

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 1 6

Vashon Presbyterian Church

Vashon Island, Washington 98070



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

February 2016 Newsletter

The Season of Lent

The season of Lent is a time of prayer, fasting and self-examination in preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of the Lord at Easter. It is a period of 40 days reminiscent of Jesus' time of testing in the wilderness. The Sundays in Lent are not counted in this reckoning of the time between Ash Wednesday and Easter, because every Lord's Day is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the early church, Lent was a time of preparation for the celebration of baptism at the Easter Vigil. In many communities of faith it remains a time to equip and nurture candidates for baptism and confirmation and to reflect deeply on the theme of entering a new life of discipleship.

New life requires a daily surrendering of the old life, letting go of the present order, so that we may embrace the new humanity. *Death must precede resurrection.* The church's peculiar Lenten claim is that in dying we live. To be raised with Christ means one must also die with Christ. In order to embrace the resurrection, we must experience the passion of Jesus. The way of the cross, the way to Easter, is through death of the "old self."

Therefore, at the beginning of Lent, we are reminded that our possessions, our rulers, our empires, our projects, our families and even our lives do not last forever. "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). The liturgies throughout Lent try to pry loose our fingers, one by one, from presumed securities and plunge us into unknown baptismal waters, waters that turn out to be not only our death tomb but surprisingly our womb of life. Rather than falling back into nothingness, we fall back on everlasting arms. Death? How can we fear what we have already undergone in baptism?

Through the intervention of God's gracious resurrection, lifelong changes in our values and behavior become possible. Lenten repentance makes it possible for us to affirm joyfully, "Death is no more!" and to aim toward the landscape of the new age. Faithfully adhering to the Lenten journey of "prayer, fasting and almsgiving" leads to the destination of Easter.

During the final week, Holy Week, we hear the fullness of Christ's passion, his death, and resurrection. From Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and on to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, all of Holy Week focuses on Jesus' journey toward the cross. As his followers, we travel Christ's path of servanthood through the Lord's Supper and the suffering of the cross toward the glory of Easter, all of which underscores the inseparable link between the death and resurrection of Jesus.

(revised from our PC(USA) denominational website, www.pcusa.org))

**A class for prospective new members will be held starting February 21.
Sign up by Feb 7 so we will know how many books to order. See Journey News.**

What Are YOU Giving Up For Lent?

When I was a child my small, conservative Presbyterian church in Everett never observed Lent. The pastor considered it entirely too Catholic. The disciplines of repentance, prayer and fasting leading up to Easter were completely foreign to me. I am grateful that as I grew in body, mind and spirit, God brought me to experience several PC(USA) churches for whom Lent was an integral and sacred part of the yearly Christian calendar.

My first experience with Lenten discipline involved fasting from or giving up *things* I particularly enjoyed, like chocolate or desserts or eating out or TV and the like. I did that for several years. Though the discipline of self-denial was good for me and it did help me think more often about the Easter season and its meaning, I can't say I felt much strengthening of spirit or a deepening of understanding of the way of Christ.

As the years went by I learned of another kind of fasting -- fasting from selfishness by doing something for others. Instead of giving up something rather trivial which I enjoyed, I looked for opportunities to give myself away for the sake of Christ, especially if such giving required a sacrifice. I would commit to some type of community service for the 6 weeks of Lent. I volunteered to clean up after worship rather than go home, put in evening hours at a non-profit rather than read or watch TV, picked up litter around the neighborhood. I must say this type of fasting did have a lasting effect on me and taught me a lot about the surprising places one can find joy.

But the type of fasting that has had the deepest, the most profound spiritual impact on my life has been the discipline of giving up things that in the doing, sent me to my knees in repentance and truly set me on a path of greater conformity to Christ. What did I give-up? One year it was irritation. Every time I would feel that all too familiar irritability and exasperation welling up I would **silently ask God to help** me examine what was going on internally so that I could respond constructively and with a measure of Christ-like love. I still get irritated, of course. However, I now am more aware of why I respond the way I do, have gained the ability to get a healthier perspective, and have become a more joyful person. One year I gave up gossip and learned some powerful lessons about kindness and thinking well of others. One year I gave up greed and came to new understandings of the insidious harm greed can cause. I came to see things like my need for recognition and accolades, for getting my way, or even for excessive time alone – as greed that can cause dissatisfaction and stress and even relationship strains. This year I am giving up my too prevalent need to control. I am going to work on giving people and situations to God more readily and will seek to let go of the desire to control outcomes. I'll keep you posted as to how THAT goes. Whatever happens, I expect to grow – in spirit, in humanity, and in closeness to God.

