



THE CIRCUIT RIDER

PORTLAND FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 1838 SW JEFFERSON, PORTLAND, OR 97201

June 24, 2009
Volume 13, Issue 13

UPCOMING EVENTS

**SUNDAY,
JUNE 28**
All-Church Conference
Profiles in Service Forum

**SUNDAY,
JULY 12**
Pastors on Preaching
Adult Class Begins

**SUNDAY,
JULY 19**
Ending Torture Forum

As a Reconciling
Congregation,
members of
First United
Methodist Church
have pledged to
welcome and support
all who want to worship
with us, regardless of
race, gender, class or
sexual orientation.

LIVING A VIBRANT FAITH

BELIEVING THINKING ACTING

First United Methodist Church
THE REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON

L

eadership RESTRUCTURING

ALL-CHURCH CONFERENCE

Our All Church Conference will be June 28, 2009 in the Fireside Room, following worship. At this Church Conference we will act on the Leadership Restructuring task group's report to consider a new design for our congregation's leadership and elect leadership for the new year.

PROFILES IN SERVICE



PROFILES IN SERVICE FORUM SERIES

On Sunday, June 28, 2009, come learn about the inspiring efforts of the people that make up our church at the next Profiles in Service Forum. The forum will take place in the Fireside Room, following the All-Church Conference. A light lunch and child care will be provided.

Bill Birge has shown great dedication and taken significant responsibility at Good Samaritan Hospital and the Cancer Center. **Janice Gratton** has made important strides toward ensuring adequate care for children's behavioral health throughout Oregon. **Ben Owre** has worked tirelessly through a life of service. He currently counsels seniors who have been victims of abuse through "Elders in Action," a program of the Portland Police Department.



memo

Rev. Dr. Arvin R. Luchs

This could get interesting! The outcome is far from certain. It's meaning unclear.

General Conference is our denomination's highest authority. Only they can amend the *Discipline* (our collection of organization and policy), only they can propose amendments to our churches' constitution. (Our "Articles of Religion" are immutable!)

The Conference meets only every four years to consider thousands of proposals for changes and adjustments in what we do and how we do it. Generally, there are many *Disciplinary* changes and resolutions—and a handful of constitutional amendments. Those must be referred to the Annual Conferences—both here and abroad—and be endorsed by 2/3 vote. Last year's General Conference sent Annual Conferences 32 amendments to consider. Results are trickling in as the areas convene at various times from late May through July.

A big vision captured much of the attention of the General Conference—the nature of our church as a global community. Since our inception—in colonial days—Methodism has reflected a Wesleyan take on American values and issues. That may have sufficed over the decades we were almost exclusively a domestic church with U.S. based missionary outreach.

Alas, all that has changed. The growth of United Methodist members internationally is eclipsing the (now) slowly diminishing membership in the States. New conferences have been organized not only in Africa and the South Pacific (where we've served for years) but also in Eastern Europe, Russia and Cambodia. Strong and effective indigenous leadership is challenging the "American captivity" of theological discussion and missional activities.

The last General Conference set about making changes to reflect the new realities. With the leading of our Council of Bishops, what emerged was a grand vision of an global network of "Regional Conferences" under a differently constituted "General Conference." Proponents believe such an organization could respond more effectively to diverse cultural, political and religious issues affecting UM congregations in their part of the world. The U.S. church—currently nearly 70 conferences in 5 Jurisdictions—would be just one of the Global Conferences.

To effect such a sweeping re-organization required both *Disciplinary* changes and constitutional amendments. They are among the 32 proposed amendments fully 23 are part of the global vision. The Oregon-Idaho Conference endorsed most of the proposed amendments—and all of the "Global" ones.

That does not seem to be the case with other Annual Conferences—particularly in the US south and south-east where many of the "Global" amendments experienced resounding defeat! Reading arguments from opponents it seems their concerns are that a U.S.-based Regional Conference would change the balance of power and open doors of inclusion they have been fighting for decades to bar.

The issues are important. Whether the will of General Conference will prevail or not will not be known for a while. Even more unclear (since the proposals are part of an interconnected passage) is what it will mean if some of the amendments prevail while others fail.

