



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

Pastor's Corner

Greetings Vancouver UCC family!

I hope you are enjoying your summer. It was fun doing our church picnic last month, and we have some other fun and engaging activities that will be happening in the coming months.

On **Sunday, August 14**, we will have a **Blessing of the Animals!** This worship service will be outside on the lawn or at the labyrinth (still deciding, and weather permitting, otherwise in the basement). This inspirational and joyful service welcomes all of our family members – even those from a different species! This is not only fun and delightful, but also meaningful and memorable. So bring your pets, on leashes, in cages, in bowls, or otherwise constrained, and join in this opportunity to have our pets meet our wider spiritual family and we them!

BTW, if anyone plays guitar or other instruments that we could use outside and would be willing to play, please contact me!

Starting in late August or early September and continuing for several months, we'll be having sessions to get us to know each other better as church family. I call these intentional spiritual growth sessions "**Heart and Soul**

Gatherings," for we share important aspects, events, and epiphanies in our lives with others which have affected our spiritual perspective, while also hearing the stories of others in our faith family. What a beautiful way of getting to know each other better! Heart and Soul Gatherings will consist of confidential small groups of 6-9 people who will share with one another our own spiritual journeys. We can meet at people's homes, or at the church – depending on the group, and those willing to host. We want all of our active members and friends to attend at least one of these gatherings. There will be sign-up sheets online, and before you enter the sanctuary, for you to designate when you can attend. We encourage you to sign up at a time in which you see listed folks from our church that you don't know well. I can't wait for these blessed times together!

These gatherings are a preface to doing the 5 Developmental Interim Tasks (*see appendix*) while we are in this time of transition. By getting to know each other better, and recognizing the places we are each coming from in our own spiritual journeys, we become a more empathetic and mutually caring congregation. This is an instrumental first step to get us working together in healthy and God-guided ways as we consider interim tasks like dealing with our church's history, envisioning our future, etc.

PASTOR'S CORNER CONTINUED

Tentatively scheduled for Saturday, August 27, from 9 am to 4 pm, we will have a church retreat in which all our members and friends are encouraged to attend, as well as our welcoming others from the wider community. The topic of the retreat will be on the topic of **“Developing and Improving Healthy Communications with Others: An Attitudinal/Spiritual Way of Perceiving and Relating.”** This will serve to strengthen our communications within our church and our personal relationships, and can improve how we interact with people in all aspects of our lives. We'll address varying ways in which we communicate, techniques for healthy communication, issues and strategies for dealing with conflicts, and how the way we communicate can itself be a spiritual practice and discipline helping us to better ourselves and our relationships with others. This will also help us to prepare in engaging in best practices when we start working on the 5 Developmental Interim Tasks. We will have a potluck during the lunch time, so bring your favorite foods!

September will be a **restart for our Education and Music ministries**. We'll have a **Rally Day on Sunday, September 18** to kick off these ministries that we will begin again after summer. We encourage your suggestions and participation in both of these areas of our ministry which are so vital to our church. More details to come.

Also in September, we'll start our first Developmental Interim Task: Coming to Terms with Our Church's History (see *appendix below for more details*). We'll create a time-line for our church (hung up on the wall), focusing on the last few decades, and consider patterns of behavior, policies, and

church functioning that have been blessings and challenges to our call from God. We'll have opportunities for everyone to contribute to this visual timeline, and to help us to address how our church's past has and still affects us and the way we do things. In identifying the things we are good at, and the things we need to work on, we can better meet the needs of our church and community in the years to come.

The first Sunday in October, the 2, will be World Communion Sunday! We will be doing it up special this year with breads and juices from all over the world being served! To symbolically connect with our siblings all over this earth, we'll be asking you to contribute making (or buying) breads and juices from different continents on our wonderful earth. This quickly becomes a favorite service for many members, not only for the unity it accentuates with all humanity, but also for the wonderful breads and juices we continue to eat during our fellowship hour! Don't miss this meaningful service! Let me know if you are willing to provide any breads or juices for this unique communion service.

Yes, we'll be busy this fall, but what a wonderful kind of busy it is! So many opportunities to connect and to grow with one another. I hope you are looking forward to it as much as I am. Blessings, Pastor Bret

APPENDIX

Interim Tasks for Our Church in This Time

Hello Vancouver UCC faithful! I'm so glad to talk with you about this vibrant period of ministry between settled pastors! I want to share with you some important information about what I see as important to the interim time, and the purpose of what we would need to do before a settled pastor is called.

