

Community Sunday

Unitarian Universalist Church of Vancouver

June 2, 2024

Cline Frasier enters the 90's Club

This morning we welcome a new member of the club, Cline Frasier - he actually turns 90 in two weeks, but we're welcoming him early.

Cline was born in Bellingham, WA, the eldest child of three. He grew up in Pullman, Washington. No stranger to loss, his father was diagnosed with ALS and died at age 40 when Cline was only 14 years old. He attended WSU with a detour into the Army at Ft. Bliss in El Paso, Texas where he met and married Gretchen. He returned to Pullman for his undergraduate degree from WSU and became, yes, an actual rocket scientist. He began in Albuquerque with the Sandia Corporation. In 1961 JFK announced the Race to the Moon and in 1961 he became the Project Manager of the Guidance and Control System that took Apollo astronauts to land on the Moon and make it back! Look him up - I did and found some wonderful photographs of Cline on the [hackthemoon](#) website.

After the Moon Landings, he transferred to the US Dept of Transportation in Cambridge MA and they moved to Concord MA. Gretchen and Cline are parents to four sons, losing one in infancy. They are a close family with three wonderful grandchildren. They returned to the state after retiring, Cline's mothers' family needed help managing Grandpa Cline's two wheat farms, and he still manages one of them.

Belonging to UUCV has been the most comfortable home for Cline, in part because he doesn't believe most of the dogma associated with other religions. Cline believes in making life meaningful and useful. He's been lucky to have the privilege of working with many wonderful colleagues and friends over the years.

Reflection on the Endowment by Clem Chow

According to Wikipedia, "A financial endowment is a legal structure for managing, and in many cases indefinitely perpetuating, a pool of financial, real estate, or other investments for a specific purpose according to the will of its founders and donors. Endowments are often structured so that the inflation-adjusted principal or "corpus" value is kept intact, while a portion of the fund can be (and in some cases must be) spent each year, utilizing a prudent spending policy."

Prominence of an academic institution's reputation and its ability to support outstanding programs and faculty are closely linked to the size of its endowment fund. For example, Harvard and Yale each reported endowment funds at 50 and 40 billion dollars respectively in 2023. Since I spent most of my adult life in the academic world, I discovered to my surprise and delight that our church has an endowment fund. I am very partial to endowment funds as it builds and ensures the future of any

institution. At the left of the entrance to our sanctuary, there are brochures describing our Endowment Fund Program. Next to that is our Legacy Tree and the leaves have two colors, Bronze and Silver.

In considering how I may support our church's endowment fund; I have looked into getting a life insurance policy on myself with the church as the beneficiary. Then I realized that at my age, starting a life insurance policy is not a very good prospect. Therefore, I will support the endowment fund with five \$2,000 annual donations in addition to my pledge as a good faith for the future of our church. So, if you are younger than me and I believe many of you are under 80, I would urge you to do what I should have done when I was your age and take out a life insurance policy with the beneficiary being our beloved community. Naturally, there are many ways one can contribute to the Endowment Fund, for example, one can include UUCV in one's estate planning. All these efforts can help us turn more and more leaves Silver on our Legacy Tree and ensure our beloved community will thrive beyond our grandchildren's grandchildren.

Reflection on the Theme by Wendy Raunig

Community has such a vast definition; for me it means coming together in love and being together. I am very fortunate because every day in my position as an ophthalmic technician/imager, I see, feel, and create community at my workstation. Patients I have known since I was pregnant with Mya and even earlier come in for regularly scheduled retina exams, some need treatments and others follow up for many different retina-related issues. Almost every patient has an update for me, whether that be a fall, a broken arm, a hospitalization, a new great-grandchild, a family event, or holiday-related plans...it's endless the stories I hear! Most are outgoing and positive and some are quiet and reserved; In return, I get to ask each person "How are you doing today?" This question makes space for them to open up or not and either is just fine.

I have been employed at my clinic since Elle was 13 months old...I'm part of the fabric of the office and I often hear from patients that they are always happy to see me. It's mutual and I am happy to see them as well. I can't tell you how often I hear "How are the girls?" Whether they were 8 and 11 or now in college and living on their own, they want an update.

I have become friends with a handful of patients exchanging numbers. Sometimes pictures of life's events get exchanged. Recently a patient wanted the name of a book we talked about so when I got home I sent her the image...we'll talk about that book the next time she comes in. Some have come to birthday parties and others to graduation events. Others send me emojis on holidays, one I play pickleball with and another just lost his son to alcoholism...I reached out to him to express my deepest condolences to him and his wife. I understood his pain as my brother is an alcoholic and I always hope he realizes the help he needs so his story doesn't end the same way...I know it's a complex disease. Community is being a part of each other's world, listening, and being present with one another.

Communities come in all sizes, interest group varieties, and age ranges. Brett and I find community when we play pickleball every Wednesday night. A group of people show up at the same time and place every week and everyone has a different skill level which provides growth opportunities. This

community group has started to expand to include my nephew, our oldest daughter, and friends we typically only play tennis with.

Every single person in this room has circles and circles of communities that you move in and out of every day. In the space that we share today, we are in a spiritual community with each other as we continue to grow and broaden our horizons. As a worship associate, I have had the opportunity to help examine themes and dig deeper into religious beliefs, help organize events, and participate in going “greener” - doing our part for the planet so our children and grandchildren have a home. Our church community also shows up 4 times a year to serve those who are houseless by volunteering our time, energy, and resources, to provide a warm safe space to eat and sleep – which I am grateful to be a part of. As I think about all the communities I’ve talked about I’ve realized it takes work, commitment, an open mind, active listening, and a passionate curiosity about the needs and interests of other people. What more can each one of us do to create a more loving community everywhere?

