



Spirit of Grace

A Lutheran-Methodist Cooperative Church

February 2022

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Election of New Officers

On January 16th, we gathered online as a congregation to attend to the business of the church, including the election of new officers to leadership positions. Please join us in offering our gratitude to those who say a holy “yes!” to God’s call to serve in this time at this place, and hold them in your hearts and prayers as they serve their terms faithfully:

Tom Hart - Board of Directors, 2nd term, 3 years

Sharon Poynter - Board of Directors, 2nd term, 3 years

Cindy Murahashi - Board of Directors, term vacancy, 1 year

Sharon Pantley - Staff Parish Relations Committee, 2nd term, 2 years

Pat Moore - Staff Parish Relations Committee, 1st term, 2 years

Debby Chenoweth - Finance Committee, continuing term

Cherri & Jim Anderson - ELCA Oregon Synod Assembly Voting Members, May 2022



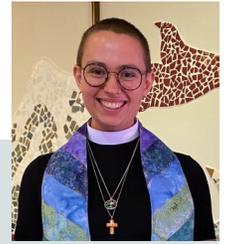
Yet, we would be remiss not to acknowledge those who continue to diligently continue to serve this congregation. We are the body of Christ, and the unique work of each and every member is vital for the wholeness of us all. To all of our staff, volunteers, board and committee members whose selfless work makes it possible for us to continue to do God’s work in this world - thank you for all that you are and all that you do.

Thank you

As we have transitioned back to zoom worship again, thank you to everyone who has been mailing or dropping their giving dollars to the church office!

Pastor's Message

Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller
spiritofgracepastor@gmail.com



Beloved Siblings in Christ,

How do you know when someone loves you?

Everyone has their own unique ways through which they prefer to show and receive love, often referred to as “love languages.” For some people, actions will always speak louder than words. For others, a small gift or token given out of the blue will fill their heart with warmth and affection, while some prefer to simply sit in quiet company with one another, feeling the love shared through simple moments. There is no right or wrong way to show someone you love them – but we can run into miscommunication sometimes when we assume that everyone else experiences love in the same way that we do.

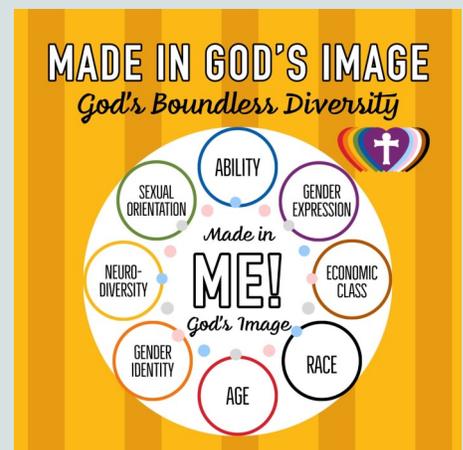
I’ve encountered many loving, welcoming, affirming churches running into this issue. The people in these congregations have experienced the love of God in a deep, profound way – and they want to share that love with those whom the Church has typically cast aside. But when it comes to stating that loving intent clearly and explicitly, some people wonder why such an additional step (and often a lengthy process) is necessary. Shouldn’t people just know that when we say “we love and welcome all” or “God loves and welcomes all” that they’re included in that as well?

Unfortunately, no. For LGBTQIA+ individuals, and many other communities who have been pushed to the margins, the love of God (and especially the love of Christians) is not something that can be taken for granted. Love that initially seems freely offered has often come with a hefty price, such as being told to be silent, conform, change, or abstain. For these individuals and communities, the language of love has so often been used to mask harmful motivations, causing deep pain and trauma that can be almost insurmountable. Such experiences cause many LGBTQIA+ individuals – even those who consider themselves Christian – to approach offers of love and welcome with caution and suspicion.

