



Cordata Beacon

A Publication of **Cordata** Presbyterian Church

January, 2023



Message from Pastor Greg: “Together”

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.*

Every New Year, without fail, I think of Isaiah 43:19 (NIV). In a typical year, Isaiah’s prophecy about God’s ongoing redemptive activity refreshes my positive spirit and heightens my anticipation about what the Lord will do for us and through us in the year ahead. But this year seems to be more about pruning than about new growth at CPC. In sports, we would call our present chapter of congregational life a “rebuilding year.” But in spite of my American mindset that “bigger is always better,” I don’t view such rebuilding years as entirely unwelcome. In fact, times of rebuilding should be expected; no endeavor grows “high and right” perpetually. I prefer to see an increase in membership, giving, faithfulness as much as any follower of Jesus, but the story of God’s people we have from the Bible suggests that pruning seasons are inevitable. Long periods of challenging circumstances for God’s people may even be the norm rather than the exception. So, if someone tells us that we should always show a “high and right” growth chart, we can question that assumption. How then do we double down on our trust in God during times of pruning? Here are a few ways:

Remember where we’ve been. A look in the rearview mirror will call to mind God’s faithfulness throughout earlier chapters of our life together as a congregation.

Take stock of where we are now. CPC’s leaders have been carefully and prayerfully looking at where we are as a congregation as we enter 2023. Like many congregations in the U.S., we have experienced a decline in numbers over the past several years. Some folks have died, some have moved, others have migrated to other congregations. We have also had others join us in that same timeframe, but the overall trend has been towards a smaller congregation. (You’ll hear the details at our January 29th Annual Congregational Meeting.) What to do in response? For starters, recognize that we are still a congregation, richly gifted and called by God for His mission and ministry where we have been planted. We also continue the work of clarifying God’s agenda for our congregation [See “Denominational Affairs” cover article in December 2022 Beacon], anticipating that work to be completed in January/February.

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Look forward TOGETHER. Rather than getting discouraged about our pruning, I want us to view this re-building season we have entered as a time of renewed vision and hope. God uses times of trial to purify and build up His people's faith and resilience. To emphasize that, I am planning a sermon series in January called "Together." We'll look at how the Lord has called us together at CPC to encourage one another to follow Jesus where we live, work, and play.

Together with you, in Christ,
Pastor Greg



2023 New Year Giving Strategic Giving for Maximum Impact

Thank you so much to all who have made pledges to Cordata for 2023. Session is now actively planning for the 2023 Cordata ministry. This year has seen too many uses of our wonderful facilities to fully list, but they include: Worship, Bible Study, Fellowship activities, Birchwood Christian School, neighborhood events, Miracle Food Network, Little Library, and more. A big part of these ministries is having a welcoming facility.

In 2022 available funds were limited, and Session drew down Cordata reserves by more than \$60,000 and deferred major facility maintenance wherever and whenever possible. Your special gifts at this time would be so helpful to address these needs.

You can assist both through your prayers and your financial contributions. Many people can maximize the impact of their giving by making certain types of gifts with tax advantages. Here is a particularly helpful new year strategy, depending on your individual financial situation:

A Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) from your IRA.

QCDs are distributions from your IRA and are not included in your adjusted gross income. This unique feature enables several potential tax benefits, such as (1) Meeting your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) and reducing tax at the same time. QCDs can reduce your adjusted gross income (AGI) while also satisfying the RMD amounts required by the IRS for individuals 72 and older. (2) Avoiding higher tax brackets. Since QCDs reduce taxable income, they can help bring an individual or household into a lower tax bracket, thereby creating more tax savings. (3) Avoiding higher Medicare premiums. Making a QCD reduces your modified gross income for Medicare purposes. *

Please prayerfully consider whether you can make this type of special gift.

The Generosity and Finance Teams

*This is general information. For precise details relevant to your individual tax situation, please seek further professional advice.

