

July/August , 2015

Well summer is upon us, I am sitting outside at our new house as we slowly begin to lose the last rays of sunshine, the earth is cooling to a more comfy temperature and I am almost hypnotized by the sounds of the sprinkler trying to bring life back to our thirsty and yellow front lawn. I am worn-out, my feet feel like they have been rambling around the world...my hands argumentative every time I try to pick something up. Moving can sure take the life out of you. And here I am trying to resuscitate it, though it almost feels like an impossible job, like the sprinkler wanting to turn the grass green it is a very slow and wearisome process.



To be truthful it has been a very long and amazing weekend. Bellevue and Tacoma Friday for Kaela's graduation and to help Dave (Jen's uncle) get organized. Packing, trying to get ready for garage sale and the moving of big furniture (Frank and Garrett, I owe you a deep gratitude and probably lunch). Saturday garage sale and Mission Statement meeting (which went pretty good), then moving furniture. Sunday morning celebrating 12 years of being a reconciling church, and finally Sunday afternoon Portland's Gay Men's Chorus...wow...no wonder my hands and feet are organizing a strike.

But I am not merely physically tired, I am also emotionally tired. Spending Saturday trying to figure out who this church has been in the past, who we are today, and who God is calling us to be in the midst of careworn building concerns and money questions and attendance matters. It feels like the world's understanding of the church as well as the world's desires for the church are ever fluctuating, and so the question for us to grapple with is, how we can become once again significant to a generation of people who say they are spiritual and who are searching for meaning in their lives, but find the church not being able to meet their requirements.

We (Longview UMC) will spent the next couple of months imagining just that. At the end of that time we hope to have a mission statement which reflects our hearts, a vision statement which energizes our minds and hands and feet, and a space that will be accommodating and be suitable for us to carry out just that. Please be present at church and meetings because all means all, and all of our prayers and thoughts will be required as we travel onward with this opportunity.

Peace be with you all, rene'

Our 12th RMN Anniversary

We celebrated the 12th year that Longview UMC has been a member of the Reconciling Ministry Network of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the UMC with an energetic church service and a fun and inspiring concert by the Portland Gay Men's Chorus that afternoon. At our service, Sarah shared with us Bishop Melvin Talbert's message of acceptance of all and the commitment to do right for justice even in the face of bigotry, a message relevant to us today. The annual Jay Gregory Award for contributions to LGBT persons in the community went to our own Gale and Willis Williams. It was their son, Mark, who this church sponsored to become a minister and who came out at Annual Conference some years ago, which motivated this congregation to study and eventually vote to join the Reconciling Ministry Network and to commit to publicly accepting all people regardless of sexual orientation. Willis and Pastor Carl Martin co-led the study which led to the vote and also cofounded the local PFLAG organization. We have been blessed with their presence and ministry these many years and miss Gale every day. I believe the vote and the welcoming of LGBT folks was motivated by love and it's amazing the blessings love bestows.

The afternoon concert capped off a wonderful day with the 100 member Portland Gay Men's Chorus rocking the house with an ABBA/Queen retrospective, complete with dancing. The house was packed. There was much singing along and much joy; I even saw Megan and her husband dancing in the narthex. I thought of our popular church song, The Lord of the Dance, and how the Lord would want us to dance with joy in celebration of life and love. The concert ended with We Are the Champions, a fitting uplift for all LGBT folks complete with the waving of the Rainbow Flag.

And the week ended with the Supreme Court's ruling that same sex marriage is guaranteed by the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution and is legal throughout the land. No piecemeal, state by state civil rights, but that we live in a United States where all are equal under the law. On a personal note, Niis and I were in Ashland to see the Shakespeare Festival on Friday; we attended the evening outside performance in the Elizabethan Theater. The rainbow flag was flying proudly from the flag pole of the theater, and the 500 plus folks there rose in ovation when the flag was pointed out. It brought joy to our hearts and tears to our eyes.

Barb and Niis

Hello Longview UMC

Troop 516 would like to thank you for another successful rummage sale. We raised over \$629. We could not do this without the use of the United Methodist hall. We really appreciate the use of your space and hope you found it in good condition when we were done.

Our best regards, Stephanie, sale chair for Troop 516

As We Move Forward

It is hard to find progress in the midst of struggle. People tend to split and conflict can be created between these two opposing forces when large impactful decisions are presented. I commend this congregation on maintaining peace as we determine the direction of Longview UMC. We have taken a step into the unknown. We are all looking for guidance from the Holy One, and we all want to see our congregation continue to exist. As to what that will look like the next coming months has yet to be determined.

