

Volume 8 Issue 11

December, 2013



Happy March everyone. Can you believe it? And it is still cold, not as cold as in NY and some other Eastern States, but still cold, 38 degrees this morning and the rain felt very cold on head. Don't laugh, I understand it might also have a little something to do with thinning hair, lol. So I am looking forward to spring and warmer weather, and I am itching to take my bike out...spring is on the way.

To me spring always equals new life and tons of changes. It makes me aware of the circle of life not only in my personal life, but also in the life of all things, including the life of the church. Being in the church business one is always surrounded by much talk of the state of the church, which is usually accompanied by a healthy dose of angst about where the church and especially our denomination is heading. Yes, the numbers are mostly declining, however I was reading an article online the other that had a little different spin on the subject. Here is an excerpt

The president of LifeWay Research, Ed Stetzer is responding to a statistic: The percentage of U.S. Protestant adults has dropped to minority status at 48 percent, according to the Pew Research Center. And the number of Americans who do not identify with any religion has increased to just less than 20 percent. People who had loose religious affiliations are finally admitting they don't have one at all.

But Stetzer sees good news in bad numbers.

With the collapse of the squishy middle, he believes the future of the American church looks... like a place where believers are not a majority but often more serious about living out their faith in Christ.

In those regions, people who were nominally Christian have dropped out, no longer projecting a façade through church membership nor willing to pay the price where it's culturally unpopular. The church in North America is quickly losing its influence in society and culture.

"Fifty years ago being an active member of a robust church was almost necessary to get on the school board," says Stetzer. "Today it might keep you off."

Stetzer says the culture has pushed the church to the margins of society, and the popular media, literature, arts, and politics reflect the results; secular spirituality is on the rise. However, Stetzer assures: "No serious scholar believes Christianity in America is on a trajectory of extinction."

Instead, he sees clarification that devout faith is what will last.

Next page

"With cultural Christianity in a freefall, I see a rise in robust believers and healthy churches. I'm not discouraged. Effective churches will attract and keep strong believers who are motivated by their faith and not by cultural norms."

What are your thoughts on this subject?

I feel like we are in a transitional phase right now, the church as we know it must change. I think most people are willing to agree on that. What worked for the post world war 2 church today is not working for us anymore. It is like we are on the middle of a bridge, and we can't stop there because we cannot exist on it. We have to move onto the other side, leaving behind the land we have learned to love. We're comfortable there, it is familiar. Stepping on a brand new land, maybe this is our promised land...but it is strange and makes us feel uncomfortable, it is forcing us to leave things behind and embrace new ways. Exactly what those new ways will look like is still up for debate. Even those things which are new to us today probably have to soon make room for even stranger ways. We are just like those Israelites God guided out of bondage. Take only the essentials, leave the rest behind God says. But we in our infinite knowledge (lol), we are dragging behind us the kitchen sink and our bedroom set, wondering why everything is so painful and moving ever so slowly. We are whining and crying all the way as God provides for us day in and day out, wondering where He went wrong.

So let's rejoice in the fact that we are being freed from the bondage, the bondage of traditions not relevant to us anymore, the bondage of "but we have always done it that way", or the opposite "we have already tried that 40 years ago, that will never work".

So let's rejoice in the relationships being created in the midst of this struggle, let's rejoice in the new ways we get to know God, let's rejoice in the different kinds of people who will have a chance to get to know God, Let's just rejoice...because it is a better and more enjoyable way to travel, through the desert or across a bridge. Rejoice in God at all times and let's also rejoice in each other...

Peace, rene

Book Club

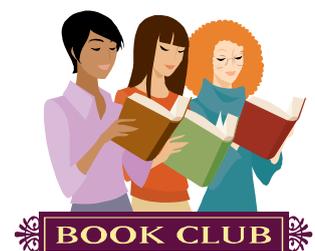
Our book for the month of March is, "Letters to a Young Doubter", by William Sloane Coffin. Our host will be Bob and Suzanne Martinson who live at 203 Aaron Dr in Kelso. Bob will lead the book discussion and you are welcome and encouraged to attend.

April's book is "My Beloved World" by Sonia Sotomayor

May's book is "Invisible Girls": A Memoir" by Sarah Thebarge.

June is to be decided.

Sharon Klump



Finance Committee

Each month, on Communion Sunday, we've been asking for a special offering to support both global and local charities. This offering is in addition to our regular offering and 100% goes to the "charity of the month." As we were last year, we have been generous in our donations this year.

