



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

The Pilgrim

May - June 2019 Vol. XXVI, Issue 3
A BIMONTHLY PUBLICATION

"THE SEASON OF PENTECOST!"

BY REV. DR. JANET PARKER

On June 9, we celebrated Pentecost—the birthday of the Christian Church—and we took the opportunity to throw a birthday party for First Congregational UCC at the same time! June 15 is the 168th Anniversary of First Congregational Church in Portland. Since 1851, before Oregon became a state, before the first shot was fired in the Civil War, First Congregational Church has



been worshiping God and serving the people of this city. That's a legacy worth celebrating. Through its history, pastors have come and gone, people have been born, baptized, confirmed, married and buried here, three church buildings have been constructed, and programs have developed

and then died away. Our denomination has even evolved from "Congregational" to "United Church of Christ." One of the strengths of being an "old" church is that it gives you perspective. You begin to see the difference between the ephemeral and the enduring. You figure out what really matters.

An interim time is a great opportunity to step back and reflect on how you would answer the questions: "What does really matter here?" And, "What does it really mean to be First Congregational United Church of Christ in

Portland?" as opposed to First Presbyterian or First Unitarian, or XYZ UCC in Portland, Salem, Seattle or San Francisco?

You may already know how you would answer those questions. If so, share your answers with a friend! Share them with our Transition Team members! If you don't know (or even if you do), join us as we begin a more intentional and communal process of reflecting on these questions. Your Transition Team has met twice and soon you'll be hearing from them, receiving invitations into ways you can participate in the discernment process that will enable you to answer these questions, write the local church profile, and prepare to call a new settled pastor. You will be aided immeasurably in this process by the accompaniment of our consultant, Rev. Cameron Trimble, and the Center for Progressive Renewal. Cameron will be meeting with our Transition Team, and occasionally with Council, throughout the next year, and we will be rolling out the results of the written report based on the survey and site visit that many of you participated in soon. I heard from so many of you how impressed you were with Cameron and the quality of the expertise she is providing our church. We are in good hands.

In the meantime, it's the season of Pentecost—the season of the Spirit—and the winds of the Spirit are blowing here! On May 31 and June 1,

our sanctuary was filled with music in the amazing world premiere of Grant Edward's "Letters from Emily." What a phenomenal work of art this is! We hope to bring a videotaped showing of it to those of you who missed it—or wish to experience it again—sometime this summer. On June 2, we celebrated the spirit of our youth! We honored our graduates from 8th grade (Keelin Sullivan), High School (Trae Sparks-Adcock, Macey Minor, and Brendan Sullivan), and College (Christina Hellums and Aivelyn Karsten); gave Julius Allman his third grade Bible, appreciated our teachers, and heard an amazing testimony from our youth climate activist, Jeremy Clark, as we prepared to participate in the rally to support the youth plaintiffs in *Juliana vs. United States* on June 4. Around twenty of us made it to the rally in Director Park. Our congregation is also being moved by the Spirit into reinvigorated advocacy for immigrant justice through our Immigrant Welcoming Congregation team. Please see Bruce Bishop's article about this important ministry in this issue of the Pilgrim.

As the gorgeous sunny days of Oregon summer unfold, let's make this a summer of Spirit! The weather will lure you outside and off on vacation, and we understand. But stay plugged in as we allow the wings of the Spirit to lift FCUCC into renewed energy and clarity of purpose. Come and enjoy vibrant worship with the excellent musical leadership of our talented section leaders (choral singers), Grant, and Michael. Come hear some new voices in the pulpit. And join us as we seek to discern the unique and enduring gifts this congregation has to offer to the world. FCUCC—your presence in downtown Portland helped shape this city into what it has become; your passion for radical hospitality, the arts, social justice and beloved community are enriching Portland now; and your vision may yet shape the future of this city we all love. May it be so—with Spirit!

Faithfully Yours,
Rev. Dr. Janet Parker

Our Immigrant Welcoming Work!

by Bruce Bishop

This is a quick update on the Immigrant Welcoming work our congregation has been involved with since we unanimously adopted our declaration in late January.

