



Cordata Beacon

A Publication of **Cordata** Presbyterian Church

July, 2026

Message from Pastor Greg:

Preparing for General Assembly

Last month, I mentioned that our denomination, the PC(USA) is holding its every-other-year General Assembly (GA) this summer. A consistent by-product of our biennial GA (which wraps up July 2nd) is to make Presbyterians across the country more aware of the diversity and potential divisions within our national church. In last month's *Beacon*, I posed a question and a conviction: "Are we prepared to . . . work towards . . . peace and unity while also keeping the purity of our Biblical faith? By God's grace and truth, we can!" I believe that knowing more about how our broader Church works might help us live into our calling as peace makers and truth seekers. To that end, here is a basic orientation to GA. First, an article that appeared in our own Northwest Coast Presbytery's newsletter...



General Assembly

The 227th General Assembly of the PC (U.S.A.) will gather June 22–July 2. General Assembly is the highest council of our denomination and brings together commissioners, advisory delegates, and staff from across the church to discern, worship, and make decisions that shape our common life and ministry. Our Executive Presbyter and Stated Clerk will both be serving at the Assembly, and we are grateful for the leadership of our commissioners, Rev. Hannah Shearer and Ruling Elder Fred Hartsook, as well as our Young Adult Advisory Delegate, Riley Boerger, and Theological Student Advisory Delegate, Muskan John.

To learn more including schedules, resources, and information about its work, visit the PC(USA) General Assembly website [pcusa.org and scroll down to the link]. Those interested in following the work of the Assembly may also review proposed overtures and other business through PC-Biz [pc-biz.org]. As you do so, please remember that these materials represent proposals that are still being considered. Many overtures will be amended significantly before reaching the plenary floor, and some will ultimately not be approved—either because the Assembly discerns another path forward or because the proposal does not function within our constitutional polity and governance structure. If you have questions about a particular overture, please reach out to the Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk. We would be happy to provide additional context and guidance as the Assembly's work unfolds.

It is also important to remember that many actions approved by General Assembly will subsequently come to presbyteries for consideration. Our presbytery will consider some of these matters as early as our October presbytery meeting, so there will be additional opportunities for learning, discussion, and discernment in the months ahead.

That's a good brief reminder about what GA is, how it works and who is involved. Here's my Top 5 Take on how we at Cordata can prepare for it:

1. **Patience.** GA involves an extraordinary amount of legislative process—overtures, amendments, committees, referrals, and so much more. It can be a real challenge to figure out what of significance has happened and how to think and feel faithfully about it. Finding our patience to wait a while to discover which initiatives merit our attention will help us know when and how much energy to give in the months ahead.

2. **Peace.** Because GA by design includes proposals for change, it always brings "hot button" issues to the surface. Reports on GA activity often focus on controversial topics. Be wary of reporting (including social

Message from Pastor Greg continues on page 2.

Message from Pastor Greg continues from page 1.

media) that is designed to bring more heat than light to these challenging issues. If we can approach conversations that arise as humble, grace-filled peacemakers rather than angry culture warriors, we will be on the better path.

3. **Discernment.** That said, we are also called to discern God's truth. The Book of Order is a (usually) handy resource for governance, but the *Bible* is our rule of faith and life. As observed by the earliest Protestant Reformers, "General councils may err, and sometimes have err'd, even in things pertaining unto God" (*Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* (1563)). In other words, not everything the GA proposes, debates, publishes, or decides is God's truth. We get to sort out the wheat from the chaff.

4. **Perspective.** With a few notable exceptions, much of what happens at GA has little bearing on our day-to-day congregational life at Cordata. The Presbyterian system is "connectional"—so we are connected with other PC(USA) congregations and entities, sharing mission and accountability—but our system is also fairly decentralized. The vast majority of discernment and decision-making rests with our own local Session. How other Presbyterians read the *Bible* and live out their faith can certainly be troubling when it clashes with our own convictions (especially on social or ethical issues), but we have freedom of conscience to search God's Word and seek the Lord's will on our own.

5. **Sovereignty.** We can read about GA outcomes. We can learn about the details from our Northwest Coast Presbytery friends and colleagues who participated in the process. We can celebrate some GA outcomes and lament others. But at the end of the day, the Lord Almighty is sovereign over heaven and earth. Jesus Christ alone is head of the Church. In Him we place our faith and hope.

Faithfully together in Christ,
Pastor Greg

Building the "Front Door to the Church"

One of the major components of the Lilly Foundation grant received by CPC in June is funding for a new communications strategy. The grant was awarded following a two-year Resilient Church Project through Whitworth University. CPC was one of eight churches nationwide to participate and receive grants of \$10,000.

