

# The Link



## MESSAGE FROM YOUR INTERIM PASTOR—REV. BRET MYERS

Hello Vancouver UCC congregants!



Well, one Sunday in worship with you seemed to go well, and I'm looking forward to the Sundays to come. As with last Sunday, next Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> will continue the usual format in which you've become accustomed, only with a polylogue again instead of a sermon. Then with the next Sunday, the third Sunday I'm here, June 5<sup>th</sup>, I'd like to introduce you to how I created a worship style that has helped attract more secularized persons (i.e., nones, spiritual but not religious, and progressive Christians) to the churches I've served over the years. You will see some commonalities with what you now do, but also some new elements – all of them good, of course!)

To that end, I want to explain the philosophy behind worship that I have, and why I do things as I do given how our wider culture has changed over the years, as well as what works well with congregations that are, or want to attract, progressive Christians and younger members to their churches.

Inclusive language in every element of worship is vitally important to me. This seems to be a common value here at Vancouver UCC, so I think most of you will appreciate some common elements that have some revised wording to help people traditionally marginalized to identify more with what happens in worship. More on this in a bit.

A second emphasis is to speak the language of common values of people from all walks of life, and not use as much "churchy" language that may be off-putting to those not reared in the church. I try to create a "values-based" worship service that will feel at home for both long-term Christians as well as the "spiritual but not religious" who may have never been to church. This creates a more inclusive, welcoming, and encouraging environment in which newcomers do not feel they are stepping into a place that uses a "foreign" language, which churchy/ecclesiastical language can do.

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Yet, it is familiar enough to long-term church-goers so that we can connect all the elements to things we have done in the past, while giving us a new "interpretation" of our faith in a way that resonates with those who are new to the faith. Interestingly, I've heard many long-term members tell me the new way of speaking about things helps them to make better sense of their own faith in a post-modern world.

Below I will go through the worship elements that I often include in the order of worship. Here are some preliminary remarks to state the values behind these different elements:

The structure, content, and titles of each segment within the bulletin are designed to:

- 1) encourage spiritual reflection, understanding, and growth (rather than passive acceptance of tenets/doctrines/dogmas),
- 2) be inclusive of all people (by not using hierarchical, sexist, or other alienating language),
- 3) promote Biblical/Christian/reading literacy (which counteracts the values of a "sound-bite" society that incites anti-intellectualism),
- 4) encourage critical/rational thinking and welcome questioning with regard to faith (which invites people into a faith-journey rather than a belief-absolutism),
- 5) imaginative/creative application to individual faith journeys (versus exclusive or doctrinaire rigidity),
- 6) invite conversation and dialogue within the community of the church (thus making our faith communal, and not merely personal), and
- 7) inspire sharing of thoughts and ideas to family, friends, co-workers, and others within the wider community (which shares our

insights to others while also engaging others to share their insights with us).

All of this serves to foster faith within the church and make it socially dynamic so as to reach others who may be looking for a community of faith in which they don't have to leave their minds or their hearts at the door before entering our church.

*Next: A Point-by-Point Description of the Bulletin Outline:*

### **Church Title with descriptor and motto under it, followed by date and time:**

While a newcomer's first impressions are going to be the building, the entryway, and the first persons they meet at the church, the first thing they will notice in the bulletin is the church title at the top. If a descriptor and motto are included here, they will get a general sense of what the church's identity is and whether it welcomes them. I try to write descriptors and mottos that are not only affirming of them where they are at, but inspire them to see how they and we may grow together.

### **Welcome Statement**

This invites people to our church, and lets them know what we emphasize, and how we see them fitting in.

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

This section is intentionally placed before the order of worship in order that those settling in may read before the service begins to get a sense of the theme of the day. It will usually include focus scriptures and commentary/quotes that frame those scriptures within the context of the theme of the day. This helps to engage the worshiper/attender to be actively engaged in thinking about the theme rather than as merely listeners. Ideally, it serves to help them grow upon their own spiritual journey. I also post this on our church's FB page and/or website or weekly email.

