



The Full Circle

February 24, 2010



Growing up in the Midwest, I relished the day each spring when you could walk barefoot in the grass for the first time. It usually happened sometime in mid- to late March. It was a liberating feeling, with the fresh green grass caressing your feet. It was the feeling of freedom, of hope, of sunshine.

After moving to New England, I was disappointed to discover that even in late April the weather was invariably cold, wet and raw. Barefoot walks in the grass did not happen until sometime in mid- to late May.

And now, in the Pacific Northwest, we have been welcomed with an unseasonably warm and sunny winter. It is a shock to see forsythia, daffodils and cherry trees in full bloom. I have learned, however, that these are not a few months early, but rather just a few weeks early.

Seasons, both predictable and unseasonable, help us mark our year, to remember the familiar rituals of the earth, sun and moon. Just as they affect the tides and water cycle, they affect the tidal patterns of the water table in us. Seasons can make us cranky, hopeful, anxious, or more productive.

As Christians, we follow the seasons of the liturgical calendar, beginning in Advent and continuing into Easter, Pentecost and through Ordinary Time. I am grateful for the repetitive quality of observing the liturgical seasons, because it reminds us that life need not be a relentless march toward some imagined goal, but a circuit, a path that each year becomes a little deeper. Hopefully, we notice something new with each passing and the experience broadens and deepens our faith life in some way. It reminds us that life is not about the closest distance between the point where we now stand and that elusive prize in the future, but rather, a weaving of past, present and future. It is a continuous walk that, when lived intentionally, takes us more fully into the heart of faith and good living.

Last Wednesday, we joined Christians all over the world in beginning the season of Lent with a contemplative Ash Wednesday service. We took part in the ancient practice of marking ourselves with ashes, confessing our sins, singing and reflecting silently on scripture.

Lenten observance began to take shape in the third and fourth centuries, as a way to bring people into a closer relationship with God. Christians thought the number forty would work. Israel spent forty days in the wilderness, Moses spent forty days waiting for God to give the law, Elijah spent forty days waiting for the still, small voice of God, and Jesus spent forty days fasting in the wilderness. Forty was a good, solid, biblical amount of time for waiting.

The word Lent itself means “spring” and has to do with the lengthening of days. It’s important to think of Lent as allowing something holy and special to lengthen and grow in us, a sort of gardening for our souls. Rather than a time of self-castigation or feeling bad about ourselves, Lent can be a time of clearing out some of the emotional and psychological detritus that clogs the clear working of our souls.

I invite you to think of Lent as a way of cultivating deep and quiet joy, as a time when you might draw closer to God. If you haven’t chosen a Lenten practice already, it’s not too late! You may want to give up something that gets in the way of your experience of God, like too much self-criticism or too much TV, or you may want take on something that will draw you closer, like a daily walk, intentional reading or playing an instrument. What matters is the intention with which you approach your Lenten practice. Think of it as an act of devotion rather than a discipline. Whatever you decide, just pick something. Try it. If you fall off the wagon, get back on. There’s no use beating yourself up about it. The point is to try something that will help you experience the life-giving presence of God more fully and to love others more deeply.

In faith,
Kent

HEALTH CARE PROGRAM

February 28th there will be a program, after worship in the Sanctuary, which will focus on health care. Dr. Harry Herdman and Marguerite Shepherd will discuss the following issues:

- The American Health Care System, what it is not.
- The Canadian Health Care System, what it is.

Dr. Herdman, is a local physician and church member and has been providing health care in his private practice for decades. Marguerite Shepherd is a physical therapist and a Canadian citizen. She worked in the Canadian system for years and owned and operated her own health care practice in Whatcom County for years.

It should come as no surprise that neither intend to talk about the good or bad points of the various bills that have not yet been passed and/or placed into law. The discussion will likely focus on the differences in the current systems, which have operated side by side for decades within a few miles of each other.

Please plan on attending.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

This section has been sent via email to those that receive the newsletter by email.

If you would like to receive the Full Circle by email please contact the office at 734-3720 or at office@fccb.net and let us know!