PASTOR'S CORNER CONTINUED

Interim ministry is vital ministry. It is a time of listening and discernment...a time of healing, letting go, and taking hold...a time of creativity and experimentation...a time for building healthy relationships and optimal practices...a time of envisioning and implementation...a time of exploring possibilities and living into God's call to us in the future...a time of preparation and with a focus on building unity of mission...and a time of welcoming and affirming the newness that a new settled pastor will bring to this community of faith. Interim ministry allows churches to become spiritually disciplined as faithful church family so as to be prepared to receive and offer gifts of mutual ministry with a settled pastor, whose own vision of ministry is in congruence with that of the congregation. This is God's grace in action, developing, edifying, and manifesting the Spirit that will help the church to grow and flourish into the future to which God is calling us.

Due to the intentional nature of interim ministry, there are tasks that are necessary to address before calling a new pastor. The 5 Developmental Interim Tasks are:

COMING TO TERMS WITH HISTORY:

This task involves addressing challenges, successes, and other happenings in the life of the church (particularly in the last 10 or so years). Are there unresolved issues that we need to address to help us move forward in the envisioning process we will be doing later? Is there grief of any kind that needs to be let out (and/or let go)? What have been the things that have most affected our congregation in the last decade? What have been the communication patterns, and the way of dealing with routine business – as well as concerns or conflict within the

church? Have they been healthy? How might we improve these? How do we see our heritage and identity as a community of faith? Is the heritage static, or ever-changing? Who have we served? How have we served? Will we need to rethink who and how we serve in the future to be God's light to the community and world? How have we dealt with change? Has it been constructive and encouraging of the talents and passions of each of our members and staff? How can we learn to be even more healthy in our relationships? Is who we've been who God is calling us to be?

DISCOVERING A NEW IDENTITY AND

DIRECTION (ENVISIONING): Who are we now, and who is God calling us to be in the future? How do we envision our church responding to God's call to our community and world? What vision, mission, and covenant statements need to direct us going forward given our core values as a congregation? What things should we focus on doing and being given there are so many things we could do and be? What would best serve our community, and what is our niche within the religious community here in this wider community? What changes might we need to make going forward to implement our vision and mission statements? How can we best provide spiritual growth to our members while enlisting them to serve the wider world? What are our core values – the ones we will uphold above other competing values? What might be our challenges in living into our faith? What sacrifices are we willing to make to be faithful to

PASTOR'S CORNER CONTINUED

our core values? Are we resolved to follow our calling despite hardships/obstacles? Are we more concerned with increased numbers, or increased spiritual growth? Are we an umbrella church that tries to accept everyone, or a focused church who ministers to a more specific demographic? What are the pros and cons of these different ways of being church given our community? Are we a church that mainly meets the needs of its members, or a church that sees our purpose existing outside our church walls/doors? Are we a belief-centered church, or an action-oriented congregation? Are we a church that is progressive, conservative, middle-of-the-road, or some mixture of these? Are there virtues we seek to cultivate in all of our members as a means of our discipleship in building Christian character; and, if so, what are they -- or what do we think they should be? Are there behaviors we insist upon by our members to abide, and that we intentionally promote so as to give meaning to membership in our community of faith?

SHIFTS OF POWER/LEADERSHIP & OPERATIONAL CHANGES:

How can we best transition from our past to our future organizationally? How do we create a church environment/ambience that is consistent with and promotes our vision/mission? How can we best prepare ourselves for changes in pastoral leadership which will involve differing styles of worship, management, and emphases? What values and characteristics do we want in a settled pastor? Do we need to consider

different ways to enlist, train, and nurture lay leadership in the church to best meet our vision and mission of who we are called to be? Is there a need for organizational restructuring, and/or revamping of our constitution, by-laws, and ways of work? How can we make our leadership more inclusive and representative of our congregation and community? How can we affirm the gifts, talents, and passions of each of our members and active friends within our church?

RENEWING OUR DENOMINATIONAL COVENANT/LINKAGES: How have we interacted with our association, conference, and synod within the UCC, and how might we improve these relationships? How much support should we commit to our wider denomination in our covenantal commitment to the UCC? How can we be benefitted by programs and interactions with our wider UCC connections? How can the UCC assist us in our ministries, and we with theirs? Are there ways we could engage in mutual ministries with other UCC churches in the area? Ecumenically? What do we need to know about our UCC heritage that we don't know currently? How do we see our local church identity as tied to the wider denomination? Can we improve our commitment to having our members represent the wider denomination on teams needed by our Association and Conference? What financial and human resource support are we ready to contribute? How can we better work with our wider church settings to not only

PASTOR'S CORNER CONTINUED

support ongoing work, as well as to create new possibilities for ministry by our denomination?

