



FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
*United Church of Christ - Portland*

# The Pilgrim

March - April 2019 Vol. XXVI, Issue 2  
A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION

## "JOURNEY TO EASTER"

BY REV. DR. JANET PARKER

*"The death of Jesus is for us nothing if we have not died with him; the resurrection of our Lord is for us nothing if we have not been raised with him."*

~Emil Brunner

This year, our Lenten journey has woven through a Dark Wood. Our worship services and sermon themes



have centered around insights provided by Rev. Eric Elnes' book, *The Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics (and Other Wanderers)*. We have faced temptation along with Jesus in the wilderness, confronted the void of self-hatred, found faith in our doubts, and seen our life's purpose illuminated in

flashes of lightning during the darkest storm. Within these experiences, we have found hidden gifts, and an Unexpected Love that never leaves us.

The path through the Dark Wood is the same path that Jesus walked 2,000 years ago. I know this because I know that God took on human life in order to know the full range of human experience. Each Lent and Holy Week, we have the opportunity to see in the life, passion and death of Jesus the extreme length God

went to enter into a solidarity of suffering love with humanity. And each Lent and Holy Week, we are invited to enter into solidarity with Jesus, and even, in a mysterious way, to enter into his death. For the testimony of 2,000 years of Christian proclamation is that the path leading to a transformed and abundant life, a life of freedom in Beloved Community, passes through the narrow door of the cross. In other words, only those who have walked awhile in the Dark Wood with Jesus find their way into the light of an Easter sunrise.

Congregations also experience sojourns in the Dark Wood. Communities also know times when the cross seems omnipresent and resurrection a distant, if not empty, promise. Interim periods in the life of a church can be a Dark Wood experience. Loss and grief, "little deaths," may pile up, leading to discouragement and depressing the energy and spirit of the congregation. At First Congregational UCC, the losses in the past year have been substantial. Both pastors and subsequently other staff have departed. Plans have been disrupted and shelved. Programs and initiatives have fallen into disarray. Even some relationships have been strained due to the stress placed on the system by all these changes. These losses and strains are real and need to be named. Only that which is recognized and named can be healed. Lent has provided us the time

to slow down and acknowledge that the journey to new life, the path to transformation and the realization of the Beloved Community takes time.

Our Call to Worship during Lent has included the words: “There’s a path... though it winds its way through darkness. We would choose to avoid it if we could.” The truth is that none of us can avoid this path; the good news is that Jesus walks it with us. What is true for individuals is also true for congregations. Unexpected gifts await us in the Dark Wood. An Unexpected Love finds us at just the right time. The God who accompanies us into the darkness also lights our way out.

So here’s the good news: unexpected gifts await those who stay on the path, who stay awake and keep vigil with Jesus in the darkest hours. For those who die with Jesus (and Jesus’ community) will surely also rise with him. That is God’s promise to us, a promise kept on Easter Sunday. Friends, believe the good news. Christ is risen! And with Christ, we also shall rise.

Keeping the faith with you,  
Rev. Janet

## KEY MINISTRY INITIATIVES FOR 2019

At our March Council meeting, Council adopted three key ministry initiatives to help provide focus and energy for our congregation’s ministry in 2019. These initiatives are tied to our three core ministry areas. These initiatives arose organically out of the interests, passions, and values that the congregation is already demonstrating, particularly when it comes to the key ministry initiatives for Hospitality and Peacemaking. The key ministry initiative for Community is particularly geared toward aiding the transition work of the congregation in 2019.

The overarching focus of the congregation during 2019 will be HEALTHY TRANSITION. As a reminder, the three overarching questions for the congregation during an interim period are:

Who are we?  
Who are our neighbors?  
What is God calling us to be and do?

These key ministry initiatives will help us answer these critical questions. They will not replace the existing work of the three core ministry areas but provide focal points for this year’s efforts in our core ministry areas. The key initiatives are:

### COMMUNITY

Renewing the Ties that Bind: Deepening relationships, building trust, discovering our shared purpose in mission to God’s beloved community.

### HOSPITALITY

Becoming an Artful Congregation: The Arts in service of community, spiritual formation, and interfaith collaboration.

### PEACEMAKING

Becoming an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation: Following Jesus’ call to radical hospitality, solidarity and service to our migrant neighbors.

If you are interested in getting involved with one of these key ministry initiatives please talk to the Core Ministry facilitator for that area:

Community—Margaret Baldwin, [community@uccportland.org](mailto:community@uccportland.org)

Hospitality—Karen Hurst, [hospitality@uccportland.org](mailto:hospitality@uccportland.org)

Peacemaking—Cheryl Clevenger, [peacemaking@uccportland.org](mailto:peacemaking@uccportland.org)

# MODERATOR MOMENT

*by Anne Sullivan*

Greetings from your 2019 Church Council and Moderator,

As I consider where to start with this piece, it occurs to me to look back at where we have been. A year ago, your Council/Moderator reported the beginnings of a process of Strategic Visioning for our congregation. We were planning to begin with developing a common church vision to include: who we are now, who we want to be and what we want to live into. From this we would develop a shared church vision and Behavioral Covenant.

First Congregational experienced some significant losses and barriers to making progress in this work last year. An initial team did meet and prepare a proposal for a Visioning Process. This did not proceed as Reverend Michael resigned shortly afterward. We have now said goodbye to two ministers, hired an Interim Minister and have a new impetus for developing a Behavioral Covenant and vision for moving forward well.

