



Volume 8 Issue 11

December, 2013



Dear Friends,

By the time you read this Newsletter the Thanksgiving turkey will be all but forgotten. There might be a few persistent turkey sandwiches lingering in the corners of our fridges, or some timeworn turkey soup in the freezer waiting to be resurrected. Mostly however Thanksgiving has made way for Advent.

Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing. Can you remember the last time you were expecting something so excitedly you could hardly wait for it to happen? All of your thoughts, everything revolved around that one joy, that one hope and you just could not wait. It is my hope that you will join us this advent season as we unpack some of those gifts Jesus brought to us, all designed to bring us everlasting hope.

12.01.13 1 - Advent Sunday - Luke 2:8-11 "I bring you good news of GREAT joy..."

12.08.13 2 - Advent Sunday - Luke 2:8-17 "The Gift of Significance"

12.15.13 3 - Advent Sunday - John 1:14-14 "The Gift of Relationship"

12.22.13 4 - Advent Sunday - Luke 2:8-14 "Unwrapped Presents"

I feel that there is a yearning for deliverance from the anxieties that the world heaps on us, in so many ways we are in desperate need, in need of deliverance by a God who has heard the cries of the oppressed, the hurt and the lost and is bringing deliverance! It is that hope, however faint at times, and that God, however distant He sometimes seems, which brings to the world the hope of a King who will rule over His people and in His creation with love and grace. A Messiah, who will bring peace and justice and righteousness to the world.

Again please come and join us on December the 1st as the Grinch visits us and helps us to find that Joy...once again.

Peace to all of you and may this Christmas Season be all that you have ever hoped for.

pastor rene'

Why this is my church...

Truth be told I wasn't even remotely interested in coming to church. My mother had talked (brow beat) me into it. She said I might like it because this was a church that welcomed gay people! I of course had heard of churches like this before, so I had a great deal of trepidation about attending, and a whole lot of "Mmmhm I'll believe it when I see it" running through my head on that first day. I had already dealt with a few churches who profess to be "accepting" and yet as soon as you get in the door they begin with the "Now that you are a Christian again do you really think Jesus would approve of the gay thing?"

My first clue that this church might be different was the large cross at the head of the altar covered in rainbow ribbons, if the congregation was willing to make their cross a giant rainbow maybe they were more committed to welcoming gays than I had thought, and not just a gimmick to get more bodies in the pews. My second clue was the pastor, about 5'9, a round happy man with a tiny poof of blond hair on the top of his head. At the time he was wearing jeans and a T shirt which I came to learn later was his uniform of choice. Unlike most churches I had visited, his sermons tended to focus on God's love and acceptance, how much he loves me how much the word of God talks of love and teaches it. What was missing was the condemnation and judgment that seem to be the earmark of most churches I have been to, this was refreshing. Coming from several years of Christian school this was a new concept for me.

The lack of condemnation and judgment in addition to the focus on the divine love forgiveness and acceptance of god is the reason I believe this congregation, as well as other reconciling ministries practice what I believe is a purer form of Christianity than what most other churches practice and teach to their believers. Pastor Rene teaches only about love, God's love, the love that will grow within our hearts, and the love we are to share with the world. Because of Jesus' love for us the entirety of the Torah (or the Old Testament) was reduced to two simple rules, "Love the lord with all your heart all your soul and all your strength, and love your neighbor as you self. That be the whole of the law." This and aspects of this simple philosophy is what Rene teaches.

The way other churches operate seems to be a little different, many work on levels of elitism and exclusion and this is a very dangerous belief. Exclusion is used by churches to form a sense solidarity and cohesion by the designation of a common enemy; in the last few decades it has been members of the GLBT community. Elitism is used in a more subtle and insidious way, by one group making themselves feel closer to, or more worthy of God, the group at the other end of this comparison then feels farther from, and less worthy of God. These concepts only serve to make a small group feel good about themselves while a much larger number is made to divided from and unworthy of the love of God. By Rene teaching the exact opposite of what is conventionally believed, and opening God's love to all, he is leading by example as to how much of a lie the status quo truly is. I seek truth in all its forms, I hate hypocrisy with a passion, and these are the reasons why I love this church and its pastor so much.

Mike Jackson



Why do you love this church? Everyone has their own story. Send yours to the church office: lumcoffice@cni.net Ed.

Our pastor, Rene, gave a wonderful sermon on Sunday, November 17, about the value of giving. We each have talents that we can share with our congregation and in our community. Our talents of leading, organizing, teaching, gardening, cleaning, calling, transporting and others all require the gift of *time*. Others share their gifts of *prayer*. The other gift we have that we can share is our gift of *money*.

