



Congregational News

From FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Corvallis, Oregon

Vol. XLVII, No. 14

April 4, 2008



IT'S HOLY SOX TIME!

It is spring, so it must be Holy Sox time! Our church coed softball team is starting practices on *Thursday, April 10*, 6:00 p.m., Chintimini Park. All interested adult men and women (12th graders through adults) are welcome to join the team. Cost is \$35.00 for Corvallis residents and \$45.00 for players living outside Corvallis.

Practices will be weekly. Games are on Sundays (afternoons or evenings), starting *May 11* and ending in early August. Contact **Tammy Skubinna** (752-4214 or Skuby1@comcast.net) to say you are playing and what days of the week you are available for practice. Come join the fun!!

WALK THE RELAY FOR LIFE

We, as a church family, have been extraordinarily impacted recently by incidents of cancer. Some have been affected directly through battling the disease, through care-giving of a loved one or, most tragically, the loss of a friend or family member. There are others of us who are indirectly affected by watching those we care so deeply about struggle

through the physical and psychological effects of treatment. At times we all feel a little hopeless when we think of the randomness of this disease.

Well, we've decided it's time to get up and do something about it! We will **RELAY FOR LIFE** on *Friday, May 16* to raise money for the American Cancer Society.

We are forming a team of teens and adults called *The Young and the Rest of Us* (get it?!) and are planning to walk all night on the OSU campus in celebration and support of a cure for all cancers. If you would like to join the team, let us know and we'll tell you how to do that.

[continued on page 7]

THIS SUNDAY

April 6 -- Communion

Adult Forum: Part 2 of the "From Jesus to Christ" series: Jesus the Preacher, Pontius Pilate, and the Passion of Jesus

Scriptures: Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Luke 24:13-35

Sermon: "From There to Here"
Charles Helsabeck

Dear Friends,

On Sunday many of you had the opportunity to hear our youth report out about our trip to the Yakama Christian Mission. I wanted to use this space to add a few reflections of my own because I am continuing to process our experiences and seek ways to learn from our week in the Yakama Nation.

One of the important pieces of our experience was contained in the simplicity of the mission site. The Yakama Christian Mission is a mission site of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and it survives on a shoestring budget. The mission has very little in terms of amenities, which means small comforts like a warm cup of coffee in the morning are at a premium. The simplicity of the site and the bare bones approach to ministry is important because of the severe economic issues faced on the reservation. While our experience was in no way one of poverty, it was based in simpler living and served to remind us of what is required for living and how many things in our lives are there merely for convenience.

One of the real gifts of our experience was in the diversity of our projects. Even as an adult I found myself outside of my comfort zone during several of the projects. Individual initiative, cooperative approaches, and a willingness to try new things were all required during our work, and for someone who enjoys and depends upon the patterns of church life there were times when I was uncomfortable. Often I think we place too much of a premium on our own comfort, but our work projects served to snap me out of that mindset which I think was invaluable to the experience. Mission trip experiences aren't, after all, supposed to be easy!

Finally, as I mentioned on Sunday morning the timing of the trip, coming directly after Easter, was a perfect reminder of what it means to proclaim that Christ is Risen. So often the resurrection of Jesus is left as an intellectual exercise. However, in our work, in our connecting with one another, in our partnering with the youth and adults from the Aloha (Oregon) Christian Church, and in our exploration of the meanings and implications of racism, we were experiencing the risen Christ in visible and cooperative ways! For me personally I am finding that even with the full schedule of Holy Week and the Mission Trip, just having had this time to spend with our youth has given me a sense of renewal—and I am thankful for the energy and passion of our youth and all of you who support these trips with your financial gifts, your enthusiasm, and your prayerful support.

Blessings!

Ryan



**UNITED
CAMPUS
MINISTRY
AT OSU**

WestM (United Campus Ministry at Westminster House), your UCC campus ministry for students at OSU and LBCC, has several upcoming events for community building, service, spiritual growth, and play. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us! If you need more information, please contact Rev. **Leah McCullough** at revleah@comcast.net.

**Student Gathering -
Every Wednesday, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.**

Students gather weekly for a free meal followed by a time of fellowship, study, singing, and prayer. This quarter we'll be sharing our faith stories using images and truths from various forms of media, literature, scripture, and art that have informed and formed our spiritual journeys.

