

May 2015

Vashon Presbyterian Church

Vashon Island, Washington 98070



To Worship God in all we do, centered in Jesus Christ,
moved by the Holy Spirit

May 2015 Newsletter

PRESBYFEST 2015

Seattle Presbytery Presbyfest is coming up Saturday May 16, 8:30-4:00 pm. There will be great presentations and workshops. The speaker Mike Breen and the theme are quite relevant to our journey right now. He asks the question "Are we on the brink of a new Reformation?" Here's a link to the blurb on the Presbytery website, and another link to Mike Breen's blog where you can gather a bit more about what he is saying.

The event is free, includes lots of coffee and snacks as well as lunch. You can rsvp on the website and we usually carpool to Seattle.

Presbyfest link:

<http://seattlepresbytery.org/events/presbyfest>

Mike Breen homepage. Check out "popular posts" link:

<http://www.disciplingculture.com/>

Seminar Hosted by Deacons

The deacons were thrilled to once again host an educational event last Wednesday in the fellowship hall at VPC. The event was co-sponsored by The Vashon Senior Center and Vashon Community Care and presented by the Western and Central Washington Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. Michael Bower, the Educational Coordinator for the Alzheimer's Association, shared invaluable information with about 70 folks from our community about how caregivers can more effectively communicate with clients and loved ones dealing with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia by understanding how the disease develops.

We look forward to more ways to support those caring for others in our greater Vashon community. (More detail in Deacon's News p. 8)

Save the Date!

Presbyfest 2015



May 16 8:30-4:00

Dan's Message....

Growing New. (Isaiah 43:19)

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

We are full-on into the growth season now, especially with Spring's early arrival. VPC's landscape is popping. Thank-you, all you VPC diggers. The messages I'll be preaching during this green season (May-September) will explore Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7).

Jesus came to bring a new Eden and a deeper healing for humanity, beyond the mere treatment of symptoms. He came go deeper, to the root of our brokenness and do the seemingly impossible: to make human beings "full of grace and truth" as he is. It is happening among us. I have more about this on my blog, which you can access from VPC's website at www.vashonpreschurch.org.

Signs of God's grace are springing forth in a number of ways in the life of VPC – not the least of which has been the grace with which diverse people with diverse opinions and experiences are learning to discern a common direction for our future, around four areas the Spirit has made clear: focus, connecting with people, not overextending (keeping Sabbath as a core value), and leadership and communication.

Our congregational conversation last month was a rich opportunity to discuss these foci, and to gather a sense of what they mean in terms of growth. The most important thing for me was hearing people share an understanding that growth means *becoming Jesus' people* – i.e. us growing in character and relationships as we follow Jesus Christ and increasingly resemble him in daily lives abounding with grace and truth.

That gave me a lot of joy. We are being changed, and I am seeing this in a lot of ways, not the least being the ways we are growing in communication and resolving conflict. We are growing more confident in God's grace to help us talk about and address sensitive issues (see my other article in this newsletter), heal old wounds and overcome anxieties about our future. With God's help we are becoming less afraid and more joyful. I really love getting to be with you in this adventure of trusting God's love. Let us keep growing together, and not be afraid to share our joy with our Vashon neighbors.

Gratefully yours in Christ,
Dan

Reading suggestion for Summer! "Christian Counterculture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount" by John Stott. One of my most favorite reads. Available new, used, and on Kindle at Amazon.com, your library, or better yet, from your friendly LOCAL BOOKSELLER "The followers of Jesus are to be different," writes John Stott, "different from both the nominal church and the secular world, different from both the religious and the irreligious. The Sermon on the Mount is the most complete delineation anywhere in the New Testament of the Christian counter-culture. Here is a Christian value-system, ethical standard, religious devotion, attitude to money, ambition, lifestyle and network of relationships--all of which are totally at variance with those in the non-Christian world. And this Christian counter-culture is the life of the kingdom of God, a fully human life indeed but lived out under the divine rule."



Dear members of Christ's body at VPC,

As you may already know, as regional presbyteries conclude voting on the issue, it has become clear that the denomination of the Presbyterian Church (USA) will soon be making a historic step. Language in our constitution's Directory of Worship defining marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman will be replaced by the wording "two persons, traditionally a man and a woman".

