



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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Summer 2019

Clergy of color open eyes at Annual Meeting

**Preach on Friday evening,
Lead discussion on need
to dismantle racism**

Lisa Horst-Clark, pastor of First Congregational UCC in Bellevue, the host church for Annual Meeting, and Andy Conley-Holcom, pastor of Admiral UCC, collaborated with others to offer “an experiment with a Progressive Church Revival,” the Friday evening before the one-day business Annual Meeting on Saturday April 27 at the Bellevue church.

“You are a co-creator with worship, co-creating power and energy that reminds us all are in this together, gathered in the church for transformation with one who walks with us,” said Andrew.

Opening her sermon, the Rev. Dr. Renee McCoy, who formerly served at Eastgate Congregational UCC in Bellevue, said her liturgical background is
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Bianca Davis-Lovelace and Kelle Brown guide PNC to address issues of racism.

Board sets priorities for its work in the coming year

The Board of Directors met on June 8 for an in-person work retreat and we accomplished a lot! We began with the framework that has informed our vision over the last two years. The overarching vision is to deepen relationships so that we together we can change the world.

At the Annual Meeting we began to realize that we need to infuse that overarching vision with a priority to dismantle racism within our institution. The Board confirmed that approach at our retreat on June 8 and agreed that dismantling racism is not a separate priority of the Board but an overarching goal.

The framework of our vision includes four areas of priority.

- Deepen relationships between colleagues

**Priorities of PNC
Board are to
deepen relationships.**

- Deepen relationships within and between congregations
- Deepen relationships between our churches and our communities
- Improve communication throughout the Conference

The Board has 11 members this year. We know that individually we can accomplish some things, as a group we can complete additional work, but we must engage our Leadership Committees and

many others to move forward in each of these areas. We will reach out to you. We hope that you will say yes to collaborating with us.

Here are the tasks that we hope to accomplish this year:

- Ensure that the Communities of Practice program continues this year by addressing the funding and administrative requirements that need to be met for the program to be viable. Working with: Committee on Ministry task force
- Create a pilot program, starting with a handful of churches, to pair a smaller membership church with a larger church when they are both working on the same issue
- Update Conference Bylaws in sev-

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We have to do our part to save the world

Conference Comments



By The Rev.
Mike Denton
Conference
Minister

A little more than four years ago, wildfires were so bad on the east side of the Cascade mountains that our conference held a special offering in support of our 26 congregations to help support any recovery or wildfire-related work that they might be involved in. At the end of it, as far as we knew, one member of one church had an unused outbuilding that was burnt down and a couple of members lost a small portion of their crops, but that was the extent of the property damage.

We soon found that it wasn't just about the fires. One thing that came up in conversation after conversation was the effect of the ever-present, lingering smoke on people's physical, mental and spiritual health. Those with compromised immune systems and those with cardiovascular challenges were at high risk but, as the smoke lingered, it had the effect of compromising the immune systems and cardiovascular systems of all those who inhaled it. For months after the smoke dissipated, everyone's physical health was compromised.

Emotionally and spiritually, folks were on edge during this same period, too. Churches with smoke in the air had less capacity to deal with conflict and crises that emerged. Their stress level was already cranked up a bit and so the normal stressors of congregational life were cranked up, too.

One of the things that happened when the smoke came is that the stores sold out of masks that could filter out smoke. With the special offering monies, we distributed boxes of them to our churches on the east side of the mountains so they could share them with folks who might not be able to afford or find one. We also purchased hand sanitizer and encouraged churches to treat the arrival of smoke like flu season. Since everyone's immune systems and cardiovascular systems were challenged by the smoke, it made sense. It was a good thing to do. It's worse, now.

Already, several PNC churches have had days when the air quality level was in an unhealthy range. Last summer, every single church in the conference was blanketed in smoke for days if not weeks. The noon sun was red for all of us. The smoke became so thick that the air was unhealthy for everyone. It was so bad that we were encouraged to stay in our homes with the windows closed in 90 degrees or more temperatures as fires raged everywhere. Ash blanked our homes and cars and the inside of our homes.

All indications are that this year is going to be worse. As churches and communities, we should

be planning on what that might mean.

