A Moment with the Moderator
Regional Moderator, Rev. John Keener

One of the deeper theological questions I struggle with around Easter is the what happens if Jesus sees his shadow when he comes out of the tomb? Do we get six more weeks of Lent?

You will have to pardon me. I get a little punchy towards the end of the Lenten journey . . . especially in this time of pandemic. In typical times I could usually find an escape or release for all the self-examination, discernment, and prayer . . . dinner out with friends, a day with family, a visit to a local brewery . . . just about anything that involved other people. Those were the days! But the pandemic has put a great big kibosh on that. Facetime and Zoom have been nice substitutes, but they don’t get the job done. So . . . I am little punchier than usual this year. And, remember, this is our second season of Lent spent in isolation! So, I hope Jesus doesn’t see his shadow on Easter morning. I don’t think I could handle another six weeks of Lent.

By the time you read this we will be 17 days from celebrating Easter . . . 17 days from celebrating the resurrection of Jesus . . . 17 days from embracing the gift of God’s grace and love. In 17 days, the journey through Lent will be complete and we will have succeeded in accomplishing our task of examination, reclamation, restoration, and tuning up to claim our prize . . . new life with Jesus. We can finally rest! We can catch our breath.

I have always seen the season of Easter as a time of celebration because there is much to celebrate. At the same time, I have come to realize that it is also a time of respite . . . a time of catching our breath. Then the real work begins . . . we follow Jesus, we live his words, and we go forth to do as he did and does. We do the work of Kingdom building.

As difficult as the introspective work of Lent is . . . as fun as the celebration of Easter will be . . . I find the work of the approaching challenge of Pentecost to be the most satisfying. This is what we have been created to be and do . . . to be builders of God’s Kingdom wherever we are. And, yes, I know that it will not be easy. It never has been. Yet, that is what we are called to be and do.

So, hang in there for a couple of more. The season of Lent is almost over, and the Jesus shadow thing is just a myth. Enjoy the Easter celebration. Embrace the gift. Catch your breath . . . there is more to come!
Second Saturdays to Shine

Our March Second Saturdays event was held on March 13 with approximately 30 people from across the United States in attendance. We were moved by Rev. Laurie Rudel’s presentation, The Practice of Gratefulness: A Lenten Retreat. If you couldn’t attend, be sure to read on to page 4 and review Rev. Rudel’s collection of resources for going deeper into the Practice to have a sense of what it’s all about. Visit https://northernlightsdisciples.org/second-saturdays for links to register to attend future events.

Coming Up

Mark your calendars and continue joining us each Second Saturday for learning, conversation, and connection. Register as an individual or gather a group from your congregation to access group pricing!

April 10: Green Chalice Ministries – Rev. Carol Devine

Since 1970, April 22 has been designated "Earth Day", a day for focusing on the health of our planet. Our own denomination has embodied our commitment to earth care by designating the third Sunday of April "EArth Care Sunday." Our Second Saturday to Shine in April will focus on learning more about the Church’s call to creation care.

Rev. Carol Devine, Minister of Green Chalice, will be with us in the morning to share the theology behind the Green Chalice movement and its programs. In the afternoon we will be joined by members of Northern Lights Region Churches who have joined the program to talk about their own process and work related to their Green Chalice commitment.

Join us in this opportunity to educate and activate yourself and your congregation to become more "green".

Rev. Carol L. Devine is an ordained minister and the co-founder and minister for Green Chalice, the creation care ministry for the denomination. She has pastored two Kentucky congregations and is currently working in Admissions at Lexington Theological Seminary. Carol has three young adult children and she loves to do yoga, garden, hike, cycle, cook, dance, and read.

May 8: Building a Foundation for Change: transforming a congregation – Rev. Dr. Amy LaCroix

Do you often hear yourself or others within the congregation saying, "it’s the way we’ve always done it"? or "we tried that once before, it didn’t work”? or ”we can't because the by-laws won’t allow it", "we don’t have a quorum", "no one wants to serve", "we are tired." Are your by-laws holding you down? You know it’s time to revise them, maybe you’ve known for years. But the truth is most people don’t have the energy. It sounds and feels like a daunting task and so you simply continue to maintain the status quo until you arrive at a place where it is impossible.