If you are reading this online, click on this link to Seattle Presbytery's excellent resource page on the amendment: <http://seattlepresbytery.org/news/2015/a-pastoral-response-to-the-marriage-amendment>

In addition to the definition changes in the amendment, there are clarifications of roles and responsibilities; A **reiteration** of a pastor's duty to follow his or her conscience before God in the choice of whether to officiate *any* wedding, and the duty of a session to determine in the same way whether or not sanctuary space is to be made available for any wedding. By the way, though weddings in our tradition fulfill the requirements of a civil service, they are at heart a Christian worship gathering celebrating a gift of covenant relationship within the Body of Christ.

I owe it to you as your pastor to share with you what I think, how I feel, and what you can expect from me as your pastor – in 1,300 words or less. Which isn't enough. So consider this as my invitation to further conversation as to why I cannot, in good conscience, officiate a religious ceremony of same-sex marriage.

My main reason. A bigger hospitality at stake. As a follower of Jesus Christ I stand under the Word in the Old and New Testament to learn my Savior's heart and mind. Now there are some clearly prohibitive verses about homosexuality in the bible that I and countless others have wrestled with, along with others that look like loopholes. But when I look at how our Lord handled scripture in disputes of ethics, sexual or otherwise, those aren't the verses he goes to. Jesus proclaimed neither prohibitions nor loopholes but the bigger hospitality of God's original (and new) creation – and calls his followers to live into it. So when confronted with questions about the "technical" legality of divorce, (Matthew 19), Jesus takes them back to the beginning in Genesis, to show a bigger picture of God's intended "Shalom" as what ought to motivate them.

Genesis 1:27 - "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them. Male and female he made them". I believe that there is something profoundly positive, creative, mysterious and ultimately hospitable intended in Genesis' definition of marriage between man and a woman which is essential to our profession of the true nature of both God and people.

Genesis 2:23-24: "Then the man said, 'this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh...' therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh"

Similarly, there is something profoundly positive and ultimately hospitable about this communion of distinctively different persons in "one flesh" that is essential to our proclamation of the true nature of community. "One flesh" means something more than a sexual union of two different bodies, but a shared will and trust as well. This points beyond marriage to our baptism – in which we become one with Christ, sharing in his death, his resurrection and his intimate bond with our Father in the power of the Spirit. Paul uses the metaphor of marriage to describe both the oneness of Christ with his (diverse) church (Ephesians 5:25-33), and also the oneness we have as a body. "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh" is a statement of **shared vulnerability** at the heart of real communion.

"We who are many are one body in Christ, and so individually we belong to one another." (Romans 12:5).

"If one member of the body suffers, all suffer. If one rejoices, all rejoice." (1 Corinthians 12:26),

Frankly, many of us in the church have barely shared the suffering of many thousands of gay people who love our Lord, seek to obey him, and yet have felt profoundly unsafe sharing this enormous aspect of their identity and experience within the church. We haven't felt it because they have been good at not troubling us with their secret; or we haven't felt it because we chose to put up subtle signs (some not so subtle) proclaiming that they didn't belong, or that we were not prepared to walk with them along their particular journey. I think we are turning a corner here in listening, but the wounds are very raw and new ones are being opened from Sunday to Sunday. The last thing I want to do is cause any more pain, by hurtful words or by hurtful silence.

So let me be clear: My conscientious **abstention** from officiating same sex weddings is intended not to put up an “unwelcome” sign, but to be faithful in proclaiming the gospel as best I can. It is my conviction that marriage between a man and woman *uniquely* proclaims a larger mystery of God’s purpose and destiny for all, not merely for bride and groom, but for all humanity. To my conscience, defining marriage in any other way in a service of Christian worship misses the fuller significance of the blessing God intended in this covenant, which I believe I am entrusted to proclaim as a minister of Word and sacrament.

This understanding of traditional marriage as a joyous proclamation of God’s greater hospitality is echoed in wedding liturgies passed down through the ages, as in the current PCUSA *Book of Common Worship*.

see link, page 841 ff.: <http://bookoforder.info/Book-of-Common-Worship.pdf>

I sincerely believe that Scriptural ideals are never exclusionary devices but point to something more -which God intends for **all** and which He will accomplish in us through Jesus Christ by the working of His Holy Spirit. If ideals were meant to be filters, we’d all be excluded. “Love one another as I have loved you” is the one that humbles us all. Ideals compel our surrender to the grace and mercy of Christ and his cross for the power to move us forward and upward, together.