In late March, interested congregants met to discuss a range of next steps to put our words into action. In early April, we hosted immigration activist/author (and Ainsworth UCC member) Pat Rumer to learn about her work locally, regionally, at the border, and internationally. On May 11, in conjunction with Lake Oswego UCC, we co-sponsored an Immigrant Welcoming Convocation to meet other UCC church representatives doing immigrant justice work and to begin planning areas of mutual interest and possible collaboration. Over 50 people from a dozen UCC churches actively participated. On June 22, these churches will touch base with each other again by video conference to discuss what we've learned and is being

done. And we're starting to plan a "Know Your Rights" workshop to learn what immigrants, their families, and allies can do to support each other.

In the meantime, church members have met with IMIrJ (the Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice), attended an all-day IMIrJ advocacy campaign at the State Capitol to urge legislative support for key immigration policies; volunteered with the ACLU as courthouse legal observers; and attended a monthly IMIrJ vigil at the ICE detention facility in downtown Portland. We've also urged support for Multnomah County's universal representation funding so that all county residents in immigration proceedings have access to legal counsel. (A similar program is pending before the state legislature.)

Our work has only just begun.

MODERATOR MOMENT

by Anne Sullivan

Greetings!

I am so excited and energized. There has been so much happening in our church and it is good. May began with a full weekend of work with our Center for Progressive Renewal (CPR) consultant, Cameron Trimble. This took place over three days and at several different levels. The Council met with her for dinner; staff met with her individually; she toured our church and surrounding neighborhood and met for brief interviews with about 20 of our members; and on that Sunday, we were able to listen to Cameron speak both before and after church service. I do so hope that you were able to be a part of some of this.

I, for one, was left excited for what is to come. We have a lot of work to do in order to become our best version of ourselves as a congregation. But the news from Cameron was not all dark. In fact, it was entirely hopeful. We are still awaiting the full written report from CPR to further outline recommendations in more detail. However, we are already moving forward. The Transition Team has held their first meeting. And Council has met since, and discussed impressions, take-aways, and next steps.

And with our Transition Team, CPR, and Council guiding our work, I am hopeful that we will all be working together to best understand our members, needs, mission, and roles as a congregation.

All around our church are the signs of gracious giving: the Immigrant Welcoming team is forming; Eco Justice works are happening; PRIDE Parade participation was great; Youth are graduating and being honored; Godly Play teachers are completing another year of wonderful story-telling. And Jessie - Children's Ministry Coordinator - is energized and has planned a great summer program. Our Hospitality team continues to provide a wonderful Hospitality Hour following church every Sunday, where I always find great energy and conversation. ArtReach is consistently amazing. Find what works for you best as you interact with this art and program, and I strongly urge you to do so in some way.

And lastly, our own Grant Edwards' "Letters from Emily" was performed this last weekend. It was a stunning demonstration of talent, gift, and love. Thank you to all who volunteered their time and energy along with Grant to bring this show to us.

I sincerely hope that each of you will continue to seek ways in which you too can participate and engage at FCUCC. Find what speaks to you. Find what fits your life and needs at this time. And if you haven't found that, and would like to speak with someone about opportunities, I encourage you to contact me, any of our Core Ministry Facilitators, or come by the Welcome Table after service this week.

Blessings,
Anne

LOCUS ISTE : LETTERS FROM EMILY

by Grant Edwards

Emily Dickinson continues to inspire and astonish generation after generation of those who encounter her. Musician-in-Residence Grant Edwards understands this well, having read every one of her nearly 1,800 poems and meticulously setting 27 of them to music as his magnum opus, entitled “Letters from Emily”. Richly scored for chorus, soloists, orchestra, winds, and a panoply of percussion, it tells a very personal story--a story which also illustrates the universal plight of all humanity: our very lives are our “letters to the world”, a world which promises nothing in return. The sun sets, the sun rises, love is gained and lost, sanity is exposed as insanity (and vice-versa)--yet, sometimes, hope flies in from where we least expect it.