To get things started, CPC's Resilient Church Team has selected a group of 15 church members to help guide a process of defining the new strategy with a special focus on its website image, content, design, and visual appeal. At its initial meeting on July 1, the 15-member group:

- Heard the "why". Why did CPC determine the need for a new strategy?
- Reviewed that was learned by church leaders during the 2-year Resilient Church Project to help guide the process.
- Learned more about the professional firm, Worship Times, (www.worshiptimes.org) contracted to help develop communication components that help convey the church's image, its people, its programs and services, its facilities, and its mission.
- Were briefed on the expectations for Worship Times and the church itself in gathering information, images, and design to build a website that addresses diverse audiences – new and old, many "unchurched" but seeking.
- Were given an extensive list of other church websites to gather communication ideas, images, and content to determine what might be appropriate for CPC.
- Was asked to select 4-6 "things" about other websites to submit to the group at a second meeting on August 5th. At that meeting, participants will share their findings and develop them for submission to Worship Times for actual website development. Actual work with Worship Times starts September 1.

Remember, most of those who the church is hoping to reach will check a website before visiting a church. Thus, a new CPC website and its components will represent the "digital front door to the church."

If YOU have further interest, please contact either Rich Emerson or Mike Langey.

The Resilient Church Team

Seasons

By Carol Lawrence

Audrey Hepburn is right; gardening is an expression of hope. We hope that tomatoes, roses, whatever we plant, will bring future joy. My favorite of all the flowers in my garden is the lilies. They have not yet reached their full height, but I have hope they will bloom gloriously in July. My hope for them is based on past experience. They have bloomed reliably for ten years.

My garden is small, so I don't really have space for all the flowers I dream of. Some plants must occupy their spot on a time-share arrangement, as the seasons unfold. April is the season for tulips, but after they have finished blooming, petunias take their turn in that space. Once the season for cool weather plants is over, the lettuces go in the fridge, and marigolds fill that spot in the garden.

Since I'm talking about seasons, you will not be surprised by my choice of Scripture from Ecclesiastes 3:

*To everything there is a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven (v.1)
A time to plant,
And a time to pluck up what is planted (v. 2b)*

Later in Ecclesiastes, Solomon writes that we also have *A time to mourn* (v.4). Although we mourn, Christians have a special kind of hope, based on our past experience of the love of Christ. In his first letter to the young church in Thessalonica, the apostle Paul wrote:

*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again,
even so God will bring with Him those who sleep
in Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 4:14)*

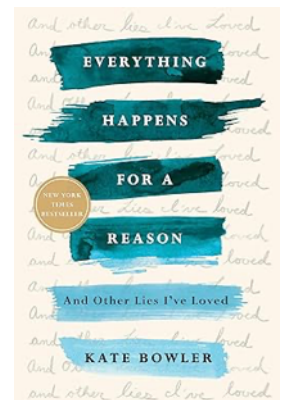
Just now, our church is in a season of mourning over the loss of Chuck Kingsford-Smith and Curry Miles, two of our long-standing, beloved faith leaders. However, we are also in a season of joy, as we celebrate the baptism of Joshua White. Seems that, like our gardens, our lives are seasonal. Because of our faith, we know that our season of mourning is temporary. In Christ, we have hope that in His time He will bring us to a season of comfort and joy.



Booklovers Book Club to Meet on July 24th

The Book Club did not meet in June, as many of us were off enjoying some summer travel. The group will gather again at Carol Lawrence's house on July 24th at 1p to discuss *Everything Happens for a Reason And Other Lies I've Loved*, by Kate Bowler. This book is a New York Times bestseller, described as "a meditation on sense-making when there's no sense to be made". All are welcome.

For more information, contact Carol at cmlawren@gmail.com.





CPC Kids Clubhouse Catch Up

CPC Kids Clubhouse - July in the Sunday Morning Clubhouse...

Study Unit 16: HOPE FOR CAPTIVES - Sunday Morning Clubhouse kids will learn that consequences are tough! God's people are in exile because of their failure to follow His plans and worship Him only. However, while the people were far away from the land God had given them, they were not far from God. The kids will see that the Lord was

with His people even while they were in exile. He watched over them and promised that they would one day return to the land. When they did, they would return to Him as well.

The last Sunday of July we get to see how God brought His people home from the book of Ezra.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Corinthians 10:31

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How can we glorify God?

ANSWER: We can glorify God by loving Him and obeying Him.

