



BROADVIEW COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

# STEEPLE NEWS

325 N. 125TH ST., SEATTLE WA 98133  
206-363-8060, FAX: 206-363-4791  
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Edited by Mary Mackenzie

## THE DUTY OF THANKFULNESS

Matthew 6:25-33 – “Consider the lilies...and birds of the air.”

by Rev. Dan Stern

I don't really know who the Christ-imposed duty of thankfulness does the most for, we who obviously have much to be thankful for, or those who must rummage around a bit to remember or to notice. Still, this dreamlike considering of the lilies, this perpetual giving of thanks in appreciation for God's everyday blessings is what Jesus calls us all to. We are to cast aside worries and notice beautiful, simple things—lilies of the field and birds of the air.

“To consider the lilies on a day of thanksgiving is to think about what we can learn from the fields, flowers, birds, and beasts of the earth.” It is important, however, that we not do this in an overly naïve manner. The word “consider” can also mean “to take care of.” To consider lilies might be to ponder how we could make better decisions if we keep the lilies in mind. We might ask, “How does the society we create affect the plants of the field and the birds of the air?” (Whole People of God commentary) Every day we are able to consider fewer and fewer species of birds and can smell diminishing varieties of lilies in fewer remaining unlogged - over forests and un-paved - over fields. Have we as Christians sufficiently taken seriously questions of threatened biodiversity and habitat restoration needs? Maybe you read of the hundreds of thousands of mis-migrating penguins, which showed up on the beaches of Rio de Janeiro due, apparently, to warming ocean currents. Apparently a number of these poor creatures have even been carried home by Brazilian city dwellers to try to make of them pets, threatening even more their survival. Of what do we need to repent in order that the oceans, fields and forests, and the creatures therein need not fear our presence? What do we need from political leaders to ensure their survival.

Surely we must ask such questions. Yet might there be a better approach than to worry about the lilies? In all kinds of challenging circumstances, Christ's simple words have brought comfort and gently admonished us: do not worry.

I was told once of a Scottish clergyman named Hallyburton who was one of those hardwired-to-worry types, whose mind, for all its saintliness, was pitched in a minor key. Suddenly, out of nowhere, glooms would settle on him like cold, clammy fog. A sense of unworthiness would rush his heart, doubts would mock him and his faith would fade. He was lost then, meandering in his mood. But in Hallyburton's memoirs, he tells how he discovered an unfailing remedy for such depressions. He writes, “I have found a law that always, even when at the lowest deeps, I can use to pull myself back in the sunshine: it is the duty of thankfulness.”

The duty of thankfulness. Every day, in all things, in all situations, all times and places, finding a way, with clarity and sincerity, to be thankful for something. Every day, a smile, a noticing of something simple, some bird, some flower, something. Do you duty!

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## **EXCERPT OF A SERMON ON GRATITUDE (for this church community)**

by Rev. Dan Stern

I feel so, so very grateful for this church, this community of fine people who come here week after week and who, beyond mere enlightened self-interest, give so deeply, who give even when it hurts, who work late at night painting quarter round and scraping tile, who sponsor refugees and arrange flowers, who protectively encircle Mosques and spend hours preparing church newsletters, who greet newcomers and sign petitions for peace, who go in person carrying godly grievances to congressional reps. . . . I am so grateful for you who contribute such meaning to my life when you show your appreciation for my gifts as well as when you encourage me to use my gifts a bit better. And when I am privileged to offer some small bit of pastoral care or solace to one of you, or when I have spread myself too thin and fail to meet some need, either way, you are nourishing and forgiving. And reminding me not to take my own self too seriously, you help me laugh it off and start over again. Thank You!

## **TENDING GOD'S LIGHT (POST-PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION)**

by Rev. Dan Stern

*"Choose this day who you will serve" – Joshua 24*  
*"Keep your lamps trimmed and burning." – Matthew 25*

Any of you happen to notice any widespread enthusiasm out and about last week? Now I know for a fact there are some, including some in my own extended family, who are not feeling so happy. I've actually been confronted by more persons than I expected who are apparently upset, and that saddens me greatly. But for the most part, though still in the midst of a scary, depressing economic meltdown, it has been a long, long time since the world as a whole has felt so momentarily hopeful and jubilant. Sometimes the world needs change so bad, we just have to grab hold of what hope we can, however "only symbolic", the hope may be. At least for the moment, it feels right that people get out into the streets and celebrate.

