

PILGRIMS PROGRESS FEBRUARY, 2010
PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
2802 COMMERCIAL AVENUE, ANACORTES, WA 98221
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REVEREND SALLY BALMER, PASTOR AND TEACHER



MESSAGE FROM SALLY

It's a Sunday afternoon and I want to say thank you. Thank you to those of you who welcome others to our week-upon-week gathering. One never knows why someone decides: "church today" --particularly if it's been a long time, if ever, since the trek was made to a Sunday gathering of a faith community. To offer hospitality says "I respect that you have come." Perhaps it is like bowing to Spirit-on-the-loose, or the Christ presence "wherever two or three are gathered."

Our hospitality can takes many forms alongside the warm hello: visual artistry, a motel voucher, sharing in prayer and the wonder of music, the “noticings” in gratitude, the shouldering of responsibilities. Beneath the surface lies an agreement, a “yes” to a need, and a “yes” to being needed.

Recently our mix of welcome-and-responsibilities took tangible shape in our covenant service followed by the annual meeting. Accompanied by potluck goodness, we elected new officers, and voted on the budget. I am grateful to all who ventured into our “officer” arena, with particular note of Tom Miller who will serve moderator for this year. Also, a warm welcome to new members Barbara Bell, Kim Deans, Charles and Margaret Kotal, Jason and Kelley Wells. Your presence adds joy.

Soon we will turn the corner together into the season of Lent. February 21st marks the first of six Sundays, with Easter on April 4th. My recent work and conversations on the qualities of “imagination (now including ‘empathy’), self, and courage” are most fitting in this reflective liturgical season. Scripture texts from the gospels add more grist; my plan is to weave these together in our Sunday times of worship, with the able help of the Pilgrim worship committee.

Now it is no longer Sunday afternoon. I’ve just returned from watching “Up in the Air” at the Anacortes Cinema. The movie depicts the intelligent, put-together George Clooney discovering something more: an evolving sense of what is truly of value to him. My hope is that Pilgrim--our very presence-- helps each of us to discover and to embody our deepest values.
With a bow to the gracious, ennobling Spirit,
Sally

Pilgrim United Church of Christ Annual Congregational Meeting Jan. 24th, 2010

Bill Malcomson called the meeting to order at 12:15 am, Sunday, Jan. 24th 2010, in the lower level of the Pilgrim Church. Present were Bill Malcomson, Sally Balmer, Densley and Joyce Palmer, Malcolm and Paula Taylor, Lynn Christofersen, Nelle Jacobson, Jim Meyers, Joan Bissel, Nancy Chapman, Anna and Torgy Torgersen, Johnnie Vance and Roger Ridgeway, Sonia Barrantes,

Sarah Ratliff, Marcia Neu, Tom and Janet Miller, Nelle Jacobsen, Joan Bissell, Ruth Peterson, Elaine Lachlan, and a host of others, whose names this recorder didn't know....Oh, heck, there were a lot of people here. We had food.

Bill advised us that the rest of the month can be taken up in meditation and reading of all the materials that were handed out. They will not be read here.

1. Officer Nominations—Bill reviewed the requirements of attendance for our Council Meetings: “If you show up, you’re good.” Bill named all the nominees who are listed elsewhere. Densley paraphrased: “No matter who you are, or where you are on the Council...you will be dissed.” Nancy Chapman moved, and it was 2nded, that we accept the nominees unanimously, which they were.

2. Budget for 2010—Treasurer (Lynn Christopherson) and Financial Secretary (Elaine Lachlan) put together a budget for 2010 based on our experience of 2009. Furnace repair, ceiling collapse, put us over expected expenditures. Yet we still exceeded our goals for Total Mission Giving. (Whoopee!) We did have to take some \$\$\$ out of the money market fund to meet our obligation to the Skagit Community Alliance (Shelter). Contributions from AA and from the Congregation are our operating income. We are a fiscally conservative congregation. (emphasis, the Recorder) The \$6800 that we start this year with is actually less than we started with in 2009. We may inform AA that our gas expense for heating the lower room, (67 °), and we may be asking them for more money to keep the space warm for the 15 meetings they hold here weekly. Tom Miller will talk to AA about this. Nancy moved we approve the budget, it was 2nded, and unanimously approved.