Our March Special Offering will be a national program called "One Great Hour of Sharing." This offering goes to the United Methodist Committee on Relief and is a way to share the goodness of our lives with those who hurt. Gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing lay the foundation of all United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), work by covering the costs of doing business. This helps UMCOR keep the promise that 100% of any gift to a specific project will go to that project, not for home costs. When floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, fire, or other disaster strikes, UMCOR sends in their teams to help restore the communities. When catastrophes cause suffering, your church --- impelled by Jesus' love and compassion --brings healing, hope and refuge.

During the floods of 1996, UMCOR sent teams to SW Washington to help . Our home town of Skamokawa had one such team that helped families replace ruined furniture, raise foundations, sanitize and move back into their homes. Bob and Shirley Foster lived and worked in Skamokawa for four months before they were satisfied that they had done all they could and families throughout Wahkiakum County were helped. This is just one example of how your gifts help carry out Jesus' command in Mark 12:31, "You shall love you neighbor a yourself."

Cynda Webb

Finance Chairperson



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
- "God Has Left the Building"
Sunday 9:30 am in the library

Music

- The "Unity Crew" rehearses Sundays at 9:00 am and Wednesdays at 6:30 pm

Message from Bishop Hagiya



It is a little obvious, but The United Methodist Church is in the midst of some major transition challenges. As the church and society reacts to the Frank Schaefer trial and Bishop Melvin Talbert's blessing of a same gender wedding in another Bishop's area, the tensions from within and outside the church heighten our cultural conflicts.

Recently, our Council of Bishops had to deal squarely with this issue, as Bishop Talbert disregarded the request of the Resident Bishop of North Alabama, Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett, and went ahead to perform a blessing of the wedding of Bobby Prince and Joe Openshaw. I know both of these Bishops personally, and I have the utmost respect for the integrity of both of them.

Our Council of Bishop's Executive Team asked Bishop Talbert not to be involved in this same gender blessing, but Bishop Talbert, acting out of his personal convictions, went ahead with the blessing. It was an action that the Council of Bishops could not ignore, and we dealt with it extensively in Executive Session (closed session). I am bound by the confidentiality of our covenant as Bishops, so the details of our discussions cannot be shared in public.

However, I believe I can share that there were two issues at stake for the Council of Bishops: One is the issue of our covenant with each other, as what does it mean for a retired Bishop to disregard the request of an active Bishop in whose area of responsibility an action is taken. The second issue is the Council of Bishop's action when a Bishop commits an act of ecclesial disobedience. I believe the former was more important to the Council of Bishops than the latter.

It is a matter of [public record](#), and was expressed a number of times, that there has been examples of historical precedence of United Methodist Bishops disregarding the request of fellow residential Bishops by coming to their area to protest racial civil rights violations. This happened during the height of the civil rights movement in our country, and out of personal convictions, some of our UMC Bishops traveled to another Bishop's area to stand in solidarity with those fighting for the civil rights of African Americans. History has proven that such violations of the covenant were acceptable and right.

I am of the opinion that we face a similar situation when it comes the rights of LGBTQ persons currently. Only the passing of time will tell if we are right in this conviction, but I believe we are witnessing the same situation of equal justice for all. It was for this reason that I stood outside the majority vote of the Council of Bishops on the questions of whether Bishop Talbert should be charged for his actions.

As I have stated many times in the past, I acknowledge my human sinfulness, and do not presume to believe that my position is the unequivocal truth. I cannot know God's Truth on this issue, and can only stand on my limited conviction of what I believe. I will not force my convictions on those who believe the opposite. Like all of you, I only know what I believe is right, and I need to be in constant [prayer](#) and discernment.

Our United Methodist Church is in for some tough sledding now and in the future, but I believe that there is a way forward for our church. It must begin with our return [to prayer](#), study, and deep discernment. Only in this deep place of spiritual depth will we find a way forward. We cannot resort to beating each other up because we are on opposite sides of this issue. We need to model the unconditional love of God in Jesus Christ in our relationships. This means we need to do the hard work of sharing openly how we disagree, not to try to convert the other, but to work to a greater understanding and acceptance of our differences. This is what it means to be unified in Christ Jesus: It is not a bland acceptance of everything, but to hold together even when we vehemently disagree with each other.

Next page

This is what I am asking of all of us. Let us be open to really hear each other, not attempt to destroy the convictions that are opposite to our own, and finally come to an acceptance of each other, even when we disagree with each other. It is hard, hard work that I am asking of us, but God never promised that it would be easy for us as Christians. In fact, Jesus told us that it was going to be the most difficult work we have ever done. This is the cost of discipleship, and the reason that I am a Christian. For in going through the fire, we will find a greater truth, and in the end, God will be waiting for us.

Be the Hope,



Trustee committee has elected Ed Hilliard to be the president for this coming year. Ed will work hard to keep our church in good shape.



