BELL RINGER

VOLUME 61 ISSUE 10

OCTOBER
2026

Calendar Highlights

Oct 3
Hospitality Workshop
10:00am – FH

Oct 6
Women's Round Table
1:30pm – Golphenee Home

Oct 7, 14, & 21
"What is?" Bible Study
6:30pm – Room 10 & ZOOM

Oct 10
UWiFaith Program
10:00am – Rooms 10, 19, S

Oct 13
UWiFaith Reflections
10:00am – Room 10

Oct 17
Church Council Meeting
9:00am – Room 19

Oct 18
"Get Acquainted" Series begins
11:30am – Room 10

Oct 20
Women's Round Table
1:30pm – Round Table Pizza

Oct 22
Bell Ringer Articles Due
1:00pm

Oct 27 Reading Radicals
7:00pm – Room 19

WEEKLY MEETINGS
Monday – Choir Practice
6pm – Room 14

Wednesday - Men's Group
10am - Baumann's Home

Friday – UWiF Bible Study
1:30pm – Room 10

Check the online church calendar at the link below.

VHUMC Calendar

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Pastor's Corner

Dear Church Member and Beloved Reader,

October, our first full month of autumn, brings crisp air, rain, shorter days, and longer nights. In this changing season, let us notice God's presence and care for ourselves faithfully. Rest, pray, nourish your body, stay connected, and make time for what renews your spirit. Self-care helps us remain present to God and ready to love our neighbors.

Please join us for our Hospitality Workshop on **Saturday, October 3, from 10:00–11:30 a.m.** Together, we will explore how to offer a warm, thoughtful, Christ-centered welcome to everyone who enters our church. All are encouraged to attend.

We will joyfully welcome new members on **Sunday, October 4**. A new *Getting Acquainted* class begins **Sunday, October 25,** for those wishing to learn more about Vancouver Heights United Methodist Church and membership. We will welcome additional new members on **Sunday, December 6**, our final first-Sunday opportunity of the year. Please help each person feel at home in our church family.

Our Adult Bible Study, *"What Is?"*, meets **October 7–21 and November 11–18**. **Rev. Sonya Davis and Abigail Speakerman** will lead the series, with Pastor B attending. We will explore our Social Principles, what the Bible teaches about how we treat humanity, and the effects of colonization on our religious practices. All are welcome.

As we prepare for the coming year, we will launch our **2027 Pledge Campaign** at the end of October to help establish our church budget for 2027. Please join us for an **All-Church Meeting on Sunday, October 18**, immediately after worship, followed by a delicious soup lunch. Our annual **Charge Conference will be Sunday, November 8**, also immediately following morning worship. Your prayerful participation will help guide our shared ministry.

In this season of change, may we care for ourselves and one another, seek God in creation's rhythms, and grow together in welcome, compassion, and faith.

Grace and peace,
Rev. Dr. Byron L. Harris
Your Senior Pastor

Hospitality Workshop: A Culture of Welcome

TOGETHER, WE CREATE THE WELCOME

Hospitality is something we build as a community, and we invite you to join us for a special **Hospitality Workshop on Saturday, October 10 at 10am**. This gathering is for everyone—not only greeters, ushers, music ministry, AV, or coffee hour hosts, but all who help shape the spirit of our church.

We'll reconnect with the practice of *authentic hospitality*: the simple, sacred act of making space for one another. In the United Methodist tradition, hospitality is more than a friendly greeting—it is a ministry of welcome rooted in God's love and extended to every person who walks through our doors. Come learn, share, and help us deepen the warmth of our shared life together.

READING RADICALS

For October, we're diving into Sloane Crosley's *Grief Is for People*, a memoir praised for its sharp wit and emotional depth.

Through stories of friendship, stolen belongings, pandemic-era New York, and her search for meaning in philosophy and art, Crosley offers a contemporary elegy that is both comforting and provocative. Her writing invites us to consider how grief reshapes our lives, our relationships, and the stories we tell about ourselves.