As far as smoke masks, there's been some emerging learnings over the last few years. Before I say much more, understand that this is a lay person's interpretation of medical advice not medical advice itself. If you want medical advice, you should talk with your doctor. So, with that said, my understanding is that several studies are saying that if you have no lung or heart condition, a smoke mask can be an important safe guard for your health. Smoke inhalation is not good for you. Period. However, for those who already have compromised heart, lung or immune systems a mask may not be as helpful for a variety of reasons. If you have any of these conditions, talk to your doctor before you use a mask and if your church is sharing masks, share this information. A respirator mask—not a surgical mask—is what you need and that facial hair breaks the seal around your mouth and nose enough to make it useless. A mask should be rated at least, N95 to begin to give protection.

That said, air purifiers can be helpful for anyone. Please consider investing in these for your church or your home and keep in mind that many in your community may not have this capacity. There are some DIY air purifiers (the directions are online) that you can make with a box fan and a HEPA filter that works as well as many more expensive air purification systems for under \$30.

We have to be honest. This only scratches the surface of what we're dealing with. Those who understood what climate change could mean told us about the kind of weather phenomena we've been experiencing decades ago. The only thing they were wrong about was how rapidly the changes would occur.

It's all happening faster than we expected. The latest report from the United Nations says we only have 12 years to change our ways until our current weather trends are irreversible; resulting in the extinction of thousands of species including, potentially, humans. Those of us later in life will only see the beginning of these changes but, if we change nothing, we are committing our children and grandchildren to lives full of suffering, pain and loss. Their lives will be ruined and, well, it will be our fault.

Some of these patterns were set up long before us but it is our choice, now, to change directions. Many of us hoped to have enough of an impact to change the world but that's not enough. We have to save it. God help us. We need to save it.

*Many of us
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Transitions announced

The Iowa Conference reported that **Don Yuncias**, who was ordained in 1955 and served churches in Washington, Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois and Florida, died recently. He also served as associate conference minister, interim conference minister, association minister, and assistant to the conference minister in eight UCC conferences: Iowa, South Dakota, Michigan, North Dakota, Missouri, the Southwest Ohio Association, Washington-North Idaho, and Hawaii.

Conference News Briefs

world, Jim said.

“The multi-ethnic church seeks to embody cultural, rhythmic, theological and linguistic realities of members and the human family. We rejoice in the multiplicity, which mirrors God’s face,” he said. “The worship honors languages lost in church and cultural histories, and reclaims them in a healing, decolonizing process.”

For information, visit pncucc.org or pncuccnews.org/june19pnc/synodworship.pdf.

or visit pncucc.org

PNC News will be quarterly

With the decrease in funding in the budget for the PNC UCC News, editor Mary Stamp plans to produce four editions, rather than five.

The issues will be published online in September, December, February and June.

For information, call 509-535-1813, email editor@pncuccnews.org or visit pncuccnews.org.

Fall Gathering is Oct. 18-19

The PNC Fall Gathering will be held from Friday morning to late afternoon, Saturday, Oct. 18 to 19, at Shalom UCC in Richland.

With the tentative theme, “Weaving Together to Win: Progressing from Value Statements to Concrete Action,” the scripture guiding planning is Eccl. 4:9 to 12, said Courtney Stange-Tregear, minister of church vitality, who is responsible for organizing the event.

“The Pacific Northwest Conference has been learning tools of faith-based organizing to change the world,” she said. “This programmatic event will be an opportunity to take our learning to the next step and apply it to our setting.”

A lack of affordable housing, environmental degradation, racial inequity, abuse of immigrants are some of the “big, scary problems” that have local, specific manifestations, she said.

“Weaving ourselves together, we can make real, concrete, important change in our churches and communities across the Pacific Northwest,” Courtney added inviting clergy, laity and community members to come to learn tools and strategies available to guide the pNC from learning and caring about the systemic problems that matter to taking action about the issues that matter.

For information, call 206-725-8383, email courtney@pncucc.org or visit pncucc.org.

Conference Office moves

The Conference Office is moving but will have the same address. They are moving one floor down into other spaces within Broadview UCC, at 325 N. 125th St. in Seattle. To facilitate the move, they have given away items free to local churches. They plan to be in the new space by July 1.