On page three, you can read more about our plans to begin the process for Spirit of Grace to become an official Welcoming Church through our denominational programs. I know that this process will take time, but I can’t tell you how excited I am for us to begin. As a queer person – even one with a relatively healthy relationship with religion and the Church – I know just how intimidating it can be to walk into a church for the first time having no idea if I will be loved and accepted as I am. I know from experience that love cannot always be assumed, even though I wish that were not the case. Programs like Reconciling in Christ were a lifeline for me when I found myself in new cities, unsure of where to turn in my search for a loving community. I truly hope that Spirit of Grace can be that source of love for people of any identity or background – boldly proclaiming God’s divine, radical love for all the world to see.

May we take this time to think intentionally about how it is we embody this love in our church, our hearts, and our lives.

In Peace, Pastor Miranda



Becoming a Welcoming Church

During the discernment process of calling a new pastor, Spirit of Grace Church articulated the goal of becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation within the next few years. Since 1983, the [Reconciling in Christ \(RIC\) Program](#) has been a public way for faith communities to see, name, celebrate, and advocate for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in the Lutheran church. There are many other similar organizations that coordinate the Welcoming Church program within their denomination - within the United Methodist Church, this program is known as the [Reconciling Ministries Network](#). These separate organizations have worked collaboratively to create and maintain the [Building an Inclusive Church Toolkit](#) - a pathway to help congregations and faith communities specifically welcome people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. As a Lutheran and Methodist congregation, this means that by following the journey outlined in the Building an Inclusive Church (BIC) Toolkit, we will meet the requirements of both of our denominations in order to become an official Welcoming Church.



The journey towards becoming a Welcoming Church is not a simple nor short one - the BIC Toolkit outlines 11 steps, each of which take time, effort, and discernment. This journey will require openness, patience, and commitment from each and every one of us.

The first step in this journey will be to form a Core Team of 5-10 people who share a passion for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people in the life of our faith community. These people will work together to advocate for, design, and shepherd the journey. While the Core Team will work in consultation with Pastor Miranda, this project will be led by the members of the Core Team. There is a training program that accompanies the BIC Toolkit, which the members of the Core Team would have the option to participate in in order to be better equipped to facilitate and lead this journey.

Those interested in being a part of the Core Team to help guide and shepherd us through this journey should reach out to Pastor Miranda to have a conversation and receive more information. Once at least 5 individuals have committed to being a part of the Core Team, they will begin to facilitate this journey by gathering information from the congregation through one on one visits. More individuals are welcome to join the Core Team at any point throughout this journey. You are all encouraged to spend some time this month in prayer and discernment, and consider how God is calling you to engage with and support this process.

Reckoning with Racism Team - Upcoming Event

Our Reckoning with Racism Team has been continuing to meet and learn more about the history of racism in Oregon, as well as the more specific history of Hood River and the land we currently steward and reside upon. While our research and learning is by no means complete, the team would love to have the opportunity to gather together with the rest of the congregation to share our learnings and findings thus far, as well as listen to any related stories and experiences you all have with this topic.

On **Sunday, February 27th**, all are invited to stay after worship for this gathering in place of our usual fellowship time. The team will share a video and some resources that we have found helpful thus far, as well as a brief summary of our research progress, before opening it up for a time of guided discussion. More information will be sent out later in the month.



Annual Meeting January 16, 2022 Minutes

Due to the increased number of Covid cases in the county and state, our annual meeting was held via zoom. Those in attendance totaled 26.

Firstly Pastor Miranda reviewed zoom instructions for voting and polling using icons available. Couples would need to log onto a second device for voting. After some demonstrations there were still a few individuals not able to access the tools. It was then decided to just go with a physical show of hands for voting.

Pastor Miranda began the meeting reading a Litany from the ELW p.317, responses vocalized by Tom Hart. She then read greetings from the ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and our Oregon Synod Bishop Laurie Ceazar.

Pastor then displayed on screen the Agenda. Nominations will be taken from the floor and then voted on. There were no questions or comments from the group.

