



United in Christ  
Our Mission: To Serve

Pastor: Rev. Dan Holland

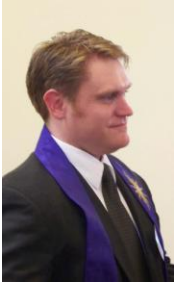
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**Pastor's Corner**

***Something New at Christmas***

I love Christmastime. Christmas seems to hold memories like no other season. I remember how crushed I was the Christmas I really wanted a microscope and my brother got one. I remember the time he and I broke the artificial tree and tried to use Elmer's® Glue to put it back together. (It worked right up until the time we had to leave for school and we asked my mom to hold it up while the glue dried.) I remember the time my sisters memorized every song in the movie *White Christmas* and choreographed all new dances which we watched over and over. I remember the first Christmas I no longer lived at my parents' house, instead of putting all the ornaments on their tree, my mom gave me a box of all my ornaments throughout the years to go on the tree at my house.

We have all sorts of new traditions Rebecca and I have established with our own family too. Rebecca gives me an ornament every year. I remember when she gave me the first one. It's still my favorite: a heart and on the inside she wrote "My heart to Dan... Christmas 1999." Christmas morning we lead our kiddos out of their bedrooms to the tree where we have at least one present set up ready to play. I remember the look on Natalie's face as we led her on her first Christmas morning. We had set up a city of wooden blocks... The next half-hour was a race between my building skills and her knocking over skills. And of course there's our family's tradition of Christmas day relaxing. Michaela's

first Christmas was a rare white Christmas in the Pacific Northwest the snow muffled the noise and provided a picturesque view over the lake; I'm not 100% sure but we may have stayed in our pajamas the whole day.

For many, Christmastime is a wonderful time of familiarity to be found in long-celebrated traditions, heartwarming music, gatherings of family and friends, reminiscing about good times shared in the past, eating good food. But as Christians, we can't forget that there is an element of Christmas that is about something that's entirely new...and I'm not talking presents... Somewhere in the neighborhood of two thousand years ago, on that very first Christmas, God entered into human history and became one of us: to walk and talk, eat and sleep, cry and suffer... to be human in every way. Jesus was God incarnate, the embodiment of steadfast love, and everywhere he went there was something new. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, sinners were welcomed back to the table. We're told that Jesus Christ is the one who makes all things new, and we should never forget, it begins at Christmas.

So this Christmastime, enjoy the traditions, enjoy family and friends and everything else that is familiar, but don't forget to keep an eye out for the totally new ways God might be at work in your life, in your family and in your community.

May God bless you and all those you love this Christmas.

*Pastor Dan*

## **Thank You for Sharing Your Fruit**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22-23

I love the practice of praying the fruit of the spirit: to let go of all that is not God and to breath in all that is God, repeating and pondering each of the 'fruit' as I pray they will overflow out of me in all that I do: "God, let me show love... joy... peace...patience...etc." I began the practice in college and continued it over the years, finding it very helpful in grounding myself as a youth director, a graduate student, a therapist, a wife, a daughter, a sister, and a friend. In the last two years, with the addition of my two wonderful daughters, I have to admit that my prayer has shifted. Or more accurately, at the end of a long day, as my ability to remain a calm and rational adult begins to fade, I repeat the fruit of the spirit in more of a pleading than a praying: "PleaseGodgivemelovejoypeacepatiencepatiencepatience... etc." Anytime I have felt the need to see goodness in this fallen world I have watched to see the fruit of the spirit around me. I have witnessed others demonstrating them, from the big moments of mission trips when we hand over the keys to a new home to the small every day moments of kind smiles while passing a stranger in the grocery store. The fruit of the spirit are everywhere.

I have experienced the fruit of the spirit in a whole new way in the last few weeks as we have settled into our new home: as the recipient of a whole congregation's demonstration of God's amazing love. On our move in day, I found myself standing in my kitchen overwhelmed to tears with the moving boxes freshly unloaded, my refrigerator being filled with home cooked meals, and others offering to help unpack and watch my kids. The moment felt as though I was being held by God, reassured that my family and I would not just survive but thrive. Thank you for showing my family and me God's love as you shared your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control through your many acts of warmth and generosity. God is working through each and every person at UPB and I look forward to knowing and being a part of such an amazing community of faith. And so I say with all my heart, thank you for sharing your fruit!