Three of the gospels remember Jesus saying that new wine needs new wineskins. (cf Matthew 9:17). Many of us believe that we cannot effect real change in our mission and our effectiveness without a significant reformation of our organization. Will that happen? Right now, nobody knows—but it's worth watching!

See you in Church!

Arvin

adults at first

sunday morning classes

FELLOWSHIP OF SEEKERS:

The Fellowship of Seekers class has decided to have a summer vacation. We will meet again in September and study the Book of Job with guidance by David Hester's book, *Job*, published in the Interpretation Bible Series.

STREAMS OF LIVING WATER: WHAT DOES ECUMENISM LOOK LIKE IN 2009?

The class meets each Sunday at 9:15 AM in the Fireside Room.

June 28

Ecumenism & Interfaith Realities: Developing a Faith In the 21st Century

PASTORS, PREACHING, PULPITS, AND THE PEOPLE: SERMONS FROM START TO FINISH

All classes will take place from 9:15 to 10:15 AM in the Fireside Room.

What's the art of preaching all about? How are sermons prepared? How do preachers choose their scripture readings, select which illustrations and stories to use, determine what topics to preach on at a given time and place? What are some of their favorite Bible passages ... favorite sermons ... and most difficult moments in the pulpit? What are the joys and challenges of sharing one's faith and teaching the messages of the Bible to others in a public setting?

First Church is blessed to have a number of ministers, who have years of experience as preachers. Come to this series of classes and learn more about the joys and challenges of preaching and communicating matters of faith with a congregation.

July 12	Rev. Ray Balcomb
July 19	Rev. Lowell Greathouse
July 26	Rev. Arvin Luchs
August 2	Rev. Al Rieke
August 9	Rev. Ross Miller
August 16	Rev. Tom Foster

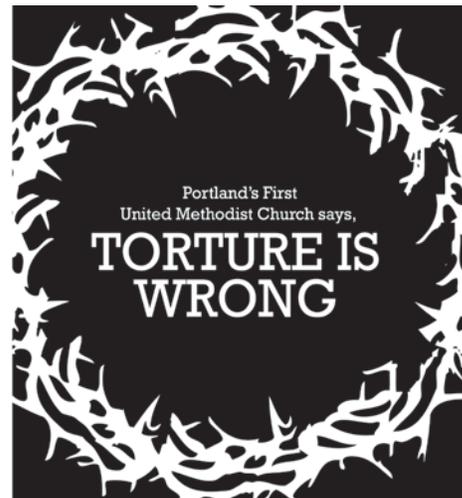
a forum at first

ending torture

JULY 19

FORUM ON ENDING TORTURE

On Sunday, July 19, the Church and Society Committee is sponsoring this one-hour forum, in which Sarah Goff and Kevin Finney from Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon will share an 18-minute video from the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, lead a discussion about the ethics of torture, and give updates on the anti-torture advocacy that's happening across the United States. This forum will be held in the Fireside Room beginning at noon. A light lunch will be provided and child care available.



We are pleased that Sarah Goff, a 2008 church intern, is now working with Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon on the campaign to end torture. For more info on the campaign to end torture go to www.nrca.org.

palestine christians

a call for reconciliation

A PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN CRY FOR RECONCILIATION

Most of the world has responded with renewed hope to President Obama's call for reconciliation between Judeo-Christian and Muslim societies, particularly in Palestine/Israel. In doing so, the President closely echoed the language and message of Naim Ateek's latest book: *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*. The message is not new. As a prominent leader of the small but faithful Christian community in Palestine, the Rev Ateek (Palestinian Episcopal Canon and founder of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem) has preached and practiced reconciliation with his Jewish and Muslim neighbors for sixty years.

Join Friends of Sabeel for a timely free lecture and conversation about the current state of Palestinian-Israel relations, the role of the Christian community, and the cry for reconciliation. This event will be Thursday, July 16, 2009 at Portland's First UMC at 7:30 PM.