This Lent, be prayerful about what your Lenten discipline might be. Whatever you decide to give-up or take-on, may this Lent lead you to a deeper commitment to prayer, a clearer understanding of self, and a closer relationship with Christ. Blessings to you on your journey.

Peace and Joy,
Lynn



A Brief History of Ash Wednesday

Lent, the 40 days (excluding Sundays) leading up to Holy Week Observances, begins with Ash Wednesday. Lent is a time of prayer, repentance, charitable giving, and self-denial we observe as we prepare to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter. This year Ash Wednesday falls comes very early – February 10th.

Ash Wednesday, originally called Day of Ashes, began to be observed as long ago as the 8th century, when people would throw ashes on their heads and repent of their sins before they began their Lenten fast. Slowly that practice has evolved into the practice we have today, in which the pastor applies ashes to the foreheads of Christians to signify an inner repentance and commitment to the way of Christ. With the words “remember you are dust and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19) we are reminded of our mortality and our total dependence upon God.

Many Christians choose to leave the ashes on their foreheads for the remainder of the day as a sign that all people are in need of repentance and are forgiven through Christ.

Ashes are produced through the burning of the palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday, signifying that the palms waved in honor of Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem, would ultimately become dust and ashes by the time of his death. Hearts of repentance and full commitment to God, however, bring eternal life.

Safe Conduct Policy Review

VPC's Personnel Committee co-chairs Larry Commeree and Barb Huff are asking all church members, over the next two to three weeks, for their input for possible revisions to VPC's Safe Conduct Policy. With 20 months experience since its implementation, we'd like to hear what your experience has been. Any recommendations for change will be presented to session for approval.

Specific areas we would like to hear about include:

- Screening and Selection of Ministers to the Congregation;
- Outside Organizations use the building;
- Online Armatus Training courses.

Plus, we want to hear from you about any other item you consider important.

As you may already know, the Policy is now available to read online. From VPC's website, click on "Location". Under the church address click on "Information and Forms". That will lead you to links to the Policy and the Application Form for Ministers to the Congregation.

Seek us out following worship, give us a call, drop us an email. We welcome all your suggestions, questions and ideas.

Thank you for your help.

Larry Commeree
567 5705
islandtime206@gmail.com

Barb Huff
567 5678
barb.huff@comcast.net

Journey/Invitation Team News

Area of Responsibility:

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

VPC will offer a six-week class for prospective new members on Sunday mornings at 9 am, starting February 21. The class will explore the theology and structure of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and focus on what membership at VPC involves. Current members are invited if they are interested in a refresher course in Presbyterianism. The class will be led by Jacq Skeffington (463-9012) and Bob Spangler (567-5302). **Because we will be using a workbook that must be ordered, we request that those interested in the class call Jacq or Bob by February 7.** If you know of prospective members, please let them know of this opportunity (which does not obligate them to join VPC).

Study Guides for Lent The first Sunday in February there will be study guides available for Lenten reflections. We have ordered enough for each family to have one guide. The guide is titled *Be Holy* and it includes brief daily reflections, ancient forms of praise, and a petition called a breath prayer, to explore what holiness means for Christians today. There are Scripture readings, meditation, and prayer for each day of Lent. This is a wonderful way to prayerfully enter the season of Lent.

In April we hope to begin another adult education class offered on Sunday mornings. Please let Diana Lilje know if you have a particular topic you wish to discuss.

Elder Diana Lilje

Mission Resource Team News

Area of Responsibility:

Financials, Building and Grounds

Financials See Per Capita Assessments p 7.

Building and Grounds

Chris Coldeen and friends spread 4 cu yds of **gravel in the parking lot** in January, filling the worst of the potholes. We plan to even out the high and low spots on a more regular schedule this year so if you're interested, just call, no experience is necessary. OJT will be provided by all the sidewalk supervisors. If indoor activity is more suitable we have options available. Chris, Jim Huff and I no sooner finished **painting the church office** than suggestions to paint other areas in the church started flooding in. Toolbelts meet on Tuesday mornings from 10-12 for these exciting activities.