Firstly nominations for the Board. Tom Hart and Sharon Poynter had terms ending 2021 and have agreed to serve another three year term. Cindy Murahashi has agreed to fill in the one year vacancy through 2022.

Next SPRC, Staff-Parish Relations Committee, Sharon Pantely's term ended 2021 but has agreed to serve another term. Pat Moore has agreed to serve the remaining term left vacant.

With no other names presented Tom Hart moved to accept these nominations and Debbie Chenoweth seconded. The vote passed unanimously.

Next order of business are Reports.

First from Building and Grounds read by Rick McBee. For grounds maintenance there are three main individuals: Dave Radley, Craig Terry, and Alan Yenne. Scott Fitch has been very involved with the community garden.

Debbie Chenoweth connected with a local Eagle Scout who designed and put up the new signage for FISH. Rick reported on the status of **the Out Reach house**, with the recommendations from the Board and LOTS of cost analysis, the house will be torn down. There is currently no time frame to accomplish this, and still a need to ascertain if there are interested parties who could use the space for community out reach.

The Parsonage also underwent a deep cleaning, new carpeting, and upgrades in preparation for Pastor Miranda and wife Jenny to move in this last summer.

No questions or comments came from the group. Sharon Pantely wanted to applaud and thank the team of workers for their diligent work.

Happy Hands report was read by Kris White. In person meetings have been limited again this year due to Covid and Zoom meetings aren't very conducive for this group. The times they have been able to meet in person has been more of a support group. Happy Hands was able to sell Bazaar items in the Fellowship room for the 1st three Sundays in December to some success. This past year they have been able to donate to the new immigrant family, the needs of our local children through the Fire Department, and UMC & Lutheran Relief.

The choir report by Audrey Bentz is on the record for review since Audrey was not present to read it. Sharon Pantely did make corrections to the report stating that two of our members passed, Kathy Terry and Lynn Mead.

Continued on next page.

Tom Hart shared the completed end of the year 2021 Financial Report. We are only \$4000 short in giving. We will have no more legal expenses like last year. The Budget for 2022 is in good shape. A complete financial report will be in the next Newsletter. Jennifer Fowler thanked Tom for taking on this responsibility with the church finances.

He reviewed the Pastor Compensation and the congregation paid for both Pastor Sue and Pastor Miranda. Currently Pastor Miranda is @ 85% hire but our ultimate goal is to increase that to 100%. Since she is part time she will be relying on more volunteers.

The only vote on the table is the fate of the Out Reach house. Bette Lou Yenne commented on the need to take our time in the removal of the building, not to make a hasty move. Agreed there are a few factors to negotiate before any immediate action. Shelley Oates made the motion to accept the Board’s recommendation to remove the Out Reach house. Craig Terry seconded. The congregation voted unanimously in favor of removal.

No vote was required by the congregation on the Budget since it already passed by the Board.

Pastor Miranda closed the meeting with a Prayer. Closed at 12:07 PM

Respectfully submitted by Sharon Poynter, Board Secretary

Board Update

The Spirit of Grace Board of Directors will have our first meeting of 2022 sometime in February (date still being finalized). Please hold them in your hearts and prayers as they discern together the path God is calling us down this year.

| Income Comparison for 2021 | 12/31/20 Actual | 12/31/21 Budget | 12/31/21 Actual | Difference vs. Budget |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| General Fund Offerings | 109,577.90 | 108,000.00 | 103,196.04 | (4803.96) |
| Building Expense Reimbursement | 5000.00 | 0.00 | 400.96 | 400.96 |
| Memorial Funds | 1420.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Designated Giving | 1936.00 | 2500.00 | 2050.00 | (450.00) |
| Good News Gardening Rent | 600.00 | 600.00 | 1050.00 | 450.00 |
| Thrivent | 26.00 | 25.00 | 0.00 | (25.00) |
| FISH Food Bank Rent | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| Pastor’s Expense Reimbursement | | 0.00 | 2000.00 | 2000.00 |
| Spirit of Grace Women | | 250.00 | 0.00 | (250.00) |
| Spirit of Grace Religious Study | | 25.00 | 0.00 | (25.00) |
| Music and Choir | | | 350.00 | 350.00 |
| Quilting Group | | | 330.00 | 330.00 |
| Totals | 118,560.90 | 111,401.00 | 109,378.00 | (2023.00) |

