



**FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL**
United Church of Christ - Portland

The Pilgrim

November-December 2015

Vol. XV, Issue 9

"Do you not know that your body is a house of God where the Holy Spirit lives? God gave you the Holy Spirit. Now you belong to God. You do not belong to yourselves. God bought you with a great price. So honor God with your body. You belong to God." - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Dear Friends:

The scriptures tell us in no uncertain terms that, as Christians, all we have belongs to God and the service of God — even our bodies. For some this might seem like a difficult teaching, but the flip side of this "giving up" of personal possessions, is the existential reality of being filled with the spirit. This reality is not a metaphor, it is a living presence that can fill our lives, our bodies, and (as you will see below) our buildings, whenever we dedicate ourselves to serving God through the teachings of the Gospel.

Depending on your background, this might sound too abstract. What does it mean for our bodies to be "filled with the spirit?" It could be that the answer is too subtle to be answered by anything other than one's own experience. But if, as a thought experiment, we extend this question to our own "collective" body downtown on the Park Blocks, a picture starts to form that is both instructive and inspiring. So what follows is a day in the life of our church building. In some ways it could be argued that this particular day was a really big day, but from a serving God perspective, or a work-flow perspective, it was not so out of the ordinary, and I thought you might all appreciate this snapshot.

November 11th, 2015 (Veteran's Day)

7:00am Women's AA Group

(This group has been with us for over 20 years. On this particular day they filled the fellowship hall with 40 people sharing stories of experience, strength, and hope.)

7:30am Wayfarer Meeting

(Because of the AA meeting we had to sneak around the side alley to the kitchen where we meet. On this particular day Sheldon Hurst led us in a session on spiritual formation, we gave a parting gift to Debbie Knudson who will be leaving the table to visit AZ until March, and other Wayfarers discussed workflow and upcoming projects.)

11:00am PSU National Choir Conference Lunch & Practice

(Though technically a "space use rental" to help with our church revenue, we're always glad to offer hospitality to big groups like this... Our halls and bathrooms were filled with singing young people, and we all had some pretty good conversations around the edges.)

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12:00pm 12 Step Group

(At noon this second 12 step group of the day met downstairs in one of our classrooms. For those of you who recognize the profound spirituality of these groups, it will be clear how much "spirit" these gatherings represent.)

1:30pm Interviews with press

(Given our new partnership with Do Good Multnomah, the Portland Tribune sat down with Chris Aiosa and me to do an in-depth interview about our theology, our world-view, and what led us to hosting a Veteran's Shelter in our chapel. Watch for the article coming out soon.)

2:00pm Press Conference

(This press conference with Mayor Charlie Hales, New City Initiatives, and Do Good Multnomah, was less about our shelter and more about the new opportunities of ministry that are possible given the Mayor's declared "state of emergency" around the homeless crisis. This was also an invitation to faith leaders to join us back at FCUCC for strategizing on November 19.)

4:00pm Oregon Historical Society with University of Oregon Press

(Although this was another "space use rental," we all consider our neighbors at the Oregon Historical Society close friends, and we are always glad to host. If you're interested, see the Oregonian article on this particular event: http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2015/11/harvard_scholar_charles_ogletr.html)

7:00pm Volunteers doing work waiting for vets

(Because this was our first night with the shelter we had way more volunteers than we probably needed, but the sense of excitement and inspiration at doing this good work was palpable, and there was much bonding happening. If you're interested in joining this effort — it really is deeply moving — reach out to Matt Morris at: mmorris@uccportland.org.)

8:00pm Vets arrive for shelter

(On our first night we only had two vets, as the word hadn't really had a chance to get around yet. The two new friends who did take us up on the offer to sleep in the chapel quickly fell asleep by around 9:45p. Given all the energy of the day I was amped up for a few more hours, but by 11:30p I curled up in the chapel with them and quickly fell asleep myself.)

A few months back, in our Sunday worship, I said that the spirit is moving in this place. It is. But what does that mean for us, and where is it leading us? Well, I know just enough about the Holy Spirit not to attempt to answer that question. What we know for sure is that it means the building no longer belongs to us, it belongs to God, and there is no telling what God has in store. As Jesus once told his disciples, "the wind blows where it will, but we don't know where it has come from or where it is going." The only way to find out what the spirit has planned for YOU is to let the spirit in a little. Don't know how? Come by your church, on any given day of the week, and even though it might not be as busy as it was on this particular day (though it might even be busier) there can be no doubt that the spirit is blowing through the halls of our building — both in silence and in noise — and if you want it to find you, it will.

Peace,

Rev. Michael Ellick

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Eve's Circle

Eves Plan Underwear Kick-Off on November 28

It's time for our annual Undies the Tree underwear drive! Start your Christmas season off right as we listen to carols, sing and trim the Eve's Circle Christmas tree with pairs of underpants and other unmentionables for area children. This month's meeting is the Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend, so bring along any visitors and join the fun. We'll have childcare available, as well.

