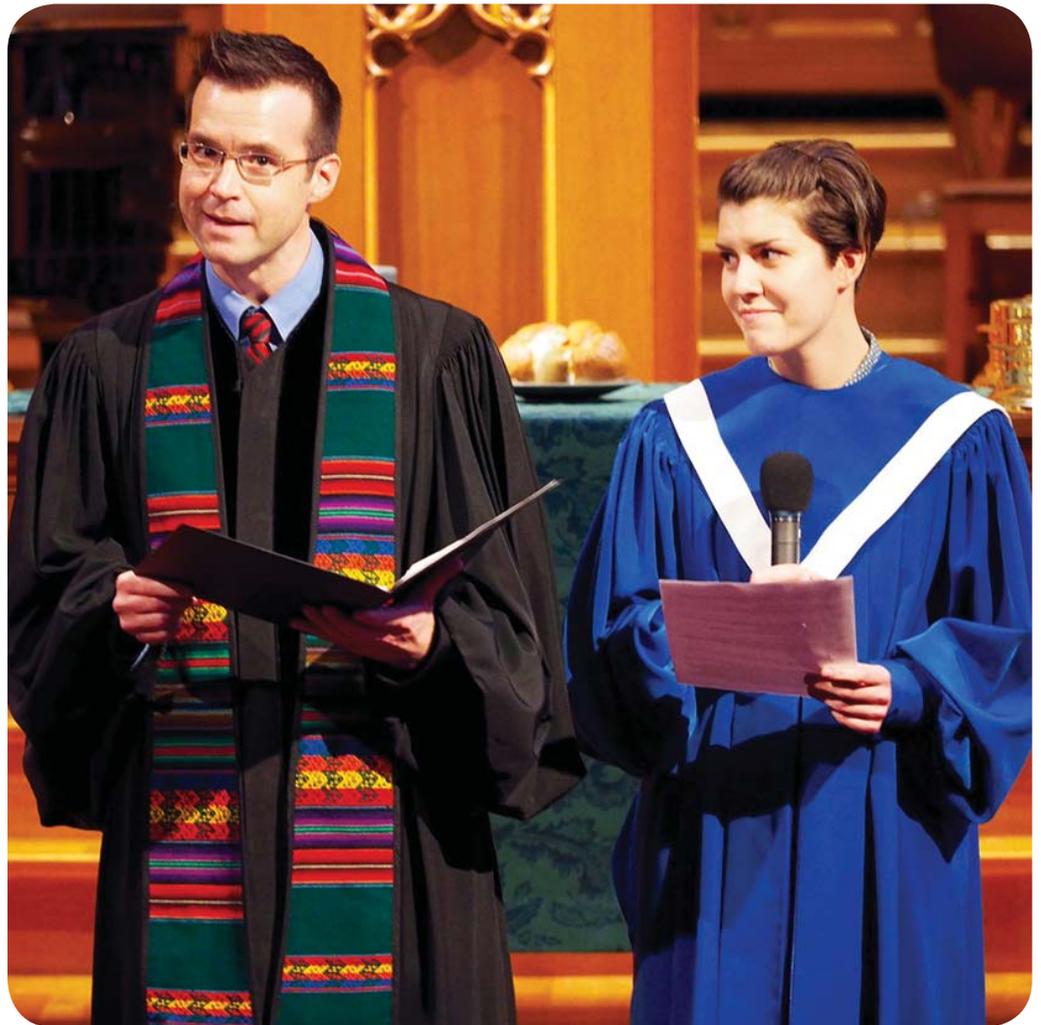


the spire

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Exploring what it means to follow the way of Jesus Christ



What is left to say?

By Pastor Ned Allyn Parker

I don't know what to say.

After writing sermons, and children's messages, and Spire articles, and Do-It-Yourself pageants for six and a half years, I would expect words to come a little more easily.

To be clear: it's not because I have nothing left to say.

Instead, it is an overwhelming cache of gratitude that – quite simply – leaves me speechless.