For information, call 206-725-8383 or visit pncucc.org.

General Synod is in June

The 2019 PNC delegates to the 32nd General Synod of the UCC June 21 to 25 in Milwaukee, Wis., are Wendy Blight, moderator, Hillary Coleman, vice moderator, and Danette Koloï of the Samoan Congregational Christian Church #2, all three from Seattle; Tara Leininger, pastor at Metaline Falls First Congregational UCC; Jim CastroLang, pastor at Colville First Congregational UCC, and Henry Reinhardt, youth Delegate from Spokane.

Jim is connecting the Colville church with the experience and energy of Synod by using worship materials prepared for three worship times at Synod.

Sharing in the worship experiences in Milwaukee will be participants from UCC conferences across the nation, interfaith partners and friends from around the

Mike Denton takes sabbatical

Conference Minister Mike Denton, one of the longest serving conference ministers in the United Church of Christ, will be on sabbatical from July 1 to August 31. It will be his second sabbatical in his 10 years serving the PNC.

In some ways, he said he feels like a newbie, awed by the mountains, oceans, deserts and plains of the region, and still learning from churches, members and pastors about “who we have been and who we are called to be.” However, his body, spirit and energy are also tired, ready for some days of rest, study and “resetting perspective and vocation.”

Minister of Vitality Courtney Stange-Tregear has been empowered by the board to do many things Mike usually does. As acting conference minister, she’ll sign checks, approve pastors’ profiles for circulation and be a resource for churches, committees and members. If there’s an emergency she will work with executive administrator Arlene Hobson, moderatr Wendy Blight and bookkeeper ANdy Warren, as well as camp managers Wade Zick and Mark Boyd to manage finances and facilities.

Mike will take his sabbatical in two parts, the summer and then December.

For information, call 206-725-8383

Wendy Blight reviews goals of PNC Board of Directors

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eral areas, including adding wording to express our commitment to dismantling racism in our institution. Working with: Justice Witness Ministry

Committee and others.

Obtain a database system that meets the needs of our Conference and the appropriate administration to maintain its accuracy. Working with: Com-

mittees and stakeholders

Revise final drafts and adopt policies: Personnel Manual, Fiscal Policy Manual, and Safer Church Policy

With God’s grace and lots

of help from all of you we hope to accomplish all of these tasks by our 2020 Annual Meeting.

For information, call 425-213-9313 or email blightwk@hotmail.com.

Pastor says forgiveness is key for transformation

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Catholic, so she was preaching from a manuscript, while other preachers—the Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown of Plymouth UCC in Seattle, the Rev. Bianca Davis-Lovelace, executive director of the Renton Ecumenical Ministry, and the Rev. Amy Roon at University Congregational UCC in Seattle—would likely preach extemporaneously.

“Transformation is change at the core of existence in a world broken to what lives—shot to pieces by spiritual shrapnel,” Renee said, noting that Easter and resurrection are about transforming that world.

“The world was transformed because one man acted in unwavering trust and emerged from the grave, demonstrating God’s faithfulness. The world was transformed because one man rose, one man left the tomb and the body of one man, Christ, is uplifted. Peace, justice and comfort do not come without genuine unity,” Pastor Renee said.

“I’m African American, you can tell that. I’m also a lesbian and a woman. I’m convinced, convicted created by the power of God,” she said. “It’s easier to tell the goodness of God than to accept ourselves.”

Three years ago, she awoke in the hospital diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. At that point,

she needed to receive God’s transforming power in herself.

“I’m more about bringing people to God than receiving all God extends into my life,” Pastor Renee said, telling her pancreatic cancer has been transforming because she realized God’s love for her.

“Though there was a toxic deadly thing growing in me, I was loved. As I journey through cancer, it’s like God sent me to my room to think about how much I am loved and to facilitate my transformation in nine months of surgery, chemotherapy and radiation,” she said. “I was a large woman all my life. With cancer, my body changed physically.

“The first act of transformation was to forgive people who visited and reminded me of my cancer, racism, homophobia and sexism,” she said.

As she forgave individuals, she forgave systems. Her path was clearer close to the door of the tomb. The more she forgave even those who had told her she was not good enough, the more she loved and liked herself.

