

Mount Vernon First
United Methodist Church

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**Mount Vernon
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The Methodist Greeter

JANUARY 2018



"Our mission as a congregation is to strengthen our personal and group relationship with Christ and to reach out to all people through faith in action."

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



*Snowflakes are kisses from
heaven.*

-unknown

Pastor's Corner

Pastor Terry Hall

BIBLE READINGS FOR THE MONTH

**January 7
Epiphany Sunday**
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14
Ephesians 3:1-12
Matthew 2:1-12

January 14
1 Samuel 3:1-10
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

January 21
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

January 28
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10

So many lessons to be learned; so many levels of understanding to explore, chew on, digest and find new life in! While that may sound like a complaint or the lament of a person buffeted by life's many challenges, I mean it as an exclamation of joy and wonder. As some of you have heard me say, the first and perhaps best, most exhilarating thing I learned in seminary was how much there is to learn from and about the Bible and a Christ-following life, and how very little of it I know, recognize or grasp. Every year that goes by proves that even with the privilege of having so many traveling companions with and from whom to learn, the gap between the life that is available to each of us and the one I am living will always be open-ended. I am reminded of the wonder of investigating a slide of living yeast cells in a long-past biology class: counting them required a slow winding of the dial to peer at level after level, separated by the merest of depths, each its own life-space, yet all part of the same abundant, living world.

Our shared lives as Christ-followers and participants in this particular outpost of God's vast creation became more abundant in a number of ways during 2017. I can't count all the opportunities we had to join with various community partners to grow in our faith by engaging in "boots-on-the-ground" expressions of our faith and desire to life live abundantly - thanks in large part to the work of our Faith in Action Coordinator, Kay Martin, whose work would not be possible without your generous support. We helped feed and clothe countless of our brothers and sisters, including children; offered shelter to houseless families in our building through Family Promise (many thanks to Carolyn and Floyd Gregg for their incredible leadership here!); and raised funds for the effort to eliminate homelessness and ameliorate hunger in Skagit County by walking together and others making generous financial gifts. If you came into the church during Vacation Bible School, you surely experienced a delightful illustration of life being lived abundantly - thanks be to God for Lori Flores' organizational skills and the deep joy she brings to her work with children and families! - as we reached over 80 children. These leaders played important roles in our growth, but they'll all want me to point out that what they do would be meaningless without the avid support of your prayers, presence, encouragement, financial underwriting and active participation.

Have you been enjoying the large group of children coming forward on Sunday mornings, and the joy evident on their faces? I know I sure have! Their presence is a testimony to the hard (and heart) work of Pastor Zulma, who leads the Hispanic portion of our faith community, in which she has invested great efforts and much loving leadership over the last 3+ years. The growing sense of comfort and connection across language and culture boundaries within our shared lives is also a reflection of your acceptance of and even excitement about the opportunity to live into Jesus' teaching about loving neighbors, which always includes doing what we can to be lovable neighbors ourselves. Every

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(Pastor's Corner continued)

time you smiled during worship when your attention was drawn to child who was not entirely still, you told the child, its parent and those around you that you (and by extension, we) truly do welcome young families and their children, recognizing that abundant life tends to be kind of loud, often messy and frequently not what we expected or knew we needed. By adopting Boy Scout Troop 1 while continuing to host Girl Scouts, you made serious commitments to the present and future of many young people, and therefore of our communities, nation and world. Our relationship with and support of young mothers in the MOPS program, which involves providing space for twice-monthly meetings, caring for a significant number of preschoolers, and the rich connection Sue Erickson continues to build with those moms, led to their strong participation in joint efforts like supporting the Giving Tree and our VBS.

And I cannot talk about abundant life and growth without mentioning our music program ... WOW! While Diane Ramsey continues to volunteer her musical gifts both before and during our 10:30 worship services, Jung Jang has overseen a resurgence of joy and abundance in the Chancel Choir (which now numbers 21 members), while also resurrecting and expanding the Children's Choir (made possible by the strong support of the Hispanic Ministry's moms), and Sarah Breckenridge's volunteer work directing the hand bell choir has allowed us to enjoy their delightful worship contributions a number of times throughout the year. The "Celebration of Candles" provided a deeply spiritual and moving time of corporate worship for every one of the roughly 150 people there, which included nearly 40 participant-leaders.

Meanwhile, the church – both the building and the people – has been receiving a real boost in attention and TLC. Volunteer cleaners have deep-cleaned our kitchen along with much of the rest of the building, picking up some of the work that Diane Almvig (and her helper/husband Geoff) have been kept from doing by a significant cutback in the time we were able to employ them for. While there were already several people engaged in writing notes, calling and visiting those who are unable to get to the building, either temporarily or generally, we now have a well-organized Congregational Care Team. Here again, we witness the two-way nature of God's callings, as those visiting come back with tales of how their own lives were enriched by the time spent listening and getting to know others in new ways.