On May 31 and June 1, listeners at First Congregational experienced a rare event: the world premiere of this monumental concert-length choral work, sung by the 30-voice Locus Iste Concert Choir under Grant's direction. Emotionally and musically challenging--yet relentlessly melodic-- the work proved accessible even to a small, unauditioned choir. Now in its fifth season, the choir rehearses Monday evenings, January thru May and is comprised of members of this church and the surrounding community, including other downtown churches and PSU. “Locus iste a Deo factus est” (“this place is sacred”) is a line drawn from Bruckner's famous motet, and serves as a motto for this concert series, along with a paraphrase of James Joyce: “All poetry is prayer and all music is meditation”.



Sheryl Wood, mezzo-soprano, beautifully personified the venerable poet throughout the oratorio, along with Genna McAllister, as the ‘boy’ Emily sometimes thought herself to be, and soprano Alex Habecker, who narrated Emily's more fragile moments. Baritone Ian Timmons, tenor Jonathan Green, and bass Jonny Roberts represented various facets of the composer's “Everyman” persona. Collaborative pianist Yvette Starkey contributed her considerable skill and musicianship to both performance and rehearsals, and Mary Rowell served as concertmaster of the 14-member instrumental ensemble.

Standing ovation for Grant Edwards and the Locus Iste performance of “Letters from Emily”

TRANSITION UPDATES

The FCUCC Transition Team is underway and gaining steam! Your Transition Team consists of five congregational members: Joanne Albertsen, Frank Baldwin, Julie Blanchard, Bill Cunitz, and Ted Heid. The team met on May 30, got oriented, and selected roles for each member to play. Frank Baldwin is chairing the team; Joanne Albertsen will be our IT wizard, Bill Cunitz will serve as liaison with the wider church and Ted Heid and Julie Blanchard will share the secretarial and communications role. Please thank these hearty individuals for their willingness to serve! On June 10, the team met for a second time, reviewed the template for the new local church profile, and also reviewed the last local church profile completed in 2014. Additionally, they had the opportunity to meet via internet with consultant Cameron Trimble to get a first look at the written assessment report produced by the Center for Progressive Renewal, based on members' surveys, the pastor's survey, and Cameron's site visit with us. We are off to a good start. Stay tuned for news of opportunities to contribute to the discernment process necessary to prepare the church to search for, and call, a new settled pastor. Rev. Janet will work closely with the Transition Team throughout their work, as will Cameron. Their work will conclude with the creation of the new local church profile, hopefully by the end of 2019. At that time, a search committee will be formed to undertake the search and call process.

Generous Gift

We are so pleased to report that in April, First Congregational UCC received a generous bequest from the estate of Evelyn S. Murray, long-time member of First Congregational and a celebrated activist who helped discontinue the manufacture of chemical weapons in Oregon. She received a commendation from Senator Mark Hatfield for her efforts, which are recorded in the church's history book, *That Church with the Tower*. Evelyn passed away in 1996, but her husband, Alan, survived her until his death in 2017. It takes awhile for the estate process to be completed, so we just received word of this at the same time that we received the check. The bequest was for nearly \$7,000 and was unrestricted. This will certainly help our congregation meet its financial commitments and pursue its mission goals! At times like these, we are so grateful for the forethought and generosity shown by those who, like Evelyn, remember the church in their will.

