

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

Message from Sally

Amidst all else: *Grateful for Gathering*

Lately I've caught myself holding my head in my hands while tears stream unbidden down my cheeks. I always knew I loved birds; something about the destruction of their – *their* – habitat by the relentless pulsing and soaking and suffocating of oil from the BP explosion underscores for me their vulnerability to our human ways. Human life was lost, too, and human livelihoods are being lost as sea life is endangered. The news stretches: to the immigration law in Arizona that tells me desperate people use desperate measures. War is not so different...and our nation has two. And not long ago, the Haitian earthquake, then in Chile. Nearby, the tragedy of lives lost in a Tesoro fire. We love life, and sometimes what we do is hold our heads...and sometimes each other.

I appreciate our need to gather as a faith community. It can feel to me less like a time to “get” anything in a consumer-sense and more like “just being” in a presence, our collective presence, and More. I could call it a Gathered Presence, one that nods to life's complexities, pain, and wonder – sometimes in singing, readings and words, specific prayers and silence. God is near.

For **Sundays this month**, I want to note our worship gatherings have a lot of variety this month! Here's a taste:

**May 2nd** Our four lay delegates to Annual Meeting-- Tom, Bill, Barbara, and Sonia shared a bit of their experience, plus I tied things in, including sharing the UCC ads on the “big screen.” For communion, Densley led into it with his sharing about “thin places.”

**May 9th** Thanks to Densley's organizing, women of Pilgrim will share for Mother's Day.

**May 16th** The strange-and-wonderful book of Acts keeps cropping up as possible lectionary readings – so finally we'll hear bits of some of the amazing stories from this early document.....

**May 23rd** ....which is a lead-in for going back to a church beginning: **Pentecost!** We'll celebrate this day of wind and fire with old stories and “prayer-a-chutes” from the children.

**May 30th** For this fifth Sunday on Memorial Day weekend, we'll hear the stark, powerful words in Samuel Clemens' (a.k.a. Mark Twain) “The War Prayer,” ably assisted by the voices of Bill Malcomson and Malcolm Taylor. A poem by Mary Oliver will offer more food for thought.

**Stay tuned:** for a **Children's Sunday** on **June 6th**.

I feel certain that Tom Miller, our dedicated moderator, would particularly note the value of our “gathered presence” for **church work day, May 8th** (10-2, all or part, chili for lunch). Enough said. What I do sense, as a committee begins to think longer-range about who we are as a community is that **our thriving is linked to our gathering**.

Jesus, deftly avoiding references to “numbers” or heavy “criteria” simply noted “where two or three are gathered, there am I.” Sacred Presence. The God of flesh, with us.

Grateful for our Gatherings--  
Sally

Words from Our Moderator

Here it is the first of the month again and its time to write a few words for the newsletter and I'm late again as usual. When we were young, time seemed to just drag by, but now it seems the first of the month comes every other day. Next month I've set a goal to have this completed before the end of May. We'll see.

Last weekend (Thursday through Sunday) several of us were at our Conference's Annual Meeting in Wenatchee. For me this annual event is a time of renewal and covenant. Although most of my time was spent in meetings (Board of Directors and Committee on Ministry) there was always time to see old friends and meet new ones.



Pacific Madrones

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The Long Range Planning Committee met for the first time yesterday at Bill Malcomson's house. The group laid out a plan and a schedule for the first phase of their task. This first phase will be a time of data gathering. They intend to interview each of us on a one-on-one basis. I'm looking forward to the work of this dedicated group from our Congregation.

Don't forget about the "All Church Work Day" on Saturday May 8 from 10 am to 2 pm. Lunch included. Bring your tools for working in the south and north gardens. Supplies will be provided for other tasks. A list will be provided so no one has to think about what has to be done. I hope we will have a good turnout for this important event.

--Tom Miller, Moderator

## Upcoming Events

### All Church Work Day at Pilgrim – May 8

Everyone is encouraged to come and lend a hand to work in the garden and all around the church on Saturday, May 8, from 10 am-2 pm. Lunch will be served (homemade chili – thanks, Janet!).

### Mother's Day Sunday

Our worship service on Mother's Day, May 9, will be led by several women (and one guy) from the congregation. The focus of the service will be on women and faith. We hope you will come to help us mark this annual observance of remembrance and celebration.

