



The Vine

CHURCH WOMEN UNITED OF LANE COUNTY

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cwulanecounty.org

CWU MISSION:

Celebrating unity in diversity
And empowering women
To work towards peace and justice

UPCOMING EVENTS

JUNE 2023

June 17 First United Methodist Church
Saturday 1376 Olive St.
10:00 Coffee and Fellowship
10:30 Forum with Sunrise Eugene



Don't Miss Our June Forum:
Eugene Climate Activists Give Us
Our Marching Orders

Saturday, June 17 at First United Methodist Church in Eugene, Church Women United welcomes high school students ready to enlighten us on pressing concerns for our ever-warming planet. Come at 10 for coffee and a chat. Sunrise Eugene kicks off their program at 10:30. You will walk away with a plan for how you can support these young folks as they demand we mitigate climate change NOW!

If you're not able to be with us in person, hop onto Zoom: Meeting ID: 882 3954 5095

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88239545095>

Or attend over the phone: Dial 1 (253) 215-8782 and enter the meeting ID shown above. You will not be asked for a password. Call President Anne O'Brien at her cell if you have questions: (541) 554-2646, See you there!

WITH AN EYE ON SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

Summer's just beginning but if you have your eye on Autumn, it's not too early to circle these dates on your calendar: Saturday, September 9 and Saturday, October 7. Grab a friend and come along. You won't want to miss these terrific Saturday forums. We continue our 2023 deep dive into the challenges presented by climate change. Guests for those events and locations are not yet confirmed. What we CAN tell you is that young members of our community will lead the way, both days. Your September issue of The Vine will enlighten you. Watch this space! Save these dates and make a commitment to do your part for our threatened planet.

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A REMINDER NOT TO FORGET
In the words of Truman Capote,
"I remember things the way they
should have been."
Ah, yes, there's always that . . .

But on a simpler note, if sending your annual donation to Church Women United has been on your to-do list for a while, now is a great time to cross it off. Send your check to Treasurer Nancy Vrijmoet, 42091 McKenzie Highway, Springfield, OR 97478. All contributions, large or small, are welcome. We haven't forgotten YOU!

You do remember Mr. Capote, don't you? But did you know that he was the inspiration for the character "Dill" in To Kill a Mockingbird? Turns out Truman and Harper Lee were childhood friends.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Anne O'Brien

On June 3, Church Women United of Lane County participated in the Wear Orange event put on by Moms Demand Action. We have partnered with them to work on supporting gun sense. We join this passionate group to find a solution for the gun violence we see so often these days.

Once again Marilyn LaRivierre, former president of CWU National inspires me with a quote. She says, "So whatever you are passionate about why not share it? Who knows - maybe you will inspire someone else!"



LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,
I'm just one person out of billions on earth. Surrounded by powerful forces in government, business, and society, I often feel totally powerless and insignificant. My temptation is to simply fall into a comfortable routine and try my best to be happy. But I know that's not right. I also know that you are all powerful, much greater than any group or institution in the world. Someone has said that God plus one makes a majority, and I want to be that one. You have given me talents, gifts, and abilities to invest wisely for you. I want to use them to truly make a difference, even if that means one person at a time—nothing grand—just you and me working together to change lives. You said that someone with faith as small as a mustard seed could move mountains. I want to change the world, beginning here, with me. Amen. Tecarta.com

MAY CELEBRATION: 2023 FRIENDSHIP DAY

Charlotte Maloney

On Saturday, May 6th we met at United Lutheran Church, Eugene, continuing at our new time of 10:00 for fellowship before the annual May Friendship Day Celebration. We gathered over coffee, tea, and an array of treats organized by Eunice Kjaer.

Our lovely program handout was designed by Nancy Vrijmoet. Plus, everyone in attendance also received a handout about Mental Health Awareness month from CWU National office for each of us to be mindful of practices of "self care."

Nancy Anderson played all our songs beautifully beginning with a prelude "They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love," as we entered the beautiful sanctuary. She continued throughout until the closing song "Let There Be Peace On Earth." Our President, Anne O'Brien, called us to order and introduced Pastoral Intern Dan O'Brien. His Words of Welcome and Prayer, were followed by Nancy Vrijmoet reading the Land Acknowledgement. Then our selections from the program written by the CWU Celebrations Committee, "Labor with Love- A Heart to Care" were read.

Our Northwest Regional Coordinator, April Avery, spoke briefly about the celebration theme. She also shared a change. The only other Oregon CWU unit will close in June.



We were then inspired by the presentation by Eileen Sigler, Resource Development Director at Pearl Buck Center. She described their services and programs which help families of parents with intellectual disabilities.

Eileen showed us what our Summer Fun Fund donation to their preschool program purchased last summer.

Next we awarded JoAnne Arnold the Valiant Woman Award. She has served our CWU unit, her family, and her faith community well her whole life.

