

LAKE OSWEGO UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Sabbatical Planning Update "Change in Our Lives"

When our children were teenagers they went to Pilgrim Pines church camp for music, confirmation, Presidents Day and Pilgrim Fellowship (youth group) retreats. Those were in addition to high school PF work camps on the Hopi Reservation. Being away from home provided opportunities for them to have



important discussions with friends and leaders, to have fun as well as participate in service for others, and deepen their awareness of God in their lives. Returning from camp, they often said things looked different at home. Maybe, but more likely, they were changed. They had grown, discovering new things about themselves, new ways of looking at the world, formed deeper friendships, explored another culture, worked, played and laughed together. They matured each time away to return more confident and even a bit taller.

While the kids were gone, Quent and I also had opportunity to do new things, to explore new restaurants, museums, and running paths. As we tackled projects together we wondered how their adventures were going. (This was before cell phones were smaller than bricks and everyone had one.)

Jennie's Sabbatical is equivalent to adult "church camp" designed just for her. The agenda of travel, rest, spiritual pondering and deepening along with quality uninterrupted time with family will renew her spirit. She will return changed by her time away from us. That's a good thing! The Sabbatical is for her well being.

At Annual Meeting some people expressed concern about Jennie being changed by her Sabbatical. Since she came to LOUCC she has experienced a number of changes already. She became our minister (new job, new city), She and Hilary were married. They moved three times, ending up in a house they

purchased that needed some work. They have become parents. Hilary attended grad school and began a new career. Each of these changes have impacted Jennie. Her life has been about change even as she has preached wonderful sermons, ministered to and inspired us.

Life is about change. The old saying goes "the only thing changeless is change." Our very lives are predicated on change from conception to death. In times of radical change we often are aware of God's presence strengthening, loving and luring us from one part of the journey to the next. Members of LOUCC who were here before Jennie know and understand the strength our congregation has to adapt to change, to weather it or celebrate it, depending on our perspective. There were some difficult transitions but we were not abandoned. The community pulled together and later it seemed as if we were waiting on God's time which was also Jennie's time to bring us together for ministry.

During our Sabbatical we will be changed as we experience life in Jennie's absence and the presence of a Sabbatical minister. We have brainstormed the start of a plan for opportunities to nurture our creative selves, to strengthen our bond with each other and renew our spirits. We will be paralleling Jennie's Sabbatical plans.

Jennie will see LOUCC with new eyes and inspire us with new energy and visions when she returns. But we will also have new eyes with which to view the journey as we continue because this journey is about change, growth and spirit.

- Bee Neufeld

On behalf of the Sabbatical Planning Team

(Bee Neufeld, Gary Tandy, Pam Rossio, Jennie Ott)