

The Link

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
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Volume 38 No. 2

God is Still Speaking,

January 26, 2016

A Meeting With the Holy Spirit

This Sunday just following worship, members of the congregation of Vancouver First Congregational Church – UCC will hold the congregational meeting. The congregational meeting is the time of year in which we gather to conduct the yearly business of the church, it is true. But more than that, the congregational meeting is an opportunity to flex our faith muscles.

In his final words to his disciples in the book of John, Jesus promises that God will send an “Advocate to be with you forever.” (John 14:16b). Another name for that Advocate is the Holy Spirit, who lives and breathes and moves within us both as individuals and as a covenant community. In the UCC, we seek to organize ourselves in the way that is most responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

How can we respond to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our congregational meeting this coming week?

- Listen carefully. As another member of the congregations speaks, ask yourself “How is the Holy Spirit speaking to me through this brother or sister in Christ?”

- Speak prayerfully. Just as we listen for the Holy Spirit in one another, in our meetings with each other we have the opportunity to hear the Holy Spirit’s leading in our own hearts before we speak. Extroverts like me especially often need to pause and breathe a moment before we speak.

- Rejoice constantly. Our sister UCC church in Lake Oswego encourages members before each meeting to “assume good intent,” meaning to understand that every member at a meeting wants to follow the Spirit as fervently as every other member. Our congregational meeting is a powerful opportunity to experience the work of the Spirit in other individuals and in the gathered body of Christ - a real reason to rejoice!

I look forward to meeting with you – and the Advocate – on Sunday.

Peace,
Jennifer

WORSHIP IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY

January 31, 2016 SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY

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 following worship

February 7, 2016 COMMUNION

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: Chuck and Jan Foulke
Worship Leader: Dwight Chapman
Ushers: Rory Martindale and Trent Corey
Wayne and Doris Fletcher

February 10, 2016 Ash Wednesday

5:00 PM, Soup Supper in the Plymouth Room followed by Distribution of the Ashes in the Sanctuary at 6:00.

February 14, 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. 11:00 a.m., Faith Formation in Classroom 2

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Pat Degerstedt and Connie Oppel
Worship Leader: Patty Yates
Ushers: Carol Pendergraft, Dwight Chapman
Darrell and Shirley Brandenburg

February 21, 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: Wayne and Doris Fletcher
Worship Leader: Arlene Arnold
Ushers: Ken Rowe and Cory Saum-Blystone
Ray Jones

February 28, 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. Adult Education in Bradford Hall following worship.

Worship Volunteers:

Greeters: Joan Blair and
Worship Leader: Leslie Chapman
Ushers: Susan Rush

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 McBride
Harriet Anani
Anne Kamp
Charlotte Warren
Sue Benson
Marvin Benson
Josiah Renner
(deployed to Afghanistan)

UPCOMING PUBLICATION DATES FOR *"The Link"*

Link Deadline
Link Mailed

February 9, 2016
February 11, 2016

Women's Breakfast Group

All women of the church are invited to celebrate sisterhood, fellowship and friendship when the ***Women's Breakfast Group*** meets at 9:30 a.m., Saturday, February 14, at the Red Lion Inn at the Quay.

Service for John Priel

A Celebration for the Life of **John Priel** will be held on Saturday, January 30th at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. John and his wife, Norma Lee have been members of our church family since 1962. A luncheon reception in Bradford Hall will follow the service.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: TOUGH DECISIONS COMING AT THE JANUARY 31 CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Through our fall stewardship campaign, we received pledges totaling \$175,216. Most of us are aware that our church budget is very lean. The preliminary budget for 2016 that we passed on November 29th calls for pledge income of \$204,000. So we are facing a potential income shortfall of \$28,787 for 2016.

Our congregation is very generous. We have tackled enormous debt due to our recent building renovations, and we continue to make significant reductions in our mortgage. We look forward to the time when our mortgage can be paid out of our operating budget and there is no further need for contributing to both a capital debt reduction campaign and our ongoing operations, but that is still a few years away.

At our upcoming congregational meeting (after worship this coming Sunday, January 31), we need to decide how we will proceed. Here are some possible alternatives:

1. Trust that enough contributions will come in to cover necessary expenses, even though a significant portion of those contributions have not been pledged in advance,
2. Undertake a supplementary pledge campaign to reduce the gap between income and expenses,
3. Decide to spend some of our cash on hand (\$10,939 surplus from 2014 operations and about \$31,000 from 2015) to offset any 2016 shortfall,
4. Reduce our operating budget by making significant cuts, or
5. Some combination of the first four alternatives.

During 2015 we had a three month period without a pastor. This contributed to our ending 2015 with expenses much lower than budgeted. It also contributed to some uncertainty and insecurity about our future. We could use some of our cash balance toward our projected 2016 shortfall, but this would not be a long-term solution. In the long run, we need to bring our operating costs and our income into balance.

