

## **PILGRIMS PROGRESS NOVEMBER 2009**

**PILGRIM CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

**2802 COMMERCIAL AVENUE, ANACORTES, WA 98221**

**360-293-5675 [WWW.PILGRIMUCCSKAGIT.ORG](http://WWW.PILGRIMUCCSKAGIT.ORG)**

**REVEREND SALLY BALMER, M.DV., PASTOR AND TEACHER**



### **A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR**

***I'M SO SORRY ABOUT THE LACK OF AN OCTOBER EDITION***

### **A NOTE FROM SALLY**

November is a mix of a month. The leaves at once shout glory. . . and are absent. (You could say they “leave” us...). We wonder of those who need shelter in the chill of the season, while others of us feast in warmth on turkey and pumpkin pie. The wider church tradition swings through polarities, with a rather triumphal “reign of Christ” Sunday (once called “Christ-the-King”), followed by the season of Advent, when inklings of a Christ-child beckon from a whispering dark.

In this mix, we’ll stir things even more. Your worship committee decided on a month of “Jesus” --something I’ve come to see as a prelude to a further decision to “use” Advent as a time for unpacking some of those myths and stories we wonder about during the Christmas season. As for this Jesus-month, I’m going to start-at-the-end, looking at the man who spoke to Pilate as a lens for understanding his paradoxical power, at once serious. . . and light.

When I am needing to discern what questions and decisions are on my plate, embracing the way of serious-and-light can be a true companion, honoring complexity and pulling upon grace. Now, as many of you are aware, Pilgrim is at a time of considering the realities of our aging building. . . which in turn brings us to the deeper questions of who we are, what we want to be and create together. So in a serious-and-light way we’ll engage in a congregational conversation immediately following our worship time on Sunday, November 22nd. This will not

be so much a time of decision-making, but rather an invaluable one of hearing, speaking, wondering aloud.

One more item to ponder: the latest book by Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God*, already has my excited attention after reading the introduction. All are welcome to discuss this book (found at Watermark Books in Anacortes) at 4:00 on Wednesdays in the church basement. I have heard it is life-changing; I can't wait to read further.

A few dates in summary:

Sundays: Nov. 8th Jesus and Paradoxical Power  
Nov. 15th Jesus, Prophet and Prayer  
Nov. 22nd Jesus, the teacher, with thanks-giving  
followed by a Pilgrim "Congregational Conversation"

Wednesdays, 4:00 book discussion on *The Case for God* in the church basement.  
All are welcome (Wed. before Thanksgiving TBA)

The blessings of the mix of the season, of life, to all of you. If you wish to contact me, I hope you will: the Pilgrim cell # is 360-420-5787. Don't worry about calling at an unfitting time; since I am part time (with usual Mon-Tues days off), the phone does a great job of receiving messages.

***Ever yours, with thankfulness-- Sally***

Congratulations to the Fischer family-- Christie (or is it with a "y?" I don't have my book here), Jon and Alexander on the birth of Andrew!!! We welcome you with joy.

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**The Leadership Team of Celebration Lutheran in Anacortes has officially desired to be listed in on the PFLAG site as an open and affirming congregation.**

**The Vestry of St. Paul's Mount Vernon has likewise made the same decision.**

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**UPCOMING GUEST SPEAKER LIST**

**November 1** Tamalyn Kralman, St. James Presbyterian Church Bellingham speaking

**November 29** First Sunday of Advent Bill Malcomson speaking

**December 27** Carol singing, reflecting and looking ahead

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## Pilgrim United Church of Christ Council Meeting

Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009

[Recorder's Note: These minutes are later than usual in reaching you because, as Recorder, I felt this meeting was too important to document in a hasty, haphazard or inaccurate manner. Please take some time to consider the many questions raised at this meeting, important questions which now confront our congregation. Thank you.--Malcolm Taylor]

Bill Malcomson called the meeting to order at 11:40 am, Sunday, Oct 18<sup>th</sup> 2009, in the lower level of the Pilgrim Church. Present were Bill Malcomson, Densley and Joyce Palmer, Malcolm Taylor, Bob and Tammy Schofield, Elaine Lachlan, Kyle Davis, Lynn Christofersen, Nelle Jacobson, Ruth Peterson. Jim Meyers, Joan Bissel. , and Nancy Chapman.

