



April 28, 2010

FROM THE CONGREGATION

This past Sunday was Laity Sunday. We celebrated those who have come, who have listened and who have stayed. Here we celebrate those who have left but stayed connected.

“We have done it before; we can do it again.”

Those words ended the discussion and debate on whether this congregation would sponsor a homeless refugee family from Bosnia in 1992. We had done it a decade earlier with a homeless Cambodian refugee family. The congregation voted to sponsor the Bosnians. We were organized: committees for food, clothing, furniture, transportation, and English lessons. Anything and everything. Housing was a given. The church had purchased and paid off the row of houses where the parking lot is now.

They arrived just before Christmas with only a suitcase for the family. Edo Sabonovic, the father, had been a national soccer celebrity and ran a neighborhood convenience store. He was from a Muslim background. Mirja, the mother, was originally from Serbia and a high school physics teacher. She was from a Christian background. Their 6-year-old daughter Svetlana was extremely smart. We called her Lana.

When the old Yugoslavia fell apart and civil war erupted between the Serbs and the Bosnians, not only the regional hatred flared, but the ethnic cleansing caught this mixed marriage family on the border town of Brcko. When marauding para-military bands started attacking, Edo's brother disappeared. (His body was discovered years later in a mass grave.) The family could not seek refuge with any family member or friends as they would be seen and reported. They had to leave, taking their car as far as they could at night and then walking for days. Eventually they got to the refugee camps in Austria. Once there, Church World Service sought placement for them.

Edo became a volunteer soccer coach for the Ferndale high school girls team and worked with heavy equipment until he hurt his back. Mirja took a job as a seamstress for a local manufacturing company. They cleaned houses and offices on the weekends. In the evenings they did piecemeal work making crackers, those paper party favors that pull apart and make a cracking sound.

By 1995 they had not only paid off their transportation debt to Church World Service, but they had saved enough money for a down payment on a house in the Birchwood neighborhood. Later they sold it and bought another house on Alabama Hill as neighbors to us.

We, the congregation, learned hospitality from the Sabonovics. “You come for coffee at three.” The coffee was dark, strong, and thick with conversation. “Oh, you stay for dinner now.”

About three years ago, when our daughter Lara was having difficulties adjusting after her third surgery, my wife Peggy went to have coffee with Mirja. Mirja said, "You and Fred leave for an hour, Lana and I are going to talk with her." What Mirja had not told anyone before changed Lara's attitude and her life. Mirja said, "I cried everyday for a year after we arrived here. Then one day I said to myself I can continue to go on crying or I can do something for myself and my family." She did. She led the family to strike out on their own, leaving the "shelter and safety" of the congregation's organization, taking the initiative to live in their own apartment, getting jobs, and buying a car.

After Lana graduated from WWU, Mirja was working less, then finally laid off. Without health insurance, they could no longer afford to stay in the U.S. Just as the housing market was beginning to fall, they sold their home and returned to Bosnia. Now, Lana has a good job and Edo fishes. Some of you will remember that Mirja walked with a pronounced limp since birth. Back home she now has had corrective surgery.

Last summer our own Tia Herdman, daughter of Harry and Liz Herdman, graduated from high school and began working as a nanny for a Bellingham family that was traveling in Europe. She is now traveling there on her own. About a month ago, I got a call from her mom, asking where the Sabonovics lived as Tia would be traveling in that region. Maybe she could stop for the night.

We email with Lana regularly and passed Lana's address to Tia. Tia asked Lana if she could spend the night; but Lana answered "NO ----- you have to stay for at least a week", which Tia did in the first week of April.

Tia wrote: “It was so much fun to be able to talk to someone who had lived in Bellingham...it was also great because she knew everywhere to go in Brcko and Bosnia and Herzegovina...and she was able to give us a very non-biased history of the area and the country. It was really wonderful to learn from her. Their whole family sends their best to the church...they want everyone to know that they are happy and for the most part healthy. They are happy to be back in Brcko but they really, really appreciate everything that the church community did for them.”

Our work with this family has come full circle. They are no longer homeless. What might be next for this congregation?

