



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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Fall 2023

Linda Allen seeks to influence hearts and minds

**Music is woman's tool
to do justice, tell history
and be with dying people**

Having learned in the 1970s that she could influence the hearts and minds of people through singing and composing folk music, Linda Allen, chose that path.

Linda, who was the music leader for the PNC-UCC Annual Meeting at Bellingham First Congregational UCC, was in a military family and moved often until her father retired in Olympia. After graduating from Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) in 1968, she taught for a year in Minnesota but decided that was not for her.

Three years in Berkeley, Calif., during the 1970s convinced her that her calling was to be a songwriter, musician and singer.

Her husband Scott, whom she married, is mentioned on page 4



Singer songwriter Linda Allen leads singing at the PNW-UCC Annual Meeting in First Congregational UCC in Bellingham.

Moderator reports on PNC search and board actions

**By Indigo Brown, Moderator and
Esther Sanders, Vice Moderator**

Here is what going on in the conference. The Board is meeting on the first Tuesdays of every month. We will have a retreat in early November to discuss the state of the conference and to do some team building. Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

The Intentional Interim Conference Minister Search Committee began the search in July. They have been hard at work looking at a second round of applicants after the first set felt led by the Holy Spirit to go a different direction.

It is reassuring that Jonna Jensen is willing to continue as acting conference minister, working remotely from Iowa.

We look forward to what God is

**Prayers, patience
and support needed
by Conference
in this time.**

doing in this process. We are grateful to Lee Albertson, on the national level, who is guiding us. We are grateful to the entire Conference for prayers, support, and patience in this time.

Annual meeting 2024 meeting date has been set for April 26 to 28. The Annual Meeting Committee is currently looking for a meeting space and we hope to announce that soon.

The Justice and Witness Ministry

and Outdoor Ministry committees have started back up and are in the process of finding members, creating guidelines, and finding regular meeting times.

Those interested in being involved may contact Jenn Hagedorn for the Justice Witness Ministry Committee at pastor@spiritofpeaceucc.org or Leah Atkinson Bilinski for the Outdoor Ministry Committee at leah@fauntleroyucc.org.

N-Sid-Sen seeks volunteers to share their time, talent, or treasure. Those interested may contact Pam Peterson at director@n-sid-sen.org.

As we enter this time of autumn let us reach out to one another. This can be a hard time of year for us all and we want to create a community where everyone feels truly cared for. John 13:34.

Might 'deciduous' describe congregations?

Reports & Comments



By The Rev. Dr.
Jonna Jensen
Acting
Conference
Minister

*When
leaves
fall off,
we may
grieve.
We may
fear.
Winters
can be
long.*

As you may know, dear saints of the Pacific Northwest Conference, I have been serving you remotely from southeast Iowa.

Because we've had a summer of drought, deciduous trees here are ahead of their usual schedule.

Fall colors are appearing. Leaves will be falling early.

My mind wandered today to imagine what humans who had never seen deciduous trees before thought the first time they saw something strange going on with the leaves.

Did they think the strange new reds and golds and oranges were beautiful?

Did they think they were forever? Were they delighted? Or, worried?

Was there perhaps some disagreement over what this strangeness was all about?

The spring shoots were edible. The dry orange ones probably tasted yucky.

What did they think when the leaves started falling off? That seems like an easier guess to me.

Leaves dropping off trees wouldn't look like a good thing.

When the last leaves fell, what could it possibly mean other than that the tree was dead?

What could it possibly mean when the leaves on all the trees were gone?

Were the humans afraid that they would be the next to go?

It was a long time until spring, if the humans stayed.

We've long stopped fearing autumn colors and falling leaves.

We "get" what deciduous is all about.

It's not a word we often use to describe congregations.

It's not a word we use to describe the Church.

I wonder if our minds might wander and wonder a bit this fall about Deciduous Church.

The first time we see our leaves changing, what do we think? What do we feel?

Maybe we raise prayerful "oohs" and "aahs" at the beautiful color changes. It might be a delightful surprise.

Maybe we continue to hold a strong preference for the beautiful shades of green.

Maybe the oranges and reds worry us.

When the leaves fall off and the tree looks like it's dying, and when the leaves have all fallen off and the tree looks dead, even though we know what deciduous is, we may grieve. We may fear.

Winters can be long. Especially winter nights.

If there will be falling leaves near your home,

I wonder about bringing one in to place near the spot where you most often pray.

If there will be falling leaves near the place where your congregation worships, I wonder about bringing some to your altar.

I wonder if we might worship in these weeks as the Easter People we are.

May we listen for the mercies of wisdom from the falling leaves.

I'm listening alongside you...

Transitions announced

Arthur Mampel, who served churches in Minnesota and Hawaii, and retired after serving Beacon Ave. UCC from 1978 to 1996, died Sept. 18 in Seattle. He published 10 books of poetry, mentored other poets and gave many poetry readings. A memorial service was Oct. 1 at Prospect UCC.

Michael Ellick will be installed as minister of worship and care at University Congregational UCC on Sunday, Oct. 22. He previously served First Congregational UCC and was director of public engagement at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon in Portland.

Ann-Marie Illsley will be installed as minister at Walla Walla UCC on Sunday Oct. 22.

Rachael Haxtema was ordained on Sept. 24, at Keystone Church, UCC in Seattle.

Deborah Tyler, whose transfer of standing was approved in August, is serving at Dayton UCC.

Janel Rieve retired as licensed minister at Ritzville Zion-Philadelphia UCC the end of August.

On June 4, the **Newport UCC** voted to sever their relationship from the PNC-UCC and the national UCC. Their new name is The Newport Community Church.

Cristina Airaghi has resigned from UCC ministerial standing.

Bill Maurey-Holmes transferred his standing into the PNC-UCC. **Patty Ebner** transferred her standing to the Southwest Conference in August.

Alyssa de Wolfe had her four-way covenant approved for a ministry teaching the Our Whole Lives curriculum.

Support groups resume

Communities of Practice, support groups organized by the Committee on Ministry (COM) and led by trained facilitators, are for folks who are in a variety of ministries in the Conference..

Most groups for specialized ministers, pastors in different contexts and congregation sizes, retired clergy, and more Inclusive for members in discernment meet on Zoom from September through June.

Amy Hitchens, pastor of Normandy Park UCC in Seattle, is coordinating the groups for 2023-24. She shared comments from past participants.

- “I am new to the UCC ministry and

find it very helpful to be in a group with others who are further along and who offer both encouragement and guidance as I learn to do ministry the UCC way. Our leader poses good questions to get us talking and offers insightful reflections after each one shares.”

- “Being able to meet regularly with a CoP group of colleagues is one of the best things I do for myself. This group keeps me connected & relative to the PNC & UCC, supports me in my life and ministry and inspires me to grow as we support and learn from one another.”

The cost is \$250 and scholarships are available. For information, email amy@npucc.org.