ASL Class

by Barbara Bennett



Barbara Bennett leading a sign language class in the chapel

CORE MINISTRY UPDATES

PEACEMAKING

by Cheryl Clevenger

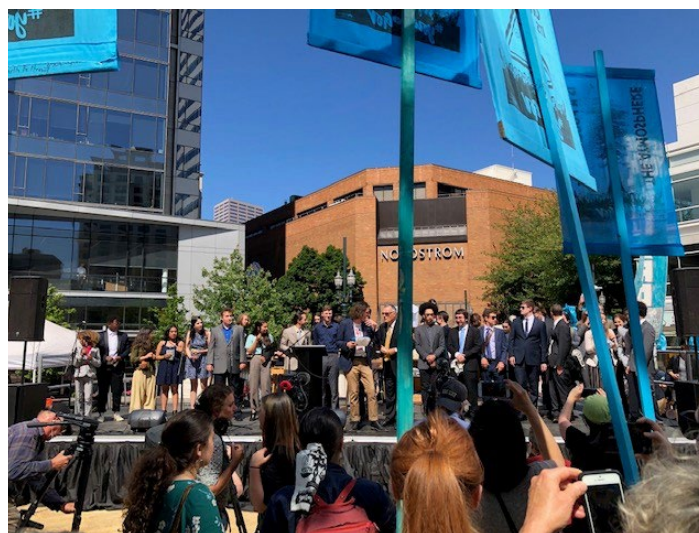
“Transition Projects” and “Pot luck In The Park” are going well thanks to our wonderful, loyal volunteers. We did get a new volunteer, which is exciting, McKenzie Harguth is going to be helping out. We have had a lot of coffee beans that were donated to Pot Luck, but I am having trouble getting them ground. I’ve been doing a little at a time, but the grinder has died. Does anyone know of someone who can make an industrial coffee grinder available to us?

As for the Soul Box Project (SBP), they have 51,000 boxes at this time and would like 200,000 by 2020, so keep making boxes. You can make them on your own and bring them in, or you can check the Soul Box Project on Google and find different locations to go and make them with others. A fun way to make new friends. You can also contact Nanci Tangeman at Nanci@nancitangeman.com for more information. The SBP wants to collect 100,000 boxes in June. Nancy would like us to commit to making 1,000 boxes. You’ll be hearing more about this.

Bruce Bishop is still looking for volunteers for The Immigrant Welcoming Team. You can contact him at babish-opdx@me.com. See his article elsewhere in this newsletter for more details on our Immigrant Welcoming work. In early June, we focused on youth and climate justice. What could be more important than passing on a livable

planet to our children? In our worship service on June 2, we heard from our own youth activist, Jeremy Clark, about why he’s worked tirelessly since he was 10 years old to advocate for policies that address climate change. The service also featured remarks by Eowyn Soran of Our Children’s Trust about the Juliana V. United States lawsuit (read in absentia due to illness), a sermon by Rev. Janet on climate justice, and artist Donna Murphy engaged our children and youth in art projects supporting the Juliana plaintiffs. On June 4, around 20 of our members joined Rev. Janet and over a 1,000 others for the rally in Director Park supporting the Juliana plaintiffs, who had a hearing before the 9th Circuit Court that day.

Also-- something new that I thought some people might be interested in. “Public Witness in the Pews Harnessing the power of congregations for positive legislative change.” The Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and its partners are working on things like legislation for Climate Justice, youth homelessness, criminal justice reform and refugee services. You can contact them at cosa@emoregon.org.



COMMUNITY

by Jessica Denniston

Eve's Retreat 2019 at Camp Adams: The retreat was amazing. The Adkins building at the Nate Creek Camp was warm and inviting and brightly lit. So were our spirits as we gathered at Camp Adams for our ninth Eve's Circle Retreat in May. Five of us gathered Friday night for a casual potluck supper, a continuously roaring fire in the enormous fireplace, and good conversation, as we relaxed into the weekend. Six more arrived bright and early for breakfast Saturday morning. Together we spent the day sharing in-depth about our themes of Radical Inclusion and Longing to Belong. Many stories of exclusion and longing were shared as well as examples of times we have felt included and belonging. The two books we used will eventually be available in our church library. Thank you, Rev. Janet, for arriving at lunch time and spending the afternoon with us, both in session and on the Great Hike.



Eve's Retreat group photo at Camp Adams

HOSPITALITY

by Karen Hurst

Hospitality is what brings people who are part of our church family together with folks who are not. We welcome others to share some of what happens in our building and as part of our community.