And as spectacular and rich as 2017 was, if we believe what Paul says in Philippians 1:6 that the One who began a good work in [us] will continue to perfect and complete it, we should expect the joys, challenges, opportunities, needs and messiness of abundancy to not only continue, but expand in this new year. What steps might God be calling you to make into even greater depths of relationship with God, neighbors and/or self in 2018? Where does your heart ache ... and where does it sing? Both the aspects of our lives from which we cringe and those with which we love to linger can be spiritual nudges, meant to awaken us to needs and opportunities we are missing. Those by which we are comforted or assured may represent a whisper to in some fashion make those same feelings more available to others. The aspects of our histories and/or tendencies which keep us on the move, internally at least, as a means of avoiding their implied threats are likely to be wounds trying to become hopes; they are often most likely to be drawn into the light, softened and transformed by the weaving of relationships. There is, by my judgment, no more clear or delightful demonstration of the Spirit's work within and between us than experiences of mutual discovery and deepening!

As we slip into another year together, I give thanks to the Creating, Calling, Challenging, Equipping and Comforting One for sending Dennie and me to Mount Vernon First UMC, and to all of you for allowing us to engage with you in the mysterious, mundane-yet-profound business of loving God with all our hearts, mind, and being while following Christ in a world that is no more, and probably no less, ready than at any other time in history to truly love one's neighbor, welcome the immigrant and remember our people have been immigrants as well, or refrain from coveting what we do not have. I look forward to the expansion of our relationships and the combination of new and deepening opportunities for enjoying the unpredictability, mystery, and wonder of abundant living!

Pastor Terry

Family Promise

by Carolyn Gregg

In Matthew 25:35, Jesus says: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

While forming Family Promise of Skagit Valley members surveyed school districts in our valley and discovered that schools identified more than 500 homeless children who were enrolled. This suggested that there were probably more than 1000 homeless kids here and that help was needed. Since the program began in May of 2015, on average one family has been settled in a permanent home every month – totaling 30 families placed.

We have housed Family Promise guests for a week 11 times in those 30 months. There are a dozen other host churches in the valley who also take their turn. In addition 16 support churches help out. Celebration Lutheran of Anacortes and St. James Episcopal of Sedro-Woolley help us by providing an average of 4 dinners each week. They also fill some of the 50+ volunteer slots we have to fill every time.

Our guests appreciate having a room to call their own for 7 days, showers available anytime and the welcoming volunteers. They are provided food and drink, in the name of Christ, let's continue to welcome them.

Trustee's Report

2017 has brought a significant and welcome increase in the pace of activity in our church. A look at the weekly calendar of use scheduled in our church is revealing. Thank you to Sue Erickson for working daily to "direct traffic" and match up group use with available spaces

This year our church body has given an enthusiastic welcome to Boy Scout Troop One. Troop One has a storied history of more than 100 years of overwhelming positive influence in the lives of young people learning and living values taught in the scouting program. It is such an honor for our church to be the host location for this group of 60 and often more youth and adults meeting every Tuesday evening in our church. As a Trustee Team we see the welcome increase in use of our spaces calls for action to accommodate lives being so positively influenced. We simply need more space to accommodate the need.

We have an entire classroom allocated to storage of tables, chairs, and room dividers, etc. That room needs to be cleared and used for better purpose, as do our hallways when often used to "store" various items. Storage space to accommodate longterm Scout Troop needs is nonexistent.

The Trustee Team has a vision to meet our needs for storage space in the form of constructing a multi-purpose building on the north part of our property adjacent to the parking lot. We envision the structure to provide secure storage for mowers, scouting gear, merit badge instruction - all things now in the existing classroom space - as well as a support base for our church grounds and building maintenance. Furthermore it could accommodate an expanded community garden endeavor on the north property if desired at a future time.

We are in the process of exploring the feasibility of building such a structure by discussing preliminary design and cost with contractors who build "pole buildings". Part of moving forward with this idea includes answering questions you may have about the vision we have to support our church operation going forward with such a project.

We believe funds may be available within endowment fund earnings from the past year to accomplish the project without incurring debt. We firmly believe using church endowment funding in this way is in full support of the vision of those who have created and have contributed to the fund over the years,

-Jim Collins

Skagit Valley UMYouth Group

Hey all you 6th through 12th graders... grab your friends and join us for some fun, fellowship, faith-building and food! Our two meeting dates for January are the 10th and the 24th. Both meetings will be at MVFUMC from 5:30 pm to 7 pm (dinner included!).