Most people groan at the thought of by-laws revision. It just feels tedious and labored and well...boring. So, we put it off another year or do a cursory look and change a few words here and there maybe add a line or two. We rarely touch the core of the structure even if that structure no longer serves the needs of the congregation. In fact, it often impedes the congregation.

In this retreat we will explore a process for identifying and dismantling the institutional structure that prevents a congregation from fully transforming into who and what God is calling in the present context. We will use tools for analyzing by-laws through historical, cultural, legal and spiritual lenses in order to identify the heart of who our congregation is now so that our congregations may move forward with a new, lean, strong foundation. Honoring the past, living the present while fully embracing the future.

Please feel free to bring your congregation’s by-laws and history. This will be fun.... I promise.

Rev. Dr. Amy LaCroix has served as the pastor of First Christian Church in Olympia, Wa. for the past 10 years. Before migrating to the Pacific Northwest, she lived in

(Continued on page 3)
Indianapolis, In. where she served as part of the ministerial staff at First Congregational UCC and Allisonville Christian Church where she helped to create and lead worship services designed for church weary people. She has been a lifelong member of the Disciples of Christ. She is the daughter of two Disciples clergy. She received her MDiv from Christian Theological Seminary and her DMin from Claremont School of Theology. She attended Hope Academy’s Church Planter School and is a certified Intentional Interim Ministry from Interim Ministry Network. Amy’s passion and calling in ministry have been grounded in transformation and change. Her dissertation from Claremont was entitled: Dismantling Institution: Transforming Congregations.

This online retreat is shaped for those who haven’t ever used a labyrinth before, as well as those who currently use labyrinths in their spiritual practice. We will spend a bit of time getting to know labyrinths in the context of the Christian tradition, take some time for engaging our own finger labyrinths as a devotional, contemplative experience, and being prepared to step out at mid-day to do our own walking labyrinth project outside.

You’ll want to make sure you have the finger labyrinth provided by the regional office, some color tools (pens, pencils, crayons, other), appropriate clothing for mid-day outdoors if you choose, and an engaging spirit to enjoy the day.

The Rev. Warren Lynn is a Disciples Pastor who has served congregations in Texas, Illinois, Washington and Montana. For the last eighteen years he has been on staff at Disciples Home Missions, a General Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Warren has used labyrinths in personal spiritual practice for around 30 years. Since 2000, he has also been teaching others how to incorporate labyrinth-work into their own spiritual life. A Certified Advanced Labyrinth Facilitator through Veriditas, Warren also previously served on The Veriditas Council, to provide training and leadership to other labyrinth facilitators [https://www.veriditas.org/page-1863725]. He has consulted with many congregations and other organizations, helping them establish their own active labyrinth ministries. Warren is a ritual and liturgy creator for labyrinth experiences, and builder of labyrinths across North America [https://www.wellfedspirit.org/welcome/spiritual-practices/labyrinths/index.html]. Warren was a founding leader for Global Healing Response [http://globalhealingresponse.com], an organized plan since 2004, using the labyrinth and labyrinth community for unified healing, and to promote mindful engagement around times and experiences of emergency, crisis or disaster.

How to Register: The Registration link is available at https://northernlightsdisciples.org/second-saturdays/.

A suggested donation of $10.00/person/session or $25/congregation/session with 3 or more participants registered at the same time.

Sessions are recorded and made available after the event, free to those who registered and at a cost of $5 each for those who prefer to participate by watching the recording(s).

These sessions are open to all, clergy and lay, from within and beyond the Northern Lights Region.
Second Saturdays: Going Deeper-
The Practice of Gratefulness

BOOKS

ONLINE
- A Grateful Day with Brother David Stendl-Rast Some people use this video as a daily meditation. It is also embedded below.
- Waking Up to What is: Grateful in the Face of it All, 16 online reflections by Kristi Nelson, Executive Director, A Network for Grateful Living.
- Website: A Network for Grateful Living https://gratefulness.org/
  There are so many wonderful resources on this website. It’s a great place to poke around for inspiration.

Summer Camps 2021

Plans are underway to have camp this summer with COVID protocols in place. All of our current plans are subject to change due to COVID restrictions, and staffing hurdles.