Anne Lamott reminds me that there are times when verbosity muddies what would otherwise be transparent explanations. Taking a cue from Anne, my first prayer for

you is one of deep recognition: "Wow!" Wrapped up in this prayerful exclamation is an extraordinary collision of awe and wonder. This "Wow" is fear-of-the-Lord type stuff – it is so overwhelming that it leaves me trembling as I think of the experiences we've shared together.

The Sunday that Japanese Baptist closed its doors and joined us for worship in order to remember the reality, impact, and consequences of internment and the appropriate responses to it.

The evening we held a group wedding for twenty-five same-sex couples.

Fourth of July picnics for our neighbors experiencing homelessness.

The candlelight vigil following the tragedy in Orlando, Florida.

Listening to countless authors, poets, and theologians.

The opportunity to say, "Those young in age and young at heart are invited forward," over a hundred and fifty times.

Welcoming one another every Sunday as a sacred act of worship and an authentic representation of our identity.

Playing sardines in the sanctuary with the youth group. (PS – If you're scared of the dark, this is an ill-advised venture. Trust me.) Slowly sharing the news that Michelle and I had fallen in love, and your unconditional affirmation.

Joining hands as Tim invited us to sing "We Shall Overcome."

Weeping openly during "Bring Us Home." Every. Single. Homecoming.

"Wow."

It's the only appropriate response to this experience of pastoring that has been bigger and better than I could have ever imagined. Anne reminds us that "Wow," when it is uttered breathlessly, is a sacred response to the Holy when no other words will do.

Ultimately, I am completely, entirely and wholly consumed with gratitude for these moments we have shared. With this gratitude comes yet more difficulty as I attempt to discern its most appropriate expression. Luckily, Anne supplies the solution for this, too. It's a simple word; a love-loaded word, filled with the accumulation of ongoing and ever-present appreciation.

"Thanks."

Thank you for opening homes and hearts and kitchens and calendars.

Thank you for embracing Michelle and me as if we were your own children, your own siblings, your own family.

Thanks for trusting. Thanks for hugs. Thanks for prayers.

As I consider the big-ness of small words, I know Michelle and I will leave in January with two words writ large on our hearts. These we will associate with this community for many years to come.

"Love" and "Home." And if I've learned anything in Seattle, it's that you can't have one without the other.

We may both be speechless as we arrive at the airport. But my guess is we'll hum a familiar tune to one another. And as the plane roars down the tarmac, we'll sing ever so softly: "Bring us home on love's renewing tide to the place of our belonging..."

Annual Meeting Sunday, January 22

By Pastor Tim Phillips

For several years, our American Baptist regional body did not have "business meetings." Instead, we were invited to be engaged in "worshipful work," which meant that coming to consensus was not a matter of voting but discerning our vocation – sensing what God might be calling us to do. Minutes were not simply documents reporting on actions but a story we were telling about ourselves and our work together. The gathering itself was not about "business" but an extension of worship.

We have continued that understanding of "worshipful work" at Seattle First Baptist as we move directly from the worship service on Sunday, January 22, to the telling of our story and the process of discerning our future. Worship and work are extensions of each other in the spiritual life. Commissions ("co-missions") will not only lead us in worship but will offer us vision for the future of our life together. We will be, as the story of the early church in Acts describes,

Celebrating Ned Allyn Parker and Michelle Horsley on January 8

While their last Sunday leading us in worship will be January 1, Ned and Michelle will be with us on January 8 at a luncheon in their honor following worship. Margaret Norton-Arnold will be leading a program and we will have an opportunity to send Ned and Michelle off with our gratitude and our prayers. Please join us for this important moment in our life together and in theirs.

welcoming new members and providing for the care of those in need; discerning how to support prayer, wondering, learning, and breaking bread together; baptizing and finding new ways to be generous with our hearts and hands (Acts 2.41-47).

That's why we need all of you to join us on January 22. It's not just another annual business meeting but an opportunity to head into the new year with the reminder that there is a power already at work within us that is able to accomplish far more than we can even ask or imagine. Please help us do this "worshipful work." Our life together depends on it.