COMMITMENT TO NEW LEADERSHIP AND TO A NEW FUTURE:

This involves putting our hearts and hands into our new vision, mission, and core values that we agree upon during our envisioning process so as to attract leadership capable of and enthusiastic about making these things real in the life of our church. Selecting leadership, both pastoral & lay, that will help us to implement our ideas and live out our identity requires our congregational support and encouragement at all times. A commitment to that which will be “new” always involves “change;” and we are to prepare ourselves heart, mind, body and spirit to welcome the new reality that will be ours in worship, programming, service, education, organization, outreach, etc. Are we convicted by our ideals such that we are willing to live into the mystery of our attempts at creating them into reality? Will we support our new ideas with new methods of bringing them into fruition? It is important that we live into our new identity before calling a new pastor so as to work out the kinks in the system before the pastor arrives. This enables the pastor to enter a church that is smoothly functioning into its new identity. Are we willing to commit to the completion of the interim processes before inviting a new pastor to lead us into the future we see before us?

These developmental tasks are necessary for our church to transition in a healthy and

flourishing way from the last settled pastorate to the next one. It is not a process to be rushed or constrained by personal interests, but carefully engaged for the sake of the whole current membership with special attention to the future membership that is yet to be. We will need to ask ourselves how our world has changed, how it views religion and Christianity, how we can engage those seeking spiritual community and serve the needs of their souls, how we can make a unique contribution to the betterment of our community and world, and how we can continue to be light to a world that is ever changing and is in need of sacred direction.

There are 5 additional interim tasks, more spiritual than developmental, that I also feel are necessary for best living out our calling by God to our world:

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER SPIRITUALLY ON A DEEPER LEVEL so as to better serve, and serve with, one another. We each need to grow in spirit as individuals, but this also involves us growing in spirit as a community of faith. Building deeper bonds and relationships with one another is vital to the success of our continued ministries.

COMMITMENT TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP AND ADVOCACY FOR GOD'S WORLD/CREATION.

Church is not a social club, or place for networking with others for business purposes. We are called to live out the values and virtues of Christ in this world through our daily living. Going to church is not enough. Our values need to be revealed in our lifestyles and the things we place priority on within our lives.

PASTOR'S CORNER CONTINUED

How can we help others? Who needs our help most? What can we do to connect our Christian values to a world in need of the services we can provide? Are there standards of conduct and behavior that we expect from our membership – not just at church activities, but in workplaces, schools, social outings, and ways of serving the wider world? What does it mean to be a member of this particular UCC church, and how do we expect that to be evidenced in our daily lives?

INSTITUTING “CREATIVE RENEWAL” AS A NORMATIVE PRINCIPLE WITHIN THE CHURCH. The church that never changes dies. Those that prosper are the ones that take the spirit of tradition to meet the needs of the present and future. Creativity is thus a necessary feature of such churches. The willingness and desire to change, not for change's sake but to remain vital and flourishing, is a palpable part of the ethos of the most vibrant churches. They are willing to experiment and try new things, and are comfortable with temporary failures because of the quest to constantly improve. Nothing except the desire to love one another, come what may, is to be written in stone. By supporting and encouraging the creativity of all our active congregants and staff, we embolden our church to respond to God's call to life abundant – thinking of what could be rather than limiting ourselves to what is.

THEOLOGICAL REORIENTATION:

Any time we consider what will be our vision and mission for the future, we

also need to rethink what theological framework supports that vision and mission. Being church in the 21st century, like every century before, requires us to look at our stories, values, hermeneutics, and programming in ways that will best respond to God's call in our time and culture. What is the role of being prophetic? Pastoral? Values-based or Belief-based? Socially active and engaged? Inclusive or exclusive? Do we focus on doctrines or deeds? Self-care or other-care? What type of Christians would we identify ourselves to be? Are we pluralistic and open to non-Christians (including agnostics, atheists, and those of other faiths), or are we more narrowly defined? What are the spiritual virtues and ethical character traits we want to exemplify to the community and world? How do our answers change how we need to worship, organize, and implement our ministries?

GROWING COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS OF MEANING AND PURPOSE:

We are to be a spiritual family, perhaps closer to one another as soul companions than even those within our families of origin. People may initially come and join church because of some inspiration they find in the worship, educational programs, or ministries of the church; but they stay because of the closeness and depth of the relationships they create with others. Those most excited about church are those who find spiritual siblings whose goals and values are similar, and/or who affirm them just as they are even despite

PASTOR'S CORNER CONTINUED

varying goals and values. A spiritual community needs to touch a person's sense of meaning within the world, and to grant them opportunities to live out their purpose through the ministries of the church. The more we develop caring, compassionate, loving, peaceful, generous, forgiving, and inspiring relationships, the more we feel that our lives make a difference and our community makes a difference.

There are varying ways we may do all of these things as we live out the blessings of the interim time. I will be glad to expound on options with the appropriate church bodies, and suggest an order of activities if so desired. It is a time for us to open our hearts and minds, reevaluate, and listen to God's voice calling us to a new chapter in our collective faith journey.

