

PILGRIMS PROGRESS JUNE 2010
PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
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REVEREND SALLY BALMER, PASTOR AND TEACHER



Message from Sally

Each of us connects with a church/congregation--or not--for all kinds of reasons. I recently revisited my reasons again when a clergy colleague, weary with expectations and pettiness, turned to me and asked: "if you weren't the pastor, would you. . . attend?"

I could feel the kind of pause inside that took me to a deeper place. Yes. A "yes" untethered to expectations or guilt, busyness or boredom, habit. . . or not. What takes me there is touching what feels like more than an idea or static "belief": the world belongs to God--expresses God--and I'm a part of this. The thought is complex, simple, and far from individualistic.

I can talk about this with my friends--and I do. I learn a lot that way. I can take classes, too--and I do, and my wonder and thinking and life increases, I hope. I can vote, visit, take a stand, help out....in other words, engage with the life in which I am a participant.

Nowhere else, though, am I reminded so centrally, regularly, with others and with a long line of faith-ancestors (with histories at least as mixed as my own) that there is a Holy One, that love is beautiful and difficult and sacred, that God is still speaking. I need prayers--and that can mean so many different things--and texts old and new; I need to hear from others, and I am helped by sweet mysteries like music and singing and not being able to choose who's at the end of the pew (whether they suit my personal taste

or not). I need to be not only reminded of God/Presence, but to think that maybe, just maybe, it is I who needs to be there for the stranger who shows up. As life keeps reminding me, it is hard to know the moments that can make all the difference. I just know that experiencing forgiveness and “no matter who you are” and “God is still speaking” can be pretty darn powerful, even if words won’t do. Heck, I even need to put money in an offering plate that has something to do with such matters.

And I understand entirely why my friend asked the question. Sometimes it can be hard for me to be clear about what I do and what matters. I wonder what Jesus thought about synagogue life, about “faith-ing” life. Or Mary, his mother. Or--here on this Memorial Day-- persons who live with the sounds of war close at hand. Or you.

For our Sunday worship this month:

June 6th-- our first ever **children’s Sunday**. With their assistance in communion, too. I’ll be away on June 13th participating in a Benedictine retreat which is a part of my course studies at Vancouver School of Theology. The next Sunday, **June 21**, I’ll be sharing some from the **Benedictine tradition and practice**. Finally, we’ll end with our **Pride Sunday on June 28th**, celebrating our Open and Affirming stance, with a look at how our diversity continues to be a challenge and hope.

Grateful for our faith-community in this corner of the world,
Sally

Words from Our Moderator

It’s June or as I heard on the radio today (yes, some people still listen to the radio), it’s “*January*”. I can’t remember when it has rained so much and so hard at this time of the year. It must be because Janet has talked me into building her a shed for her gardening stuff. Of course I can’t just build a simple “shed” but must build a first class one with all the bells and whistles, including a window and power. Every time I go outside to start work, it rains.

June is going to be a busy month for us. One of our grandsons is graduating from high school next week and then we are going to visit our oldest son and his family in Tennessee for two weeks. I will also be attending a Conference leadership retreat at N-Sid-Sen in Idaho from June 11 through June 13.

Some good news. The flagpole cables have been replaced. We found a company in Anacortes that had a lift truck and they did the job in about ten minutes. We replaced the old flag ropes (which had been cut and stolen during the last flag robbery) with stainless steel cable. These will be bolted to the pole at a height of ten feet. As far as cutting the cable, it will take a special tool to do that. I don’t think we will have any more casual flag stealing. At least I hope not. We should have a re-flag raising one Sunday morning after we get all the detail work done.

The Church Council has decided to go to an every other month meeting schedule for the time being. If this proves impractical we will revert to the monthly schedule.

--Tom Miller, Moderator

Upcoming Events

Children's Service – Sunday, June 6

This is a special day to celebrate our youngest members. Kids will participate in all parts of the service including the readings, communion, singing and prayer. The service has been planned to accommodate those of us with shorter attention spans.

Other Upcoming Sunday Guest Ministers

The Reverend Trish Williams will speak at PCC on June 13, and the Reverend Barbara Gilday will lead the service on July 11.

