

**BANNED**

QUESTIONS ABOUT JESUS

*An Open and Affirming Congregation*

PARKROSE COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

2024



## **JourneyNotes with Pastor Giuseppe Amato**

### **Banned Questions about Jesus**

In his book, *Banned Questions about Jesus*, Christian Piatt says that when he was a teenager, his youth pastor threw a Bible at his head. Why? Christian asked questions that his church simply did not allow. In fact, after the Bible-bashing, he was promptly kicked out of the youth group.

I've never had a Bible thrown at me, but I know what its like to be in a church where certain questions lead to excommunication. I've even discouraged them myself. When I eventually joined more progressive congregations, I thought my fellow parishioners there must be comfortable with such questions. What I learned is that most of us have simply not been provided with the space, opportunity, and encouragement to engage them. For that reason, when I preach, I often address strange or controversial items in our passages. But sermons are largely one-way communication. They are great for presenting ideas, not so great for engaging beyond that.

When those of us interested in a Bible study met together last week, we decided that we wanted to engage questions—our own and others. So we decided to begin a Connect Group to discuss Banned Questions. Our conversations so far have been quite thought-provoking. Our very first question was, “Did Jesus have sex? Did he have sexual desire?” Luckily Piatt’s youth pastor wasn’t there—I’m sure he would have thrown bibles at us for asking such a thing!



Now, you may be wondering what exactly a “Connect Group” is. It’s a small group format I created aimed at fostering connection with others, ourselves, and God through intentionally relational, spiritual, and/or theological conversations. It is a relationally-supportive space that provides opportunity for us to learn, process, and share.

You are welcome to join us if you’d like. We meet in my office every Wednesday (except 12/27) at 11am. We have no homework and it

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Pastor Giuseppe's Tentative Office Hours:  
Monday to Thursday: 10:a.m.—3:00 p.m.  
(Please Call Ahead)

Church Office Hours:  
Monday to Friday: 9:00a.m.—2:00 p.m.

**Staff**

Rev. Giuseppe Amato, *Pastor*

Clay Osburn, *Moderator*

Aaron Winegar, *Office Administrator*

Erica Martin, *Community Life & Youth Director*

Niki Farley, *Music Director*

Rev. Charles W. Ross, *Pastor Emeritus*

is not necessary to buy a book ahead of time. If you are interested in a Connect Group but this time doesn't work for you, let me know via email (pastor@parkroseucc.org)—I'd love to see more groups form! I'd be delighted to provide training and tools.

--Pastor Giuseppe  
(He/him)

## **UPDATE: A MESSAGE FROM THE CPC PALESTINE/ISRAEL NETWORK**

As the violence continues, our thoughts and prayers are with the many people who are suffering from the effects of war in Palestine and Israel. We hear and view many terrible situations daily on our news sources, whether it be death, serious injury, deprivation of food, water, electricity, medical care, and housing. Many of our UCC PIN members have friends and acquaintances in both Palestine and Israel and know that their lives have been turned upside down by these events.

As a committee, we encourage everyone to continue to contact their representative and senators to demand that they call for a ceasefire to stop the suffering and provide assistance to all who are homeless and suffering. Continued bombing of Gaza will only result in increasing the magnitude of deaths and injuries to innocent people, in particular to the Palestinians who are trapped in the confines of Gaza. CPC PIN has created a NEW sample script for your phone calls. [Giuseppe note: The script provided is incomplete. As these calls are so important in moving the political needle, I've included a resource that I use effectively. It's 5calls.org, and it enables us to make 5 calls to our representatives in 5 minutes. In addition to the website, it is also available as an app on IOS and Android.]

We also want to encourage everyone to learn more about the conditions Palestinians have been forced to live under in Gaza, the West

Bank, and Israel as a result of the Nakba which occurred in 1948, resulting in over 2,000,000 Palestinians becoming refugees. To help you learn about the historical and present conditions, we are providing a list of resources you can view and study online. We also welcome the chance to speak with your congregation which may be arranged by contacting Marcia Gilliland at [marcia.gilliland@gmail.com](mailto:marcia.gilliland@gmail.com) or Rev. Catherine Alder at [aldercatherine@aol.com](mailto:aldercatherine@aol.com).