Prior to the free public lecture, there will be a Middle Eastern dinner/fund raiser at 5:30 PM. The cost is \$50.00. Tickets can be purchased by calling: 503/653-6625.

the edge

thoughts
for the journey

Lowell Greathouse, Minister of Discipleship

Words are important. They shape our lives and are the lifeblood that frames our reality. Words ... and phrases explain what we see ... and don't see ... they inspire discourage and judge. They express our deepest feelings. Words are the building blocks to the stories that are passed on from one generation to the next. Words quickly become phrases, and they fill our world with various points of view, specific pitches, and inspirational thoughts.... When words become phrases, we find them on billboards, Starbucks coffee cups, and on all kinds of websites. One of my daughters recently shared a series of quotes with me from the Story People website. One of the "favorite quotes" that caught my attention said: "I once had a garden filled with flowers that grew only on dark thoughts, but they need constant attention and one day I decided I had better things to do."

(www.storypeople.com)

church library

learn and grow

CHECK IT OUT

Especially for young readers, check out the worldwide best seller, *Three Cups of Tea*. It has been adapted and updated to bring Greg Mortenson's remarkable story to life with new photos and illustrations, and more surprises!

Marilynne Robinson's beautiful new novel, *Home*, is a companion piece to her Pulitzer Prize-winning *Gilead*. It is an elegant variation on the parable of the prodigal son's return focusing here on the relationship between a long estranged brother and sister who return home to care for their dying father.

Both books are available in the church library.

music appreciation

fond farewells to
two first church musicians

Sojourn Breneiser and Anna Viemeister

We are sorry to have two of our choral musicians leave us to move on to other phases of their life.

Sojourn Breneiser, our bass soloist/section leader will be leaving as of July 5, 2009. We have enjoyed his presence and leadership in the Chancel Choir, and his solos both during the offertory and recently in the Haydn, *Lord Nelson Mass*. He has been with us for five years. He is leaving to pursue his work both in sales with St. Maly, as well as his own private business.

Anna Viemeister has served as one of our music interns for the past four years. Her vocal leadership in the alto section of the Chancel Choir and her bubbling personality will be missed by us all. Anna graduated this spring from Portland State University and has been accepted by the Manhattan School of Music for her graduate study this fall.

We wish both of these fine people the very best in their endeavors and hope that they will return to First Church to visit whenever possible.

church interns

servicing our community
and world

Colin Jennings and Alex Wade

We are pleased to announce that this year's First Church community interns are Colin Jennings and Alex Wade.

Colin will be working on health care issues through The Archimedes Movement and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

Alex will be working with Project Summer: Summer Food Service Program through the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force and the Multnomah County Commission on Children and Families.

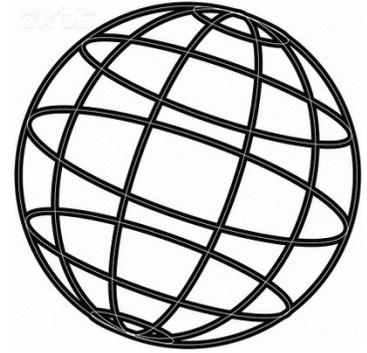
For over 25 years, our congregation has placed interns in a variety of settings to help make our community better. Congratulations to Colin and Alex on their selection!





SPOTLIGHT

CLARA BISWAS
in Cambodia



GETTING TO KNOW OUR COVENANT MISSIONARY: CLARA BISWAS

by Colleen Foster, for Global Missions Committee

Clara's service in Cambodia is unique, to say the least. Just imagine, in a very hot climate, heading to work through Phnom Penh's sprawling slums and arriving at the edge of one of the city's immense garbage dumps. There you find families with children fanning out from their lean-to shelters to "harvest" whatever is usable or whatever can be sold among the refuse. For the poorest of the poor, this is not only a way of life; it is a matter of simple subsistence.

So just what is Ms. Biswas mission? "To bring hope to the hopeless, bring light to those who are in the dark, bring Christ to the poor, and share the love of God." (Luke 4:18-19) Her objective is to share the love of God, wherever she goes. Her goals include:

- 1) Education programs for children to train them for jobs to address their poverty
- 2) Improving living conditions, and providing medical care for those who are ill
- 3) Creating awareness of issues such as human trafficking, human rights, and domestic violence

The education program of the Cambodian mission supports some 620 children in public schools and enhances their learning through classes such as music, computer work, and art. The health program refers patients to hospitals and non-government organizations (NGO) health centers. Clara not only works closely with families in need, but networks with other church and NGOs for scholarships, financial assistance (especially for those needing health care), and helping move people from garbage dump living to relocation and rehabilitation centers.