July Lessons:

Unit 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3), Daniel in the Lion's Den (Daniel 6), Daniel's Prophecies (Daniel 7-12)

Unit 17 God Brought His People Home (Ezra 1-3)

Clubs 4 Kids (C4K) - School is out and our after-school program has morphed into our midday/ all summer Fun in the Sun (FITS) program. The relationships with the kids get stronger every year. The feeling of belonging and connection has blossomed. The mother of one of our regular C4K and FITS attendees reported that her young son nearly exploded yelling at some teens who were behaving disrespectfully toward the CPC building. She said he was livid, like a dog protecting his family when he thought that they might cause damage to the church. It's safe to say this child definitely feels connected and valued.

FUN in the SUN 2026! - Fun in the Sun 2026 has officially begun! The focus of our 18 gatherings this summer is to present a small synopsis of each book of the *Bible* and where to find them... all 66 books! Story time explains how the *Bible* is broken up into categories (law, history, poetry & wisdom, major & minor prophets, the Gospels, letters, and prophesy).

A fun Route 66 Bible Road Trip "TENT BUS" has been created to help keep everyone engaged and connected with this fun theme. (More photos on page 10.)

The first day of the first week was sweltering hot and just a day later, the second day of FITS saw rain and gusts of wind that nearly blew our TENT BUS away. But the extremes in weather didn't stop nearly 30 kids from learning the overview of the book of Genesis. The 50 chapters of Genesis were told in a fun, interactive, and creative way. The teens also got to help take part in the story telling. They thoroughly enjoyed (perhaps a little too much) the spraying of the younger kids with water spray bottles to simulate the rains of the great flood when we got to the story of Noah. There were screams and chaos, but the (very wet) younger kids loved it!

The craft was tie-dye t-shirts to remind us of the chapters of Genesis from when Joseph received his special coat of many colors to when he reunited with his father and brothers. It was quite the undertaking to dye 29 shirts, but we were super organized and they turned out great!



Clubhouse Catch Up Continues on page 5.

Clubhouse Catch Up Continues from page 4.

We've also started memorizing a challenging Books of the Bible Rap song. We've got the Pentateuch down. Yes, the summer is off to a fantastic start.

This casual and fun time of connection with kids AND their grownups during FITS provides many opportunities to share the Gospel and personal testimonies in an organic, conversational way. In one of these conversations the very first week, a mom shared that her young son had recently been expressing a fear of death. This was the perfect opportunity to share the salvation message with the entire family right there and then.

We can use some extra help. Please consider joining the FUN. The sign-up sheets with a brief description of various ways to serve are in the CPC lobby. We have a specific need for extra help July 28 & 30 and also August 4, 6, 11, and 13. Many of our key leaders will be unavailable during these times.



Christmas in July! - Calling all crafter types! We are getting a big head start on the holiday season. Each Christmas Eve we send kids and families home from our special service with a handmade keepsake ornament. We hope to get a design for this year's Christmas Eve Keepsake Ornament plus get them made by the end of July!

The ornaments should be of high quality but not too complicated. We want both kids and adults to be able to put them together. The ornament must also include a heart shape somewhere in the design. Please send your design suggestions to Bonnie Hollingsworth (BonnieH@cordatachurch.org). We will choose the design and arrange a few crafting days to gather and make them.

Child Evangelism Fellowship Offers Day Club - July 6th - 10th

Child Evangelism Fellowship will host a FREE 5-Day Club for children 5-11 years old, July 6th - 10th from 3:30-5p. This year's theme is "Turn Around". Stop in after Fun in the Sun for a double dip of fun!

Growing Faith Class - Summer Break July 12th - August 30th

Please join our Growing Faith Class (Adult Education) currently studying the transformative power of living the Beatitudes on July 5th at 9a in the Chapel. This will be the last class in this six-week video series, *Becoming Like Jesus*, that uses the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 to articulate the lifelong process of progressive sanctification, where the Holy Spirit uses our ups and downs—our triumphs and our tears—to shape us. After this class, we will take a summer break from July 12th to August 30th when there will be no adult education class.

Join us in the fall when we will begin a new study. More information will follow in the September Beacon and the August/September Sunday bulletins.

Fellowship News - Lunch Bunch on July 26th

Lunch Bunch will be offered once per month so we can get to know one another in a warm, inviting setting and no cooking. Ask a person you would like to get to know to join you. Sign up at the information table in the foyer. July 26th is the next opportunity to have lunch together, so be sure to sign up.

If you would like to **lend a hand cleaning the kitchen**, please come at 9:30a on Saturday, July 11th. Working together is a wonderful way to fellowship and appreciate each other.

Also, **we need more volunteers to sign up to be hosts for the After Worship Coffee and Cookie Table** this summer. It's an excellent way to get to know others in the congregation and help make the fellowship after worship warm and inviting.

