I am pleased to announce that we started off the year with over 100 people attending our September meeting. It is clear that others share my excitement about The Alliance’s programs (as well as the yummy lunches.) Thanks to all of you who renewed your membership and to our 16 new members. New memberships and renewals are always welcome.

Directories with names of all members signed up through the September meeting are available today. If you have not received your copy, you can pick up a directory from the Welcome Table after today’s meeting.

Membership maintains the member records and prints name tags. We also staff the Welcome Table at luncheons should you have questions. Team leaders working with me cover five key areas.

1. **Database Entries and Updates** provided by Petie Padden.
2. **Joys and Concerns** headed up by Dotti Chidester.
3. **Rides** to monthly meetings for members who don’t have transport, arranged by Mary Post. Call her at 503-310-7526. The phone number listed on the tan bookmark is incorrect.
4. **Telephone List** coordinated by Jean Omelchuck to connect with members who don’t have email access.
5. **Memorial Services Support** managed by Lynne Bacon.

Thanks to those who have volunteered to help with greeting and name tags. We need help each meeting with setting out and putting away name tags, greeting people and answering questions, so I may be contacting you.

Membership hosts an annual luncheon for new members. Newcomers can meet the Leadership Team and each other and learn about opportunities for service in our community. Additionally, mentors are available should new members want someone to chat with, sit with, and/or answer any questions. Please let me know if you would like to be connected with a mentor.

I look forward to meeting more of you during the coming year.

Yours in Fellowship,

Sara Hamill

MEMBER IN PROFILE: Sara Hamill

Visitors approach Sara’s front door on a path beside her rose garden. A profusion of cream, pink and pale orange blooms brighten the cloudy day. I’m accompanied along the path by the barking of a dog duet, one resonant baritone, one sharp staccato. Sara reassures the twosome with a few gentle rebukes and introduces me to Artie, her “forever” golden lab, and Charlotte, Liz Seully’s little King Charles spaniel, a temporary resident. Sara provides dog boarding or day care, a single dog at a time. Dog care is just one of her several jobs.

Born in Portland, but raised in Boise, Sara displayed an early love of animals. Before the age of ten she showed horses and joined 4-H. With a degree from Boise State in Interpersonal Communication, she returned to Portland in 1987. A year later she was diagnosed with breast cancer. In remission, she was encouraged to pursue counseling.
Sara Hamill, continued

her “dream job.” She earned an MA in Counseling Psychology from Lewis & Clark. Sara was working at the William Temple House in 1998 when she collapsed; she was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. She lost job, home and stability. Depression followed. “I needed a reason to get out of bed,” Sara admits. “But, I knew I could raise a puppy.”

In 1999 she began to work with service dogs. Sara has raised ten dogs now (three with Coffee Creek inmates), each one for a year and a half before “handing off the leash to forever owners.” These days daily dog-walking with Artie or boarder pups helps to moderate her MS. Fatigue is always a challenge.

Sara is a life-long Unitarian. She joined First Church in 1988 and recently joined The Alliance. For many years she served on the Adult Program Committee and participated frequently in the programs. In writing classes or SoulCollage® she has filled notebooks with her memoirs. She has facilitated Covenant and Sustaining Circle groups and served two years as a Lay Minister. She completed the Wellspring course and moved on to become a spiritual director. “This church keeps me growing,” she claims.

The dogs are asleep. Thunder rumbles and rain pelts the roses out in the garden; more than 30 bushes crowd the small space, many planted to honor departed loved ones. I return along the path, inspired by Sara’s stories, her kind and empathetic nature, and especially, her courage.

MEMBER IN PROFILE: Susan Pryor

Susan Pryor’s ancestors arrived in Oregon even before our Ladies Sewing Society (now The Alliance) employed their skills in 1866 to found our church. Susan’s great, great, great grandfather was Jason Lee, who followed the perilous Oregon Trail in 1833 to start a community along the Willamette River just north of present-day Salem. Today, statues of Jason Lee memorializing his pioneering efforts can be seen in Oregon’s Capitol, as well as in the US Capitol’s National Statuary Hall.

Susan’s own history inspires her reading of historical letters and journals. “I love stories about how people lived,” she says, especially “stories of admirable women’s lives.” These days Susan devotes warmhearted service to our Beacon Bookstore. Located in a corner of Fuller Hall, the bookstore offers items with spiritual, biographical, social justice and historical themes.

Susan’s story in Portland began at age two when her family moved here from Berkeley. She attended Grant High, graduated from PSU in Psychology, and met Bill while folk-dancing at Reed College. Following graduation and their marriage in 1964, Bill attached to a National Guard Unit stationed in California where they remained for the next 48 years, raising two sons and participating with the small UU Congregation of Marin County. They always dreamed of returning to Oregon.

They moved back to Portland in 2013. Susan’s strong interests led to early connections within First Church and a knitting group. Her affinity for “playing with yarn” and “hands-on work” led to service with The Alliance’s Greens Sale as chair of the Boutique. Susan introduced the selling of hand-sewn, hand-knit articles now sold every year. She and her knitting circle create prayer shawls offered by our Lay Ministers to congregants who need comfort. Always modest, Susan credits others. “In this church there are women models everywhere.”

Susan is a model of loyalty. She sustains life-long friendships arising from her interest groups: Grant High journalism class, knitters, weavers, and readers’ groups. Her favorite travels include visits with old friends or her sons and grandson in California. “I’ve led an ordinary life,” she claims modestly. “My blessings I find in the lives of extraordinary people.”