

The Link

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
1220 NE 68th Street
Vancouver, WA 98665-0508
360.693.1476
Website: www.vancouverucc.org



Volume 38 No. 1

God is Still Speaking,

January 12, 2016

Shine On!

Every Sunday morning, as I drive north on 1-5 toward the church, I see a guy on one of the bridges over the freeway. Maybe you've seen him too. Dressed in a blue and green Seahawks uniform, he's waving a flag and pumping a fist in the air. I think he wears some kind of hat, but since I am driving when I go past I can't make it out too clearly. Every time I see him, I smile at his joyful enthusiasm and think, "Wow, there's a guy who really loves the Seahawks." I'm already anticipating that I will miss him when (or, given the final moments of last week's game, should I say "if"?) the football season ever ends.

We are in the season of Epiphany, the weeks between Christmas and Lent during which we rejoice in the Light of Christ that shines before, behind, above, below and within us. As we call upon Christ's light, we are encouraged to let that light shine out for all the world to see. We each do this in our own way. In my time with you, I haven't yet seen anyone from First Congregational standing on a bridge waving a flag that says "Jesus!", but I have been witness to incredible acts of compassion and caring, to passionate activism, to tireless labor in the maintenance of our building and grounds, to thoughtful discernment at meetings, to warm welcomes and to heartfelt farewells. Perhaps we are not flag wavers in the way that the Seahawks fan is, but I believe that our actions shout just as loudly.

In the weeks to come, I would invite you to notice – and to share with me when you do – moments when the Light in this community of faith is shining so radiantly that everyone who passes by must notice and comment "Wow, there's a community that really loves Christ!"

And, on a logistical note: As I am settling into our time together, I am learning and adjusting my time and resources based on that learning. At one time, I mentioned that I would hold hours at the local Panera on Wednesday afternoons. A few times, though, I have been called away for a pastoral care concern during that time. Since there is not a reliable way to send notice when that happens, I decided it's not a good idea to state for certain that I will be there. So, don't plan on me being at Panera on Wednesdays. However, I am in the office much of the day, and often into the evening, on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and am also available after church on Sunday. So please do let me know if you would like to connect. Last week, I regretted to learn that I missed a prayer request that came through on Saturday via email. If you have an emergency hospitalization on the weekend, please feel free to text or call my cell phone 971-340-6316.

See you in church!
Pastor Jennifer

WORSHIP IN JANUARY

January 17 2016

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Jennifer Brownell preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 3 yrs. - Grade 7. Youth Group Meets at 11:30 a.m.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Joy Gerlitz and Jean Matthews
Worship Leader: Dwight Chapman
Ushers: Ken Rowe and Cory Saum-Blystone
Mike King

January 24, 2016

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Jennifer Brownell preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 3 yrs. - Grade 7. Youth Group Meets at 11:30 a.m.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: June and Jonathan (Bruce) Lasher
Worship Leader: Pam Osborne
Ushers: David Harrington and David Macko

January 31, 2016

10 a.m. Worship Service. Rev. Jennifer Brownell preaching. Infant and Toddler Care available. 10:20 a.m.: Christian Education for children 3 yrs. - Grade 7.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Ruth Hammer and Virginia Ebersole
Worship Leader: Jean Beary-Stolle
Ushers: John Bradley and John Hannon

Congregational Meeting Scheduled

There will be a Congregational Meeting on January 31st, immediately following worship, to present the finalized budget for 2016 and to present the names for the Pastoral Search Committee to the members

Mary Jo Ebel Circle

The ladies of the church are invited to the meeting of the **Mary Jo Ebel Circle** on Wed. January 20 at 1:00 p.m. in the Nettie Fries Lounge. Rev. Jennifer will be our guest speaker.

REMEMBERING OUR FAMILY IN PRAYER

Prayer requests for:

Our sons and daughters overseas, and the people of the Middle East;

CONTINUING PRAYER REQUESTS FOR:

Joan Blair
Ken Kerr
Betty Ferner
Nita Calvert
Cordelia Rush
John Priel
Harriet Anani
Anne Kamp
Charlotte Warren

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DATES FOR “*The Link*”

Link Deadline
Link Mailed

January 24, 201
January 26, 2016

Link Deadline
Link Mailed

February 7, 2016
February 09, 2016

Good Read!