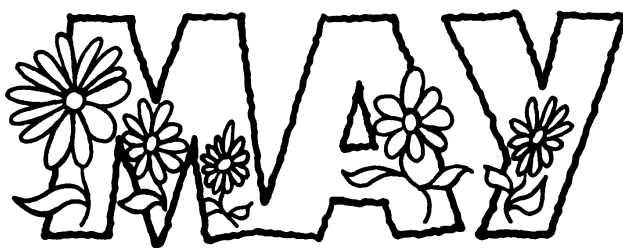
We have done it before, and we can do it again.

- Fred Wepprecht

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 MAY

Deadline Date	Mailing Date
May 5	May 12
May 19	May 26

FLOWERS FOR THE SANCTUARY! Help brighten up the Sanctuary by providing flowers for Sunday worship. Please sign up on the Flower Calendar on the workroom door.

NEXT LANDSCAPE CLEAN UP PARTY.

Saturday, May 15, from 11 – 1:30 p.m.

We have beautiful church grounds and it's actually fun to come and work with others of our Church Family to help keep them that way! Join us as we continue to clip away dead branches, trim back over-abundant new growth, and pull more weeds to help maintain our beautiful church grounds. Bring your gloves, a clipper (powered if possible), perhaps a rake and a bucket or box for your clippings. **Lunch will be provided!**

If we get a dozen or more of you to come help we'll get a lot accomplished again! We're still looking for someone to step up and chair the Landscape Committee! If you know a bit about plants and when things should be cut back, watered, fed or removed we'd love it if you could help in this way please call Linda Rawls. Thank you from the Trustees Board!

Questions? Call Linda Rawls at 734-5060 (home) or 733-1140 (work)

SAVE THE DATE!

You are invited to celebrate the installation of *the Reverend Kent French* as Lead Pastor of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ of Bellingham, Washington in a Vespers Service on **Friday, May 28, 2010 at 8pm.**

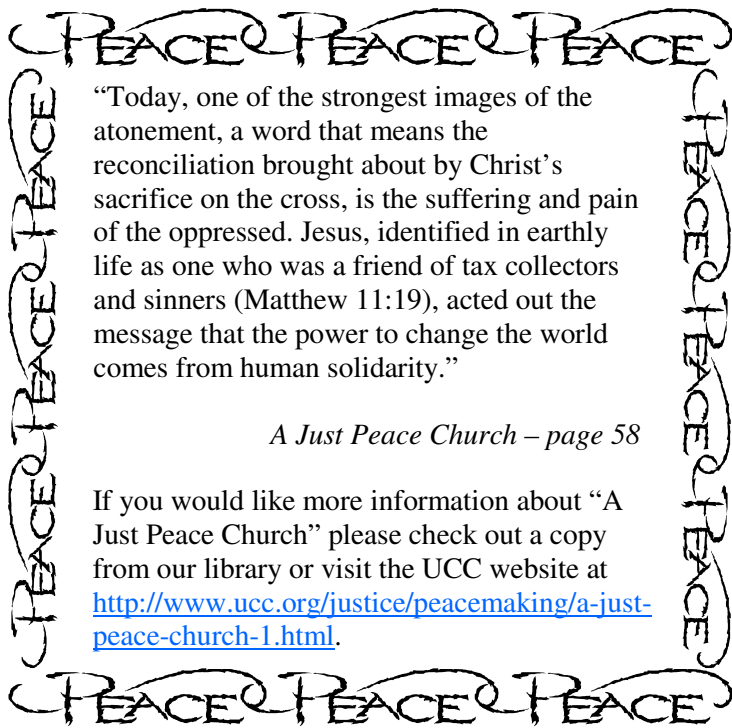
Service in the FCCB Sanctuary with reception to follow.

HEALING PRAYER: On the first Sunday of each month, we will hold a healing prayer service in the Chapel directly after the worship service. You are welcome to enter this time of quiet and music to pray silently or to write a prayer. A pastor will be available to pray with you and, if you wish, offer an anointing with oil. The next healing service is this **Sunday, May 2nd.**

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 May 4** will be *Out Stealing Horses* by Per Peterson. For more information contact Kathleen McGuinness at 733-1251.