As she journeyed in the tomb of pancreatic cancer, people prayed for her, evangelical men and women, Buddhist, Hindus, Sikhs and others.

“They prayed God would heal my body. An atheist friend prayed for me in case there



Renee McCoy tells how cancer brought transformation.

was a God. I was so glad they prayed for me,” she said.

“Cancer is not the path for all out of the tomb to transformation, but we can learn to love others, journey to see light that guides out of the tomb,” Pastor Renee said. “In prayer, we are united by the body of Christ if we have the courage to let God change us and let us emerge from our tombs.

“We transform the world through forgiving those who hurt us, acknowledging we are worthy. In serving God, we feel the Gospel within us, and let others in our lives regardless of doctrines or what they think of us,” she said. “The only thing

that matters is that we are up and walk out of our graves to live the bold, outrageous transformation God calls us to.”

Renee, who was ordained 30 years ago in the Metropolitan Community Churches, has worked in parish ministries in New York City, Washington D.C., Detroit, Tacoma and Seattle/Bellevue. Her ministry has focused on excluded people—LGBTQ, homeless, youth and disenfranchised. With a doctoral degree in medical anthropology, she has taught at Wayne State, Eastern Michigan and the University of Washington, and has worked in HIV/AIDS programs.



Amy Roon serves at University Congregational UCC in Seattle.

Amy Roon speaks on ‘body’

Amy Roon, who is on the ministry team at University Congregational UCC in Seattle, reminded that all body parts are parts of the body—eyes, ears, hands. If the whole body were an eye, it could not hear. God has arranged the members. There are many members in the body. Some have greater honor and some inferior, but all are part of the body of Christ.

Speaking about an inferior part, she said that seven years

ago she lost her mother to metastatic colon cancer. During her mother’s illness, Amy learned about that vital part of the body, vital in “our plumbing,” she said.

“I learned the hard way it was something more than a basic function and that we know less about the gut than the brain,” she said.

Why did her mother eat and nothing happened. Things

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'Transformation' and 'community' are powerful words

Preaching at the Progressive Revival Service before Annual Meeting, the Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown, senior pastor at Plymouth UCC in Seattle, said "transformation and community are powerful, pregnant words, words used in seminary that sounded lofty, hopeful."

She defined transformation as radical, thorough, dramatic change, metamorphosis and renewal.

"If we are to change in community, transformation and revival requires something significant in us. It requires us to function as one," she said. "We have the body of Christ so we can be liberated, free, together.

"We use the body metaphor to tell us about who we are and who we should be, so all people are included and honored for who and what they are." Kelle said. "Our work is partial. Eyes are not hands. Arms are not brains. The work we are doing is partial. When eyes try to be hands and arms try to be brains."

She pointed out that many want to be free and liberated, but refuse to pay the cost.



Kelle Brown sings with Plymouth's Soul Choir.

"Without community, there is no liberation, no freedom until all are transformed. It's often hard to build community," said Kelle. "It's easy for people to forget to trust God, especially in people who do not look like them. We need to love our neighbors who are in cages south of the border, who are drinking water poisoned with lead or who do not believe as we believe."

She encouraged seeing themselves as gifts of God.

"God is here waiting for us

to catch the vision of community, to listen a while, to make room. We have the time and resources to see God in our midst," Kelle said.

"Easter is about embodying transformation and resurrection," she said. "If someone is left outside the doors, lonely or abused, we may be the body that remains alive, but it's not enough to stay alive, stuck in survival mode.

"Trust is about more than survival. It's about thriving,"

she said. "Death is the only way to resurrection. Christ may not be recognized. The young will lead communities if they trust in God. How do we get in step with God? Certain people need to go forward to be in the church of Jesus Christ.

"We are all children of God. It's disingenuous to convert people to our image, our kind of people," Kelle said. "God is doing a new thing, making room for all people even when they fail and fall. There is room for all. God creates joy out of nothing. God is able to build the kingdom of God."

Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) she was called five years ago as lead pastor at Plymouth UCC. A graduate of Spelman College, she received a MDiv from Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry. She completed a doctor of ministry at San Francisco Theological Seminary. She works to dismantle racism and other forms of oppression. She serves on the PNC Justice Witness Ministries Committee.

