



Newsletter

Notes from Pastor Anna:

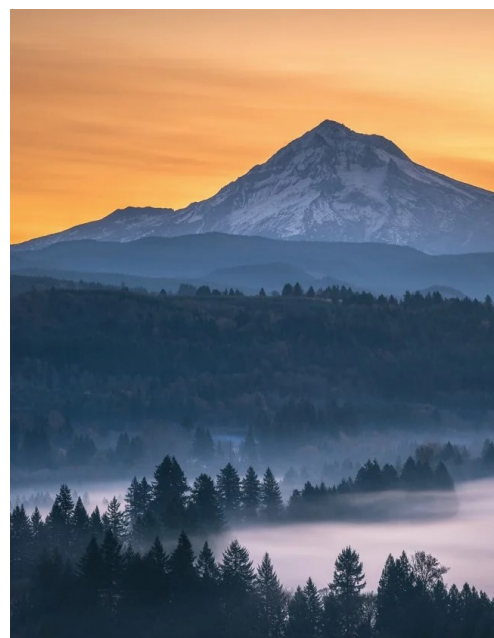
A Word of Thanksgiving

We all should take some deep breaths together. Driving past the Sellwood bridge to Vermont Hills with my windows down, the air is crisp, and my eyes catch the giant ginkgo tree splashed with bright yellow colors. It signals that we have traveled a distance together.

Dear Ones, something about changing seasons beckons me to shift my energy in different ways. I move more slowly. I gaze out in the open a bit longer. I want to stay under my covers longer in the mornings. Most of all, I want to light a candle wherever I can get my hands on it. And I'm filled with memories of spending time with family and friends at church. As we head toward the season of Advent, I am fluttering with anticipation for new memories that will shape our journey.

I want to express gratitude for the ways you showed up to begin walking the mile M.I.L.E (Ministry that Matters, Itineration and Location, Lay Enhancement, Elimination of Racism) this past month. It helped us to ask the essential questions faith communities should be courageously asking at this juncture. Are we contributing to life-giving ministries that prioritize the dismantling of racism? Are we doing the window work of getting to know and have an interest in our local community? Who are our partners? How can we best show up to serve our community that fosters an inclusive spiritual oasis for all?

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Notes from Pastor Anna (continued)

As a predominantly white American Christian community, I understand that the questions weigh even heavier on our hearts and minds. Every cultural assumption and inclination will direct our attention to seeking ways of fulfilling white supremacist ideals, such as focusing on "quantity over quality" and minimizing our emotions attached to these experiences.

However, as a person of color, I have witnessed your desire to "embrace faithful love" by responding to this challenge with humility and an eager heart to learn. Many of you consistently attended our first introduction to the Racial Conscious Awareness workshop held by Dr. Cynthia MacLeod. We took an honest look at assessing our relationship with our community partners. It also required us to look internally at what we are currently doing. Thank you for leaning into how we can choose to be different. Thank you for showing up (trunk or treat, collective healing, game/craft night, prayers for friends and community, community work-day, ImBible study, Sunday adult bible study, Fireside gathering, Talk-n-thought, spaghetti fundraiser) in ways that impact the well-being of our community health. Thank you for working together on what living out our faith through this transitional period means.

As we enter the season of Advent this week, I invite you to ask yourself, with M.I.L.E. in mind, "What did each person in the Christmas story pass on or contribute? How did they participate in God's liberation and love (or try to thwart God's justice?) What can we learn from them, and what is our role now? What will we pass on to the next generation?"

"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." - Martin Luther King Jr.

The Seventh Generation Principle, a philosophy of the Iroquois that emphasizes how seven generations after us will be affected by our current decisions - invites me to practice a discipline of cultivating a sacred imagination for what will come that will sustain and benefit the generations who come after me. It reminds me of my maternal grandmother and mother, who passed on their hopes and dreams for their children and future. It reminds me that we are part of this web of interconnection where nothing is created from isolation—but that our collective actions and efforts creatively shape and transform us here in the now and in the future chapters ahead of us.

I invite you to consider what you would like to pass on this season that might be life-giving for your loved ones and the beloved community we envision.

Smiles,

Pastor Anna



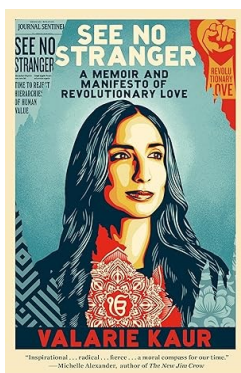
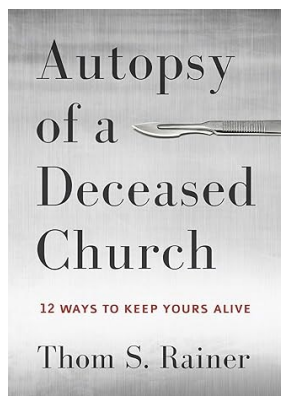
Ministry that Matters • Itineration & Location
Lay Ministry Enhancement • Eliminating Racism

Book Studies

In our adult Sunday School at 9:30 am, we will be doing a couple of book studies. The first will be *Autopsy for a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* by Thom Rainer.

