

REASONS TO CELEBRATE

BY Rev. Lara Crutsinger-Perry



April is a big month at my house. All four of us have birthdays! It feels like we are always celebrating something. And if you add in Easter and Spring Break, our house is full of cake and excitement, all month long.

This month I also observed the anniversary of my ordination. This prompted me to reflect on the past four years. I have learned a lot about myself, what it means to be a pastor and our congregation during this time. I've been privileged to work with amazing staff and lay leaders. And every year just keeps getting better. This year has brought many changes and opportunities. We celebrated

Easter together for the first time since Covid. Groups are slowly returning to the building for meetings. The office is buzzing again. This year I am expanding my role within the PNW UCC conference. I am serving as an ordination mentor for one person and I sit on the discernment committee for two others. For my self-care, I participate in a Community of Practice and have a spiritual director.

This past week I was affirmed as your solo pastor. I intend to use the experiences, learning and wisdom garnered over the past four years, as well as my years as a community organizer and teacher (prior careers), to help me as we walk into the future together. Over the next few months, I will be working with my newly appointed Pastor Relations Committee to help me set some priorities for myself and my ministry for the summer.

Indeed, summer planning is under way! We will have youth group retreats, outdoor worship, adult education opportunities, and opportunities for us to come back together (or for the first time) as a congregation. I look forward to opportunities to walk, chat and catch up with folk.

As we restart more and more aspects of our congregational life, we will continue to learn from the lessons and experiences presented to use during the past two years. And in the coming months, you will have opportunity to help set priorities as we shift from two pastors to one. This will take compromise, creativity and careful discernment. We need to recognize and prioritize the most important aspects of our communal life. This may mean pausing or letting go of some things. It may mean doing things a new way or someone new doing it. I look forward to working with Council, Personnel and others as we set forward

reaching priorities for myself and the congregation. We will consider how to best care for each other, how to continue to offer vibrant and meaningful worship for all ages, strengthen our public witness (continue our initiative to uprooting racism) and care for our building and grounds. This is the messy, beautiful opportunity we have: to adapt and show our resilience in the reality of change.

April is coming to a close and signs of spring are all around us; trees are in bloom and new life is sprouting and hatching everywhere I look. Just as with the natural world, we are entering into a season of life and growth here at United.

I'm excited!!

MODERATOR MUSINGS

BY Joan E. Knapp, Council Moderator



Courageous Patience

James 5:7-9

7 Therefore, brothers and sisters, you must be patient as you wait for the coming of the Lord. Consider the farmer who waits patiently for the coming of rain in the fall and the spring, looking forward to the precious fruit of the earth. 8 You also must wait patiently, strengthening your resolve, because the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Don't complain about each other, brothers and sisters, so that you won't be judged. Look! The judge is standing at the door!

Some of us find it hard to be patient when we want to take action and/or make a decision right now. I understand. There are times when we discuss something seemingly forever and never make a decision. Yet, I also know that it's important to take time to discuss, to discern, and to process before making a decision(s). That takes patience!

As a Congregation we need to continue to be patient as we're still going through a transition time. The pandemic has significantly impacted everything the church does. Don't forget our pastors, staff and ministry/committees have done an excellent job of being flexible and adapting to changing issues. We are truly blessed to have all of them helping pivot so we could continue to worship and do other activities/events. Thanks especially to Pastor Lara, Jenn, April and Aisha!

The Building Future's Group (BFG) spent two years gathering information before presenting it to the Congregation. It may have seemed too long for some, but it took all that time to gather the necessary information, especially since it was done during the pandemic closures. Likewise, the Pastoral Transition Team took time to gather information from the Congregation and the two denominations before reporting their recommendation.

After the Congregation gave their input, the Council made a motion that was presented to the Congregation on April 24 at a Special Congregational Meeting where Pastor Lara excused herself so that everyone could speak honestly and openly. That motion (*The Council recommends the Congregation affirm the Rev. Lara Crutsinger-Perry as our solo pastor with the plan the Congregation will provide input to develop a job description*) was overwhelmingly approved by those in the Sanctuary as well as those on Zoom. After the positive vote, members welcomed Lara back with applause! Congratulations Pastor Lara, on being our solo pastor!