The good news is, Christ is not waiting for us to get it all together, but is actively reaching for all who need his grace; gay, straight or questioning, and He lifts us into new life and community in Himself. It is already happening, and I have no intention of questioning his choices or getting in his way! The authenticity of our community, whether we truly share in Christ’s flesh and bone, will be our willingness to co-suffer with Christ along with all his and therefore, our, brothers and sisters as we struggle with this issue *and all other identity issues*. Only in our shared baptismal identity as “Child of God, with whom I am well pleased” we find the power and grace to accept one another and bear one another up in love.

Let me share more of what you can expect from me:

-A full welcome of LGBT and questioning people as if they were my own family, closest friends and dearest neighbors because, frankly, they already are. You can expect my attendance at their weddings, and my willingness to baptize their children, bless their homes, share in one another’s joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, life and death. In short, I will strive to love them and to lay down my life for them as my brothers and sisters in Christ. (1 John 3:16)

-You may count on my respect for whatever session decides in the event of the request of the use of VPC’s sanctuary for a same-sex ceremony.

-And finally, count on my welcome of your differing opinions, and my willingness to meet with you, study with you, pray with you, and be taught by you.

In all humility, in fear and trembling, yours in Christ, Dan

Mission Resource Team News

Area of Responsibility:

Financial stewardship,
Building and Grounds.

Building and Grounds Maintenance: We are very grateful to the **Quilter's Guild for providing black out curtains for the Social Hall windows** during the popular "Dealing with Dementia" program presented by the Deacons on April 22nd. It was a bright, sunny day but the slide show was easily projected and viewed.

The flowerbeds have sprung to life and rhodies are in full bloom. I hope you'll arrive early on Sunday to take a few minutes enjoying the foliage. If you'd like to spend more time getting up close to the flowers, join us on **Wednesday afternoons starting May 13th to trim and tend the flowerbeds (and pull a few weeds!)**. Bring along some soup or salad to share and we'll dine together afterwards. It's still a little too chilly for BBQ so we'll switch over to that when it warms up.

The "Toolbelts Group" continues to make improvements every Tuesday morning from 10:00 til noon. We've been trimming around and scrubbing down curbs in the parking area and are planning to repaint the yellow curbs next week. We'll also begin pressure washing the east side of the Social Hall (by the parking lot). We hope to repaint that wall some sunny day. Feel free to join us any Tuesday as there is always need for an extra hand or foot to brace a ladder.

Work is continuing in conjunction with the Worship Team to provide a **cordless microphone** for the sanctuary. Barry Cooper has quite a bit of experience with microphones and sound systems and is providing invaluable information.

We are also still investigating partnership with another non-profit organization to share the unused spaces within the building. As a result of our recent "Congregational Conversation" we are aware of the desire to maintain the use of our Social Hall for increasing community events but are confident a mutual agreement for sharing that space can be

worked out with the right partner. The financial reality of maintaining our building, as a major mission resource, weighs heavily on all our hearts.

During your spring cleaning, don't forget we plan to have our annual yard sale in early August!

The Mission Resource Team meets on the 4th Sunday of each month after Worship in classroom "B" and would love to have you join us.

Elder Jacq Skeffington

Financial Stewardship We are in the process of a loan review that will result in the interest rate going from 5% to 3.5%. This will reduce the length of the mortgage by 8 months with the loan being paid off by 2024. Our current balance is \$116,000 with monthly payments of \$1336.

Elder Barb Huff

Worship Team News

Area of Responsibility:

Sacraments celebration, music program, readers, bulletin, ecumenical worship, church décor.

Pastor Dan's Sermons May-September will explore Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7).

Choir Dates in May are 14th, 21st, and Sunday the 24th.

Saturday Bible Study dates are May 2nd and 16th, at 10:00. We are continuing to study Paul's ministry with Romans.

Elder Brownie Carver

Purposeful Service Team News

Area of Responsibility:

Scholarship, Mary Magdalene weekend/partnership, IFCH dinners, mission partner relations.