In June we met to discuss our mission, as that will be our beacon moving forward. On July 12th, following the service we will come together as a family of believers to peacefully discuss the mission that we are all committing to uphold. This will be a pot-luck meeting as I would not like this topic discussed on an empty stomach. I pray you all commit to attending. All of you have a voice and an opinion that deserves to be heard. If you have any questions as we go forward, please feel free to contact me, and I will do my best to answer your question.

Garrett Harrison, Church Council Chairperson

Portland Gay Men's Chorus Concert

What an exciting performance from the Portland Gay Men's Chorus. We learned that they are not all men, or all gay but they sing incredibly. We were treated to this concert as part of their outreach to the community. They donate their time and energy to the benefit of others. This time the proceeds are going to our local PFLAG chapter. We had over \$800 in ticket sales.

This was the 3rd time they performed in Longview. Many of the chorus members remarked how nice Longview was. Because of their comments, it helped me appreciate our area a little more. One guy shared that he lived in the city but thought that it must be wonderful to live in an area with lots of trees, the lake and a walking path behind the church.

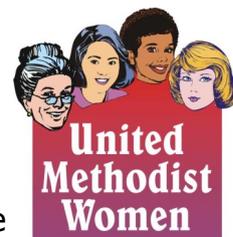
I want to offer my appreciation to all of the folks that helped with the concert. There were many involved in setting this up, advertising, preparing food for the after concert reception and in selling and collecting tickets. Thanks you all for your support.

If you missed the concert this time, don't worry, they will be back.

Eileen Arnold

United Methodist Women

The United Methodist Women are not meeting through the summer, but that doesn't mean we are not busy!



We are preparing for one of our biggest fundraisers of the year – the annual rummage sale. We have already received a lot of donations but need more in order to fill the fellowship hall August 14th & 15th. Please bring your donations to the choir room (2nd door from 30th Ave.) as soon as possible. Items donated must be clean and in good working order.

This is a great chance to clean out some closets, sort through the garage, basement or whatever. We all have items no longer used or needed and it might be just what someone else is looking for!

(If we should find ourselves in the midst of roof repair, etc. the rummage sale will be rescheduled or relocated.)

The UMW gives generously to the church in many ways. Thank you for your continued support.

Sharon Fosburg
UMW President

We mourn the passing of Mary Lou Prescan. She was a lovely presence and a faithful member since 2003 when she moved to Longview from Florida.



Mary Lou had lived the last several months at Americana Rehab Center where she maintained the same pleasant happy attitude she always showed at church.

A memorial celebration of her life will be held at the church July 11th at 1:00 pm with a reception following in the fellowship hall.

“Mary Lou told me she moved here from Florida to be near her sons, and as she drove around looking at churches she saw our huge, lighted 50th birthday cake on the roof and said to herself, “This is the church for me!” And so it was. I loved her. She had a quick sense of humor as you got to know her.” Niis Bue

Can New People Navigate Your Worship?

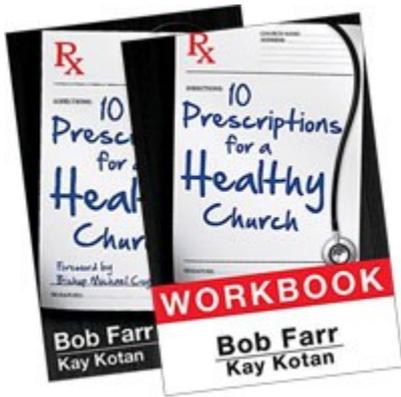
by Jacob Armstrong

Many churches have a way of doing things that doesn't allow for new people to connect. Without even knowing it, we exclude those we truly want to reach. Let me illustrate. A guest arrives at a church that is new to her. She learned of the service times from the website. She is nervous. She almost talked herself out of coming five times. But something drew her to worship. She easily finds a parking place but isn't quite clear where to enter the building. She follows another family in a door, and is greeted quickly by someone who hands her a folded piece of paper. She realizes quickly that she is early, really early. Later she will learn that the church had changed service times but neglected to make the change on the website. Everybody else arrives on time.



The first thing that happens in worship is the sharing of announcements. A lot of announcements. Sounds like a lot is going on, but it is hard for her to decipher what all the events are. The letters VBS mean nothing to her. She wonders why a rummage sale would be so important to a church. The next thing the person speaking (no idea who the person is) does is invite people to stand and "pass the peace." She stands, but doesn't know what to pass. A couple of kind people come and shake her hand, but then move on to someone else. She stands awkwardly as she hears others talking with their friends. They then sing a song. She realizes the numbers in the folded program refer to a number in the book in the pew. She stands to sing and feels some comfort as she hears the sounds of voices mixing together in song. After the song, another unidentified individual asks for "joys and concerns." People begin sharing requests for prayer. She doesn't know any of the folks being discussed, but everyone else seems to as they nod with knowing looks as each prayer request is lifted up and updated.