Some particular First Congregational events during which we have shared our welcome these past two months are worth noting:

- On Sunday mornings, we share with newcomers to our worship service and with those who join us downstairs for Fellowship Hour, with people from the streets who come in for food and conversation, and with visitors who want to see our sanctuary, our windows, the art in our galleries--or sometimes just our bathrooms!

After supper and our closing, six of us headed home and the five remained. It was a special day with this Circle of special women. It was a grand slumber party for the rest of us. Laughter can be good medicine.

Thank you Paris Hancock and Cath Clark for a very well thought out theme and program. Huge thank you to Paris for planning, shopping for, and preparing our simple yet nutritious and delicious meals. (We managed with no kitchen). The Guinness chocolate cake was amazing! More please! More retreats, more fellowship, more Camp Adams, and yummm ... more cake!



Eve's Retreat hike

Thank you to our 2019 Eves Circle Retreat Committee: Judy Bishop, Cath Clark, Paris Hancock, and Ariel Henry. Relevant discussions, delicious food, beautiful wilderness, and heartfelt sisterhood. What more could we want? #blessed

- In our ArtReach Galleries, we have welcomed four artists from four countries and any number of art lovers from who-knows-how-many different countries and states who visited these spaces and contemplated the photos and the prints. (We also raised \$1808 to send--via One Great Hour of Sharing--to Iran, which suffered severe flooding during the time that our chapel gallery space housed "Doors of Iran," photos by Iranian artist Ziba Vishteh.)
- The Gallery also hosted four Curator's Events, all of which were attended by folks from within and beyond our local church family. Of special note were the 40+ members of Portland's Iranian community who attended the "Door of Iran" event and the four of them who shared in leadership: creating calligraphy, playing music, reading poetry, and sharing insights on Iranian culture.
- In our sanctuary, we were delighted to share "Letters from Emily," the Locus Iste presentation of Grant Edwards' composition that was also under his direction. Both the choir and the audience included members of the First Congregational family as well as musicians and listeners from outside our First community.

We look forward to what is upcoming in our life as a hospitable community here at First Congregational.

- We will continue to welcome visitors to worship and to Fellowship Hour. Be sure to greet them and let them know who you are and who we are!
- The current ArtReach exhibit continues through June and will be followed by a summer exhibit featuring drawing, painting, and sculpture focused on line and space. Plan to attend the Curator's Event in July, which will also include live music.
- More live music will be part of our Sunday morning worship services--we can look forward to something a bit different each week.
- And at some point during the summer, look for posters to go up in the stairwells to the sanctuary. They will highlight who we are as a church community, and what we do; these will offer visitors to our building an introduction to our values and visions, and perhaps remind us as well.

There is much to share!



Upcoming Youth Activities

The youth group has been working towards finding a schedule that fits our needs. We continue to meet, play games, have conversations, and be in community with each other. We are planning some fun events for the summer, so keep a lookout for those!

We Say Goodbye to Annie

Annie Tarter will be transitioning out of the Teen Ministries Coordinator position at the end of June to pursue a Masters degree at Oregon State University in College Student Services. Annie is so grateful for the time she was able to spend with the youth here at First Congregational Portland, and is thankful for the support she has received from parents, grandparents, and the entire congregation. She is very sad to leave, but is excited to see what is next for the youth of this church.

Family Ministries will be planning a farewell party with the youth to send Annie off properly, and will be looking at staffing needs for our youth program over the summer. We are so grateful that one of our members, Rev. Denise Denniston, has stepped up to volunteer with our youth in a significant capacity for the foreseeable future.

BEHIND THE DESK OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER

By Cara Rothe

We have had another busy quarter in the building.



We were hosts to several groups such as Oregon Natural Desert Association, Oregon Symphony, Architectural Heritage Center, Aurora Chorus, City Club of Portland, Poetry Slam, PPOP, Downtown Neighborhood

Association, Church of Film, Consul of Japan, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Oregon Historical Society, and Oregon Ballet Theater. Thanks to our facilities manager, Steve Eggers, we partnered again with Church of Film. This time, we showed work of the Animation Group of Three and Tadanori Yokoo.