Jewish Organization Resources

1. [jstreet.org](http://jstreet.org)
2. [jewishvoiceforpeace.org](http://jewishvoiceforpeace.org)

Gaza Support Organizations

1. [oxfam.org/en/open-call-immediate-ceasefire-occupied-palestinian-territory](http://oxfam.org/en/open-call-immediate-ceasefire-occupied-palestinian-territory)
2. [jewishvoiceforpeace.org/resource/ceasefire/](http://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/resource/ceasefire/)
3. [afsc.org/action/tell-congress-oppose-ground-invasion-gaza-israel?ms=WEB24HG0001FM](http://afsc.org/action/tell-congress-oppose-ground-invasion-gaza-israel?ms=WEB24HG0001FM)

Palestinian Support Organizations

1. Friends of Sabeel North America - [fosna.org](http://fosna.org)
2. Tree of Life Educational Fund - [tolef.org](http://tolef.org)
3. [eyewitnesspalestine.org](http://eyewitnesspalestine.org)
4. [Mazin@qumsiyeh.org](mailto:Mazin@qumsiyeh.org)
5. US Campaign for Palestinian Rights - [uscpr.org](http://uscpr.org)
6. Voices from the Holy Land - [pgmhn.org/calendar-1/invitation-to-online-film-salon](http://pgmhn.org/calendar-1/invitation-to-online-film-salon)
7. [mondoweiss.net](http://mondoweiss.net)
8. UCC Palestine/Israel Network newsletter - [myemail.constantcontact.com/UCC-PIN-DECEMBER-2023-E-NEWS-.html?soid=1125185402059&aid=mcD\\_RqhNjMk](http://myemail.constantcontact.com/UCC-PIN-DECEMBER-2023-E-NEWS-.html?soid=1125185402059&aid=mcD_RqhNjMk)

We also encourage everyone to pray for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East.



**January Birthdays**

Vickie Lyman	01/09
Catherine Todd	01/13
Sadie Durant	01/13
Linda Loeffler	01/19
Rhonda Rowan-Robertson	01/22
Maurey Cline	01/22
Owen Rubsam	01/23

**February Birthdays**

Tanner Martin	02/02
Ryan Van Benthuisen	02/03
Antoinette Bessette	02/07
Heather Martinez	02/16
Al Darrach	02/20

# REPORT FROM THE MODERATOR

BY CLAY OSBURN

I am writing this article a little before Christmas but the article won't be published by Christmas but I still want to wish everyone a belated Merry Christmas. Also I wish everyone a very Happy and productive New Year.

I just signed up to be Moderator for 2024 and have been accepted. I want to thank everyone for their support in 2023 especially the Staff and past Moderators. I will continue ask for their guidance when necessary. I also want to thank Tanya for her willingness to share me with the Parkrose Community.

Big news in 2023 was the hiring of our new Pastor. I believe the Search Committee did what was asked of them and represented the congregation with due diligence. Pastor Giuseppe has blended in and is a good fit for us. I look forward to working with him in 2024.

WeShine continues to be a positive presence in the Parkrose community. With the exception of United Gospel Mission not providing showers any more due to WeShine hooking up to the water main and getting their own shower in the Village and "Feed The Mass" having some funding issues we continue to support our other partners, namely SoValTi, Iglesia de Jesucristo de Las Tinieblas a La Luz, Portland Fruit Tree project, and Portland Parks who run the Eastminster Community garden. We still have Cultivate Initiative providing some showers, laundry and clothing option. Just because Feed The Mass hasn't been providing meals we didn't stop serving meals. We still have the Monday, Wednesday and Friday lunches available for our community guests. A big thanks to tall he volunteers who prepare and serve those meals.

We will be on lookout for non-profit partners to work with to help provide services for our Community. I'm excited to see what this New Year brings to Parkrose. Thank you all for your continued interest in this community.

Much peace, love and joy to us all.  
Clay



## Brunch Communion



We're going to start out the New Year with a special Communion Brunch Service on Sunday, January 7th. We will meet in Eastminster Hall for a short service and then eat brunch together. This will all start at our regular time of 10:00. Please come and join us.



*It's back!* We'll be having Coffee Time every Sunday after church. Please join us in Eastminster Hall after service for coffee and conversation.

PS: I have some people who have volunteered to help set up and clean up Coffee Time. If you would like to be added to this list please let me know. If you can't help set up or clean up Coffee Time but would still like to bring a snack, please let Donna know at [barkerd860@icloud.com](mailto:barkerd860@icloud.com).

# News from the Community Life & Youth Ministry

**Wishing Everyone the Happiest of Holidays  
no matter how you celebrate!**



How did you celebrate the holiday season? It seemed after Thanksgiving that the holidays just magically appeared. We celebrated the season by attending the Scan Fair, making traditional Norwegian & German foods, visiting loved ones, and going to a Smash Room! (More to come on that, my dear friends)

It is always the time of year to reflect and see how this year has turned for us. I look back and can see how we helped to build a village and make it 'home' for many (literally); bring forth shower & hygiene services and meal programs for our unhoused neighbors; nurture partnerships and discover new ones; and continually offer opportunities for service and connection with one another and our young people. All this and also welcomed a new pastor and his sweet family into our Parkrose UCC community. It is in the hopes that we carry this incredible spirit and energy into the next year (and those that follow.)

