

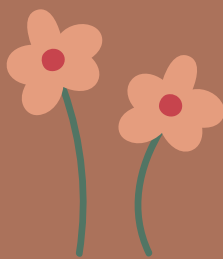
FEBRUARY/MARCH 2024

Newsletter



## Brighter Days Ahead

The end of winter is at hand, and spring is fast approaching! Read on to hear about all of the ways that new life has been stirring and emerging at Spirit of Grace as we prepare to enter into the spring season, ready to grow and flourish into the people God has created us to be and to become!



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# Pastor's Letter

## Beloved Siblings in Christ,

As creation and the creatures around us have been slowing down, adopting their habits of hibernation and rest this winter season, it feels as though life at Spirit of Grace has been bustling with busyness these last few months! After a January of snow and ice storms that kept most of us hunkered down in our homes, February has felt like a whirlwind of activity as we readied ourselves to begin the season of Lent and contemplate the ways in which we are invited to return to relationship with the Divine.

We began February with a celebratory party: the Agape Feast! Agape is one of the Greek words for love, used to describe the kind of active, self-giving, relational love we experience from God through Jesus Christ, which we too are called to embody in our lives. Our fellow Open & Affirming congregations joined us for this "Love Feast" as together we dreamed of ways to live out God's radical love and welcome in our local community. See page 9 for pictures of this joyous event! However, a love that truly honors God is a love that doesn't only focus on what is easy and positive, but takes an honest look at past hurts and harm in order to fully understand what needs to be mended and repaired so that all people can experience the love, life, and liberation of God. This is why we, together with Riverside and Bethel UCC, have embarked on a Lenten journey following Jesus in dismantling the doctrine of discovery with Sarah Augustine's book "The Land is Not Empty." Our conversations thus far have been enlightening and engaging, and I am eager to see where this Lenten wilderness journey will lead us all.



# Pastor's Letter

Our new board members had their first meeting of the year in February as well! I am so immensely grateful for the 8 congregation members who faithfully discerned and answered this call to serve on our new leadership team and help guide our congregation as we navigate what ministry will look like for us in the coming years. Our meeting in February was full of energy and ideas, and we came away with goals and hopes for our work and relationships together this year. You can read more about the new roles our board members will be taking on and the goals we have set for this year on pages 7 and 8. The hope with this new structure of having each board member carry a specific role and speciality is that they will become the "point-people" for these areas of ministry. If you have an idea or question about one of the areas covered by our board (Outreach, Finance, Grounds, Staff-Parish Relations), be sure to reach out to that designated board member. As we grow in our ministry together, we must remember that we are part of the body of Christ, each of us a vital member necessary to do the work of God. If you don't know what your vital role is yet, talk with Pastor Miranda or one of our board members for help in discerning this!

After 2 and a half years of ministry with you all, I finally feel like I have found my footing and I am starting to feel more connected with our surrounding community, which has been a huge source of joy for me these last few months. Thank you all for your grace and support as I have continued learning and growing into my pastoral role and calling in this community. This "little church with a big heart" has given me the space to continue growing into the kind of leader I always hoped God would help me become. I can't wait to see all of the growth and flourishing that is yet to come for us. In the meantime, breathe, beloveds. The journey to the cross may be long and arduous, but the resurrection promise always awaits us on the other side of the tomb.

In Peace,  
*Pastor Miranda BG*



# Journeying through Lent

## Lenten Book Study

8:30 am Sundays - Fellowship Room  
6:30 pm Thursdays - Online via Zoom

**"The Land is Not Empty:  
Following Jesus in Dismantling the  
Doctrine of Discovery"**  
by Sarah Augustine

In keeping with our commitment to work towards racial equity and anti-racism, we will be joining together with Bethel and Riverside UCC to read this important book by local author Sarah Augustine in order to better understand the lasting harm of the Doctrine of Discovery and the responsibility we have to dismantle this harmful legacy of the Christian Church.

We will read this book as a congregation, reading two chapters per week using our usual book study group times, and we will gather with our neighbors in faith for 3 community events with local leaders to discuss how we are called to respond to this in the Columbia Gorge.