With the mild winter we've had so far some of the shrubbery around the church is starting to form buds. If you would like to **"adopt" a flower bed** or area please call the church and leave me a message. We'll certainly plan a work party some Saturday in March to spruce up the grounds before Easter. The Carpe Diem students and parents are planning to create a small vegetable garden on the south side of the social hall as an educational tool. It will be exciting to watch the transformation.

Christine Browning, one of our newly elected deacons, let slip that she's familiar with the program we use to **update our website!!** Have you noticed any changes?

We're scheduled to have the **carpets cleaned again February 19th**, setting up a six-month rotation of cleaning them.

The Mission Resources Team will resume meeting on the 4th Sunday of the month after worship, coffee and conversation. Please join us.

Blessings,

Worship Team News

Area of Responsibility:

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

Sign Board In an effort to improve communication with the community, we feel that the sign in front of the church needs to once again be a reader board. If you have an opinion about the sign please contact Brownie at 463-5399.

This year our **Ash Wednesday service will be held in our sanctuary at 7:00 AM on February 10th.** Then we can wear our crosses throughout the day! Other special services include **Maundy Thursday on March 24th at 7:00 PM and a Good Friday service at 7:00 PM on March 25th.** We look forward to seeing you at these additional events.

Elder Brownie Carver

Hospitality/Fellowship Team News

Areas of Responsibility:

Hospitality, Fellowship

VPC Book Club The book club will meet this month on the 19th, 6:30 PM at the Skeffington's. The book selection for the month is Issac's Storm by Erik Larson.

Elder Kate Smith

Purposeful Service Team News

Area of Responsibility:

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

Missionary Work in Haiti Back in November we received a request from Lake City Presbyterian Church to pledge support to bring Mark Hare and Jenny Brent to the area to speak with a number of churches supporting their missionary work in Haiti. VPC has supported them in the past but we have never met them. This young couple are PC(USA) Mission Co-workers, who have been serving in the Dominican Republic and Haiti for several years and are back in the US on furlough for the school year, staying near Mark's parents in Amesville, Ohio. Mark teaches small farmers techniques to improve crop production, so that they can feed their families and, hopefully, have enough to sell. Jenny has been helping improve the health and standard of living for people in Dominican batays, housing for sugarcane workers. We are tentatively planning to host an event around April 30th at VPC. Read more about them at www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/hare-mark/.

IFCH Meals Thanks to all of you who provided the wonderful lasagna dinner for the IFCH meal on the 28th of January. VPC will again host the IFCH meals on Tuesday and Thursday evenings this year and actually provide the meal on the 4th Thursdays of each month. A sign up sheet is already posted in the social hall for February 25th so you'd better sign up quickly while space is still available!

The Purposeful Service team will **resume meeting on the Third Sunday of each month** shortly after worship, coffee and conversation. Our next projects will be to prepare scholarship application packets for the Heindsmann Scholarship and promote the One Great Hour of Sharing.

Blessings,

Jacq

Deacon's News

Life-Changing Prayer Group

Prayers direct and strengthen our faith journeys, and VPC has a strong history of intentional prayer activities. We've all benefitted from the dedication of this group's members over many years.

As we look out into the year ahead and a new period of opportunities for our church, we must also consider how we can best support prayer activities. Our leadership is suggesting some rearrangements for the Life-Changing Prayer Group and welcomes more ideas and participation from everyone.

In reality we enable two types of prayer ministries. One focus is all the supportive prayer activity centered around requests shared during Sunday worship. It also includes other needs made known to the group's members, for example, the messages left in our prayer mailbox in front of the church. The second aspect is the group that meets regularly with residents at the Vashon Care Center. It has been faithfully led by Olde John Croan and our pastor.

This is the valuable moment to reconsider our group prayer activities and create renewed and beneficial frameworks. In preliminary planning for our VPC-centered concerns, some specific suggestions centered around identifying one or two people who will assume responsibility for recording prayer requests during worship. Then (with the consent of the person making the request) they will share these with others in the prayer group. This group's members can organize themselves to determine exactly how to support all the needs.