Join us for an evening of thoughtful reflection, honest conversation, and good company as we explore this moving and memorable book together.

Next Meeting: October 27 at 7:00 PM

If you have any questions or would like more information, please reach out to Joan Frazier.

WORSHIP MINISTRY

Advent Festival

It's hard to believe that Advent Season is right around the corner. VHUMC is holding its annual Advent Festival on December 6th and is looking for a few good elves to host a table to help make the event fun for all.

Here are some ideas: Cookie decorating station, ornament decorating station, picture-making station. The sky is the limit. Of course, there is always the clean-up crew that is needed.

A sign-up sheet will be circulating soon, so please let us know if you think you could help in any way.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Our next **"What Is?"** series begins this fall on Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm, and we're looking forward to another season of learning, reflection, and courageous conversation. Led by **Abby Spiekermann** and **Rev. Sonya Davis**, this five-week study invites us to grow shared language for anti-racism and justice work, inspired by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of the beloved community.

We'll gather in **two short segments**—**October 7–21** and **November 11–18**—to explore colonialism, the church's historical role within it, and faithful paths toward decolonization. These sessions will help us imagine what healing, repair, and justice can look like in our own time and place.

No book is required; **all materials will be provided.** You're welcome to join us in person or on Zoom, whichever works best for you.

These conversations matter, and your voice will enrich them. We hope you'll join us as we learn, reflect, and grow in community this fall.

All Saint's Day

All Saints' Day will be observed on Sunday, November 1, 2026. As part of this meaningful time of remembrance, the Worship Committee invites you to share photographs of loved ones who have gone before us. These photos will be placed in the Sanctuary windows, creating a visual tribute that honors their lives and the light they continue to shine among us.

If you would like to participate, please bring your photo and give it to Pat Hodney-Gould or Meredith Goodwin. We will ensure it is placed in the stained-glass windows for worship on November 1.

Kristkindlemarkt: Celebrating 36 Years of Joy, Generosity, and Christmas Magic

For 36 years, Kristkindlemarkt has been one of the most beloved ministries at Vancouver Heights UMC—a tradition rooted in generosity, dignity, and the simple joy of helping children give gifts from the heart.

Each December, our Fellowship Hall transforms into a festive "store" filled with new, unused gifts donated by our church family and friends. Tables are arranged by category—Home Goods, Bath & Body, Holiday, Hardware, Sports, Jewelry, Clothing, Games, and more—so children from Learning Avenues Child Care Centers can shop for a special gift for their parent or guardian. Every gift is wrapped on-site, and while wrapping is underway, each child enjoys a cherished visit with Santa (and yes, it's a perfect photo moment).

Learning Avenues, housed right here at Vancouver Heights UMC, is the only childcare center in Clark County to provide caring, developmental childcare to families for a cost based on their ability to pay. Kristkindlemarkt ensures that every child—preschool through middle school—gets to experience the pride of choosing a meaningful gift and the joy of giving it.

We also honor the dedicated teachers and staff of Learning Avenues with a holiday gift card as a small thank-you for their year-round care and commitment.

This year's Kristkindlemarkt will take place **Wednesday, December 16**, and may be our final year due to challenges in gathering donations and volunteer participation. If this is indeed our last season, we want to go out with a bang—creating an unforgettable experience for the children, families, and staff who have cherished this ministry for decades.

How You Can Help

- **Cash donations** (designated directly to Kristkindlemarkt)
- **New, unused gift items** for any of our store categories
- **Wrapping supplies: Holiday Gift bags** of all sizes, **Tissue paper,** and **Tape.**
- **Volunteering your time**—set-up, tear-down, shopping assistants, gift wrappers, and more (contact the church office to get connected with the ministry)

Every contribution, large or small, helps us create moments of joy that children carry with them long after the holidays.

Let's make this 36th anniversary year shine brightly.