Children's Program

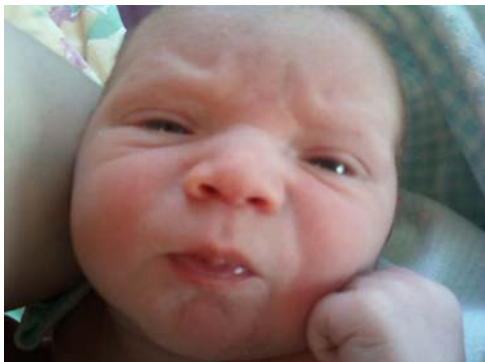
Make sure to be in church on Sunday, June 6, for the Children's Service!

News from Pilgrim

The Long-Range Planning Committee has met and will be meeting again in early June. A subcommittee is working on questions to be used in an upcoming visitation of the members of the Pilgrim community. In July and August, members of the committee will be setting up visits with each of you to learn of your ideas and concerns regarding Pilgrim's future. Stay tuned!

Long-Range Planning Committee members are as follows: Chair: Bill Malcomson, Members: Nancy Chapman, Roger Ridgway, Anna Torgersen, Bob Carey, Lynn Christofersen, Bob Schofield. Ex officio: Tom Miller, Moderator, Sally Balmer, Pastor.

Pilgrim Community News



Owen James Misch was born May 30 at 8:07 am, 7lbs 1 oz. Anne and the baby are doing great.

--Mike Misch (proud dad)

A couple of weeks ago Laurie Malcomson had a setback. She ran a high fever and had a rapid heartbeat. It was evidently an infection and some strong antibiotics brought her around. However, she also has a growing mass in her abdomen, which we think is an enlarged spleen. She is getting terrific care from the folks at San Juan Rehab and Care Center, as well as from her doctor and from Skagit County Hospice. Laurie has lymphoma. She can receive visitors at San Juan. The best visiting times in terms of her energy are around 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

--Bill Malcomson

Grace Malcomson was elected Treasurer of the La Conner Middle School Associated Student Body for 2010-2011.

--Christi Malcomson

Charles & I have a team in the American Cancer Society Relay For Life in Anacortes. The dates are June 18, 4:00pm to June 19, 9:00am. If anyone would like to join our team "La Belle Vie" or support us in any way just contact us. You can also check-out the website www.relayforlife.org/anacorteswa

--Margaret Kotal

Local Community News

Anacortes Family Shelter

I'm writing because I'm still very interested in the AFS which is half a block down the alley from our church. It is a great new community service that provides shelter for up to 90 days to women, women with children and families. It also has up to two units that can provide "transitional housing" for people up to 24 months. These units are for people that need more time to complete educational opportunities or other established goals.

The first group of people (who all moved in at about the same time) are finished and moved on. Change now occurs on an irregular basis, depending on the needs of each person or family. This means people are moving in and out quite often. In the beginning, I organized a group of great volunteers to help with a dinner. It was a bust because nobody from the Shelter came. I understand that the people from church thought it was a great chance to talk and have conversation anyway. I had double-booked (oops!) and so couldn't stay much after church. I'll try to be better. The dinner, of course, was on a Sunday when the core staff is not there. On the Friday before, the staff had told me that they had about 18 people who said they would attend. I don't think the problem is the staff, but the newness of the Shelter and the fact that we are a church. The weekend "staff" are working for Youth Dynamics.

The Council subsequently decided not to do anything more for awhile with/for AFS. I meanwhile started going to the Auxiliary meetings that the staff had organized for volunteers. Out of that have come offers such as Kiwanis providing all the soap, etc. for the laundry room. They have also decided to adopt a room. Other groups/people are holding a weekly story hour for small children. Others are providing life skill classes such as stress management, family finances, etc.

I think we should try again. One unsuccessful time is not good enough! I have some ideas for things we can do as a small band or an entire congregation. BUT I'm not willing to do all the work myself under the Church's name. I think there must be a few people in the congregation with good imaginations and bright ideas plus a willingness to give this another go. So if you are, please contact me at church, by phone or email. And bring your thinking caps or lists or whatever.