Musicians present chat

The United Church of Christ Musicians Association is offering a Saturday Sharing chat session on Zoom on “Music Copyright for Churches” with Siobhán Maguire, assistant manager of ONE LICENSE and host Jim Boratko. A one-hour ZOOM session was held at 8 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 30. The chat is recorded and will be available for those who cannot attend.

For the link and video link, visit <https://uccma.wildapricot.org/event-5415921>.

Admiral UCC offers hymnals

Admiral Church in West Seattle has more New Century Hymnals than it needs and is offering extras to others on request for the cost of shipping.

For information, email joyinthemorning1130@gmail.com.

OWL session is Oct. 4

Amy Johnson, who leads Our Whole Lives (OWL) workshops for the UCC, reported that there will be an Our Whole Lives Taking Flight webinar on LGBTQ+ and Aging at 9 a.m. Pacific Time, Wednesday, Oct. 4. Panelists for the discussion include Wilhelmina Perry, Anne Holmes, Jane Fleishman and Meg Riley.

Registration is at https://ucc.zoom.us/webinar/register/9216782901629/WN_DAehfdQIRiWNOBvfr5xkZg?fbclid=IwAR14j_-V1hJ5Tz2MqtN9FlfZoW-UuEJT04yacx0ay2qZjQLJeVbfTz-wjx_4#/registration

All of of the OWL webinars are recorded and available after the fact <http://bit.ly/3X4XWaT>.

Churches reclaim city's welfare

This fall a coalition of congregations and partners in Seattle are hosting a four-night revival on the theme, “Reclaiming the Welfare of the City: A Revival for Racial Reconciliation,” based on Jeremiah 29.

The revival includes vibrant music, powerful preaching, creative expression and multi-racial community building.

It begins on Oct. 3 at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Seattle’s Central District. Yolanda Norton, an ordained minister and founder of Global Arts and Theology Experience (GATE) and the curator of the Beyoncé Mass, is the preacher. GATE’s Black Girl Magic Ensemble will lead music. This is the worship team that brought the Beyoncé Mass to Seattle in the spring of 2021.

On Oct. 4, the service is at Quest Church in Ballard. In partnership with Acts On Stage theater, there will be an arts-based, interactive worship and workshop. This event invites attendees to witness and discuss a theatrical presentation, “Story of An Off Brand Band.” Written by Michelle Lang-Raymond, this one-act play is an art imitating life piece that centers on the Micah 6:8 call to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.” Discussion groups will be based on age.

On Oct. 5, attendees will meet at Plymouth UCC. The preacher is Steve Jerbi, minister of Christian formation, love and justice at University Congregational UCC in Seattle. The UCUCU choir will offer music and the Black Girl Magic Ensemble returns as the praise band.

The closing night, Oct. 6, is at UCUCU. Joe Kim, lead pastor at Bothell United Methodist Church, is the preacher. Musical selections are from the Black Girl Magic Ensemble and the praise team at Kingdom Family Worship Center.

Attendees are asked to bring material goods for Immanuel Community Services.

The congregations and groups for the revival are: Acts on Stage, Bothell UMC, The Global Arts & Theology Experience, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Kingdom Family Worship Center, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Plymouth UCC, Quest Church, UCUCU and University Gathering UMC.

Seed money is from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Phyllis and Ralph Swanson Endowment, and the PNC-UCC Church Development Committee.

For information, visit at fb.me/e/6wES2uBgK.

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Musician has written hundreds of songs, on 13 CDs

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ried in 1989, has been a business partner and the technical support person for the many videos they have produced to accompany songs.

Faith and the power of music to change people are central to her career as a musician, said Linda, who grew up Baptist, became Lutheran after PLU.

Linda moved to Bellingham in 1976, continuing her career with two daughters in tow. She met Scott in the 1990s while attending a Unitarian church there. Later they began attending the First Congregational UCC, and that has been their church home ever since.

"In the 1990s and since, I have sung in many churches and have concerts in many different venues," she said. "My largest audience was for a national United Methodist Church conference."

Eventually, after Linda discovered Matthew Fox and creation spirituality, she went to graduate school and seminary at the University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland and studied under him.

After graduating as a doctor of ministry in 2006, Linda went on to be ordained as an interfaith ministry in the Creation Spirituality tradition. Her ordination for her ministry of music, teaching and preaching was blessed by a gathering of interfaith ministers in Bellingham.

From 2011 to 2014, she and her husband, Scott, were at Holden Village, a Lutheran retreat center in the Cascades, where Scott was business manager, and she served as program director and postmistress.

For the PNC 2023 Annual Meeting she chose songs from her CD, "Lay It Down: Images of the Sacred," one of 13 CDs she has produced with hundreds of original songs and a varied repertoire.

One project Linda developed



Linda Allen travels to sing in churches and other venues.

was a musical called "Daughters of Lilith," influenced by the Jewish midrash or story of Adam's first wife, Lilith, who rebelled against her subservient role as Adam's wife and chose to leave the Garden of Eden. Linda composed songs of other women of the Bible, like Mary, Mary Magdalene, the bent over woman, Eve and others, giving her interpretation of them strong feminist imagery.

Linda's current focus in ministry is as a certified clinical musician with Hospice of the Northwest.

This work led her to start two choirs, Bellingham's Women with Wings and the Bellingham Threshold Singers. She has two songbooks with songs to "lift the heart and heal the spirit." They are in two CDs "Carry Us through This Night" and "Into the Promise of Morning."

Linda has facilitated re-

she sings songs from her CD, "Emergence," and has conversations about the issues presented, such as the war in Ukraine, separated families at the border, abortion rights, unhoused people in neighborhoods, aging, dying and more.

"At rallies on local political issues, there are often many speakers. I encourage planners to include music breaks, so it's not one speaker after another, but they break up talks with music," said Linda, who may read a headline and turn it into a song.

"There are so many issues to write about. Events come up and I write a song specifically for them," she said.

For one church service, she was inspired to write a song expressing the lament of many women in churches, "God, I cannot call you Father."

"Many women have been abused, badly treated and made invisible by men in their lives," Linda explained.

"Many women resonate with the truth I express in songs," Linda said, explaining that much in the Bible is about the overall truth or message, like in the Jewish tradition of midrash commentaries and stories.

"There is the Torah and then scholars and teachers write notes in the margins, expounding on what they read, explaining the biblical stories," Linda said. "It's a rich source of storytelling."

"It's also fun to create pieces with humor and poignancy," she added. "I enjoy bringing new perspectives to churches."

Out of her passion for the history of women's rights, Linda worked with the Washington Women's History Project, the Washington Centennial Commission, the Washington Women's History Consortium, the Inquiring Mind program of Humanities Washington, the Cultural Enrichment and Folklife Programs of the State Arts

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Pastor serves two churches, works with nonprofit

Along with serving as pastor of Everett UCC and Liberation UCC, Jermell Witherspoon, promotes diversity, equity and inclusion with area school districts through the nonprofit, Zeno that creates a love for math and competency in math among children and parenting adults. He works with families and children of color to make more equitable practice in study of math.