This is a short book (100 pages) and a quick read. You don't have to purchase the book to participate in the Sunday morning discussion. We will discuss the first two chapters on December 3.

Discussions will continue until we finish the book, with breaks on the second Sunday of each month for our Second Sunday Spiritual Practice.



The next book will be *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love* by Valarie Kaur. This is the book highly recommended by District Superintendent Tim Overton-Harris. He reported at the Charge Conference in November that he has arranged for Valarie to do a workshop next year.

The church will be buying several copies of this book for use by the Sunday School attendees and other groups or individuals who may want to read it on their own.

Join us on Sunday mornings at 9:30 am in the Fireside Room for these two intriguing books.

December Dates to Note

Dec 3: Advent begins!

Dec 11: Charge Conference, business portion, at 6:00 pm.

Dec 17: Soup Potluck & Cookie Exchange following worship

Dec 24: Since Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday, there will be a single worship service that day. A candlelight service at 4:00 pm.

Dec 25–Jan 3: Pastor Anna will be on vacation

Dec 31: Bryan Cooper will bring the message during worship

How to Stay Informed

Online Gatherings

[Sun 10:30 am](#)

Worship

[Tue 1:00 pm](#)

Talk N Thought

[Wed 6:30 pm](#)

ImBible Study

Visit our website

vermonthillsUMC.org

Staying Connected, church calendar, and more

Read Weekly Emails

Email the church office at officeVHUMC@gmail.com to receive these

Use Social Media

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Watch videos of online gatherings: [YouTube.com/](https://YouTube.com/@vermonthillsumc)
[@vermonthillsumc](https://YouTube.com/@vermonthillsumc)

White Supremacy

An essay by Minda Redburn:

Sunday morning, November 26, a pastor implores her congregation to, "Say it with me: 'White Supremacy.'" What? What does this ugly right-wing term have to do with us in progressive Portland, Oregon?

It's a tough one, isn't it? These words feel like an accusation that white people are consciously and intentionally wanting to dominate and harm people who aren't white, and this thought feels awful. I sincerely doubt that such an accusation is true for anyone who is reading this, white or BIPOC.

In several recent Anti-racism classes, I've explored my participation in white supremacy as a white woman. On November 4, 2023, with some VHUMC buddies, I went to a workshop held at the West Hills Covenant Church.

The workshop was called Collective Healing: Embracing Resilient Community. Pastor Anna Cho was an organizer of the event. Our BIPOC workshop leaders were mental health therapists Abby Wong-Heffter, and Wendell Moss, from Seattle.

They opened the workshop by asserting that two common mental health diagnoses, anxiety and depression, result from White Supremacy. As a retired licensed mental health therapist myself, I think they're right. How can this be?

Their handout showed a number of "poisonous" attitudes that are part of our culture of colonizers. Here is some of what is on their list:

Either/Or Thinking	Objectivity	Individualism	Power Hoarding
Quantity Over Quality	Paternalism	One Right Way	A Right to Comfort
Fear of Open Conflict	Urgency (and Efficiency)	Bigger and More is Progress	

Maybe you relate to most or all of these concepts. Some may be approaches we try to avoid. Others may be "normal" ways we think about and approach things. Where do we see the poison here?

If I objectify "different" humans who are also made in the Image of God, as we are taught by our faith, without considering the "subjectivity" of their feelings, and we think "microaggressions" are just being over-sensitive, or if we allow other humans to be used as commodities in service of profit because this approach will "work", or if we ignore destructive impacts official policies will have on BIPOC communities, and we privilege white voices, opinions, and ways of doing things over those of minorities since stopping to listen would be inefficient, if we avoid conversations about racism because it's so uncomfortable, and all of that drama isn't welcome or desirable, and we really don't have time to deal with this right now, and besides, how will it affect my stock portfolio?

Sorry, I got a little carried away there. I didn't quite make it to my point. My point is that such things cause significant harm, and often overwhelming pain to other people who don't happen to look the same as we do, and who are, in fact, our sisters, brothers, our siblings in our faith.

Our sibs are hurting from centuries of erasing treatment that still occurs even here and now by

white people. And in this workshop, BIPOC and white people were invited to begin to grieve the wounds that BIPOC, and whites, have carried. This was done in community. This is how we, all of us, can begin to heal.

Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Equity Workshop

An essay by Glennis McNeal:

I want to share some uncomfortable facts I discovered about myself while attending these informative sessions.

As a member of the dominant society, I'm conditioned to avoid awkward conversations. Why rile the waters? As a good person, there's no way I could be a racist anyway. What's there to talk about?

The comfort I crave smothers curiosity when it comes to talk of race and racism.