Once again, we need to be patient as we move forward. At the May Council meeting, we will make some decisions about a plan. More than likely a small team will be appointed to gather solo pastor priorities from the Congregation. Then the Personnel Committee will revise the Pastor job description based on those priorities.

We must continue to be patient as Pastor Lara shares with us her goals and dreams for the Congregation. We must continue to be patient during this time as we explore together what we want our future as a church to be. As we do so, let's remember the following from Ordinary Purpose:

“Let's breathe. And pray. Let's extend grace. To ourselves and everyone else. Let's reset. Again and again and again if we need to. And let's remember this LIFE thing is hard. For everyone!!! Then let's stand back up... and begin again. We can do this together.”

We can do this together with the help of God!

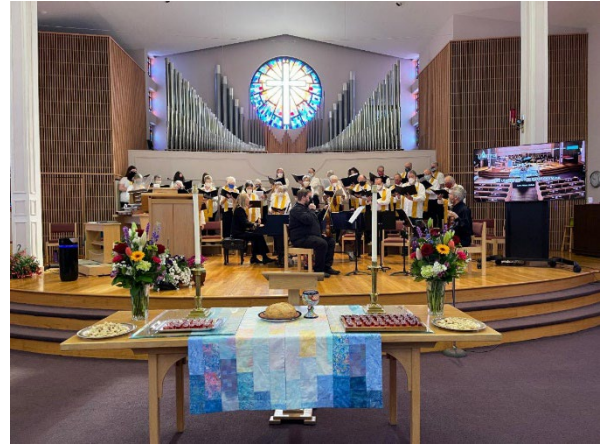
MUSIC AT UNITED

BY April Kuhr, Music Director

I really struggled writing the last Voice article, trying to figure out how to report our activities. Everything felt constrained by the dictates of dealing with and managing Covid. Or, attempting to—which, frankly, felt so overwhelming. It brought to mind the German Chorale, *Aus Tiefer Not, schrei ich zu dir*, translated: “Out of the Depths (or, from deep affliction) have I cried to you, oh Lord”. The re-opening committee continued to meet, discussing scientific studies and possibilities and options for re-opening. So often, it felt to me like guessing, with a huge responsibility for guessing wrong. We were dependent upon our resident nurse, **Therese Sprunger** and epidemiologist, **Frank Westrum** for the science behind the studies. Frank measured the chapel and figured out the metrics for putting air purifiers in the Chapel and Fireside Room. Thank you, Frank. Moving worship upstairs gave me the sense of literally crawling out of the depths.



With this, a sense of hope returned, and caused me to realize how much it had been missing. Thursdays Together brought a ray of sunlight, and an opportunity to re-awaken our atrophied social skills. Easter Sunday and the preparation leading up to it felt new and different—because we really were working toward something different—being together—FOR REAL, with the focus of connecting in person more than it has been for the last two years. Easter was such an inspiring day. We worshiped together, we sang together—AND—we ate together. It was so amazing to see people interacting with smiles on their faces—oh, wait—its because we could actually see their faces!!



Easter Sunday Festival Choir

So much went on behind the scenes—the Festival Choir was even larger than pre-Covid and rehearsed with the Chancel Choir regularly; **Pat Andersen** decorated the Chapel for a festive celebration, and we all just went for it. No holds barred; no constraints—what a different feeling.

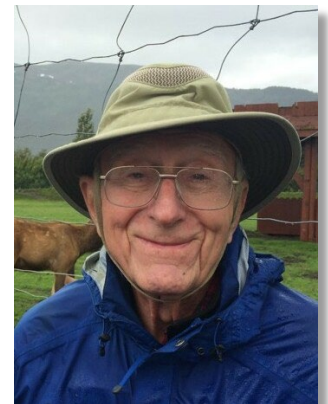
The AGO/United Holy Week Concert featured five local organists and was attended by 70 plus people. It can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTNobE4Euwl>.