Women's Spirituality Circle – Tuesdays in April (beginning April 8), 7:00 – 8:30 p.m., at Westminster House

This group is for individuals who seek ever more deeply to live an authentic life, to connect with humanity and creation, and to encounter the Sacred. We gather to share our stories and to support one another on our journeys of meaning-making and transformation. Because this group is organic with a growing shared leadership, both content and pedagogy vary based on the gifts of the members. Through the use of a

common book, or music, art, silence, reflection, journaling, listening and ritual, we walk with one another on our paths of becoming.

**University Learning Community –
Wednesdays, Noon – 1:00 p.m.**

A conversation group, centered around the book, *Moral Man, Immoral Society: A Study of Ethics and Politics* by Reinhold Niebuhr, that will nurture and challenge the spirit. (Feel free to bring your lunch.)

**Got Plans? Making a Living and
Trailblazing a Life Retreat -
April 4-6, at Camp Adams**

On this retreat young adults will be invited to explore calling, vocation and how to live an authentic life. Through small sharing groups, art, worship, labyrinth walking, play, music, and time in the great outdoors, we'll explore together who God is calling us to be and what God is calling us to do with our lives. Leadership will be provided by campus ministers, chaplains and denominational young adult leaders across Oregon, and nationally known singer-songwriter, Carrie Newcomer, will be in concert on Saturday night.

**Stone Soup – Tuesdays,
April 8 & 22, 3:30 – 7:30 p.m.**

Students prepare and serve a free community meal to those who need food assistance. Call or e-mail to schedule a time to volunteer.

**Reel to Real –
Friday, April 11, 8:00 p.m.**

Together we view a popular film,

"Into the Wild," and share conversation seeking out the images of faith and/or spiritual truth it holds for us ("nutritainment").

**Prayers for the Journey -
Monday, April 14, 7:30 – 9:30 p.m.**

Just as we need food for our physical bodies, so too we need spiritual sustenance for our souls. Join us in this space that is set apart for you to be still and to listen to your heart, reflect on your journey, and attune to the Sacred. You are invited to just sit, be, and contemplate, or to engage experientially in prayer stations through art, writing, music, lighting candles, and movement. Choose your own pace, engage in the stations of your choice and stay as long as you like.



This week we will be gathering to watch the movie, "Dead Poets Society." Meet at 4:00

p.m.—location TBD.

LENTEN STUDY BOOK FOR SALE

Anyone interested in purchasing a copy of C.S. Lewis's book, Mere Christianity, may do so by making a check out to the church in the amount of \$11.95, with a notation of the memo line "Lenten book." This book was used by **Charles Helsabeck** in his Lenten class and six copies are still available for your reading pleasure.

**PBS SERIES LOOKS AT
SOCIAL CAUSES OF ILLNESS**

An upcoming four-hour series of broadcasts on PBS called "**Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?**" will investigate the growing body of evidence that suggests there is more to our health problems than bad habits, medications and unlucky genetics. It delves into the "slow killer" that hides in plain view: the social circumstances in which we are born, live and work that actually get under our skin and put us at risk for health problems including stroke, heart disease, asthma, hypertension, diabetes, kidney disease and cancer.

The series will not simply illustrate differences in health care access and treatment, but why some populations get sicker more often in the first place - the increasing evidence that inequality, racism, poverty, segregation and neglect affect health both directly and by influencing behaviors.

You have several opportunities to view "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick? "

1. The first one-hour segment "In Sickness and in Wealth" will be aired on Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB) on *Sunday, March 30*, at 11:00 a.m. The rest of the segments will be aired on each of the following three Sundays at 11:00 a.m. Additional broadcasts are available at other times on OPB HDTV - check the listings if you get HDTV:

<http://www.opb.org/programs/program.php?id=18534>

2. A community viewing and discussion of the first one-hour segment will be held on *April 9* at 7:00 p.m. at the Corvallis Odd Fellows Lodge at 223 SW 2nd St. The mayor of Corvallis and representatives from health, education and community activists will lead discussions of the effect of these problems in our area and how they can be addressed.

**TIME IN:
SHARING SACRED SPACE**

On *Wednesday, April 9*, from 5:15-6:00 p.m., the **Interfaith Community of Corvallis** invites you to take a few minutes at the end of a busy day to sit in contemplative silence with others of many different faiths. This time of silence, called "Time In", is held in the Chapel of First United Methodist Church, 11th & Monroe, on the second Wednesday of each month. (Please use the 11th Street entrance.)