For the month of January, the Book Club will be reading Pastor Jennifer's 2015 memoir *“Swim Ride Run Breathe” How I lost a Triathlon and Caught my Breath.* If you would like to join them, copies of the book will be available for sale in the office (starting this Tuesday) for \$15.00 each.

The Book Club meets every third Thursday at the IHOP by SR500 and Target. You may contact Alice Rowe 360-576-0490 for more information on the Book Club.



JANUARY UPDATES

The cold weather has kept the WHO shelters full with overflow beds. Please continue to donate men's socks, gloves, hats, thermals, and underwear to the big yellow basket in the narthex.

Sign up now for our WHO week March 6-12. Once again we are partnering with our friends at Kol Ami. Volunteering is easier than ever this year by using Volunteer Spot.

Here's how it works in 3 easy steps:

1. **Click this link** to go to our invitation page on Volunteer Spot:

<http://vols.pt/cbdRWF>. **Advance the calendar** to March to find the shifts available during our shared week shifts, March 6-12.

2. **Enter your email address:** (You will NOT need to register an account on Volunteer Spot)

3. **Sign up!** Choose your spots – Volunteer Spot will send you an automated confirmation and reminders. Easy! Note: Volunteer Spot does not share your email address with anyone.



SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY IS COMING!

For over 10 years our church has supported the community by donating to the youth group's Souper Bowl Sunday canned soup drive. During that time, collected non-perishable foods and dollars have benefited various organizations in the metro area. For the past 2 years we have supported Martha's Pantry with Souper Bowl Sunday collections. This has been a great tradition for our church. However, it is time to evolve.

This year, the youth group as well as ALL the children of the church will be participating in Souper Bowl Sunday in their Sunday school class on January 31st. They will be counting the ounces of non-perishable food as well as the total dollars collected, and they will then deliver the food to Martha's Pantry at the end of church.

Please join me in donating to the Souper Bowl Sunday canned food and money drive supporting Martha's Pantry. Donations are being accepting in the narthex throughout the month of January. No donation is too insignificant because when added together, even little things can make big changes in our community.

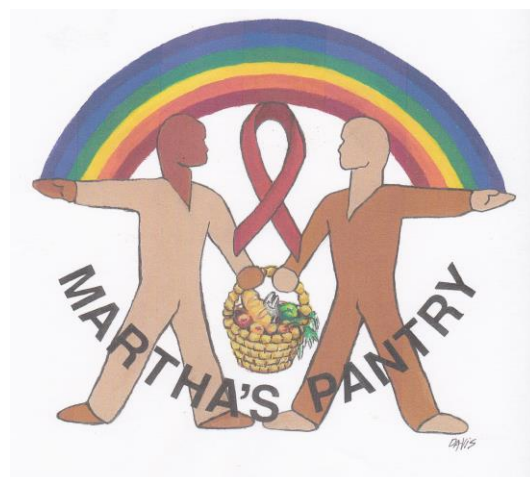
Blessings!

Kristina Martin

From the Heart

I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.

~Martin Luther King, Jr.



Happy 2016 Church Members!

As the new year begins, new opportunities open for volunteers. Please consider serving our congregation in the following short-term openings:

1. **Greeters:** Each Sunday we need (at least) 2 smiling faces to welcome everyone to our services. You make the critical first impression and are an important link between visitors and members. It's a great way to meet new people and renew old friendships. Obligations: Show up 1.2 hour before services with a smile and welcoming handshake!
Jean Beary-Stolle (jstolle@comcast.net) has the sign-up sheet and can give you more information.
2. **Altar Flowers:** We all have special dates and occasions to celebrate. Please consider sharing your remembrances, birthdays, anniversaries and memories with flower arrangements or plants to grace the altar. If desired, you can have the occasion noted in the Sunday bulletin. There is a sign-up posted on the bulletin board in the narthex. (to keep Rev. Brownell's allergies from flaring, milder scented flowers are appreciated!)