Trustees have been looking into the leak in the Fellowship room and had the Roof Dr come and climb around the roof and discovered some needed repairs which will be done as soon as it gets drier. Trustee will be constructing a new sound booth at the rear of the church soon and we encourage all of you to help donate toward the cost. The temperature in the sanctuary has been turned down during the week to save on our gas bill. Our blue choir robes have become moldy over the years and sadly will need to be thrown out. The handicapped bathroom will be getting a new hot water heater as the old one leaks.

If you or someone you know could use any of the three lawn mowers sitting out by the parsonage please talk to Gene Fosburg. He can give you details on each. There are two riding mowers and one push mower. Cost will be minimal if any as we really need to get rid of them.

Staff Parish Relations Committee

Rene's salary package for 2014 included a new calculation of the church's contribution to his retirement. Under the new retirement system, our church's contribution as approved at the charge conference in November was \$632.62. However, we have been notified by the Conference that our calculation of the church's contribution was not correct, and the correct contribution would be \$889.09 for 2014, resulting in a yearly addition of \$256.47 to Rene's retirement. In order to make the correction, we will need to have a short Charge Conference and vote. We are scheduling the vote after church on April 27.

Barbara Vining, SPRC Chairperson

Social Justice

The congregation overwhelmingly voted to focus our efforts on alleviating hunger in our area. As one person put it in their comment section, hunger affects everything one does; it's hard to do anything when one is hungry. Consequently, at our first well attended meeting in January, we discussed several ways to focus on food inadequacy and set goals for 2014.

These are where we think we can provide some help to our community:

Next page

1. Providing Saturday lunches at Community house. Because of the flu epidemic, Community House is not yet opening its doors to volunteers. However, we hope to provide lunch on a periodic basis there. We would need to purchase the food and will need six to seven persons to volunteer to cook food. Clean up is provided by the residents.
2. Habitat for Humanity needs lunch provided for their build sites for ten to twenty people. UMW took that project on in January when the sun was shining-- and the building folks were very appreciative. Thanks to all who provided food, cooked and delivered.
3. Providing backpacks with food for school kids on Friday afternoons. We have invited Suzanne Martinson to speak at our March 3 meeting on this topic. She has worked with Altrusa for many years in providing school backpacks. We look forward to hearing her experiences and evaluating whether this is a project we can take on.
4. FISH - what they need right now are phone volunteers to receive calls from those in need and to refer them to services. We will consider whether to be food distributor for 2015.
5. Summer garden is a possibility. There was a suggestion to plant fruit trees.
6. During Lent several churches will meet for a common Lent study regarding hunger. The meeting will be at Gyro's (former site of Frank's European Deli).
7. We also feel the need to advocate for reduction of hunger on the national level as our local efforts help individuals and supplement SNAP benefits but do not work at reducing the causes of hunger. Bread for the World is a faith based nonprofit organization which has advocated to our Congress for years to alleviate hunger. We note that Congress recently passed the Agricultural bill which includes monies for SNAP (formerly food stamps) but at an \$8 million reduction
8. Tide Me Over - we continue to provide supplemental food stuffs as needed to those who come through the doors of our church thanks to the contributions by members and UMW. Continued thanks to you all for your support.

Another focus of Social Justice is working for full inclusion of LGBTQ folks in the ministry and life of the church (commitment as a member of the Reconciling Ministry Network). As part of that work, we have worked with PFLAG and the Rainbow Community (Facebook) to plan an alternative prom for young people in late spring. We still have monies to support that event. The young people are working on a date and place for the dance. The Rainbow Community is currently meeting at the Longview Library on Monday afternoons at 3:30. They are a fun and diverse group from middle school to college kids at LCC. Check it out.

The RMN annual Gathering this year will be held on March 8 at Des Moines UMC in south Seattle for a one day event.. As usual, the program sounds very interesting. There is always a speaker followed by two workshops. Meals are provided. The speakers will focus on helping Christians see Scripture with new eyes. There are several workshops -- "How Safe is Your Sanctuary?", Beyond Labels, introducing Our Whole Lives sex education curriculum and resources . For more information, see The Word Is Out newsletter which is posted in the narthex. Talk with your friends about carpooling up there.

Barbara Vining, Social Justice Chairperson

Why I Love This Church

My family has been members of Longview United Methodist Church for over a year now and I am so happy to call the members of this church my friends.



2012 was a horrible year for my family. We ended up homeless and living in the Community House. We had no money and no friends in this town. We were told that LUMC could help with a gas voucher. The first time we came to church we were not looking for a church home. We were solely trying to make it through one more week. Pastor Rene welcomed us with open arms. He didn't judge us because of how we looked or the fact that we were asking for help from complete strangers. He invited us to stay for the service so we took him up on the offer. During the service there is always a moment to meet with someone you don't know. We didn't expect anyone to take notice of us. Why would they? We sat in the last pew. We had never talked to anyone there before and we certainly weren't dressed for church. People actually came up to us regardless and welcomed us with hugs.

