

THE CIRCUIT RIDER

Social Distancing Edition Vol. 6

Snoqualmie United Methodist Church

MARCH/APRIL 2021

SAVE THE DATES

Saturday March 20 –
Reconciling Fellowship Meets
Alma and Ekaterina Gomez, 4
pm

March 28 – Palm Sunday,
10:30 am

April 1 – Maundy Thursday
service, 6:30 pm

April 2 – Good Friday service,
7 pm

April 4 – Easter sunrise
service, Snoqualmie Point
Park, 6:25 am

Easter service, 10:30 am

THIS IS US

Our *This is Us* focus in this issue of the *Circuit Rider* is on our three retired pastors: Ed Morrison, Richard Whetsell and Melvin Woodworth.

Everyone sees the world from a certain, defined cultural perspective. But people who have done their inner work also see beyond their own biases to something transcendent, something that crosses the boundaries of culture and individual experience.

~ Richard Rohr, *Meditation on Seeing Clearly*, Feb 28, 2021

These men did not retire from the ministry here at SUMC – they chose us! We are blessed by their talents and experience - blessed by the resources they are.

All grew up in families where a faith practice was prominent, but the nature of their calls differed: Ed's work was about accompanying people through spiritual/emotional struggles; Richard described his faith in the context of love, humility, and Creation; Mel responded to every call with a "Here I am, Lord" attitude and became, again and again, the voice of the marginalized,

those historically with little or no voice.

It has been an honor to talk with our retired pastors, all who attested to Pastor Lee's influence and the diversity of our congregation in their decision to become one of us.

Ed Morrison

Ed grew up with church at the core of his family life. He went to Seattle Christian School and then to Wheaton College. Though his "call" was more a whisper than a shout, he applied to seminary and married after college.

Many of Ed's professors at Columbia Seminary in Atlanta smoked, drank, and cussed, but their Christlike love for those inside and outside their culture began Ed's movement from fundamentalism toward mature faith. Compelled by the mysteries of human psychology, he spent his senior year at Columbia as a pastoral counselor at an Echo Glen-like center for girls, earning his M.Div. with Honors in Pastoral Counseling in 1968. He then became Resident Minister of Glacier National Park. Daughter Sigrid spent her first year there. In 1970, he moved back to Atlanta and served a year as a chaplain in a 1000 bed charity hospital. He believes the work and supervision he received there opened his heart to all God's people.

In 1971, Ed accepted a call as Presbyterian Campus Minister at University of Mississippi ("Ole Miss") in Oxford, MS, where he pastored faculty and students and preached monthly at the First Presbyterian Church. During this time, he entered a dark night of his soul through a dying marriage and a dying faith. He moved to Jackson, MS in 1976 and became the director of an emergency shelter for teenagers. He divorced, left the Presbyterian ministry, and feeling depressed and lost, struggling to find meaning.

In 1982, he met Carol, who was teaching at Tougaloo College, an HBCU (Historically Black College or University). As a couple, they tried different churches. When Carol went through treatment for alcohol addiction, it was a wakeup call for both of them. They returned to their spiritual journeys and began attending an Episcopal church.

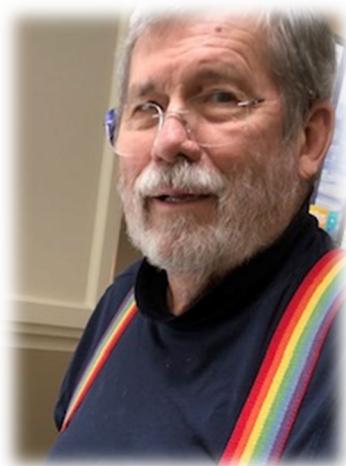
After Sigrid graduated from high school in 1986, Ed and Carol moved to Seattle, where they counseled teen underachievers and their parents. They found a home at Redmond Presbyterian, and, in 1994, Ed decided to reaffirm his call to ministry and became their "Tentmaker," serving as volunteer Associate Pastor until 2000.

In 1990, Ed and Carol began a private practice as Licensed Mental Health Counselors and practiced as Morrison Counseling for over 20 years. In 2000, they moved to their place on the river in North Bend; they had trouble finding a church, but continued their spiritual growth. The first time they attended SUMC, Ed says, "Lee's preaching and Harley's choir blew us away. We've been enfolded into this congregation ever since."

In 2019, Ed was anointed by Pastor Lee and commissioned during worship service to be SUMC's Minister of Counseling. He looks forward to the unfolding story of his journey with the Cosmic Christ and SUMC.



Richard Whetsell



Richard entered ordained ministry in 1985. For ten years prior to being ordained, not unlike Jesus, he was a carpenter! Richard, as it turns out, has used these skills throughout his life. Richard served several churches in Oklahoma before answering the call to pastor in Alaska for 6 years. Though Richard formally retired in 2011, he has remained active utilizing his contractor skills as facility manager in two churches and continuing to fill pulpits. He is currently serving on the SUMC board of Trustees, the Worship Committee, and the Inclusion Committee.