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## **CALLED TOGETHER AS SPIRITUAL FAMILY**

This section heading not only summarizes the subheadings to come, but also invites us to see ourselves as engaged in a communal experience, not simply a personal one. It asserts that our purpose in being together is an intentional act of acknowledging and acting on our sacred bond to one another.

### **Welcome and Announcements**

This is intentionally placed before the worship service/time of sacred fellowship begins as it is informational rather than sacramental. It attunes our congregation and attendees to what is going on within the church and how we are reaching out to the wider community. A welcome statement by the worship leader can preface the announcements.

## **PRELUDE AND WELCOMING THE LIGHT OF LOVE IN OUR MIDST**

The Prelude is not simply an auditory clue that alerts people that the time of sacred fellowship is about ready to begin, it also serves to help transform people's consciousness from casual time to worship time -- readying their hearts, souls, and minds to receive and participate in the discovery of the divine in our lives individually and collectively. Acolytes bring the "light of love" into our sanctuary and our presence as a reminder of that light which is simultaneously from God, within us, and between us. (The words written under the caption may be read silently, or aloud by the acolyte or worship leader)

### **Choral Introit**

When and if used, is a response and affirmation of the "Light of Love in Our Midst" that confirms our attention to preparing for the divine to enter into our lives.

### **Affirming God's Presence in Us All "You Matter"**

This statement by the pastor sets the tone for

making everyone feel affirmed for who they are, where they are on life's journey, and that God and we as a congregation believe they matter. Groups that have unfortunately been excluded by many churches (e.g., LGBTQIA+, brown and black skinned persons, the homeless, et al are specifically mentioned as mattering to God and to us).

### **\*Hymn for...**

This first hymn serves not only as introduction to the time of sacred fellowship by the congregation, but also ideally foreshadows the theme of the day, and especially the words in the "Centering Our Souls". It is an act of song that engages the congregation to become attentive to the divine truths and sacred experiences to be shared together.

### **\*Centering Our Souls**

This is an intentional focusing on the theme of the day in words that seek to encourage understanding, reinforce commitment, and nurture creative discernment of how God/the divine speaks to us where we are in order to lead us forward into a new future.

## **WE LISTEN FOR THE SACRED IN THE MIDST OF OUR LIVES**

This section heading guides us to be receptive to God's still speaking voice in our lives and community. It is an invitation for us to prepare ourselves for an experience that can result in divine epiphanies and sacred relationships.

### **A Time for All God's Children**

While everyone with a childlike spirit is welcome to come forward, this is a time especially for communally recognizing our devotion to providing spiritual edification and nurturance for the youngest among us. The messages, though perhaps profound, are put in a simple manner so as to be understood by persons of all ages and aptitudes. It is a time for creative ways of illustrating common values,

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truths, and virtues to be lived day by day. Ideally, this teaching moment is done weekly by many members of our congregation – as so many of us have much we have learned and can pass on to the next generations.

## **PRAYERS**

### ***Sharing Our Joys and Concerns, and Acts of Compassion or Kindness Silent***

#### ***Meditation: The Prayers of the People***

##### ***Pastoral Prayer***

##### ***Unison Prayer***

The time for prayers enlists a variety of methods to open conversation with the sacred among us.

By sharing our joys and concerns, we share our hearts and minds with each other over things that we are finding impactful to our lives. This vocal telling enables not only others to pray with us regarding these matters, but also makes them aware of how our own spirits are being affected by our surroundings so that we can better respond to one another in a spirit of informed love for each other.