Many thanks, Nancy Chapman

to see as gift

to see as gift each person, happening, and idea
is what is asked should I seek to become myself.
it's easy to love the lovable, Jeshua taught.
none he knew took it wholly to heart.
Yoda said there is no try, just do or not do.
Skywalker did.

I hear these words throbbing in my heart,
insisting I endeavor to make safe
for each sentient being,
boulder, dragonfly, tree, seed, bird, and star,
this place of participation
in a continuing expansive living cosmos.

if I had to first add up each hour
to do every good act in the time
and times remaining,
I'd have to say no, too hard,
for every moment of intentional change
I succeed in making
leads from this breath forward,
to affect forever the yet to be.

still, I assent, openly put on the mantle
consecrated at my first hour
when life stirred me to awaken, rise,
bade me live with every spark of being
I could gather together vectored toward
enduring inclusivity, reality, joy, and hope.

only with yes in my employ is this possible.
for solely one moment at a time am I able
to choose to sustain, honor,
to devote myself to touching this
unwavering true light while I still live.

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News from the UCC

Follow the Lead of the UCC's Southwest Conference: Pledge Non-Compliance with Arizona's New Immigration Law

On April 23 Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed the nation's most extreme anti-immigration legislation into law. S.B. 1070 requires police to question and arrest people they suspect of being in the country illegally. The law essentially codifies racial profiling. The UCC's Southwest Conference wrote an open letter to the governor, President Obama, and other officials protesting the law, urging a boycott of the state, and encouraging non-compliance with the law. Take a stand for fair and comprehensive immigration reform. Pledge your non-compliance with Arizona's SB1070. Donate to the UCC effort to witness with our friends in Arizona.

U.S. Supreme Court Finds Life Sentences for Juveniles Unconstitutional

We celebrate this victory for justice in the case of Sullivan and Graham v. Florida. The U.S. Supreme Court, on May 17, ended the practice of sentencing juveniles to life imprisonment without chance of parole. The United Church of Christ Justice & Witness Ministries was an amicus on behalf of the young people. Pierson Kemp, a member of the UCC's Executive Council, had attended the U.S. Supreme Court oral arguments on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

"Language of God" Video sustains strong surge

Written by Jeff Woodard (Excerpt from original article in UCC News emailed newsletter)
May 25, 2010

The much-publicized, initial splash of the UCC Stillspeaking Ministry's "The Language of God" video message continues to make waves across the internet. Launched in a coordinated campaign of supporters on April 16, the video message now has been disseminated by hundreds of thousands in more than 100 countries, with the potential to still be viewed by millions more given the tens of thousands of uploads of the video on blogs, news sites and social networks.

More than six weeks into its launch, the video still generates 500 to 1,000 daily views combined on [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#). As of May 24, those two sites alone had drawn nearly 250,000 views and generated more than 2,500 comments.

Due to the sudden, large rush of traffic driven by UCC members on April 16, YouTube tagged the ad as spam within 20 minutes of its launch, counting no views for much of that first day. By the next morning, it was apparent that the traffic was organic and not manufactured, so the spam tag was lifted. Despite being frozen for several hours, the ad was promoted briefly by YouTube later on April 17 as one of the site's most popular videos.

"The message of the video and the Stillspeaking campaigns are the best representations of the kingdom of heaven I have experienced in my 25 years in ministry," says Chaplain PJ Banks-Anderson, a Gulf War veteran and military chaplain. "Through my continuing work with military families, I am able to use 'The Language of God' ad and the 'God is Still Speaking' campaign in a number of ways."

A retired Navy Chaplain, Banks-Anderson is a volunteer chaplain in the Civil Air Patrol, an auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force. Currently completing a yearlong Clinical Pastoral Education residency in Metairie, La., Banks-Anderson is the founder of the [National Restoration to Military Families Team](#).