At this time we are planning to host mirrored camps at both Gwinwood and Cane Ridge West. The dates for our camps and ages (grade completed) are as follows:

July 12-15th
- Kids Camp (1st-2nd Grade)
- JYF Camp (3rd-5th Grade)

July 19-24th
- Chi Rho (6th-8th Grade)
- CYF (9th-12th Grade)

We are planning on requiring masks to be worn by everyone at camp, as well as practicing social distancing and/or establishing small group pods to reduce the risk of possible exposure. As directors are recruited for these camps I do plan on working with them on establishing clear policies and procedures regarding COVID, based on the information that we have going forward.

It may become necessary to limit the registration numbers due to COVID restrictions, or due to securing enough volunteers for the camps. If you are interested/willing to serve as a counselor, nurse, cook or other volunteer for camps please let me know: chris@northernlightsdisciples.org
March 21-27
First Christian Church
328 Fairgrounds Road
Hamilton, MT 59840
Website

The First Christian Church operates under the care of supply pastors and church leaders. Our presence in the beautiful Bitterroot Valley and Hamilton Montana began in 1895. Since that time, the church location has changed as the congregation's needs changed and land became available.

We continue to seek your prayers for wisdom in managing resources, and especially clarity and unity of vision for our ministry in the Bitterroot Valley.

God’s Love Goes Deep and Wide

The Easter Offering, received by most congregations on March 28 and April 4, 2021, supports several of the general ministries of the Christian Church. Your gift supports college students in leadership development programs, global mission partners, health and social service ministries, the formation of new congregations, support for pastors and chaplains, and so much more. If you are among the leaders in your congregation responsible for planning worship, you can find videos, a speakers bureau, and a communion meditation by Rev. Terri Hord Owens on the Disciples Mission Fund webpage. Your gift has the power to change lives around the world. Give online now or through your congregation. Thank you.
NBA XPLOR Program Announces Changes

Debbie Jennison, Spokane XPLOR Team Coordinator

Greetings to all who have been a part of Spokane XPLOR! It is with a heavy heart that I tell you that our time with NBA XPLOR has come to an end. NBA XPLOR has new opportunities/models on the horizon as it seeks to support young adults (see below). There have been so many people who have been involved with Spokane XPLOR, that I can’t name them all. Thank you to all those who kept the program in your prayers, donated funds, hosted the XPLOR residents in your church, and helped create a loving environment in which the residents could live and worship. A special THANK YOU to the following people who served on the Spokane XPLOR team during the 2 years that we hosted XPLOR residents...Edie Rice-Sauer, Sandy Messick, Greg Skinner, Laurie Clark-Strait, Tiffany DeTienne, Dolores Ford, Chris Snow, Jenn Snow, Janie Snelly, Jerry Klein, Dave Evans, Loretta Evans, and Doni Walker. We ended the time with some funds left over and voted to donate those to 2 of our former Internship sites...Northwest Fair Housing and Transitions. It has been a privilege to work with such a wonderful, dedicated group of people.

Bonnie Osei-Frimpong (NBA XPLOR staff) sends the following greeting/thank you: “The host team, congregations, and region have truly been remarkable and gracious with me, and with XPLOR, as we have navigated especially challenging circumstances in this last year. Thank you for that. Also, thank you for your partnership, and I bid every blessing to our friends in the Northern Lights Region. You are really a shining star “

NBA XPLOR

After placing NBA XPLOR, our faith-based residential service program on hiatus during 2020, due to multiple, concurrent pandemics—especially Coronavirus, the NBA XPLOR team are excited to share that we are implementing a new directional emphasis for NBA XPLOR in 2021.

Since NBA XPLOR was first envisioned in 2012, and launched in 2014, our objective has been to cultivate a young adult, community-centered, social-justice oriented, spiritual and vocational deepening experience. In XPLOR’s original design and implementation, there was strong consensus that “the need is great, and the time is now.” In six years of residential programming in 10 different host cities, 120 young adults have pursued this opportunity for what they might discover about their own faithful next steps.