Stories of random acts of kindness and/or intentional deeds of compassion are expressed by the congregation from what they have witnessed in the last week or two – whether done by others or themselves. These stories of good news and benevolence are a counter-balance to the negativity we are accustomed to hearing throughout the week via radio, TV, social media, and other sources of news. They remind us of the goodness in the world, and of our role in being witnesses and/or enactors of that goodness. Our shared stories are testimonies that we are not Sunday-only Christians, but feel it is necessary for us each to do good in the world every week – not simply waiting for opportunities for us to do good to fall into our lap, but to actively seek ways of creating goodness in our relationships, community, and world.

The time of silent meditation is an opportunity for the people to relate to the divine privately in their own way, while simultaneously being cognizant of how others are doing the same. This empowers the process of prayer, reminding us that even in our individual prayers, we are united with our siblings of the same spirit and values.

The pastoral prayer gives voice to our collective concerns and values in a way that affirms we are spiritual siblings together – especially when we are intentional about giving voice to those matters of the spirit publicly.

And the unison prayer is our collective affirmation of all the former prayers that serves as an interactive and inter-relational way of lifting up our voices and our spirits in one accord so that what we do together is greater than the sum of what we have done separately. The unison prayer can be any prayer that does this, though some churches may prefer particular types of prayers here. If a church prefers to do some version of “The Lord’s Prayer,” I will usually rotate a 3 or 4 versions in order to keep the prayer from being rote, and to allow a wider audience to appreciate the themes contained within that prayer – as well as to help each person to see the prayer with new eyes to see and hear it with new ears to listen.

##### **\*Hymn of...**

This hymn ideally not only continues the theme of the service, but prefaces the scripture lessons – giving the scriptures a musical voice before we ruminate more concertedly on their meaning.

##### **Scripture Lesson(s)**

This may consist of one or several passages from sacred scriptures, and/or other texts of wisdom or moral edification. Depending on the church, these passages selected by the pastor

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will usually be Biblical, but may also be other texts within or outside of the Christian tradition. God speaks through all the world religions, and even may be heard in non-religious texts to the discerning spirit. The reading of these words may be done purposefully and emphatically, suggestively and with nuance, or even dramatically performed or told in story form. There is a richness in sacred texts that welcomes multivalent meanings and understandings, and invites various methods to add depth and breadth to the interpretative process for both speaker and listener.

### **Message**

Messages (i.e., sermons) may be done in multifarious ways as well: e.g., exegetically, devotionally, prophetically, pastorally, contextually/historically, mytho-poetically, inspirationally, as stories, as 1<sup>st</sup> person narratives, as a Bible Study where all are invited to comment, or as a polylogue where the pastor serves as a facilitator of discussion on a passage, theme, issue, or event that welcomes the collective wisdom of every person in the congregation. Keeping the methods and topics variable helps to invite a curiosity about how God will speak to us on any given Sunday, and how we might be engaged in that conversation.

### **\*Hymn for...**

This hymn serves as a synopsis of the message and/or theme of the day and as a motivator for the congregation to take the lessons learned and turn them into daily action and practice. It encourages faithful discipleship and commitment to the values of Christian living made real in the world. As such, this hymn is less likely to be “belief-centered” or an assurance of what God is going to do for us, but rather how we are to be the people of God in living by God’s values in a world that needs to have these sacred values practiced and exemplified by we who strive to be faithful.

## **WE DEDICATE OURSELVES TO GOD’S SERVICE THROUGH FAITHFULNESS**

This section heading follows up on the notion that our faith is to be translated into daily habits and practice. We come not just for our own spiritual enrichment, but to be empowered to go out into a world in need of healing, nourishment, inspiration, and spiritual sustenance. We are to be the consciences of our wider society rather than the mirrors of its own values. We are to be the reminders of culture that the best values come from sacred sources and affirm divine virtues – not only with our verbal, but our embodied, presence within the world.