Each year, it is up to the Finance Committee to prepare a budget to guide the spending of the gifts of money given to the church. And so, we ask the congregation to give a *pledge* to support the budget to the best of their financial ability. Our new budget for 2014 is very close to our 2013 budget.

This past year, we have managed to stay within our 2013 budget. But that doesn't tell the whole story of our congregation's giving. In addition to the pledges, you have given money for a new lawnmower, a new computer, monitor and printer. During the *Go-Be-Do* series of sermons, you have given generously of clothing, food, paper products. And then there have been our Communion Sunday special offerings to benefit the Angel Fund, Tide Me Over fund, Community House on Broadway, Ocean Park Camper Fund, One Great Hour of Sharing, Peace with Justice Sunday, and World Communion Sunday.

Give yourselves a little "pat on the back" because we met our budget and more. Because of sharing your gifts, our church, our community and our world are all a better place. Thank you so much.

Cynda Webb, Finance Committee



United Methodist Women

- All women of the church are welcome and encouraged to attend
- 1st Thursday of each month 10:30 am

United Methodist Men

- All men of the church are welcome and encouraged to attend
- Third Wednesdays 7:00 pm

Women's Book Group

- Meets 2nd Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. (except July and August) in member's homes.

Sunday School

- Each Sunday Sept through May
9:30 a.m.

Adult studies

- Adult Sunday school class
- "Change the World"
Sunday 9:30 am in the fellowship hall

Music

- The "Unity Crew" rehearses Sundays at 9:00 am and Tuesdays at 7:00 pm

The Staff Parish Relations committee met this month and set goals for 2014 for pastor and congregation. Among the goals set are continued church growth (our worship has averaged 55 on a given Sunday - up from 45 in 2012), continued strengthening of children's ministry (we now have 27 children in our midst), and discipleship training.

It may be helpful in this time of our church's setting its budget to consider where the money you provide the church goes. Since our building is paid for, most of our proposed budget expenses are for staff. Our staff consists of our pastor, Rene, our music director/accompanist, David Wilson, our administrative assistant, Sharon Fosburg, and our child care givers. Rene works on a three quarter time basis, but gives of his time and effort fully and unstintingly. His administrative abilities have provided greater leadership for the church, witness that we are forging a budget at the end of the year for the first time in many years. He inspires us with his prayers and comfort for those in need. He walks Jesus' walk when he gives of his time and money for those within the church and without. It would be great if we could bring him on full time. The Conference this year made a change that only full time pastors will receive defined benefit pensions. This results in our church providing less for Rene's pension, but he also is now providing more to his defined contribution pension. We would love to be able to support a full time pastor. We are not proposing any change other than pension to Rene's salary for 2014.

Sharon Fosburg has been working for few hours a week at very little pay. We know she works above and beyond what is required. I don't know what we would do without her weekly communication and tending to the daily needs of our church. We are proposing a very needed increase of her salary to a level that is at least an hourly minimum wage (though she is not paid on an hourly basis).

We have been much blessed this year with David Wilson's contributions in music planning, song and piano accompaniment. He contributes his spiritual gifts to us at very little compensation. Because of Dave, we now have a drummer; which has transformed the praise music time during Sunday morning worship. Dave is continuing his college education with the goal of becoming a career church music director. We are proposing a modest increase in his wages from \$100 per week to \$119 per week. We are indeed fortunate to have Dave and appreciate that we are contributing to Dave's continuing education and dreams.

Our Sunday morning child care givers are Caitlyn and Mary. Caitlyn dreams of becoming an elementary school teacher and is presently pregnant and looking forward to becoming a parent. Mary supplements her part time employment with her Sunday morning caregiving. Again, our contributions to them encourage them in their dreams.

The total SPR proposed budget for 2014 is \$57,310. Please take time to thank your church staff for all of the hard work they do during the year. As those of you who have not yet made a pledge for 2014 prepare to do so, please keep in mind our staff as you consider prayerfully your pledge.

And invite your friends to our awesome worship!

Barbara Vining, Chair Staff Parish Relations Committee

Trustees have been busy putting in the new window in the sanctuary. There are many steps to complete this project and please bear with us as we get the finish done. Many thanks to the McCrady family who is fronting the cost in honor of Dave's parents. Trustees have been busy outdoors removing some shrubs and putting in three Japanese trees and two burning bushes. Shirley Patterson has been real busy removing red rock and replacing it with bark. The old roses out back behind the Fellowship Hall have been removed and the ground turned and bark also put on this. New roses and other bushes will be put in there in the spring. The men are busy mowing, blowing, and removing leaves from sidewalks and parking lot.