FULL CIRCLE DATE FOR MARCH

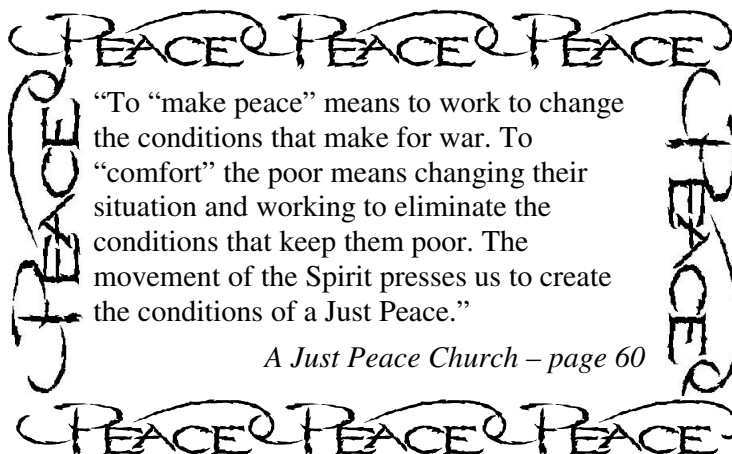
Deadline Date	Mailing Date
March 3	March 10
March 17	March 24

GIVING NUMBERS

Please be sure you are using your 2010 giving number. If you are using prior year envelopes, you may be contributing to someone else's giving number – be sure the number on the envelope is your 2010 giving number. If you bank on-line, please check that your giving number is correct. Call Denise if you are unsure of your number 734-3720 X4

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES: will not be meeting during March due to the Lenten Series. Classes will resume **April 20th** with the topic "Selling Hate: 'Bible-like' Hate Messages on T-shirts."

LIVING THE QUESTIONS: This on-going class meets from **7 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday evenings** of each month in Room 11. For additional information and/or copies of the pre-session reading material, contact Bob or Pat Styer at 676-2585.



CELEBRATE THE FIRST OF SPRING AT INTERFAITH AUCTION

Tickets are on sale now for "A Burst of Spring in the Garden of Hope," Interfaith Coalition's auction on the first day of spring, **March 20, 2010**. Cost is \$40 each and includes a sit-down dinner. Always a fun, community-building event, the auction begins at **5:30 p.m.** at the Lakeway Inn & Conference Center. Proceeds support programs that provide housing to homeless families and health care for all in need. Conveniently, if you wish to purchase tickets or donate an auction item, you may contact our congregation member Therese Holm, who serves on the Interfaith Coalition Board of Directors, or you may call the Interfaith office at 734-3983.

FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

BOOK CLUB: The Daytime Book Club meets the first Tuesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in the Fireplace Room for refreshments and fellowship followed by a book discussion. The book we will be discussing at our **next meeting on March 2** will be *Sarah's Key* by Tatiana de Rosnay. For more information contact Kathleen McGuinness at 733-1251.

LABYRINTH: Join facilitators Sharry Nyberg, Brenda Nicholson and Bobbi Virta on **Thursday, March 4** from **6:30 to 8:00 p.m.** for an open labyrinth walk when our theme will be "World Day of Peace". The labyrinth is also available for walking during the week in the Chapel when the church office is open.

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL 2010: Save the date and plan to join us for an incredible week of VCS. **June 21-25, 2010.** Registration is limited to 135 children (age 4 years to those entering the sixth grade). **Registration begins April 18.**

CHURCH SCHOOL GATHERS: The Church School will gather on **Sunday, March 7** in the Social Hall following Time with Children to learn more about this year's mission project, Pennies for Peace. They will rejoin their families in the Sanctuary for communion.

YOUTH NEWS

February 28: Games and Discussion. Meet in the Youth Room for some games and a conversation about cliques. There will be snacks. Middle School meets **4:30-6:00 p.m.**, High School meets **6:30-8:00 p.m.**

PARENTS' NIGHT OUT

The high school youth group is hosting a parents' night out on **Saturday, March 27th.** Drop your kids off at the church at **4:30 p.m.** and they will enjoy games, crafts, and pizza with the high school youth group. Pick up is at **8:30 p.m.** Donations raised from this event will support the youth group's summer mission service trip to Mexico, where they will be building houses.

LENTEN SOUP SUPPER AND PROGRAM

God in Our Midst: How is God Working Within Us?

This year's series allows us time to pause and reflect how we experience God's presence in the life of our church and on the Christian practices that enable us to live joyfully in ways that enrich our lives and the lives of others.

We are trying a new format this year that incorporates a short worship service followed by a topical presentation and small group discussion.

- 6:00 p.m.** Fellowship supper
- 7:00 p.m.** Worship
- 7:15 p.m.** Topical Presentation
- 7:40 p.m.** Break-out Discussion and Experiential groups
- 8:30 p.m.** Adjourn

In **Weeks 1 and 2**, we'll explore how God works *within us* through practices like prayer, worship, discernment and study to strengthen our faith. In **Weeks 3 and 4**, we'll explore how God works *through us* to bring social justice, hospitality, and community ministries.

This Lenten Season, you are invited to seek ways that you can conduct your daily life and live in ways that answer questions about Christian values, grow your faith, and commit to creating a just and peaceful world.

Childcare will be provided for children 5 and under. An experiential class for school age children will be offered based on the theme of the evening.

For further information, please contact Marilyn McClellan at marilyn@donel.net.