Last year Eve's Circle delivered 574 new undergarments to Goose Hollow family shelter, Human Solutions, and the Portland Public Schools Clothes Closet.

Our Undies the Tree drive will continue through the end of the year. Bring some undies to tie on the tree or just help us get set for the rest of the drive. Come be busy, joyful and thankful. The company's always good (and this month, so is the cause).

See you on Saturday morning, November 28, from 10am to noon in the Fellowship Hall. As mentioned above, childcare will be available.



If you think a group of interesting women of all ages is your kind of crowd -- come along! Members and friends of the church alike, you are welcome. Eve's Circle meets the fourth Saturday of every month.

- December 26 - Seeing Nature at Portland Art Museum
- January 23 - Borderlands Immersion Recap
- February 27 - Disaster Training & Camions of Care
- March 26 - Qi Gong
- April 23 - Eve's Reads
- May 20-22 - Eve's Annual Retreat at Camp Adams
- June 25 - Upstart Creative Co-Op
- July 23 - Planning for next year

Life in Our Church

Help Send Children to Camp Project Camp Grandma Agnes

Do some holiday shopping, brighten your home, AND support a good cause. Eve's Circle will be selling handmade placemats, napkins and aprons to support Project Camp Grandma Agnes on December 6 after church.

Agnes Alexander was a member of First Congregational in Vancouver for 78 years and a dual member here in Portland at the end of her life. She led a busy church life, including youth leader and later, camp grandmother, to hundreds of children attending UCC camps over the years.



Familiar faces surround Agnes Alexander, Camp Grandma, at Camp Adams in 1998.

Sometimes campers need a caring person to talk, to open their hearts. That's where camp grandmothers come in – and Agnes was a favorite.

When she passed away in last January, Agnes left lots of beautifully sewn aprons, placemats, and napkins. In her memory, Ann Laskey (Agnes' daughter) is leading Eve's Circle in finishing and selling the items to support scholarships for young campers. Agnes believed every child should be able to attend church camp.

Help us make this true at First Congregational. Stop by the sales table in the Fellowship Hall on December 6. Many designs are perfect for your holiday celebrations! (And they make great hostess gifts.)



Christmas Poinsettias

Each Christmas, the church is decorated with beautiful poinsettias honoring friends or loved ones, commemorating meaningful events and in remembrance of those who hold special places in our hearts. **Following worship on December 13 or 20, they are available for delivery to members who are unable to attend.**

If you would like to participate in this meaningful annual tradition, please complete the form below, attach your payment, and place it in the offering plate or return to the church office no later than **Sunday, December 6. The poinsettias will be in place during Advent and Christmas Eve.**

Your Name(s) _____ Phone _____

I/We donate _____ plant(s) at \$18.00 each Total amount of \$_____ is enclosed

In memory of (please print) _____

In honor of (please print) _____

Thank you!

Reflections from the Borderlands

Bruce Bishop's Testimony from the Borderlands

Intro: Los Samaritanos is a volunteer organization on the Arizona side of the Sonoran desert. Their mission is to save lives on the desert, which they do by conducting searches and water drops in the wilderness. The following story focuses on one afternoon's exposure to their work.

It's Tuesday afternoon. We're heading west on Arivaca Road from I-19. Harry's driving. Shura's riding shotgun. Zak and I are in the back seat. There's a white van following us. Shura tells us to keep our eyes peeled, Zak looking right, me looking left. She perches on the edge of her seat, hands on the dashboard, scanning back and forth, looking for something unexpected. Movement, clothing, vultures. Her movements remind us of a hawk's.

Suddenly, there's a helicopter sound. It appears to be following us. It circles and lands a few hundred feet away. Harry hits the gravel shoulder. He and Shura jump out of the 2005 white Samaritan Explorer, which is carrying 75 one-gallon jugs of water and equipment for our adventure. They start trotting across the road toward the helicopter. They're joined by two people from the van behind us.

A couple of minutes later, they return, telling us that the helicopter is not a Border Patrol vehicle, but is herding cattle. Had it been Border Patrol, it would have meant a migrant had been spotted from the air. Harry and Shura were ready to help.

We start down the road again. Perhaps distracted by the incident, Harry misses the turn, so we go a couple of miles farther south and west into the wilderness before he realizes it and turns around. He finds Cerro Colo, then Rancho Seco, roads. Maps show these roads as dead ends. They're not. Harry gets out a couple of times to open barbed-wire gates. He says it's okay, even though there are large "No Trespassing" signs, because one side of the road is BLM land. On the unpaved road, we have to pull over a couple of times for large trucks transporting cattle off the ranch. These are cattle herded by helicopter.