Please help us keep the building safe by locking doors you unlock during the week and turning down the temperature after any gatherings or meetings to keep the heating bill down.

Many thanks to each person who helps with the cleaning. You are all appreciated.

Sharon Klump, trustee president.

***Note from the editor:** A few weeks ago Bob Martinson shared with us during worship what it means to him to be part of this congregation and why it is so important that we work so hard to do what we do. He graciously shared his talk in print so that it could be reproduced in the newsletter.*

I have a favorite Bible verse from First Corinthians, and I have seen it in print many times, in wedding vows and Christmas greetings and for other special occasions. These last few years, each time I read it, I think of you, of this church, of this congregation. The verse from St. Paul's letter to the church in Corinth reads: "So now faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

I'm here this morning as part of our yearly stewardship drive, asking each of you to prayerfully consider what you might give or do to help our church thrive in its mission for the coming year. So you might think I'm using this touching sentence from Paul's letter just to be nice or to try to soften you up a little before I walk out into the pews and start twisting arms.

But you'd be wrong. I know that the power of love is transmitted through the power of prayer and that your prayers, transmitting your love, are one of the reasons I'm standing here this morning. I believe that with all my heart.

Three years ago I stood up in church to explain that Suzanne and I would be missing for what turned out to be several months. I'd been diagnosed with an acute leukemia and my one shot at survival was chemotherapy and, if that was successful, a stem cell transplant in Seattle. The one thing I remember saying that morning is that this is a powerful place. A powerful place.

I felt that power the first day we walked into this church eight years ago. I could feel it with each handshake and each hug. I could feel it each time we made clear to newcomers, or to this community, or to this state, that God's love isn't set aside for a select few. It's for all of us.

Your prayers got me through that transplant and back home. Your prayers touched my own personal angel, Suzanne, as she was called to become both nurse and caretaker on a journey that has brought us so many challenges -- and yet so much hope. Your visits and phone calls and cards and love enveloped us all those months. And your prayers. Your power.

When we got back to church, we realized how much we had missed it. Much was new, much was familiar. Our congregation had grown. The monthly potluck -- always my favorite, since Suzanne makes the food we bring so you aren't forced to try anything I might bring. There were the morning greetings and catching-up conversations in the Narthex. And forgetting to put on our nametags. The sound of new babies in the arms of young parents. The click of a cane in the sanctuary aisle by a longtime member -- though it took a while for me to realize that the cane I heard was mine.

We love this church. That's why I'm here asking for money, for muscle, and again, for prayer. We need money to keep this small, bright slice of God's kingdom alive. We need muscle -- work -- to maintain our building, our ministries, our outreach to our community. And we continue to need prayer as the linchpin that pulls it all together.

I wish I could wave a magic wand and make the money appear that would fund all of the glorious things our church seeks to do. But God doesn't work that way. We are put on this earth to face obstacles and uncertainties and struggles and doubts. Success comes with a fight. And this church always has been a fighter.

A small miracle helped. A little over ten years ago, our church almost closed its doors. Attendance had shrunk. We had a one-quarter time pastor. Our ministry was in danger of failing. The congregation voted to join the Reconciling Ministries Network, which seeks to unite Christians of all sexual orientations and gender identities into the world of Christ's inclusive love.

That took guts. A lot of churches preach diversity. Ours fights for it. Marches for it. Celebrates it. Shortly after I joined the church, I remember meeting our former district superintendent who told me that our Longview congregation represented the future of the United Methodist Church. That seemed so obvious to me. Yet today we are one of only three reconciling ministries in Southwest Washington. Our international church conference still resists gender equality, while our state has endorsed it. We United Methodists still have a ways to go.

I know that this place will help make it happen.

Still, I feel a little awkward looking out at you this morning and asking for help. I know you do so much and give so much already. Whenever I drop by the church, there almost always are people here working. In the office. On the church. On the dozens of ministries we help support. Just look at yesterday, and all the work of our United Methodist Women whose Christmas Bazaar -- which included a lot of great crafts from the Methodist Men -- was such a success. And yes, at my insistence, Suzanne bought a couple dozen of Leona's rolls.

And there are the new things we're tackling, like Go & Be & Do, outlined in Rene's recent series of Sunday programs that showed us the steps we can take to try to change the world. It sounds so overwhelming. There is so much need. For food, medical care, clothing and housing. For love. Yet these people we help, Jesus reminds us, will inherit the kingdom of heaven.

We are a congregation of doers and givers. We laugh a lot. And sometimes cry. Spreading God's word comes with emotion, and if our congregation is any indication, it comes with a smile.

We know hard work. And it's the hardest workers who can usually find a way to do a little more, to give a little more. But we also know that these are tough times. Our giving begins at home. Remember that the ministries you support might begin with the person sitting next to you.