Worship is a vital part of the church's body system

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came in and couldn't go out.

Then Amy learned the cancer spread to the perineum, the sac that keeps the intestine from falling down the left leg.

This container is part of the living organism, nothing is superfluous.

"The container, in a subtle way, gives cues to make all in the body do what it is supposed to do to keep you alive," she said. She likened the body systems to worship.

"Andrew is passionate about worship. He thinks it is one thing. I think it is something else. As a church community does worship, it may find some elements weaker," she said.

"We put a sign out that gives the worship time. We do the welcome, call to worship, songs and pass the peace. We argue about chairs or pews, hymnals, lighting and plumbing.

"We can do worship and church in ways so we forget it is a vital part a vital organ to who we are as Christians and whether our mission is alive for the next generation. We can do that only if what happens is more than plumbing.

We may argue about the parts, but we know worship is wondrous. We only begin to understand how it works," Amy said. "We come to church for any number of reasons and stay because we made friends.

"It's about our thoughts,

words, theology and music passing from one generation to another. Members have made a friend in Jesus and in one another. We make friends and those friends are the basis of our commitment to what becomes our church family."

No one talks about it being a miracle to have 45 members in a church, but Jesus had 12 really good friends.

"This is a lonely time. We have a lot in common with Jesus' time. Jesus walked, talked and made good friends. The friends were transformed by friendship," she said.

After Jesus was gone, she continued, the group of friends carried on.

"I am transformed because

of those who have been in the church, who did not know me, but welcomed me and saw me as a child of God," Amy said. "I see in the mirror in the eyes who I am and could be. Friends are our mirrors. They tell the truth. They reflect back love."

Amy called for church members to do that for each other, to be transformed by friends in Christ so that "we are the living church," said Amy, who earned an MDiv at Pacific School of Religion in 2002. She has also served as associate pastor at United Churches of Olympia and interim at Lummi Island Congregational. She earned a bachelor's degree in vocal music in 1996 at Oberlin College.

Black pastor unapologetically preaches social justice

In opening her sermon on Friday, Bianca Davis Lovelace, executive director of Renton Ecumenical Association, said she is unapologetically a black, college educated social justice preacher.

“As I wrestle with the text that through the spirit we are given faith, healing, prophesy, speaking tongues, interpreting, but it’s the same spirit, God whispers words of contrition and repentance. I come to the conclusion that I can’t preach transformation and revival without acknowledging contribution by leaders in the country.

“Unity and diversity are not manifested as God wants,” she said. “It is immoral to refuse to love people, address poverty, deal with injustice, welcome strangers and care for the least. This country is rooted in genocide, marginalizing communities. The country has yet to repent of original sin. Racism is ingrained in the fabric of the DNA of the country and may engage in it not knowing. Some of us feel no need, ignorant not get off the hook. The biggest issue through the black church is social justice preaching lens.

We see a person truly humbled before honor what bring to the table and to the country. We see as human or objectify.

The country has seen only



Bianca Davis Lovelace heads Renton Ecumenical Association.

monetary value of black bodies. The culture only cares for the black body if it’s controlled or makes money. The only value of immigrants is if we find a way to exploit them. We do not see immigrants and human.

The country is rooted in Christian values. Are we worshiping God about God dwelling in human form or God of capitalism and white supremacy? Who is your God? Transformation only begins with repenting sin of genocide of Native Americans, slavery of black community. Then we move to repair.

It looks like rehabilitation, not mass incarceration. Black Christians, Muslims and Jews

worship freely without fear for their lives. We want to pray and worship in peace. We want children to go to school without fearing gun violence.

All God’s people live where they want to live, not pushed out by gentrification and redlining.

Transforming leaders have heard.

We want white accomplices, not just allies, but people who put their lives on the line to challenge and combat white supremacy, LGBTQ brothers and sisters living freely without landlords trying to discriminate, women paid fair wages, black persons free who are going where lead, living where

lead, not police supervision.

It’s time to transform now. The village is on fire. Will you sit and watch it burn. No more complicity and silence.

Transformation is not that.

Accomplices ready to do the work to transform so all gaps people experience are gone. We need to move forward today, not one step back. We need new and reforming churches.”

