



The Link
JANUARY 2022



Dear Vancouver UCC,
It is Epiphany, the season in which we seek for and follow the Light of the world that came to us at Christmas. Epiphany is a season of change and transformation, a

season to follow Christ wherever he may lead, even down paths that are a little frightening or unfamiliar. Epiphany is a season of promise—the promise that wherever the road may go, Christ will be there—leading and calling, accompanying and guiding.

For you and I, this is also a season of farewell. My last day with you as your pastor will be on January 16. For a time, we have listened for Christ's call together—now we will follow new paths. I am pausing from parish ministry to complete a writing project that has been brewing for many years. In the meantime, I will remain active in the Central Pacific Conference, attending Bridgeport UCC (where my partner Rev. Tara Wilkins serves as pastor), serving on a conference committee, and offering the keynote at the tri-annual women's conference coming up in November of this year.

And what does this season of listening and following hold for you, dear congregation? My

deep prayer is that this congregation, along with other churches in the conference and UCC denomination, are able to embrace the new day we face post-pandemic and not only adapt but model Christ by leading into the future. The way forward for the church, as it is for the nation, is to embrace a few seeming paradoxes.

First, honor the past, but live for the future. Right in the mission statement, Vancouver UCC proclaims the desire to be “rooted in but not rootbound by Christian tradition.” It is important to remember who the church was in the past, and just as important to dodge the temptation to stay there. Trying to return to past programs, ideals or values is not only impossible, it is distracting from the kingdom building that God has placed before this community here and now.

Second, stay close while being open. Friendship and community care is a beautiful value in this congregation, and one that I pray will continue to be strengthened. But caring communities can become closed communities, relying on second-hand rumor and gossip rather than open communication. Taking communication underground is damaging to everyone in the community, whether they are directly involved or not. I have experienced directly both the hurt that comes from rumor-mongering and the healing that comes from direct—if momentarily painful—confrontation. ▶

Vancouver
United Church
of Christ



*Sunday Worship: 10 am
In Person and Zoom*

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The office is currently closed

Pastor: Rev. Jennifer Garrison Brownell
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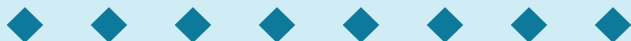
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The LINK is published the 1st week of each month. The **Due Date** for articles is the **4th Sunday** of the preceding month.

Your submissions should have:

- Articles in WORD format or text in the body of an email.
- Pictures submitted as attached jpgs.
- Permission of the copyright holder for all copyrighted materials.

Message from the Pastor continued...

Loving each other means telling the truth in love sometimes, not with the goal of total agreement but with the goal of continuing to be both close and open.

Third, grow in both your individual understanding of God and your love of others. Since earliest times, Christian communities have been set apart by the care they show for those who are ill, fragile, or alone. That care is unique because it relies on an ongoing and evolving understanding that the work of the Spirit is made manifest in each individual. In order to be a thriving community, each individual of every age and ability can commit to a plan of spiritual growth. For each person that will look different, but without spiritual growth, the programs, projects, and missions that a church community commits itself to will be much harder, if not impossible to sustain.

Honor the past, live for the future.

Stay close, stay open.

Grow with God, care for others.

It has been such an honor to be on this journey with you since November 2015. Thank you for all the ways that you have helped me to live into these three paradoxes in our time together. May God continue to richly bless each one of you and this community of faith.

In peace,
Pastor Jennifer



MESSAGE FROM YOUR COUNCIL MODERATOR

The wind has been blowing heartily down the Columbia River Gorge, and people wonder why I wish for rain! Most of the time, when the rain is falling the wind does not blow. In this strange year that followed a truly strange year for all of us, it is interesting to know what we wish for.

Our congregation is working to meet a new challenge—to choose an interim pastor to guide us in calling a permanent replacement for Pastor Jennifer Brownell. Pastor Jennifer will be preaching through January 16. Please join in celebrating her work with us during coffee hour on January 9.

If you are interested in serving on the search committee for the interim pastor, please contact moderator-elect John Marquardt, who will be chairing this committee. We are looking for two people who will work with those who have already offered to assist: Tom Renner, Jan Foulke, Steve Bloodworth. Email John at johnmarquardt@gmail.com soon as we hope to choose an interim pastor to start during Lent around the beginning of March 2022.

Information about the upcoming congregational meeting will be coming out in addition to reports from your council representatives about their work over the months of 2021. The yearly meeting to elect officers and representatives and consider the yearly budget will occur on January 30 directly after worship. If you regularly attend worship via zoom, information will be coming out about how to sign out of worship and into the meeting. Someone will monitor the zoom attendance so you can ask questions and hear answers even if you are attending remotely.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Lord and this congregation as your council moderator for 2021. As we all look to the New Year, let us continue to work together guided by the Holy Spirit to meet the challenges we will face as a congregation and as a community. Many blessings to you and your families!

Brenda Houchen, Your Council Moderator



Here is an update from your financial secretary. As of December 21, we have 65 pledges for a total of \$179,364. If you have not pledged yet, you are encouraged to do so as we budget for 2022.

Just a reminder for electronic givers, you will need to again input any reoccurring donations after January 1, 2022. Thank you, Jan Foulke.