Youth Ministry Update

by Andrew Souza Lewis

CPC Youth Group Fall 2025 - Spring 2026

On June 10th we commemorated the simultaneous conclusion of regular Youth Group and the school year with a Last Day of School Party. That's right—CPC's Youth Group has been meeting Wednesdays from 5:30-7:00p in the Family Life Center all school year. Please interpret my lack of written communication on the matter (this is my first *Beacon* article) as a sign of groundbreaking vitality rather than a lack of remarkable reports. I invite you to take a look at the following figures (see infographic).

Upon looking at the numbers, readers may assume this has been a season of growth—and it has in some respects. However, those numbers represent the fifth-to-ninth graders CPC has already been serving—the overwhelming majority are our immediate neighbors and also the vast majority are outside our pool of membership. Feel free to applaud as you read this the enduring foundation of CPC's children's ministry (led by Bonnie Hollingsworth) and the dedicated work of the Ruble family (spearheaded by Dave) to serve the burgeoning adolescent population. There are too many names to make a comprehensive list, but if you remain able in your seat, please give a round of applause for Dave, Evangeline, Isaac, Jamile, Julie, Kaela, and Nele (in alphabetical order) for their leadership this school year. I, as Director of Youth Ministry depended on each of these individuals weekly and their consistent commitment is worthy of much credit. This is not even to mention the numerous cooks Julie recruited for delicious meals each week.

As you can see, these numbers reflect the value CPC has already placed on its children's and youth ministries and the quality of connections. I highlight those numbers not to highlight growth but to highlight the golden opportunity of next-door-need combined with members' willingness to nurture our neighbors. "Growth" this year actually did not happen in numbers but rather in a transition toward our vision of intentional investment in these youth. These changes have included: switching from biweekly to a now-weekly gathering; moving out of the crowded youth/children's ministry room to the Family Life Center and its foyer; serving a home-cooked meal; incorporating a regular biblical message; and a new assortment of group games. As much as Youth Group has changed, we also celebrate what remains the same: a consistent community where youth sense they are loved and accepted (and have fun!).

On behalf of Youth Group and its leadership team, we thank you for your continued support of this thriving community. While we await our back-to-school kickoff in September, we continue to connect with many of the youth through two Youth Group summer hangouts (in July and August) as well as the summerlong Fun in the Sun (Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00-2:30p). I hope you share in our excitement to build up this awesome community of adolescents; please lift up Youth Group in expectant prayer as we charge into this next season of growth together.



43+

students served
(5th to 9th grade)



32+ 11+

boys girls



15+

students/week
(average total)

Youth Group Summer Hangouts - July 8th and August 19th from 5:30-7p

Students in grades 5th-11th are invited to two special Youth Group Hangouts over the summer just for them! There will be fellowship, building connections, fun, and food. Students are encouraged to bring a friend.

Contact Andrew Souza Lewis at andrewsl@cordatachurch.org if you would like more information or have any questions.

Do You Have a Will?

by Gregg Block

Most do not. It is estimated that two-thirds of Americans die without a will or estate plan. When you die without a will, state law, rather than your personal wishes, dictates how your assets are distributed and the care of any minor children. This can result in many unintended consequences.

Many people avoid making a will, because they don't want to think about dying. But here's the thing: 100% of people who don't want to think about dying still die.

Without a properly drafted will, your estate could face complications such as:

- Family Disputes – Without clear instructions, disagreements may arise over asset distribution.
- Court Interference – Your estate could end up in probate court, delaying the inheritance process.
- Unintended Beneficiaries – The state may decide who inherits your assets, which might not align with your wishes.
- Guardianship Issues – If you have children, the court could appoint a guardian rather than someone you trust.

What is a Will? A will—or last will and testament—is a signed, legally binding document that describes exactly how you want your assets (like property, bank accounts, and other things you own) to be handled after you die. A will can resolve issues as big as dividing the family farm among five siblings or as small as making sure your nephew gets the pocketknife he admires.

Many folks could create their will with an online service. Ramsey Solutions has a tool that helps you decide if an online will could work for you. There are many online and DIY kits available to help you write your own will. While writing your own will is possible, here are some reasons you may need an attorney for wills if:

- You own property in multiple states
- You have significant assets or business interests.
- You want to set up a trust or special inheritance conditions.
- You need guidance on Medicaid planning or tax implications.

