

The Pilgrim

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A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION



Dear Friends,

Many of you have already read the following letter and heard this news as I relayed it at church—I wanted to reprint it for those who have not yet had a chance to connect with me during the interim. We are asked to live not for one person or one place, but in love for each other and for our community. This is the path God is showing me to live truly in the mission of our church & in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

After much discernment and prayer, I have decided to resign as Senior Minister of First Congregational United Church of Christ. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) has asked me to consult full time on a variety of state-wide projects, and given the unique nature and scope of the work that is being proposed, I have decided to accept the offer. This was not an easy decision, but after many conversations with my wife, and a significant period of inner reflection about what I feel called by God to do next, I know this to be the right choice for myself and for my family. Also, as I'm sure you all realize, the work of a parish minister requires a significant investment of heart and time, and given our desire to find a better work/life balance while raising a child—and to give more time to my parents and extended family here in the NW—it's clear to us that the time has come for me to step aside.

I have discussed this with our Assistant Minister, Rev. Elizabeth Durant, our Moderator, Sarah Vazquez, with members of our church council, the congregation, and my pastoral relations committee. I let them know that I will remain on the job for another 90 days, giving us time to discuss the road ahead and how I can best serve the church before taking my hand off the wheel at the end of July (my last Sunday will be July 29th). This is something I have thought long and hard about, and at our next council meeting I will be submitting formal "next step" recommendations for the council to consider. Though it will ultimately be up to congregational leadership to make the next few big decisions in the life of the church, I believe my vantage point offers unique perspective that can be most useful in the months and years ahead.

There is much more to say, but we still have time to say it. Though my time here at First has not been without its challenges, I have come to love this unique and eclectic community, I am proud of the work we have done together, and I will carry with me many good memories from my time as your Minister. As I told the council last night, the current group of lay leaders is perhaps the finest I have ever worked with, and along with the rest of you in community (we are a "priesthood of believers" after all), I have high hopes for what could come next. Of particular interest to me now is how to best support Rev. Elizabeth and the staff during this time of transition and beyond. But mainly I want you all to know how much I care for you, and that I will be leaving the church with no ill will toward its people, and only my earnest hopes and prayers for our collective futures.

In faith,

Rev. Michael Ellick

Moderator Note

Sarah Vazquez



Dear Friends,

For this issue of the Pilgrim, I again share my moderator note from Sunday, May 6, when Rev. Michael shared the news of his resignation with the congregation. First Congregational's Church Council has delved into important

deliberative work and open-hearted discussion during this last month, and we will share news of these meetings transparently as it becomes pertinent to the congregation. For the time being, as we come together in this period of transformative growth, I wanted to reiterate the following.

Good Morning, friends. Michael Ellick, what else is there to say but: God Bless You.

And, God blessed us. Never on my faith journey have I met a leader so unabashedly avowed and committed to the true Gospel, the big picture... the notion that "the least of these" is actually the most important work.

What a gift and reason to celebrate! This man is living into his purpose, and I can't help but wonder how many of us can say that we are living into ours, or are willing to take that risk or make that change? Are you?

It is a remarkable honor to have been led by a Senior Minister whose gift is to organize and lead community outreach and social justice efforts both at the state-wide and national level.

And in saying so, it cannot be overstated that Michael has had a tremendous impact on us as a faith community here in this place: we are operating with a balanced budget, which was no small undertaking; we have lived into the new governance model; and have seen growth, diversity, and vitality begin to take

root in this space. So while we will be grieving his loss as a natural product of transference and the human condition, we remain gracious and grateful for his time with us and the blessings bestowed upon us during his tenure here.

I urge you in the processing of Michael's departure that you also save space to lift Michael and his family in prayer, celebrate his successes and take pride in this upcoming opportunity, that you hold compassion for Michael's humanness in his called position in our church, with a spirit of thankfulness for ALL of the work that Michael has done here and the decisions through discernment and follow through that did not always make him popular. I believe Michael to be a man of great integrity and therefore believe him when he says that this step into the broader community is where God is leading him. I give thanks for who he is and what he has meant to us.