Joan Bissel moved that we thank Lynn C. for her years of work. The applause was deafening. Bill M. was also applauded wildly. He was then awarded a ceremonial pen inscribed with the words “Pilgrim Manor,” not meaning he is retiring, but that we have truly appreciated his “manner” during his tenure as Chairman. He will be sporting a button reading “I’m very receptive to compliments today.”

Then, a virtual snowstorm of irony ensued with the dispensing of buttons and stickers: “Jesus called; He wants his religion back” button was awarded to Lynn C. for her hard work. Tom was awarded an elephant sticker. Don’t forget that. Nelle got a panda bear. Malcolm got a monkey in honor of his ongoing snarkiness. Nancy got a “go-gettem” tiger. Anna, for her garden work, got a frog. Ruth got the music bird. Janet M. earned a bunny award (along with a virtual trip to the zoo) for all that hopping around. Jonnie V. who stuck her neck out, got the giraffe award. Denny, for reasons almost too obvious, also received a monkey award. Joyce earned the Photo Fun award. Marcia got a dog award, while Paula got the cat award for being inscrutable. Joan received a frog award for being in green and hopping around better. Bob, for reading intelligently, was given the pig award. Go figure. Christine and Bob’s wife both got pandas for being with the

children. The “I know I came into this room for a Reason” button went to Tom Miller as new Moderator. A new Perpetual Button: “Welcome to the Fun Side of the Rainbow”—goes first to Sonia B., to which she exclaimed: “Halleluiah for spreadsheets!”

Hands were raised heavenward and Bill Malcomson declared for the last time as Moderator: “The Meeting is adjourned.” It was 1:00pm.

Respectfully (No, *really!*) Submitted,

Malcolm Taylor

P.U.C.C. Recording Secretary

[Home: Justice and Witness Ministries](#)

The fight for health care reform is not over! Realizing a final health care bill will mark an historic achievement that will transform the lives of many Americans who are without access to quality, affordable health care.

The past week has been tumultuous in Washington D.C. The election of Scott Brown in Massachusetts has altered the political balance of the Senate, a change which presents new obstacles for proponents of healthcare reform.

Our mission must remain the same – to continue the advocate for reform that embraces and responds to our moral vision for our health care future.

The need for prayer and action continues. Take Action to day!

- [Call your elected officials](#) and encourage them to move forward with health care reform. [Use our script](#) and ask them to support real health care reform that embraces the moral vision of a system that is inclusive, accessible, affordable, and accountable.
- Join as we [observe Health and Human Service Sunday](#) on January 31, we pray for holy boldness to continue to lift up health care for all.

IMPORTANT FILM AT THE LINCOLN FOR THE SKAGIT HUMAN RIGHTS FESTIVAL

Hannah and Rachel grew up as little girls in the same small Midwest town, where traditional gender expectations eventually challenge their deep love for one another. Hannah becomes an adventurous, unapologetic lesbian and Rachel a strong but quiet homemaker. Weaving back and forth between past and present, the film reveals how the women maintained their love

affair despite a marriage, a world war, infidelities, and family denial.

Hannah Free is a feature-length motion picture shot in HD for distribution in worldwide theatrical and ancillary markets.

Hannah Free produced by **Ripe Fruit Films, LLC**

March 7, 2010 3 p.m.

Lincoln Theatre

712 S. 1st St., Mount Vernon , WA 98273

Sponsors: Skagit PFLAG, The Pride Foundation : part of the 2010 Skagit Human Rights Festival

Tickets (online): www.lincolnthatre.org

Tickets (phone): 360-336-8955 (M-F, noon-5pm)

Ticket price: \$10.00 General, \$8.00 Students/Seniors

sent by Roger from the New York Times

By [WILLIAM YARDLEY](#)

Published: January 15, 2010

MILLWOOD, Wash. — State auditors told Millwood Community Presbyterian Church last summer to close its farmers' market on the church parking lot or the lot could no longer be claimed as tax-exempt. Without hesitation, the church kept the market and paid the \$700 in annual taxes.