### Community Gatherings

Tuesday, February 6th - 7pm on Zoom  
*Discussion with author Sarah Augustine*

Sunday, March 17th - 1pm, FISH Community Room  
*Discussion with local indigenous leaders*

Saturday, April 13th - Time TBD, Bethel UCC  
*Discussion with the author and local indigenous leaders.*

## Ash Wednesday

6pm February 14th

We mark the beginning of the Lenten journey with a contemplative service and the imposition of ashes, remembering that we are beloved by God our Creator, to whom we will return.

## Midweek Lenten Gathering

5-7pm Wednesdays

St. Mark's Episcopal  
400 111th St. Hood River

In Advent, we hosted a midweek meal and worship service and invited our siblings in faith from St. Mark's to join us. Now, it is their turn to host and our turn to be guests! We gather with our siblings in faith from St. Mark's for a weekly soup supper, scripture study, and simple evening worship service.

Spirit of Grace is responsible for bringing the meal on **February 28th** and **March 13th**. Sign up to bring soup, salad, or bread to share!

## Maundy Thursday

5-7pm March 28th

As Jesus gathered with his disciples for a final meal before his arrest, we too will gather around a table to share a common meal as we remember Christ's journey to the cross and await the coming Resurrection.

# Baptismal Preparation

Lent is historically a time in the Christian Church when new believers prepare for baptism, learning the stories and traditions of the church as they eagerly await their baptism and official entrance into the Christian community on Easter morning (usually at the end of the Easter Vigil, a long service that begins on Holy Saturday and ends by rejoicing in the resurrection at the dawn of Easter).

This year, a member of our community has begun preparing for their own baptismal journey, and will be baptized in our community on Easter Sunday! Poe Foster has been worshipping with us for the last few months, and meets on Monday afternoons with Pastor Miranda to study and prepare for his baptism. Read more about our new community member below, and think about how you can pray for, encourage, and support Poe on his baptismal journey!



My name is Poe Foster and I have lived in Hood River with my amazing family (wife and two nearly adult children) for just under six years. Being originally from the US but living the majority of my life in Canada, my family and I transitioned to try something new and live a little adventurously.

As a child I grew up in the Gospel Hall but like many of us had some difficult hardships that rocked my faith in Jesus. Returning to my faith many years later, I have been looking for an inclusive and loving Lutheran church that accepts all people and allows us all to be embraced by God's love.

I feel as though I have found a home with Spirit of Grace and am excited to carry my faith even further and extend it to my family. Lastly, I work at The Next Door as a manager with foster youth here in Hood River, have two amazing dogs and enjoy tattoos.

# Easter Sunday

Christ is Risen! Alleluia!



Sunday, March 31st

Easter Breakfast – 8:30 am

*Join us for a potluck breakfast before worship in the Fellowship Room!*

Easter Worship – 10:00 am

*We gather to rejoice and celebrate the Good News of Christ's resurrection and remind one another of what it means to be a people of the resurrection in this time and this place.*

Poe Foster Baptismal Celebration – 11:15 am

*Immediately following worship, we return to the Fellowship Room to celebrate the baptism of our new sibling in faith, Poe Foster!*

# *New Board Roles & Responsibilities*

In our Annual Meeting on January 21st, our congregation voted to amend our constitution and adopt a simplified leadership team model that will better accommodate our current capacity and resources. Rather than having a separate Board, Staff-Parish Relations Committee, and Finance Committee, these three components of the Leadership Team have now been condensed into a single board, with each board member taking on specific roles and responsibilities:

**Tom Hart - Treasurer - Finance Specialist - term expires 2026**

**Sharon Pantely - Staff-Parish Relations Specialist - term expires 2026**

**Margaret Godard - Staff-Parish Relations Specialist - term expires 2026**

**Doug Swanson - Board Chair - term expires 2025**

**Debby Chenoweth - Outreach Specialist - term expires 2025**

**Cindy Murahashi - Secretary - Outreach Specialist - term expires 2025**

**Sharon Poynter - Buildings & Grounds Specialist - term expires 2024**

**Jennifer Fowler - Financial Secretary - Finance Specialist - term expires 2024**

**Open Board Position - no assigned role - term expires 2024**

Our Board met on Sunday, February 11th to establish these roles and responsibilities, and to set goals for the coming year of ministry. There will be four primary board meetings throughout the year, as well as a concluding meeting in December to wrap up year-end business:

**Sunday, April 28th - 11:15 am - 2 pm**

**Sunday, June 30th - 11:15 am - 2 pm**

**Sunday, August 25th - 11:15 am - 2 pm**

**Sunday, October 27th - 11:15 am - 2 pm**

**Sunday, December 8th - 11:15 am - 1 pm**

# 2024 Engagement Goals

*The following goals emerged from our board meeting. It is our hope that we as a congregation will meaningfully engage in the four goals listed below - each commitment has four suggestions of ways that we, as a congregation and as individuals, can live into this goal.*

## **1) Build connections and relationships with our neighbors and community partners so that we can better offer support, advocate for their needs, and celebrate abundant life with them.**

- Get involved and form connections with groups that meet in the FISH Community Room
- Participate with volunteers who come to serve in the FISH Garden
- Show up and participate in community events as a congregation
- Get to know the lives and stories of those who come to the FISH Food Bank

## **2) Cultivate partnerships with our ecumenical, interfaith, and non-profit neighbors so that we can work together to better steward and share our resources in order to meet the needs of our community.**

- Partner with other local open & affirming congregations as we live into this commitment together
- Work with local non-profits to discern how new life can emerge from the old outreach house
- Share in worship, study, and fellowship with local congregations
- Learn from and connect with ecumenical and interfaith partners through GEM

## **3) Encourage and affirm existing and every-day ministries of our congregation so that all can feel empowered and equipped to grow and serve in ways that are life-giving and spirit-filled.**

- Make space in worship to regularly affirm the ministries and service that happens regularly and often goes unnoticed
- Cultivate a culture of encouraging the gifts we see in one another
- Adjust our expectations of one another in order to honor our capacity and serve in ways that are sustainable
- Support one another in stepping out of our comfort zones and into our growth zones

## **4) Stand in Solidarity with our neighbors who experience marginalization and discrimination, and speak out against oppression and injustice wherever we encounter it.**

- Listen to the stories of our neighbors who experience marginalization, oppression, and discrimination
- Participate in calls to action in our local and surrounding community however and whenever we can
- Understand the history of Christianity's endorsement of White Supremacy and other systems of oppression and discrimination so we can work towards dismantling it and creating a more just and equitable future.



# Agape Feast Celebration

On the first Sunday in February, we had a special worship service celebrating our commitment to being an Open & Affirming congregation, a place where all people are welcome to bring their whole selves and be loved as beautiful members of God's expansive and wondrous creation!

After worship, we gathered with our Open & Affirming partners, the congregations of Riverside and Bethel UCC, in the FISH Community Room for our Agape Feast Celebration. We shared in food and fellowship, listened to reflections on why welcoming congregations are so vital, and brainstormed together about ways that we can work together to live into this shared commitment and better reach out to our surrounding communities.

It was a wonderful day full of joy and celebration. Stay tuned to see what fruits will begin to emerge from these relationships and commitments in the coming year!



# Church Updates

## FISH

### March Distribution

Thank you to everyone who has signed up to volunteer for our FISH Distribution dates on March 11th, 13th, and 15th! If you are still interested in volunteering, please contact Bette Lou Yenne (541-386-5031 or [abyenne@gorge.net](mailto:abyenne@gorge.net)) to get signed up to volunteer.



## Collecting Care Kits

Thank you so much to everyone who has donated much-needed items for our Baby Care Kits! We are hoping to have all materials collected by Easter (the end of March) so that we can gather to assemble the kits in April. Below you will find the items we are still in need of, though needs will change as more donations are brought in!

**T-shirts - 10 needed**

**Socks - 10 needed**

**Hand Towels (dark colors preferred) - 15 needed**

**Bars of Soap - 65 needed**

**Gowns - 60 needed**

Donations can be brought to the display in the Narthex. Monetary donations are also accepted - be sure to indicate on the check or giving envelope that the donation is for "LWR Care Kits."

If you have any further questions or want to know what items we are most in need of currently, reach out to Dottie Gilbertson ([dottieg@gorge.net](mailto:dottieg@gorge.net)).



# Community Updates

## Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration

On Monday, January 15th, the Columbia Gorge community gathered at Riverside UCC for a special celebration service in honor of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The celebration was called "We Stand Together: Continuing the Work of Justice and Equity for All" and focused on the ways in which we are all called to live out Dr. King's legacy today.

A Community Gospel Choir, led by the talented Cynthia Butts from Portland, led us in joyous music as we listened to readings and reflections from community leaders.

Pastor Miranda was one of the speakers, along with Ubaldo Hernandez and Edward McNair.