So now I'd like to share a few Principles of Transition that I believe to be true for us in moving forward:

1. *God is Sovereign.* In other words, God calling Michael to do this work was no surprise to God; therefore, I'm trusting this. And, because Christ is the head of this church, we are led by the sovereign, and know that ALL things work together for the good of those who were called according to his purpose. And, I believe that we are. We are not tethered to a man, or a woman, or any group. We were named and called by God.
2. *God is with us.* He was with Jesus in the desert, He was here with us when Michael came, and he's certainly not going anywhere now. God is all up in this place, and he is busy at work. I would love nothing more than to share my testimony with you about what God is doing in my life and how busy He has been working on my heart, my mind, and my body. And I am confident that just as he is at work in me, he's got collective goodness and mercies ebbing to us from the horizon! They're coming.

3. *God has our best in mind*; I'd be a fool to say that I see clearly his intention in all of this, but that's not my charge. I believe we have the choice to resist being fair-weather or fickle followers, demanding to be let in on an unnamed outcome. Rather, we know (much like the Ephesians knew that God would be with them) that he in fact is with us and wants what is best for us then and there and here and now.
4. *Nevertheless, they wept.* The Ephesians knew that God was in control, and yet they wept when Paul left. And so, I just want to take this moment to remind you that regardless of this good news, it's OK to grieve the loss, and I would also point out that there is no one right or wrong way to respond to or process your grief. I am here for you. I see you, I hear you, and I love you. We will get through this.
5. Reverend Elizabeth, staff, and lay leadership are all here and have been doing some incredible work this year. I am certain that the work we've done up to this moment has in some ways laid the groundwork and prepared us for this. You have a strong group of collective leadership and I'd like to point them out and recognize them now: so, Peace, Anne, Cath, Bill, Paris, Karin, Cara, and Elizabeth would you please stand up. Core ministry facilitators: Karen, Alice, Nanci, please stand up. Look around. These folks are ALL IN and leaning in... so, lean on us.
6. Finally, I want to call attention to the recent and remote history of frequent and sometimes painful pastoral transitions here. You may be thinking to yourself, "here we go again," or, "we've been here before." I would argue though that you haven't been here before, as no one instance in time is like the next, or the last. This is different. And the difference is, that we as a faith community are poised for this moment. You may not have considered this until now, but let that ruminate... let it settle in. We are all in this together. As

members following Christ, we remain committed to the work, led to be here with one another in faith and ready for new dimensions. This I assure you.

Blessed Assurance... Jesus is mine. Amen.

*In Faith,
Sarah H. Vazquez*

Children & Youth Ministries

We celebrated our school year, thanked our teachers, and honored our graduates in worship on Sunday, June 10th. Third graders **Betty Fallico** and **Jayden Laskey** received bibles. Afterwards we celebrated downstairs with a party.



(pictured left) Youth Minister **Annie Tarter** leads the youth group in a game.

(pictured right) During our end of year party, Peter takes a swing at a candy-filled piñata



Congratulations, graduates! Our graduates include:

Miley Minor, graduating from Hockinson Elementary. In the fall, she will be at Hockinson Middle School. Her favorite subject is music. She plays soccer for the Wildcats in Battle Ground. Miley loves to shop and play with her friends.

When he's not writing or studying science at school, you'll usually find **Jeremy Clark** near the top of a climbing wall at the bouldering gym. Throughout middle school, Jeremy has worked to educate others about the causes, effects, and solutions to climate change. He's lobbied his lawmakers in Salem and Washington DC, and has appreciated the support of many in our church community. Over the summer, he's looking forward to trips to visit family, backpacking and... yes, more climbing. This fall, Jeremy will be a freshman at Cleveland High School where he'll be encouraging his peers (and lawmakers) to make sure that Oregon's Clean Energy Jobs bill passes in the 2019 legislative session.

William Laskey will be attending Madison High School in the fall. William's favorite sport is soccer. He just

finished his first full season of competitive soccer with NEU soccer club in Portland. He has been playing soccer year round and hopes to do so next year as well. His favorite subjects at school are Math and Spanish. William is looking forward to exploring engineering classes in high school.