“My heart work is to open doors and create better ways to be on earth with others. We are all people and we are all spiritual beings,” Jermell said.

In each setting he applies different skills to touch the hearts and lives of different people. The two churches have unique journeys.

Everett UCC is a more traditional, predominantly white church with 120 members on the rolls and 30 to 40 attending each week. It’s a church that is envisioning a new journey as it sells its 130-year-old building to Housing Hope “to fulfill our vision deeply steeped in providing siblings who are unhoused with housing,” Jermell said.

“We sold it at a lower than market price as part of our vision to be partners with our siblings who are unhoused. It will



Jermell Witherspoon is pastor at Everett and Liberation UCC.

be torn down and replaced with housing for people 55 years and older,” he explained. “We are now waiting for revelation of what the spirit is calling us to do in ministry.”

Those on the roster are being consulted in the process of discerning the mission and vision for what is next.

“**We are reaching out** to envision. It’s been a beautiful journey, but is hard on folks, too. We are rejoicing and mourning,” Jermell said.

“We have a big, beautiful, old building. Our mission and vision has been part of how we use the building. The spirit is guiding us, and we have made connections in the community,” he said.

The Everett church has offered a food pantry and served meals to unhoused neighbors and about 50 unhoused people who stayed in its basement as a shelter and many of whom are 55+. They have partnered with Union Gospel Mission to pro-

vide wraparound services for those in the shelter.

Those in the shelter sleep on portable beds and can spend the day upstairs. The church has also been open as a cold weather shelter, when people come in and stay upstairs, including sleeping in the sanctuary.

Everett UCC has had this ministry for many years.

“We have made it work, even though it has not always been comfortable,” he said. “We have learned much in the process about the many different ways people become homeless. We hear their stories. All of us are one paycheck away from being homeless. We have also learned about the impact of mental breakdown.

“**It is vital to address** the systemic issues that promote, bring about and keep people in homelessness,” he pointed out.”

Housing Hope has two other buildings in Everett, one of which houses families and this one for seniors, which fits zoning for downtown Everett.

The program owns and runs more than 600 units in 24 housing sites around Snohomish County and Camano Island as part of its mission to promote

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In 2020, she produced ‘Here’s to the Women!’ on suffrage

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Commission and the Folklife in the Schools Program.

A CD, “Washington Notebook,” includes original songs for Washington’s centennial.

She collected and edited songs for two songbooks, “The Rainy Day Songbook” and “Washington Songs and Lore,” and then traveled to schools, museums and libraries to do workshops and concerts.

Linda also created a traveling one-hour presentation,

“Here’s to the Women!” for the 100th anniversary of the state and national efforts to pass the 19th Amendment for the women’s right to vote.

Because she made it in the pandemic, she prepared a virtual presentation on Powerpoint with images, stories, poems and songs on women’s rights, the history of women’s roles, multicultural perspectives, the Equal Rights Amendment and ongoing discrepancy in wages for women. Her 53-minute

video premiered in 2020 at the Seneca Falls Women’s Rights Historical Park.

Linda has toured not only in the U.S., but also abroad, including in 2006 visiting Israel and Palestine and then recording children’s songs for the Peacebuilders program in Bethlehem.

In all her songs and presentations, she seeks to honor her forebears by “continuing their fight for justice.”

Her life’s work, she said, seeks to uncover injustice and

create songs to help mend the injustices and help people move through their lives and struggles.

“I still respond when I’m invited,” she said.

While she has done much voluntarily out of her interest, her songs and concerts are her career and ways she continues to earn a living.

For information, call 360-920-7533, email linda@linda-songs.com or visit lindasongs.com.

Pastor seeks to touch hearts, lives to challenge

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and provide permanent affordable housing and support service to reduce homelessness and poverty.

Everett UCC continues to discern its new ministry as it looks like the building will close in the immediate future, knowing that the community of Everett has not always accepted the church's outreach.

"In the six months, we will discern how we will move forward, what the spirit is calling us to be as we transition into new ministry," said Jermell.

Be it at Everett UCC or Liberation UCC, he said: "We need to address the systems of dominance and open up so people can be healed and made whole."

Liberation UCC, at 832 32nd Ave., about 30 miles south of Everett in Seattle, is also a space of healing, but "caters especially to those who have been minoritized and pushed out," Jermell said.

"We need to undo systems in ourselves and in our congregations that have held us down," he said. "We need to work inside and outside on behalf of people of color, queer people, people with different abilities to make a healing space so they can be whole."

Jermell knows that it is unique to be involved with both queer folks and folks of color.

"Outward expressions of queerness are often not accepted by many communities of color," he said, "yet both have similarities as they encounter the dominant culture and systems of dominance. Both people of color and queer people are by nature counter to the dominant culture. Both are ostracized and pushed away. Both have also been taught by the dominant culture how to ostracize and minoritize others.

"We are not a minority but are minoritized," Jermell said. "Through introspection, I pull

out people's innate beauty, reaching out to remind people they are made in God's image.

"We have learned to say we are not good enough, not God enough," he observed. "My job is to show those who are pushed out how to live, understanding they are like little gods made in God's image, be they queer, black or brown. We wish to make that the system of normalcy."

Jermell does that to undo the impact of systems in the church, just as he undoes systems of dominance related to homelessness in Everett.

Of the 100 in Liberation's community, 20 to 50 attend each week.

"Liberation is a revolving door, seeing different people every Sunday, like a drop-in center, a place of healing with many walking in," he said, noting that 25 people are the core of church members.

Much of its ministry is supported by grants. One grant supports a pastor of trans experience. As part of its trans ministry, Liberation offers a blessing ceremony when they change their names.

While Seattle is relatively open, there is division between LGBTQIA, people of color and white people, Jermell said. Just because one fights for cultural understanding and rights in one area does not mean they are open in other areas, so Jermell seeks to relate more with other UCC churches.

He was headed on a path to ministry, as a youth pastor and graduating in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in psychology and social work from Alabama State University in Montgomery.

He returned to Seattle to study for a master's in pastoral studies at the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University. By the time he graduated in 2019, he had shifted in

theology and found a new home in the United Church of Christ.

At the STM, he connected with Darrell Goodwin, founder of Liberation UCC 13 years ago, first as a nondenominational church. With Darrell as a mentor, Jermell began attending Liberation in 2015.

When Darrell left in 2017 to be the Southern New England Conference minister, Jermell became pastor of Liberation and also was called to be pastor of Everett UCC, which Darrell also served.

Jermell said Liberation UCC is a growing community that follows a Pentecostal path and whose participants are predominantly multicultural and people of color.

In his community job, Jermell works through Zeno with families and children of color to raise their skills in math.

"Diversity work relates to blackness and those furthest from opportunities based on race—pushed out and ostracized queer, differently abled and other marginalized people," said Jermell, whose title with Zeno is assistant director of partner services.