So moving now into 2019, we have begun the process of naming a Transition team to help guide us through this strategic visioning and prepare us for a Pastoral search.

## Interim Process:

We have contracted with a Consultant from Center for Progressive Renewal to assist us with this process of developing our potential and understanding our strengths and weaknesses. Her name is Cameron Trimble. Here is a snippet from their website to help illuminate why we chose to work with CPR:

### WE BELIEVE...

We believe that every leader and every congregation has untapped potential and is capable of making a meaningful impact in their community. Our work together realizes and amplifies the potential within the leaders of your congregation to envision a new future for your church. We believe that...

- Leadership is an art form, unique to every leader. When people, lay and ordained, are invited to contribute their energy to a congregation and see that the contribution makes a difference, the congregation is strengthened.
- Congregations are best thought of as “schools of love” where people gain access to relationships and resources that connect them to God and one another. That connection, over time, shapes them into more loving people.
- Some congregations need to close. Some congregations need to reinvent themselves. Some congregations need to amplify their vision and expand their impact. All congregations have potential.

To this end, Janet and Cameron have already begun working together and planning this work. First steps will involve the Vitality Assessment. This assessment draws from a survey of our congregation, church statistical

history and a review of ministry area demographics (from Missioninsite demographic tools). From this, CPR will develop a written report with recommendations.

This consultation contract includes a 3-day site visit. We have scheduled with Cameron to be in Portland, at First Congregational UCC, the weekend of May 3,4,5. She will be meeting with staff persons on Friday and dinner with Council on Friday evening. She will tour the community and church and meet with 20 members of our congregation on Saturday, May 4. On Sunday, May 5, she will attend our church service and hold a forum with the congregation before the service to discuss the ideas from her new book, *Piloting Church*. This sets out her philosophy and approach to working with churches. Following worship, she will be available for a general Q&A session with the congregation about the consulting work that she and the Center for Progressive Renewal are doing with our church.

Lastly, our contract with CPR will provide for 12 consultation and coaching sessions. These will take the form of monthly meetings via remote/video/phone. These are designed to assist with:

- Coaching our renewal team on presenting the change proposals to the congregation
- Developing an integration and implementation strategy for the congregation's strategic plan
- Developing a budget of both income and expenses for the plan
- Keeping our team on task and on time
- Working with us to overcome obstacles and resistance to change in the congregation

We need all of our congregants to engage in this process in order for the outcome to fully represent our strengths and our struggles, our passions, and our blind spots and to accurately guide our next steps and future of our church lives together.

Please consider the nomination of yourselves or others for the Transition Team. The deadline for submitting names is April 14. You may submit names to either me or Rev. Janet. And please attend to completing the Survey when this arrives in your inbox. We hope that all of you will be available on Sunday, May 5, to meet and listen to Cameron's presentation.

Go in Peace and Love one another,  
Anne



# TREASURER'S REPORT

## by Belinda Moos

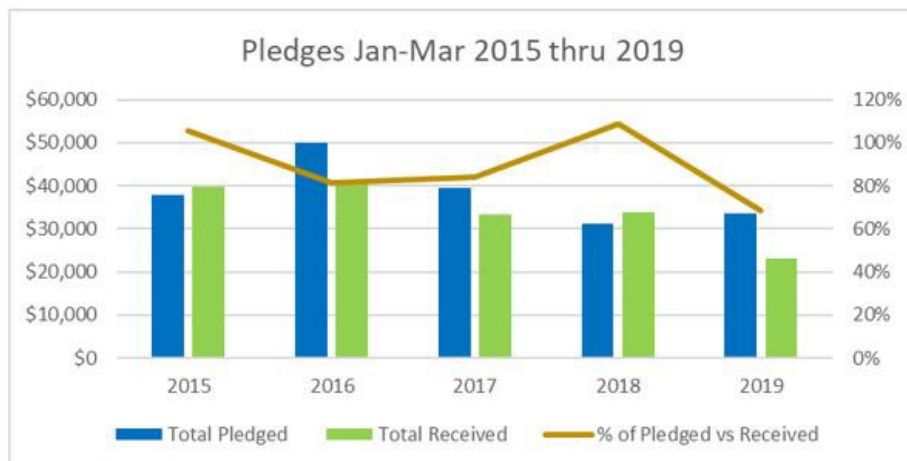
*"Before giving, the mind of the giver is happy; while giving, the mind of the giver is made peaceful; and having given, the mind of the giver is uplifted." ~Gautama Buddha*

During our Annual Meeting in January we heard your request to provide updates on the financial health of our Church in 2019. Our plan is twofold – to provide monthly financial insights and to create a yearly Stewardship theme to enlighten and inform the good works behind your Pledge dollars. We have just wrapped up the first Quarter of 2019 and thus far what we have received in Pledges versus the Commitment from our congregants is much lower than in prior years. Just as a comparison, the below information incorporates the first quarter of years 2015 through 2019 showing what we had received versus what that year's budget was for the first three months.

Thanks to your pledges of financial support we received in December, the Church Council and Financial Oversight Committee developed a budget for faithful ministry at First Congregational for 2019 as approved by our annual meeting in January. As we work through this year of transition, we value your commitment to the Church as your Pledges are necessary to sustain both our Church and Wider Community missions. You will receive your first quarter Pledge detail via email in the next week. Please take the time to review your Pledge and your Commitment. Council, Stewardship Team and Financial Oversight Committee thank you for your generosity. Stay tuned for the next Pilgrim as we highlight another Financial facet and report on results through the first Quarter of 2019.