United Women in Faith

Have you explored the reading program at Vancouver Heights? Did you know that the books featured in our program are available here at Vancouver Heights, and many can also be found through your local library?

One of the greatest benefits of this program is that every book offers an opportunity to learn and grow. The collection focuses on areas that are central to our work as God's stewards:

- Spiritual Growth
- Social Action
- Nurturing Community
- Education for Mission
- Leadership

Whether you enjoy novels, practical guides, biographies, or personal stories, each book can deepen our understanding of our relationship with God, one another, and the world around us.

We also offer books for children and youth, making this a resource for all ages.

We invite you to stop by the book cart and browse the collection. We're confident you'll find something that inspires, challenges, or enriches your journey of faith. There truly is something for everyone!

Treasures from the Attic

Time to clean out your closets and garage. Gather your long-forgotten treasures to donate to United Women in Faith's annual Treasures in the Attic sale. Donations will be accepted by UWF until the first Sunday in November. Consider bringing jewelry, holiday decorations, dishes, books, electronic equipment, housewares, linens and other clean items in good condition. Items will be collected in the designated container labeled "Treasures from our attics" next to the church office.

Treasures in the Attic will be held at the church from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 14 and after church on Sunday, Nov. 15. A chili and cornbread feed, donations accepted, will be hosted on Sunday following service.

This annual fundraiser helps us reach our commitment to our pledge for mission giving for the year 2026. This money combines with other United Women in Faith units around the country so that we can continue making a difference in the lives of women, children and youth locally, nationally and globally as has been done for over 157 years.

For questions, please contact Deb Avery or Pat Hodney-Gould, co-presidents of Vancouver Heights UWiFaith. Thanks in advance for your donations.

Growing Together

Change nudges us to look again at what we hold dear—not to discard our traditions, but to let them breathe anew.

When we listen to one another with compassion, we discover that God is speaking through every generation. Together, we can imagine ministries that meet today's needs while honoring yesterday's faithfulness.

May we be a church that asks courageous questions, welcomes new possibilities, and grows side by side trusting that God is shaping us into a community alive with love.

Holy God,
As we step into this season of change, steady our hearts and open our minds. Bless our all-church meeting with clarity, kindness, and shared purpose. Guide our annual conference with wisdom and courage. Shape us into a people ready for growth and hope in the new things You are doing among us.
Amen.

On **Sunday, October 18**, we'll gather after worship for an **All-Church Meeting** and a simple, comforting soup luncheon. It's a chance for our whole church family—elders, youth, and everyone in between—to sit together, share a meal, and talk about where God is leading us next.

Our church is rooted in traditions that have carried us through many seasons. Our elders hold wisdom, history, and the steady rhythms that shaped our faith. Our youth bring fresh ideas, new energy, and a hopeful curiosity about what church can look like today. When we bring these gifts together, we become a community that is both grounded and growing.

This meeting is an opportunity to practice what we proclaim: **Open Minds, Open Hearts, Open Doors.** Open minds that are willing to ask questions. Open hearts that listen with compassion. Open doors that welcome new possibilities.

As we share soup and conversation, we'll explore how we can continue delivering God's message with clarity, joy, and relevance—honoring our past while embracing the future God is preparing.

We hope you'll join us at the table. Together, we grow.

The Annual Charge Conference is coming soon!

The SPRC will meet with the District Superintendent on **Saturday, November 7 at 10am,** and the **Annual Charge Conference** will take place on **Sunday, November 8**, immediately following worship.

Ministry leaders, please begin preparing your reports and submit them to the church office by **October 24.**

What Is a Charge Conference?

In the United Methodist Church, the **Charge Conference** is our annual gathering where we reflect on the past year's ministry and look ahead to the future God is shaping for us. It is a time of **celebration, accountability, and shared vision** as we continue serving Christ and our community.