Jermell has been with Zeno for six years, working in the community to engage families and teaching teachers to do equity work.

He helps predominantly white teachers name biases and be aware of what excludes. He helps white educators be introspective to recognize how they may promote the system of dominance and how detrimental small things can be.

He works with teachers of color to help them experience that who they are is essential to families and children of color, not focusing on whiteness but bringing out the brilliance and beauty of communities of color.

"We need to open our eyes so we do this work together. White educators are willing to

learn and be open," said Jermell, who does professional development with schools, school districts and children of color.

"I see changes in the ways white folks and people see their role and responsibility and broader role in the community. People are responsible to do and be the change through changing minds and actions."

In his roles, he sees there is the same heart work to do, but it manifests in different ways.

"My heart work is to open doors and create better ways to be on earth with others," he repeated. "Part of the work is to deal with sin at the core."

While Liberation is intentionally a space for queer folks and folks of color, Jermell said it includes white allies who are learning ways to be free.

He also said Everett is learning ways to be free.

"Freedom looks different for different people. We are all trying to be our best, freest selves," he said. "We are all are transitioning to be our God selves."

Jermell is grateful for his heritage, which stems from the Church of God in Christ (COGIC). His hope is that spaces like the COGIC church "would also do their work, one day, in dismantling their biases and detrimental thinking in order to embrace the inclusive love of God," he said.

"I was drawn to the UCC to live authentically and for its theology," said Jermell, who decided to be ordained as a UCC pastor.

He is drawn because the UCC is open and affirming, but struggles because it is a predominantly white systemic organization.

"Nonetheless, I have found a home in the UCC," he said.

For information, call 425-830-2212, email pastor@mylucc.org or visit everettucc.org or mylucc.org.

Hate incident spurs 'Love Is Greater' campaign

Veradale United Church of Christ turned hate-related vandalism in June into a "Love Is Greater Than Hate" campaign beginning with a party July 3.

More than 100 people came for a meal and conversation. Temple Beth Shalom and Congregation Emanu-El responded immediately, as Veradale UCC responded to instances of hate and graffiti at the temple.

Those at the party donated security cameras for the church.

The "Love Is Greater Than Hate" campaign now includes community art, fall events and letters to political leaders.

Gen Heywood, the pastor, pays closer attention to what is going on around the church but doesn't want it to be a fortress.

Inside and outside, hearts and signs say, "Love."

On June 25, vandals took down the rainbow Pride flag, a Black Lives Matter flag, a flag with human rights messages, and small Pride flags. A neighbor's video showed vandals run across the lawn, pouring diesel to kill the grass with the phrase, Lev 20:13, referring to Lev. 20:13, an anti-gay passage.

Because Veradale UCC is open and affirming, and many members are LGBTQ, the vandalism is being investigated as a hate incident.

Through Faith Leaders and Leaders of Conscience (FLLC), which Gen convenes, Gen is finding more ways for love to be greater than hate.

An donor replaced the three flags, which were raised in a ceremony at the July party.

Now the church displays a different flag each month. One says, 'We strive to love God with all our heart, mind and soul and our neighbor as ourselves.' Another expresses the UCC three great loves: "Love neighbor, love children and love creation."

While participating in the World Council of Churches in September 2022 in Germany,



Community members create signs calling for spreading love.

Gen observed that around the globe people's empathy and love lead them to act in solidarity to challenge injustices.

To invite solidarity, she recently offered ideas to the Spokane Valley Arts Council and FLLC asking people to think in their settings about ways to make love, compassion and empathy unavoidable, just as hate seems unavoidable today.

"What can we do in our settings to make compassion unavoidable?" Gen asked.

In that spirit, she has invited community members to create and display "Love Lives Here" or "Love Is Greater Than Hate" signs in solidarity, using old political signs on wire H's that can be placed in yards of homes, businesses and churches. Participants have emailed photos of their signs and she is posting them online.

After displaying signs in lawns, people can bring them to the FLLC's annual Healing the Earth Vigil at 2 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 1, at the Doris Morrison Learning Center in Greenacres and place them along pathways near the center where people can walk after the vigil.

The vigil includes Constance Holland of the Episcopal Diocese of Spokane speaking on behalf of the Saltese Flats marshlands and wildlife as she raises concern about plans to increase the pressure of natural gas that flows through a

60-year-old pipeline running underneath the natural area.

The GTN Xpress Pipeline that runs from British Columbia to California under the Saltese Flats Wetlands, as well as under communities, schools, churches and daycare centers. Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light is promoting efforts to stop the pipeline expansion.

Gen plans for the "Love Is Greater" community engagement to continue through fall.

In addition, during November, FLLC plans to join with the "Little Amal" Campaign to build empathy for refugees. Little Amal is a 12-foot puppet of a nine-year-old Syrian refugee girl looking for her mother. Since July 2021, the puppet has traveled from Syria through Eastern Europe. On Sept. 7, the puppet begins her U.S. walk.

Gen hopes every place of faith can discover what they can do to strengthen the message that "love lives here."

"Bullying voices have been strong this year, belittling LGBTQ kids at school board meetings and creating fear," she said.

Members of FLLC and Gen were concerned how long it took the Spokane Valley mayor to make any statement about the vandalism at Veradale UCC. Gen wrote a letter to the editor asking the city of Spokane Valley to take a stand against hate.

They were glad the Spo-

kane Valley police chief has designated the vandalism "an incident of hate" and called in the FBI to help investigate.

Gen wants those who did the vandalism to know they do not have to continue to act in hate, because "Christian faith says we can each turn around and start again. God created everyone. No one has to stay stuck in hate," she said.

"All of us as humans get things wrong. Part of being human is that we can change if pride and ego do not get in our way," Gen said.

In the spirit of solidarity and to express that love is greater than hate, Gen, who convenes FLLC, recently helped the group write a letter of solidarity to Venerable Geshe Phelgye and the Temple of Universal Compassion in Spokane when they had funds stolen on Aug. 13. FLLC helped promote an event they held to raise funds to replace what they lost.

Then FLLC wrote the Spokane City Council and Spokane's mayor expressing concern that the mayor was on stage and prayed for at a recent rally held by leaders known for their white nationalist hate and racism. The letters called city leaders to live up to their slogan, "In Spokane, We All Belong."

FLLC also sent a letter to state leaders asking the people Washington to join in opposing Christian nationalism and white supremacy in the state.

"We reject all attempts to cloak bigotry in religious language and ask you to do the same. We hold fast to the separation of church and state, articulated in our nation's constitution. We seek a city and state that are welcoming to all, and civic leadership that observes the importance of the separation of church and state."

For information, call 926-7173 or email genheywood@att.net.

Covenant ministers multiply ministry at Magnolia

Magnolia UCC in Seattle has developed a new model for ordained ministry with Covenant Ministers.

Marci Scott Weiss, the pastor, said the idea grew from a book by former General Minister and President John Dorhauer, *Church 2.0 and Church 3.0*, on alternative models of ministry.