## PCUCC, WeShine & Gather Make Shelter paint it up artsy style!



PCUCC's own Bill & Duane, along with villagers came and helped paint mandalas. This is a place-making project with **Gather Make Shelter** and an art installation for the WeShine Village. These mandalas can be seen along the fence of the Village! They are very beautifully colorful!

## Wellness Wednesdays!

Most in our community know that we have had Cultivate Initiatives come with their shower & laundry mobile truck or their outreach van from 11-2 on Wednesdays. Jan and I have met with the leaders from C.I and discussed options to increase the traffic here at Parkrose UCC on Wednesdays. How can we help folks better access these services here?

During the winter, we will be opening Eastminster Hall from 11 am - 2pm as a warm place for folks to access clothing, and hygiene needs, eat lunch (prepared by the Wednesday lunch

crew), charge cell phones, and experience a little fellowship with one another. Following other wellness fair models at Pilgrim Lutheran and St. Peter & Paul, we are calling our event **WELLNESS WEDNESDAYS!**

WeShine Staff & I have been making connections for shelter referrals, mental health & wound care, plus additional resources. Our First Wednesday was a holiday-themed hot cocoa party!



(Pictured here are Lucille, Clay & John of the PCUCC “lunch bunch”; and Jose & Mandy from Cultivate Initiatives with the hygiene supplies and mobile clothing closet.)

\*If you are interested in volunteering or donating much-needed items, please get in touch with me at [cedirector@parkroseucc.org](mailto:cedirector@parkroseucc.org)

## Christmas Eve Service

With Giuseppe's support, and musical direction from Niki and Guitar Friends, and participation from our youth & friends, a wonderfully magical and meaningful Christmas Eve Service was presented, this past Sunday. If you missed this service, do not fear! Aaron has made it available on YouTube. You'll find a few gems on the following page! (Pictures by Travis Martin)



Thank you to Sharon Ericson and Tanya for assisting as needed. Thank you to Niki, Mike & Jesse for sharing your musical talents. Thank you to the Children and youth for being “sheep” reading, lighting candles, and carrying in the puppets/star; and Pastor Giuseppe for tying it together with an inspired blessing.

It was a most amazing service!



## UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS & ACTIVITIES:

I am excited to plan a few exciting “doings” and service projects. Youth are invited to a **Lunchtime planning event** on Saturday, January 27 at 1:00 pm. More details to come.

- **“God’s Work, Our Hands” Service project** along with other East County area churches. Servin’ it up all over, Jesus style!

Additionally, I am meeting with the leader of the **Northeast Youth Collective** to plan for future activities as well.

Here are some other things we can look forward to...

- **Turtle Monitoring** this Spring with Laura G.
- A **“Smash Room”** experience! Trav and I did some re-con on this matter, and we found a most excellent place! We will plan for a session in February!

May the New Year turn blessedly for us all. (Perhaps that is a matter of how you look at it.) I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year, my lovely friends!

Take special care always,

-Erica Martin



### KEEP CONNECTED:

Don't forget to call your church friends, especially those who do not receive these electronic messages. This is one simple way we can stay connected during this time.

Parkrose Community United Church of Christ  
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## TESTIMONIES, NOT TESTS OF THE FAITH

The United Church of Christ embraces a theological heritage that affirms the Bible as the authoritative witness to the Word of God, the creeds of the ecumenical councils, and the confessions of the Reformation. The UCC has roots in the "covenantal" tradition—meaning there is no centralized authority or hierarchy that can impose any doctrine or form of worship on its members. Christ alone is Head of the church. We seek a balance between freedom of conscience and accountability to the apostolic faith. The UCC therefore receives the historic creeds and confessions of our ancestors as testimonies, but not tests of the faith.

## OPEN AND AFFIRMING



In Galatians 3.28 we are reminded that despite our differences we are all "one in Christ Jesus." Therefore, we, the people of Parkrose Community United Church of Christ, declare ourselves to be open and affirming. With God's grace, we seek to be a congregation that includes all persons, embracing differences of sexual orientation, gender, marital status, age, mental and physical ability, as well as racial, ethnic, religious, political or social-economic background. We welcome all to share in the life and leadership, ministry, and fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities and blessings of participation in our congregation. This is God's church and no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.