Painful Lessons

By Carol Lawrence

Isn't this an odd image? When I painted it, I was forcing myself to do something different from my favorite blue/green/yellow color scheme. The painting that resulted, however, is admittedly a bit bizarre. The colors are jarring, the shapes thorny, prickly. Overall, the painting feels more like something that happened to me, rather than something I created. It looks violent, and, yes, painful.



Pain is a real quandary for Christians. As a cancer survivor, I have plenty of experience with real physical pain. As many do, I struggled with the age-old question of why God, omniscient and all powerful, allows us to suffer. The several Bible verses about glory in suffering can be a little mystifying. For example, we read in 1 Peter 5:10-11 (NKJV):

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

To be perfectly honest, deep in the throes of my cancer battle, the relationship between pain and glory proved elusive. After the fact, though, I realize I did learn some important lessons. And that question of why He would let me suffer? This may not be the answer for others, but I now understand, thankfully, that the cancer escapade was part of His plan. I am a very different person than I was, and much better equipped for His purpose.

So, it turns out God lets us suffer, because it suits His plan. The kicker is, however, His plan may not be to make our life easy, much as we might wish for that. His plan may be to mold us into people who can better serve others, which we all know is His real plan for us as Christians. For this, we can be mightily thankful, and give Him the glory. Of course there's a song for this:

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.*

I've shared the refrain from *To God be the Glory* for you, but I encourage you to go to Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0dQbfbSW0Q>) and watch this video of children singing it. It will make your heart sing.

"CURIOUS ABOUT CORDATA" Coming February, 2023

Have you been attending worship and would enjoy knowing more about Cordata Church? Once again in early February we are offering a short 3-part series of gatherings to explore the ministries of Cordata. This is a good chance to get to know new attendees and to get answers to questions such as: How might I serve at Cordata? How do I get involved in a Bible study? How is the Presbyterian form of church unique? How might I become a member? and other topics.

Anyone, whether new or a regular, is invited. First meeting is 12 Noon after worship on Sunday, February 5th, with a lite snack provided. A second meeting will be by Zoom, and a third in the series will be scheduled after worship on a Sunday later in February.



CPC Kids Clubhouse - "Happy New Year!"

We return to the Old Testament this month in the Kids Clubhouse. The study unit "Warnings to the People" teaches the consequences of disobedience and ultimately God's faithfulness. This Old Testament study wraps up with the meaning and reason of repentance from Matthew 3.

Holiday Happenings and Happy Hearts -

Many lovely memories were made for CPC folks and Cordata neighbors due to the efforts of many volunteers who helped make the Christmas season bright!



Thanks to the welcome desk team (Margaret Rudy, Suzanne Rautiola, and others) for their help in prepping many, many felt stars and to Nina Buma for helping assemble this year's ornament.

Thanks to Jason Houtsma from Mosaic Church for playing guitar at the Caroling & Cocoa tree lighting event and to Chris Battershill, Christian

Chala, and Janet Drew and her family for creating a tree to light!

Thanks to the Clubhouse kids - Joshua, Paxton, Rosemary, and Gwen - for their amazing job reading the Christmas story at the Christmas Eve service.



Thanks to the cookie decorators - Carole Wallace, Julie Farrow, Isabella, and Kaitlin - who creatively beautified the cookies for the Christmas Eve fellowship. **And a very special thanks to Kristin French** for making sure no details were left undone!

For more photos of Advent and Christmas events, see pages 8 and 9.



Birchwood Christian School

So many kids were out sick in December that it was doubtful that the BCS annual Christmas program would be able to happen, but fortunately most everyone recovered in time! The show went on - minus one wise man and a stable lamb!

The kindergarten's read-a-thon Angel Tree fund raiser raised over \$1,500. Their shopping field trip had to be rescheduled due to illnesses but fortunately happened before the Salvation Army's donation deadline!