**Pledge Comparison 1st Quarter Actual vs Budget - 5 years**

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Pledged	\$37,772	\$50,017	\$39,609	\$31,270	\$33,583
Total Received	\$39,853	\$40,816	\$33,368	\$33,932	\$23,085
% of Pledged vs Received	106%	82%	84%	109%	69%





# CORE MINISTRY UPDATES

## COMMUNITY

by Margaret Baldwin

The Community Core Ministry has just welcomed new leaders to help direct our focus of deepening relationships and discovering our shared purpose in mission to God's beloved community. The Rev. Denise Denniston will volunteer with middle and high school students. The Rev. Avena Ward will work with our Called to Care outreach to homebound members of the congregation. Our new part-time Family Ministries Coordinator, Rev. Pam Fine, will work with the Family Ministries Team to create a opportunities for kids' curiosity about spiritual matters to flourish. Our new part-time Children's Ministry Coordinator, Jessie Tarter, will be working in the Godly Play classroom each week as well.

These new leaders are taking on some of what Rev. Elizabeth used to do, but the Community Core Ministry is much bigger than this. Each of us in the congregation is invited, if we are so moved, to create a team to work on a project dear to their heart. Patty Bonney feels called to share her spiritual journey with others who come to the church on Tuesdays at 12 pm. Daniel Hunter and others show up to teach Godly Play several times a month. Mary Lou Sevetson plays and teaches ukulele on Mondays to those who would like to learn.

What is it that your spirit is longing for, and urging you to do? Talk to me about your idea so that we can find a way to make it happen.

Rev. Janet is putting together a worship team to discuss and plan Sunday worship. Please talk to her or me if you have ideas you would like to share.

## HOSPITALITY

by Karen Hurst

Hospitality Core Ministry is busy! Look for details in the articles that follow.

ArtReach Gallery hosted evening meditations and discussions through Lent from 6-7 p.m. The Icelandic Consul will be visiting the Gallery in early April.

A Persian Culture Curator's Event will be Saturday, April 20, from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Mark your calendars; this will be a lovely experience. In May, a new show will open with photographs by Alexandra Opie in the large Gallery and Song Heng in the Chapel Gallery. Watch for details!

We welcomed seven new members on March 31 and are glad to greet visitors each Sunday. Fellowship Hour gives us a time to socialize after worship and to connect both with old friends and new. Many thanks to the Birthday Month Teams that host each week, and especially to the Team Leaders who organize.

Spirituality on Tap is a monthly gathering with Rev. Janet that has begun this year and is an ongoing possibility for conversation regarding faith and life.

Keep your eyes open for the film events that connect with the Gallery exhibits! And be sure And be sure Grant Edwards' Locus Iste concert is on your calendar for May 31 or June 1!

All of the Hospitality events are open to the public and attract the public as well as members of our own church family. They are opportunities to share, to discover, to grow, and to meet new folks in warm and open gatherings.

# PEACEMAKING

by Cheryl Clevenger

Potluck in The Park and the Transition Project are going along well thanks to the support of our volunteers who put so much time and energy into them. Of course we can always use more volunteers.

The Soul Box project is being geared up again thanks to Nanci Tangeman. I'm sure many of you have been busy making boxes. There is a lot of work being done at the Multnomah Arts Center getting ready for an exhibit opening there on April 5. They have now rented space so all the boxes and the work can be done in one place. You are always welcome to volunteer or just visit (7688 SW Capital Highway, Cottage #1).

Our Children's Trust is the organization that is helping youth plaintiffs sue the Federal Government over climate change. It has a hearing scheduled for June 4, 2019 with the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Portland. They are planning a big Rally on that date. We are invited and encouraged to participate in the rally. Watch our web-site, e-news, and Facebook page for more information on the rally as it becomes available.

## Join Us To Activate Our Immigrant Welcoming Declaration!

*By Bruce Bishop*

The first meeting of our Immigrant Welcoming Committee will be Sunday, April 28, in the chapel after worship. Please join us to start putting our words into action.

Here's a list of activities we might undertake. We invite your other suggestions too. If you're interested in one of these opportunities, or in discussing them, contact Bruce Bishop (babishopdx@me.com) or Frank Baldwin (frankwbaldwin@gmail.com).

Volunteer to:

1. Represent us with Portland-based IMIrJ (the InterFaith Movement for Immigrant Justice), a statewide organization, [www.imirj.org](http://www.imirj.org).
2. Serve as a member of Portland First's work group to develop our action plan of Immigrant Welcoming activities.
3. Lead our work group.

Background:

Our Immigrant Welcoming Congregation Declaration, adopted unanimously at the January 27

annual meeting, identified four major areas where we will focus our work: Connecting, Educating, Advocating, Accompanying. The action plan will identify specific activities in each of these areas for members to participate in.

Examples:

There are lots of other ways to be involved in Immigrant Welcoming activities. For example, would you like to:

1. Assist the Portland First Art Exhibit Team on Immigrant Welcoming projects.
2. Join the Portland First Immigration reading and literacy program.
3. Create a Portland First Immigrant Welcoming choral or instrumental music program for adults and/or children.
4. Participate with IMIrJ in Accompaniment Training (Immigrant Solidarity Network letter writing, physical accompaniment to ICE check-ins and court appointments).
5. Participate with IMIrJ in Accompaniment Training for Bilingual/Bicultural Leaders.
6. Attend a Vigil (Bringing elements of

our faith tradition to a public witness/action).