Bianca, who holds a bachelor’s degree in speech from Jackson State University and a master’s in nonprofit management from Columbia College in Chicago, earned an MDiv in 2013 from Chicago Theological Seminary and is an ordained UCC pastor. In addition to pastoral ministry, she was an early intervention specialist and health educator for clients with HIV with the Cook County Health and Hospital Systems. She is executive director of the Renton Ecumenical Association of Churches (REACH), one of the tri-chairs in Washington for the Poor People’s Campaign and co-founder of Progressive Millennials for Action. She has served as pastor at Eastgate Congregational UCC in Bellevue, where 80 percent of members are white and 20 percent are people of color. She also serves on the Justice Witness Ministries Committee.



Hiba Jameel, Seattle-based Iraqi-American artist, created a painting during worship and the PNC sold 60 prints to help the PNC fund new church starts.



Youth Choir from the Samoan Congregational Christian Church of Seattle/Renton sang and danced during the revival worship.



Lisa Horst-Clark and Andrew Conley-Holcom open revival.



Revival participants light candles as an expression of prayers.



Revival participants write messages on "Tree of Life."



Setting for revival worship at Bellevue First Congregational.



Revival participants drop coins in gratitude for blessings.



Seattle Congregational Christian Church youth group choir.

Justice Witness Ministries facilitates discussion on racism

The PNC Justice Witness Ministries Committee, which has taken on a priority of dismantling racism, helped set the stage for discussions on racism in PNC congregations and the need to support clergy of color as part of awareness of racism and white privilege in society.

Steve Clagett, JWM chair, pointed to progress from the statement in founding documents that all are created equal, to the Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves, to the Civil Rights movement gains, the election of President Obama and other of progress in race relations and justice, Steve said there is still work to do in dismantling racism

“African Americans are still beaten, put down and humiliated,” he said.

“Now clergy of color have come to us and are serving in ministry in our white-dominated congregations,” he said, suggesting that their presence is a gift, because “people of color see us more clearly. They have stepped out to minister to us, but find it stressful.”

So at Annual Meeting, the Justice Witness Ministries Committee (JWM)’s Dismantle Racism Team facilitated discussion to celebrate nonwhite churches—such as the Samoan churches—and to acknowledge wrongs by denominations.

Along with the need for white members to understand their privilege and power in society, Steve said.

Members of the team read quotes from stories some African-American clergy shared, because telling stories can change perspectives.

- One pastor expressed anxiety that her suggestions in committee meetings were met with opposition as part of some not wanting a black pastor to take leadership rather than take orders.

- One was told her direct



Rick Derksen and Mary Flowers of the People’s Institute have helped Plymouth UCC address internalized issues of race.

communication style seemed aggressive and angry.

- When a white congregant touched her hair without permission, one felt as if she was in a petting zoo.

- One felt brought to serve as a token so the congregation could pat themselves on the back for being progressive in hiring a black pastor.

- When a black congregant told of mistreatment of black people by the congregation, a white member said the black people in the room needed to stop blaming white people for everything.

- One was chastised because a Trump supporter left when she opened space in a Bible study for congregants upset after the election. When the congregant returned, she gave the pastor the silent treatment.

- During recuperation from injuries in a car accident, no white congregant called on her, but instead accused her of not visiting white members. Black people are expected to ignore their pain for the sake of white people’s comfort.

- In April 1994, the first ordained black UCC minister in the Washington North Idaho Conference spoke to an adult Sunday school class about his ministry with Union Gospel Mission of the Beacon Ave.

UCC. The leader invited him stay for the morning worship, but as he entered the sanctuary, the pastor greeted him but closed the double doors in his face. The Rev. Jeffrey Barker, now semi-retired and on call as chaplain at the Children’s Hospital in Seattle, stood outside the doors at Bellevue First before Annual Meeting, handing out a letter telling of his experience. He later joined Annual Meeting.

Mary Flowers of Village of Hope, a 10-year-old multi-racial, mostly African American anti-racism organization in West Seattle, partnering with Plymouth UCC, said those words were “a small sampling of aggressions some clergy experience in churches every day.

