



May 2014



With Easter behind us, and spring budding upon us we begin to move further and further away from death and ever closer towards life...at least that is the hope, but the ques-

tion remains, what is life?

With funerals that hit close to home and Jesus' death on the cross the topic of life and death seems like a natural one to engage in, even though our society seems to shy away from the topic as much as it can. As believers what happens after death, though a mystery, is a pretty safe conversation. Well, we go to heaven, we return to God, enter the pearly gates, there may be a thought about judgment, and a very fleeting thought about hell. Mostly however many of us though not sure about the exact details are hopeful that those who have gone before us are in a better place, and one that we too shall enter. So now that we have death pretty much figured out, let's return to the other half of our equation. What is life?

Interestingly enough this may be the tougher conversation of the two. We can probably agree that there are two parts here. First, there is life biologically speaking, there is a physical birth, our body with all its mysteries, its beauty and its shortcomings, and finally physical death, ashes to ashes and dust to dust. Second, there is a spiritual component to life. At least as believers this should be part of our understanding of life. To be born again is one way we talk about that change from physical to spiritual, or living in the kingdom of God while here on earth. So what does this spiritual life look like? Can it even be explained in earthly terms? Opinions differ on the answer to this question. There definitely is a deep seated relationship that connects us individually to the Creator of all things, and there may not be any words that do it justice or explain it in ways that make sense to another person, but must there not also be a collective piece? It seems that the best we can do is look at Jesus' life and the way He lived His life while here on earth. Born again or living in the Kingdom is our way of trying to put God first in our own life. It means looking at the world through the eyes of God, feeling it hearing it, acting upon it in such a way that our life would glorify Him through our actions towards others. There is a purpose to us, which is bigger than us...

This collective piece would also hold true for our vision and mission here at church. It plays itself out in the relationships we form, in the celebrations and in the struggles we share, in the lessons we learn or try to ignore, and finally in the ways we share this real God we have found in the middle of this real and messy life together with our surrounding community, those outside our own four walls.

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The best we can do is to look at Jesus' life and to try and follow His life model. Robert Schnase wrote a book a little while back, *The Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. I know these are not new, but as I think about what the kingdom of God may look and feel like, these come to mind. They may be worth another look? Here they are: Radical Hospitality; Passionate Worship; Intentional Faith Development; Risk-Taking Mission and Service; Extravagant Generosity.

So again the question is. Are we alive? Is our church alive? Or are we simply existing while taking attendance on Sunday mornings? Or do we make a difference in this world? When our community talks about us, what do they say, what do they see? Would they miss us if we were to die (close) tomorrow? Maybe we need to spend some more time looking at who we are, who we want to be, what we stand for. Let me leave you with this final question, and it may be a challenging one. I love our slogan which says, we are a welcoming congregation, and all means all, and I understand how we got there, however my question to all of you is, can this really be true? Will we embrace all? Invite all? Will we tolerate all? I would love to have some more conversation around these questions, come and see me, and talk amongst yourselves...

Peace, rene

Trustees

Trustee committee continues to do yard work, mowing, picking up leaves, edging, etc. If you are willing to help, please let us know. Our little trees, planted last fall, are leafing out and looking very nice. The three extra mowers have been traded for one reconditioned walk-behind mower. The sound booth is nearly done and will look real nice after it is stained and has a baseboard of carpet same as the sanctuary carpet. Many thanks to those who generously gave money and those who built it. We will enjoy our music much more with its benefit. We are still working with the roofing company to fix roof leaks. We have two painting projects coming and again another volunteer opportunity.

Many thanks to those help with cleaning of the church we appreciate you.

Sharon Klump

Blankets Plus

Longview United Methodist Church will take a special offering on Sunday, May 4th for this very important mission. When tragedy strikes, Church World Services (CWS) is prepared to help immediately. The CWS distributes winter and summer-weight, or heavy-duty blankets to those displaced by disaster and also to those who are homeless or economically disadvantaged.

A \$5 donation will fund the cost of one blanket that can be shipped to someone who is in great need of it. Please consider giving to this mission. Envelopes will be provided and you can put "Blanket Sunday" on the memo line of your check. Please consider joining the United Methodist Women in this project. We will have a short DVD power point to further explain this worthy project.

New Groups Using Our Building

Two new groups are calling Longview UMC home! A newly formed Overeaters Anonymous group will be meeting each Monday and Thursday at 7:00 pm. This is a "spin-off" from the Narcotics Anonymous group that has been meeting at our church for several years.

The other new group is a new Boy Scout "Venture" troop. They will be meeting at the church on 2nd and 4th Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm. These Scouts come from different troops and are all looking to go beyond what the regular scout troops offer – this is what makes them a Venture troop.

Both of these groups will meet in the Scout room at the east end of the building.

May book club meeting

We will be meeting at the home of Sharon Fosburg, 2673 42nd Ave Longview on May 14th at 7:00 pm for discussion on the book, "Invisible Girls: A Memoir" by Sarah Thebarger. We will be joined by another book club of ladies who are reading the same book. This is an exciting new adventure for our group. Please plan to attend and let Sharon know at (360) 425-5439 if you will be there.