7. Assist IMIrJ's Document Translation Team (Help to ensure that documents and information are available in English, Spanish, or other languages).

8. Serve on IMIrJ's Clergy Ready Bench (Relational space for clergy to discern, strategize, and rapidly respond).

9. Engage in Political Advocacy (Building relationship with local, state, and federal legislators to amplify voices of immigrants and invite them to take courageous action).

10. Participate in Denominational Organizing (Building the capacity of our regional and national denomination to advance immigrant justice).

11. Attend Organizer Training (Grow in leadership through the art of community organizing) offered by IMIrJ and other community organizations.

12. Participate in IMIrJ's Quarterly Gathering Design Team (Help plan meaningful and dynamic gatherings in our church and community).

13. Join IMIrJ's Development Team to help grow the financial capacity of IMIrJ.



# *NEW FACES & STAFF CHANGES*

*By Rev. Janet Parker*

Heraclitus said, “Change is the only constant,” and sometimes First Congregational UCC seems to be working overtime to prove him true.

So far in 2019, Rev. Elizabeth Durant and our Child Care Provider, Caroline Patetta, have departed, and we recently learned that our Communications Coordinator, Leah Abraham, will be leaving us at the beginning of May to get married and move with her new husband to Virginia. Caroline needed to step down from her job for health reasons, so we wish her well and pray for her full recovery from an injury sustained in the fall.

We are delighted to inform the congregation that Rev. Elizabeth landed the position of sabbatical pastor for Rev. Tara Wilkins at Bridgeport UCC. In the meantime, we’ve been busy seeking to fill vacant positions and bridge the gaps left by Rev. Elizabeth’s departure. While we miss the old faces, we are richly blessed by the new faces that are joining our ministry team. Here’s where things stand as of the publication of this newsletter (bio and pictures below):

## **Family Ministries:**

We are delighted to welcome our new part-time Family Ministries Coordinator, the Rev. Pam Fine and part-time Children’s Ministry Coordinator, Jessie Tarter. Pam will oversee the Family Ministries Team and supervise our Children’s Ministry Coordinator and Child Care Provider. Jessie will anchor our Godly Play Children’s education program. We have also just hired a new Child Care Provider to replace Caroline. Her name is Jocelyn Griffith and she will start as soon as her background check is completed. We are blessed to have these wonderful new folks filling out our Family Ministries Team!

## **Church Office:**

Remember the Ghostbusters’ theme song, “Who you gonna call? Ghostbusters!” The theme song of our church office could be “Who you gonna call? Call Andre!” When we unexpectedly lost our Communications Coordinator in October, Bookkeeper Andre stepped in to fill the gap until we hired Leah Abraham. When the computers are down or the software needs fixing, call Andre! So when we learned of Leah’s departure, it didn’t take church leadership long to come up with a creative solution: expand Andre’s job to include the Communications Coordinator role. So as of May, Andre will essentially handle our Communications, Bookkeeping and IT functions in the Church Office. You will find Andre to be unflappable, resourceful, friendly and incredibly competent! We are so grateful he accepted our offer to expand his position.

In the meantime, please take time to let Leah know how much we’ve appreciated her gracious hospitality, open spirit, warm smile and competency in the demanding job of Communications Coordinator. We wish her the very best in her marriage and new life!





## **PAM FINE**

Family Ministries Coordinator

Contact Pam at  
[family@uccportland.org](mailto:family@uccportland.org)

I was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, but was smart enough to go to college at University of Oregon. After nine years in Eugene, I moved to San Francisco to begin a haphazard career-life as an office manager, a word processing trainer, a freelance writer, a fundraiser, and a few other things. In 1980, I married Dan Burklund. We moved to the Gold Country near Lake Tahoe, and created two amazing sons (John and Michael) together. I was (and am) a devout Baby Boomer, but was a Christian in name only until we joined a United Methodist Church where asking questions was encouraged. So I did. A lot. When Christian Education at the local church level no longer slaked my thirst, I enrolled in seminary at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. Ordained in 1994, I served six churches in Northern California, most of them small and wonderful. I also served as Chairs of our Conference Board of Church & Society, and Committee on Children and Poverty, and have traveled to Cuba, the Philippines, and Angola as part of that work. Upon retiring in 2016, Dan and I went to Chile for six months. From there, I went to Montreal for 4 months before landing in Portland, and First Congregational UCC, both of which make me very happy!



## **JESSIE TARTER**

Children's Ministry Coordinator

Contact Jessie at  
[jessierent@gmail.com](mailto:jessierent@gmail.com)

I've been a theater teacher, childcare professional, camp director and storyteller for years. I've been a member of First Congregational church in Eugene Oregon for over a decade and am so excited to meet and join the community in Portland. During the weekdays I'm a cook at a local pre-school and spend my free time writing and performing poetry and music. Thank you for having me and I look forward to meeting you soon!