Don't forget to bring donations of food for the **Vashon Maury Community Food Bank** this Sunday, this First Sunday of the month. Their need is great.

Thank you to all who contributed to the "**One Great Hour of Sharing**". The total received was \$1,113.19 and was forwarded to the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

The **Heindsman Scholarship Committee** is reviewing the application received and setting up an interview appointment. Only one application was received this year.

We will be responsible for providing the **IFCH meal May 28th**. This usually requires 4 people to prepare the meal and clean up afterwards. Funding for ingredients is available through VPC. Why not get a group of friends together and try something new? There is a sign up sheet in the Social Hall if you wish to participate.

We are communicating with **Mary's Place (the Church of Mary Magdalene)**, the United Methodists and the Church of the Holy Spirit about a combined service in mid August this year. If you are interested in helping or planning please contact Beverly Skeffington at 354-8921.

The Purposeful Service Team meets the Third Sunday of each month after Worship. Please join us.

Elder Jacq Skeffington

Journey/Invitation Team News

Area of Responsibility:

Bible study, Christian formation (all ages), new members and discipleship, evangelism and invitation.

An adult education class is due to start in mid-May. This class will be held at 9 AM Sunday mornings and run for 6 weeks. We will be viewing a video of sessions led by the Reverend Tim Keller, who has been called the C. S. Lewis of the 21st century. Keller addresses frequent doubts that non-believers and skeptics bring when confronted by religion. He explains how the belief in a Christian God is sound and rational and he provides a challenging argument for pursuing the reason for God. Intrigued? Stay tuned for the start date of this challenging presentation.

Thank you to all those people who have agreed to help with nursery care during the worship service.

The Journey Team is still working on getting more people involved with **Home/Small groups**. They are a very rewarding way to get to know each other better and be a support to each other in our Christian walk. Please let Diana Lilje know if you would be interested in joining or forming a group.

Will You Answer the Call?

The past two months a few home groups have been reading **Called** by Mark Labberton, president of Fuller Seminary. This excellent book has urged us all to live as followers of Jesus. It has helped us to examine how our lives relate to the world and what God's call is for us personally and for the church. The book poses many questions and answers and gives much food for thought.

Please consider borrowing a copy of this book from one of us who have already read it and join with others to discuss its contents. You will find it very rewarding. Any question? Talk to Diana Lilje, Michele Houston, or Barb Huff.

Elder Diana Lilje

Hospitality/Fellowship Team News

Area of Responsibility: Hospitality, Fellowship

Change is coming to Coffee Hour effective 6/1/2015. If no one signs up for coffee hour we will only have coffee in disposable cups. If no one brings any treats we will not have anything to eat w/the coffee/tea. The way to solve the problem is to sign up and bring treats for coffee hour. If you sign up for Coffee Hour you will need to clean up. The other change is the third Sunday of the month will be "Open Sunday". Anyone can bring whatever treat they want to for Coffee Hour. The first "Open Sunday" is June 21, 2015 that happens to be Fathers Day. My goal is to have more people sign up and participate in Coffee Hour. If you have any questions please contact me, Kate Smith. I look forward to fun Coffee Hours.

Elder Kate Smith

Upcoming Book Club Selections

The book club will meet May 15th at the home of Bev and Jacq Skeffington. Arrive 6:30 for a potluck followed by a discussion of The Legend of Colton H. Bryant by Alexandra Fuller. The selection for upcoming months are as follows:

June The Signature of All Things Elizabeth Gilbert

July All the Light We Cannot See Anthony Doerr

August A Trip to the Stars Nicholas Christopher

September Violins of Hope James A. Grymes

Clerk's Corner

The VPC session met on April 13, with all members attending. Teams and committees submitted reports, primarily in writing. Session voted to participate in vacation bible school this summer, and agreed to allow use of the VPC building as needed. In response to concerns voiced about the e-mail best practices adopted at a prior meeting, session emphasized that it is not to discourage communication. Rather, it is to assure confidentiality and avoid miscommunication and harmful language. Session reviewed the documents to be distributed at the planned April 19 conversation regarding the discernment process, and set the agenda for discussion. Session made appointments to the audit committee, appointed Barb Huff to serve as a representative to the April 21 presbytery meeting and named Kate Smith as session member of the nominating committee. Session also accepted the lower interest rate for the mortgage but kept the monthly payment the same so as to pay off the balance sooner. Finally, session discussed (but took no vote on) the need for background checks for volunteers under age 18, and the logistics of a congregational retreat.

