

## *Phil's Thoughts*

There is a Peanuts comic strip that features the character Linus who is sighing. His big sister Lucy criticizes him for wasting time with sighing, declaring that sighing has no value. Linus responds, “When we do not know how to pray as we ought, the Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.’ Romans 8: 26.” The subsequent frame reveals Lucy with a big frown, followed by her conclusion, “I don’t know whether to slug him or to go back to Sunday School!” I am frequently recall this cartoon for a host of reasons, especially as we anticipate returning to the fall schedule and the restart of Sunday School (Sept. 13 – see article on p. 3). It also offers brief but rich commentary both on what prayer is, and how we use the Bible.

I was reminded recently of how variously Christians understand the Bible. All Christian churches affirm the importance of scripture, but some say they interpret it literally and others emphasize metaphorical understandings. Some believe the meaning of the text is self-evident and timeless. They think it speaks in the same voice to everyone in every age. This doesn’t result, however, in everyone agreeing on everything. Some declare that the Bible is without error, although I’ve never been entirely clear about what that means in practice. Virtually everyone I know hold some parts of scripture more important than others. Others, and I include myself in this group, find significance in learning more about the various voices represented in scripture. I seek to understand the context of a particular passage – why was it written, to whom and for what purpose? What issues were the original hearers of a text facing? In my view, the Bible records how our spiritual forbearers navigated differing perspectives as their faith evolved.

In addition to divergent views of what scripture means, there is a wide disparity among the faithful with regard to their familiarity with the texts. Some are well versed in scripture and others rarely open the book. To add to the complexity, content level knowledge does not necessarily tell us much about a person’s methods of interpretation, or whether s/he holds a “high” or “low” view of the Bible.

Last month, the Juneau Empire ran an anti-same gender marriage editorial by the pastor of another church in Juneau. In it he refers to his take on scripture that leads him to believe that the Bible condemns same gender marriage. The July 28 edition of the paper contains a “My Turn” column by me in which I reach the opposite conclusion (<http://juneauempire.com/opinion/2015-07-28/my-turn-faith-support-marriage-equality>). In my piece I also observe that throughout time, the Bible has been used for and against a whole host of issues – slavery, women’s rights, war and peace – the list goes on. I do not doubt the sincerity of those on various sides of the issues, but it does lead me to ponder, to put it bluntly, of the value of scripture. What is its significance when two people with opposing viewpoints are both convinced scripture supports theirs? When someone quotes scripture to you, do you feel like slugging them (figuratively, I hope!), or does it make you want to go back to Sunday School? What role does scripture play for you? How is the Bible important to you? How important do you want it to be?

Among the things I affirm about the Bible is that it is not a book that Christians agree *about*, but it is a book we agree *on*. What I mean by that is that it is the church’s book. We are not of one mind regarding what the Bible means, but we hold it in

## *Youth News*

This month is filled with many great opportunities for the Cooperative Youth Group!

Four of our young people: Magen Boegli, Liz Kell, Lacey Davis, and Summer Putman are joining Melissa down in San Antonio, TX for the Gather at the River conference put on by the Methodist Federation for Social Action and Reconciling Ministries Network. They will participate in the youth program, "Current," which uplift, renew, and empower our young people through an ally training, creative prayer and practice, and laying the groundwork for a sacred community of Reconciling Youth across the nation.

We will be a part of groundbreaking work and continue the work as the LGBTQIA+ outreach team of the Cooperative Youth Group here in Juneau as well as in the Alaska Conference at large. Please pray for us as we travel, learn, and get empowered to do this inspired, yet difficult, work for change and love!

The Cooperative Youth Group will be starting back up this month as well! Young people, grades 6-12, are welcome. Our theme this year will be Understanding and Celebrating Differences for Unity, Harmony, and Peace with Justice. Stay tuned for more information on what we will be discussing, what

we will be learning, and our mission trip planned for June 5-15, 2016.