Our Music Director, April and Cheri Kelley

There are so many people to thank, including the entire Chancel and Festival Choirs, **Cheri Kelley** for her incredible and inspiring singing every week; **Dan Meuse** and **Laura Fairbanks** for sharing their amazing musical talents with us during the Good Friday Service, the hot cross bun bakers, **Pat Andersen** for Cafe Service decorating, making and serving hot cross buns, members of STM and CLM who worked so hard behind the scenes, baking and serving, and cleaning up!

Most of all, **Pastor Lara** and **Jennifer Molfetta**, who inspired, created, planned and re-planned constantly and kept it all flowing smoothly. Palm Sunday began with a bittersweet note as we bid a fond farewell to our friend and long-time choir member, 96 year-old **Al Walter** (*right*). Al teased and inspired us, told amazing stories and showed us how to age in graceful and grace-filled ways. To quote **Bob McMullen**, “Al enriched all of our lives”. As we move forward, out into our Easter inspired, Covid-affected worlds may we take a cue from Al and continue to enrich each other’s lives.



UPROOTING RACISM COMMITTEE

BY Kathleen Clark, Chair

The Uprooting Racism Team's role is to provide a coordinated approach in eliminating racism across United's programs, communications, processes, and congregational community. Members of our 2022 team include **Peggy Smith, Eleanor van Noppen, Marcia McLaughlin, Leslie Cushman, Rev. Lara Crutsinger-Perry, and Kathleen Clark.** Our main focus this year is to bring an intensive anti-racist training program to our congregation. We have reviewed several curriculums and are further exploring the use of the UCC's [Sacred Conversations to End Racism](#).



We are continuing the training and implementation of an equity decision making tool with ministries and the Council. The purpose of this tool is to raise issues that the decision-makers may not have considered. It is a guide to support inclusion of diverse identities and specifically those who will be most impacted by the decision. It emphasizes community and relationship-building rather than expediency and it promotes transparency by providing documentation of the deliberation process that can be shared with others who are not directly involved in the decision. If you would like a copy of the tool, contact me.

Thanks to former team member, **Mac Buff**, who drafted a new racial justice statement for United's website. The statement was approved by Council and can be found [here](#).

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE MINISTRY (CLM)

BY Joanne Conner, Chair



CLM is thrilled to announce that we restarted our social time after Sunday services on Easter, with the tradition of serving coffee and hot cross buns.

United Churches of Olympia has been boldly creative in finding ways to stay connected to our congregation during the COVID pandemic. CLM has done its part by reaching out to our congregation by sending birthday cards, giving remembrances and gifts, delivering Advent and Lent bags, calling on those in need of support, welcoming visitors and many more gestures of love.

Our Piece Crafters group meets at 10:00 am on the 1st Saturday of the month in the Fireside Room (except in May when the group will meet on May 14 due to a planned memorial service on May 7). All are welcome to bring any craft they are working on to enjoy the company of others. Many work on projects that we give to those who would appreciate them. If you know someone who would like the comfort of a warm prayer shawl or lap robe, please contact me.

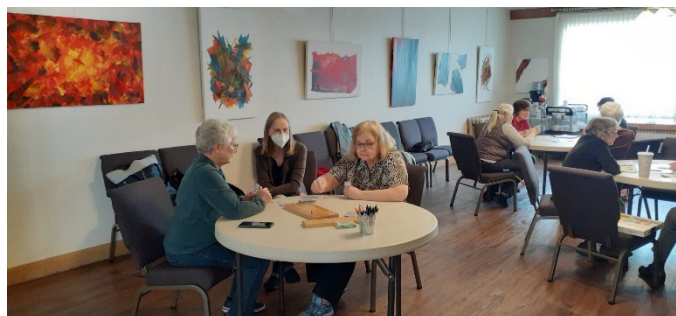


We recently honored **Eleanor van Noppen** (*left*) on her 50-year anniversary as a member of United Churches of Olympia. Eleanor has given service to the Olympia community as a tireless worker for homelessness, the hungry and others in need of support.