We have been working with Portland5 in their efforts to re-roof their theaters. Three of our offices are now being rented to their engineers and work foremen. We have enjoyed getting to know these folks and working collaboratively with them to get the work done. We are also enjoying our deepened relationship with Do Good Multnomah and their Rapid-Rehousing and Communications

Department. These workers have been a joy to have in our office space.

As we move into summer, we have many building projects planned. We will be washing windows, scrubbing exterior walls and walkways, and thoroughly cleaning gutters and vents. Steve Eggers has already jumped into this work.

Work continues with members Ted Heid, Edward Eggleston, and Scott Sorenson to prepare for this year's lease negotiation with the city. We are moving through the process and preparing to execute a new contract in November.

We said farewell to our lovely communications coordinator, Leah Abraham. We miss her dearly as she leaves us to move to Virginia with her shiny new husband. At the same time, we are very grateful for Andre Cordes who has been acting as our bookkeeper since March of 2018 and has now taken on the role of communications as well. He brings a hearty work ethic and good spirits to **both** roles now and is a wonderful part of our office.

Maureen Gullett continues as our communication assistant. Maureen is our cheerleader in the office. She always has a smile and has a special excitement for our work.



LIFE IN OUR CHURCH

Hello, FCUCC Parents!

We've had a lot of transition at the church lately, haven't we? And I am new at my job - there are several of you that I haven't even met yet, and I haven't organized much yet either! It feels like it's time to take intentional steps to strengthen the Family Ministries at FCUCC.

Before the end of June, you'll receive a questionnaire from the Family Ministries team designed to help us with that program-strengthening mentioned above. Please set aside some time to consider your responses carefully. We will probably introduce the results of the survey at a gathering in early fall -- using them as the foundation for our planning.

Godly Play Training

Most of you know that the curriculum we use for our young Sunday School children is the wonderful program Godly Play. And, if you were in worship on June 2nd, you know we have seven great teachers who share the responsibility of offering this material to the kids. You may **not** know that two of these teachers need to be available each week, which means our schedule is getting a little tight. So, we are planning for a Godly Play training in late August. (Our trainer is about to give birth, so she was unable to commit to an exact date before this issue of the Pilgrim hit the presses!)

Now, you are invited to become a Godly Play teacher! And you are invited to attend the Godly Play training -- a relatively short event that will happen on a week night or Saturday. And, oh by the way! Our current teachers are definitely invited, too, for the purpose of refreshing your skills. Look for the announcement of a date soon!

Are you - or have you ever wanted to be - a Storyteller?

Have you ever found yourself in worship as Children's Time is going on, thinking, "Gee, I could do that!" Or, "Wow, that looks fun!" Or, "Gosh, I do have at least one story that I could tell the kids; what do I do?" I encourage you to let me know about your interest and availability. Children's Time can be a consistent source of learning and fun when we have a variety of story tellers! How about giving it a try?