Sally opened with prayer. We needed it.

1. Financial Report. Elaine crunched some numbers and announced the church took in \$5148 in September. She reminded us that in Oct. '08 we took in \$7063.
2. Treasurer's Report. Lynn stated that we are 75% of the way through the year. She noted that contributions are about 5% behind on the planned-for offerings of \$5000 a month; and we are averaging about \$4700. We did receive another \$200 in deposits from Anacortes Choral. We incurred some unexpected bank charges in September: there was a \$134 charge for filing the deed of trust as part of the Cornerstone Foundation application. Overall for the year we are showing a slight loss of \$569. In terms of cash flow, we are "hanging in there" and "dancing around waiting for things to catch up." Big expenditures for us are in Mission Alliance: \$750, and for the Shelter: \$1500. Bill emphasized, "This is a very lean budget." AA gives us \$800/mo. (Up from \$600). It was agreed that under current circumstances, we could not handle "servicing the loan we are contemplating at, say, \$1000 per month. That would make us say, 'HUH?'"
3. Renovation Committee Discussion. Nancy first enumerated what the committee was asked to do:
  - Determine and organize priorities for building upgrades and maintenance.
  - Determine funding.
  - Supervise the physical work.
  - Report to Council and the congregation on a regular basis.

The inspections have determined that the building is essentially structurally sound. There are problems with the exterior, which have become the primary area of concentration for renovation. Fortunately, we have no asbestos; if we did, as Kyle noted, "You would have to just put the whole building in a big Baggie," and have it carted away. The committee asked various contractor businesses for recommendations. Zevally and McCool were asked to make bids but have not responded. The only one to come through was Wes Cline, who responded in a timely manner and with diagrams.

We have \$75K line of credit. What Cline Construction & Design proposes would require \$138K, minimally, and paying on the principal of just \$75K would require \$1250/month. So, We, the Congregation, need to ask questions and consider alternatives. The committee feels their job is done.

Putting a band-aid on the failing building does not change the status of the building's chronic ailments. We've been applying stopgap measures for ten years or more, and, although we could continue to do that, just patch as needed, it is clear that this practice cannot go on indefinitely.

Sally offered that the question of whether "to patch or to overhaul" seems to stand as a metaphor for where we are as a congregation right now. We are clearly at a crossroads. Using discretionary money that we are throwing at this building just to try to maintain it, or just fix the outside, is much more than

this congregation can handle financially. The needs of our tenant, Alcoholics Anonymous, which holds some 18 meetings here a week, is also a consideration. The money AA brings in sustains what we do here, and, likewise, supporting what AA does is part of our church mission. Pilgrim is a 501c3 corporation, which owns the building and the land. It is ours to do with as we see fit.

Here are a series of questions, which rose out of the discussion, in no particular order:

Is selling the property a possibility?\* (The financial challenge of demolishing the building makes it cost prohibitive to sell just the land.)

\*Bill Malcomson sent this message from Nancy Chapman out October 21:

I spoke with John Prosser this morning. He is one of the movers and shakers in commercial real estate in town, as an agent. He talked about different locations in town and what they had sold for.

He thinks that

Commercial Ave. gives us an advantage, as does the corner. It's somewhat far south and not too large. A lot of businesses need more than the +/- 11,000 square feet we have. He doesn't think the building is necessarily a detriment. As a "guestment", he is thinking in the \$600-650,000 range if the buyer would want the building.

Are there other sources of income that we haven't looked at? Fund raisers?

Does the town of Anacortes value having this building here?

Is it a question of to stay or not to stay?

What kind of a church are we, and what do we see as our work here in the community? Are there other congregations we could look to as models for what we could do?

How important is it that Pilgrim continues at all, the building or the congregation? Thinking outside the box, is the church a building? a social structure? both?