Any questions, contact Lori or check out the Skagit Valley UM Youth Facebook page.

Faith in Action

When we delivered the donated toiletries to Love, INC. in December we were reminded that this need does not occur just during the holidays, but is a continuing need for what Love, INC. refers to as the “working poor”. These are people who are doing their best to earn a living and support their families but are not earning a living wage and rely on food stamps to help put food on the table. Unfortunately, food stamps do not cover items such as shampoo, laundry detergent, dish soap, toilet paper, paper towels, body wash/soap, toothpaste, and especially needed diapers in the 2, 3, and 4 sizes. Therefore, we would like to make collecting these items a continuing ministry in partnership with Love, INC. There will be a collection box in the narthex, and it is my hope that when you are buying some of these items for yourself, you might consider getting an extra item to put in the box, especially when there are buy-one-get one (BOGO) sales. An occasional trip to the Dollar Store is also a great way to get many of these items for \$1. Thank you for all your generosity throughout the year and for having a heart for those who are going through a difficult period in their lives. Hebrews 13:16 – And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Winter Shelter Support

The Friendship House in partnership with the Seventh Day Adventist Church will be opening an emergency Winter Shelter with the goal of providing immediate care to Skagit County's homeless population during these cold months. Volunteers are needed for a variety of roles! To be fully operational they need some spectacular volunteers that can assist their shelter staff. If you are interested in helping out please contact Chris at chris@skagitfriendshiphouse.org

Sleeping Mats for the Homeless Team

Maria Breznau, Faith in Action Coordinator started this worthwhile project in January of 2016.

Team Members: Barbara Jackson, Irene Williams, Linda Jones, Sue Erickson, Nancy McKeown, Kay Martin, Sue Kelder, Annette Mentzer, and others (MVFUMC), Betty Postman (Reform Church), Elaine Desmarais (Immaculate Conception Catholic Church), and Terri from Bellingham.

Workshops: twice a month at UMC and at St. Charles Catholic Church

Volunteers: Bag cutters and crocheters put the sleeping mats together.

Donations for 2017: Total 63 sleeping mats

- Phoenix Center 2 sleeping mats
- Friendship House 10 sleeping mats
- Family Promise 16 sleeping mats
- Homeless Project 35 sleeping mats
- Holding 7 sleeping mats for 2018

Donations for 2017: Total of 135 hats

- Homeless Project 81 hats
- Friendship House 12 hats
- Giving Tree 12 hats
- Community Kitchen 12 hats
- Warm coats 12 hats
- Church 6 hats
- Holding 12 hats for 2018

I would like to recommend that we continue the Sleeping Mats for the homeless project in 2018.

Campaign – Workshops

Workshops – each month – (subject to change)

St. Charles Catholic Church – First and Third Wednesdays @ 6:30pm

United Methodist Church – Second and Fourth Tuesdays @ 1pm

I would like to continue crocheting and/or knitting hats and scarfs. Use donated yarn.

From Your Finance Team:

A huge thank you to all those folks who took the time to prayerfully consider their church pledge for 2018, filled out the form, and turned it in. Also, thank you to all of you who so generously supported the church, especially this time of year. We realize there are a lot of other requests for your money, especially in December. We also realize there were a lot of different church opportunities in the last few weeks (Mawingu, poinsettias, Giving Tree, staff gift, etc.) Your generosity is such a testimony to your response to God's wonderful gifts to us!

In our church, financial giving may be accomplished in a variety of ways. Some people place cash in the offering plate. Some people write a weekly or monthly check, while others lump their payments together, paying only once or twice a year. Still others use electronic means, such as a credit card. And some folks use their financial company, such as Ameriprise, to give their financial gift.

Knowing this may help you understand why our monthly finance report that Lori prepares for the newsletter may appear somewhat “off” on occasion. For example, sometimes it may appear that we took in a lot more money than our expenses. That may be a month when one of our one-time-in-the-year givers has paid their pledge. Or it might be a month where we have withdrawn money from the Endowment Fund and placed it in the general budget until it needs to be distributed. On the disbursement side, our bills do not come in in nice, neat, 1/12th (monthly) increments either. For example, one of our larger bills is for insurance, and we do not pay this in monthly installments. Therefore, a month where we make a large payment may make it appear that we have spent way more than we took in for that month. The bottom line is, don't look at any one month to determine how we are doing financially. Rather, watch over several months. Any time you have questions, don't hesitate to talk to one of the finance team members.

We will end 2017 with all of our bills paid, including our apportionments, and some money to carry over into the new year. Praise God, and again, thank you for your support.