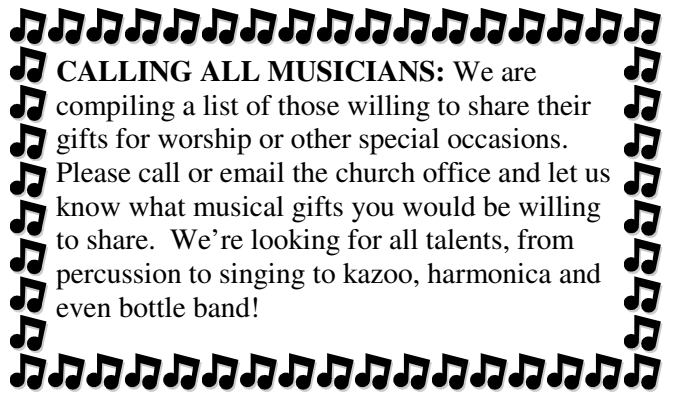
LABYRINTH WALK: The labyrinth is generally in the Chapel available for walking during church office hours (Monday – Thursday 9:00 to 5:00 p.m. and Friday 9:00 to 1:00 p.m.) and on Sunday mornings. Please join us for our next facilitated walk on **Thursday, May 6** when our theme will be "Cultivating Our Dreams."



“Today, one of the strongest images of the atonement, a word that means the reconciliation brought about by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, is the suffering and pain of the oppressed. Jesus, identified in earthly life as one who was a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19), acted out the message that the power to change the world comes from human solidarity.”

A Just Peace Church – page 58


If you would like more information about “A Just Peace Church” please check out a copy from our library or visit the UCC website at <http://www.ucc.org/justice/peacemaking/a-just-peace-church-1.html>.



CALLING ALL MUSICIANS: We are compiling a list of those willing to share their gifts for worship or other special occasions. Please call or email the church office and let us know what musical gifts you would be willing to share. We’re looking for all talents, from percussion to singing to kazoo, harmonica and even bottle band!

WANTED: Ushers and Greeters

Sign up for ushering and greeting in the coming months by going to the sign up sheet in the Narthex. Diaconate members will send reminders and instructions to those who request them. Look for our display!



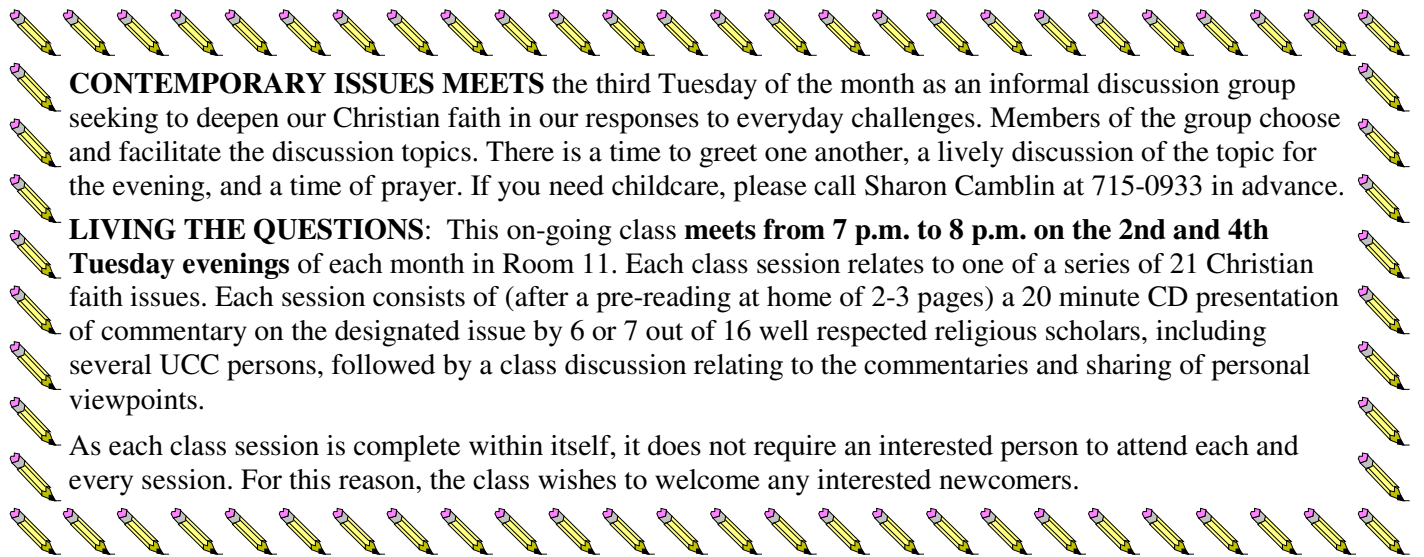
CHILEAN EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORT

On Feb.27, 2010 Chile was hit by an 8.8 magnitude earthquake. One hour after the earthquake, Robinson Crusoe Island, located five hundred miles off the coast of Chile, was hit by a 45 foot tsunami wave that devastated the island’s single village.