"When I started at Magnolia six years ago, I wanted to develop alternative models," she said.

The church has now called four covenant ministers who are in three-way covenants with the church, the Conference and themselves.

All four are involved with MCUCC in a mix of paid and volunteer roles that are carefully negotiated with each based on their needs and wishes, Marci said.

The church converses with

each on how to make just relationships so they are fairly compensated.

MCUCC is their home church for their standing. They are active in the church, the community and world, each in different ways based on the gifts and skills they bring.

"Our community has made a commitment to welcome and support these relationships with ministers who are ordained to specialized ministries, not parish ministry. We feel called to support them to do good world in the world," said Marci.

Previous Committees on Ministry were hesitant about ordaining people into specialized ministries except chaplaincy, she said.

Magnolia's covenant ministers are seminary prepared, went through the member in discernment process and felt called to ministry.

"Bringing their unique, diverse gifts, we said there is a home for you here and we value your work. All are members of our congregation and participate in worship and the arts planning," Marci said. "Magnolia offers them a way to live out their calls.

- Maureen McLain teaches a class on the history of the UCC for Magnolia and for the PNW-UCC Conference.

- Carson Hawkes offered a class, "Conversations with God," and a series on grief.

- Becky Withington is doing a monthly Zoom series on "The Mystic in You" for Magnolia and the Conference at 7 p.m. on last Tuesdays.

- Michael Haven, who does Bibliodrama, will prepare a drama for the installation of the four at Covenant Ministers at 10 a.m., Sunday, Nov. 12.

Previously Michael offered

a Bibliodrama on the story of the bleeding woman for Domestic Violence Sunday, Sept. 24. She also prepares Bibliodramas for other churches.

"Bibliodrama brings Bible stories to life to engage people," Marci said.

Each also shares in pulpit supply when needed.

"It's an alternative way to do ministry in the world," Marci said, noting some are retired or near retirement, and some have other full-time jobs.

"It's a beautiful partnership of collaboration in relationship to my ministry. It's a model of teamwork that uses diverse gifts in ministry," she said.

The covenanted ministers are based in Magnolia, but not limited to it. They add to the creativity in worship.

Each shared their unique pilgrimages into this model of ministry in articles that follow.

Maureen McLain seeks to have educated laity

Covenant ministry gives Maureen McLain a chance to do what she loves, what she knows and what she cares about.

"We often talk about the need to have educated clergy, but I have always thought that we need educated laity, so I want to create teaching and learning communities in which we learn from and teach each other," she said. "We are all learners and teachers."

Maureen grew up in West Seattle attending Fauntleroy.

Her journey towards ministry began after she, her husband and two sons began attending Magnolia UCC when Phil Eisenhauer was pastor. They joined in 1977.

"I enjoyed hearing his sermons with references to theologians like Walter Brueggemann," she said. "We had a strong adult education program. Each pastor added to that.



Maureen McClain educates.

When she saw other single mothers going to seminary, she felt that was what she needed to do because of her interest in studying theological and biblical scholars.

Maureen had majored in English at the University of Washington, taking time to earn

her degree.

In 1971, she began a career in government jobs with the U.S. Customs Service, checking shipping and imports to be sure laws were followed. Maureen did various clerical jobs and had promotions.

After working 30 years, she retired when she was 55 and applied to go to seminary at Pacific School of Religion. She earned a master of divinity in 2004.

"I enjoyed the experience and stayed another year to earn a certificate in advanced professional studies," she said.

Maureen moved back to Seattle and found an apartment in Mill Creek, a less expensive area.

Her parents lived in Edmonds. One son lived with her in Mill Creek and one son lived in North Seattle. She recently moved to Lynnwood, a 40-min-

ute drive to Magnolia UCC on backroads.

"I prefer to come in person to church, because I have been singing in the choir since I joined," she said.

Maureen prepared her profile and submitted it to churches but had no a call. Then she learned that Michael Haven was a covenant minister at Magnolia.

She talked with Marci Scott-Weiss and created a covenant. The Committee on Ministry accepted her for ordination in January 2020, but she wanted her extended family to come and that was not possible when COVID was spreading.

Her covenant ministry is in adult education and faith formation.

Maureen offers discussion groups. She prefers in person but does some on Zoom. She

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Trauma leads to ministry helping others face trauma

Growing up in Southeast Virginia, where Southern Baptist views were “in the air” she breathed there, Carson Hawks looked for other ways to be in relationship with God.

Her trauma growing up led to her ministry.

In 1982, she began studying religion at Averett College, a Southern Baptist college in Danville, VA, but left because she refused to disown gay friends when the church told her to do that.

In 1985, Carson realized she was lesbian, leading to rejection by her family, who believed she could not be gay and Christian.

With that background, she experienced 30 years of trauma, convinced God hated her and organized religion was not for her.

“I went back occasionally longing to fit, but found more trauma,” said Carson, who tried the Metropolitan Community Church. She did not find the UCC until she was in seminary.

In 1990, she earned a bachelor’s degree in physical education at the University of South Carolina and taught physical education.

“I taught physical education off and on, did substitute teaching, worked as a waitress on weekends along with working for Walmart and Sam’s Club for 15 years and doing different jobs to figure where I fit in,” she said.



Carson Hawk offers healing.

Later Carson returned to do a master’s degree in education with an emphasis in school counseling, completing that degree in 2005 at Old Dominion University in Norfolk.

That year her mother, who she had been taking care of, died.

“I realized I could go anywhere, so I went with a friend to Phoenix, Ariz., and was school counselor in a Gila River, Pema and Tohono O’odham Indian community,” she said.

Because she let students talk about sexuality and spirituality, school officials were concerned, Carson said.

“I began to understand I needed to work where I could allow people to talk about LG-BTQIA issues,” she said. “I believed that God loves people no matter what, but I did not yet believe that for me because the

trauma was ingrained.”

In 2010, Carson realized that for her health and wellbeing, she needed to fulfill her longing to help in the world. That meant going to seminary, but she did not think there was a seminary where she could be herself and be openly gay.

Online, she discovered Pacific School of Religion and knew she had found her school.

“I cried for three hours,” she said, thinking mid-June was too late for her to apply for enrollment, financial aid and housing.

“God poked me. Even though I thought there was no way I could get in by August, I applied and left it to God. All fell in place miraculously. Eight weeks later I was in my dorm room in Berkeley,” she said.

Carson graduated in 2016.

“PSR was a safe and loving environment for me. The walls from my trauma crashed down,” she said. “PSR is UCC, Methodist and Disciples, and is part of the ecumenical Graduate Theological Union, so I took classes with Jesuits and other faiths, while being introduced to the UCC.”

While working through PTSD, she struggled even to walk across the threshold of a church into a sanctuary. Most were working toward their ordination while in seminary, but Carson did not affiliate with a church while there. She didn’t think she could find a church.