Here's looking toward a happy and hopefully healthier new year.

Fireside Chats Scheduled to Start Again This Month

Beginning January 19th, Fireside Chats return on Zoom with a focus on missions and ministries within our church. You are invited to join in these intimate interviews with our friends in Christian service in various places. Lined up already are: Ray Deck of Skookum Kids, Lem Usita of the Firs, Hans Erchinger Davis of the Lighthouse Mission, Cheryl Ryan on missions in China, and Mike Kuhn on seminar education in the Middle East. Our purpose is to help you get a closer view of ministries we support at Cordata and the endeavors of our members so that we may better understand their challenges and pray for God's work in these various arenas.

Note: These discussions are on Thursdays from 7 to 8p. Sign up to get the link to Zoom through the church office (admin@cordatachurch.org).

Everyone is welcome to these heart-warming, rewarding sessions!

Hope, Promise, and a Future!

I've shared with you before that my own history with the hymns we sing at church goes back to my Dad. Daddy led the singing at our church in Tacoma at the evening service for many years as I grew up. He was in the choir, and he loved to sing. **Last summer, here at CPC, we shared a wonderful time of singing some of those hymns on a Sunday afternoon. January 8th, right after worship here in the foyer, we have another special time carved out to do the same!**



Last fall, I had a run at bronchitis and was not able to sing for quite a while without coughing., BUT I used the hymnal my friend had shared with me and sang many of those songs of hope and promise "in my head" and didn't cough once! The words ministered to me in mighty ways.

I invite you to **join us in the foyer on January 8th, whether you can sing or not, after the final prayer in worship to sing some of our favorite songs of hope, praise and promise** before you head home for the week. What a great way to start the New Year!

Barbara Sanford

CPC Served as an Emergency Shelter During Recent Flooding*

Due to the effects of the multiple weather systems moving through Whatcom County, the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Division of Emergency Management (DEM) has been in contact with the American Red Cross regarding providing sheltering support. In response, the American Red Cross has established a temporary shelter for those displaced as a result of the impacts of the weather.

It is located at: Cordata Presbyterian Church...

If water is threatening your home and you must leave, consider this shelter. The Red Cross encourages you to bring the following for each individual: prescription and emergency medication, extra clothing, pillows, blankets, hygiene supplies, important documents, and other comfort items. Additionally, special items for children and infants, such as diapers, formulas, and toys, should be brought, along with other items for family members who may have other needs. For individuals with pets, remember to bring items to meet your pet's essential needs: leash, crates, food, and drinking and eating bowls.

...For more information on the shelter, please contact the Red Cross at 1-800-733-2767 (1-800-RED CROSS).

The DEM has been monitoring these conditions and will issue any advisories for unincorporated Whatcom County. If you live in city limits, monitor your city's communication channels for updates on evacuations and road and river conditions. The DEM continues to hold daily briefings for local leaders.

All future updates from the DEM will be posted on this page.

*Reprinted from the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office Facebook Page



How Does our Nominating Committee Work?

In Presbyterian churches, the Congregational Nominating Committee serves as the key source for identifying new leaders. The Committee does this by nominating members of the congregation to serve as Elders and Deacons (and a few other roles) each year.

Our Nominating Committee convened beginning in October to fill two current vacancies on Session - Elder for Discipleship (Class of 2025) and Elder for Personnel (Class of 2023). The Committee started by praying together over the list of possible members to serve in these roles, asking the basic question: "Who is the Lord lifting up to be our next Elders in these important roles?" As you'll see below, the Committee's efforts have produced two excellent nominees.

At our Annual Congregational Meeting on January 29, 2023, the Nominating Committee will report to the congregation and nominate these two candidates. (Alternate nominations may also be made from the floor.) Then the congregation will vote. Once elected, there will be a short training period, and then the newly elected Elders will be ordained / installed to office during a Sunday worship service in February.