Money is tight, but the locally raised beef and vegetables and, most important, the environmentally minded customers had become central to the 90-year-old church's ministry.

"It's like we've got more going on in our parking lot than we do within the walls of the church," said the pastor, Craig Goodwin.

Across the Northwest, where church attendance has long been low but concern for the environment high, some church leaders and parishioners are ringing doorbells to inform neighbors — many of whom have never stepped inside the sanctuary down the street — about ways to conserve energy and lower their utility bills. Some view the new push as a way to revitalize their congregations and reconnect with their nearby community.

Religious leaders have been preaching environmentalism for years, and much attention has focused on politically powerful evangelical Christian leaders who have taken up [climate change](#) as a cause. Yet some smaller, older and often struggling mainline churches are also going greener, reducing their carbon footprint by upgrading basement boilers and streamlining the Sunday bulletin, swapping Styrofoam for ceramic mugs at coffee hour and tending jumbled vegetable gardens where lawns once were carefully cultivated.

"I've never been good at door-to-door evangelism," said Deb Conklin, the pastor at Liberty Park United Methodist Church in Spokane, Wash., where an aging and shrinking

congregation of about 20 people worships on Sundays. “But this has been so fun. Everybody wants to talk to you. It’s exciting. It’s ministry.”

Several mainline church leaders in the Northwest said environmentalism offered an entry point, especially to younger adults, who might view Christianity as wrought with debates over gay rights and abortion.

A study released in December by the Barna Group, which more typically studies trends among evangelicals, said that older, mainline churches faced many challenges but that their approach to environmental issues was among several areas that “position those churches well for attracting younger Americans.”

“We actually encourage it as a way to get people into the churches,” said LeeAnne Beres, the executive director of Earth Ministry, a Seattle group founded in 1992 that has guided many area congregations through environmental upgrades over the past decade but has recently emphasized more direct political action for pastors and parishioners. “That is what people are interested in, and I don’t see anything Machiavellian in that.”

“It’s fertile ground,” Ms. Beres said, “and these are issues that people are predisposed to care about here in the Northwest.”

Several pastors said they had worked to ground environmental activism in religious teaching and more traditional areas of ministry, particularly social justice, to distinguish it from secular environmentalism. That might mean discussing the impact of climate change on people in countries susceptible to rising seas or on other species, what Hunt Priest, the rector of Emmanuel Episcopal in Mercer Island, Wash., called “the web of creation.”

“For a little while some people forgot this was a spiritual issue,” Mr. Priest said, “and we’ve reclaimed that now. I think we got caught up in things like changing light bulbs and saving paper and having the power company come out and do an audit.

“All important, but for us it needs to be about how we live our lives as Christians now that we know more about what we’ve done to the environment.”

Mr. Priest, who recently joined Ms. Beres and other pastors to lobby staff members of Senators Patty Murray and [Maria Cantwell](#), both Democrats of Washington, for a cap on carbon emissions, said he was wary of viewing environmentalism as a “church growth program.” He noted that while some mainline churches had reported increased attendance as they emphasized the issue, Emmanuel’s congregation, now about 250 families, had declined even though the church had been active on environmental issues for more than a decade.

Still, he said, concern for the environment “can be a spiritual growing edge.”

“Greening a congregation,” as some call it, is not always easy. At Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ near downtown Spokane, built in 1893, the congregation has about 200 people, down from 2,000 a few decades ago. The pastor, Andrea CastroLang, said the church recently had an energy audit and that while it has made some of the proposed changes, including upgrading the boiler, some were impractical for the soaring, heat-leaking sanctuary.