Sunday, January 9



Please join us during coffee hour after worship when we will be honoring Pastor Jennifer before her last Sunday on January 16. For more info please contact Sandy Mathis at sanjermathis@msn.com.

From Our Conference Minister

Rev. Tyler Connoley



If you spend any time with pastors or church leaders of any kind, it's not long before the subject will turn to worship and contagion precautions.

"How is your church doing worship right now? Are you requiring vaccines? Are you checking? What about masks? Are you singing? Is anyone singing?"

On an unconscious level, many of us have started to realize that we're moving into a new phase in our relationship with the novel coronavirus. Now that vaccines are widely available in the United States (and since the vast majority of our members are vaccinated) we have begun to move from the *pandemic* stage into the *endemic* stage.

All along, scientists have said the likely end-game for COVID-19 is that the virus that causes it will become endemic in the human population. Like the common cold or the flu (which are dangerous for some people but not for most), the virus will become something we

learn to deal with regularly. For those who are vaccinated, this is already beginning to happen -- even while the pandemic rages on in intentionally unvaccinated wealthy populations, and in communities and countries deprived of vaccinations.

Our CPC churches, where most people are vaccinated, are becoming proving grounds for how we will live in the endemic phase. For that reason, we need to think carefully about what we do in the next few months. We are setting patterns that will live with us for years, and we may be modeling behaviors that will become common practice in the wider population.

As with earlier stages of COVID-19, I will hold a series of Zoom calls for clergy and lay leaders to share with one another what we're learning. I'm calling these **Endemic Practices Conversations**. Here's the schedule:

January 18 at 12 pm PST

January 19 at 9:30 am PST

January 20 at 5:30 pm PST

All the meetings will be held in my personal Zoom room:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5790725484>

I also want to say something about morality and vaccinations. Whether we like it or not, our calling to be Christians means we are also called to moral leadership, and the decision of whether or not to vaccinate is a moral question. I'm not sure about the ethics around requiring proof of vaccination for attendance at church, but I am absolutely clear about the morality of choosing or not choosing to be vaccinated.

I know we progressive Christians don't like to name it. However, when a healthy adult with access to vaccines chooses not to get vaccinated, they are sinning.

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...From Our Conference Minister continued

They are sinning against their body, and the God who created it. Choosing to risk illness and death for no good reason.

They are sinning against their neighbors, risking the health and lives of people they infect, and the lives and health of those whose hospital rooms they selfishly take. They are sinning against healthcare workers who have to hold their suffering, despite the medical professional's own long-term trauma and exhaustion from this pandemic.

They are sinning against those around the world who continue to die from new variants incubated largely in the bodies of our unvaccinated friends and family who glibly flaunt their selfishness as if it were a virtue. It is not virtue. It is sin.

I am trying to become more bold in accepting my calling as a moral leader. I want to be careful not to fall into hubris or brittleness. However, in the face of a concerted effort in our society to claim selfishness as a virtue,

those of us who are called to Christianity need to begin to exercise our moral voice.

As we move into the endemic phase of this disease, I believe our highly-vaccinated church communities will become engines of experimentation for endemic best practices. We have an opportunity to model good habits for our friends and neighbors. We also have an opportunity to be moral voices in our communities, advocating for vaccination as a moral choice for those who have access, and demanding good access to vaccines for our less-wealthy neighbors in the United States and abroad.

As always, thanks for accepting the call to be the church for this place and this time. You are the moral leaders the world needs right now.

Blessings,
Tyler

Rev. Tyler Connoley

575-956-3316

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5790725484>



January Mission Offering

Please help support God's Ministry at Friends of the Carpenter! They are a non-profit, faith-based day facility that provides safety, structure, and purpose for vulnerable members of our local community.

Their current budget has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Your donation will help fund and support services in their

Friendship Center, Wood Shop and help grow their Readiness and Training program.

Friends of the Carpenter recently experienced an electrical fire in their facility and, like our church, they have rebuilt and have reopened. You are welcome to visit and see their renewed service in action!

You can read more about their mission here—
<http://friendsofthecarpenter.org/>

JANUARY



- Jan 1 John Fite
- Jan 3 Ken Rowe
- Jan 6 Lisa King
- Jan 7 Charles Ross
- Jan 11 Virgil Myers
- Jan 18 Allison Abernathy
- Jan 22 Danya Marquardt
- Jan 24 Dorothy Mathews
- Jan 28 Judy Dahlen
- Jan 31 Martin Borcharding



SPECIAL CONCERNS

The family of Ileana Hendrick—Brian Fick’s mother

The family and friends of Joanie Nelson

The family of Carole Elizabeth

The family of Opal Chapman

The family of Jeremy Chapman—Leslie's son

Nathan Klump and Karen Klump—Lynn Chan's nephew, and sister

The family of Irma Slocum



The Christmas caroling done by the church choir was a big hit with Irma; she enjoyed every minute of it! Thanks again and Happy Holidays! The Slocum family



Irma Slocum passed away Sunday, December 19, just a few months shy of her 101st birthday. Members of the church choir were grateful to visit with Irma and share Christmas joy.