Worshipful Work

We have several important items on the agenda for our Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 22. Two items are considered "special" in our bylaws:

- The congregation will be asked to approve a bylaws change relating to search committees that are formed for pastors. The change would allow the Lead Pastor to serve as a member of a search committee seeking another pastor. Currently our bylaws do not allow pastors to serve on pastoral search committees. See details below.
- We will vote on members for a search committee for an associate pastor to replace Pastor Ned Allyn Parker.

We will also conduct the regular business of the church including voting on officers, a budget, and proposed expenditures for the Romney Foundation for 2017.

Please join us for this important work.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO SFBC'S BYLAWS PERTAINING TO COMPOSITION OF PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEES

The following amendment to our Bylaws will be considered at the 2017 Annual Meeting of Seattle First Baptist Church:

Present Version of Bylaws:

Art. 8, Sec. 2, Par. 3, Sent. 1

"When a pastoral vacancy exists, the Diaconate will nominate and the congregation will elect a Search Committee, representative of all major areas of Church Life, and exclusive of the pastors and other full time staff."

Amendment to Bylaws Passed by the Diaconate on November 17, 2016 for Recommendation the Congregation for Approval:

Art. 8, Sec. 2, Par. 3, Sent. 1

"When the Lead Pastor position becomes vacant, the Diaconate will nominate and the congregation will elect a Search Committee composed of Church members representing all major areas of Church Life. Church pastors and other full time staff will not serve on the Search Committee for the Lead Pastor. When any other full time or part time pastoral position becomes vacant, the Diaconate will nominate and the congregation will elect a Search Committee composed of Church members that may also include the Lead Pastor."

Reason this Amendment is Being Recommended for Adoption:

The Personnel Commission, Lead Pastor and Diaconate believe that the Lead Pastor should be allowed to sit as a member on a search committee formed to select an associate pastor who will report to the Lead Pastor. Because the existing Bylaws prohibit all pastors from sitting on pastoral search committees, we recommend that the Bylaws be amended by the congregation at the Annual Meeting to permit the Lead Pastor to participate as a member of the search committee for an Associate Pastor.

Administrator's Corner

By Darren Hochstedler

There is an old Mennonite story about a horse pull. One horse pulled 7,000 pounds, another 6,000. Together you would expect them to pull 13,000 pounds. But when teamed together, they pulled 20,000 pounds. This principle is called synergism. By definition, the simultaneous action of separate agents working together has a greater total effect than the sum of their individual efforts. For the principle of synergism to work as it should, there must be cooperative effort.

For God's work to succeed in our church and the world, we need teamwork. When everyone pulls together, it is incredible what we can accomplish.

Your Stewardship Commission, working with the Pastors and each church commission, has put together a budget that

is both realistic and visionary. A budget that will encourage us to work together to continue the important ministry that we are called to do in this place. The full budget will be published and available at the welcome table on Sunday, January 8. I encourage you to look through it, ask questions and continue to dream and to plan for the important work ahead in the new year.

Exercise for Seniors

The next Senior Luncheon will be Sunday, January 15 at 12:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. The program is titled "Exercise for Seniors" with Mariah Kaye. She will present exercises especially designed for sitting in a chair, including her famous "Ti Chi" exercise, which can be used as a Lenten Devotional.

Mariah Kaye became a Senior Fitness Specialist because of the many ways exercise improves the quality of our aging. She likes being on the soapbox of how exercise feels (mostly) good while we do it, and it affects and improves all facets of our lives. And she also enjoys practicing what she preaches.

Mariah says, "In our time together, we'll do a session of seated tai chi, for a balanced internal and external benefit, and round out our time together with stretching because it feels so good in the body. We'll do it all with our friends, because that's the best way to exercise!"

Maybe you'll even choose to join Mariah on her soapbox.

Lunch is \$5. Please call the church office if you plan to attend so we can get an accurate lunch count. Call the church office to make a reservation at 206.325.6051 or email David Kile at [David@seattlefirstbaptist.org]. Join us for a great time!



Mariah Kaye

Sing Gospel for Social Justice – MLK Service

By Vicky Thomas

The Sanctuary Choir's social justice project - Love across Borders - continues in January as we support justice for all by joining in the Evergreen Mass Gospel Choir for Martin Luther King Day on Monday, January 16 at New Beginnings Christmas Fellowship in Kent. This choir is conducted by Rev. Sam Townsend, a noted gospel expert.