## Children's Program

- We'll celebrate Mother's Day on May 9 by looking at homes animal mothers make
- Sunday, May 16, Roger is doing a lesson on whales with information about our local whale deaths.
- The following two lessons will be on the sea and seashore.
- Watch for news about Children's Sunday coming up on June 6!

## News from Pilgrim

The Long-Range Planning Committee has now been formed and will hold its first meeting in early May. The 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

We are back after missing too much time from services. Unfortunately, on the 10th, we will leave again, this time for Santa Barbara and a visit to daughter Diana. I hope to be at First Congregational UCC Santa Barbara on the 16th. We have visited there on several occasions and enjoy the service and the people.

--Densley & Joyce Palmer

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 19:00am. If anyone would like to join our team "La Belle Vie" or support us in any way just contact us. They could also check-out the website [www.relayforlife.org/anacorteswa](http://www.relayforlife.org/anacorteswa)

--Margaret Kotal

## Mother wit

Out of her body  
you  
a person child  
nuzzling her breast  
between gulps of milk.

Through the fuzziness  
you saw her face,  
smelled her body,  
felt her moist breath  
upon your upturned cheek,  
before, while in  
her watery cradle,  
you heard her heart  
beating next to you,  
listened to her hum  
hello baby,  
I love you,  
you're mine,  
heard her staccato grunts  
when you kicked.  
you felt her  
patting you.  
Whispering there, there.  
murmuring, can't wait.

The bond of time,  
unbroken life  
passed on to you,  
felt as an echoing  
she's me, I'm her,  
we simply are.

Out of her body,  
out of her sight,  
you became another.  
Mothers cannot always  
be right there.  
That is a good thing.

The you  
who was birthed  
needed space  
and new explorations  
although you could not  
understand this  
for a long, long time.  
Side by side  
and then apart,  
apart and ever bound,  
the bond matured.

Now, when you are distant  
or she, gone,  
your bond endures  
for what it is  
for that which it became,  
for that which  
you together  
forged, held close.

And, now,  
upon your coming babe,  
that living bond  
which you inherited,  
rooted deeply,  
and honed,  
you may endow.

## Local Community News

Sent: Friday, April 23, 2010 2:33 PM

Subject: Article by MVHS student Amelia Furlong

Dear Friends/Wonderful Supporters,

I wanted to share this incredible editorial from our high school newspaper that was written by one of our Gay/Straight Alliance (GSA) members. Many of you know Eileen Butler and Brad Furlong's twin daughters, Amelia and Madeline. This is by Amelia, who is the editor-in-chief this year of the Mount Vernon High School newspaper (and also recently honored as Student Journalist of the Year by the state organization!).

Amelia has been a very positive, exciting influence on the GSA this year, offering the club and its members her abundant energy, intelligence, and tremendous support as a straight ally. I believe that this editorial in our student newspaper, which is widely read by the student body, will have a strong influence on our school climate. Things have been changing for the better ever since the GSA was started over 4 years ago (our graduating GSA members have never known their high school without a GSA--an astounding fact to many of us!). Our three incredible Over the Rainbow Festivals, in which many of you have played a part, have made a huge difference. This editorial will be another great push forward.

I have received Amelia's permission to share her editorial, and she has said others can use it/publish it as they wish. I think it speaks eloquently to her peers and I hope it will get wide distribution and reach many hearts. It certainly has touched mine.

Best regards,

Cathy Pfahl, Librarian  
Mount Vernon High School and  
Mount Baker Middle School  
Advisor, MVHS Gay/Straight Alliance

### Editorial by Mount Vernon High School Student

I joined GSA by accident. I'd heard of the club, of course. In three years at Mount Vernon High School it would be hard not to hear about something as controversial as a Gay/Straight Alliance. While I supported the club from a distance I never imagined, when I went to a meeting at the beginning of this year to interview the president, that I'd soon consider the club to be one of my most important activities.

If there is one thing that GSA has made me realize, it is that straight people have to stand up for their gay and lesbian neighbors and friends. There are not enough gay and lesbian Congresspeople and politicians to implement change all on their own. Before joining GSA I was a passive supporter. I never really thought about LGBTQ rights. I supported them but I never actively pursued change. But, as Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel once said, "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim." GSA has taught me to no longer be neutral. It has taught me to no longer accept

any sort of discrimination or intolerance. It has taught me to stand up and defend the rights, safety, and privacy of those people whom I love and deeply respect. It is time that the rest of us stand up as well.