Her ex-partner’s sister died and needed help caring for her 10-year-old niece, so Carson went to Phoenix to help her.

“There I stumbled on First Church UCC. I was there until 2020,” she said.

Michael Haven, who lived across the hall from her in PSR, invited her to Seattle. There she connected with Magnolia UCC and became a covenant minister helping people with spiritual growth and with healing from trauma, especially religious trauma.

Carson offers retreats and classes, does pulpit supply and helps lead worship with Marci Scott-Weiss, the pastor.

Magnolia UCC called her to covenant ministry, and she was approved for ordination at Magnolia, but she has moved to Tucson, where she is now based and works remotely leading spiritual growth and grief groups on Zoom.

In Tucson, Carson is working with Excellent Way as director of program development and customer care.

“When I am financially more secure, I’ll return to Seattle,” she said.

Meanwhile, Carson, who continues to work with a therapist and spiritual director on her own PTSD, recently led a spiritual retreat and did a book study by Zoom.

For information, call 480-274-5840 or email chawkssoaring@gmail.com.

Minister will teach at Magnolia and other churches

Continued from page 8

also offers three- or four-week book studies.

“Now I offer them at Magnolia, but will eventually work with other churches,” she said.

Later this year, she will teach a forum on the history of the UCC on Zoom which will be open to anyone in the con-

ference. She is also planning a short book study on Parker Palmer’s book, *Aging Gracefully*.

Classes she offers for Magnolia are volunteer, but she plans to arrange agreements to be paid for leading classes at other churches.

While her preference is

offering classes in person so the mutual teaching and learning happens, she knows many people like Zoom, because they can sit in their home and not have to drive.”

Maureen appreciates the model of covenant ministry because each minister offers something different, increasing the

Magnolia’s overall ministry.

“We come from so many different backgrounds and perspectives of what the church is and how to do ministry. It enriches the life of the church to have a mixture of backgrounds, perspectives and gifts.”

For information, call 510-717-2031.

After serving as pastor, covenant minister chooses focus

Becky Withington was ordained in 2012 and served as pastor of Everett Congregational UCC Church from 2012 to 2015, as sabbatical pastor for Diane Darling at Alki UCC for four months in 2014, and as pastor of New Pilgrims UCC in Anacortes from 2017 to 2022.

Now as a covenant minister at Magnolia UCC, she focuses on connecting people to spiritual lives to deepen their contemplation and mystical experiences.

“The nice thing in covenant ministry is that we are called to serve by doing what we most like to do,” Becky said. “I chose my title to be minister of transformational Christianity.”

She leads church retreats, contemplative practices and silent meditation, especially outside in nature, such as at N-Sid-Sen and Pilgrim Firs, PNC camp and retreat centers.

Becky grew up Lutheran in Minneapolis, where she earned a bachelor’s degree at



Becky Withington does retreats.

the University of Minnesota in women’s studies and married in 1987. Her husband’s work took them to Milwaukee, Wis., where she earned a master’s degree in 1898 at the University of Wisconsin in library science.

They decided to move to Seattle with his company in 1989 and started attending Plymouth UCC, where she

was on staff as coordinator of the program for children and youth. Becky also worked as a librarian for Sound Transit from 1991 to 1996, when her son, Griffin, was born.

“During those years, feeling called to ministry, I decided to go to seminary at the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University, earning a master’s of divinity in five years,” said Becky.

There she met Marci Scott-Weiss in her UCC polity class and attending St. Paul’s UCC where Becky was an intern.

“My call was to parish ministry because I like ritual and I also like contemplative practices related to the mysteries of faith and experiential practices,” she said.

That interest led her to join two PNC women in March 2022 on a one-week pilgrimage to the Iona community in Scotland. After Iona, she and her husband traveled to sacred

places in Ireland.

Knowing the New Pilgrim’s ministry was coming to an end and grateful that the congregation gave her time for that experience, she prepared an online book of photos and meditations.

In February, as she was contemplating retiring, she and her husband began attending Magnolia UCC, near their home.

Then Marci told her about the covenant ministry.

At its annual meeting, MCUCC voted to call her as a covenant minister with a mix of volunteer and paid roles.

“I love the collaborative work with the MCUCC community, which has more worshiping on Zoom than the 30 to 40 who attend worship. It is a vital congregation,” said Becky, who is the newest covenant minister.

For information, call 206-290-9884.

Minister of the arts guides groups to do Bibliodrama

Michael Haven enjoys helping church members prepare and present Bibliodramas. It has given her later years purpose.

“Bibliodrama brings sacred stories to life on the chancel as the stage. I gather people to read the story, such as Jesus healing the bleeding woman. Then we discuss what people may have said and share ideas to flesh out the scenes,” she said. “I often write it with Marci Scott-Weiss, the pastor, to be sure the theology and facts are straight.

“We are doing one on the bleeding woman who was healed by touching Jesus’ robe for Domestic Violence Sunday in early October,” she said.

She enjoys how conversations about a scripture deepen their understanding.

Michael moved from Ann Arbor, Mich., after her parents



Michael Haven uses drama.

separated. She lived in San Francisco most of her life before coming to Seattle in 2016.

After high school in 1973, she worked as a secretary for different businesses and was involved in community theater for 35 years there.

Michael was not involved

in a church until she was going through a divorce in 2008 in Colorado Springs.

“I started going to a UCC church and it saved my life,” she said, adding that the pastor learned about her experience in community theater and asked her to direct a Lenten play written by a local playwright.

“That gave me the idea of doing Bibliodrama to bring scripture to life,” Michael said.

She then moved to Alameda, Calif., where she did Bibliodrama for a Lenten series on the last week of Jesus’ life.

The pastor suggested she go to Pacific School of Religion. So she did. While there from 2014 to 2016, she did Bibliodrama.

“When I moved to Seattle, I emailed churches offering to do pulpit supply and Bibliodrama. Joy Haertig at Magnolia UCC

asked me to do a Bibliodrama during Lent,” said Michael, who decided to join the church.

Magnolia called her to be a “traveling minister of the arts” and ordained her in 2018. Based there, she has taken Bibliodrama to other UCC churches and churches of other denominations until COVID hit.

“I support myself working as a full-time secretary with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,” Michael said.

In covenant with Magnolia, she does Bibliodrama as a volunteer with people in the congregation as the cast. Her work with community theater in San Francisco was volunteer unless she directed or wrote a script.

“In this ministry, I feel the Holy Spirit working in me, deepening my faith,” she said.

For information, call 206-316-3941.

Partners in Colombia will visit for Annual Meeting

Martin Nates, director JU-STAPAZ and Pablo Martin, chair of CEDECOL (Council of Evangelical Churches of Colombia), PNC-DOC partner organizations in Colombia, will speak at the PNC-UCC Conference Annual Meeting, April 26 to 28, 2024, and the Northern Lights Regional Meeting of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) May 3 to 5, 2024.