*Rebecca Holland*

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## **Potomac Association – United Church of Christ**

At the recent fall meeting, a service was held in memory of our late moderator, Robin McCord, followed by several workshops, including the one I attended on church development. Each participant rated his/her church on a scale designed to measure church vitality. Other delegates decorated "Tents of Hope". Over 300 colorfully painted tents from UCC churches throughout the U.S. were displayed on the National Mall before being sent to the Darfur region of Sudan, where they will provide temporary housing for refugees.



Tents of Hope from around the country are displayed on the National Mall in front of the U.S. Capitol building.

Gary Jean photo

## **ADULT EDUCATION**

**Adult Education sessions will resume on January 11, preceded by a breakfast and introduction of our first 2009 class on January 4th at 10 AM.**

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## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

We delivered eight (8!) bags full of gifts for the children Central Union Mission found for us. I

know I am not the only one who finds it rewarding to shop for an unknown but real child who has certain wishes and likes and hopes, and who gets whatever we pick out for them and buy. If it is a cold day when I am shopping, my 9-year-old girl may get a sweatshirt instead of a blouse. But it will be one I think she will like!

I felt like Stacy and Clinton of What Not to Wear coordinating a wardrobe for that nine-year-old girl -- pretty much pink and dark blue - - even nifty dark blue quilted shoes with pink straps.

I think we did an amazing job to be the providers of the Christmas gift bag for eight children this year.

*Nancy Snyder*

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**TECHNOLOGY UPDATE**

Please remember to visit our website. We are trying to keep it up-to-date with the wonderful things that have been happening at United Parish this fall. We also hope to be adding the prayer list "for members only" soon.

New links are being considered for community service information as well as committees within the church. Please let me know any ideas you have for improving the website.

*Patty Keys*

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**Delete Christmas**

In light of what we've lost  
some would prefer to delete Christmas.  
Funds, funds, what is Christmas  
without our funds?  
Savings depleted, lost security,  
credit rates far too steep.  
Banks change names while we sleep.  
Bell ringers scramble for dollars.  
Unclean persons on the street  
dirty our search for Christmas peace..

In this wilderness of lost  
we could let go our mouse  
and drag ourselves

to the only God of Certainty and Peace.  
Money is cheap, but God is extravagant.  
Let us luxuriate, appreciate  
the most costly gift God sends.  
Delete Christmas  
if we fail to open or  
claim God's gift.

*Shirley Klotz Bickel*  
c. 2008

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**Roots**

It seemed like the summer would never end. While the days grew shorter, the warm weather lingered through the fall, reluctant to leave. Would the roses on the patio ever stop blooming? How many pink blossoms have we enjoyed as we walked (or ran) into the church, or on our way out, into the "mission field," as the signs by the front door say? The roses are named "knockout" for a reason. What about those crape myrtles and the tropicals like the coral plant (jatropha) and the Swedish ivy (plectranthus)? Did you see the petals, red and lavender, amidst the green leaves? They'll never quit, we thought. And what about those primrose (oenothera) repeating their earlier blooms as if spring had never left? Indian summer, as it's known, seemed to go on forever. But then something happened. Fall stopped, just like that, the temperature dropped like a rock in a pond, the leaves turned crazy colors, then brown and fell, and the flowers drooped and disappeared. We rotated the pots on the patio-- out with the tropicals, in with the evergreens, emerald Alberta Spruce, standing like sentinels in the cold. A first snow comes, and the spruce are flecked with white. For a while, we miss the excitement of summer, the rush of change, the excitement of each blossom. But can you hear what's happening? Beneath the bare branches, under the cold ground, the plants are putting out new roots, getting ready for spring and a new year. And like the spruce, we are waiting for the bright ribbons and garlands, the sparkling lights of Christmas.

*Merrill Hathaway*