## **THANK YOU, CAROLINE!**

by Jessica Denniston

On behalf of all the little's parents down in the nursery, we wanted to give a huge thank you to our Nursery Childcare provider, Ms. Caroline Patetta, who has departed from First Congregational. The children loved your caring words, your silly play and the way they felt so welcomed for Sunday childcare! We've appreciated your ministry with the children, as we would argue that your position was the most important for sure. We will be faithfully praying for your future endeavors. Thank you so much again, Caroline, you'll be greatly missed!



# BEHIND THE DESK OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER

*By Cara Rothe*

The first quarter of the year has been very busy. We have hosted several exciting events such as



Oregon Natural Desert Association, Oregon Symphony, Willamette Writers Association, Hands Off Venezuela, PopMob, Architectural Heritage Center and several regular performances such as Aurora and Kalakendra.

Thanks to our facilities manager, Steve Eggers, we were particularly excited

to partner with a new group called Church of Film. This group has been showing movies at Clinton Street Theater for years, and decided to branch out to a downtown space. On February 14, they screened the movie "A Russian Fairytale." We had a great turnout — with over 200 people — and are already discussing our next movie!

Last summer, NETFLIX filmed part of an episode at the church for their series the OA. You can now see the church's cameo in Season II, episode 3.

We are still searching for our next tenants for the Annex. I met with representatives from the City of Portland, The Red Door Project, Social Justice Funds NW, and a private business owner discussing the renting of our offices. Do Good Multnomah began renting an office in April for their new outreach project. Programs involved will include a Rapid-Rehousing and Communications Department. The

space will be utilized primarily for administrative purposes and a few appointment-only client meetings. Rent for Do Good will be covered by funds raised through events hosted at our church by Steve Eggers and myself in 2017 and 2018. We raised a total of \$16,400 for Do Good Multnomah. Although our hope was to open another shelter, we are happy to be able to support their work in any way that we can!

We have many ongoing projects on the building right now. We are repairing several windows, working on getting our kitchen certified, and switching our sanctuary lights to LED.

I have attended several meetings with Portland 5's Facilities Manager, Operations Manager, and City Project Manager regarding work to be done on their building through the spring and summer of this year. This work will start in May and will have an impact on the sidewalk and on the Madison parking.

Over the past year, I have met several times with Edward Eggleston and Scott Sorenson to prepare for this year's lease negotiation with the city. Our last meeting was in the first week of April and included Ted Heid and Rev. Janet Parker.

Unreinforced Masonry Investigation Project continues. I have been working with other churches and Jim Sikkell for over a year to better understand our place in relation to the new seismic requirements of the city. Jim has done the heavy lifting with this research by using his connections and resources to secure more information. Please let me know if you have any questions about this.

# TRANSITION UPDATES

## Transition Team Nominations Sought!

Your Council is preparing to put together the Transition Team that will guide the congregation through the next phase of the interim period. The Transition Team will facilitate dialogue, self-assessment, questions around identity, mission and pastoral leadership needs, and will put together our Local Church Profile. We invite nominations from the congregation.

Please send nominations to Moderator Anne Sullivan ([moderator@uccportland.org](mailto:moderator@uccportland.org)) or Rev. Janet Parker ([revparker@uccportland.org](mailto:revparker@uccportland.org)) by April 14.

The Transition Team will consist of 5-6 people who are representative of the diversity of our congregation; the following are examples of some categories that could be helpful in forming the team:

1. Someone with Finance background
2. Member with 10+ years at FCUCC
3. Newer member of FCUCC
4. Has children at home
5. Young Adult
6. Older adult
8. Actively connected in mission and service of our community
9. Engaged in Music or Arts programs of church
10. Engaged in Children's or Youth Ministries of church

Additionally, we are seeking those with diverse backgrounds in terms of race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+, gender, and those who have demonstrated wisdom and a loving heart.

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## Congregational Vitality Survey: Your voice is needed!

As part of our work with the Center for Progressive Renewal, members are invited to fill out a survey that will help the Center generate a report with reflections and recommendations for our church. We need as many of you to fill out this survey as possible. The more people complete the survey, the more accurate a picture we will get of our congregation's health, strengths and challenges.

The survey is intended for those who are members or otherwise active, regular participants in our congregation's life (we know some of you are active, regular participants who for various reasons have not joined the church officially; your voice counts too!). Please click on the link below to fill out the survey. We will collect surveys through May 1. If you need a paper copy, please notify the Church office (503-228-7219) and we will provide one!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/UCCPortlandMembers>



# MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS



**BRENT HAUGEN**

Brent Haugen has felt guided by spirit his whole life and has been fortunate to be a part of different church families that have fed his curiosity about God and his soul. When he moves to a new area, Brent seeks out a church that shares his values for indiscriminating hospitality, humanity, the environment and for spiritual development—that's UCC.

He began his UCC journey in Phoenix and continued it in California and Minnesota. After moving to Portland mid-December, he explored different UCC churches in the area, but spirit kept bringing him back here. As Brent joins First Congregational, he's excited to continue on his path of spiritual development and enlightenment. He hopes to be a more active member here, as well as in his community, to be a positive influence in the values he holds dear. He is grateful that we opened our doors and arms to him as he sought a new church home!