Richard and Karolann chose SUMC by listening to Pastor Lee's sermon online. She mentioned Fr. Richard Rohr, whom they had been reading daily for years. "Our theology just matched up. We enjoy the wide diversity of people here."

More thoughts on faith

Richard states:

Alaska was life changing. Physically, Alaska can be an unforgiving place. I had better be able to take care of myself. The vastness of creation as we experienced it there helped me conclude that humans are not necessarily at the center of creation. The earth has been in existence approximately 4.54 Billion years, and homo sapiens just 200,000 years. God had been around a long time before we showed up. To think that I am somehow the center of creation just doesn't hold water. I had to correct my theology to match the creation as opposed to expecting creation to accommodate to my theology. Put another way, do you think creation conforms to your belief just because you believe it? We need to respectfully get in line.

What's next

Richard explains that as a result of an embolism last April, he cannot be physically active at the level he was before. He states, "I could always be doing something. Now, although I know how to do it, I just cannot always do it. *The truth is that my value is not based on what I can do. My value is that I am loved.* I have had to figure out how to live with meaning and value. I continue with studies and endeavor to be a resource. I have started writing again especially about healthy boundaries, church policy, and addiction and co-dependence."

Melvin Woodworth

Melvin has always been aware of a benevolent presence in the cosmos. As a child, he had a secret place where he could be with this compassionate presence. As a sophomore in high school, Mel had a conversion experience that helped him understand grace through Jesus Christ.

Wanting to talk about his experience of Spirit, Mel was told that, "Words are symbols for shared experiences." Mel watched for people with experiences similar to his and found them to be *Christians who called their experience "God."* But the "God" people talked about was much smaller than the "GOD" he experienced. Christ's grace in his experience was far more unconditional than that expressed by many Christians.



Mel's first church was Capitol Hill United Methodist Church in Seattle. Capitol Hill shared its building with the Metropolitan Community Church that served the gay community. His experience of Christ's grace convinced him that God loved sexual minority persons, though many in the church condemned those who were "different." Mel became the 'face of sexual minorities' at our Annual Conference. His God loves everyone.

From Capitol Hill UMC Melvin went to Rainier Beach UMC, an English-speaking congregation with 10 members from Tonga. Under his direction, they grew a weekly Tongan service of 65. He went on to serve with or preside over ministers who conducted services in Tongan, Fijian, Samoan, Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi. He pastored Filipinos and African Americans and made mission trips to Honduras, Mexico, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His God loves everyone.

Thoughts about Methodism and SUMC

Regarding SUMC and Methodism in general, Mel states, "In the life of Jesus Christ, and in the theology of the United Methodist Church, there is an inextricable melding of a spirit of acceptance and compassion with a spirit of social action. Doing stuff is core to who Jesus was. Belief-based action is key to being a Methodist. Lee and SUMC do that. Global United Methodism is in crisis. If we are followers of Jesus, we love our brothers and sisters with room for divergent thinking. Lee emphasizes this as well. She is good at helping people with their spiritual growth and living it out in real ways in their lives."

Looking back at the many congregations he was called to serve, Mel states, “Each church has given me the skills that I should have had when I went there. All of life is that way: you really don’t know how to make an omelet until you have made some omelets. The moves did not always make much sense to me but I never turned one down, and in every case learned and grew in faith.”

“How vs. What”: Melvin’s agenda has always been about How he wants people to function, not What they should do.



RECONCILING FELLOWSHIP EVENT

The Leadership of the Reconciling Fellowship invites Fellowship members and anyone else at SUMC who’s interested, to attend a Zoom event on Saturday, March 20, at 4:00, when Ekatarina and Alma Gomez, a valuable part of our church family, will share their personal stories. We are grateful for this opportunity to get to know them.

DISMANTLING RACISM: LENT DEVOTIONS WITH UMC BISHOPS

"Is it possible to worship at the altars of racial superiority, privilege or supremacy and still claim to have denied ourselves, picked up our crosses, and be followers of Christ? Racial injustice is a discipleship matter. And racial injustice in one of the twin pandemics affecting our great nation." - Bishop LaTrelle Easterling.



Each week of Lent and every day of Holy Week, devotionals that inspire the undoing of racism, discrimination, oppression and exclusion are being offered by select United Methodist Bishops. Find them posted weekly on the worship page of Snoqualmie UMC's website (<https://www.snoqualmieumc.org>) on the Snoqualmie United Methodist Facebook page, or using this link: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/dismantling-racism-lent-devotions-by-our-bishops> .

May we confess and fast from the sins of racism, discrimination, oppression, exclusion....May we feast on the beauty of God's diversity!



WORSHIP FORECAST

Sundays 10:30 am on Zoom, Meeting ID 801896850
Or click on the home page of our website, www.snoqualmieumc.org

Need help with Zoom? No problem. Call Greg (425-246-4384) or Toddie Downs (425-208-1470)

LENT CONTINUES....