Wills are not the only documents you need: Your last will and testament tells people what you want to happen after you die. But what about what you want to happen while you're still living and not able to make your own decisions. Some documents to consider: **Living Wills – Advanced Directives – Financial Power of Attorney – Medical Power of Attorney – Living Trusts**

Plan Ahead - Writing a will is one of the most important steps you can take to protect your loved ones and ensure your wishes are honored. Everyone 18 or older should have a will. But who decides which someone gets what—and how messy the process is for your family—comes down to whether or not you left clear instructions. Acting today can prevent legal complications down the road. Don't wait. Start enjoying the peace of mind that comes from knowing you're protecting the people you love because you planned ahead and weren't afraid of the hard stuff! And your loved ones won't have to deal with all the crazy things that can happen if you die without a will.

This article is educational and not legal or financial advice. Please consult an attorney or financial advisor for personalized information.

Outdoor Work Party - Saturday, July 11th, from 9a - Noon

Plan to join us on Saturday, July 11th, at 9a to help keep the CPC grounds looking nice all summer long. If you have rakes, tarps, 5-gallon buckets, weeding tools, gloves, etc., please bring them.

Sign up in the foyer so that we will have an idea how many will attend. If you have any questions, contact Doug Cowgill.

Remember our motto: "Many hands make light work."

Cordata Scene Joyous Celebrations in June



Honoring graduates Charlee Carpenter & Nele Iwansky



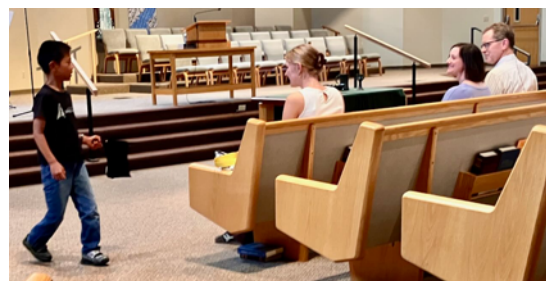
Confirmation of Josh Ruble & Ella Ruble
Baptism of Charlee Carpenter



The Ellis Family

New Summer
Offertory Music

Jake Larson



Young People like Paxton White Step Up
to Help Collect Offering



Choir celebrates a wonderful year of
singing with a party!

Cordata Scene Joyous June Celebrations Continue



A Very Special Father's Day!

Matt and Josh White Serve as
Congregational Leaders.

Josh White is Baptised in the
Nooksack River.



Thank You!

Thank you to everybody that made the trek to the Nooksack River in support of my baptism. It was very encouraging. Thank you for sharing your own stories of baptism.

Josh

Thanks to everyone in the congregation for your overwhelming support, prayers, and encouragement of Josh over these last few years and on the day of the event. There have been a lot of people who have invested in him that prepared him for taking this step of faith in baptism. We were incredibly touched by this beautiful community on Father's Day. Thank you.

White Family

"No love, no friendship, can cross the path of our destiny without leaving some mark on it forever." — Francois Mauriac

Save the Date

Monday, July 6th-10th, 3:30-5p, Child Evangelism Fellowship's 5-Day Club - See page 5.

Wednesday, July 8th, 5:30-7p, Youth Group Hangout - See page 6.

Saturday, July 11th, 9a, Outdoor Work Party - See page 7.

9:30a, Kitchen Clean Up, Kitchen - See page 5.

Saturday, July 18th, 9a, Men's Breakfast, Ungers' Pavilion

Friday, July 24th, 11a, Celebration of Life Service for Curry Miles, Worship Center

1p, Booklovers Book Club, Carol Lawrence's Home - See page 3.

Sunday, July 26th, After Worship, Lunch Bunch - See page 5.

Friday, August 1st, 11a, Celebration of Life Service for Chuck Kingsford-Smith, Worship Center

Wednesday, August 19th, 5:30-7p, Youth Group Hangout - See page 6.

Regularly Occurring Events

Sundays - 9a, Adult Education Class, Chapel - Ends June 4th; see page 5.

10:30a, Worship, Worship Center

10:45a, CPC Kids Clubhouse/Sunday School

After Worship, Coffee Fellowship, Foyer

Mondays - 2p, Tai Chi Exercise Class, Chapel

Tuesdays - 1p, Fun in the Sun, Church Lawn

Wednesdays - 9a, Weekly Prayer Group, Zoom - Contact Admin@cordatachurch.org for link.

2p, Tai Chi Exercise Class, Chapel

Thursdays - 1p, Fun in the Sun, Church Lawn



Even Fun When It's Cloudy or Rainy!



Celebration of Life Services

Curry Miles
Friday, July 24th, 11a
Reception to follow
in the Foyer.

Chuck Kingsford-Smith
Friday, August 1st, 11a
Reception to follow
in the foyer.

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