Fortunately, the white van is still following, eating our dust. It's got the rest of our delegation from First Congregational Church. We're on a water drop with Harry and Shura, two members of The Samaritans from Green Valley and Sahuarita, retirement communities 20 miles away. Before retiring to Southern Arizona, Harry was a fire department lieutenant in upstate New York. Shura ran a homeless shelter in Berkeley, California. They're taking us on a route they (or other Samaritan volunteers) try to check every two weeks or so. We keep going another five or ten miles. More comfortable on pavement, the van has a harder time keeping up, bouncing along, negotiating the turns and gullies.

Our mission is to deliver jugs of water for migrants who are walking three or more days through the Sonoran Desert in

Arizona. Their primary mission is to stay alive for the journey and not be caught by Border Patrol helicopters, SUVs or agents. All of us in the desert try to avoid dehydration, getting cut by cactus or jumping Cholla, or spraining an ankle. You would hope if people had made it this far, they would survive. Too many don't.

It's the last week of October. Temperatures are in the mid to high 80s that afternoon. The desert gets much hotter and more dangerous at other times of the year. Often, migrants are told, the safest time to hike north is at night. Without lights. Without maps. Without enough food or water.

A gallon of water weighs about 8.3 pounds. A walker in the desert needs at least that amount each day to avoid dehydration. Most border crossers have far less, even on their first day. We carry eight gallons of water several hundred yards beyond a water cistern for cattle. That water is not fit for human consumption. In the Samaritan way, we mark our jugs with the location, date, and our group name. FCC Portland was here, our jugs document. Most won't know or care what that means.

Shura Wallin is the Sonora Desert equivalent of Oregon's Gert Boyle. She's one tough mother. She saves lives on the desert. And, it seems, everybody knows her. She's been doing this work for over 15 years. Her mission, and that of the other Samaritans

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Life in Our Church

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in the group she co-founded, is to save lives. By leaving water in the desert and searching for migrants in distress. Samaritans wear t-shirts proudly proclaiming, "Humanitarian aid is never a crime." They believe it. They walk their talk.

Some days, they find Samaritan water jugs in different places than where they were left. Sometimes, they're empty. Sometimes, that's a good sign. It may mean that it helped a migrant stay alive. Other times, it may mean that hooligans have found the jugs and emptied or slashed them. When they think that's happened, Samaritans move their jugs some place else. They'll also do that if, after a couple of

months, it seems that nobody's accessing the water. That may mean that migrant trails have shifted. Usually, those shifts take migrant walkers into more dangerous territory, farther away from safer routes. The plastic jugs usually will decompose within six months in the desert.

In the desert, things in the distance are farther than they appear. Migrants at the border are often told that it's only five miles to Tucson. In fact, it's 68 miles from Nogales along I-19.

Migrants who have crossed the border without documents, of course, can't use the Interstate. They use routes to the east or west where they hope neither the Border Patrol nor the drug cartels are watching. On our water-drop

trip, we are checked at two border stations, even though we're over 20 miles from the border.

The week before we were in southern Arizona, seven men were killed in Mexico, including one who was beheaded, near the border crossing at Sasabe. It may be the most dangerous crossing along the entire 1,954 mile line between the United States and Mexico. Sasabe is about 40 miles west of Nogales. It's all deserted wilderness.

As long as this human traffic continues, and at least until there's a comprehensive humanitarian solution to this crisis, volunteer Samaritans need to stay on the lookout in this valley.

Practicing the Presence

Join us on Wednesday evenings for a time of prayer and meditation chosen from a wide spectrum of traditional and new forms practiced by many peoples throughout the world.

Beginning at 5:30 p.m. we gather in the Kiva for a time of Silence. Quietly enter during the first 30 minutes as your schedule, traffic, and parking allow.

At 6 p.m. we will introduce and practice a particular form of prayer or meditation. These forms may be different each week, but they will be explained in ways that will enable participants to practice the presence on their own during the week.

The evening will always end by 7 p.m. when choir practice begins.

Our thoughts and prayers are with:

Roger Walcker; Gladys Smalberger; Pat Kerwin; Jan & Ray Velez; Jan Gibson; Katherine Brumbaugh; Anne Lemar; Nora (Auseklis) Moolenkamp; Blair Kimball; and Logan Hlavacka.

ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held at the Church (1126 SW Park Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97205) on December 13, 2015 at 11:45 a.m.

The agenda will include the following:

1. Vote on adoption of new Bylaws.
2. Election of officers.
3. Vote on adoption of the 2016 budget.

We look forward to seeing you there and to your active participation in the decisions made in the interest of our church.