On Thursday afternoons during the Lenten season, CLM hosted get togethers in the Fireside Room (*below right*) with fun and games which have been well attended. Because they have been such a hit, we will continue these Thursdays Together gatherings.

Small groups continue to be formed around shared interests including an upcoming LGBTQ inter-generational brunch group that will get underway in June.

Stay tuned for more announcements on spring and summer social events.



THE RETREAT IS COMING

BY Jinny Beekmann, Councilmember

Friday, August 26 – Sunday, August 28

Back by popular demand is our big event of the summer--the All-Church Retreat. It will be held on the last weekend of August at Pilgrim Firs Campground in Port Orchard. The theme of the retreat is still being decided BUT there will be:

- Fantastic food
- Cabins in the woods
- Fabulous camaraderie and laughter
- Swimming, boating, gentle walks, sunsets to watch
- Spiritual activities and gatherings
- Relaxed time with new and old friends
- Slow and/or fast activities, conversations and sharing
- Your choice of all the above or a few or no activities ... napping is fine!



Registration and more information will be coming soon.

NEW INTERN AT UNITED THIS SUMMER

BY Pastor Lara

I'm excited to announce that this summer **Nate Humpherys** will be joining us for ten weeks as a pastoral intern.

Before Nate left for seminary, he was a member of Westminster Presbyterian, participated in our Olynnial program and supervised several youth group events. Nate will be with us from June 8-August 17. There will be plenty of opportunities to welcome him to our congregation so stay tuned for more information.

Nate is currently looking for a guest house or garage apartment he can rent for the summer. Please let Lara know if you have a rental property that might work for him.

Nate Humpherys is a second-year MDiv/MAPT student at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, and is an inquirer with the PC(USA) under care of Westminster Presbyterian Church and the Olympia Presbytery. Some of his favorite classes so far have included Preaching Through the Christian Year, The Ethics and Theology of Sexuality, and Lamentations & 2 Isaiah Through the Lens of Trauma and Disaster Studies. When he's not studying, he enjoys a range of hobbies from cooking and baking to board games, music, hiking, and adventures with his 9-year-old canine companion, Belle.



UNITED IN PICTURES

BY Jennifer Molfetta, Church Administrator



Above: Members and friends helped celebrate April's birthday (above) and Pastor Lara's birthday (right) during the month of April.

*Seated above (l-r): **Pastor Lara, Therese Sprunger, Sandee Sennes, Dee Corwin, April Kuhr, and Karen Conover.***

*Right: **Therese Sprunger** looks on as **Pastor Lara** gets ready to douse her birthday candles in water after making a wish. Ah, our new normal with Covid ...*





Above L-R: **Karen Conover, Joan E. Knapp and Kathleen & Mark Clark** celebrated Easter at the 8:30am service on April 17.



Above: *The Festival Choir filled the Sanctuary with sweet melodies on Easter Sunday.*



Left: *Easter Chapel service at 8:30am. **Pat Andersen** decorated the tables beautifully. It was wonderful being back in the church again. Salud!*



Left: *Holy Week Organ Concert on April 11. The concert was attended by over 70 people from our church and the greater community.*

VOLUNTEERS GETTING THINGS DONE

BY Jennifer Molfetta, Church Administrator



Dean Paulsen repaired a gutter drain line next to the main entrance in the lower parking lot.



Leslie Cushman weeded and took out shrubs during our Annual Spring Cleanup on April 23.



Lynette Hunter and **Jude Van Buren** raked leaves, weeded and pruned shrubs around the church. **Mark Hunter** (not pictured) chopped down several shrubs and brought his trailer so we could haul all of the debris away.



Therese Sprunger spruced up the area around our sign on Capitol Way. Now the bulbs will shine!