With Village of Hope and European Dissent, Plymouth members have worked three years to develop a model for white congregations to engage in anti-racist organizing in partnership with communities of color, learning how racism was constructed and how it can be undone.

Arising from internalized racial suppression, she said she was traumatized and in tears to learn she would have only an hour to explore the testimonies of the African American clergy at the PNC Annual Meeting.

She had hoped to bring a climate of change in the church.

“A pastor who is not white may feel like a guest, not really at home, even though invited to a position of leadership,” she said.

Rick Derksen, of the People’s Institute, a partner in Plymouth’s anti-racist work and participant in European Dissent, told of training whites and blacks on the internalized relationship they didn’t think about as the church invited Kelle into the pulpit and ministry.

“We couldn’t go in ignorance into the experience,” he said. “We spoke about leader care.”

Rick said that 20 years ago, he did not understand why it was important for him as a white person to learn about the dominant culture systems, the powers and principalities, he represents.

“I grew up as a missionary’s child. When I was 20, my wife and I were called to be Mennonite missionaries in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to save lives. I served 20 years. I did not people in Congo, however, called to be missionaries in the United States.”

Returning to Pennsylvania, he began anti-racism training, beginning seeing himself as open-minded and progressive.

“I saw other whites as bad whites and myself as a good white,” he said.

After two days, he began to transform, confronting how racism had impacted him and how he internalized messages of superiority, seeing himself as better, more capable, even as a white savior.

“I stopped asking if I was a racist and began asking how my racism played out for me as a person of faith. Now I know it’s about saving our families, our souls from participating in a system of racism,” Rick said.

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People's Institute representatives share insights

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"I have five grandchildren who keep me grounded. We need to name and disrupt white supremacy wherever it is in our society and churches.

"I understand you did a revival service. Revival is to live again, to be revived," he said, expressing his commitment to work within white churches so he and they can "live again."

Mary also pointed out that climate change is about racism and capitalism.

"There homelessness because of racism plus capitalism. We do programs and services, but people are poor because they lack power," she said.

Rick said he went to Congo like other Christians of North America who go to tell the lie of colonialism that ripped land from people and made crosses and cathedrals of gold.

Mary told of seeing missionaries with babies with distended stomachs covered flies.

"We see the child, not the people connected to the message of superiority and inferiority," she said. "The parents can't take care of their child if we do not tell the truth of what colonization and capitalism do in a country. They come in and rob people of their health. We take the babies adopt them."

She was introduced to the UCC at Trinity in Chicago, which started Plymouth Free-



Steve Claggett, JWM chair, tells of work to dismantle racism.

dom Schools. To be President, Barack Obama had to distance himself from the truth Jeremiah White preached at Trinity.

"Jeremiah was demonized. We were punished for Obama," she said.

"I thank Trump. For eight years, we thought we were in a post-racial society," she said. "With Trump, we can't hide. In churches, we need to know there is racism and we have benefited, but we were oblivious."

"Until whites wake up and realize it's not about black's pain, but about 400 years of families being split, giving our bodies away, being raped, being divided by the spectrum of color.

"Slavery was not a Southern thing. It was an American thing. Genocide is not a South-

ern thing, but an American thing. Violence is not a Southern thing, but an American thing," she said.

The concern is that in five years racism will be on the agenda again.

"It's not an agenda item," she said.

Steve Claggett said the PNC is starting to do something. The Dismantle Racism effort is learning because Kelle, Chris Hanson, Robert Brown, Don Bell of Plymouth, Leslie Cunningham Olympia, Ruth Brandon, Everett and others are keeping up the dialogue and communication between meetings.

PNC moderator Wendy Blight said the conference is committed to continue conversation, aware that despite "the

sea of whiteness we swim in, the water I grew up in and are accustomed to," it makes a difference to know a few people, begin to share conversations of pain and to tell me the truth.

"It's not easy to hear as a white person but it is our life work," said Wendy, committing to do two things:

1) Take conversation to the next level of leadership, the Board of Directors and Conference council.

2) Challenge the Ministry Resource Committee for next year to see major changes in nominees and what leaders look like.

Steve said it's tough to talk just one hour and offered times to share ideas to dismantle racism in individuals and churches.

In preparation for Annual Meeting discussions, PNC members were invited to read articles written in 2017 by three black clergy.