Life in Our Church

Healing Through Yoga

All of us are recovering from something. Whether that is an addiction, trauma, or life in general, we all have wounds. Let's join together with the aim of healing through the practice of yoga. We will meet on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month from 4 to 5 p.m. in the downstairs classroom. Our first class is November 25

All are welcome. Come as you are. No experience is required. You don't need money or the "right" clothes.

This gentle practice will include physical movement, breathing and mindfulness. Regardless of ability, everyone can be successful in this class. If you have a desire to practice and you show up, you're well on your way to healing through yoga.

This is a donation-based class, open to the community, and is offered to all on behalf of First Congregational UCC. If you're interested in participating, please contact Stephanie (StephanieRM@live.com). If you know of others outside our church who might be interested, feel free to pass along Stephanie's email to them as well.

ArtReach Gallery Presents: Terry Voss: A Half Price Retirement Art Sale

For the month of December, the ArtReach Gallery will feature the work of Terry Voss, a member of First Congregational. The paintings are being sold at reduced prices, and half of all sales will be donated to the church. The opening show is Thursday, December 3, at 5 p.m.

Artists Statement : "I began painting around the turn of the century after retiring and moving to southern Arizona from Portland, OR. I started out studying in watercolors and soon after branched out into acrylics and collage. I have taken workshops through the years from Gerald Bromer, Pat Lambrecht-Hold, Cleo Teissedre, and Dick Phillips as well as a number of artist in Green Valley AZ. I have won three honorable mention, second runner-up, and two first place awards in competitions in Green Valley and Tucson. I have also shown at Rogoway Gallery in Tubac with the Best of the Briggs for several years.



Whereas I say that I paint abstracts because I can't draw, I really am just drawn to the constant newness of moving paint around on the canvas. I usually launch out with a clean canvas without having a plan for the end project, and I have found that the more I can get my head out of the way, the more I can enjoy what I create."

December Birthdays

Clark Binkley..... 1	Debbie Knudson 16	Severin O'Boyle
Celeste Johnson.....2	Gladys Smalberger 19	Rosenau..... 30
John Bradley.....6	Mike Terpstra 19	Donna Hellums..... 31
Carol Herzog 6	Heidi Levy 27	

November and December 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
November 22 9:15 Story Lab 10:25 Worship 11:30 Fellowship 11:30 Budget Forum 1:00 Potluck in the Park	23 12:00 SA 1:00 UCC Ukes 1:15 Senior Yoga	24 1:00 SA 3:00 Returning Veterans Project	25 7:00 AA 1:00 SA 4:00 Healing through Yoga 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	26 Thanksgiving Church Closed	27 12:00 Weight Watchers 1:15 Senior Yoga	28 10:00 Eve's Circle
29 9:15 Story Lab 10:25 Worship 11:30 Fellowship 1:00 Potluck in the Park 7:00 The Hour & A Half Hour	30 12:00 SA 1:00 UCC Ukes 1:15 Senior Yoga	December 1 1:00 SA 3:00 Returning Veterans Project	2 7:00 AA 1:00 SA 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	3 12:00 SA 5:00 ArtReach Reception	4 12:00 Weight Watchers 1:15 Senior Yoga	5 10:00 Cookie Baking 7:00 Season of Light Concert
6 9:15 Story Lab 10:25 Worship 11:30 Fellowship 1:00 Potluck in the Park	7 12:00 SA 1:00 UCC Ukes 1:15 Senior Yoga	8 1:00 SA 3:00 Returning Veterans Project	9 7:00 AA 1:00 SA 4:00 Healing through Yoga 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	10 12:00 SA 12:30 Artists Way	11 12:00 Weight Watchers 1:15 Senior Yoga	12 11:00 Molly's Fund 6:30 Goose Hollow Family Shelter 7:30 Choral Arts Ensemble
13 9:15 Story Lab 10:25 Worship 11:30 Fellowship 11:45 Annual Congregational Meeting 1:00 Potluck in the Park 4:00 Aurora Chorus	14 12:00 SA 1:00 UCC Ukes 1:15 Senior Yoga 7:00 Musical Meditation	15 1:00 SA 3:00 Returning Veterans Project 6:30 Church Council	16 7:00 AA 1:00 SA 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	17 12:00 SA 7:00 Aaron Meyer Concert	18 12:00 Weight Watchers 1:15 Senior Yoga 7:30 Aaron Meyer Concert	19 2:00 Aaron Meyer Concert 7:30 Aaron Meyer Concert
20 9:15 Story Lab 10:25 Worship 11:30 Fellowship 1:00 Potluck in the Park	21 12:00 SA 1:00 UCC Ukes 1:15 Senior Yoga	22 1:00 SA 3:00 Returning Veterans Project	23 7:00 AA 1:00 SA 4:00 Healing through Yoga 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	24 12:00 SA 12:00 French Group 8:00 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	25 Christmas Day Church Closed	26 10:00 Eve's Circle
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