Here is the upcoming schedule:

### **August**

22 - Junior/Senior Scholarship & College Essay Writing Seminar 9:00 AM & Lunch / Fun Event (Afternoon)

Location TBA

23 - Sunday Gathering: Incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders only with parents/guardians

5-6:30 PM with Dinner at NLUC

\*Youth Group, Grades 7-12: Volunteers to Serve Dinner

30 - Sunday Gathering: Whole Youth Group Mixer 5:15-7:15 PM at NLUC

## *Report from the UMC Annual Conference, Part II*

### *But wait...aren't we already a Welcoming Congregation?*

Our tag line is "No matter who you are, no matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." Doesn't that say it all? Who doesn't feel welcomed? Well, as a heterosexual, Alaskan-born, Eng-

lish-speaking, able-bodied, Master's degree graduate, middle-class, married white woman who has deep family history in Northern Light, I'm definitely the wrong person to ask. All the stars of privi-

lege are aligned for me (except perhaps arguably my female gender). There are no roadblocks between myself and any place of worship, especially in regards to my sexual orientation or gender identity.

## *Youth Exchange & Study (YES) , Our Ambassadors from the Middle East*

I'm grateful that our government took the initiative with the YES grant to bring young people from the Muslim world to learn, to live, to share, to make friends and to return home to share their stories. I want you to be a part of their story.

Veysel Kavanci, a boy from Istanbul, will be hosted by Stuart & Suzie Cohen and their son, Gabel. He will attend JDHS.

Lena Okasha, from Cairo, will come to the Heutte family, joining Tom, Dawn and their daughter, Hannah. She, too, will be at JDHS.

Yara Dgheish, from Gaza, will be with Beth Revist, and go to TMHS with her host sisters, Morgan and Anna. She will also have a younger brother, Bennet.

These three creative and adventurous students are part of the group of 750

young people selected from over 40,000 applications received by the US State Department. They are looking forward to life in Alaska, bringing their talents, their stories, their hopes and their dreams.

They will be in Juneau for the 2015-2016 school year. Please get to know these amazing young folks early on, so they can be part of your lives too.

Judith Maier

## *Summer Lunch Program - Volunteers Needed thru August 14*

We continue to serve lunch for children at the Geneva Woods housing complex in Douglas. This provides essential food not otherwise available since the school lunch program does not run during the summer . The meal is offered Monday through Friday . Volunteers help cook, serve, and lead activities. Meal preparation occurs in our church kitchen in the morning and lunch and activities are from 11:30 – 1 at Geneva Woods. Help is still needed! If you would like to be part of this for our last two weeks, contact Becca Freeman, Site Coordinator, [rkfreeman77@outlook.com](mailto:rkfreeman77@outlook.com), or 321-2605.



## *Looking Ahead – Sunday School and Fall Schedule begin September 13*

On Sunday, September 13 we will return to 11 a.m. worship that will continue through the 2015-16 school year. This is also the day that **10 a.m. Sunday School** classes will resume. There is an adult Bible Study, and sessions are in the works for elementary, middle, and high schoolers. There is also nursery care and we are exploring options for a preschool class. We are still **recruiting teachers**, and finalizing plans. **If you are interested in teaching, have questions, ideas, etc., or need more information**, please contact Pastor Phil, [nlucpastor@ak.net](mailto:nlucpastor@ak.net), or 586-3131.

## *Welcoming Congregation continued*

In Phil's article in the July newsletter, he asked us to reflect on if we are ready to be an open and all-inclusion congregation. The Presbyterians call it More Light, and the United Methodists call it Reconciling. I attended a workshop lead by Rev. Israel (Izzy) Alvaran from the Reconciling Ministries Network at the United Methodist Annual Conference in early June in Anchorage, hosted by St. John UMC. My personal motivation for attending the workshop was to learn how to gracefully start the conversation with my peers and friends who are not familiar with the LGBTQ+ community.

I want to begin by challenging ourselves to think outside of the binary system: male/female, right/wrong, yes/no. As female, we are already placed second in this binary (female, wrong, no), which already leads to a hierarchy and is not egalitarian at all. Humankind's story is that males are preferred and women are property of men. So the question par-

ents and doctors want to know when a baby is born; is it male or female? The first question someone asks at the news of a new birth is "is it a boy or a girl?" The child's placement in the world depends heavily on which box is checked and we deny a child personhood until we can solidly answer the question "is it ...?"

At the workshop I attended, I learned that the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are more complex than I realized. The complexity can be summarized by LGBTQAIPC. Wow, that's a lot of jumbled letters that hardly anyone knows what they all mean! No wonder the conversation is so difficult; most don't know where to even start! Gender identity and sexual orientation are a continuum. You cannot simplify with a Check-the-Box or Circle One.