Farewell to Maggidah Batya Podos

We bid a fond farewell and offered our blessings to Maggidah Batya Podos on June 10th. After nearly four years of serving our congregation as our Youth Ministry Coordinator, Batya is retiring and moving (with her partner Gail) to Albuquerque, New Mexico. We are grateful for the gifts of spiritual leadership, storytelling, Torah study and teaching, art, music and song that Batya has brought to our children, adults and families. We wish her many blessings on this new adventure!



Meet & Greet

Ushers & Greeters at First Congregational UCC

Ushers are scheduled one Sunday per month, but there are substitutes available when we need to change or be away. We arrive about 10:00 am to be ready to welcome visitors and regular worshipers, and give them an Order of Service. We answer questions, welcome children, assist people with walkers and provide hearing devices – whatever helps people to share in a safe, welcoming place.



Busy Easter Sunday ushers: Bill Cunitz, Anna Mella, Julie Blanchard and Margret Oethinger



Easter ushers: Debb Chapman and JoJo Mella

Greeting at the front of the church is also a way to volunteer and welcome people on Sunday morning. Roger and Debra Perry are very faithful greeters. We'd like to add a couple of people each Sunday to assist visitors, directing them to the sanctuary, restrooms, children's areas and Fellowship Hall.



Greeter Roger Perry in his Easter hat.



Greeter Debra Perry braves the Easter cold.

Would you like to volunteer as an usher during worship?

We could use a few more people on our ushering team!

If you're interested or have questions, you can contact **Julie Blanchard** by email at julieb2@easystreet.net, or find her at the back of the sanctuary most Sundays.

Life in Our Church

COMMUNITY CORE MINISTRY

Eves Brave the Wilderness at Eighth Annual Retreat



Left to right: **Back row:** Elaine, Mary, Lou, Ariel, Judy, Elizabeth, Katie, Nanci, Jessica **Middle row:** Karen, Celeste, Janine, Amanda **Front row:** Margaret, Ann, Gwen, Alice, Patty

Braving the Wilderness: Showing Up Unapologetically as Our True Selves was the theme for this year's Eve's Circle Retreat at Camp Adams on May 19. Led by Reverend Elizabeth, 18 Eves claimed their belonging and belovedness through song, art, stories, meditation and silence. Reverend Elizabeth led activities based on the works of Brené Brown, Sonya Renee Taylor and Geneen Roth. Amanda Guthrie and Ann Laskey provided more information and exercises about physical, as well as spiritual, well being. As usual, there was good food, time for walking the woods, a little bit of music and plenty of laughter. This year there were stories that spanned generations, as grandmothers and great aunts were honored. Thank you to the planning committee – Janine Vaughn, Karen Hurst, Judy Bishop, Lou Severson and Nanci Tangeman – as well as this year's Eve's Circle leader, Elaine Molskness.

Eve's Circle will wrap up its 2017-2018 year and plan for next year at the June 23 meeting, 10–noon in the Fellowship Hall. We'll also choose our new leader (want the job?). Come along! Anyone female-identified is welcome to attend this last meeting of the season – a salad potluck.

SoulBox Project: We'll Take Sunday



First Congregational UCC Artist's Way Group made 35 Soul Boxes in a gathering.

In August we will return to our Soul Box ministry with "We'll Take Sunday." You'll be hearing a lot more about this, but in a nutshell we will commit to making more Soul Boxes to be added to next February's massive installation in Salem.

100 people a day are shot in the US. Every Sunday we will be adding 100 Soul Boxes to our own installation in the sanctuary. This will be our own way of holding space for the 100 people shot every Sunday.

In the meantime, keep folding Soul Boxes. We'll use them to begin our installation in August. Folding instructions are on the Pencil Table in the Fellowship Hall – as well as a supply of pre-cut 8 ½ x 8 ½ inch paper.

By the way, we have 100,000 sheets of paper in our church basement – donated through the efforts of Cheryl Clevenger. That's paper enough for 50,000 Soul Boxes!

