a member-in-discernment in the United Church of Christ. They been a member at First Congregational for over a year. You will usually see them on Sunday with their partner Tobi and two children Journey and Mercy. Prior to finding First Congregational, Grant co-pastored a bilingual church in Kazakhstan and started a campus ministry at Ohio State University. Grant loves the emphasis on diversity, spiritual growth, and interdependence that they found at First and they are looking forward to nurturing these elements over the next year while serving as your Community Core Facilitator.

Upcoming Events

FEBRUARY

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH

ArtReach Gallery - Cambodian Resiliency Reception

Fellowship Hall

Join us in the Fellowship Hall on Saturday, February 18th for a special introduction to our February and March exhibition in our ArtReach Gallery. Featuring a blessing by the The Monks from Wat Dhammarangsi, a performance by Bopha Angkor Dance, and poetry reading by Willa Schneberg, local author of *Storytelling in Cambodia*, we welcome everyone to join us to study an important time in Cambodian history and celebrate the resiliency of its people through art.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH

Eves Read - Lou Sevetson

Fellowship Hall

Originally scheduled for April, we've moved up our popular book discussion to Saturday, February 25 at 10am. What's your new favorite? Share ideas! Trade books! Please come ready to tell us about any books you've recently read. Is there a book or two that you just can't get out of your mind? Also, bring 2 - 3 used books to trade or give away, if you'd like. This is a great chance to refresh your book shelf, as well as your to-read list. After our meeting, we'll send out a list of books discussed. Meet in the Fellowship Hall. Any questions? Contact Lou Sevetson, mlsevetson@aol.com.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH

YOUTH GROUP: Tree Planting with Friends of Trees

Parkrose Community UCC

Middle and high school youth gather at Parkrose Community UCC (12505 NE Halsey St, Portland, OR 97230) to plant trees in NE neighborhoods with Friends of Trees! NOTE: An RSVP and permission slip is required; please see the bulletin board outside Rev. Elizabeth's office near the Fellowship Hall or email edurant@uccportland.org.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26TH

Shrove Pancake Breakfast

Fellowship Hall

Everyone is invited to a very special Fellowship Hour after worship, with pancakes prepared by our middle and high school youth. Come join us for this tasty tradition! We'll be receiving donations for our summer service trip.

MARCH

FRIDAY, MARCH 3RD

High School Youth Summit at Camp Adams

Camp Adams

High school youth are invited to a Youth Collective Summit for high school teens. Global music, stories and conversations about identity, power, and difference. Sliding scale cost from \$75-\$100 includes lodging and meals. See Rev. Elizabeth (edurant@uccportland.org; 503-946-1042) for details.

Upcoming Events

MARCH

SATURDAY, MARCH 18TH

Cambodian Resiliency: Poetry Writing Workshop with Willa Schneberg

Fellowship Hall

In this generative workshop, we will grapple with what constitutes poetry of resistance and resilience in the light of extreme social justice violations, including genocide. We will discuss the role of poetry in our current political climate, and investigate how to respond to economic inequity, environmental degradation, sexism, racism and heterosexism through the poem's lyrics, and no resort to polemical language. Poetry from masters of this genre: Martin Espada, Brian Turner, Carolyn Forché, John Smelcer, Khmer poet U Sam Oeur, and Oregon poets Frances Payne Alder and Carter McKenzie will guide us in this process.

SATURDAY, MARCH 25TH

Villages NW - Margaret Baldwin

Find out about Villages NW, a community-driven program to enable every local resident who wants to remain in the home and neighborhood they love to have a Village to support them. What does it take to be part of the village — as a client or a volunteer?

APRIL

SATURDAY, APRIL 22ND

Naked (Party) in the Garden of Eden – Belinda Moos &

A naked party is a get-together where everyone brings a piece of clothing or accessory she's not using and trades it for something "new." Trade and learn some organizational techniques.

MAY

FRIDAY - SUNDAY, MAY 19 -21

Annual Eve's Retreat at Camp Adams

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Our calling is to live into the kingdom of God more fully by cultivating community, practicing hospitality, and publicly demonstrating and advancing God's peace.

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

Joey Rodriguez, *Communications Coordinator*, jrodriguez@uccportland.org

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

P: (503) 228-7219 F: 503-228-6522 W: uccportland.org