With respect for the VCC group prayers, additional people to join in providing the services there are most welcome. This set weekday activity centers more around singing and a short message with prayers for those residents. They gather at 10 AM on first and third (and any fifth) Wednesday mornings and our participation is always warmly welcomed by VCC residents.

Two important settings for prayers - each vital. Which one can you consider joining and supporting in this new year? Share your interests and any questions with Olde John Croan, Pastor Lynn or Nancy van Roessel. You can also leave a message with the church office staff.

New Deacons

The Deacon team is excited to welcome two new members this month. With the addition of **Christine Browning and Beverly Skeffington**, we are better equipped to provide support for our entire church family. Remember that we are ready with lots of current information for island-based social services and transportation as well as able to provide the more traditional deacon activities. Deacons can often only be helpful if and when we are aware of the needs, so please keep us aware of any concerns.

Deacons are Sue Weston, Susan Commeree, Lindsay Hofman, Bev Skeffington, Christine Browning and Nancy van Roessel.

Clerk's Corner

The session held its monthly meeting on January 13, with all attending. A number of annual administrative tasks were completed, with the following appointments: Corporate President: Kate Smith; Corporate Secretary and Registered Agent: Bob Spangler; Treasurer: Barb Huff; Clerk of Session: Bob Spangler; Financial Secretary: Diana Lilje; and Commissioners to Presbytery: Bev and Jacq Skeffington. Session also voted to hold 2016 session meetings on the second Wednesday starting at 7:00 pm. After discussion, it was agreed that the annual meeting date would not be changed. A review of the 2015 financial results was provided and discussed. All teams and the pastor provided written reports, which were briefly discussed. Jacq explained Purposeful Service Team's request that funds be made available to bring a missionary couple to Vashon to speak of their experiences in Haiti. Session authorized \$300 to help defray the expenses of bringing the missionary couple to Vashon. Session voted to remove two inactive members from the membership roll, and made final plans for the retreat to be held with the deacons on January 23. Finally, Barb led a discussion of Personnel Committee's desire for comments on the Safe Conduct Policy so that any appropriate changes can be made in March.

The annual congregational meeting (which also serves as the annual meeting of the legal corporation under which VPC operates in Washington) was held on January 23 during the worship service. The following were elected to ordained positions: Christine Browning, deacon class of 2016; Bev Skeffington, Nancy van Roessel and Susan Commeree, deacons, class of 2017; and Al Ross-Weston, ruling elder, class of 2016. The congregation elected a 2016 Nominating Committee composed of George Thieme, Héré Thieme and Claudia Ross-Weston. Barb presented 2015 financial information and the 2016 budget and answered questions in that area.

Bob Spangler, Clerk of Session

Note: If you would like a copy of the VPC Annual Report please call the office and they can email or mail a copy to you.

Per Capita Assessment

At the January 20 Annual Meeting of the congregation, several people inquired about the annual per capita assessment. VPC's budgeted per capita payment for 2013 is a total of \$2,675. The amount is calculated by multiplying the number of members at year end by an amount that varies annually. We receive the calculation from Seattle Presbytery. For 2013, the assessment is \$40 per member.

The assessment proceeds are directed to three entities: Seattle Presbytery receives \$29.13 per member, the Synod of Alaska-Northwest receives \$4.00 and the General Assembly of our parent denomination receives \$6.87. The Book of Order states that the presbytery "is responsible for the government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love and witness." The synod is charged with the support of the mission and ministry of its presbyteries in their responsibilities to congregations in these areas. The parent Presbyterian Church (USA) is responsible for the overall Presbyterian mission activity and the administrative functions inherent in oversight of a connectional church system.

VPC has traditionally paid the per capita as a lump sum for all members, and has not sought to recover that payment specifically member-by-member. Some other churches require each member to pay the annual assessment separately from their other offerings. While we do not require individual payment, our financial situation would be improved by members writing a check for \$40 and marking it "per capita" to help defray this expense item for our congregation.

Bob Spangler

Leadership Retreat

VPC's elected leadership (elders, deacons, pastor and clerk of session) held a retreat at the church on January 23. The format for the discussion was a continuation of the issues and themes identified at the 2014 and 2015 leadership retreats, congregational conversations and the results of the Appreciative Enquiry. The 2014 retreat led to a focus on spiritual renewal, creating a sanctuary and safe haven, and being a sign post pointing to encounter with Jesus. The first part of the recent retreat was to discuss what it means to be a "sanctuary" and a "safe haven" and how we can act as "living signposts." Other aspects of the agenda addressed the importance of keeping the Sabbath as a core value, communication (both among leaders and between leaders and the congregation), and the need to have and broadcast a values/mission narrative and statement.