Ask Nanci Tangeman or Cheryl Clevenger for more information about Soulboxes.

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



Carol Lynch in the Library

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 Severson.

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.

PEACEMAKING CORE MINISTRY

What is Goose Hollow?

Every Sunday at the Welcome Table there are sign up sheets for various ongoing activities of our church. One of those sign up sheets is for Goose Hollow. Some may know Goose Hollow as a stop on the westbound MAX. Some may know it from the old days when former Mayor Bud Clark made his tavern Goose Hollow Inn famous. But for our purposes Goose Hollow is much more personal. Many years ago a member, the late Jim Lawlor introduced us to his passion, Goose Hollow Homeless Family Shelter. This shelter is housed at First United Methodist Church which is at 18th & Jefferson. The Shelter is managed by Portland Homeless Family Solutions.

Over the years on the second Saturday of the month, First Congregational has provided overnight volunteers, those who sleep over and are on hand if the need arises for guest families. Helping hands have done laundry, set up the sleeping areas, sorted donated clothing and other tasks at hand. Kid Time has been provided by FCC volunteers. This is an important time when we have provided activities, art projects, story time, etc., giving parents some all important and much needed down time. Finally we have provided a healthy, hearty family friendly meal. It is cooked off site by volunteers and brought to the Shelter and served buffet style. Our volunteers are invited to eat with the guests.

Because of the lack of volunteers, FCC is now only able to provide the monthly Saturday meal. There are but a few of us loyal souls left. We would love to bring in new enthusiasm and fresh faces to this very worthwhile and satisfying opportunity for volunteering.

If you are interested please ask us for more details. If you don't know us ask someone to point us out. We would be happy to share our experiences with you.

– Jim Sikkell, Myrna Lawlor,
Margret Oethinger, Judy Bishop

Third Quarter “Spare Change” Recipient!

For the next quarter, Portland Literacy Council (PLC) will be the recipient of the spare change given during our weekly offerings.

Founded in 1993, the Portland Literacy Council is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting adult literacy programs throughout the Portland metropolitan area. PLC activities include delivering volunteer tutor training programs around the metro area, hosting an annual literacy tutor conference, publishing the LiteracyLINKS newsletter, and supporting local literacy projects.

As the umbrella organization for Portland's adult basic education and English language programs, they connect and serve organizations throughout the area. President Peggy Murphy sees emphasis shifting from ESL to adult basic education. Closures of local GED® preparation programs signal a need for more math tutors and online classes. “Portland has programs for people under 25 but once you're older, resources dry up,” she said. “People who didn't finish high school don't always have time to go to school and study. We should go into the community instead of having them come to us.”

“I see us as an organization with a lot of potential,” Peggy continued, “we need to broaden our base, keep our traditional tutor training and conference but also expand. We can't do everything but we can make a dent.”

HOSPITALITY CORE MINISTRY

Hospitality at First

Hospitality is who we are and how we engage with others. It's how we share ourselves and how we open ourselves to others. It's a gift we offer and receive.

At First Congregational, as a church body and as church-going bodies, we show hospitality regularly and in many ways:

- Thanks for the hospitable gifts of the Birthday Team members who provide food and drinks each Sunday morning. Everyone who worships at First is an automatic member of their birthday month's team, and I hope each one of us finds a pleasure in participating one month a year in Fellowship Hour hosting.
- Thanks for the welcoming outreach of ArtReach. Our gallery inspires us, makes us think in new ways, provides connections with new folks who explore the art with us, and invites us to share. May we all

find time to spend moments in contemplation and wonder at what we see and at what we read in each exhibition's brochure.

- Thanks as well to the Curator's Event that accompanies each show and provides some structured time to converse with the artist and each other, to explore more profoundly what the art is, and to grow in understanding of art, ourselves, and each other.
- Thanks for Locus Iste and the deep experience we shared this last June through Locus Iste's service of music and poetry. Those who perform invite us into a very special place. Their gift to the community is hospitality at its core.
- Thanks for the Pencil Table and Welcome Table volunteers who reach out to include newcomers, who make old-timers aware of events and activities that are happening, who answer questions, forward questions and requests on behalf of others, and who offer a smile and a hello to one and all.