Bob Spangler, Clerk of Session

Deacons' Team News

The deacons were thrilled to once again host an educational event last Wednesday in the fellowship hall at VPC. The event was co-sponsored by The Vashon Senior Center and Vashon Community Care and presented by the Western and Central Washington Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. A shout out to Jacq Skeffington and Myrtle Walls for their help in room set up and kitchen help and to the Quilt Guild for loaning us window coverings. Michael Bower, the Educational Coordinator for the Alzheimer's Association, shared invaluable information with about 70 folks from our community about how caregivers can more effectively communicate with clients and loved ones dealing with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia by understanding how the disease develops. Participants were then able to connect with each other around coffee and cookies while VCC provided on-site care for patients who were with their caregivers. There was great appreciation for the quality of information provided. We look forward to more ways to support those caring for others in our greater Vashon community.

We are still looking for those who would love to be a help to people who need a ride to worship on Sunday, doctor appointments, etc. We have a number of folks needing this kind of help, especially on Maury Island. This could be either on a regular basis or being available on call as you are able. You'll find that even doing it once can end up being just as much a blessing to you as to the rider! Just email me, Michele Houston, at mlhouston50@gmail.com or call at 206-463-0379 for more information. Or talk to any other deacon – Sue Weston, Susan Commeree, or Lindsey Hoffman. And please pray for our fearless leader, Nancy van Rousel, as she recovers from pneumonia! Peace to you all!

The April Presbytery Meeting

Rev Dan Houston, Elder Barb Huff and I attended the most recent Presbytery meeting held at Overlake Park PC, in Bellevue on April 21st. Due to a two boat schedule and horrendous traffic we arrived late and left early. But, it was a wonderful celebration to worship together with so many Teaching and Ruling Elders.

We had the unique opportunity to celebrate with 10 candidates who are beginning new ministry positions and were to be examined so the group split up into two examination groups. Also before the group was a proposal by the Exams Task Force to lay out a clearer and more transparent exam process.

According to Executive Presbyter Scott Lumsden, changes to our Book of Order regarding who may be married will likely be approved and take effect in July. What does not change however, is the discretion that a pastor and session have concerning marriages. This is a topic about which we shall certainly have more conversations as a congregation.

Wonderful video presentations were provided by mission partners Coastland Commons and Big Table. I highly suggest you check out coastlandcommons.org and big-table.com for additional info.

The next Presbytery meeting will follow Presbyfest at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle. This will be a Saturday affair from 8:30am - 4:00pm, May 16th with keynote address, workshops and worship. Keynote speaker Mike Breen asks the question: Are we on the brink of a new Reformation? For additional info go to seattlepresbytery.org

Presbyfest link:

<http://seattlepresbytery.org/events/presbyfest>

Mike Breen homepage. Check out "popular posts" link:

<http://www.disciplingculture.com/>

Calendar for May 2015

(all events at VPC unless otherwise stated)



May

- 2 Bible Study 9 AM
- 3 Sunday Worship Service 10 AM (communion service)
- 10 Sunday Worship Service 10 AM
- 10 Deacon's Meeting
- 15 Book Club at 6:30 PM at the Skeffington's
- 16 Bible Study 10 AM
- 16 Presbyfest 8:30-4:00 University Presbyterian Church
- 17 Sunday Worship Service 10 AM
- 17 Purposeful Service Team Meeting after worship
- 24 Sunday Worship Service 10 AM
- 24 Mission Resource Team Meeting after worship
- 31 Sunday Worship Service 10 AM

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Life Changing Prayer group meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays at 10:00 am at VPC, and on the first, third and fifth Wednesdays at 10:00 am at the Vashon Community Care Center..

Women's informal breakfast meets at Sporty's at 8:00 am on Wednesdays.

Bible Study meets the 1st and 3rd Saturdays.

Please note: Dates, times and events may change after publication. Refer to the weekly e-News or Sunday bulletin for confirmation of details.