March 7 - Rending Our Hearts: Claiming God's Promises (3), *Rules for the Road*. Please have some bread and drink ready for consecration and use in **Holy Communion**. Music with Michelle Wilkinson. Exodus 20:1-17, and other texts.

March 14 - Rending Our Hearts: Claiming God's Promises (4), *My Cross to Bear?* Core texts Mark 8:31-38, Numbers 21:4-9.

March 21 - Rending Our Hearts: Claiming God's Promises (6), *A New Covenant*, Jeremiah 31:31-34. Music with Toddie Downs.

March 28 - Palm/Passion Sunday! Gather a "palm" branch from your surroundings to welcome "King" Jesus, red-carpet style. Mark 11:1-11, Mark 14:1-15:47, excerpts. Psalm 31:9-16.

April 1 - Maundy Thursday 6:30 pm. Enjoy each other's dinner company on Zoom. Gather with Jesus for a last supper, and to hear his parting wishes. Bring your lap top / phone / tablet to your home table and we'll eat and tell stories together. John 13.

April 2 - Good Friday 7pm. Mark 15:21-42.

April 4 EASTER - Sunrise Service tentatively planned for **Snoqualmie Point Park**, starting at **6:25 am**. We will observe social distancing and double masking. Zoom service to follow at 10:30 am.

Thanks to our creative and thoughtful Worship Committee: Betty Gildersleeve, Jacque Lindstrand, Marcia Reinert (chair), Ron Sumners, and Richard Whetsell. Thanks to **Shelley Huestis** for coordinating Sunday readers and liturgists. Call or text Shelley (425-283-6007) if you want to read scripture, guide the service, or offer special music!

- For worship updates and occasional revisions
please visit the worship page on our website: www.snoqualmieumc.org . -

NEWS OF THE CHURCH: WATCHA WATCHIN’



The pandemic has given most of us more indoor and solitary time. One activity that offers entertainment, knowledge, emotional catharsis, and/or welcome distraction to members of our congregation is watching series, documentaries, and/or tv shows. We asked several people about their viewing pleasures (when they’re not watching the news).

British series top several lists. **Nancy Parsons** just finished re-watching *Downton Abbey*. **Lucinda Hauser** and **Reri MacLean** like *The Crown*. “It’s my workout series,” Lucinda says. **Gene Pollard** likes *Keeping Up Appearances*.

Cooking shows and chef stories are favorites. **Lucinda and Tim Hauser** and **Carol and Ed Morrison** love *Chef’s Table*. **Nancy Parsons** likes *Top Chef*. **Carol Peterson** watches *America’s Test Kitchen*, *Cook’s Country*, *Barefoot Contessa*, *Alton Brown*, and *Sara Moulton*. **Toddie Downs** and **Nancy McLean** love *the Great British Baking Show*.

For Black History Month, PBS offered several productions. **Connie Edwards**, **the Morrisons**, and **Karolann and Richard Whetsell** greatly appreciated *The Black Church* and *The Marian Anderson Story*. Connie also really liked *Driving While Black in America* and the interview with Henry Lewis Gates.

Favorite dramatic and comedic series are *Firefly Lane* (**Jeanie Mandas-Huling**), *The Queen’s Gambit* and *Virgin River* (**Nancy M.**, **Lucinda**, and **Carol and Ed**), and *Unorthodox* (**Reri** and **Carol M**). **Ivy Ren** likes *Blue Bloods*, *911*, and *Lonestar*. **Pat Warner’s** been watching reruns of *Quantum Leap*. **Gene Pollard** particularly enjoys *MASH* reruns, because he spent a year in Korea in the U.S. Marines. **Joanne Royston** and **Bob Miller** and **Carol and Ed** loved *Last Tango in Halifax*. **Nancy McLean**, **Linda Trombley**, and **Karolann Whetsell** enjoyed Canadian series *Anne with an E*.

Inspirational series include *Self Made*, suggested by **Nancy M** and **Lucinda**, and *Voices of Fire*, which **Nancy M** and **Carol M** liked a lot. **Gene P** is inspired by shows on EWIN, the Catholic Channel, including *Web of Faith* and *Faith and Tradition*. He also enjoys watching the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on Sundays on Channel 232. **Freda Monroe** is a fan of Della Reese and loves her in reruns of *Touched by an Angel*.

Not everyone we talked to streams movies, but here are some favorites of those who do: **Nancy M** and her family watched *Hidden Figures*, which generated questions from the kids. **Jeanie** and the **Morrison**s loved Harry Dean Stanton in *Lucky*. **Jeanie** liked *The Black Godfather* and thought it was a good pick for Black History Month. **Karolann’s** looking forward to *Black Klansman* on Hulu. **Richard Whetsell** recommends *The Dig*.

Happy Watchin’, Everyone.



COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

If you have any suggestions or ideas for me for future issues, please let me know!

Thanks, Toddie Downs (toddiedowns@yahoo.com)

Contact Us

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