In this time of transition, our commitment to being open and hospitable gives us energy, gratitude, and anticipation. We look forward to new possibilities for gathering, sharing, engaging, and growing even as we continue to claim what we already know and value.

ArtReach Gallery presents:

scientia
L A U R E N C A R R E R A

June 3 - July 29, 2018 | ArtReach Gallery

INVESTIGATIONS

Chalkboard Series

&

THE REVELATION

Everything That Rises Must Converge

Carrera's exhibition includes 12 paintings in the Main Gallery and one installation in the Chapel Gallery. You are invited to visit the show & note your insights! Then, come to the Curator's Event on July 21st to share with others and learn more about the exhibit.

Upcoming Events

Forum on Iran

US Withdrawal from the Nuclear Agreement and the Path to War

Friday, June 29, 2018, 6:30 pm

First Unitarian Church- Eliot Chapel

In May, President Trump withdrew the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)-known widely as the Iran Nuclear Deal. Diplomats both internationally and in the US fear that this increases the risk of war between the U.S. and Iran. President Trump has selected advisors (John Bolton, as National Security Advisor and Mike Pompeo, as Secretary of State) who have openly positioned themselves as eager to go to war with Iran.

In this climate, it is imperative that community members have the opportunity to hear expert speakers discuss the current reality and how a dangerous path to war can be averted.

NAMI Mental Health First Aid Training

July 8-9, 2018

First Congregational UCC Classrooms

The Safety Team at First Congregational UCC recognizes that any one of us may be the first point of contact for a person on a mental health or addiction recovery journey.

In this course, you will learn how to assist an individual having a mental health or substance-use related crisis through a five step action plan to assess the situation, select and implement appropriate interventions, and secure appropriate care for an individual experiencing one such crisis.

Topics covered include: depression and mood disorders, anxiety disorders, trauma, psychosis, substance use disorders, etc. We learn through the lens of recovery and resiliency—the belief that these individuals can and do get better and use their strengths to stay well. At the end of the 8 hour training, you will receive a certificate of completion (please see an outline of the program on the opposite side of this note).

We will be meeting in the classroom on **July 8 from 12:30pm-4:30pm** (Light lunch will be provided) and in Fellowship Hall on **July 9 from 8:00am-12:00pm** (Light breakfast will be provided) **Space may be limited, so email Cara Rothe at cara@uccportland.org to register.**

Thawing ICE Mindful Walk for Immigrant Justice

Every second Thursday, noon - 1:00 pm

Thursday, July 12th, 2018

Portland I.C.E. building, 4310 SW Macadam Ave.

All people concerned about the criminalization of immigration are invited to join in a monthly silent walk of compassion and solidarity. **For the gathering on July 12, we aim to wrap all four sides of the I.C.E. building with people, in a continuous stream of compassion.** Participants need not be Buddhists or member of any faith. The event is organized through Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice (learn more at IMIRJ.org)

Contact Janine or Gary Vaughan, (503) 232-9353, gjvaughan@hotmail.com

Curator's Event

Saturday July 21, 10am - Noon.

Fellowship Hall

Artist Lauren Carrera and Curator Sheldon Hurst will explore with participants the topic "Alchemy and Art" as it relates to the work on exhibition. Alchemy is the art of transformation. We will discuss our generated meanings & how they challenge transformation.

S'Mores Family Camp

August 25-26, 2018

Camp Adams (Molalla, OR)

Calling all families with children ages birth to college! Join us for an awesome time of fun, fellowship and family in the forest at Camp Adams on August 25th to 26th. We'll swim in the creek, hike/walk/breathe, have field games, arts & crafts, worship, good food, and of course....campfire with songs and s'mores! This year Annie Tarter will lead our youth group on a night hike...wear close-toed shoes. Come for the day or stay for the night. This is a great way to unplug and connect with other families.

Register now at: <http://uccportland.org/family-camp>.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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