Clara's enthusiasm and dedication cannot be overstated. Prior to her commission as a General Board of Global Missions (GBGM) missionary, she worked among lower caste people in Bangladesh, and also with students in Sendai, Japan. Her emphasis is upon issues of justice, development, international understanding, worship, and equality, from a Christian perspective. Incidentally, she speaks no less than four languages: English, Bengali, Hindi, and Japanese.

Quoting Clara (abridged): "When people get jobs and are able to continue toward study in higher education, they gain hope for a better future. It is joyful to watch the faces of happy children as they go places they had never gone before." Clara works closely with a church at one of the dump sites; there, and elsewhere, programs for children include Sunday School and Christmas and Easter programs. Clara continues, "Although we bring the Gospel informally, we see the joy of children singing Gospel songs and performing in dramas depicting Christmas and Easter."

Portland First UMC is most fortunate to be in our fourth year in Covenant with Clara Biswas. Further information is available through Dee Poujade. Contact Dee at: travelingmimi@gmail.com.

THE SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

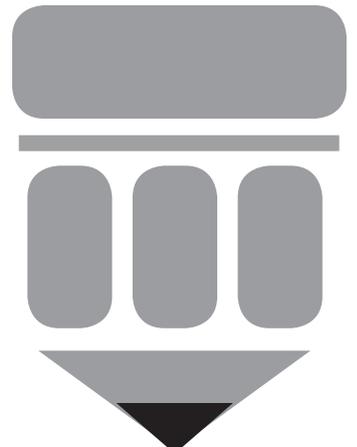
Both men and women are invited to the nearest School of Christian Mission Studies at George Fox University, Newberg on July 15-19, 2009. You can enroll for either two or four days, as an overnight attendee or a commuter.

The three themes, all very relevant today, are:

- 1.) *The Sudan*
- 2.) *Native American Survival*
- 3.) *Food and Faith*

Choose the study that is best for you. The course, Native American Survival, will be taught by First Church's own Cheryl Bittle.

Registrations are now being accepted until July 1st. Call Melba Rizzo or Trudy Kayser for a registration form. Scholarships are available.



Publication Deadlines

Articles for The Circuit Rider are due no later than 10:00 AM on the Thursday before publication the following Wednesday. The next Circuit Rider will be published on July 8, 2009.

Bulletin insert information

is due no later than 4:45 pm on **Wednesday**.

Sunday service participant

information for the Sunday bulletin is due no later than noon on **Wednesday**.

E-mail:

office@fumcpdx.org

The Circuit Rider Online or by E-Mail

See the latest and past issues of **The Circuit Rider** in color at <http://www.fumcpdx.org/newsletter>

The Circuit Rider can be e-mailed to you. E-mail the church office at office@fumcpdx.org to request it by e-mail.

our prayers

prayers and concerns

PRAYERS OF CONCERN FOR ...

The Rev. Dr. Raymond Balcomb, who is in rehab recovering from a recent stroke ...

Moima Doe, who will be having a hip replacement ...

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING FOR ...

Peter Connor & Peiling Hsu, on the birth of *Benjamin Leroy Connor*, born in Louisville, KY on April 20, 2009. The proud grandparents are Bill and Sonja Connor ...

CONTINUED PRAYERS FOR ...

Allen Dobbins, Lyle Iverson ...

PRAYERS FOR THOSE SERVING IN THE MILITARY ABROAD ...

Karl Alger, Jared Bomberger, Daniel Bomberger, Ian Kalgren, Steven Johnson, and Michael Panck

thanksgiving

expressing our gratitude

FROM THE HOWARDS

We want to thank you for your prayers and support during Carol's cancer treatment. Your kindness helped us through a difficult time. - *Hal & Carol Howard*



In our
thoughts
& prayers