We enjoyed the readings and prayers by Phyllis Hockley, JoAnne Arnold, April Avery, Diane Beuerman, and Katharine Hunt from Opening Prayer, a Litany, the Fourth Quadrennial Priority to Poverty and Hunger (including actions our unit has taken to address this priority), through Sending Forth Prayer.

Twenty four attended in-person and 6 on Zoom, including 2 members of national CWU: Rev. Lillie Holman, CWU Spiritual Formation Director, and Cathy Smith, Midwest Regional Director. The recording of the celebration is on our website.



**VALIANT WOMAN AWARD
By Anne O'Brien**

**We proudly presented
our Valiant Woman award
to JoAnne Arnold
of Central Presbyterian,
at our May Friendship Celebration.**

Here is a brief bio:

Jo Anne Arnold was born in Boise, Idaho on August 20, 1933, the 4th of 5 siblings.

She was a good student and active in school clubs and played field hockey. She also worked after school.

JoAnne attended Boise Junior College and College of Idaho and later, McCormick Theological Seminary for 2 years. After completion of seminary she worked in campus ministry in the Chicago area for a school year then went to Holland and Europe for a long summer of work abroad program.

She was hired to work at First Presbyterian Church of Pendleton, Oregon for 2 years. She was married and moved to Eugene in 1963. There she joined Central Presbyterian Church and worked at The Koinonia Center at the University of Oregon and later worked at Central Presbyterian.

She worked in Youth Ministry- Child care for migrant workers.

She was also an active home maker and worked for Weight Watchers as lecturer.

JoAnne went back to school for a masters in Gerontology in 1980.

She worked for the State of Oregon Child Protective Services.

Her special Interests include:

Gardening and staying active in local bird watching groups.

She's been a long standing Book Group member and a member of the Hardy Plant Society.

She has been an active participant in:

CALC

FISH

Church Women United

World Without War

Sanctuary Program for Central American refugees

We appreciate all that she does to keep us connected to First Presbyterian in Eugene and we proudly present her with this Valiant woman award for 2023.



STICKING WITH LOVE
HATE TOO GREAT A BURDEN
TO BEAR
Naphtali Renshaw

I've spent a lot of my life angry at God.

That is probably a strange way to open an article for a religious publishing— especially as a guest writer— especially as a guest writer who also makes a living working with churches. So, before I get myself into more trouble than I planned, allow me to explain.

I have spent a lot of my life angry at God. Not the real God, but the one fabricated in my mind from the time I was a small child— in all likelihood planted deep within my soul by well-meaning adults who were also secretly angry and/or scared of God.

The God of my childhood hated disobedience and lying and too many tears. Since God was “our Father,” I always pictured him as somewhat like my own father. Once I could no longer dismiss my human father’s profound humanity, God started to fall apart; and, I started to recognize my anger towards him.

God isn’t supposed to be fallible, but mine was— and then, God was awful. God hated everyone: Muslims and liberals and women who had abortions and queer people and people who didn’t love him enough... I’m condensing for the sake of time and space, but, somewhere along the way, I decided that the God I had been trying to please since childhood was exhausting. Today, I would argue that that particular God doesn’t exist anywhere other than in people’s imaginations.

In the words of Dr. King, “I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.”

God is Love. Oddly enough, this statement challenges my theology; not because I question the identity of God, but because I am still trying to figure out what love looks like, boots on the ground.

Last year, drag queen pastor, Isaac Simmons/ Ms. Penny Cost dropped a spoken word video entitled, “The Bible is... Nothing.” The work is laced with profanity and raw emotion, and Simmons not only critiques a gospel that is leveraged against marginalized communities, but the relevance and reality of the God who allows it.

Years ago, while preaching, Dr. Tony Campolo stated, “First, while you were sleeping last night, 30,000 kids died of starvation or diseases related to malnutrition. Second, most of you don’t give a s***. What’s worse is that you’re more upset with the fact that I said s*** than the fact that 30,000 kids died last night.”

Nearly 500 bills have been introduced attacking LGBTQIA2S+ rights in the United States. Seven of those bills are in Oregon. The majority of the proposed legislation across the country specifically targets queer children and young adults. This May, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed Senate Bill 1580, dubbed the “Let Them Die Act,” allowing healthcare providers and private insurers, including first responders, to refuse healthcare based on personal convictions. Queer rights advocates fear that the bill will be leveraged against the LGBTQ community, but in truth, kids have already died by suicide because their humanity is on the line every time a new bill is introduced. Kids are dying, and I’m out of polite words.

Last year, Eugene Pride Co-Vice President, Marlie Heberling issued an invitation to local congregations:

“Will you do more than share posts, or buy merchandise, or attend our gatherings? We need more than moral support. We need active allies. Will you stand with us against the hate groups?”