Listed below are simplified definitions for LGBTQAIPC. They should not be mistaken as a complete understanding

of the gender identity/sexual orientation continuum. Nor is this an exhaustive list of gender identities and sexual orientations. I have included reference to pronouns. If you are unsure of someone's pronouns, ask them and respect what they use. In addition to the binary he/she, some use a gender neutral pronoun such as "ze" instead of she or he, while others go by their proper name only.

**L-Lesbian:** Identifies as female, is attracted to females (she/her).

**G-Gay:** Identifies as male, is attracted to males (he/him).

**B-Bisexual:** Identifies either as male or female, can be attracted to both their own gender and another gender simultaneously (she or he).

**T-Transgender:** Does not identify with their assigned birth gender. (she, he, or ze).

**Q-Queer:** An umbrella term for those who are marginalized for not being heterosexual. For example, a person who is gender non-conforming

## *Welcoming Congregation continued*

(doesn't identify as either male or female) may identify as gender-queer (she, he, or ze).

**A-Asexual:** A person who generally does not experience sexual attraction toward any group of people. Asexual is not the same as celibacy (her, him, or ze).

**I-Intersex:** Someone who has been physically born with possible ambiguous or mixed external genitalia or other biological complexities such as male and female reproductive organs, chromosomes (XXY), and/or hormones (ze).

**P-Pansexual:** Someone who can be sexually attracted to anyone, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation (she, he, or ze).

**C-Cisgender:** An individual who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth. Genital anatomy, gender identity, and personal presentation all conform to society's expectations of either male or female. (she or he).

I don't think we can assume that Everyone feels welcome and safe to come to church. If Northern Light were to become Reconciling/More Light, we would need to include in our welcoming statement the "full inclusion of sexual orientations and gender identities." This is crucial because they are the only group that is blatantly discriminated by the United Methodist Book of Discipline. (The Presbyterian USA denomination now defines a marriage between two people.) So, as it stands, "No matter who you are..." can still be interpreted "as long as you are heterosexual" both to those of us saying it and visitors hearing it. This isn't unlike the American Declaration of Independence when "All men are created equal" was initially understood to exclusively mean white male landowners.

So, why is it necessary to be loud, proud, and out there? Can't we just change our tag line? The problem is that one would only know that we're gen-

der identity and sexual orientation welcoming if they've already been brave enough to come in our doors and join us in service. Not only does the Book of Discipline strictly condemn the LGBTQ+ community, but historically and currently, Christians as a whole have publicly attacked LGBTQ+ psychologically, theologically, and even physically. If I weren't heterosexual, I probably would never step foot into a church either without knowing their stance on my identity and orientation first. To be loud, proud, and out there is an intentional invitation to lay down the welcome mat. Outside. It's our external representation of who we are at Northern Light as a loving beacon of God's love for all human-kind.

Averyl Veliz

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## *Phil's Thoughts continued*

common as a sourcebook. It contains “our story,” and as we read and study scripture we become part of the story. The Bible records how people of faith have sought to live in relationship with God and others, and learning from them means we don’t have to start from scratch. We access their wisdom for the living of our days. Sometimes we find application in what we read, and other times we may disagree with a text or find it not particularly pertinent for our lives. What we will find in scripture is a rich array of diverse, complex, and often compelling encounters that our spiritual forebearers have had.

One way to become part of the story is to participate in the Adult Bible Class that will resume on September 13, 10 a.m. in the Skuse Room at the church. Last spring, the class began a study of the letters of the Apostle Paul. Their study has been supplemented by the book, *The First Paul*, by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. During the first weeks of the fall, they will conclude that investigation before launching into new topic – probably investigating one of the synoptic gospels – either Matthew or Luke.