Martin and Pablo were invited by the Global Ministries Committee of the PNC-UCC and Northern Lights Disciples.

They will also be available to visit congregations, youth, clergy, and community and civic organizations in the week between the two annual meetings.

Both JUSTAPAZ and CEDECOL are organizations working for peace and justice in Colombia.

Two national Global Ministries mission co-workers, Xiomara Cintron and Alex Maldonado Lizardi, work with JUSTAPAZ.

Mary Olney-Loyd for the Disciples and Corey Passons for the UCC are co-chairs of the Global Ministries Committee for the PNC-UCC and Disciples Region.

There are six Disciples and six UCC members on the regional Global Ministries Committee, which meets every two to three months.

They are recruiting churches and groups interested in hosting, translating, assisting with travel and providing speaking opportunities for Martin and Pablo in May.

They especially want to involve congregations with unique ministries that would be of interest to these global partners and would highlight ministries of both the PNC-UCC and the Northern Lights Region.

"We are also looking for persons who are fluent Spanish speakers and are willing and



Alex Maldonado Lizardi, Xiomara Cintron, Rick Russell, another participant and Mary Olney join in a Colombia partnership Zoom meeting.

Photo courtesy of Global Ministries

able to do simultaneous translation," said Mary.

Congregations with unique ministries, persons with connections with Congress persons, translators and others who are interested are encouraged to contact them.

Information on the UCC-DOC Colombia Partners and JUSTAPAZ is at northernlightsdisciples.org.

There are also videos, worship resources and music suggestions from the UCC-DOC mission co-workers in Colombia, Xiomara and Alex.

Information about the PNC and Northern Lights partners, JUSTAPAZ and CEDECOL is at globalministries.org/where-we-work/LA-Caribbean/Countries/Colombia.

Mary said that Colombia partnership meetings, shared with the Northwest and East Coast partners, plus the national Global Ministries and the partners in Colombia, are usually held monthly on Zoom. They are open to anyone interested.

Fall meetings, however, have not been scheduled because Angel Luis Rivera-Agosto global relations minister, Latin

America and the Caribbean is traveling to countries in that region.

Corey said that attending even one or two of the Zoom sessions gives a taste of the work.

People who would like to join the Zoom meetings and learn about the partnership may contact Mary or Corey.

"It is an opportunity to learn about the incredible work the partners are doing for peace and justice in Colombia," Mary said.

In August, the group heard from a woman who works with JUSTAPAZ and helps rural women know their rights and lift them up because there is much violence against women in rural areas," she said.

Much of the violence, Mary observed, comes from the machismo of the Latin culture that is a factor in domestic violence. In addition, there is violence related to militias that remain in rural areas.

"The president of Colombia is working for total peace. JUSTAPAZ and CEDECOL, are included in new peace talks, working to establish total peace in the nation," she commented.

"That is challenging and complex work," said Mary. "U.S. newspapers usually call his administration leftist, but as Christians, how can we call work for peace and justice leftist. That work should be admired in our society."

People fleeing from South American countries like Venezuela and Ecuador are fleeing through the Darien gap, a piece of land in northern Colombia that leads to

Panama, she reported.

"They are fleeing for a better life and pay large amounts for guides to cross dangerous areas," she said.

Corey said he has not attended all the partnership meetings but reviews the notes and has gained a deepening respect for the partners and their struggles as they seek to build real relationships.

In Colombia, violence occurs, and our two partner organizations show up for the survivors of domestic violence and bear witness to the wider violence. It does not stop, but solidarity is key to healing, Corey said.

"Violence against women is not just domestic violence but also from militias," Mary said. "I am moved by the Christian faith of our partners and impressed by their strategic thinking and good planning as they work with programs to help people in need improve their lives."

For information, call 206-949-8447, or email maryolneyloyd@gmail.com or coreypassons@gmail.com, or visit <https://northernlightsdisciples.org/colombia-partnership>.

Despite national shortage, N-Sid-Sen had full staff

Pam Peterson, managing director of N-Sid-Sen, found that living on Lake Coeur d'Alene felt natural to her, having lived by a lake her whole life.

Lake Coeur d'Alene is a different body of water than the one she grew up beside. Storms are more ferocious, so floating docks are preferred. The water is much deeper than the lake in New York. Storms come off the mountains. In the spring, water comes way up obliterating the shoreline. It dropped and the milkweed beds returned.

Pam finds lessons for life and the PNC in that setting.

"I love working outdoors and look forward to using my skills in eco-spirituality retreats for pastors and laity," she said.

"Many churches in the conference are experiencing transitions, so it's helpful to be in nature. There is always transition in nature, such as with monarch butterflies' different stages in their life cycles. Those stages and changes keep them healthy and keep them going," she said.

On that theme, the camp nurtured milkweed to draw monarch butterflies and had butterflies on the 2023 T-shirts.

Pam notes that dormancy is "not as a time of doing nothing but as a time of gestation, a time that things are going on if we know how to listen for and see them."

Starting in April, Pam expected she would have a major learning curve. That was true.

Compounding normal issues starting in that role just before the summer season was the impact of the nationwide shortage of camp staff.

She spent more time than anticipated in the kitchen before staff came.

This summer, two Camp America staff helped cook.

"We need a full-time kitchen boss, cook and kitchen staff on a regular basis," she said. "Later in the summer, we used



Pam Peterson at the close of worship at the Westminster-Colville-Chewelah retreat in early September.

a catering company and temporary cooks."

"Eventually, we had enough staff committed through Aug. 15, the week after the UCC family camp," she said.

By the first of October she hired a full-time resident kitchen boss and chef.

Although groups the end of August cancelled, September was full and remains full through mid-October with a weekend dance camp and a quilt group.

Because of the fires this summer and as part of normal safety, Pam applied for and has received a grant to bring an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps group to do fire mitigation in November and December. They will arrive about Nov. 1 and stay to the third week of December.

"They will cut down the overgrowth, bushes and saplings throughout the camp, especially clearing around the buildings. That waste will be turned into wood chips to cover the roadway to the cove," she said.

Pam is also considering

more ways to promote use of N-Sid-Sen by more churches and larger, more financially sustainable groups. She is exploring making N-Sid-Sen a wedding venue. A Samoan group may come for a week next August and do their own cooking.

"We also want more groups who will take advantage of our whole setting, especially young, highly mobile groups coming to pitch tents in the ropes course area," she said.

For example, a group from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints is considering coming next spring to use the full property.

"We plan to rent wall tents next summer and see what interest there is in "glamping" to draw young adults," she added.

"UCC summer camps were not at capacity, so I hope to tour the conference to meet people in the churches and invite them so we can be closer to capacity," she said.

"The camps were great. Kids had a wonderful time exploring camp offerings, making friends and reuniting with friends from last year," Pam said.

"One piece was that the

new You and Me camp—an adult and elementary school child—was paired with senior high camp. The high schoolers interacted with the grade schoolers, especially at the waterfront, helping them get on the raft or learn to swim. They stepped into the role of older sibling. At the tables, they happily sat with each other."