I have a deep conviction that the "white way" is the "right way" --once people of color act/dress/speak/celebrate like me, racial problems will disappear.

I'm the white in white supremacy.

Because of my good intentions, every person of color will feel welcome and at home in our suburban church.

I didn't know that suburbs were white because our government officially forbade housing loans to people of color.

But enough about me. In this class series, Cynthia MacLeod led us through the history and culture that shapes our world views on racial issues. A Black woman with lived experience, Cynthia is a skilled presenter who draws on her background as assistant director of Equity Professional Development in the Portland Public School District, as college instructor, and United Methodist conference representative. She helped us evaluate community and church backgrounds that have a hidden impact on us. We discussed our own perceptions and experiences that shaped our understanding

For our own church, creating a cross cultural welcome will involve, gulp, listening. People wish to be heard. When the other person speaks we can't interrupt by bragging on ourselves: "I know just what you mean" or "I don't see color" or "I have many friends who are persons of color." We listen so we can continue the conversation by repeating what the visitor said and prove we are paying attention.

Becoming anti-racist involves fear, learning and growth. It's not always a linear progression, Cynthia told us.

If you disagree with what I wrote here, or if Forrest Namenuik's November 19 sermon felt uncomfortable or inappropriate, by all means feel free to talk about it. Workshop participants Aaron Cripps, Crystal Carlson, Anna Cho, Virginia Cooper, Lorraine Crawford, Jan Espy, John Espy, Glennis McNeal, Minda Redburn, Delight Sullivan, and Donna Ward are prepared to listen.



Birthdays

Colin Persichetti	Dec-02
Laura Anderson	Dec-03
Savannah Eden	Dec-05
Barbara McClincy	Dec-08
Bryan Cooper	Dec-10
Jan Espy	Dec-10
Carol Rust	Dec-10
Julie Van Nest	Dec-11
Orpha Barry	Dec-13
Ray Miller	Dec-13
Rebecca Schappert	Dec-15
Kirsten Wall	Dec-19
Matt Hebert	Dec-20
Nathan Karman	Dec-22
Caleb Rhodes	Dec-25
Virginia Cooper	Dec-28
Mike Reunert	Jan-09
Kian Mitchell	Jan-19
Marie White	Jan-19
Wesley Mitchell	Jan-23
Torden Wall	Jan-23
Susan Zotter	Jan-24
Jacob Eden	Jan-29
Mary Turk	Jan-30
Dennis Simpson	Jan-30
Thom White	Feb-03
Nana Hebert	Feb-12
Scott Wegner	Feb-14
Minda Redburn	Feb-21
Elizabeth Brown	Feb-23

Upcoming Events

Dec 2	All Church Work Party	Feb 11	Second Sunday Spiritual Practice
Dec 3	Advent Begins	Feb 18	Game Night
Dec 10	Second Sunday Spiritual Practice	Feb 19	Red Cross Blood Drive
Dec 11	Charge Conference, 6:00 pm		
Dec 17	Soup Potluck & Cookie Exchange		
Dec 24	Single Worship Service at 4:00		
Dec 25	Merry Christmas!		
Jan 1	Happy New Year!		
Jan 6	All Church Work Party		
Jan 7	Second Sunday Spiritual Practice		
Jan 14	Game Night		
Feb 3	All Church Work Party		

Ongoing:

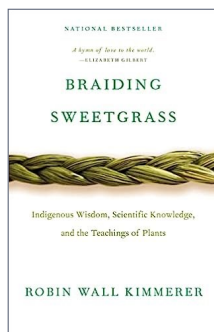
1st & 3rd Mondays @ 5:00: Fireside Friends Quilting Group

Tuesdays @ 1:00 pm: Talk 'n' Thought

Wednesdays @ 6:30 pm: ImBible Study

Connection Points

The VHUMC Ramblers walk on Monday mornings at 9:00 am. We walk for about an hour at different parks and neighborhoods in SW Portland. If you would like to be put on the mailing list and join us for some exercise and good company, contact Katie Simpson or Susan Zotter.



Talk & Thought (TnT) is a women's book group that gathers on Tuesdays from 1:00 to 3:00 pm at the church. This group was begun over 40 years ago by a group of intergenerational women using books to explore and share their understanding of life and belief. We continue today using a book to spark dialogue. Contact Linda Miller for more info.

Fireside Friends, a sewing group dedicated to making two quilts per year, is meeting on the 1st and 3rd Mondays from 5:00 - 7:00 pm in the quilting studio (downstairs from the sanctuary). Newbies are welcome!

Whether you prefer hand-sewing, machine-sewing, or working the long arm quilting machine, you'll have fun with this group! Contact Elizabeth Brown with any questions.





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*"Vermont Hills UMC is a Reconciling Congregation where
Our Hearts and Minds and Doors are truly open."*

VERMONT HILLS CHURCH
— *A Spiritual Oasis* —