# Community Updates



## Community Action Gathering for Permanent Ceasefire Now

Fridays at 4:30pm  
State & 2nd Streets, Hood River, OR



Come and gather in solidarity as we speak out against the war, violence, and genocide happening in Palestine.

**Wear red and bring your signs calling for peace and justice.**

This Community Action Gathering is a weekly event, and will also allow us to share more information on other actions to take, such as calling/writing to congressional representatives, signing petitions, etc.

*This is a peaceful, interfaith event.*



# Community Updates

## New Gem Board Members

This year, the GEM Board bid farewell to a few members after many different lengths of dedicated service! If you know Andy Wade, Brooke Harvey, or Kim Vogel, be sure to thank them for their service to our interfaith community.

In January, we welcomed three new board members: Annette Luthy, Patricia Mitchell, and Doug Swanson (our new GEM Board representative). Please pray for these new leaders in our community, and thank them for stepping up and answering the call!

The GEM Board meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 2pm.

## GEM Monthly Community Meetings Third Thursdays, 11:30 am - 1 pm

Thursday, March 21st

*Rockford Grange*

*4262 Barrett Drive, Hood River*

Our speaker this month will be Ann Harris, who will talk with us about the group BIG (Blacks in the Gorge) and ways in which we can show up and say that Black Lives Matter.

# ELCA/UMC Updates

Oregon Synod Assembly

June 1st, 2024

Online via Zoom

## The Way of Jesus: Embodied | Spiritual | Friendship

The delegates of the Oregon Synod of the ELCA will gather online on Saturday, June 1st to attend to the business of our Synod. Our voting delegates this year are

**Tom Hart** and **Alicia Bermes**.

Oregon Idaho Annual Conference

June 20-23, 2024

Tigard United Methodist Church

## Being Well

The delegates of our UMC conference will convene to attend to regular business, gather in worship, and explore impactful ways to spread wellness across the area.

Our voting delegate this year is **Tom Hart**.

*Our conference follows a little over a month after the delayed 2020 General Conference, which finally meets in Charlotte, North Carolina, April 23- May 3.*

# Prayer

## For What Shall We Pray?



"For What Shall We Pray?" is a weekly post through ELCA Worship inviting individuals, groups, and congregations to lift up our world in prayer. See more like this at [blogs.elca.org/worship](https://blogs.elca.org/worship)

***For peace among nations where war and violence rage, especially Palestine and Israel, Syria, Myanmar, Russia and Ukraine, and Sudan...***

***For cease-fires and for safe return of hostages...***

***For nations in political transition, including Italy and Palestine...***

***For safe and just resolution to protests in Nigeria, South Korea, and across Europe...***

***For those grieving Laken Hope Riley and for the Augusta University and University of Georgia campus communities...***

***For all experiencing unseasonable, unstable, and extreme weather across the United States...***

***For those battling wildfires, especially in Nebraska and Texas...***

***For safety, compassion, and welcome for refugees, asylum seekers, and all migrants...***

***For victims of hate crimes, violence, and abuse...***

***For medical professionals, researchers, and scientists...***



If you have prayer requests that you would like to be lifted up by our prayer chain and in Sunday morning worship, please email Carol Kyger ([cckyger@gmail.com](mailto:cckyger@gmail.com)), who will pass your request along to our prayer chain.

If you are interested in being a part of our prayer chain that receives prayer request emails as they come in, please email Carol Kyger to be added to that list.

If you have a prayer request that you would like to be kept **confidential**, please email Pastor Miranda. These prayer needs will not be shared publicly unless expressly mentioned.

# Weekly Reflections



## **February 4th: Isaiah 40:30-31**

*How does your hope and faith in God give you renewal when you find yourself weary? How do you feel when you remember to put your trust in God?*

## **February 11th: Mark 9:2-3**

*When you imagine Jesus' divine self, what do you picture? What images, feelings, smells, or sounds come to mind? How would you have felt on that mountaintop?*

## **February 18th: Genesis 9:13**

*What are you reminded of when you see a rainbow in the sky? How does this beauty of nature bring you closer to God through the covenant?*

## **February 25th: Romans 4:16**

*It is through faith that we receive the promises of God, not through law or works or actions within our control. How does this faith comfort you and stir you to live for Christ?*

## **March 3rd: John 2:16-17**

*A rare depiction of Jesus' anger and zeal against those who would exploit the poor and desecrate the temple. What does this depiction of Jesus teach us about what it means to be faithful?*