We went around the room, and each person was asked to offer an answer to the above question. The consensus was that Pilgrim is more the group of people than the building or locations; this congregation is a family, a group of pilgrims, and we need one another. Here are some other comments: It is not incumbent upon us to solve the building's problems for all time, though it is it worthwhile to try. Jim Gleeson last June said, "Don't you worry, one way or another, we are staying together." We are a unique group in that we all came with some church background, and have come together forming an unrestricted sense of church. This sense is still a pull for a lot of the members. Maybe it doesn't have to be in any one building, but it does need to continue. The aging process of this congregation will go on, maybe with a new name. The soul and whole social structure can live on anywhere; it doesn't have to be any particular four walls. New young families are important to the future, as AA is a mission of the church. The continuation of the church that is the people is important. "The people you live with, your family, your congregation, are very important. But where you live is a pretty important thing too."—Bill Malcomson. It is important to identity to have a location. Spirit is everywhere and in all people, but there is spirit in beauty, too. "The building does not make the church. I am reminded of St. Francis standing in a field, holding out a finger and a bird coming up and alighting on it. That is a church. Also a church is shown in that scene from M\*A\*S\*H, when the soldier comes and says 'I need sanctuary'."—Jim Meyers

In Baptist language, it is upon us all now to pursue how we're being led.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Malcolm Taylor  
Recording Secretary  
Pilgrim United Church of Christ

### October roses

Autumn closes the curtain on summer;  
once-resplendent beauty  
drains from tree and stem to  
carpet garden and forest floor  
in a faded cover of red and gold.

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Only a few hardy hangers-on  
clutch bloom and blossom  
as if trying to retain  
a semblance of the beauty  
that only a short time ago  
drew ardent admirers.

When at last their grip weakens  
and flowery remnants fall,  
they pass the way of all living things  
to share themselves in the rich brew  
of time.  
DENSLEY PALMER 2009

### [Home: Justice and Witness Ministries](#)

Over the past fifteen years, the only sexuality education programs funded by the federal government have been abstinence-only-until-marriage programs. Because of poor evaluations and public health outrage, half of our states have voted to not fund these discredited programs.

On September 29 advocates cheered when the Senate Finance Committee voted in favor of an amendment introduced by Max Baucus (D-MT) providing \$75 million per year to fund evidence-based, medically accurate, age-appropriate programs to teens. In response to this vote, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) proposed an amendment



reinstating \$50 million per year to the failed Title V abstinence-only-until-marriage program. The vote passed by a razor-thin margin of 12-11.

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**[This is outrageous! Click here to contact your Senators today and ask them to only support funding for a comprehensive approach to sexuality education, to strip the Hatch abstinence-only-until-marriage amendment, and to urge their Senate colleagues to do the same.](#)**



United Church of Christ



[Home](#): Newsletter

## Called Out eNews - October 2009

### Support marriage equality and partnership recognition in Maine & Washington

*Help get out the vote on November 3*

In Maine and Washington, we continue to campaign for marriage equality and the legislature that will be decided by voters on November 3. There are many opportunities to show your support in both states by helping to get out the vote.

#### No on Question 1 Campaign in Maine



Maine has already passed legislation this past May that allows same-sex couples the right to marry. However, after this passed there have been many groups that want to repeal the legislation. On November 3, Maine citizens will vote to see if Maine should repeal same-sex marriage legislation or not.

There are many ways to [volunteer](#) your time for this campaign. Equality Maine is the host to a huge nation-wide volunteer drive. So far there have been many phone banks set up and debates around the state and they plan to have many more before November 3.

Earlier in the month, David Gaewski, the Maine Conference Minister for the UCC, participated in a press conference where he showed his support for the "No on 1" campaign. This was not the first time though that the Maine UCC Conference was involved in the marriage equality debate. This past April, 40 UCC ministers supported Gaewski as he testified before the state legislator in support of marriage equality legislation.

It is very important to keep fighting for this legislation. If you live in Maine or know someone that does, **vote [no on Question 1](#) if you support marriage equality.**

*Approve Referendum 71 in Washington*



People in Washington are also campaigning for marriage equality legislation that will be voted on in just a couple of weeks. If this is passed, it will provide same-sex couples most of the same legal rights as married heterosexual couples. One of the organizations, [Approve Referendum 71](#), that is trying to preserve the domestic partnership law, has many different ways that you can volunteer your time.