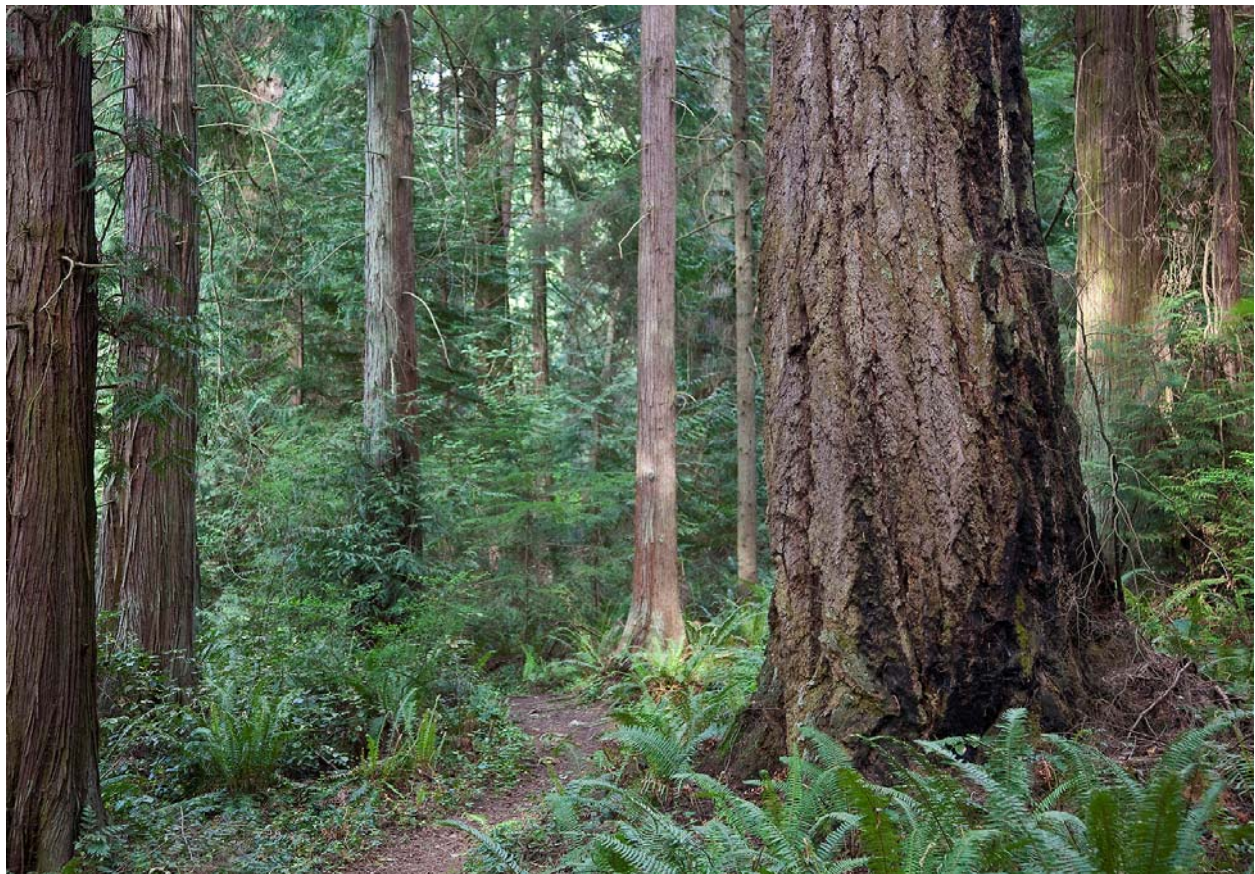
The video and the Stillspeaking campaign create safe environments for individuals "to seek, explore and define themselves as God has defined them," says Banks-Anderson. "Everyone has a place at God's table, in God's house, and within God's heart without condition. It is a message of love that saves minds and lives from the torment of secrecy and fear of rejection."

Video viewer Mick Bradley wrote in an email that, prior to viewing "The Language of God" he was "80 percent certain" that he was going to re-commit his 20-year-old call to Christian ministry and pursue it as a vocation. "This ad is a solid confirmation. And I'm pretty sure I want to do it through the UCC. It will take years, but it's time to become the person I believe I am intended to be."

ACFL Trail #210

In the hushed centennial family gathering of trees - towering, silent, booming bowers: western hemlock, douglas fir, yellow cedar all lined up, wisened grandfathers, slim uncles, wrinkled grandmothers, and the odd cousin big leaf maples, all standing around pondering me, the toddler among their very old souls, scrambling along this dusty path, smiling when I gaze upon their all-knowing faces

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