The discussion surrounding these subjects was challenging and deeply thoughtful. A recurring theme was the need for VPC to be more welcoming to the community. Some of the ideas in this regard are already being implemented, such as keeping doors open to be more inviting, encouraging people to stay for coffee hour and post-worship discussions, and asking ourselves how decisions that we make will be viewed by visitors. As living signposts, both individuals and the church as a whole must make evident our Christian values and mission in our daily lives as well as in worship. VPC must recognize and reach out to our diverse community (including the gay and lesbian community), articulate our mission, avoid "cliquish" behavior and ensure that the way the community views us corresponds with what we aspire to be, with God's help.

For observing Sabbath (which is not just Sunday) we need to encourage and equip ourselves and others to cultivate the practice of taking a break from daily routine, obtaining renewal and rest and discovering our joy. Creating opportunities before, during and after the worship service will help us achieve this spiritual renewal. Although communication was seen as overall satisfactory, efforts to engage the congregation and community at large must continue -- especially as we begin the process of calling a new pastor and review our procedures and policies, including our Safe Conduct Policy. Those present discussed the possibility that due to the size of our congregation VPC will not be able to call a full-time pastor, and the ramifications of that type of call. Finally, a committee will be working on a values/mission statement that reflects how VPC sees its roles and opportunities as a Christian community on Vashon.

New VPC Officers



Newly elected Deacon Beverly Skeffington; Elder Al Ross Weston; Deacon Christine Browning

IFCH Meals Report for the year 2015

There is a great pie chart hanging in the East Room on one of the bulletin boards that shows how IFCH spends its funds. 40% of these funds go to help pay rent. We know that rental prices on Vashon are just going through the roof and it is getting harder and harder for folks to find affordable housing. I hope you will look at the chart and get an idea about the many needs that are met through financial support of IFCH.

The IFCH dinners provide approximately **8,000 total servings annually**. VPC serves 11 meals each year and each meal serves approx. 25 folks - so: **275 individual meals** served by the VPC meal team each year - **PLUS** the Tuesday and Thursday meals space and utilities and auspices provided by VPC in support of **2,500 additional meals each year**.

It is a vital ministry and support that we at VPC are carrying out.

Respecting Choices Vashon

Respecting Choices provides a framework for advance planning for people at different stages of life and health. Advance planning is a shared responsibility that relieves families of the burden of not knowing what their loved ones would want, and provides clear direction to medical providers. Facilitators help families explore their wishes and concerns, help them draft their advance directives, and provide information regarding choices. As an island, Vashon has unique needs—there is no island hospital, medical care is often fragmented, and there is no consensus on how to plan end of life care. However, it is also a place with a strong sense of community and shared responsibility. We believe an island wide effort to facilitate these conversations, especially as the population ages, would have great benefit, and would provide a model for other similar communities.

We're planning a presentation for VPC members and the community at VPC on Saturday Feb 27th from 10 - noon. Please RSVP to the church at 463-2010 so we can provide sufficient literature.

Important Dates!

Feb 10th

Ash Wednesday

Feb 21th

New Members Class Begins

Feb 27

Respecting Choices Vashon

Calendar

February 2016

(all events at VPC unless otherwise stated)

Important Dates!

Feb 10th

Ash Wednesday

Feb 21th

New Members Class Begins

Feb 27

Respecting Choices Vashon

Feb

- 6 Bible Study 10 am
- 7 Sunday Worship Service 10 am (Communion Service)
- 10 Ash Wednesday Service 7 am
- 10 Session Meeting 6:30 pm
- 14 Sunday Worship Service 10 am
- 14 Deacons Meeting at noon
- 19 VPC Book Club at 6:30 pm at the Skeffington's
- 20 Bible Study 10 am
- 21 Sunday Worship Service 10 am
- 21 Purposeful Service Team Meeting after Worship
- 27 Respecting Choices Vashon Seminar 10 am-Noon
- 28 Sunday Worship Service 10 am
- 28 Mission Resource Team Meeting after Worship

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.