Anna (Gwendy) Collier’s husband Jonathan was born and raised on Robinson Crusoe Island and, in order to help his island recover from the devastation, he and Anna are involved with a fund raising activity to provide school materials for the children on the island. The K-12 island school was completely washed away by the tsunami.

The Mission, Justice, and Social Concerns Board is sponsoring a presentation about Robinson Crusoe Island and the relief efforts that are being coordinated by Anna Collier and Jonathan Recabarren. The MJSC Board feels that this is a Just Peace issue. FCCB will facilitate collection of monetary donations which will specifically be used to buy text books and writing supplies for the school children on the island.

Come to see pictures and hear information about the tsunami destruction and relief efforts, presented by Anna and Jonathan on **Sunday, May 9**. They will have their information set up in the Narthex directly after worship.



CONTEMPORARY ISSUES MEETS the third Tuesday of the month as an informal discussion group seeking to deepen our Christian faith in our responses to everyday challenges. Members of the group choose and facilitate the discussion topics. There is a time to greet one another, a lively discussion of the topic for the evening, and a time of prayer. If you need childcare, please call Sharon Camblin at 715-0933 in advance.

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. Each class session relates to one of a series of 21 Christian faith issues. Each session consists of (after a pre-reading at home of 2-3 pages) a 20 minute CD presentation of commentary on the designated issue by 6 or 7 out of 16 well respected religious scholars, including several UCC persons, followed by a class discussion relating to the commentaries and sharing of personal viewpoints.

As each class session is complete within itself, it does not require an interested person to attend each and every session. For this reason, the class wishes to welcome any interested newcomers.

GETTING THE MISSION DONE

In December 2009, Church Council convened a sub-committee to evaluate the structure of our church's boards and committees and to recommend potential changes to meet our current and future needs. The establishment of this sub-committee followed up on the recommendations of the 2008 Council. Currently, this sub-committee includes Janet Ott, current moderator; Randy Flowers, vice moderator, and ad hoc members, Vince Brown, Carol Garguile, Carol Nicolay, Doug Shepherd, Bob Styer, and Janai Symons. Pastor Jane Sorenson served as staff support to this sub-committee during her tenure. Pastor Kent French now provides staff support.

After reading Anthony Robinson's book, *Transforming Congregational Culture*, the sub-committee chose to name itself, "Getting the Mission Done," recognizing that God is calling us to discern structural changes that:

- connect more people to the ministries of our church
- deepen connections within our community
- allow us to accomplish the mission of our church with ease and grace
- support the growth of new ministries in the church which engage the passions and talents of our members.

After further consideration, this sub-committee will make recommendations to the Church Council for discussion. We will also bring these recommendations for discussion in the wider congregation, through small-group neighborhood meetings.

As we move forward in this important work about our future, we welcome your questions and comments.

DIAPER BANK AT FCCB

Did you know that a healthy supply of diapers can cost up to \$100 a month? And that no social service programs, including food stamps, cover the cost of diapers? For a family in crisis or transition, the cost of keeping a child in a clean, dry diaper is prohibitive. Without the means to purchase a healthy supply of diapers, families may be forced to leave their children in soiled diapers, which can lead to health problems, not to mention unhappy children - and, by extension, unhappy families.

To help alleviate this problem, we're starting a **diaper bank** here at FCCB. We'll be soliciting donations of money and diapers throughout the community and distributing diapers initially through two partner agencies - Interfaith Coalition and The Opportunity Council.

How can you help?

- Look for a special donation box in the Narthex beginning on Sunday, 4/18/10 and donate diapers (sizes 1-4).
- Contact Stacey Nordtvedt - 714-8387 or bellinghamdiaperbank@gmail.com - if you'd like to volunteer to help set up diaper drives around the city, transport diapers to & from FCCB, or help spread the word about what we're doing.
- Write a check to FCCB, making sure to write "diaper bank" in the memo line.