**DENISE & JESSICA DENNISTON**

Denise Denniston was not raised in the church but began attending a Presbyterian church in Toledo, WA during her sophomore year in high school. As she graduated from WSU in 2007, she realized God was calling her to enlist in the Washington Army National Guard (WANG) as a medic. After graduating from medic school, she deployed to Northern Iraq as a combat medic. Within two weeks of being back from Iraq, she started seminary. Shortly thereafter, she began her first of many units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

During her residency, she experienced isolation and rejection in the Presbyterian Church for being a lesbian. When doubt set in, a former pastor and long-term mentor encouraged her to continue on into the United Church of Christ. Now an ordained UCC minister, she serves as clinical chaplain at Providence St. Vincent's Medical Center, and as a Washington Army National Guard Chaplain. And she has recently signed on to be our volunteer

Youth Ministry Associate! Denise is married to Jessica, who joined the congregation with her.

Jessica Marie Denniston grew up in the suburbs of a small city in Eastern Washington with her grandmother. She didn't attend church growing up but started exploring her faith after high school in a non-denominational church and was then baptized in the Vineyard Church. Denise had just graduated from Fuller Seminary in order to become an ordained Presbyterian (PCUSA) minister. When Denise switched from the PCUSA to the UCC, they became members of All Pilgrims Christian Church in Seattle, where they were married. After moving here for Denise's work, they became very involved at Hillsdale Community UCC in Portland.

After they bought a home and moved out to St. Helens, WA, they wanted to find diversity, and a pro social justice church in the heart of the city, so they decided on First Congregational. It has been home for them. They are both glad to be joining this congregation officially, as they have been attending First Congregational for over two years now with their two-year old son, Alec.

Since August of 2018, Jessica has been plugged in with Eve's Circle Ministry as a co-facilitator, which she really enjoys, and now is helping out the church by serving as interim



child care provider in the nursery. Jessica and Denise wrote that they find First Congregational UCC to be “a community that uplifts God’s word and call to be agents of love in this world,” and that they are “grateful and honored to be a part of this congregation.”



### **AVENA WARD**

Avena Ward grew up in the United Church of Christ, the daughter of a UCC pastor father and an organist mother. She followed her father’s path, coming to ministry later in life. After graduating from Chicago Theological Seminary in 2000, Avena was ordained at St. Pauls United Church of Christ Chicago where she served as Associate Pastor for 17 years. At St. Pauls she provided pastoral care and trained lay ministers for care giving. She served on the Faith & Public Issues Task Force for 15 years. After retiring from St. Pauls in late 2017, she moved to Portland with her husband, Tom Corbett, to be near their daughter, Coco Corbett, and her husband, Jesse Stromwick. In Portland, Avena works as a spiritual director, group facilitator and retreat leader and also as an annuitant visitor for the UCC Pension Board. In Portland, Avena is working as a spiritual director, group facilitator and retreat leader. She also serves as an annuitant visitor for the UCC Pension Board.

We are so fortunate to have her working with our Called to Care Team now at FCUCC!



### **MCKENZIE HARGUTH**

McKenzie Harguth was born here in the Pacific Northwest. She lives in Milwaukee and is currently a nanny for three boys. She loves hiking and photography. She attended a Lutheran church until she began coming here. She has been attending First Congregational UCC for about four months now. She told me that she loves this church because she experiences us as practicing what we preach when it comes to welcoming everyone. She’s interested in getting involved in our ministries with kids, with the houseless community, equal rights and the environment. She is excited to become a member!



### **GABRIEL BRADFORD**

Gabriel Bradford was raised informally as a Protestant, without being affiliated with any particular denomination. He considers

himself non-denominational and has attended a number of different churches, including New Beginnings, since he was 17.

Gabriel wrote that “What attracted me to your congregation is the warmth. The focus is about God’s love and not about judging one another. I feel that this church welcomes everyone, which is a strength that I hope all churches will learn. I believe as Christians, we are stronger together than apart. If we could all just focus on loving one another, instead of gossiping and judging, we can be even stronger. After all Jesus left us the perfect example of how to live and love.” Gabriel had not been baptized so we had the opportunity to baptize him on March 31. He said he wanted to be baptized because it symbolizes his dedication to Jesus Christ.



### **BARBARA BENNETT**

Barbara joins us from nearby First Congregational UCC of Hillsboro. Now that she has moved into the city she wanted to attend a church closer to home. We’re delighted to have her and especially happy that she chooses to share her love and gift of signing the anthems with us. Barbara began learning American Sign Language when her granddaughter became deaf. And she is willing to do a workshop to teach ASL to others, so stay tuned!

# LIFE IN OUR CHURCH

## Holy Week

AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST - PORTLAND

*Palm/Passion  
Sunday*

WITH A PALM PROCESSIONAL  
APRIL 14 🌿 10:30 AM

*Maundy  
Thursday*

WITH HOLY COMMUNION & OPTIONAL  
HANDWASHING / ANOINTING  
APRIL 18 🌿 7:15 PM

*Easter Sunday*

WITH KIDS' EASTER EGG HUNT  
APRIL 21 🌿 10:30 AM

CHILDCARE IS PROVIDED AT ALL SERVICES



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## ArtReach Gallery Curator's Event "Persian Culture" on April 20

Curator's Event "Persian Culture" will be held April 20, in celebration of the Ziba Vishteh's "Opening & Closing DOORS IN IRAN."

The event will feature Persian poetry with Faramarz Mehrdadfar and Marzie Salarie;; Calligraphy by Amirhosein Goharjoo; Persian Music by Hamid Habibi; the artist Ziba Vishteh; and Curator Dr. Sheldon Hurst.

The event is from 10 a.m. to noon on April 20 at the Fellowship Hall. This is a free event and open to the public. Refreshments will be available.