Meet our New Elder Nominees

The Nominating Committee presents Julie Farrow (Elder for Discipleship, Class of 2025) and Margaret Rudy (Elder for Personnel, Class of 2023) to be formally nominated at the January 29th Annual Congregational Meeting. Here is a little information about each candidate.



Julie Farrow - Nominated to Be Elder for Discipleship

Always full of hope and optimism, Julie Farrow is a person who amazingly finds a creative solution for just about anything. She has contributed to our congregation through her "can do" spirit, helping with small group leadership, teaching a several adult education classes, guiding our "Connect" team, and serving as Worship Elder.

A Canadian by birth, Julie moved south of the border from Toronto 26 years ago. She gained experience as a non-profit fundraiser with the American Red Cross and was executive director of Camp Prime Time, a program for disabled children based in Central Washington. She has also used her nonprofit experience in volunteering with organizations such as Love INC. In 2009 she shifted her professional work to insurance and in 2015 celebrated the opening of her own independent Farmers Insurance office in Ferndale.

One important turning point in her life was a 6 month "sabbatical" living in France just prior to jumping into the insurance business. Finding herself free to go abroad, she looked on the internet for a "cooking school" in Southern France and bought her ticket to Paris. She describes her life with the French as a wonderful period of "reset" and "finding herself again."

Yet another big moment for Julie was marrying her husband, Stan Humphreys. Their friendship had been budding for years and, then, in 2013 they decided to commit their lives to God as a couple. Julie has a daughter Janine, son Brian, stepson Curtis, and two grandchildren - Baker and Delta.

Julie is currently enjoying retirement. This freedom in her schedule has allowed her to pursue new opportunities. Julie volunteers with Teach One to Lead One as the Volunteer Coordinator and a mentor. She states, "It's exciting to be a part of shaping our future generation." She has also become rather addicted to pickleball and enjoys getting out on the court as often as possible.

Julie is excited to serve on Session again. She believes discipleship is key to a Christian walk and looks forward to exploring ways to deepen her walk as she works with the committee to encourage the congregation in their walk with Jesus. She counts it a blessing to work alongside so many devoted, faith-filled men and women.

For Information about Margaret Rudy See Page 7



Margaret DeWilde Rudy - Nominated to Be Elder for Personnel

Why is Margaret wearing sunglasses in her photo? That is because much of her life and service at Birchwood/Cordata has been devoted to gardening.

Margaret DeWilde Rudy has been attending Birchwood/Cordata Presbyterian Church for most of her life and became a member in high school. The child of parents who immigrated to the US from the Netherlands, Margaret was born in Port Angeles, but her family moved to Bellingham a year later. As new comers to the area, they began attending the closest church to their home - Birchwood - and it quickly became not only their worship fellowship but also their social community. Two families - the Gengers and the McLeods - took the young DeWilde family under their wings and made them part of their lives. In fact, Ted Genger built the current Rudy home.

Margaret graduated from Bellingham High School (the last class to graduate before Sehome opened) and attended Western Washington University for several years, eventually working for the Bellingham National Bank. However, she also continued to help her parents in their nursery, especially in the spring and summer growing season. While at Western, Margaret met and was married to Larry Rudy at Birchwood 51 years ago. After they were married, Larry went to work at the DeWilde Nursery. Since Margaret's father was the President of the Washington State Nurserymen Association, he had to travel to each chapter during the year, so was gone frequently. Eventually, Margaret joined her husband at the nursery, and ultimately as the DeWilde's retired, Margaret and Larry became the owner/managers before they retired in 2018.

The Rudys have two children - a daughter Melissa, who lives two doors away from her parents in Lynden, and a son Tim, who lives in California. Margaret notes that having her daughter so close is a blessing, because Margaret can help with and be a part of the lives of her grandchildren (Maren and Bryce) and they, in turn, can help Margaret and Larry.