In addition, to this Sunday morning class, **I am exploring the idea of starting a midweek Bible Study, either during the day, or an evening session, or both.** My idea for the class(es) is to begin with an overview of scripture. One

possibility is the United Methodist produced *Disciple Bible Study* that introduces “the grand sweep of scripture.” It is now available in a new twenty-four week format. Another might start with Marcus Borg’s book, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, which offers (for some) a new lens through which to see scripture. We could include an examination of how the United Methodist and Presbyterian Church USA denominations understand scripture. Yet a third idea would be to focus on the lectionary readings for the next Sunday. The lectionary is a three year cycle of that includes the Hebrew Bible, Psalms, Gospel, and Epistle texts for each week. It follows the flow of the church year which provides the frame of reference for interpreting the Bible.

What do you think? Would you like to participate in a Bible Study? If so, when? Which format or approach would be of greatest interest? Even if you don’t think of yourself as part of the Biblical story, Bible study can be of great value. There are numerous cultural, literary, and historic references to scripture and knowing more about the Bible can aid your comprehension of how it is used and what it means. I look forward to hearing from you. You don’t have to slug me; just let me know!

### Revenue "On-Budget"

Revenue in support of the day-to-day spending of Northern Light's 2015 finances remained (as of July 24) slightly ahead of what it was budgeted to be at this point in time.

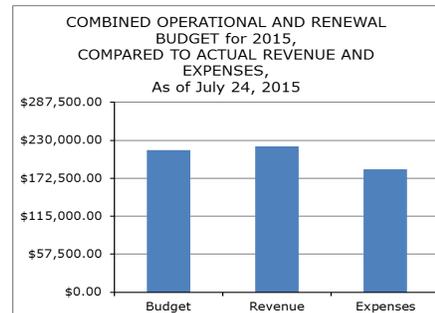
Northern Light's 2015 spending plan is divided among 4 different funds—two funded by endowment earnings and two (largely) by congregational giving. The latter two are the operational fund and the renewal fund. This year the renewal fund supports preventative maintenance projects, such as repair of rot, substandard insulation, and re-failing windows in the manse and improved lighting in the sanctuary. The operational fund finances

of Northern Light. Roughly 80% of the revenue for the operational and renewal funds comes from congregational giving. Thank you for that support.

As mentioned above, as of the writing of this article, revenue for the operational and renewal funds is about \$5,000 (2.3%) greater than it was budgeted to be at this point in time. Considering the fact that the budget was set about 8 months ago, this is good budgeting -- perhaps because we had a strong response to our request for pledges predicting how much different individuals planned to give during

2015 to Northern Light. Renewal and operational expenses are much further "off-budget" than their revenue. Expenses are about \$29,000 or 13.5% under the budgeted amount. A benefit of this inaccuracy is that it results in a positive cash flow for the church. Revenue is about \$34,000 greater than expenses. Contributing to the discrepancy between the budgeted and actual expenses are factors such as volunteer rather than paid labor; less expensive materials than anticipated; and projects or events not yet started.

Jim Alter



### Community of Christian Women News

The Annual Gathering of Alaska United Methodist Women is October 9-11, 2015. This year's annual gathering, under the theme of "You Raise Me Up," will be held at the North Star Bible Camp in Wil- low, Alaska. We would like to send at least 2 women from Northern Light Church to this gathering,

travel assistance is availa- ble. Please contact Carol Barril (586-1002) for more information, including the registration form, lodging & fee information. Regis-

### Volunteers Needed to Cook Dinner at AWARE Shelter

AWARE is seeking volunteers to cook for the women and children at the Domestic Violence Shelter. The meals are prepared every day starting at 3:30 p.m. and served at 5. If interested or to find out more, contact Pastor Phil, [nlucpastor@ak.net](mailto:nlucpastor@ak.net), 586-3131.

## *Birthdays*



1	Dan Beason	14	John Norman
	Mike Story		Giada Veliz
3	Dale Wygant	17	Daniel Stoops
4	Karen Larson	18	Lindy Ferguson
	Daniel Lyon	19	Eric Scott
5	Anne Haydon		Dominique Morley
	Lorraine Holland	20	Peggy Metcalf
7	Janet Kussart	21	Peggy Barnhill
10	Marnita Coenraad		John Evans
12	Mary Borthwick	25	Sue Lium
	Pat Gorman	27	Ferguson Wheeler
	Jane Ginter	28	Shirley Carlson
	Kitty Eddy	29	Gene Randall
13	Sarah Ginter		

## *Thank You's*

Many people and groups are involved in making sure things happen at NLUC. Each month we would like to recognize some of those individuals and groups for their special services. Special thanks to:

\*Liturgists for July: Tom Perkins, Bob Coghill, Peggy Sue Wright, Karen Peska

\*Greeters/ushers for July: Nico and Susan Bus, Judy Knight, June Degnan, Don and Jan Kussart

\*Alan Akiyama, Peggy Metcalf, Carol Barril, Tom Perkins who assembled the July newsletter

\*Breakfast/Brunch Providers for July: KJ & Peggy Metcalf, Charlie Joseph, Gotschalls, Carol Barril, Karen Peska, Doogan and Morleys, Andi Story, Esther Millea

\*Flower providers for July: Judy Knight, Carol Barril, Esther Millea

\*Special thanks to the crew who did some deep cleaning in the kitchen early this summer: Judith Morley, Linda McCargar, George Partlow, Judy Knight, Carol Barril, Jane Ginter and Bob Coghill

\*Everyone who donated plastic grocery bags for the weekend food program. More are needed for next year-you can bring them to church at any time

*If you have a suggestion for a thank you, call Christina at the church office, 586-3131 or e-mail her at [nluc@ak.net](mailto:nluc@ak.net).*

# AUGUST 2015

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
<p><b>2 10 Worship</b>  <b>After Worship - Brunch</b></p>	<p><b>3 11 Lifering</b>            12 Bartlett Toddlers</p>	<p><b>4 3 Violin Lessons</b></p>	<p><b>5 12 ACOA</b>            5 Piano Concert &amp; Reception  <b>5:30 Chancel Choir</b></p>	<p><b>6 9 Piano Workshop</b></p>	<p><b>7 7 Men's Breakfast</b>            9 Piano Workshop            12 ACOA            3 Violin Lessons</p>	<p><b>8 9 Piano Workshop</b></p>
<p><b>9 10 Worship</b>  <b>After Worship - Brunch</b>            Recital &amp; Reception</p>	<p><b>10 11 Lifering</b>            12 Bartlett Toddlers</p>	<p><b>11 3 Violin Lessons</b></p>	<p><b>12 12 ACOA</b>  <b>5:30 Chancel Choir</b></p>	<p><b>13 5 Council</b></p>	<p><b>14 7 Men's Breakfast</b>            12 ACOA            3 Violin Lessons</p>	<p><b>15</b></p>
<p><b>16 10 Worship</b>  <b>After Worship - Brunch</b></p>	<p><b>17 11 Lifering</b>            12 Bartlett Toddlers  <b>5:30 SPRC</b></p>	<p><b>18 3 Violin Lessons</b>  <b>Serve dinner at the Glory Hole</b></p>	<p><b>19 12 ACOA</b>  <b>5:30 Chancel Choir</b></p>	<p><b>20 9:30 Lectionary Study</b>            12 PEO Luncheon</p>	<p><b>21 7 Men's Breakfast</b>            12 ACOA            3 Violin Lessons</p>	<p><b>22</b></p>
<p><b>23 9:30 Deacons</b>  <b>10 Worship</b>  <b>After Worship - Brunch</b>  <b>5:30 Youth Group - NLUC see p. 2</b></p>	<p><b>24 11 Lifering</b>            12 Bartlett Toddlers</p>	<p><b>25 3 Violin Lessons</b>  <b>Serve dinner at the Glory Hole</b></p>	<p><b>26 12 ACOA</b>  <b>5:30 Chancel Choir</b></p>	<p><b>27 9:30 Lectionary Study</b></p>	<p><b>28 7 Men's Breakfast</b>            12 ACOA            3 Violin Lessons</p>	<p><b>29</b></p>
<p><b>30 10 Worship</b>  <b>After Worship - Brunch</b>  <b>5:15 Youth Group - NLUC see p. 2</b></p>	<p><b>31 11 Lifering</b>            12 Bartlett Toddlers</p>					

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**Now broadcasting Sunday Services at**

**<https://new.livestream.com/nluchurchjuneau>.**

**Sermons, newsletters and Juneau Empire articles also can be found on our website:**

**[northernlightchurch.org](http://northernlightchurch.org) or you can find us on face book.**



### *Summer Worship Schedule*

*10:00 Worship*

*followed by breakfast/brunch*

*No matter who you are,  
no matter where you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here.*