This month, **Cammie Bella**, a local spiritual director, will present a contemplative prayer form called "Lectio Divina", an ancient Christian practice which focuses on praying with Scripture. Afterward silence is observed, offering an opportunity to deepen one's experience of the practice presented or to engage in one's own form of silent contemplation, devotion or spiritual study. Enter and leave at any time.

"Time In" is an opportunity to deepen one's connection with the Source of all that is, and to set a tone of peace and unity for our community. It is open to

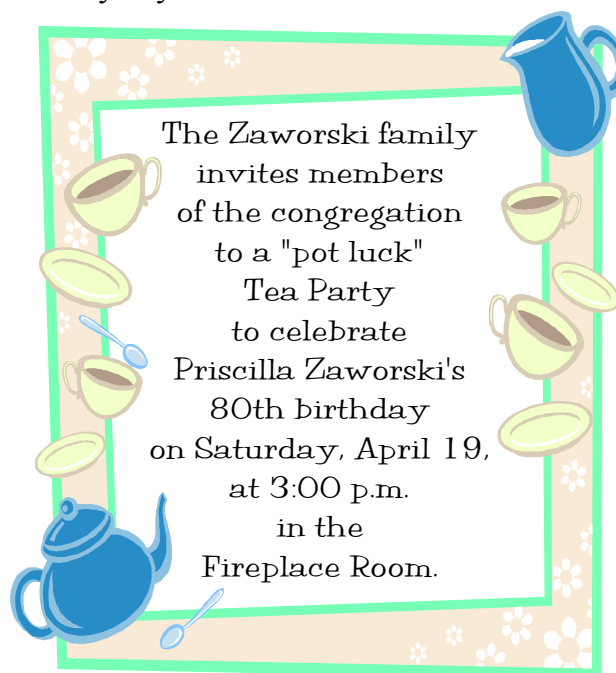
people of all spiritual pathways who wish to experience spiritual practice in the company of others.

AFTER-EASTER REMINDER

Remember to pick up your Easter breakfast casserole pans or other cookware from the Gatton Hall kitchen. Also, please return the plastic flower basket liners for re-use next year.

SOUP 'N 'BREAD NEEDS YOU

We need two more people to bring soup (enough to serve 30 people each) and two more people to bring bread (3 loaves per person) for the *April 13* Soup 'n' Bread lunch. No one has, as yet, signed up for clean-up. Look for the sign-up board this Sunday in the church entryway.



LIZ'S LINK

Dear Friends,

Let me start with the good news! After two weeks of Jessie's blood counts remaining steadfastly and persistently low, they have begun to go up, and their rise is accelerating day by day. We also know why this round of chemotherapy has been so difficult for Jessie. Her doctor got suspicious a week ago and ordered a test to check a particular blood enzyme. Jessie is the one person in a million who is missing this enzyme. The lack of the enzyme magnifies the effects of one chemotherapy drug, so Jessie got what amounted to 10 times the normal dose of this particular drug. In 30 years of practice, Dr. Kaplan has had only one other patient with this problem. We are thankful for patient #1, and Dr. K's acuity in catching the problem. This is a drug Jessie will be taking throughout her treatment. Now they can adjust the dose accordingly. Otherwise the next five months would have been miserable.

These last two weeks have been a significant challenge for me, watching my daughter so sick with no explanation and no movement towards getting better. I would find myself praying over and over again for white blood cells. Just white blood cells. This was a problem for me because I have always veered away from specificity in prayer. It has seemed to me to be theologically shaky ground. I confess to you that after 28 years in ministry, I still have no definition that completely satisfies me about what prayer is or how prayer "works." I'm not sure the verb "works" belongs anywhere around prayer; in fact, I'm pretty sure it doesn't. I know that I don't think prayer is a magic spell: in other words, I don't believe that if the right person says the right words in the right way, then presto...the frog will be turned into a prince. Lots of people pray, many of them for important things like world peace, or healing for a loved one, or a solution to a pressing problem. Some people get what they ask for; others receive nothing tangible. And I don't think we can infer from the result either the divine will or the integrity of the prayer or the pray-er. Therefore, I have tended in my own private prayer life, when I get to petitions, to ask just (just!) for patience, for compassion, for strength, for discernment, and other such generalities.