Blessings,

Barbara del Bosque

FINANCIAL REPORT November 2017

	Income	Expense
Regular Account	\$ 19,813.50	\$19,764.17
Special Accounts	\$ 1,958.50	\$ 5,932.63
Memorial Accounts	\$ 140.00	\$ -0-

We took in slightly more than we spent in November and were able to pay all of our bills and our Conference apportionments. Thank you so much for your continued support of the ministries of the church.

If you have not had a chance to turn in a pledge card for 2018, it is not too late. There are pledge cards on the table in the Narthex or you can contact the church office for one.

Thank You!

Dear Church Family,

Thank you for your very generous Christmas gift to each of the church staff members. We feel the love expressed in this gift and are so grateful.

Happy New Year,

Pastor Terry, Sue Erickson, Kay Martin, Jung Jang, Lori Flores, Diane Almvig and Ashleigh Jacobson

January

BIRTHDAYS

1/7 Bill Burress

1/10 Cheryl Bishop
Evan Repplier
Jacinda Matson Herring
Jessie Wiggins

1/11 Lois Yale
Hollis Spitler

1/12 Sharon Minor

1/13 Anne Lundquist
Dee Brown
Claire Miller

1/14 Lisa Agard

1/15 Kurtis Scoby

1/18 Randy Rabenstein
Roxanne Romanelli

1/19 Amy Flores

1/20 Lester Bradford
Hazel Blakeslee

1/21 Delores Sward
Brent Thompson
Jacob Eastman
Abigail Thompson

1/24 Kelli Walker

1/25 Bernice Petrish
Chris Cooper

1/26 Yank Belisle
Kathy Dean
Jennifer Ruhland

1/29 Wayne Smith
Adelicia Newall

1/31 Bob Hallberg
Wes Minor

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Happy New Year!	2 9:30 am MOPS 6:00 pm Boy Scouts 6:00 pm NAMI Board Meeting	3 1:00 pm Staff Meeting 2:15 pm Worship Design Team 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	4 8:30 am Men's Morning Ministry 9:30 am Quilters 7:00 pm Bell Choir	5 6:00 pm Women's AA meeting	6
7 8:30 am Service with Communion 9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:40 am Coffee Hour	8 1:30 pm Care Team Meeting 5:30 pm Overeaters Anonymous	9 1:00 pm Sleeping Mat Team 6:00 pm Boy Scouts 6:30 pm NAMI Education	10 1:00 pm Staff Meeting 5:30 pm – 7 pm SVUM Youth Group 6:00 pm GS Troop #45063 7:00 pm Chancel Choir 7:00 pm Finance Meeting	11 8:30 am Men's Morning Ministry 3:30 pm G S Troop 44345 6:30 pm G S Troop 44129 7:00 pm Bell Choir	12 6:00 pm Women's AA meeting	13 8:30 am Church Council Meeting
14 8:30 am Service with Communion 9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:40 am Coffee Hour	15 10:00 am UMW Executive Board Meeting 1:30 pm Wesleyan Circle 5:30 pm Overeaters Anonymous	16 9:30 am MOPS 6:00 pm Boy Scouts 6:30 pm Girl Scouts of WW (leaders)	17 12:00 pm UMW Luncheon and Meeting 1:00 pm Staff Meeting 2:15 pm Worship Design Team 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	18 8:30 am Men's Morning Ministry 9:30 am Quilters 2:30 pm Trustees Meeting 7:00 pm Bell Choir	19 6:00 pm Women's AA meeting 6:30 pm Boy Scouts Overnight	20 Boy Scouts Overnight
21 8:30 am Service with Communion 9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:40 am Coffee Hour	22 9:00 am Newsletter Mailing Day 5:30 pm Overeaters Anonymous	23 1:00 pm Sleeping Mat Team 6:00 pm Boy Scouts 7:00 pm NAMI Support Group	24 10:00 am Worship Support Team 1:00 pm Staff Meeting 5:30 pm – 7 pm SVUM Youth Group 6:30 pm GS Troop #45063 7:00 pm Chancel Choir	25 8:30 am Men's Morning Ministry 3:30 pm G S Troop 44345 6:30 pm G S Troop 44129 7:00 pm Bell Choir	26 6:00 pm Women's AA meeting	27
28 Family Promise 8:30 am Service with Communion 9:00 am Sunday School 10:30 am Worship 11:40 am Coffee Hour	29 Family Promise 5:30 pm Overeaters Anonymous	30 Family Promise 6:00 pm Boy Scouts 6:30 pm Scout Sunday Rehearsal	31 Family Promise 1:00 pm Staff Meeting 7:00 pm Chancel Choir			

ANNIVERSARIES

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

1/8 Bill and Darnell Burress

1/18 Todd and Stacy Ladwig

1/25 Leo and Sharon Waldschmidt

1/28 Bill and Anne Lundquist