I'll stop there. Many worship services have created a closed loop that is very hard to break through. Some persistent ones hang in there and eventually understand the lingo and the patterns. But for the church to adapt in a way that leads to life for more people, we must care enough to open the closed loop to let new people in. We must be willing to think about everything we do in worship through the eyes of the newcomer. It may mean giving up the passing of the peace because we realize this is not a time when guests feel more welcomed, but more isolated. It may mean finding other arenas where prayer requests can be shared and actually prayed over. It may mean sharing fewer announcements in worship and spending more time focusing on connecting people to God. In short, opening the closed loop demands intentionality. Intentionality starts in preparation. Preparation for worship should take into mind what we know about our community. The question of intention is "why?" Why are we singing this song? Why are we having a children's moment? Why are we making seven announcements? People who come for the first time and those who are returning for their 100th time appreciate the decisions made to include everyone in the worship of God. They may never notice it, but they will feel it. And they will return.



How does someone in your church go from being new to being an authentic follower of Jesus Christ? Many churches provide really fuzzy answers to this question. We often hear people say, "That is what Sunday school is for, right?" We have come to believe that if we come to worship, attend Sunday school, serve on a couple of committees, and participate in Vacation Bible School, somehow we become disciples. We have come to believe this happens by osmosis — if you come to the church and hang around a bit, you will develop into an authentic follower of Jesus Christ.

Many churches we encounter have at best an unintentional faith development process that leads people to church membership rather than discipleship. This unintentional approach produces people who worked really hard operating the church. It added a lot of busyness to a lot of already busy lives. And we have mistaken busyness as discipleship.

Because many have not thought this through, there may not be a set of character traits, beliefs, daily rituals, behaviors, or expectations outlined or taught in many of our local churches. In fact, we may not even be sure that we should be describing an outcome. Consequently, we have a shortage of discipleship. We have people who have been with us for a very long time, but their faith isn't necessarily any deeper than when they were confirmed. They are good, moral, nice people, but not necessarily disciples of Jesus Christ.

What Does an Authentic Follower of Jesus Look Like?

The very first myth we must debunk is that an intentional faith development process is creating a required curriculum. The journey of faith development is not curriculum identification. Rather it is how to grow more Christlike. What are the traits, beliefs, and experiences that the church desires people to have in order to grow in their faith and live it out daily? What would you want people to know and experience so that their daily lives are changed to walk closer to Christ?

Your pastor and leaders must work through for themselves what they think an authentic follower of Jesus Christ would look like. It may not be perfect, and it may change over time. But if you haven't designed a target to hit, you won't hit anything. Bishop Robert Schnase's book *Five Practices of Fruitful Living* is an attempt to help us set a target by giving some markers for an authentic follower of Jesus Christ.

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A Way of Life

We will never fully finish our spiritual work, thus the spiritual growth pathway will have no ending point either. We sometimes must rediscover a spiritual discipline, go deeper, or see in a new context where we are in our own spiritual journey. This isn't a checklist but a pathway for spiritual growth and maturity. It is a map or guide that allows us to grow deeper in our faith. The Christian life is a way of life. It is not an exact science, but it is a life of practices. Therefore, you need to know the practices in order to live that way of life.

Creating a Pathway

There is no one, perfect, clear-cut discipleship path. We recommend that congregations assemble a discipleship or faith development team to create a pathway or process. One church developed a process known as The Quest, which provides for four different ways that adults can connect to small groups, Sunday school, service projects, and so on. Those four ways are Explore, Connect, Grow, and Unleash. All of their existing small-group ministries were redefined according to these components, and every new small group, whether through Christian education or service, is created with this intentional faith development classification in mind. It is best to roll out new opportunities to engage in intentional faith development at least twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. Some may be resistant to doing things differently, but new people will come in under this process, and that is most important.

Tide Me Over

Since January, we have had at least 16 bags of groceries taken by those who need them. That is an average of about 3 bags per month. Sometimes, as soon as we put out a bag, it is taken. There is definitely a need for food for some who are our sisters and brothers. Thank you for your continued contributions. This month, we are in need of peanut butter and toilet tissue (and any other canned goods - vegetables, fruit and meat).



SIGN UP FOR COFFEE HOUR AND ALTAR FLOWERS

Sign up posters for these opportunities can now be found in the fellowship hall, on or near the serving table.



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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 disciples for Jesus Christ

This is our current Mission Statement. The new improved version is to be approved at our July 12th Council and vision planning meeting. Be there and be part of the next step for Longview UMC!!