One of the first things we will be doing is to work on our getting to know each other better spiritually. Whether it be a class on our UCC heritage for both current and prospective members, or having "Heart and Soul" (getting to know each other's spiritual journey) gatherings, or spiritual growth groups, or classes/workshops/or Bible/book studies, or other such opportunities, we build respectfulness and love within our church family by sharing our faith journeys with one another. This may be the most important step of the interim process, to my mind – especially when rebuilding trust in the congregation.

I look forward to your enthusiastic participation in this interim process. I am always amazed at the unforeseen blessings that happen when people take this process to heart, and share from their soul with one another.

Love and peace, Rev. Bret S. Myers



Prayer Chain

The monthly newsletter will now include prayer requests that have been distributed to the prayer chain during the most recent month. This will enlarge the circle of prayer for these prayer requests.

The prayer chain consists of about 20 people who have committed to regular prayer for those in our church community and who receive an email after prayer requests are made. If you want to be added to the prayer chain, please let Sandy Mathis know.

Prayer Needs

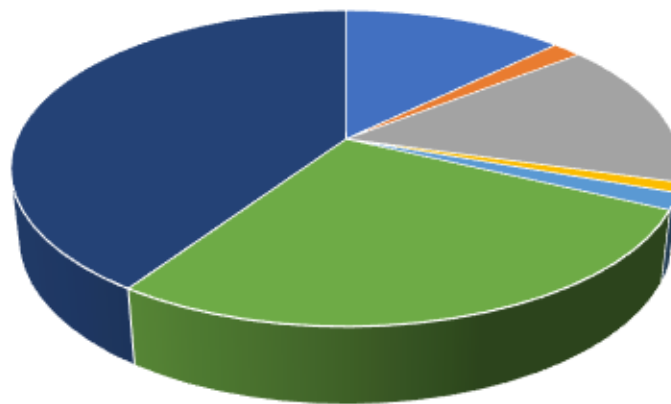
- For Pastor Bret's father, John Myers, with health problems.
- With thanksgiving that Randy Franklin continues to improve after back surgery.
- For Joan Barber's mother, Ruth Young, who has begun hospice care.
- For Ray and Patti Jones who have been ill.
- For Marilyn Martinyak who will be scheduled for foot surgery soon.
- For Alex Laskey who recently had surgery.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Expenses in June followed a typical pattern. Our expenses for the month totaled \$19,820, which gave us a surplus for the month of \$1,446, and adds to our surplus for the year. If you have any questions, please let me know. Thanks for your continued generous support! Steve Bloodworth, Treasurer.

	YTD	Budget
Music Program	12,059	25,423
Parish and Worship Activities	1,610	5,430
Pastoral Expense	14,160	88,504
Christian Education	956	4,550
Wider Church Mission Support	1,596	11,132
Administration & Operations	25,951	47,184
Building Operations & Maintenance	38,449	75,848
Total Expense	94,781	25,8071

YTD Expenses



- Music Program
- Parish and Worship Activities
- Pastoral Expense
- Christian Education
- Wider Church Mission Support
- Administration & Operations
- Building Operations & Maintenance

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS



Irma Slocum

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

If you are a singer and would like to sing for the memorial service on August 13 for Irma Slocum please come to a rehearsal in the Sanctuary on Thursday, August 11 at 7 pm to learn the music. We will be singing with some members of the original Brahms's Singers (then Vancouver USA Singers) under the direction of Ron Frasier.

THE PEACE POLE IS BACK!

The Peace Pole has returned to Vancouver UCC. Thanks go to Chuck Foulke for all the hard work he put into restoring the pole to its former beauty.

The Peace Pole was installed at our church in 2003/2004 when we voted to become a Just Peace church. We were led in a yearlong study by Rev. Linda Jaramillo was an intern with our congregation. Linda moved from our congregation to the National UCC offices in Cleveland as the Minister on Peace and Justice, a job our former pastor Brooks Berndt now holds.

The pole was dedicated to Gladys Evans, the mother of our then pastor Ed Evans. We thank Jan and Chuck Foulke for installing the beautiful pole to its new home.



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

Interim Pastor: Rev. Bret S. Myers
Pastor@vanucc.org

Office Administrator: Elizabeth Spanning
Elizabeth@vanucc.org

Building Coordinator: Leslie Chapman
Leslie@vanucc.org

Financial Secretary: Jan Foulke
Finsec@vanucc.org

Treasurer: Steve Bloodworth
Steve@vanucc.org

Moderator: John Marquardt
Moderator@vanucc.org



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.



August 2 Marjorie English
August 2 Doris Fletcher
August 6 Holly Chan
August 6 Pat Sutherland
August 9 Amy Cresto
August 9 Jan Schnabel
August 10 Rachel Corey
August 10 Scott Jones
August 11 Sandy Mathis
August 16 Angela Hill
August 22 Randy Summers
August 24 Marilyn Jones
August 28 Brian Chan
August 30 Josiah Renner