It's often implied in the Gospel stories of Jesus that the Kingdom of God is like a big party – like a wedding, like a street parade, like a pleasant stewardship dessert banquet, maybe, or like a grand thanksgiving celebration. I like such imagery a lot, but of course, most parties this side of a heavenly afterlife do get old. Perpetual partying hardly seems adequate to usher in the future we all dream

of. For hope to materialize into things more substantial – health care for everyone, enough shared renewable resources for the planet, and so on – we're going to need to stay rather disciplined; we're going to need to be attentive.

Why? Because (*Seasons Commentary*) "an untended life of faith runs the risk of smothering the God-given flame within." The life of faith is dimmed through inattention. Of course God would want us be attentive to a lot more than what America happens to call commander in chief. Where more than in a land presumably governed by the people, for the people, and of the people is it appropriate for faith-filled people to be ready, to keep our lamps trimmed and burning, and to choose this day whom we will serve? When and where could it possibly be more appropriate for us to diligently tend God's light than here and now?

I remember what a UCC pastoral colleague of mine Talitha Arnold, once asked the longtime editor of the *Christian Century*, Martin Marty. Talitha was then pasturing a UCC congregation in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She was having a hard time navigating Santa Fe's famed new-agginess, feeling here little congregation was forever being marginalized and dismissed by shallow, spoiled spiritual dilettantes. She wanted to be able to unabashedly affirm her UCC faith heritage to the same degree that Joshua did when he said, surrounded by peoples who affirmed other gods, 'as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord'. But Talitha also knew she wanted, she had to affirm her faith in a way that did not damn other faiths. So she asked Martin Marty how to do that, and he replied, "You say you're from the United Church of Christ?"

You have the blood of the puritans in you! Claim your heritage! If you go deep enough into any faith tradition, you find the common ground with all other (deep) traditions. What we are all seeking is that common ground. But we have to go deep into our own tradition to find it." I like what public radio historian-humorist Sarah Vowell's says in her new book, *The Wordy Shipmates*, "Think the Puritans were all straight laced seriousness and tight buckles? Think again," says Vowell. Ever since the arrival of the Puritans in 1630, we have done a terrific job of misunderstanding them. They were not stupid. I do point out that they did and said and believed a lot of unreasonable things, which kind of goes with the territory of being born before the Age of Reason. But the colonists of Massachusetts Bay were fiercely intellectual, obsessed

**Continued on pg. 3**

## **Continued from pg. 2**

with knowledge and learning and books and thinkers and thought. They had barely finished nailing together their rickety cabins before they got cracking on building Harvard so their sons—especially their future ministers—could become fluent in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.” The point is this: don’t be embarrassed about proclaiming your own faith. Choose this day whom you will serve. So many great religious leaders, from Bishop Tutu to the Dalai Lama have said the same kind of thing: go deep; find common ground!

At this very first time in history in which we the people have chosen to elect a bright young multiracial President, I believe God calls us to tend the light of encouragement, to be supportive of new leadership, but at the same time, to insist that new leaders truly lead in paths of truth and light. We need, in other words, to keep our lamps trimmed, to stay alert, and of course, to ever give attention to that which is the light’s source, which is God.

How are we to do this? What Christian practices nourish and sustain your faith? How are we to not burn out, to stay with it for the long haul, to keep the light lit? How do you do it? What spiritual disciplines make a difference to you? Whatever the individual specifics, sustaining the faith happens best when people of faith keep lamps trimmed and burning locally, in their own tried and true faith communities. We have to diligently tend the light God has entrusted us with right here at Broadview Church.

as we prayerfully deliver our pledges this month, our annual statements of intention for the coming year, let us be conscious of how much it all matters that through thick and thin, through dark nights and long delays, we will keep on tending God’s light here at Broadview.