Our book for June is, "War Brides" by Helen Bryan. We will be discussing the schedule of books for next season after we take the summer off (from meeting, not reading!)

Sharon Klump

Baby Shower

There will be a baby shower following worship service Sunday May 4th. Ciatlyn, who has been our lead child care provider for a few years is due to have a baby boy, Jacen in May.

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 room 1

Music

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



Why I Love This Church

I have been a United Methodist since I was about four years old. Around then, a neighbor invited my parents to come to church at Rainier United Methodist Church, and we started attending regularly. I still have a nice memory of taking my dress shoes off in church so that I could stand on the pew next to my mom or dad when we sang hymns (this put me at just the right height to look at the hymnal and have one of my parents' arms around me). I grew up there, at UMC Camps, conference youth events, district training events, and lay speaking classes. I did confirmation with the Clatskanie Methodist youth group, and as I learned more about what it meant to be a Methodist, I knew that it was a church where I fit. I like it that we read the bible for ourselves, talk to God ourselves, ask questions, and "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Open communion seems to go along with this for me. I also like the emphasis on serving the community and the needy, and having a plain but serviceable church so that more funds can go to help people who need it. Sadly though, Rainier UMC never had very many people my age. The few that there were (including me) started getting distracted from church in high-school and even took some breaks from attending during college. I came back after college though, took church building classes, and even wondered if God might be calling me to the ministry.

During those years, the Methodist Church as a whole was confronting the LGBTQ issue. I remember how disappointed Rainier's Lay Leader, Steve Frantz was at the outcome of talks on this issue at a General Conference. Rainier UMC did a study on Homosexuality And the Church, but they never could get enough people to support becoming a Reconciling Congregation. Also at this time, I was beginning to realize how important the welcoming of the LGBTQ community is to me personally. It had always been important to me, but as I got older, interacted with more people, and went to college, I realized that having a church home that fully welcomes you was very special and that no one (queer or otherwise) should miss out on that. So, I was very disappointed when General Conference 2012 finished, and the church as a whole could not even agree to admit that there was any disagreement on the issue. I began to wonder if perhaps I had been wrong about the United Methodist Church being where I belonged. How could I attend and give my gifts of time, money and love to an organization that did not officially believe the way I did? Every time I came through the door or put money in the offering, wouldn't I be saying I agreed? I took another break from church.

One Saturday night, I decided I was going to go to church in the morning. I remembered reading an article in the paper about the minister at Longview UMC marrying a same-sex couple, so I looked up the church's website. When I got there the next morning, I saw an Obama bumper sticker in the parking lot, and in the sanctuary I noticed that there were a few people around my age. There were even a few babies and kids. The music was emotionally effecting to me, and they even had a drum set! I felt as if I'd come to a place where people were growing, changing and thriving. There were a lot of jeans, sneakers and casual shirts...even on the pastor! I saw a same-sex couple lean their heads together to talk in a quietly close way, and someone had an espresso cup under their pew. I felt like I might be home.

That day, and the Sundays that followed, people always made me feel welcome. They would ask my name, and remember it, or, cheerfully ask again, and invite me to do the same. They seemed happy to have me there. People invited me to upcoming events but didn't nag or swarm. The music continues to be great. I love pastor Rene's informal preaching style; it's so neat that he truly invites people to raise their hands and speak or ask questions. I enjoy the power point pictures and graphs, and I like it that he usually finds a way to relate things to real life. I loved the day he said: "How would you feel if Jesus were going to spend the day with you?"

As for the LGBTQ and UMC issue, attending a reconciling church is the solution for me. I am proud that this congregation decided to follow this path 10 whole years ago, and I pray that the whole UMC will someday join them. Politics aside though, this is a place where I can love and be loved, learn, ask, worship, pray, work and grow with others. And I was right, I do feel at home.

Kebby Jones

Making Your Church Kid and Family Friendly

By Ann A. Michel

The start of the school year is a great time to roll out the welcome mat for families and children. The following tips come from the Lewis Center's 50 Ways to Build Strength: Caring for Children.

1. Make your space child friendly. Nursery and classrooms should be clean, safe, sanitary, and visually appealing to children and their parents.
2. Host seminars on parenting. Have a Sunday morning class focused on family concerns.
3. Give gifts to expectant moms and new babies.
4. Sponsor a parents' night out.
5. Provide childcare for all church events. Make it fun and enriching.
6. Give pagers to parents who leave children in the nursery. Or use the parents' cell phones, reminding them to set their phones to vibrate.
7. If children's sermons are incorporated in worship, make sure they are consistently presented creatively.
8. Include at least one hymn every Sunday that children love and can sing with the congregation.
9. Involve children in helping with worship.
10. Have children serve alongside their parents as greeters and ushers.
11. Give younger children entering worship a small activity packet with crayons and other items.
12. Print a booklet for parents to use in explaining elements of worship to their children.

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