*Photograph by Ziba Vishteh*

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### Lenten Reflections: A Time for Meaningful Reflection & Meditation

*By Dr. Sheldon Hurst*

Every Wednesday from March 6 to April 10, First Congregational UCC - Portland hosted a Lenten Reflection series, which was free and open to the public. Each evening we gathered to meditate and reflect on various images of doors in our spiritual life.

Beginning on Ash Wednesday, we focused on the photographs by Iranian artist Ziba Vishteh, whose exhibition DOORS IN IRAN is in our Chapel Gallery through April 28. Poems by Persian writers Omar Khayyam, Rumi, Hafez and Shamlou provided images in poetry related to the doors in Iran. Selected scripture passages and songs related to the door image as well.

The series focused on The Ash Wednesday Door, The Door of Life, The Door of the Eye, The Door of the Ear, The Door of Truth and The Door of God. An average of about 20 people gathered at 5:30 p.m. for soup that was provided by many participants. This time together in the spiritual practice of Lent was led by Janet Parker, Sheldon Hurst and Grant Edwards.



*Photograph by Ziba Vishteh*

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST - PORTLAND PRESENTS

# Letters from Emily

A SONG CYCLE OF 27 DICKINSON POEMS BY  
*Grant Edwards*

MAY 31 & JUNE 1, 2019  
7:30 P.M.

FEATURING:  
THE LOCUS ISTE CONCERT CHOIR  
SHERYL WOOD, MEZZO-SOPRANO  
WITH IAN TIMMONS, JONNY ROBERTS,  
JONATHAN GREEN & GENNA MCALLISTER



**\$15 SUGGESTED DONATION**

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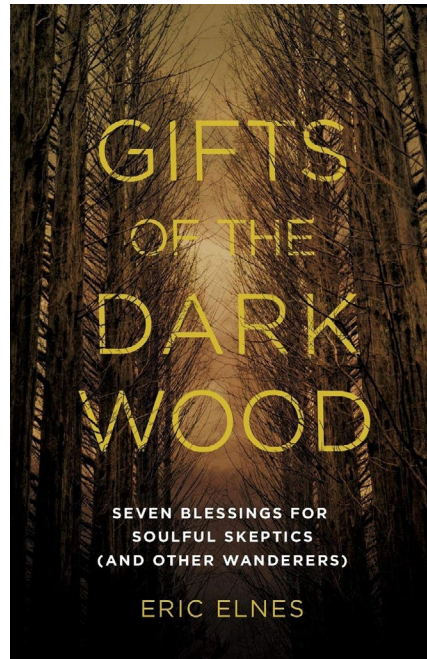


## Discuss *Gifts of the Dark Wood* with Rev. Janet Parker

Have you been enjoying the Lenten sermon series on Eric Elnes' book, *Gifts of the Dark Wood*?

If you have found the themes raised in the sermons intriguing and would like to explore them further, consider reading the book and joining Rev. Janet for a discussion on it after church on Palm Sunday, April 14. After some time for fellowship and coffee, we'll meet in the Library at noon.

Even if you haven't read the book, you're still welcome to come and engage in conversation on the themes that have been raised during the sermon series in Lent.



### Available Online!

"Gifts of the Dark Wood: Seven Blessings for Soulful Skeptics (and Other Wanderers)" is available for as little as \$5.95 used or \$9.99 for the Kindle version on Amazon.



## Spirituality on Tap for Young(er) Adults

Are you a younger adult/millennial type? If so, you are invited to a new ecumenical venture in "pub theology" that Pastors Janet Parker (First Congregational) and Robyn Hartwig (St. Andrew Lutheran Church) are offering. Once a month, we gather for great Mexican food, drinks, and amazing conversation on timely topics related to faith and life in today's world. Come and bring a friend! If interested, please RSVP to [revparker@uccportland.org](mailto:revparker@uccportland.org) or at [www.facebook.com/groups/SpiritualityOnTap/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/SpiritualityOnTap/)

Where: Mazatlan Mexican Restaurant, 2050 SW Morrison St. (near Providence Park)

When: Thursday, April 25; soft start at 7:30 to order food and drinks; discussion begins at 8:00

### TOPIC FOR APRIL 25: DID JESUS RISE IN BODILY FORM, AND DOES IT MATTER FOR YOUR FAITH?

Jesus' resurrection from the dead was the lived experience of the earliest Christians, according to accounts written within a generation of the event. Gospel writers take pains to record experiences of Jesus that demonstrated some characteristics of physical bodies. The Bible and later Creeds of the Church insist that Jesus was not a ghost. Yet minds shaped by modern science struggle to believe this ancient Christian testimony for understandable reasons. Increasingly, many Christians put little to no emphasis on Jesus' bodily resurrection as a non-negotiable tenet of faith. Many Christians have come to understand Jesus' resurrection as spiritual or metaphorical in nature, or both. Does it matter for your faith whether or not Jesus rose bodily? If so, why? If not, why not?

## Eve's Circle Upcoming Events

This year, Eve's Circle is led by Alice Forsythe and Jessica Denniston. As an added bonus this year, free child care is available during the meeting.