Thank you for helping to ensure that all children in Whatcom County have clean, dry diapers!

Note about disposable diapers: For families in crisis or transition, access to laundry facilities is often limited, making disposable diapers the only feasible option. In addition, day care & preschool programs like Head Start require that children wear disposable diapers.

INTERFAITH NOTES

FRIENDLY VISITORS SEEKS VOLUNTEERS FOR SENIOR OUTREACH PROGRAM

Seniors throughout Whatcom County who have little social contact with friends or family are waiting to be matched with compassionate volunteers who will visit them weekly at home through Interfaith Coalition's Friendly Visitors program. Individuals interested in working one-on-one with seniors in need of caring human connection are invited to participate in one of the following monthly orientation and training sessions:

- Tuesday, May 18 from 1 to 4 p.m.
- Wednesday, June 16 from 6 to 9 p.m.
- Tuesday, July 6 from 1 to 4 p.m.
- Wednesday, Aug. 4 from 6 to 9 p.m.

Please call **756-5179** for more information or to reserve a space.

AUCTION RAISES \$133,000 FOR HOMELESS HOUSING AND HEALTH CARE

Interfaith Coalition raised an all-time high of \$133,000 through the unwavering generosity of friends and supporters at its March 20 spring auction. Proceeds will support the coalition's programs, which provide housing to homeless families and health care to families and individuals without insurance or the means to pay for care.

Our congregational gifts of a gardening wheelbarrow full of supplies, plus two \$100 gift certificates to local nurseries, contributed to the success of Interfaith's biggest fundraising event of the year. In total, our gifts and the gifts from other participating Interfaith Coalition member congregations raised \$8,200 in the auction.

"In a year when we wondered how the economy would affect donations to our auction," said Lori Polevoi, Interfaith's communications and development director, "your congregation's generosity, along with the generosity of other donors, demonstrated to us that, even as individuals and congregations may be feeling the pinch, compassion for people in need does not wax or wane with the state of the economy."



Stephen Ministry

FCCB has commissioned 74 people Stephen Ministers since March 1993. We congratulate our 7 new Stephen Ministers who are **Kathryn Taylor, Kathi Matthes, Delilah Bragg, Angela Pahlow, Andrew Holcom, Heather McKendry and Karen Mills.**

If you would like one of them to be with you on life's journey, call one of the Stephen Leaders or the church office.

For more information you can contact one of our Stephen Leaders: *Donna Romjue (752-1747)* *Libby Weiss (756-2062)* and *Pat Styer (676-2585).*

CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL 2010: Save the date and plan to join us for an incredible week of VCS **June 21-25**. This year's theme is "Create." Registration is limited to 135 participants and open to children age 4 years to those entering the sixth grade. **Registration began April 11.** The participating churches who came together in ecumenical fellowship 30 years ago have decided that this will be the last year of Vacation Church School. Please join us for our *best year ever*, as we say good-bye to this wonderful program. Questions contact Sharry at 734-3720.

THINKING ABOUT GOING TO CAMP? There are camps for those of all ages. While making plans for the summer we hope you consider attending one of our UCC campsites for fun, fellowship and adventure. Camp brochures are available on the Information Table in the Narthex. For more information about camps or to apply for a camp scholarship contact Sharry at 734-3720.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR RECOGNITION: Mark your calendars and plan to join us on **Sunday, May 16** for the 10:00 a.m. worship service, when the church will honor and recognize those graduating from high school. A reception hosted by the Board of Christian Education will follow in the Social Hall. We would love to borrow an announcement and picture of each graduate to share with the congregation during Senior Recognition. Please put them in Sharry's mailbox in the office. Thank you.

YOUTH NEWS

Youth Group Activities for May

Middle school meets **4:30-6:00 p.m.** and high school meets **6:30-8:00 p.m.** in the youth room (#18) unless otherwise indicated.

May 2: Youth Group Pizza and Game Night! Be ready for pizza and bring your favorite game if you have one!

May 9: No youth group. Happy Mother's Day!

May 14, 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 a.m. May 15: Mystery Dinner and Lock-In with the youth from the United Church of Ferndale! Bring your sleeping bag and come ready for a fun evening of group games and challenges at UC Ferndale! It's sure to be a great time, so don't miss out!

May 23: Discussion and Games with Pastor Kent!