### **Giving of Our Offerings**

Because we are a people in covenant community with God and the world, we refuse to be merely partakers and not givers. We give of our selves, our time, our efforts, our resources, and whatever else that we have been blessed with to give to a world in need of what we have to share. This is an intentionally spiritual commitment we make to our God and our world. We acknowledge our blessings, and we affirm the worth of what we have to give for the betterment of our wider community. Giving gratefully and joyfully becomes a spiritual discipline of training our hearts and minds to be focused on the blessings we can share, and not simply those we receive.

### **Gift of Music: Choral Anthem**

The choir offers up its offering of song to the people of God. Joyful voices remind us of the importance of using our God-given gifts, as well as our accumulated resources, to enrich the experiences and lives of others in our world. This anthem may be placed elsewhere in the worship, but fits nicely in this time where

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we consider how we can bless others with our monetary gifts.

### **\*Song of Dedication**

This song of dedication is rotated according to the season, focusing on broader themes throughout the Christian year. The words are to be a reflection of our inclusive welcome, our mutual encouragement, and our commitment to be spiritual family – not only to each other, but to the wider world.

### **\*Unison Prayer of Dedication**

Likewise, the prayer of dedication by the people of God serves to unify our common cause for making God's will to be done in our lives and world through our actions of generosity and giving. The language is again to be values-based rather than belief-based, reinforcing our shared commitment to principles and virtues that people throughout the world can affirm.

### **\*Choral Benediction**

If this is done, it serves as a response to the congregation's prayer of dedication and the reinforcement of living out our shared sacred values.

### **\*Encouragement for the Journey**

These last words of the service offer challenge and assurance in living by our higher values, and are meant to be inspirational and motivating for each person to go forth in the week to come to be beacons of beneficence and lights of love.

### **Postlude and The Light of Love Goes into the World**

These serve to symbolize, one musically and the other visually, the carrying out of our values and virtues to those we meet along our life's way, as well as those we may never meet but still may positively influence by our deeds of love, peace, compassion, and kindness. We bring the light of love into our sanctuary at the beginning, but we do not keep it there. We take it out into the world the rest of the week.

## **WE GO FORTH AS PEACEMAKERS TO CREATE JUSTICE FOR ALL**

This section title reminds us that while the time of sacred fellowship is concluding in worship, it is just beginning in how we relate to our wider world. We are called to be peacemakers and justice-creators, for this is how we best show our love for God and neighbor.

A saying is used each Sunday to refresh our focus on how we are to live our lives on earth.

### **Thanks to all for their attendance and participation**

A statement is included to thank all for the presence, and to reaffirm the type of spiritual community we hope to be with one another and to the world.

Alright, I know this is a lot to digest, so feel free to ask any questions, suggest alternative possibilities that keep within the values of worship expressed, or other insights that you may have.

I look forward to our working together to create a meaningful and inspiring time of being nurtured in our faith and values for God's purposes.

Blessings, Pastor Bret

**THE LABYRINTH IS NOW OPEN!!**



## CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

### MISSION AND OUTREACH

#### CLIMATE JUSTICE CHURCHES

The M&O team has completed a cycle of three work sessions around the priorities that were identified at the recent Zoom planning retreat: homelessness, immigrant welcoming and climate justice. As a result of these work sessions, we're now planning:

- With help from the local Council for the Homeless we hope to soon offer learning sessions for everyone about the challenges of homelessness.
- To strengthen our relationship with the local Lutheran Family Services' program for resettling of immigrants, especially for the current surge in Ukrainian refugees. Since our last meeting, we have agreed to send \$5,000 from the church's Naselle fund to Lutheran Community Services Northwest for Ukrainian refugee resettlement, leaving about \$4,000 for other local M&O opportunities.
- The very first line under the BE THE

CHURCH banner in front of the church reads, "Protect the Environment. So, when we became aware of a *Creation Justice Churches* program, overseen by UCC's Minister for Environmental Justice, Rev. Brooks Berndt (and our former pastor), we were excited by its scope and the process it would call for VUCC to undertake.