I know I am not alone. There is a movement underway in this country to overturn homophobia and bigotry and intolerance. It is exhilarating to be a part of. Every day I read about a new victory for the LGBTQ community. In January the first lesbian mayor of a major city was inaugurated in Houston. On March 9 the first same-sex marriages took place in Washington, D.C. Last fall the House passed legislation that adds sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of characteristics protected from hate crimes. Legislation to repeal the Military's 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' policy is currently being debated in Congress. This year the Washington State Senate passed a bill that will enforce schools to abide by anti-discrimination laws that protect gay and lesbian faculty and students.

However, even while great strides are being made, the fight is anything but over. Only five states and the District of Columbia allow same-sex marriage. Many states still lack anti-discrimination laws that protect gays and lesbians. In Mississippi a high school recently shut down its prom rather than allow a lesbian couple to attend the dance, although Mississippi courts found this unconstitutional. The LGBTQ community still faces discrimination, fear, and hatred in all corners of this country.

The first public high school GSA was started at Newton South High School in Newton, Massachusetts in 1992. However, I think it reflects negatively on MVHS that when I go to the link for Newton South High School's GSA the link is blocked by the MVHS computer. No other student club link is blocked, and it strikes me as disgustingly unfair that when the word "gay" appears, our school censors it. This is a link on a public high school website! How inappropriate can it be?

Still, we have come a long way since 1992. Today high schools all across the country have GSAs. The world is changing. It is changing slowly, unsurely, and hesitantly, yes, but it is still changing. America is changing.

Just recently the MVHS GSA held its third annual Over the Rainbow festival, a two-day event that featured LGBTQ-themed workshops, cakewalks, and even a drag show. On April 16 the GSA will participate in the national Day of Silence in honor of those voices that are silenced by homophobia. Ten years ago this would not have been possible. Today it is. It is through activism that we will shape what tomorrow will bring.

--Amelia Furlong

News from the UCC

### President Obama issues presidential order on patient visitation

On April 15, President Obama issued an executive order requiring hospitals that receive Medicare and Medicaid to allow patients to designate visitors and respect durable power of attorney directives.

General Minister and President the Rev. Geoffrey A. Black, the Rev. Michael

Schuenemeyer, executive in the UCC's Office for Health and Wholeness Advocacy, and Sandy Sorenson, director of the UCC's Washington D.C. Office, issued a statement following President Obama's order. "This directive opens the hospital visitation doors for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people so that they may have their loved ones present with them and involved, especially at life's most profound and critical moments. We stand in support of the President's courageous and compassionate decision affirming the rights and dignity of all Americans." To read the full statement, [click here](#).

### New UCC commercial launched on April 16

The United Church of Christ will launched its next "God is Still Speaking" commercial on April 16, For more details, go to <http://www.ucc.org/news/viral-ucc-ad-launch-inundates.html>.

### Help Pass ENDA!

ENDA is the Employment Non-Discrimination Act that protects all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. House Speaker Pelosi reports that ENDA may be moving toward a vote on the House floor soon after the committee takes action on the bill. Make sure one of the first things they hear about is the importance of an Employment Non-Discrimination Act that includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Here are three things you can do:

1. Take Action through the JPANet, the UCC's Justice Peace Action Network: Stand up against discrimination! and use the United ENDA toolkit to support this important legislation.
2. In DC, make their phones ring! United ENDA is a coalition of hundreds of organizations, including the UCC Office for LGBT Concerns, working to get an ENDA that includes gender identity and expression. United ENDA is tracking the meetings to learn where this new Congress stands. [Click here](#) to go fill out the Lobby Report Form available from United ENDA. It's the best way to let us know how your meeting went and whether your Representative and Senators expressed support.

Call the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and have them connect you to your Representative (based on your zip code). Tell them: "I am a constituent, a person of faith and I would like you to please tell Representative [your representative's name] that I strongly support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act that would ban discrimination against all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people."

Then, call back and leave messages with your two Senators too!

3. At home, set up a visit!

Request an in-person meeting for you and other community members with your two Senators and your Representative (or their staffs) in their home district offices. You can call the district offices to request these meetings, but they often want you to fax a meeting request. To find contact info for district offices, go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) and [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).

4. Let ENDA know about your meeting!