***Deepen, Grow, Act©* by Rev. Kathryn A. Bert**

We’ve already had a wonderful celebration of our community and we’ve yet to welcome in our new members this morning! I promise to keep it short. I know you have a congregational meeting to attend following this service. But I did want to talk about two things. One is the streamlined mission statement that members will be asked to vote on. The second is a new structure for living out that mission.

Our mission has three elements – to deepen, to grow and to act. Deepen our spiritual experience, grow beloved community, and act on our values in the wider world. It’s easy to remember when it’s simple like that. In 2005, the mission statement that was adopted says:

We come together to deepen our spiritual experience and philosophical understanding, grow a vital, nurturing community, and act on our values in the wider world.

I think we’ve maintained the meaning of that 2005 statement but made it easier to remember. Gone is the language of philosophical understanding, but of course, philosophical understanding is a spiritual experience for many of us, and we changed vital, nurturing community to beloved community.

The Beloved Community is a term Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used to describe a global vision of a society where people of all backgrounds come together to eliminate poverty, hunger, bigotry, violence and other injustices, based on the fact that we are all interconnected. While many of us associate the term with that vision, we did not capitalize the term in our proposed mission statement so that it could be more broadly interpreted and personalized to our vision. But beloved community is a vital, nurturing community and, I would assert, more.

Besides making it easier to remember, the streamlined mission statement, I think, has the potential to unite us with that common mission. It matters that we have a purpose. We are not just a random group of people who come together on Sundays and at other times to do whatever project strikes our fancy at the time. We have a purpose – and that purpose is:

1. to deepen our lives – find and create meaning,
2. to grow community – that feeling of fellowship and communion and friendship and,
3. as the children’s affirmation says, to make the world a better place – to take our values out into the world and act on them, to promote our values so that we might develop the community we seek both inside these doors and in the wider world.

These ministries, these purposes, help guide us as we make choices as a community: As we choose to support Family Promise of Clark County, or Sustainable Harvest International, or the local Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary school. These ministries include our newly formed BIPOC group called Global Majority and the mid-Adult Friendship and Social Group, the Beloved Community Work Group and the longstanding Green Team. It would take too many words for me to list all the groups that keep this place vital and beloved – just know that your group matters and your work is important. It is for you and the world we have this community, this church. Thank you for making this place what it is.

In order to help keep us focused on the mission, we have created a Ministry Collaboration Team, this structure I mentioned that I wanted to talk about. The Ministry Collaboration Team will have representatives from each branch of this mission – two lay people to represent all the ways we deepen our spiritual experience, and two people to help us with growing and nurturing community, and two people that connect us to the projects where we take our values out into the world. Six people will meet monthly with program staff to ensure we are focused on the mission and clarity to help us achieve our dreams for this place. It will help us evaluate our efforts and successes and vitalize areas where the congregation wants to do more or less. It looks at our connections across program areas and mission legs.

We have an “acting” team right now – that is, people who have stepped up to serve until we find the representatives who are most excited about this kind of work. We particularly wish to invite younger folks and newer-to-the-congregation people to help us with this effort. If this is something that you might be interested in, please speak to me, email me, or look for a way to follow-up in Tuesday’s bulletin. I imagine the Ministry Collaboration team forming the center of our beloved community and as the heart that keeps beating and keeps us relevant.

Of course, it is the people that make up the church and Community Sunday is our opportunity to celebrate the people, to celebrate you. And we also have the joy this morning of welcoming new members into that celebration. These new members have studied our history and theology, the history of this particular congregation and the covenant which holds us together. I am a lover of history and of tradition, so it has been that for seven years I’ve used the words of your previous minister, Mark Gallagher, in this Ingathering Service. And as much as I’ve loved his words, they do not fall off my tongue easily. So, as we take the opportunity, perhaps, to update our mission statement, I have taken the liberty of writing new words for our New Member Ingathering. But first, we begin with our covenant. This was adopted by the congregation in an Annual Meeting in 2017, just before I arrived as minister.

“As members of UUCV, we commit our best efforts to inspiring and supporting each other in our quest for truth, meaning, and compassionate community. To that end: We aspire to practice acceptance...by valuing our differences, by understanding each of us is acting to meet legitimate needs, by seeking progress, not perfection. We work to nurture healthy relationships...by listening wholeheartedly, by upholding our personal boundaries and respecting others’ boundaries, by addressing conflict in a timely way. We intentionally join ourselves in community, for we are stronger together. Therefore, we seek

to...honor the dedication and work of our volunteers, put the good of the congregation before personal preference, and celebrate the moments when we bring each other joy, comfort and hope.”

We have some ritual words of welcome to offer - these are new:

Co-Presidents: Mindful of the commitments necessary to sustain this congregation, we are greatly encouraged by your joining with us.

Members: We welcome you into the fellowship of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Vancouver. We are honored that you have freely chosen to become a part of us by entering into covenant with us.

Minister: We welcome the whole of your beings, the complexities of your natures, and the diversities of your gifts. We look forward to a long journey together.

New Members: I do so join with this congregation. We come together to deepen our spiritual experience, grow beloved community and act on our values in the wider world.

All Members: We covenant to practice acceptance, nurture healthy relationships and intentionally join ourselves in community.

All Present: Love your neighbor as yourself. Search for truth with an open mind. Make the world a better place.