I’m paraphrasing the invitation, but if we’re being honest, even progressive Christian congregations know that the church is a lot better at virtue signaling repentance than walking into the fire that the church is largely and historically responsible for lighting. Coming from this tradition, when I think about Jesus, I think about how he lived his life invitationally: “Come, eat; Come, drink; Come, follow Me.” Always an invitation to press into the great mystery of abundance found deep in the intentional margins of society.

I believe that the God Who Is Love and Mystery mingled together still issues the same invitation. For me, I hear the invitation best when it comes from the people Jesus loved to hang out with— those that society had pushed out and lied about and said that God was angry with. As we enter the month where we are invited to celebrate the diversity of God’s kin-dom with our queer siblings, I encourage you to listen well.

To start you off, I invite you to watch for a series of “Pride Neighborly Workshops” sponsored by Eugene Pride and the BeLonging Space as well as opportunities to engage in and support the new “Faith & Spirituality” center at Eugene Pride.



NOTICING THE MANY SHADES OF GREEN

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From *Nature Notes: Stories and Reflections on Creation as
Companion to the Interior Life* (2023)

Sitting high in the back of the bus heading up to the McKenzie River Ranger Station, I savor a picture-window view of morning sky to the east and north.

A thin marine overcast evaporates as morning summer sun climbs into the new day.

From my perch I watch increasing swaths of greenery pass by as we transition from concrete strip malls and blacktop parking lots into the lush rural McKenzie Valley, dotted with holly farms, blueberry farms, filbert orchards, ponies, llamas, and sheep.

Early morning sunlight dapples the ground, now, through leafy canopies of every sort. Birch, bigleaf maple, front yard plum and pear trees, side yard apple and cherry trees, all pass rapidly outside my bus window. All of it, a pleasing wash of green.

But which green? I ask myself.

Well, I lean with full attention toward the window as the bus gains speed in the open stretch of highway. The blur of green, I notice, reveals nuances, even as we *whoosh along at 55 miles per hour.*

I see shimmering early-summer green, cool understory green, the dense green of this tightly planted hazelnut orchard.

I see the cool dark green of backlit leaves of maple canopy, the dark leathery green of Oregon white oak.

I see grass green, still sparkling with diamond-like beads of dew. The green of ground cover flecked with the yellows and pinks, pale purples and blues, of wildflowers. And flecked, too, with bright-white grass daisies, and soft-white clover.

As we ascend from broad valley farmland into the rugged terrain of the Cascade foothills, I notice now the forest greens of tall stands of conifers.

And now I notice how the moist climate of river and fog brings forth other kinds of green—the yellow greens of rock moss, and the silvery green of strap lichens and tube lichens, the scraggly gray-green moss called Old Man’s Beard, which hangs from the branches of trees both ancient and young.

I love the color green, in its varied tints and hues. It calms me, refreshes me. It is the color of many growing things, the color of Life.

When I deboard at the Ranger Station and begin my day’s hike along the river, I note the liquid deep blue-green of the channel, the foaming translucent teal of whitecaps in the rapids.

Green on the river. Green up the steep forest slopes. Green carpeting the forest floor. All of it opening to a piercing blue sky above.

I cannot help but notice the lush verdant life in which I am immersed on *this patch of this beloved planet Earth.*

Noticing things is no small thing. It is an act of worship, a way I am alive in the presence of Creator, coming more fully alive in the midst of Creation.

In a world full of heartache, I believe that my savoring Creation in this way does, in fact, please and refresh Creator, as much as it pleases and refreshes this part of Creation which is me.

CHURCH WOMEN UNITED

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SUMMER FUN FUND

Phyllis Hockley

Each year many of you participate in our SFF project, raising money that is used to make summer fun available to homeless and at-risk kids. And it didn't just start this year or last! ➔ And the fun you provide can be very stabilizing for kids living in chaotic families and unstable situations and is so important for them.

Now A GREAT BIG thank you to many of you that have already sent me money for this project. If you haven't, and would like to participate, you can find an envelope tucked in here, made out to me.

*Write your check to CWU, memo it SFF,
Stick it in the envelope and send it today!
A great big thank you
will soon be flowing your way!*

TER-GUARD, Tuesday, Apr. 16, 1968

Church Women Help Raise Funds For Pearl Buck

The cooperative efforts of Church Women United of Eugene and Springfield helped raise nearly \$900 for the Pearl Buck Center in Eugene.

The money came from registration fees for a recent symposium on "New Concepts in Education for the Retarded" attended by some 200 teachers from all over the state.

The program was sponsored by Lane County Chapter No. 216 of the Council for Exceptional Children and food for the luncheon was entirely provided by the CWU groups. Mrs. George Blinkhorn is president of the Eugene group and Mrs. Lloyd Thomas is president of CWU of Springfield.