2021 marks an inflection point that presents new challenges and new opportunities for young adults, congregational and social service partners. Again, NBA XPLOR seeks to discern and navigate the ways in which we can create equitable, faith-rooted, young adult-focused, community -transforming, vocational deepening experiences. Therefore, we are exploring new ways to continue to live into our call to build wise and faithful leadership for the church and the world in the 21st Century. The need is great and the time is now for new models of young adult leadership formation opportunities.

During 2021, we are centering our energy on three vision areas:

- Nurturing an XPLOR Alumni community, with an emphasis on growing a culture of equity
- Launching an innovative young adult peer group, in close partnership with a Disciple constituency ministry
- Visioning and designing a leadership experience by and for Black women of faith

Based on conversations with XPLOR stakeholders, NBA staff, and multiple ministry partners, we anticipate that there is rich opportunity in visioning around these ideas.

The residential service year model strongly identified with XPLOR will remain on hiatus for the time being, as our team, stakeholders, and partners discern the challenges and opportunities of this time and assess the best ways our programming can continue to build leadership for the church and world in the 21st Century.

In order to give this new directional emphasis the energy that it will need, we are dedicating our staff time to these innovative XPLOR models. We do not see that we can pursue the possibility of a “traditional” residential XPLOR house in 2021, but rather we will take what we have learned to help inform our implementation of these vision areas. We expect to evaluate and vision what a residential context could look like in the future as part of a growing portfolio of program opportunities for a wide diversity of young adults exploring the connection between the life of faith and the work of justice.
Mission Partner Andrew Larsen Announces Northwest Itineration
March 2021

Andrew Larsen is a mission partner who serves with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. He is from Helena, Montana, a graduate of Pacific Lutheran University and has worked in the Peace Corps. Andrew is an engaging speaker and a serious advocate for anti-racism and human rights. Andrew is a prophetic voice for bold new thinking.

“IT IS WITHIN OUR TRADITION, OUR ANCESTRY, OUR VERY IDENTITY AS CHRISTIANS TO BE WILD ABOUT THE WAYS WE APPROACH THE WORLD. THESE IDEAS AND ACTIONS ARE ONLY DANGEROUS TO THOSE WHO BENEFIT FROM MAINTAINING AND PROFITING FROM THE STATUS QUO. INSTEAD WE CAN AWAKEN THAT PROPHETIC VOICE IN US ALL AND BRING ABOUT GOD’S GRACE TO EVERYONE.” “OUTRAGEOUS AND WILD” Wordpress.com

There is an opportunity to learn about his partnership in the Philippines available to UCC Pacific Northwest Conference and Northern Lights Region folks. He has worked towards developing a prison ministry in the area of human rights. It is a disguised description due to government restrictions. Andrew is anxious to share this story and more. Please try to schedule your time as soon as possible.

Andrew has arrived in the Pacific Northwest area where he will quarantine and rest for a time. In March and April 2021 he is available to do Zoom meetings. In his words, “I WANT TO OFFER TO YOU (GLOBAL MINISTRIES COMMITTEE) AND A CONGREGATION THAT WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PHILIPPINES, THE WORK OF OUR PARTNER HERE, AND SOME OF THE CURRENT CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD WITH THE PANDEMIC AND CONTINUED POWER OF AUTHORITARIANISM HERE.” He suggested that this could be a part of a worship service where he would preach on a subject and provide a virtual pulpit supply, a zoom Sunday school or evening event. He is flexible and willing to work within your community.

Andrew Larsen
and.w.larsen@gmail.com

Northern Lights Reflections

WEBS 2021 SPRING BOOK STUDY W/ SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Cynthia Bourgeault’s
The Wisdom Way of Knowing:
Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart

April 5 - May 24, 2021
Mondays: 9:30-10:45 a.m. via Zoom
For Zoom link email contact: Rev. Valerie Webster, facilitator
vwebster587@gmail.com

"Wisdom is not knowing more, but knowing with more of you.”
Cynthia Bourgeault

9:25-9:30 a.m. Join Zoom Gathering
9:30-9:45 a.m. Welcome & Opening Meditation
9:45-10:30 a.m. Reading Reflection & Spiritual Practice in large & small groups
10:30-10:45 a.m. Insights & Inquiries & Closing Prayer
10:45-11:00 a.m. Visiting for those who want to connect