Submitted by Tom Hart, Treasurer

COVID Update

Thank you all for your understanding and flexibility when we had to close our church building due to a dramatic surge in COVID cases in our area. As we continue to learn more about this virus and its various forms and variants, we are embodying our Christians calling to do whatever we can to love and protect our neighbors and those most vulnerable in our communities.



Our church building will remain closed at least through Sunday, February 13th as of now. However, moving forward, we will be making these decisions based on our COVID Building Usage Policy, which has been preliminarily approved by the board, pending a final vote at our February meeting. This policy is based on the current COVID guidelines from the ELCA and UMC - should these denominational guidelines change, we will update this policy accordingly. You can find the policy on page 8.

FISH Board Representative

Thank you to Kristin Marcroft for her faithful service as the Spirit of Grace representative on the FISH Board this past year! Due to a work change, Kristin is no longer able to serve in this capacity, and we are looking for someone to step up into this role. If you've volunteered with FISH in the past and think this might be an interesting opportunity, please reach out to Debby Chenoweth or Bette Lou Yenne for more information!

February Weekly Reflections

Feb 6 – Luke 5:4 *How do God's blessings show up in surprising and confusing ways?*

Feb 13 – Luke 6:21 *How can we better align our worldview with the upside down nature of the Kingdom of God?*

Feb 20 – Luke 6:28-29 *Why is forgiveness so crucial to God's vision for us? Why is it so hard for us to authentically live out?*

Feb 27 – Luke 9:34-35 *When you feel lost in a cloud of uncertainty, where do you look for God's clarity?*

February Birthdays & Anniversaries



Roberta Schweller **3**

Joyce Gilbertson
Kristin Marcroft **17**

Pepi Gerald **23**

Prayer Requests

Personal prayer requests can be sent to Carol Kyger at cckyger@gmail.com or call 541-386-6341.

The following policy was written based on guidelines from the [UMC](#) and [ELCA](#). When rising cases lead to an increased risk category, mitigations and restrictions are adopted immediately. When cases lessen and lead to a decreased risk category, cases must stay within that range for a minimum of one week before mitigations and restrictions can be lessened. Decisions made based on data distributed by [COVID Act-Now](#).

SEVERE (> 90 per 100K)

- ==The church building is closed to all non-essential business
- ==All meetings and gatherings will be held via Zoom
- ==Worship will be held via Zoom

EXTREME (75-90 per 100K)

- ==The church building is closed to all non-essential business
- ==All meetings will be held via Zoom
- ==Worship Options
 - Outdoors: masked, distanced, singing, no communion
 - Zoom

CRITICAL (25-75 per 100K)

- ==The church building is open for limited usage
 - no meetings or gatherings may exceed 60 min.
 - no communal food consumption
- ==Meetings may be held in person or via Zoom based on comfort and convenience
- ==Worship Options
 - Outdoors: masked, distanced, singing, no communion
 - Indoors: masked, no singing, no communion, no fellowship
 - Zoom

HIGH (10-25 per 100K)

- ==The church building is open for regular use - masks required.
- ==Meetings may be held in person or via Zoom based on comfort and convenience
- ==Worship Options
 - Outdoors: masked, distanced, singing and communion allowed
 - Indoors: masked, 1 brief sending song, no communion, no fellowship
 - Zoom

MEDIUM (1-10 per 100K)