Once the service continued I looked around and noticed the rainbow streamers on the wall behind the cross. I have been to churches before and one thing I was sure of was church and PFLAG do not go hand in hand. I must admit that I was very curious about why the rainbow ribbon was in the church. I don't think I really paid too much attention to what the sermon was actually about. I was just trying to take in how kind everyone was, the fact that no one cared that we showed up in jeans, no one judged us on the fact that we needed help. What I do remember most clearly from our first visit was Communion. We were invited to stand and as I walked down the aisle I was filled with such a sense of peace. All I could think of was how beautiful the church looked and how wonderful it felt to walk toward that cross.

I remember thinking that this was a truly amazing place and that I NEEDED TO GET MARRIED RIGHT HERE! Marriage was always something we had talked about, but we didn't really want to just go to a court house. We wanted it to be a special day. When we lived at Community House since we were not married at the time that meant that my husband stayed on a separate floor than our son and myself. Every day it was heart breaking to not be able to be together. We decided we would ask Pastor Rene if he would marry us the following Sunday. We had no plan, we had nothing special to wear, we just needed the marriage certificate and witnesses so we could share a room.

We didn't think it was going to be anything special. Why would it be – we had only come to this church one time before. What we didn't know was that at the weekly meeting they made plans to make it special and memorable for us. We were given gifts. Everyone knows the saying, "something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue. In keeping with the saying I was given a piece of petrified wood, a silver cross necklace, a copy of a favorite book and a wand made of dried lavender tied together with a lovely blue ribbon. I cried when I opened the presents. I can't even begin to describe how special those gifts were to me. Our wedding was beautiful. Several of the kids were given bubbles and as we walked down the aisle the bubbles reflected the light and made everything look glossy for the few seconds before they burst. Today I can look back on our wedding and say that it was perfectly magical. It sounds so simple to everyone else but to us we knew we had found our church home.

Since we joined the church so many things have happened. We have laughed together. We have cried. We have watched our friends expand their families. We were blessed with a beautiful baby girl and once again our church family came together and threw us a wonderful baby shower. LUMC has been there for us more times than I can count. When I was pregnant with my daughter I had several people tell me they wanted to be honorary grandparents to our kids. This meant the world to me because my own grandparents want nothing to do with me or my family. To know that there are people that love us enough to want to be a part of our lives is so special.

Our car broke down a few weeks ago and we didn't think we would be making it to church for a while. Once again the church has gone above and beyond for us. Calls were made and people volunteered to come get us. Since we are a family of 4 with 2 car seats most people simply don't have enough room to fit us all. The first Sunday Rich was able to take us all. The next Sunday Mary and Delorse came to pick us up. Three different people have taken time out of their day to make sure we got safely to and from church.

To me this church is more than just a random group of people we happen to co-exist with once a week. They are some of the best friends I have been lucky enough to know.

What does this church mean to me? It's more than just free child care for a few hours. It's having two of the loveliest caring kind ladies take part in our son's life. He loves them and can't wait to see Cait and Mary every Sunday. It's more than just a place to gather. It is a place to make friends, share lives, be there for EVERYONE, no matter what is going on in their life. When we say everyone is welcome, we truly mean everyone is welcome. Come as you are and we will accept you for exactly how you are, not what we think you should be. We welcome diversity. The first time I heard that I didn't know exactly what that meant, but since I have been a member of this church family I have never seen anyone be turned away. I have never seen anyone be judged because they couldn't afford food. What I have seen is "tide me over" bags put out weekly. I have seen the Angel fund help those in need pay power, water and rent bills. I have seen people come together whenever anyone is in need, be it a shoulder to cry on, a visit in the hospital if someone is sick or a ride to church when you are in need.

This church is family. This building is love.

Jessica Palmer

Lent Study

During Lent several churches will meet for a common Lent study regarding hunger. The meeting will be at Gyro's (former site of Frank's European Deli). The study will begin at 6:30 pm beginning March 11th and continue through April 15th. The restaurant will be open at 6:00 pm for anyone who wishes to purchase food before the study begins. The restaurant will not be open to the public during those times—only for our group.



2851—30th Ave.



Phone: 360-425-4927

Email: lumcoffice@cni.net

Check out our website!
www.umclongview.com

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Longview United Methodist Church is a beacon of diversity in our community. We encourage each individual in their spiritual journey as they become a disciple for Jesus Christ