If you love to sing but don't have the time during the year for the Sanctuary Choir, this is your chance for a short-term commitment. E-mail or phone Vicky at the church vicky@seattlefirstbaptist.org by January 2 to participate. The rehearsal schedule is: Wednesday, January 4 from 7-9 p.m. at SFBC; Saturdays, January 7 and 14 from 11:30 a.m. -1:30p.m. at New Beginnings in Kent; Monday, January 16 with warm-up at 5 p.m. and the MLK service from 6 -8 p.m. at New Beginnings.

We are trying to carpool, so don't let the lack of "wheels" stop you. We want to sing a strong statement of inclusion, particularly the week of the inauguration. JOIN US!

Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial

Monday, January 16, the Evergreen American Baptist Churches will meet in Kent at New Beginnings Christian Fellowship for a 6 p.m. remembrance of the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Members of the Seattle First Baptist choir will be singing in a multicultural mass choir of voices from our sister churches and the preacher for the service will be the Rev. Dr. Marvin McMickle, president of Colgate Rochester Crozier (the seminary from which Dr. King graduated) Divinity School. Dr. McMickle is the author of several books on race, the church and society, and pastoral care.

Please plan to join us as we honor one of our great national leaders and American Baptist icons. In this time of national dis-unity, this is an opportunity to practice Dr. King's "Beloved Community."

Adult Learning in January – Epiphany Stories

Come join Rev. Dr. Bob Reid who will help us to see First Century ways of exploring the lectionary Gospel readings for the weeks following Epiphany this January. Professor Reid will bring his knowledge of First Century story-telling insights to help us discover how these stories of Gospel beginnings can be experienced quite differently than how we've been taught to hear them.

Rev. Dr. Robert Reid is the Director of the Master of Arts degree in Organizational Communication and Leadership at the University of Dubuque and also serves as adjunct faculty for Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry.

Ordained to the American Baptist ministry, Dr. Reid is the author of 6 books--most recently, the *Six Deadly Sins of Preaching: Becoming Responsible for the Faith We Proclaim* (Abingdon 2012). He currently serves as the interim pastor for Japanese Baptist Church in Seattle.

Classes meet at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays, January 8, 15, 22, and 29 in the Parlor. More information is available on our website.

Adult Learning in February: Sacred Conversations on Race

By Lynn Gaertner-Johnston

Throughout February, Adult Learning will facilitate sacred, courageous conversations on race. The goal is to deepen our understanding of race and racism and our commitment to racial justice. We have planned these topics and activities for the Adult Learning sessions on Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m.:

February 5: Defining Race and Racism. After reviewing norms for our sacred conversations, we will talk about our personal experiences of race and begin to identify the effects of racism on all our lives. We will also define the terms *racism*, *prejudice*, and *discrimination* in order to speak the same language.

February 12: Identifying Racial Stereotypes That Perpetuate Institutional (Systemic) Racism. We will share what we have learned (and often continue to believe) about people of other races, and we will explore how racial stereotypes affect people of color on both the personal and institutional levels.

February 19: Deconstructing Racial Slights and Insults. We will examine "microaggressions," that is, brief, everyday slights and indignities—both intentional and unintentional—that harm people of color. We will talk about ways to recognize and catch microaggressions before we commit them, along with ways to accept and learn from feedback on our behavior.

February 26: Determining Next Steps in Dismantling Racism. Through large- and small-group discussions, we will review and expand what we have learned. We will also discuss ways that, individually and collectively, we can continue to fight against racism rather than be complicit in it.

The sessions will begin with a centering prayer or quotation and will include brief videos and slides, small-group and paired conversations, large-group discussions, and suggested homework.

Talking about racism and recognizing one's part in it take courage and a willingness to be vulnerable, but they are essential steps in creating Dr. Martin Luther King's Beloved Community. The Adult Learning Commission enthusiastically invites everyone to attend. Although the conversations will be most eye opening for white people, we will welcome and embrace participation by people of color.