March 3 – Worship

Presenter, Rev. Kent French

March 10 – Spirituality

Presenter, Rev. Paul Jensen

March 17 – Community

Presenter, Carol Nicolay

March 24 -- Social Justice

Presenter, Doug Shepherd

MUSICIAN DAVID ROVICS: FCCB's Mission, Justice & Social Concerns Committee is proud to partner with the Whatcom Peace & Justice Center and Veterans for Peace to host anti-war folk musician David Rovics. This event will observe the 7th Anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and will include a candlelight vigil to remember all who have suffered, and still suffer, in this ongoing tragedy. The performance is **Wednesday, March 10th at 7:00 p.m.** at the Whatcom Peace & Justice Center, 100 E. Maple Street. Tickets \$10 at the door.

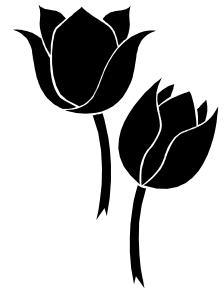
TIME FOR MISSION: ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING, MARCH 14TH.

One Great Hour of Sharing is part of Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) . It is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ. Through One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) the UCC works with international partners to build sustainable communities, respond to disasters, and minister to refugees. By building sustainable communities we support self-help programs that enable people and communities to stand against and rise above hunger, disease, illiteracy, and other forces of injustice that deny and destroy dignity. In the event of a natural disaster or human caused tragedy they provide emergency and long-term assistance to those affected. As an example OGHS has been working hard in Haiti after the devastating earthquake. On average, OGHS responds to a disaster once every 2.5 days. OGHS helps minister to refugees by responding with advocacy, hope and hospitality for people who have been uprooted from their home of origin. More than 30 million of the world's people are uprooted at any given time. On March 14th please remember this important cause and give generously. If you would like more information about OGHS please go to the UCC website at www.ucc.org/oghs . Thank you for sharing and bringing love and hope to so many.

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS: Looking for a chance to join others in community while making new friends and tapping into your creative side? Please join the group for some fun on **Saturday, March 6, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.** in the Mt. Baker Room. Bring a current project you are working on or something you would like to begin and join us!

CREATIVE CONNECTIONS RETREAT: Come join us on **Saturday, March 27, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** for a time of "Nurturing Your Creative Spirit." We will join together for some creative craft fun, laughter and play while connecting with other women in our community. Registration fee of \$20 covers craft supplies and catered lunch. Childcare will be available upon request. Registration forms are available on the Information Table in the Narthex. For more information contact Sharry Nyberg 734-3720.

Easter Tulips



I/We (name): _____ would like to purchase
(#) _____ pot(s) of Tulips at \$ 8.00 each to decorate the church for Easter.

_____ Purchased as a gift to the church

_____ Purchased in Memory of: _____

_____ Purchased in Recognition of: _____

If you wish to take your tulips, please do so after worship on Easter.

*Please return this order form with payment (cash or checks written to "FCCB: Tulips") by **Wednesday, March 24th** to the Church Office or by mailing to: First Congregational Church, 2401 Cornwall Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225.*

**First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ**

An Open & Affirming Congregation

2401 Cornwall Avenue

Bellingham, WA 98225-3414

Date: February 24, 2010

CHURCH CALENDAR

March 1

5:00 PM *Exercise Group*

March 2

9:30 AM *Book Club*

7:00 PM *Pilgrim Circle*

March 3—Full Circle Deadline

5:00 PM *Exercise Group*

5:00 PM *Prayer Shawl*

6:00 PM *Lenten Series*

7:00 PM *Stephen Ministers*

March 4

6:30 PM *Labyrinth Walk*

7:00 PM *Jesus Seminar*

March 5

10:00 AM *In Stitches*

5:00 PM *Exercise Group*

March 6

10:00 AM *Creative Connections*

March 7

10:00 AM *Worship/Church School Gathers*

4:30 PM *Middle School YG—Question the Pastor*

6:30 PM *High School YG—Question the Pastor*

March 8

9:00 AM *Shalom Circle*

2:30 PM *Hospitality*

5:00 PM *Exercise Group*

7:00 PM *Board Meetings*

March 9

9:30 AM *Discovery Circle*

7:00 PM *Living the Questions*

March 10—Full Circle Mailing

5:00 PM *Exercise Group*

5:00 PM *Prayer Shawl*

6:00 PM *Lenten Series*

6:30 PM *Stephen Minister Training*

March 11

1:00 PM *Jesus Seminar*

7:00 PM *Centering Prayer*

March 12

10:00 AM *In Stitches*

5:00 PM *Exercise Group*

March 14

10:00 AM *Worship/Church School*

11:00 AM *Blood Pressure Clinic*

1:00 PM *MS & HS—Ice Skating at Bellingham Sportsplex*