“They were like, ‘It’d be really great if you could lower your ceiling,’ ” Ms. CastroLang said. “We said, ‘We can’t do that.’ ”

Food is at the forefront of some local efforts, and it is central to the changes under way here at Millwood Presbyterian. In 2008, Mr. Goodwin, the pastor, and his family experimented with eating only locally grown food. Mr. Goodwin, who blogged about the experience, said that he had not been particularly environmentally minded in the past and that the shift came as he tried to help his church engage more with the modest neighborhood surrounding it. The congregation, once 1,700 people, had shrunk to 420 five years ago but has since risen to about 500, he said.

Mr. Goodwin said the farmers’ market, originally conceived by a teenage girl in the congregation, Kelly Hansen, was part of what he hoped would be environmentalism at a basic level, what he called “place making,” with the church a shaping force.

“We’ve been trying to sort out how we flesh out a future in this community,” Mr. Goodwin said. “Instead of ‘How do we get people in here?’ It became ‘Let’s get ourselves out there.’ ”

[Home: Justice and Witness Ministries](#)

Three things you can do to help the people of Haiti:

- [Pray](#) for the people of Haiti and the relief workers who are assisting them.
- Donate to the [UCC’s Haiti Earthquake Relief fund](#) to provide emergency relief and support for long term recovery.
- [Call on the Obama administration to grant Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\) to Haitians who are in the United States.](#)

Last Tuesday’s 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Haiti resulted in overwhelming human casualties and widespread structural damage in the Western Hemisphere’s poorest nation. While relief efforts are underway, we urge you to contact your congressional representatives and the Obama Administration to ask that the United States halt it’s deportation of Haitians by granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians in the U.S.

The Haitian government does not have the necessary funds or infrastructure to undertake relief and reconstruction efforts on its own - also making it temporarily unable to accept deported Haitian nationals. For the U.S. to return thousands of Haitians to Haiti under the current circumstances would exacerbate the humanitarian crisis and further compound the food shortage, illness, maternal and infant mortality, and other implications of Haiti’s fragile economy. TPS for Haitians in the United States will allow the Haitian government to invest its limited resources to rebuild damaged infrastructure and offer emergency relief to its suffering citizens.

Friends:

I wanted you all to know that I will now be offering the same course in three venues and one new course in the near future.

The course on Hinduism and Buddhism: The Beginnings will now be offered at the following locations and times:

Anacortes Senior Center: Mondays, 1:30-3:30 p.m., Feb. 1, 8, 22, March 1, 8.

Mt. Vernon Senior Center: Thursdays, 10-Noon, Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, March 4.

La Conner Senior Center: Tuesdays, 9-11 a.m., March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30.

You do not need to register for the above classes. The cost will be \$30 for all 5 sessions. If you can only come to certain sessions, the cost will be \$7 per session. You may pay me directly with cash or check (made out to "William L. Malcomson").

I will also be teaching a course entitle "Islam and the World" under the auspices of the Senior College in Anacortes. It meets at the Anacortes Middle School. The times are as follows: Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m., April 22, 29, May 6, 13, 20.

The cost is \$25.00 for this class.

There are still openings for the tour of Western Turkey, beginning October 18, 2010, which Barbara Bell and I will be co-hosting.

I would like to know immediately if you are interested. Contact me at my e-mail address or at 360-770-6217.

Bill Malcomson

For further reflection

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 20th century

Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

Soren Kierkegaard, 19th century

Christ did not appoint professors, but followers. If Christianity (precisely because it is not a doctrine) is not reduplicated in the life of the person expounding it, then he does not expound Christianity, for Christianity is a message about living and can only be expounded by being realized in men's lives.

Bob Dylan, 20th century

Jesus tapped me on the shoulder and said, Bob, why are you resisting me? I said, I'm not resisting you! He said, You gonna follow me? I said, I've never thought about that before! He said, When you're not following me, you're resisting me.

Tony Campolo, 21st century

I don't know how your theology works, but if Jesus has a choice between stained glass windows and feeding starving kids in Haiti, I have a feeling he'd choose the starving kids in Haiti.