With Interim Pastor Bret Myers' support, the M&O team has now proposed to Council that we embrace the Creation Justice Church (CJC) program and undertake the steps that will prepare us to declare ourselves a Creation Justice Church. The CJC program is extremely flexible, with each participating congregation developing its own plan of action based on its self-understanding and sense of mission. You can expect to hear more about this process in future Links and elsewhere.

Together, these three initiatives are the M&O team's first answer to the third question for our congregation's interim process: Who is God calling us to become?

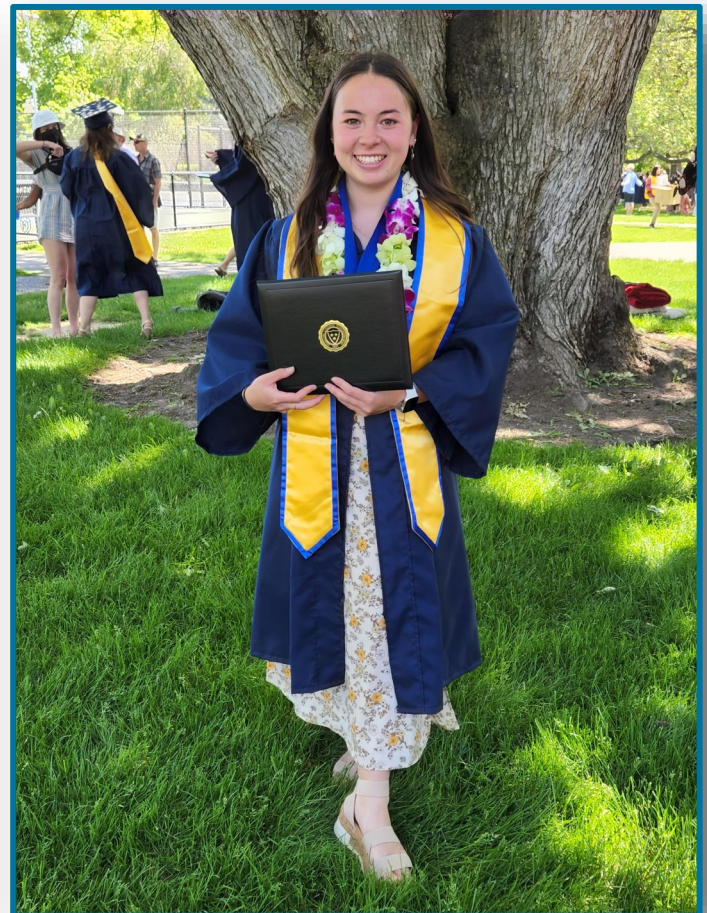


We want to thank my church family for all of the cards, calls, flowers and condolences. It means a lot to have the support of friends and family. Blessings to all of you. Judy Walter, Kent and Katie

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!



**Brian Chan** graduated from the University of Washington in August 2021 with a Master's Degree in Forest Management. In June of 2020 they earned their Bachelors of Science degree in Forestry. Due to Covid, no ceremonies were live and they will now get to "walk" on Sunday, June 12.



**Holly Chan** graduated from Whitman College with a Bachelor of Arts in Biology, Summa Cum Laude. She will be working this summer in Colorado as a hiking guide and then moves to Philadelphia this Fall to begin a health care job for 11 months. She currently hopes to get into a Physician Assistant program by next year.



# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!



Haydn Chapman

Class of 2022

**Haydn Chapman** will graduate on June 9 from Legacy High School. Haydn is the grandson of Leslie Chapman and great grandson of Dwight Chapman and has attended Vancouver UCC since he was born. After graduating, Haydn will take a year off while he decides what his future path will be. He is contemplating joining the US Coast Guard or going to a tech school.



JOIN EVERGREEN HABITAT FOR OUR ANNUAL

## Faith Partners Lunch

JUNE 9 | 12 PM

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church | 16001 NE 34th St, Vancouver, WA 98682

Members and leaders from all faiths welcome. Learn what's happening at Habitat and how your faith community can get involved. See our new Johnson Village neighborhood and join us for a special foundation blessing!