During Charge Conference, we:

- Review the ministries and mission work of the past year
- Celebrate the ways God has been at work among us
- Approve leadership for the coming year
- Receive reports from committees and ministry teams
- Set direction and goals for the year ahead
- Affirm our commitment to being a church of *Open Minds, Open Hearts, Open Doors*

Charge Conference helps us stay grounded in our mission while remaining open to new possibilities. It is a moment to pause, give thanks, and discern how we can continue delivering God's message with clarity, compassion, and purpose.

As we gather, we do so with gratitude for where we've been and hope for where God is leading us next. Together, we continue the work of being a church that welcomes, serves, and grows in faith.

Welcoming New Members This Fall

Our congregation is blessed to welcome new faces into our community this season. Our **first group of new members will be received on Sunday, October 4**, a joyful moment of commitment and celebration.

The next "Get Acquainted" series—our pathway for those exploring membership—will meet **October 18 through November 15**. These sessions offer a friendly space to learn about our church, meet leaders, and connect with others discerning their next steps in faith.

As the year draws to a close, our **final new-member group of 2026 will be received on Sunday, December 6**. We look forward to celebrating their presence among us and blessing their journey.

If you're considering membership, we'd love to get acquainted.

Church and Community News

🌿 Social Justice Prayer Vigils This Wednesday

Two opportunities for prayer and reflection will be held on **Wednesday, October 7** as our community gathers in hope and solidarity.

At **2:00 pm**, all are warmly welcome to a Social Justice Prayer Vigil in the **Pioneer Chapel at Salmon Creek UMC** (12217 NE Highway 99, Vancouver, WA 98686). This quiet, heartfelt time of prayer offers space to lift our world in compassion and unity.

That evening, from **7–8 pm**, an **Interfaith Peace Prayer Vigil** will take place at **Gretchen Fraser Park** (516 SE 155th Ave & Mill Plain). All are invited to join this candlelight gathering for peace; bring a candle if you wish.

Council for the Homeless Annual Fundraising Event on October 15

Gathering for Change is more than a fundraiser. It's a movement to end homelessness, powered by our community.

This is more than a night out. It's a defining moment. Gathering for Change 2026 marks the beginning of a bold new chapter.

As we introduce what's next, we invite you to be in the room for the moment it all comes into focus. Because the future isn't something we wait for; it's something we create, together. Join us for an unforgettable evening.

Soul Care Women's Retreat – Salmon Creek UMC

Salmon Creek UMC invites all women to a special **Women's Retreat** on **October 17, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30** p.m. Guest speaker Poppy Smith—author, speaker, and spiritual coach—will lead us in an uplifting day of growth, connection, and encouragement for women of every age and stage of life. Registration is $20 and includes a Panera lunch; registration forms also include lunch selections. Mark your calendars, invite a friend, and join us for a meaningful day together. For questions or to register, please contact Laurie Doering at lauriejd0503@comcast.net or call 360-606-7494.

The 2026 PNW United Women in Faith Annual Gathering meets **October 23–24** at **Hope UMC in Bellevue**. This year's theme—**Dream It. Believe It. Do It.**—features special guest Debbie Dimitre portraying suffragette Alice Paul. Registration is **$35** and includes Friday dinner plus Saturday snacks and lunch. Hotel rooms are available at Coast Hotel Bellevue with a reserved group rate. Registration opens Friday at 3:00 PM, with the program beginning at 4:30 PM.

🎃 Boo Bunco Fundraiser: An Evening of Fun for a Great Cause

Learning Avenues Child Care Centers invites our community to a festive night of Bunco, costumes, prizes, and fall fun—all in support of early-childhood programs that serve local families. Join us **October 29, 5:30–8:30 PM at the Luepke Center** in Vancouver. Tickets are **$50**, with free parking and plenty of seasonal treats.

Businesses are also encouraged to **host a sponsor table**. It's a great way to connect with the community: decorate your table, share giveaways, and meet potential clients. **Table sponsorships are $250 and include two player tickets.**

Register at **office@learningavenues.com** and pay online at **learningavenues.maxcheckout.com**.