30 YEAR HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY KITCHEN

BY Eleanor van Noppen

The Community Kitchen began 30 years ago at the home of Phil Tenkoff. Five Catholic workers came to stay with Phil and his family. They established the Bread and Roses shelter which still operates at its current 8th Ave SE location. The first meals were served in 1982.

As the need for more meals grew, the Kitchen moved to Columbia Street in 1987. Various churches took turns serving dinner. The Sojourners Group of United took a turn every month. The cooking, serving and cleanup of this meal was coordinated by Lee & Jo Johnson and Bill Edmundson. Other United members helped, served and cleaned up.

In 1990, Selena Kilmoyer of Bread of Roses took over the coordination between churches. The Kitchen moved to Cherry Street in order to be in a bigger facility. There was now room for an all-day Bread and Roses Advocacy Center.

In 2003, the lease on the Cherry Street facility lapsed so Catholic Community Services took over administration of the Kitchen. Every day, one hundred meals are now served out of the Salvation Army Kitchen at 5th Avenue and Plum Street. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served by various groups around the community.

About six years ago, **Jo** and **Lee Johnson** retired from the Kitchen. Barb McLean and **Bill Edmundson** continued to coordinate the dinners once a month for United for many years. We serve about 100 meals every 2nd Tuesday of the month. Many different United folks have volunteered for years at a time. Other Community Kitchen Organizers from United include: **Judy Mason, Therese Sprunger, and Deb & John Wallace.**

I started my volunteer work there and continue to help out at the Salvation Army. Some years at Christmas we give away much appreciated socks and small bags of dog food. Contact **Therese Sprunger** or call the Church Office if you interested in volunteering.

THURSTON HUNGER WALK

BY Judy Mason

It's COUNT DOWN TIME for The Thurston Hunger Walk. You are invited to join the United Church's Hunger Walk team leader, **Therese Sprunger**, at the Saint Martin's University track on **Sunday, May 1** at 2:45pm to walk in support of meals for our hungry neighbors. You don't have to pre-register. Just show up. Donations are way down compared to last year. The need is greater than ever due to how high the cost of food is due to inflation. Please [donate online here](#) or mail a check made out to and sent to the Thurston Hunger Walk at 220 Thurston Ave NE, Olympia, WA 98501. Ask your friends and neighbors to contribute as well. See what the Food Bank and Community Kitchen do with the monies generated by the Walk by viewing this video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NhlGj5oJ98>.

Love. Hope. United.

The United Churches of Olympia

<http://www.theunitedchurches.org>

Office phone: (360) 943-1210 Email: admin@theunitedchurches.org

Office Hours: Mon. - Thurs. 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Church Staff

| | |
|---|--|
| Rev. Lara Crutsinger-Perry, Co-Pastor | lara@theunitedchurches.org |
| Jane Appling, Rental & Events Coordinator | rentals@theunitedchurches.org |
| Aisha Bayness, Children's Program Coordinator | aisha@theunitedchurches.org |
| Severin Gardner, Media & Streaming Technician | media@theunitedchurches.org |
| Amanda Jones, Bookkeeper | bookkeeper@theunitedchurches.org |
| April Kuhr, Director of Music | april@theunitedchurches.org |
| Jennifer Molfetta, Church Administrator | jennifer@theunitedchurches.org |
| Jeremiah Sather, Media & Streaming Technician | |
| Johanna Scott, Childcare Assistant | |
| Rev. Paul McCann, Pastor Emeritus | |

Church Council Leaders

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Joan E. Knapp – Moderator | Pam Anderson – Clerk |
| Kathleen Clark – Vice Moderator | Jean Fuller – Treasurer |

Church Council Members

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Kerby Avedovech | Jinny Beekmann | Dave Carmer-Hall |
| Leslie Cushman | Jeff Hogan | Jen Laine |
| Char McMullen | Celia Nightingale | Jude Van Buren |



All are welcome at the United Churches regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, ability or finances. We hope you will find an opportunity to join us this week! Please email or call the church office for more information.

Come Worship with us on Sundays at 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.