If a group of interesting women of all ages is your kind of crowd, join us for an upcoming meeting and the annual Eve's Retreat, held up at our sacred Camp Adams:

**APRIL 27** – Eves welcome the kiddos! We will be partnering with the “God Squad,” our youth ministry group, to take a field trip to view Art Revealing the Gunfire Epidemic: The Soul Box Project and Vision Quilt. Those wanting to fold a Soul Box will have a chance to do that. We will meet at 10:30 a.m. at the Multnomah Arts Center Gallery (7688 SW Capitol Highway).

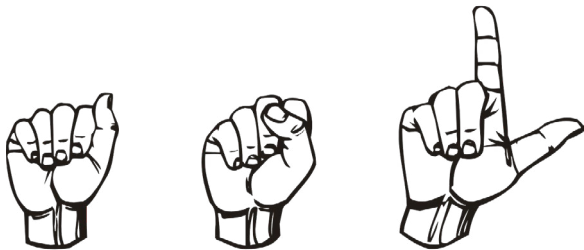
If you or your teen is interested in visiting this moving exhibit with the Eves, please reach out to either Jessica

Denniston, Cheryl Clevenger or Nanci Tangeman for more information. If you need a ride to the Multnomah Art Center, please try to arrange with fellow Eves or contact Nanci or Cheryl. The exhibition is free.

**MAY 17-19** - Eve's Circle Retreat at Camp Adams will be May 17-19. We will be digging deeper into “inclusion” and what that means beyond societal norms, as well as how we, as womxn of First Congregational, can embrace and immerse ourselves into inclusion of everybody. We'll also have a book to read ahead of time. More information about costs and registration will follow in church media and will be available on the Pencil Table in the Fellowship Hall. As usual, scholarships are available.

**JUNE 22** – Program TBD

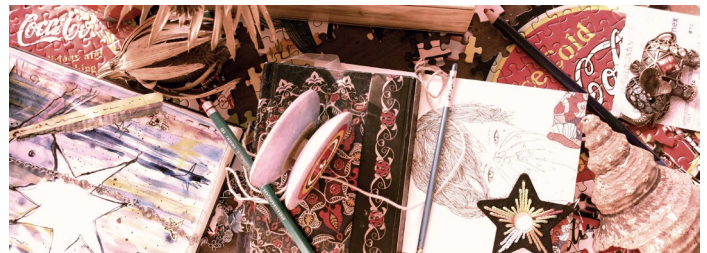
**JULY 27** – Conjuring program ideas for 2019 – 2020 year!



### Learn the Basics of American Sign Language (ASL)

Becoming familiar with the alphabet in ASL will help you recognize more and more words as you observe signing. Barabara Bennett, who signs hymns on Sundays, wants to share this interesting and popular language with you on Sunday, May 19, from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall.

Learn to spell your name and how to greet someone in Sign. Learn lots of tips and words such as home, church, work, etc. Hand outs provided so you can easily practice at home.



### Playdate With Spirit

Our busy lives can leave us feeling disconnected from what feeds our spirit. What draws us together is a desire to reconnect with a source of nurture and nourishment for our spirits.

Come away for a few hours, on Friday, April 26, from 2 to 4 p.m., to gather the pieces of your life and visualize how Divine Spirit reveals new insights and understandings through a creative encounter. In this session we'll move from centering into collaging. We will meet in the Chapel. This event is open to all those who identify as women. Contact Rev. Avena Ward for more information.



# CHILDREN & YOUTH

## Upcoming Youth Activities

### COLLABORATIVE YOUTH GATHERING AT CEDAR HILLS UCC (Friday April 12, 6 - 9 P.M.)

Youth from Parkrose, Cedar Hills, Beaverton, and Vancouver UCCs will be gathering together for a Potluck dinner and a movie.

### YOUTH GROUP IN THE YOUTH LOUNGE (Saturday April 13, 8:45 a.m. - 2 P.M. )

We will be stuffing Easter eggs for the egg hunt in the youth lounge!

### YOUTH ACTING FOR OUR EARTH TRAINING (Sunday, April 14, during worship)

We co-sponsoring a free, day-long training for all youth grades 4th through 12th and their families to make a difference in Climate Change & Recovery. Participating youth will learn the science of Climate Change & Recovery; how Climate Change impacts people everywhere; the importance of planting trees and caring for the soil; and how to make effective presentations and influence laws and regulations that benefit the planet.

You can reach Youth Acting for our Earth via email at [vergun@alumni.stanford.edu](mailto:vergun@alumni.stanford.edu). See further details and sign up for this or other local trainings at [ClimateChangeRecovery.org](http://ClimateChangeRecovery.org).

If you are attending this training, please let Annie Tarter know.

### EASTER SUNDAY (Sunday, April 21)

The youth will be helping with the egg hunt as well and we also have some fun activities planned specifically for them.



*Youth participated in the Womxn's March with Rev. Janet Parker and other congregation members in March.*

### SOUL BOX PROJECT (Sunday, April 21)

Youth will join Eve's Circle this month to visit "Art Revealing the Gunfire Epidemic: A Participatory Exhibit of The Soul Box Project & The Vision Quilt," from 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Multnomah Arts Center Gallery (7688 SW Capitol Hwy, Portland).

See previous page for more details.

### YOUTH GROUP LED BY DENISE DENNISTON! (Sunday, April 28)

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rev. Dr. Janet Parker, **Interim Senior Minister**  
1126 SW Park Ave. Portland, OR 97205  
*Phone:* (503) 228-7219 *Website:* [uccportland.org](http://uccportland.org)  
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