Thank You

We would like to thank all who came to Jack's service and to also thank you for all the comforting cards and wishes.

The English Family
Marjorie, Gary, Russell and Mark

2015 End of Year Statements

The end of year statements will again be available following the service this Sunday. John Fite will seek you out, or you can find him. He'll be the one with the big box.

MISSION & OUTREACH SPECIAL OFFERING FOR JANUARY CAR CAMPING

As rental prices in Clark County have risen astronomically in the last year, more minimum wage workers have lost their housing. Many of these people have resorted to living in their cars.

In addition, the shelters and winter overflow shelters are full every night, so people who have cars (which are considered "shelter"), are not first on the list to get a shelter bed. These "Car Campers" need a safe space to park their cars overnight. For this reason, a new coalition of local faith communities, the Council for the Homeless, and "Car Campers" has formed in Clark County.

Using several models from King County where churches have used their parking lots to host Car Campers overnight, a pilot project has started this winter in Clark County. Currently, 2-3 local churches are participating, and other churches, including ours, have pledged to help financially.

Hopefully, by next winter the project will expand to more churches hosting.

To contribute to this project, simply make your check out to our church with "Car Campers" in the memo line. Thank you for your support.

"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home."

~Edith Sitwell



The Continuing Struggle for Racial Justice

As the current political debates and the tragic deaths of so many people of color have so clearly revealed, we have much work to do to achieve racial justice in this country. The United Church of Christ (UCC) has long been a leader in calling out racial injustices and working for change. Our own Central Pacific Conference UCC passed a resolution at our last Annual Meeting declaring us to be "An Anti-Racist Conference".

The resolution "Calls upon the churches and members of the Central Pacific Conference to make anti-racism a priority by engaging or re-engaging in the Sacred Conversation on Race, by using denominational materials or other resources with emphasis on unpacking bias and dismantling racism..." and for churches to report back at our Annual Meeting.

The Racial Justice Network Face Book Group has been formed to help facilitate this work. If you are on FB please check out this resource at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/racialjusticenetwork/>. Our church will be working with this group to bring resources, education and training to our own congregation.

One Portland event to consider is happening this Saturday, January 16th at 1pm at the Portland City Hall, 1220 SW 5th Avenue: "Solidarity Rally". This event is hosted by many community groups including: YWCA, Urban League of Portland, the Center for Intercultural Organizing, Showing Up For Racial Justice (SURJ), etc.

There will be a rally inside City Hall with speakers from the communities who have been targeted and those who stand in solidarity with them - along with other local civil rights leaders. This event will be followed by a peaceful public demonstration in front of Portland City Hall that will show the whole city that we stand together for love, inclusion and respect.

Welcome New Members: Chuck and Jan Foulke

Please add this information to your
your directory:

Chuck and Jan Foulke

145 N. 40th Avenue
Ridgefield, WA 98642
Phone: 414-308-3788

jfoulke@sbcglobal.net

A Prayer for the New Year

God of all times and seasons,

On this threshold of a new year, I turn again to you. The year spreads before us with possibilities. No doubt there are challenges as well ahead. Already in the first few days, lives have been lost to violence, war, hunger and injustice. Already your heart grieves. Mine too. Then again, there have also been signs of hope: children embraced, lives touched by grace, heroes who surface in times of trial.

In the midst of the good and the bad, hear my prayer for this new year.

*May you help me to love a bit more deeply,
See the beauty around me more clearly,
Listen more earnestly,
Speak more honestly.*

May I be troubled by injustice and moved to act.

May I be led by compassion and be moved to serve.

May I walk softly upon this earth and be gentle towards your creation.

May I be a courageous and bold witness for you.

May I be a living example of Your gracious love, not only in word but in deed.

And may I daily give thanks for the others in my life and in the world who do the same and more, every day, in innumerable ways.

For the promise in this New Year, I give you thanks.

Help me to live it wisely and well.

~Rev. Sandy Messick, Disciples of Christ