No charge to attend and a light lunch will be served

RSVP to Lindsy at [lindsy@ehfh.org](mailto:lindsy@ehfh.org) or 360-737-1759



## AROUND TOWN



### 50 Years of Service



In October 1970, Charlie Ross was just 33 years old when he and his wife took a cross-country trip from Illinois to Portland, Oregon to pursue an opportunity as the new pastor of Parkrose UCC. After

landing the job, Charlie was certain that he wanted to engage with the community beyond the church, and asked around to see if there were any local services helping those in need. Although he can't remember who it was, somebody happened to mention a small, relatively new charity called SnowCap that was providing food to the hungry.

After initially taking a few canned food donations to the fledgling organization, Charlie began volunteering for SnowCap in 1972, ultimately deciding that was exactly where he was meant to be.

"Human connection is so important" said Charlie, "and SnowCap has always done such a good job making sure people have enough to

eat, as well as making them feel welcomed and cared for. I just love that they help people who need help."

After 50 years, Charlie is now SnowCap's longest continually serving volunteer. And while he's satisfied with the work he's done, the one thing that makes Charlie truly beam with pride, is passing down his legacy of serving the community, to his own family.

"I'm so happy that both my kids and now my grandkids have all volunteered with SnowCap. They've helped fill food boxes, and helped with the auction, and now they volunteer with me, to make sure I get a ride over here every week, so I can keep volunteering."

While he might not be able to do every volunteer job he used to do, at 85 years old, Charlie still carries that same passion for helping others, that drew him to SnowCap in the first place.

"SnowCap was built to last" said Charlie, "I'm excited about what we've done, and I'm excited to see where it goes from here."

We are too, Charlie. And we can't thank you enough for 50 wonderful years of helping SnowCap, help others.

*Excerpt from April SnowCap Newsletter <https://www.snowcap.org/>*

## CONGREGATIONAL NEWS



The Family of Don Walter

Ken Kerr, Pastor  
*MCC of the Gentle Shepherd*

Nathan Klump  
*Lynn Chan's nephew*

An end to mass shootings, recently at  
school, church, and grocery.



The Memorial Service for Don Walter will be held Sunday, June 12, at 2 pm in the Labyrinth.



**Irma Slocum**

The Memorial Service for Irma Slocum will be held Saturday, August 13 at 11 am. A potluck in Bradford Hall will follow afterwards.

Vancouver  
United Church  
of Christ



*Sunday Worship: 10 am*

1220 NE 68th St • Vancouver, WA 98665  
www.vanucc.org—info@vanucc.org  
(360) 693-1476

*The office is currently closed*

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The LINK is published the 1st week of each month. The **Due Date** for articles is the **4th Wed.** of the preceding month.

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.
- Send articles to elizabeth@vanucc.org.



June 3 . . . . .	Sue Benson
June 3 . . . . .	Bert Martin
June 4 . . . . .	Elias Martin
June 5 . . . . .	Shawn Daniels
June 5 . . . . .	Brenda Houchen
June 7. . . . .	.Claude Blair
June 7. . . . .	.Liam Holden
June 10 . . . . .	Lauren Hubbell
June 12 . . . . .	Virginia Dunbar
June 12 . . . . .	Cindy McNally
June 12 . . . . .	Allison Schnabel
June 13 . . . . .	Sterling Roberts
June 14 . . . . .	.Rory Martindale
June 17. . . . .	Doraine Kohler
June 18 . . . . .	Kimberly Lewis
June 19 . . . . .	JoAnn Kersavage
June 21 . . . . .	Jeff Schnabel
June 25 . . . . .	Loretta Railing
June 26 . . . . .	Lynn Chan
June 29 . . . . .	Haydn Chapman