## **GIVING THANKS**

by Mary Mackenzie

A year ago, an event that would rock my perception of life took place; my father nearly lost his life to a life-threatening illness. This incident has caused me to put life in perspective and to think long and hard about what is most important in my life. Even the little things have taken on more meaning. More importantly the year’s events have caused me to grow closer to God, and my family. Every day, I wake up and thank God, for the gift of life, and for my family. I now realize just how vulnerable we all are, and how fragile life really is.

The changing of the seasons, for me, is a great time to reflect and give thanks for all that we have, and for all that we are given. I am very thankful to work for you all here at Broadview Community United Church of Christ. Over the last three and a half years, I have enjoyed getting to know you all as a community and spending some time with you most second Sunday’s and at other times. I also am thankful for Pastor Dan, he’s great to work for, and very understanding. He is truly all that a good pastor should be.

Finally, this Church, Broadview Community United Church of Christ, has many things to be thankful for. You have received seven new members in the last couple of months, which is wonderful, especially when around the city, and the country, church attendance is down in all ‘mainstream’ churches. As an outsider, I admire your ability to become a close-knit church community. You do this better than most churches I have been a part of. While, I admit the economy leaves something to be desired, and we are now in the fifth year of a war, the most important thing is something no one can take away: we have each other. You have friendship, community and a church family.

I highly recommend taking time out of your busy lives, to take a minute to take stock of all that you have and give thanks for this. Even during our difficult times, we should be thankful that all that has been given to us. This can do wonders to our psyche.

## **FROM A CALL TO WORSHIP**

**November 2, 2008**

God is our focus;  
Not our hopes, fears, joys or tears,  
but only God.

God is our hope and joy,  
our source and our goal.

As we assemble here, from the east and the west,  
the north and the south,

O give thanks to God, who is always good,  
whose steadfast love endures for ever!

Let all redeemed sing their praise together,  
for God turned desert experiences into pools of water,  
and made parched souls become like springs of living water.

God is our hope and our joy,  
our source and our goal.

## FOR SLOW LEARNERS

### Matthew 23:1-12

by B.D. Prewer

Call no man Sir,  
call no man Master  
all pomp and power  
are sure disaster.

All pride's a load  
the meek disdain,  
riches the price  
the poor find vain.

The best of seats  
are grabbed by frauds,  
they are condemned  
by their own words.

Too late they learn  
that power is weak  
too late they find  
that gain is bleak.

All virtues worn  
on proud display  
are best ignored  
by those who pray.

The truly great  
are always least,  
they come to eat  
the simplest Feast.

## COMMUNION BREAD

Submitted by Christy Qualin

Our monthly communion loaf is donated by the *Grateful Bread* in Wedgwood. They also have donated scone bites in the past.

Established in 1996, The Grateful Bread continues to serve and thrive as an independent community based bakery and café.

They offer homemade bagels, bread, pastries, cookies, pies, and more baked fresh daily.

A lunch menu with a variety of homemade soups, salads, sandwiches, paninis, and more is available after 10:30 am!

They have a variety of beverages, from espresso to real fruit smoothies.

Organic milk and fair-trade coffee are also available. Pre-Orders for Fall and Winter Holidays. Dine in or take it to go. All challah on Fridays!

In addition, they have a complementary Wi-Fi internet hotspot.

The Grateful Bread is located at 7001 35<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE in Wedgwood, Seattle.

Hours: M-F 7am-7pm, Sat 7:30am-6pm, Sun 8am-6pm.

Phone: 206-525-3166

## BIRTHDAY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2008

### November

|                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| John Witmer       | 11/2  |
| Jo Royal          | 11/8  |
| Byron Scott       | 11/9  |
| Kathleen Lundt    | 11/12 |
| Laurie Ford       | 11/17 |
| Gail Williams     | 11/19 |
| Lisa Johnson Hill | 11/22 |
| Chris Hylander    | 11/23 |
| Marj Lindsay      | 11/25 |
| Andrew Estep      | 11/26 |

### December

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| Thea Ward          | 12/5  |
| Tom Ward           | 12/5  |
| Chris Foss         | 12/8  |
| Sally Middendorf   | 12/10 |
| Lin Takahashi      | 12/11 |
| Maxine Manning     | 12/12 |
| Tracy Studyvin     | 12/13 |
| Bill Norton        | 12/15 |
| Lois Selmar        | 12/15 |
| Giovanni English   | 12/20 |
| Christie Dickerson | 12/25 |
| Dan Stern          | 12/29 |