From the Admin:

*****Articles for the November newsletter are due by 1pm on Thursday, October 22.**

Climate Justice

"Caring for God's Creation" program on Saturday, October 10, will give attendees a head start on ideas for combating the climate crisis. Hosted by United Women in Faith at Vancouver Heights United Methodist Church (VHUMC), the program will begin at 11 a.m. in the sanctuary of the church.

A panel of three speakers will discuss the crisis facing us. Sarah Flint, UMC Earth Keeper, Deaconess Candidate, and Cultivator of Land and Belonging at Vancouver First UMC, will introduce environmental stewardship and how Scripture calls on us to care for the natural world, followed by Heidi Cody, SW WA field manager for the Washington Conservation Action and ACE Coalition Manager, who will explain upcoming environmental ballot initiatives and candidates. Karen Wilson and Mark Ray, VHUMC Community Garden stewards, will discuss the purpose and impact of community gardens.

A light lunch will follow the panel discussion with attendees discussing relevant table topics such as pollinators/gardening, water conservation, composting, air quality, and response to natural disasters. Responses will be discussed following lunch. The program will conclude at 2 p.m.

Attendees are requested to RSVP for lunch and for childcare, if needed. For more information or to RSVP, please contact Vicki Smith (360-713-3425) or Sheree Fitzpatrick (360-921-6249).

Walking Together Into a New Season of Faith

Stewardship Season & Our 2027 Pledge Campaign

As we enter October, we begin a season of gratitude and reflection—a time to remember how God has carried us, shaped us, and called us to be a church of open hearts, open minds, and open doors. Stewardship is not just about budgets or numbers; it's about recognizing that everything we have is a gift from God, and responding with generosity, hope, and trust.

This month we launch our **2027 Pledge Campaign**, inviting each of us to consider how we can support the ministries that make our church a place of welcome, compassion, and growth. Your pledges help sustain worship, outreach, music, children's programs, pastoral care, and the everyday work that keeps our doors open to the community.

As you pray about your pledge, we encourage you to reflect on three simple questions:

- **How has God blessed me this year?**
- **How is God calling me to grow in generosity?**
- **How can my giving strengthen our shared ministry in 2027?**

Every pledge—large or small—helps us plan faithfully for the year ahead. Together, we build a church that continues to serve with joy, care for our neighbors, and follow God's leading into new possibilities.

Thank you for the ways you give, serve, and show up. Your faithfulness makes a difference.

Voices of Advent: A Four-Week Pastor-Led Study for a Season of Hope

Beginning Wednesday, December 2 — 6:30 pm in Room 10 and on Zoom

As we enter the holy season of Advent, *Voices of Advent* invites us to listen closely to the Scriptures that inspire our Christmas celebrations. In this study, biblical scholar **Prof. Matthew L. Skinner** leads us through passages that shape our understanding of hope: Jesus promising to return, John the Baptist preparing the way, faithful poets anticipating Christ's birth, and angels rejoicing as Christmas dawns. Each voice helps us prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

This four-week, pastor-led study will explore how Advent is not only the beginning of the Christian year but also the overture to the incredible story of Jesus—a season that calls us to pause, listen, and let Scripture guide our anticipation.

We will meet **Wednesday evenings at 6:30 pm**, beginning **December 2**, **in Room 10 and on Zoom**, making it easy for everyone to participate—whether in person or from home.

Books are available through the church office for $12.

Let's Connect!

We've introduced new "Let's Connect" forms to help us stay better linked as a church family. These simple cards make it easy to update your contact information, share a prayer request, ask a question, or let us know where you feel called to serve. **They also double as our attendance sheet**—just jot down your name and the date to let us know you were here with us. Whether you're a longtime member or newly visiting, these forms give us a gentle, practical way to listen, support, and stay connected. Pick one up on Sunday. Every connection strengthens our shared life in Christ.

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We are part of the Reconciling Ministries Network.
We are a church that is spiritually alive, radically inclusive and justice oriented

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