New SFBC member Joanne Wright and I will lead the sessions. For several years Joanne and I participated in sacred conversations on race, which Joanne facilitated, at University Baptist Church. We have both attended anti-racist training programs and have committed ourselves to anti-racist work. If you have any questions about the upcoming sacred conversations, please talk with Joanne or me. We look forward to leading the sessions.



Join the conversation during Adult Learning.

Tim Phillips to Speak in Bellevue

Pastor Tim Phillips will be the speaker at the Meekhof Lecture Series at Newport Presbyterian Church in Bellevue this year. Tim will speak on January 13 – 15 on the topic of his doctoral work: "Evolutionary Theology and Revolutionary Worship."

The program begins on Friday evening when Tim speaks about "Evolutionary Theology" from 7:30 - 9 p.m. On Saturday, from 9:30 to 11 a.m., the topic will be "Revolutionary Worship." Tim will also preach at both morning worship services on Sunday. Tim assures us that the material he plans to cover is very similar to what he covered with us in the fall during Adult Learning.

For more than 15 years, Newport Presbyterian Church has hosted the Meekhof Lectures honoring the memory of Doreen B. Meekhof, late wife of Newport's founding pastor, David Meekhof. These challenging and compelling talks cover a range of subjects related to social witness, faith education and worship. The event is free and open to the public.

Congratulations on this honor, Tim! Newport Presbyterian is located at 4010 120th Ave. SE, Bellevue, WA 98006-1199.

A Thankful Advent

This year I had the honor of publishing a small book of meditations called *Advent With My Family*. I wasn't sure what the response to the book would be, either from my birth family or from my church family at Seattle First Baptist. Well Advent has passed, and feedback from my family has been positive. Moreover, I have been overwhelmed by your kind words of support, encouragement and thanks regarding the book.

Thank you for providing a community where people like me can be challenged, accepted, and supported in artistic endeavors. This experience has been much better than I ever imagined it could be, and it is all because of you, my beloved church family. You motivate me to continue writing and sharing.

Jim Segaar

Wednesday Dinner Programs in January and February

In this new year, we will be continuing the pattern of Wednesday Dinners as an extended fellowship time with occasional programs offered along the way. We give thanks to Patricia Warming for leading two programs of music and meditation in December. They were opportunities to renew the soul of the holidays.

On Wednesday, January 25 after dinner, Patricia Doheny, long time student of the Guadalupe legend, will share the story of this strong, brown Madonna who appears to an Indian peasant and asks him to do something he does not believe he can do. Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to support him while he finds a way to accomplish the great task she gives him. At a time when our world is facing great turmoil, the Guadalupe story offers heart-warming hope. Come join us!

On February 22 at 7 p.m., the Rev. Susan Chorley, with long connections to Seattle First Baptist and co-founder of Exhale, will be sharing her story from Parents Magazine as a mother who has had an abortion. She will be speaking about her family's experience (son Franz and ex-husband Frank) and the feeling of being abandoned and shamed. Susan leads a movement beyond politics to share the stories of those who have had this experience in the hope that people will "feel they can bring their whole selves to church." For more information see [www.exhaleprovoice.org].

Friendship Circle Update

By Imogene Williams

We are grateful to all of you who helped our November 23 Bake Sale, which raised a total of \$483 for missionaries. Our December meeting featured lively conversation, signing cards, and singing carols. Catherine Fales will show slides of her recent trip to Israel at our next meeting on January 10. Perhaps it will include photos of some of the things she told us about at the last meeting: a spice shop in Jerusalem and Alice in Wonderland fashioned from marzipan!

Photo: The ABW Bake Sale in November was a big success. Thank you to the bakers and the buyers!



"Annie and the Stand-ins" Headline at Seattle Jazz Vespers

By Kellie Whitlock

The original date for this concert was January 1, 2017, New Year's Day and although it would be a great time to celebrate with family and friends at home, attending a concert probably would not be on anyone's "New Years Resolution" list. So, we've moved the concert to January 8, 2017 at 6 p.m.