Please come to this important congregational meeting, and please help our congregation make these hard decisions.

With great appreciation for your generosity and your wisdom,

Your Church Officers:

Ken Rowe, Moderator; Tom Yates, Vice-Moderator;
Jean Beary Stolle, Clerk; John Fite, Financial Secretary;
and Richard Trefren, Treasurer

MISSION & OUTREACH FEBRUARY SPECIAL OFFERING is WINTER HOSPITALITY OVERFLOW SHELTER (WHO)

In 2003, Council for the Homeless and Share partnered with the Greater Vancouver Interfaith Association to create the Winter Hospitality Overflow (WHO), a program committed to providing safe shelter during the winter months to families and individuals experiencing homelessness.

Our church will volunteer to staff the shelter March 6-13th (see related article). Even though WHO is a volunteer-driven program, the WHO incurs expenses for utilities, groceries, volunteer training materials, and salaries for professional case management staff.

Please consider giving generously to support this example of love in action by writing a check out to our church any Sunday in February and noting "WHO" in the memo line.



Sign up now for our WHO week March 6-13. Once again we are partnering with our friends at Kol Ami. Volunteering is easy 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> **Make sure the calendar is on March** to find the shifts available during our shared week shifts, March 6-13..

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.

You can view the shift details and description before you sign up, but sign up early to get your preferred shift!

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 (jtstolle@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!)

Congregational Meeting January 31, 2016

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

**Laurie Parafinczuk
Gina Marquardt
David Slocum
Tom Renner
Jeff Schnabel
Karen Kulm
Carole Greenauer
Kimberly Lewis
and
Janet Melton.**



Interfaith Advocacy Day 2/4/16

On Interfaith Advocacy Day, you will be able to:

- Join workshops that will break down the issues on [FAN's 2016 Legislative Agenda](#)
- Learn current best practices on how to advocate in today's legislature
- Learn how to prepare for briefings and hearings.
- **Meet with your legislator! Once you register, FAN will set up an appointment for you and others from your district**
- [Register Here](#)
- Lunch will be provided

Don't miss this important day in Olympia!

REGISTRATION: \$15.00 when paid in advance, and \$20.00 if you pay at the door. Your registration fee helps to cover some of the cost of renting our meeting space, catering, and materials. Online registration ends January 31, 2016 at 11:59 PM. You can register after that time by calling our office at (206) 625-9790.

After you register, you will receive details on the agenda, workshop topics, and the times of your legislative appointments. To help us in this important work, make sure you register with a strong commitment to join us on February 4!

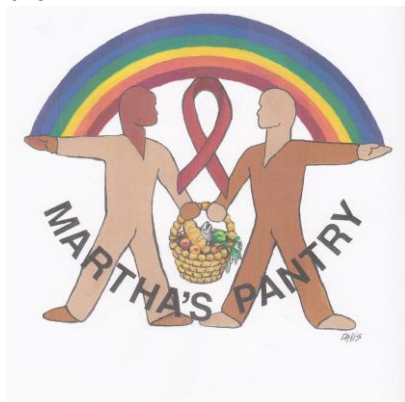
LOCATION: The United Churches of Olympia, 110 11th Avenue SE, Olympia, WA 98501. Parking is limited unless you park in a state parking garage for a fee. Contact Karen Kulm at 360-991-5774 to carpool.

CHECK-IN: Doors open at 8:00 AM on February 4, and the program begins at 9:00 AM. We'll end by 3:00 PM following a debrief session in the Pritchard building on the capitol campus.



January 31, 2016

Please join me in donating to the Souper Bowl Sunday canned food and money drive supporting Martha's Pantry. Donations are being accepted in the narthex through next Sunday.. No donation is too insignificant because when added together, even little things can make a big change in our community. This year, the youth group as well as **ALL** the children of the church will be participating on Souper Bowl Sunday. 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.



Valentine's Day Celebration!

Please join us on Sunday, February 14th after church in Bradford Hall to celebrate Valentine's Day as only First Congregational UCC Vancouver can!

Our very own Charlie Ross is going to lead us in some fun folk/square dancing and we will be making Valentines for our shut-ins. We promise, fun, fellowship and sweet treats!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

February 03	David Macko
February 12	Carole Greenauer
February 12	Gail Schmitt
February 16	Lenna Stradley
February 21	Simon Melton
February 25	Don Walter



"Lent comes providentially to reawaken us, to shake us from our lethargy."

~ Pope Francis



Wednesday, February 10, marks the beginning of the Lenten Season. In recognition of Ash Wednesday, Parish Life will again be offering a soup supper in the Plymouth Room beginning at 5:45 PM followed by Distribution of the Ashes at 6:30 in the Sanctuary.