- ==The church building is open for regular use - masks required.
- ==Meetings may be held in person or via Zoom based on comfort and convenience
- ==Worship Options
 - Outdoors: distanced, singing and communion allowed
 - Indoors: masked, singing and communion allowed with masks and distancing, fellowship (outdoors preferred, indoors under 30 min)

Caution-Based Exceptions

*Exceptions favoring more cautious restrictions may be made when the risk level based on cases has lessened, but the **infection rate exceeds 1.1%** and the **positive test rate exceeds 5%**. In these cases, church leadership may decide to hold off on lessening restrictions.*

February

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|--|--|---|-----|---|-----|------------------------------------|
| | | 1 10am Men's Fellowship (zoom) | 2 | 3 6:30pm Study-Group Zoom | 4 | 5 9-1 Women's Spirituality Zoom |
| 6 10am Worship | 7 | 8 10am Men's Fellowship (zoom) Worship Team Meeting (time?) | 9 | 10 6:30pm Study-Group Zoom | 11 | 12 |
| 13 10am Worship | 14 Happy Valentine's Day! | 15 10am Men's Fellowship (zoom) | 16 | 17 6:30pm Study-Group Zoom | 18 | 19 |
| 20 10am Worship Guest Preacher | 21 Office Closed Presidents' Day | 22 10am Men's Fellowship (zoom) | 23 | 24 2-4pm Women's bible study Zoom 6:30pm Study-Group Zoom | 25 | 26 |
| 27 Food on the 4th 10am Worship Racism Presentation & Discussion | 28 | | | | | |

Worship Duties

| February | 6 | 13 | 20 | 27 |
|---|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|  | Jill McBee | Sharon Poynter | Jill McBee | Tom Hart |
|  | Kristin Marcroft | Linda Boris | Linda Boris | Debby Chenoweth |
| Presentation (Zoom) | Rick McBee | Debby Chenoweth | Debby Chenoweth | Rick McBee |
| Congregation | Sharon Pantley | Tom Hart | Sharon Poynter | Sharon Pantley |



Spirit of Grace

1140 Tucker Road
Hood River, Oregon 97031
Phone: 541-386-3993
Email: office@hoodriverchurch.com
Web site: hoodriverchurch.org

Sunday Worship Times
Worship Service 10:00am zoom

Education Times
Check with the Church Office

Office Hours

Pastor
Miranda Bermes-Goller
Mon-Wed 9-12 or by appointment

Staff
Jennifer Fowler
Office & Financial Secretary
Mon 9am to 2pm
Wed 9am to 2pm
Thurs 9am to 2pm

Linda Boris
Pastoral Assistant
Tues 9am to 1pm



https://



Board of Directors (3 yrs)

Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller
Tom Hart, Co-Chair (2021)
Sharon Poynter (2021)
Shelley Oates Co-Chair (2020)
Gordon Leigh (2020)
Cindy Murahashi (2022) 1 year

Finance Committee

Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller
Debby Chenoweth (2022)
Dottie Gilbertson (2022)
Tom Hart Treasurer & Payroll
Jennifer Fowler Financial Secretary
Shelley Oates Board Liaison

Ministry Team Leaders

Worship Linda Boris, Dottie Gilbertson
Altar Guild Marlene Lahti
Children & Youth
Men's Ministry
Women's Ministry
Outreach Debby Chenoweth
Prayer Chain Carol Kyger
Reception/Hospitality
Building Rick McBee

Music Ministry

Organist/Piano Dottie Gilbertson & Audrey Bentz
Voice Choir Audrey Bentz & Sharon Poynter
Bell Choir Linda Boris

Staff Parish Relations (2yrs)

Sharon Pantley (2020)
Pat Moore (2022)

Representatives

Oregon Synod Assembly: Jim & Cheri Anderson
Oregon-Idaho Annual Conf.



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Spirit of Grace

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Hood River, Oregon 97031

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