In her many years at Birchwood/Cordata, Margaret has been the Coordinator of the Nursery, a Sunday School teacher, a member of the choir and bell choir, an usher, and a greeter at the Welcome Desk during the week. However, she is probably best recognized as an indispensable part of the Facilities Team, as anyone who has volunteered for a landscaping party knows. In fact, many of the plants and shrubs around Cordata have been donated by the Rudys.

In her free time (which is limited), she loves gardening (of course), enjoying a daily walk, and caring for two retired polo horses, who are living out their retirement on the Rudy farm. However, taking care of her grandkids is the greatest joy of her life.

Margaret notes, "I look forward to being a part of the team - the Session - and participating in the challenging times at Cordata."

2022 End of Year Report for The Little Library

The Little Library was installed in early April and Sandy Hiorns began monitoring the number of books given away on March 30, 2022. On 3/30/2022 we began with 20 children's books and 17 adult books.

3/30/2022 - 5/19/2022 we gave away 78 children's books and 25 adult books

5/19/2022 - 7/11/2022 we gave away 129 children's books and 34 adult books

7/11/2022 - 8/8/2022 we gave away 62 children's books and 27 adult books

8/8/2022 - 9/19/2022 we gave away 71 children's books and 32 adult books

9/19/2022 - 11/14/2022 we gave away 62 children's books and 34 adult books

11/14/2022 - 12/20/2022 we gave away 7 children's books and 0 adult books

Total for the Year 2022 = 409 children's books and 152 adult books



We received 2 monetary donations and many donations of books from the congregation. And we are now receiving book donations directly to The Little Library from the community. We have been "blessed to be a blessing"!

Sandy Hiorns

Advent



Christmas at Cordata



Christmas Eve



Preparing for Christmas



Thanksgiving Photos



A Prayer of Thanksgiving at Christmas

Tom Ross

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we come before you with gratitude for the gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus, to your world. You did it, parenting in an impossibly unusual way. Yet you convinced Joseph to trust you enough that he adopted the growing baby and his mother into their home. You planted your word in Joseph so Jesus had a firm foundation for the Holy Spirit to use by the age of Bar Mitzvah.

We pray for volunteers to serve your congregation with Holy Spirit gifts for ministry and teaching. Our church needs elders for leadership, deacons to care for the sick, and teachers for young and old students of your word. You have graciously provided them in the past. Lead us through the future challenges we face. We thank you for the food bank and neighborhood children's programs which appear to be empowered by your hand. Give us ears to listen for your voice and faith to trust your word on the path ahead.

"When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" (Matthew 25:39 NIV) Do you have a prison ministry in our future? You warned us in your Sermon on the Mount about persecution. *"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:44-45 NIV) Are we tough enough, listening enough, loving enough, to do what you plan for us?

Jesus, quoting Leviticus, you said, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart"* (Mark 12:30 NIV)...*but love your neighbor as yourself...* (Leviticus 19:18 NIV) *The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself.* (Leviticus 19:34 NIV) Lord, have mercy on our country in the consequential decisions ahead in 2023. Amen



Welcome all Prayer Warriors

Every Wednesday morning at 9a a group of people in our congregation meet for an hour of prayer. We spend time talking and praying about the needs of our congregation and world. We'd love to have others who believe in the power of prayer join us. Since COVID, we have been meeting by Zoom and have been surprised how the Spirit moves even through electronics. For ease of gathering we have continued to meet by Zoom, so no need to leave your home. Please contact Julie Farrow at jmfsucceed@gmail.com if you have questions or wish to join us, and she will send you the Zoom link.

Unsung Heroes

A special thank you to **Dan Sanford** who coordinates our poinsettia order and delivery each year for Advent from Kiwanis.

Another big thank you to **Jim Zander** for planting 10 Spirea shrubs near the church playgrounds, and to **Margaret Rudy and her family**, who donated the shrubs.

God bless everyone who works to make our church more beautiful inside and outside.