But these past two weeks, it's been all about white blood cells. I have been made uncomfortable by my own prayers, creating an internal dialog that goes sort of like this: "God, I know that asking for specific things is dicey, and what I should really be seeking from you is balance and patience and the wisdom to care for my daughter, but really I want white cells, lots of white cells, especially those infection-fighting neutrophils. So please give me strength for the day and white cells, and patience and white cells, and I know this is a terrible prayer because I'm at war in myself between what I think I should want from you and what I really want, which is white cells..." Elegant, eh?

Last Friday, I received a visit from the social worker on the oncology unit, a lovely, skilled, and compassionate woman. She checks in with all patients and primary caregivers. She was asking me how I was doing, and threw out the line, "You're a pastor; your faith must be a comfort to you." Having just finished another bout of the internal debate that passed for prayer that day, I answered without thinking, "Right now my faith is making me crazy!" In her best social worker manner, she encouraged, "Tell me more about that." And so I told her in frustrated detail of my prayer dilemma. She responded, "I didn't grow up in any faith tradition, but from what I know about people's experience of God, honesty is important in the divine-human relationship, and so don't you think it's okay for you to be honest with God about what you want? When you pray, are you just talking to God about what you want or are you asking God to give you this thing?"

That was a lot of theological insight from a person who claims no theology! I'm just beginning to think through her words. If prayer is fundamentally about relationship with God, then we do have to be honest. And sometimes what we honestly want is very specific. Like white blood cells. Like this hospitalization to end. Like my daughter getting well. So what does it mean, to want something very specific, to offer that up to God in prayer? Can I offer it to God and still be okay if God doesn't fix it? That's a question about me, not about God, but I think it's a question many of us have. Can we distinguish for ourselves the difference between honestly sharing our desires with God and wanting God to fulfill those desires? Certainly the Bible is full of God's people sharing all manner of specific desires. But will we be okay with God if we ask for something really important and then don't get it?

I don't have an answer for that last question, and it is a question that haunts me. I would appreciate any insights any of you might have. Despite my questions, despite the internal dialog I offer to you as well as to God, I can honestly say that prayer has never been more real to me than in the past two months. Jessie and I have talked more than once about this huge network of people praying for us. This web of love and concern that holds us and the rest of our family, it has taken on substance and weight. We know of its presence and it matters. It matters every day.

So that's my offering this week: a mix of affirmations and questions and doubts, a theology of prayer still in the process of becoming after all these years.

God bless you all.

Liz

RELAY FOR LIFE *from page 1*

Our team so far – **Molly Chambers, Eileen and Don Milligan, Kim Thack-**

ray, Pamela Wood-Rinkus and Ginny Lucker. We'd love to have you join us! If you can't walk with us but want to

support us, ask us how. **Our goal is to raise at least \$2000** and we'll take all the help we can get!

We are planning two fundraising events prior to the night that we walk (mark those calendars!) We will have a **Dessert Auction** after church on *April 27* and a **Mother's Day Bake Sale** on, you guessed it, *May 11*.

Please plan to rally around this effort in whatever fashion you are able to show your support for those in our midst who are fighting the courageous fight against this insidious disease.

TAKARAZUKA CHURCH REPORT

Okinawa Report- Part I

Greetings to our friends at First Congregational UCC in Corvallis! We thank God that the partnership between our churches nurtures our friendship. When we visited you in 2004, the Rev. Tsukuda made a report on the situation of Okinawa. Many of you participated in and listened diligently to the group discussion. We know that you have kept studying Okinawa issues since then. Because we believe that the first report should not be the last, we would like to continue our report. We would be happy if you could use our reports as one of your study resources.

Federal Judge ruled against the U.S. Defense Department plans for the airbase in the habitat of Okinawa dugong on January 24, 2008 in San Francisco. This is a ray of light in the dark for Okinawa

where there are piles of problems in relation to the airbase.

This suit was filed by U.S. plaintiffs, the Center for Biological Diversity and the Turtle Island Restoration Network, joined by Japanese groups, Save the Dugong Foundation, Committee Against Heliport Construction, and Japanese Environmental Lawyers Federation. Earth-justice represented all the plaintiffs.