## READINGS NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2008

### November

November 16, 2008

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Extravagant Opportunity

Judges 4:1-7; Psalm 123

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:14-30

November 23, 2008

Reign of Christ/28<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Reigning Compassion

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24; Psalm 100

Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:31-46

November 30, 2008  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Where Are You, God?  
Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19  
1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

## **December**

December 7, 2008  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Messengers of Hope  
Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13  
2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

December 14, 2008  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Shouts of Joy  
Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 21, 2008 – *Children's Christmas Pageant!!*  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Birthing a Promise  
2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:47-55  
Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

December 28m 2008  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas:  
Long-Awaited Gift  
Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148  
Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40  
Or Epiphany Readings:  
Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14  
Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

## **BARACK OBAMA, 20-YEAR UCC MEMBER, ELECTED U.S. PRESIDENT**

by Gregg Brekke,  
November 5, 2008  
Taken from: <http://www.ucc.org/news/barack-obama-20-year-ucc.html>

Televised political pundits began to concede victory to Sen. Barack Obama in the 2008 U.S. presidential election as Ohio and Pennsylvania, crucial "swing" states for both candidates, were won by the democrat from Illinois.

The 10pm predictions came to fruition as the west-coast states of Washington, Oregon and California – with a combined 73 electoral votes – all endorsed Obama.

Obama's relationships with the UCC came to light nationally as unflattering video clips from his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright – pastor emeritus of

Chicago's Trinity UCC, circulated on the internet in early 2008.

Wright's sometimes fiery calls for national repentance and political change were removed from their contexts and compiled into a montage that portrayed his preaching as anti-American.

Obama made a faith commitment at, and had been a member of, Chicago's Trinity UCC for 20 years, prior to withdrawing his membership from the church on May 31 of this year.

The Rev. John Thomas, general minister and president of the UCC, noted of this departure:

"We recognize that this has been a difficult, painful decision for the Obamas – and a deeply personal one. It is also sad news for many members of the UCC, who grieve when anyone chooses to leave our fellowship, especially under such public and painful circumstances."

Thomas offered the UCC's continued pastoral support to the Obama family, and to the pastors and members of Trinity UCC.

Prior to this falling-out, Obama addressed nearly 10,000 fellow UCC members at the denomination's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary General Synod in June 2007. Obama's keynote speech triggered a tax-status inquiry by the Internal Revenue Service, which eventually concluded that the church did nothing wrong and that Obama's appearance was compliant with IRS guidelines.

Earlier in 2007, Obama addressed the UCC's Iowa Conference annual meeting and attended several UCC congregations during his bid for the Democratic nomination.

In his concession speech, Sen. John McCain congratulated Obama and offered his support to Obama's presidency. "I pledge to him tonight to do all in my power to help him lead us through the many challenges we face," he said.

He continued, "Today, I was a candidate for the highest office in the country I love so much, and tonight, I remain her servant."

McCain has self-identified as a member of the Episcopal church but now attends a Southern Baptist church.

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325 N. 125<sup>th</sup> St.  
Seattle, WA 98155

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### **ENTER THE COOL CONGREGATIONS COMPETITION**

Interfaith Power & Light is offering \$10,000 in prizes (\$5,000 for the congregation with the lowest overall emissions per congregant and \$5,000 for the biggest carbon loser - the congregation that has shrunk its footprint the most). If your congregation wants to take part in the contest, you'll need to use the calculator to measure your carbon footprint between now and December 31, 2008. To check out the web site and for the full list of rules see:

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

### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Congratulations to Terri Toennesen and Jo Royal who were legally married on November 1, 2008 in Palm Springs, CA. Friends and family were in attendance.

### **THANKSGIVING EVE SERVICE**

There will be a joint Thanksgiving Eve Service at Luther Memorial Church, held at 7pm. BCUCC Choir members are encouraged to join the joint choir. Contact BCUCC Office for more information.

### **SHAREHOUSE**

**November:** Blankets and linens

**December:** Laundry detergent and disposable diapers  
For more information contact Lin Takahashi.