"Annie and the Stand-ins" are a septet of some of Seattle's best standard jazz, blues, and R&B musicians around. This concert is especially unique because we'll have both a female and male vocalist. Featuring: Annie Eastwood, vocals and percussion; Jim Wulff, vocals; Beth Wulff, keyboard; Brian Kent, tenor sax; James Middlefield, harmonica; Larry Hill, bass; and Tom Brighton, percussion.

January Calendar of Events

Sunday, Jan. 1 New Years Day Sunday
9:30 a.m. - No Adult Learning today
10:15 a.m. Family Fellowship Hour in Youth Lounge, 3rd Floor
11 a.m. Worship and Communion with Pastor Ned Allyn Parker delivering his last sermon as a member of our pastoral staff and Michelle Horsley will play organ and piano for the last time as our Organist.

Wednesday, Jan. 4
6 p.m. Community Dinner - Fellowship Hall
7 p.m. Special choir rehearsal for the Evergreen Martin Luther King Jr. Gospel Choir - Sanctuary

Sunday, Jan. 8 The First Sunday in Epiphany
9:30 a.m. Adult Learning - Epiphany Stories with Rev. Dr. Bob Reid - Parlor
10:15 a.m. Family Fellowship Hour in Youth Lounge, 3rd Floor
11 a.m. Worship with Pastor Tim Phillips preaching on Matthew 2.1-23
After Worship Celebration and Sendoff for Pastor Ned Allyn Parker and Michelle Horsley, our organist
12:30 p.m. American Baptist Women's Ministries board meeting - Peacemakers
4 - 6 p.m. Labyrinth - Gym (Note - different location for this month)
6 p.m. Seattle Jazz Vespers presents "Annie and the Stand-Ins"

Annual Reports are due no later than Jan. 8. Please submit to jim@seattlefirstbaptist.org

Wednesday, Jan. 11
6 p.m. Community Dinner - Fellowship Hall
7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

Sunday, Jan. 15 Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday, Second Sunday in Epiphany
9:30 a.m. Adult Learning - Epiphany Stories with Rev. Dr. Bob Reid - Parlor
10:15 a.m. Family Fellowship Hour in Youth Lounge, 3rd Floor
11 a.m. Worship with Rev. Bruce Chittick preaching
Following Worship - Senior Adult Luncheon - Exercise for Seniors

Monday, Jan. 16 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
6 p.m. MLK Worship Service sponsored by the Evergreen Association of Baptist Churches
New Beginnings Christian Fellowship, 19300 108th Ave. SE, Kent, WA 98031.
Members of the SFBC choir will be part of a mass choir for this event.

Wednesday, Jan. 18
6 p.m. Community Dinner - Fellowship Hall
7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, Jan. 19
7 p.m. Diaconate meets in the Parlor

Sunday, Jan. 22 Annual Meeting Sunday, Third Sunday in Epiphany
9:30 a.m. Adult Learning - Epiphany Stories with Rev. Dr. Bob Reid - Parlor
10:15 a.m. Family Fellowship Hour in Youth Lounge, 3rd Floor
11 a.m. Worship with Pastor Tim Phillips preaching on Acts 2.41-42
Following Worship - SFBC Annual Congregational Meeting - Sanctuary

Wednesday, Jan. 25
6 p.m. Community Dinner - Fellowship Hall
7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

Friday, Jan. 27 - Saturday, Jan. 28 - SFBC Leadership Retreat at Camp Burton.

Sunday, Jan. 29 - Fourth Sunday in Epiphany
9:30 a.m. Adult Learning - Epiphany Stories with Rev. Dr. Bob Reid - Parlor
10:15 a.m. Family Fellowship Hour in Youth Lounge, 3rd Floor
11 a.m. Worship with Theologian in Residence Patricia Hunter preaching on Matthew 5.1-12
(The Beatitudes)

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On Christmas Day we lit candles from Bethlehem as part of our prayer time.

Lighting the Advent Wreath was central to the service on Christmas Eve.

Our Christmas concert included music from South America.

Laughter was the theme of our Do-It-Yourself Christmas pageant.

Online Extras

Every week on our website we publish photos of what's happening at Seattle First Baptist. Take a look at some of the fun we had in December!

<http://www.seattlefirstbaptist.org/recent-happenings.html>