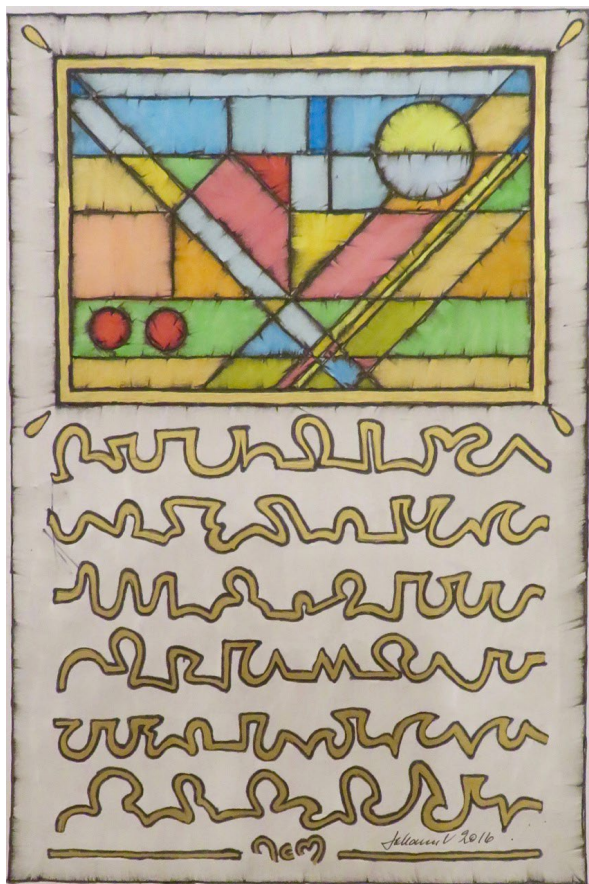
Blessings, Pam Fine

ArtReach Gallery

EXHIBITIONS AND CORRESPONDING EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

Mar 3 - Apr 28, 2019

Johann Vilhjalmsson: Reading Asemic Writing
FROM ICELAND (Main Gallery)



*Asemic Writing by Johann Vilhjalmsson in the
Main Gallery*

It is a rare opportunity for us to have drawings by an artist from Iceland. These are created in meditative states in which each drawing becomes a colorful expression of an inner vision. Asemic Writing is free form, and without any particular word in mind or semantic content. Johann is part of an art movement with international attention.

March 9th Curator's Event: We saw some other expressions of asemic writing, watched a video of the artist Johann Vilhjalmsson discussing his art, and then we took the adventure of doing our own asemic writing.

March 3 - April 28, 2019

Ziba Vishteh: Opening and Closing DOORS IN IRAN
(Chapel Gallery)



*Photograph by Ziba Vishteh from the "Doors in Iran"
exhibit in the Chapel Gallery*

Ash Wednesday began a six week series of spiritual formation meditation/reflection sessions on Wednesday nights during Lent. The evenings included reading a mixture of spiritual writings from Persian poems, Christian scripture, and Taize chants. Participants shared insights during the one hour sessions. Soup and bread started at 5:30 and the meditation began at 6pm.

Flood Victims in Iran: The photographs by Ziba Vishteh were made available by the artist to raise money for relief for people in Iran's severe April rain storms. \$1,808.00 was raised for this purpose.

April 20 Curator's Event: A Morning of Persian Culture. From 10am to Noon on Saturday, April 19th about 80 people gathered to share poetry, calligraphy, music, and hear a lecture on Persian Poetry. Half the participants were from Iran, with a range of immigration from 1970 to very recent.

May 5 - June 30, 2019

Wonder Box: Alexandra Opie (Main Gallery)

Alexandra Opie's photographs are of natural forms that become larger than life in their photographs. So we see what we would miss with our limited vision. The titles of the works are in Latin, emphasizing the relationship to botany and the scientific categories of plant life.

May 18 Curator's Event: We reflected on the photographs by Alexandra Opie, professor of Art at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. Then she gave a talk describing the process of her work which begins with the early form of photography known as tintype.



Exhibition by Alexandra Opie in the Main Gallery

May 19 - June 30, 2019 Eyes: Seeing in Black and White - Photographs by Song Heng (Chapel Gallery)

On Sunday, May 28 we introduced Song Heng to the congregation during fellowship hour. We got to note two important things: first, he is a recent immigrant from China with his wife and two children and second, his photographs include people from Shanghai and Portland, a real mixture of life together.

June 9 Curator's event brought Song Heng to discuss his life journey and to take photos of those in attendance who wished to do so.

PRESENTATIONS

March 10 : Sermon: Call It As It Is: First Congregational Church

May 19 : Talk: Spinning Appearances and Words: Trinity Episcopal Arts Focus.

June 23 : Sermon: Seeing Being. Willamette View Vespers.

EXHIBITIONS COMING

July / August Teresa Zawitkowska and Adam Hurst

Sept./ Oct. Keith Wilson

October 11-15 Northwest Stone Sculptors and Northwest Sculptors



Art Curator Dr. Sheldon Hurst and "EYES" photographer Song Heng

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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