May 30, 1:00-3:00 p.m.: Bellingham Community Meal! Join us in the gym at Assumption Catholic Church to help serve food to the homeless in our own community!

TICKETS FOR THE MEXICO MISSION TRIP DINNER AUCTION ARE NOW ON SALE! Join us on **Saturday, May 8** for a delicious Mexican dinner and a fun evening of live and silent auction. You can buy your tickets Sunday mornings in the Narthex or any time the church office is open. Call Martha Serven at (360) 676-8536 or Jodi Wallace at (360) 647-2141 for more information.

WOMEN'S LUNCHEON: The Women's Circles invite ALL the women of the church to join us on **May 14th at 11:30 a.m.** in the Social Hall, when we will host the women from the Lummi Island Church. The theme is the 50's and 60's. Bring your memories, attire, and memorabilia for our museum table. The food will also be reminiscent of the period.

CAMPERSHIP BREAKFAST: It's time again for the Annual Campership Breakfast! Come enjoy fresh baked cinnamon rolls and fruit before church on **May 2**. Breakfast will be served from **9:00-9:50 a.m.** Money raised will support scholarships for summer camp.

DO YOU SPEAK OR READ A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

We would love to have you participate in the worship service for **Pentecost Sunday, May 23rd**. Please contact Kathryn in the church office and let her know if you would like to participate and what language you speak. Thanks!

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.

AROUND THE CHURCH

PARKING ON SUNDAYS: As a courtesy to folks for whom walking has become more difficult, please avoid parking in the disability lot east of the Sanctuary and those spots near the front doors in the lot west of the Sanctuary. It also helps welcome visitors if the lots are not full when they arrive. If you want to stretch your legs on a Sunday morning, please remember that you are welcome to park in the Bunk's Medical Center lot on Cornwall. Thank you for your help in extending this form of welcome!

USED WASHING MACHINE NEEDED: The Church is in need of a washing machine. If you have a working washing machine you would like to donate, please call the office at 734-3720.

RUMMAGE SALE—"FINAL CLEARANCE" SALE

You are invited to shop after worship on **Sunday, May 2nd** from the items left over from the rummage sale held downstairs on Friday & Saturday. The prices cannot be beat since everything is on a donation basis.

Come to the basement and find a treasure! Doors will close at 12:30 p.m.

Join us **May 2nd**
for
Campership Breakfast at 9 a.m.
and

New Orleans Sunday during worship at **10 a.m.**

Please join our adult mission group who just returned from working in New Orleans next **Sunday, May 2** as they share their reflections during worship.

**First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ**
An Open & Affirming Congregation
2401 Cornwall Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225-3414

Date: April 28, 2010

CHURCH CALENDAR

- May 3**
9:00 AM *Shalom Circle*
5:00 PM *Exercise Group*
- May 4**
9:30 AM *Book Club*
7:00 PM *Pilgrim Circle*
- May 5**
5:00 PM *Exercise Group*
5:00 PM *Prayer Shawl*
7:00 PM *Stephen Ministers*
- May 6**
1:00 PM *Vi Weaver Memorial*
6:30 PM *Labyrinth Walk*
7:00 PM *Jesus Seminar*
- May 7**
10:00 AM *In Stitches*
5:00 PM *Exercise Group*
- May 8**
5:00 PM *Mission Trip Youth Dinner & Auction*
- May 9—Mother's Day**
10:00 AM *Worship/Church School*
11:00 AM *Blood Pressure Clinic*
11:00 AM *Kid's Choir Practice*
- May 10**
9:00 AM *Shalom Circle*
5:00 PM *Exercise Group*
7:00 PM *Board Meetings*
- May 11**
9:30 AM *Discovery Circle*
7:00 PM *Living the Questions*
- May 12**
5:00 PM *Exercise Group*
5:00 PM *Prayer Shawl*
- May 13**
1:00 PM *Jesus Seminar*
- May 14**
10:00 AM *In Stitches*
11:30 AM *Women's Lummi Luncheon*
5:00 PM *Exercise Group*
6:00 PM *YG Lock In at United Church of Ferndale*
- May 15**
11:00 AM *Landscape Clean Up Party*
- May 16—Senior Recognition**
10:00 AM *Worship/Church School*
11:00 AM *Kid's Choir Practice*