There is one slacker among us. Me. I used to do a lot around the church, but not so much these last couple years. My excuse has been medical – the transplant folks in Seattle call it the New Normal. The New Normal, I've discovered, is that nothing's normal anymore

But my pledge today is to give more to my church, to do more for my church, this coming year. I want to become a bigger part of this place, this powerful place.

I pray that you will join me. Thank you.

Bob Martinson



Here's an interesting part of a piece written by Tom Robinson for the RMN newsletter:

"Based on a growing number of studies and my interactions with my own students in the political science department at Gonzaga University, today's young people are more prone to evaluate those around them on the basis of their abilities than on the color of their skin or their sexual orientation. ***This is true even among young Evangelicals who, according to new surveys, are increasingly supporting expanded gay rights and are increasingly rejecting their parents and grandparents attitudes toward those who are gay.*** These young people are the future."

[a summary along with selections from the press can be found on RMN's website](#)

Rev. Frank Schaefer has been sentenced and possibly will lose his clergy credentials. Many of you have asked, "What can we do?"

Now is the time to ask ourselves, "how wide is our welcome?" Now more than ever, we have the opportunity to share a voice of hope and not one of harm with our LGBTQ friends and family. The church prosecutors want us to back away in fear. But Jesus has given us a higher law of Love. A love that is risky, a love that is selfless, a love that hopes all things, a love that endures all things. A perfect love that drives out fear, like we witnessed in Frank Schaefer. The time for debate is over. The time for action and Biblical Obedience to the Gospel of inclusion we have been given by Jesus is now.



For Thanksgiving Stephanie at Uplifting Words (love that blog!) shared ways to combat loneliness during the holidays. I wanted to share some things that I have done or want to do with my family or friends to take the focus off myself and put it where it belongs, on God and His children, and help others as we are commanded to do. As one who has suffered depression (an inherited chemical imbalance) for many years these ideas work – faith in action works.

James 2:14-17 “Dear friends, do you think you’ll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, “Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!” and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn’t it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?”

- 1) Salvation Army: Ring the Kettle Bells for the Salvation Army. One year my sister and I took our kids. They had a great time and afterwards we treated them to ice cream.
- 2) Soup Kitchen: Several years (not necessarily in a row) my children and I along with my sister and her children helped at the local soup kitchen. The shelter residents really enjoyed the children.
3. College Students: Many times students are unable to go home for the holidays, especially foreign exchange students. Twice my husband and I asked the college administrators if we could use the student union to bring in food for students. Both times we had great groups of students. After we had done this a college organization took over the enjoyable task of feeding and entertaining the students over the holidays.
4. Meals on Wheels: Meals on Wheels doesn’t run on holidays in most areas. When I was working for hospice I realized that several of our communities’ elderly would have no meal served on Thanksgiving, so I made an extra turkey dinner and my husband, kids and I delivered the meals to those who had no family. Contact your Meals on Wheels and ask if they know of anyone who will be without a meal over the holiday.
5. Open Your Home: Something I would like to do is invite those who have no place to celebrate the holiday into our home or people who are unable to travel. This could be those who are simply alone or students.
6. Social Services: Your local social services probably has a tree with a child’s name tied to it – usually at the local mall or grocery store. Every year our family has adopted a child or two. When the kids were younger I would take them to help me shop for the children we adopted.
7. Domestic Violence Shelter: Ask your local domestic violence abuse shelter if there is something you can do for those torn away from their home during the holidays.
8. Care Center: Take a group of people and go Christmas Caroling at your local senior residence/care center. Also, ask if they have an “adopt a grandparent” program. I worked at a health care center a few years ago, and the residents loved having entertainment throughout the year but especially during the holidays. Residence today are older than they were 20 years ago. Ours were primarily in the 80-100+ year old range and many of their children are elderly and unable to travel. And you would be surprised at how many are abandoned by family. What child couldn’t use a few more grandparents!
9. Humane Society: Ask your humane society what you can do for the homeless pets. Many times these shelters are neglected during the holidays. Our local shelter often asks for old towels, blankets, pet toys and pet food.
10. Homeless Shelter: Check out your local homeless shelter. Many times the children in these shelters are unable to enjoy special activities over the holidays. Maybe your church or youth group could help pay for the children to go to Santa’s Village or see Disney on Ice at your local arena. Most from my personal experience receive a lot of gifts so think outside the box for things to do for these children.

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**Check out our brand new
website!**

www.umclongview.com

**Christmas Eve
Worship service**

7:00 pm

**Longview United Methodist
Church**

2851 30th Ave.