The lawsuit sought to compel the U.S. Department of Defense to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) by conducting a complete public assessment of the impact of the proposed project on the dugong (a relative of the manatee, also known as sea cow) so that actions could be taken to avoid or mitigate any adverse affects. In the ruling, Judge Patel said, "The current record contains no evidence that a single official from the Department of Defense with responsibility for the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) has considered or assessed the available information on the dugong or the effects of the FRF." The impact of the FRF on the Dugong is currently not well-understood. Judge Patel reaffirmed her 2005 decision that the endangered dugong, listed on Japan's register of protected cultural properties, is entitled to protection under the NHPA. She also found that DOD's involvement in the plan to construct a new military base is a 'federal undertaking' that may directly harm the dugong, and so subject to the requirements of the statute. The judge also held that DOD's failure to

produce, gather and consider information about effects of the new base on the Okinawa dugong for purpose of determining whether protective measures are necessary, constitute a violation of the NHPA.

Comments from the plaintiffs:

- Avoiding the impact on the Okinawa dugong facing extinction should be considered. (Earthjustice)
- We hope the U.S. Department of Defense follows this ruling that will ensure the dugong protection. Because the construction of the airbase would not protect the dugong, this ruling practically means, depending on the protection plans, halting the base expansion plans. (Dugong Network)
- This is a reasonable ruling in an advanced nation in which ecology is valued. We have been fighting, counting on its fair judgment. On the other hand, this ruling has starkly revealed that protecting the Okinawa environment is not a U.S. DOD's concern. The construction itself of the new airbase is against the protection of dugong. We would like to appeal to the international public opinion to prevent the construction of the new airbase. (Committee Against Heliport Construction)

Takarazuka Church is in partnership with "Ufuzato Church" in Okinawa. Though Okinawa is far away from Takarazuka and we are not able to provide sufficient support, we pray for them. We wish you to pray with us. Our next report

will be on the current facts in Okinawa.

With God's blessings and comforts,
Reported by Etsuko Omori

SPRING ARTS & CRAFTS FESTIVAL

Saturday, April 19! Please mark this date on your calendars for the fourth annual festival (formerly known as the Spring Fling Craft Faire) in Gatton Hall, from 10:00 to 5:00. There will be more than 20 vendors, including our own folks, wonderful vendors from previous years, and some vendors new to our festival. A portion of the proceeds goes to the youth program, so come to the festival this year to support the youth and our local and regional artists. For more information, please contact **Jody Eleveld**.

A D CIRCLE TO MEET

The A D Circle meets on *Wednesday, April 9*, at 1:30 p.m. at the home of **Anna Marie Holmes**, 3848 SW Neer Ave. For information or transportation call **Coral Torley** (752-0114).

VOLUNTEER FOR STONE SOUP

Tuesday, April 15, is our next Stone Soup day. Please sign up this Sunday to help, or contact **Pat Johnson**.

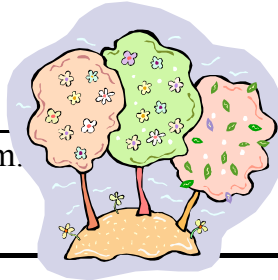
Our Thoughts and Prayers

... are with **Myrle Tooker**, recovering from a bicycle accident;

... and with those attending and leading in the Transforming Faith Conference in Portland from April 3-6.



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Copy deadline for next issue of newsletter is Tuesday noon, April 8.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

Friday, April 4

7:00 a.m. First Friday Forum,
 Shari's

7:30 p.m. Badminton

Sunday, April 6

9:00 a.m. Sanctuary Choir
 9:15 a.m. Church School, Room 5
 9:30 a.m. Adult Forum
 10:30 a.m. Worship
 4:00 p.m. Youth groups movie
 night [see page 4]

Tuesday, April 8

8:30 a.m. Staff
 Noon Lectionary class
 7:00 p.m. Caring for Creation,
 Library

7:30 p.m. Boy Scout Troop 1

Wednesday, April 9

7:00 a.m. Breakfast Group
 1:30 p.m. A D Circle
 7:15 p.m. Sanctuary Choir

Thursday, April 10

5:30 p.m. Church Basketball

6:00 p.m. Holy Sox practice,
 Chintimini Park
 7:00 p.m. Girl Scout Troop 142



SHHHHH! IT'S A SURPRISE

Join us for a surprise party in celebration of **Charles Helsabeck's** 60th birthday on *Friday, April 25* at the church. Come any time between 5:30 and 8:00 p.m.; toasts will be at 6:30. Bring stories, memories, or pictures, no gifts. [Charles' newsletter does not include this announcement.]

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