The Kids Camp was not held, because children interested came to the You and Me Camp led by Kaila Russell.

"**We are back up** and running post-COVID and experienced no illnesses," said Pam, who plans to start marketing the camps in October, encouraging campers to take advantage of the early sign up \$100 discount.

"We appreciated all the volunteer staff and directors," she said. "We couldn't do it without them. We are already recruiting for next year."

"**There is never ending** maintenance, switching light bulbs and doorknobs, repainting, checking and replacing roofs," she said.

Dean Johnson is the full-time maintenance director. There is need for an assistant maintenance staff person.

"Camp is about hospitality, strangers dining together," Pam said, explaining that groups often want the privacy of having the whole camp without paying what is needed to rent the whole facility. Often they do not want to share the space."

In early September, there were several combined church retreats. One week, Westminster, Colville and Chewelah shared the facility. The next week, Pullman and Colfax shared it. The third week, Walla Walla and Wallace were scheduled.

Pam will go to churches by Zoom or in person to preach.

For information, call 208-689-3489 or visit n-sid-sen.org.

Pilgrim Firs filled with groups in summer, fall

Mark Boyd, managing director of Pilgrim Firs Camp and Retreat Center at Port Orchard, took advantage of a rare quiet moment at Pilgrim Firs to take a week of vacation. He is also taking time in November for the first month of a three-month sabbatical.

He will use time in November to take time away to breathe, relax and write, plus attend some poetry workshops.

Through July and August, Pilgrim Firs was filled every day with Warrior Pathh, Guitar Camp, Banjo Camp, Women 2 Women, Bellevue Choir, 12-step camps, a L'Arche staff retreat, Planned Parenthood Teen Council and other groups that have kept the camp and retreat center filled each week with 100 to 140 people.

Mark said when the Planned Parenthood Teen Council came, they were first hesitant to learn Pilgrim Firs was a church camp.

Then they began reading signs around the camp about who the UCC is as a church.

"I love watching how camp changes lives as so many folks discover that this too is church. My heart swells with pride to know this is my church doing what we do best, sharing God's love," said Mark.

The same happens when LGBTQIA groups come and discover the Pride Garden at Pilgrim Firs.

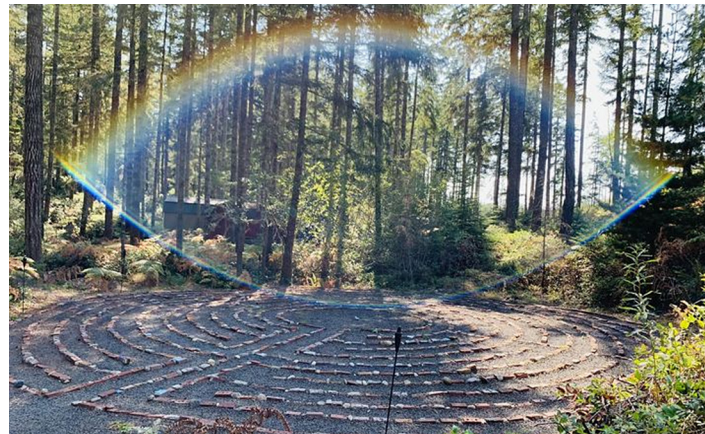
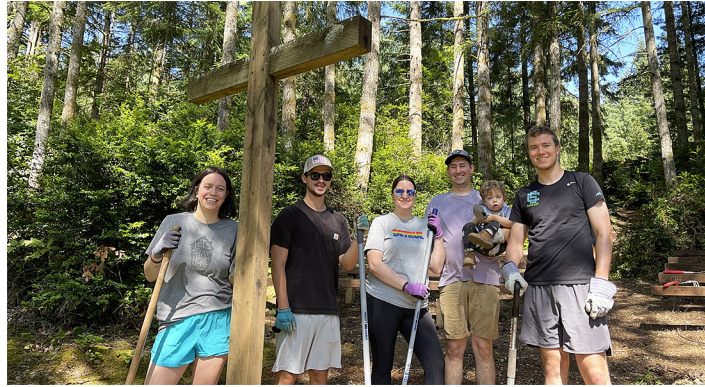
"It's another opportunity for conversations about the UCC," he said.

The conference and PNC churches have also been using Pilgrim Firs, said Mark, noting that there is effort to expand that usage.

The Taiwanese UCC came again in June for a church camp and a week of teaching Taiwanese children and youth Taiwanese language.

There have also been several weekend church retreats.

"While churches may once



Pilgrim Firs work camp, rainbow over labyrinth and harp retreat.

Top photo courtesy of Pilgrim Firs. Bottom photo by Casey Lewis

have come for their own weekend retreats, now we are encouraging multiple churches to share weekends so we make better use of the space," said Mark, noting that Eastern Washington churches like Richland and Pullman, and Westminster, Colville and Chewelah shared weekend retreats at N-Sid-Sen.

"We are looking at doing that here," he said.

In August, United Churches of Olympia and St. Paul's UCC shared Pilgrim Firs one weekend. Fox Island and Suquamish UCC plan to come next May.

The University Congre-

gational UCC men's group and the Samoan UCC women will share Pilgrim Firs another weekend with separate programs. Bellevue Women plan a November retreat.

"We want to help churches not only come back to camp but to use the space well. Sharing Pilgrim First for weekend retreats fills the camp and also connects people in churches with each other and strengthen relationships within the Conference," he said.

The PNC Board of Directors will hold a retreat at Pilgrim Firs the weekend of Nov.

3 to 5.

Fall will include more UCC church groups, PTSD groups, 12 Step groups, songwriting groups continuing and other visitors continuing into January with rarely a free weekend, Mark said.

The annual PNC-UCC Men's Retreat will be the weekend of Feb. 1 to 3.

The Midwinter Youth Retreat returns to Pilgrim Firs the weekend of Feb. 9 to 11, under the leadership of Margaret Swanson, Leah Bilinski and Mark.

"This will be a joint junior-senior high weekend of fun and community as we take a deep dive into our faith," said Mark.

In addition, on the weekend of June 14 to 16, Pilgrim Firs will restart a Kids Camp on the West Side.

To help strengthen the camp and retreat ministries of the conference, Mark said, the Outdoor Ministries Committee has recruited additional members and will begin determining what is needed for the camps.

They will begin recruiting directors and making plans for the summer camping program at N-Sid-Sen.

In recent years, with the intervention of COVID, it was hard to recruit people to serve on the conference committees, Mark said. Now there is a full Outdoor Ministries Committee to look at the camping ministries.

"We transitioned the youth and family camps to N-Sid-Sen. This is the second year of doing that. COVID cut into attendance, but we now have opportunity to grow again," Mark said. "I think more will go once they know about transportation from the West Side."

Mark invites members of the PNC to call to learn how they can participate in the camps.

For information, call 360-876-2031 or visit pilgrim-firs.org.