Many UCC churches in Washington have been actively involved in supporting Referendum 71. All Pilgrims Christian Church is having a showing of the movie,

*For the Bible Tells Me So*; Admiral UCC and a West Seattle based interfaith group are holding signs at a main intersection; Richmond Beach UCC had a panel discussion that included both pro and con speakers. Other churches are including a statement in their newsletters and Sunday bulletins that talk about the importance of voting and their support for marriage equality. It is wonderful to hear about what our local churches are doing on this issue. If you are a Washington voter, **remember to vote yes if you support this domestic partnership law.** Even if you do not live in Maine and Washington, there are still ways to support marriage equality legislation.

Knowing what your state is doing on the issue of marriage equality is an important way to stay informed. There are only two weeks left until these states vote on these important marriage equality





# Take Action!

# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

[Home: Justice and Witness Ministries](#)



In September 2000, world leaders of 189 countries signed the UN Millennium Declaration, a commitment to do everything in their power to end extreme poverty. A set of time-bound targets was established with a deadline of 2015 to reach this goal of poverty alleviation which became known as the Millennium Development Goals.

We are now over halfway to the Millennium Development Goals' target date, yet every day thousands of people die as a result of extreme poverty. The gap between the rich and the poor is growing. We have the power to change this!

### **Stand Up and Take Action!**

We invite you to engage in events in your local community and to "stand" electronically with fellow members of the United Church of Christ by signing the Stand Up petition.

**Ask your church, community, family, or co-workers to stand up with you against global poverty and send a powerful message to world leaders!**

### **Pilgrim Still Listening in Order to Act**



On Sunday, November 8, after worship there will be the last Listening Session, completing a stage in this process of our development as a congregation more deeply connected and ready to act in the public arena. We will begin at 11:30 and be through by 1:00.

This season of listening is part of the community organizing effort we have joined, the North Sound Alliance. We and the other members of the Alliance are working to enable members to know one another more deeply while surfacing the social concerns that could be the focus of activity in the public arena.

If you have missed the chance to take part in one of the previous Listening Sessions, please don't miss this one. You will have an inspiring time of learning more of your about the life-path of other members of our community, and an affirming experience of being more fully known and appreciated, and you will be creating the agenda for Pilgrim's social action. Please put the date on your calendar.

**FROM THE WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE**

The Season of Advent begins November 29 and extends four Sundays through Christmas Eve. This year, we are inviting folk in the congregation to share their own thoughts about what this season leading up to Christmas means to them and their families.

#### **SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT ADVENT AT PILGRIM**

**1. Advent is a time of exploring ways in which the sacred is incarnate in myself, those around me, and the Cosmos as a whole.**

**Densley Palmer**

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**2. I guess (while) growing up Advent wasn't a big thing in our household.**

**Now, it still doesn't seem to be very important. It always feels like some hermit concocted it to reinforce the "holy birth".**

**I don't think it is necessary nor will it encourage me to behave any differently. It is looking for an external God to appear and it just isn't going to happen.**

**Ruth Peterson**

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**3. A building excitement about shared experiences with family.**

**An opportunity to nurture family and friends; to show them how important they are.**

**A feeling of ambivalence about the birth story.**

**Christ Malcomson**

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**4. I'd simply say that it's a particular season of gestation/ preparation on into celebration of holy incarnation, past and present. Christmas also has that "high holy day" status for the past several centuries, mingling in with the earthy times of darkness and light.**

**Sally Balmer**

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**5. Advent can be a span of weeks in which we consciously strive singly and as a fellowship of faith to transform the traditional Carol of a miracle birth into a living communal enactment of giving to life, of expressing love through our thoughts and deeds, and a taking of time to contemplate what it means to be an active participant in the unfolding new vision of inclusivity, generosity, and persistent love to all who inhabit our Earth and to the Earth itself.**

**Joan Bissell**

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**6. For me Advent is a celebration of life, the renewal of human existence, spiritual renewal with my God. This is a season of hope with family and friends, the joy of a new season, remembering the present and past who have gone before. Also, the joy of decorations and good food.**

**Janet miller**

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