## **March 10th: Romans 2:8-10**

*What good works has God created and prepared you to do? How does the grace of God through our faith in Jesus Christ empower you in this work?*

## **March 17th: John 12:24**

*It is only through death and the ending of things that we are able to find new life and new beginnings. What deaths are you seeing around you? How might they bring new life?*

## **March 24th: Isaiah 50:4**

*What word of God sustains you when you need it most? This could be a bible verse, a hymn, a poem, or even a memory you hold dear and sacred.*

## **March 31st: Mark 16:8**

*This version of the resurrection story ends with fear and hesitation. How can we make space for this reality in our celebration of Jesus' victory over death?*



# February Dates

## Weekly Meetings & Events

8:30 am Sundays - Book Study

10 am Sundays - Worship

10 am Mondays - Women's Coffee Group

10 am Tuesdays - Men's Coffee Group (Zoom)

7 pm Wednesdays - Bell Choir

6:30 pm Thursdays - Book Study (Zoom)

## Monthly/Special Meetings & Events

February 3rd - Women's Spirituality Group

February 5th - Agape Feast Celebration

February 6th - The Land is Not Empty Discussion with Author

February 7th & 21st - Quilting Group

February 11th - Church Board Meeting

February 14th - Ash Wednesday

February 15th - Church Office Closed

February 18th: Living in the Word Bible Study

February 21st & 28th - Lenten Midweek Gatherings

February 27th - Women's Monthly Bible Study

*VIEW MOST UP TO DATE CALENDAR AT  
[HOODRIVERCHURCH.ORG/CALENDAR](http://HOODRIVERCHURCH.ORG/CALENDAR)*

# March Dates

## Weekly Meetings & Events

8:30 am Sundays - Book Study

10 am Sundays - Worship

10 am Mondays - Women's Coffee Group

10 am Tuesdays - Men's Coffee Group (Zoom)

7 pm Wednesdays - Bell Choir

6:30 pm Thursdays - Book Study (Zoom)

## Monthly/Special Meetings & Events

March 2nd - Women's Spirituality Group

March 3rd - First Sunday Fellowship

March 6th & 20th - Quilting Group

March 6th, 13th, 20th - Lenten Midweek Gatherings

March 11th, 13th, 15th - FISH Food Distribution

March 13th - Bessie Asai's 101st Birthday

*email office@hoodriverchurch.com for Bessie's address to send her a card*

March 17th - The Land is Not Empty Discussion with Local Leaders

March 21st - GEM Monthly Community Meeting

March 21st - Church Office Closed

March 26th - Women's Monthly Bible Study

March 28th - Maundy Thursday Dinner Church

March 31st - Easter Sunday Celebration

*Church Office Closed April 1st-6th*

**VIEW MOST UP TO DATE CALENDAR AT  
[HOODRIVERCHURCH.ORG/CALENDAR](http://HOODRIVERCHURCH.ORG/CALENDAR)**

# Contact & Connect

## Sunday Worship

10:00 am

In-Person & Online

[hoodriverchurch.com](http://hoodriverchurch.com)

## Church Office Hours

9am - 1pm

Monday - Thursday

## Staff

**Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller**

[spiritofgracepastor@gmail.com](mailto:spiritofgracepastor@gmail.com)

Available during office hours or by appointment

**Linda Boris, Pastoral Assistant**

Available Tuesdays, 10am - 1pm



Spirit of Grace  
Lutheran-Methodist Church

1140 Tucker Road  
Hood River, OR 97031

541-386-3993

[office@hoodriverchurch.com](mailto:office@hoodriverchurch.com)

## Church Board Members

Tom Hart

- Treasurer & Finance Specialist
- term expires 2026

Sharon Pantely

- Staff-Parish Relations Specialist
- term expires 2026

Margaret Godard

- Staff-Parish Relations Specialist
- term expires 2026

Doug Swanson

- Board Chair
- term expires 2025

Debby Chenoweth

- Outreach Specialist
- term expires 2025

Cindy Murahashi

- Secretary & Outreach Specialist
- term expires 2025

Sharon Poynter

- Buildings & Grounds Specialist
- term expires 2024

Jennifer Fowler

- Financial Secretary & Finance Specialist
- term expires 2024

Open Board Position

- no assigned role
- term expires 2024

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