<http://www.ecclesio.com/2017/11/dance-continues-kelle-brown/>

<http://www.ecclesio.com/2017/11/dance-inclusion-african-american-leadership-dominant-culture-churches-by-bianca-davis-lovelace/>

<http://www.ecclesio.com/2017/11/first-steps-darrell-goodwin/>

For information, call Steve at 206-795-9475.



Kyna and Jamie Shilling of Plymouth UCC led singing.



Hillary Coleman is vice moderator.



Courtney Stange-Tregear spoke.

Annual Meeting business intersects with action

Meeting on the holy ground of the Dwamish at First Congregational UCC, the first church in Bellevue in 1896, the PNC Annual Meeting adopted a budget of \$635,510, passed an emergency Green New Deal resolution, elected new leaders for its committees, celebrated with worship and discussed ways to support clergy of color.

Lisa Horst Clark, the lead pastor of First Congregational UCC Bellevue, said we are called to be your church in this place, members of your body, your servants, open our ears to listen, gathered to be transformed into your body, 'Many Gifts, One Spirit,' the Annual Meeting theme.

Hillary Coleman, vice moderator, said that "All we do at annual meeting—budget, worship—are ways to build community."

Wendy Blight, moderator, announced a quorum with 245 from 45 churches.

"We are all here to serve the conference," she said announcing the retirement of Hall Bergmann, Diane Darliing, Chip Laird, Cecilia McKean and Kenn Robinson, noting that retired ministers advocate, encourage, walk alongside ministers today. She welcomed 10 new clergy ordained in the conference and 11 members in discernment.

"Along with them, laity are often the ones who get the job done. They are the dreamers and implementers," she said. "The Conference is all of us."

She introduced the conference staff, including Andy Warren, who is the new accountant.

Wendy introduced Conference Minister Mike Denton, noting that he is one of the longest serving conference ministers in the denomination.

Mike referred to his written report, at pnucc.org/new-page-1, for details.

"We are in a make or break moment, deciding what to change—exciting, but we may



Wendy Blight, moderator, leads the Annual Meeting.

feel nervous, overwhelmed and fragile," he said. "It's about more than what we are experiencing in the conference. It's about what we are experiencing living in the world.

He cited the impact of climate change with half of Americans believing it means the end of the world in 200 years; the impact of race relations being on a downward trend; the impact of more youth suicides.

"Apocalyptic seems appropriate. It's a time for anger or courage," Mike said. "What we promote as normal is one reason for the mess. We rationalize theology. As a white, straight, Christian, male, who have been responsible. We think that we can see a problem, and fix a it.

"We try to figure how to do things in the right way, using the full force of our power, but often we have used the earth and souls, bodies, people of color," he said. "I am complicit. The powers and principalities are racist, I am racist, too.

"If transition from the morning conversation to business, we may miss the point," he said. "We need one another. The church needs us, too."

Wendy then summarized her report on what PNC work.

"It's easy to get discouraged about church. The conference structure may not always serve well. We have limited

resources as we visit pastors and church members, and as we feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, advocate for the incarcerated, and share power."

She noted that many churches open at 10 a.m. Sunday and are closed for the week.

"Ours is an amazing abundant ministry we do every day with Jesus as our companion. If we are together we see abundance. The conference holds community together," Wendy said, listing ways the PNC can help transform the world: 1) deepen connections between clergy; 2) deepen connections within and between congregations; 3) deepen ties of churches and the community, and 4) communicate effectively.

Ann Lev and Martha Baldwin presented the budget on behalf of the Stewardship Committee: "We are funding what is needed to give the conference a chance to succeed and move forward. We have chosen to operate with a big deficit for the third year," they said.

More churches indicate they need to drop their Our Churches Wider Mission giving from \$475,000 in 2015-16 to \$417,700—nearly \$60,000, because churches are having a hard time and need to fund their needs. The PNC is working to revitalize congregations.

So the PNC is using in-

come from endowments, about \$110,500 this year. In addition, the PNC is seeking to raise \$24,000 from Friends of the Conference, communicating with people to give direct donations to the conference.

Even as the budget reduces the amount the PNC sends to the national UCC from 31 percent to 28 percent, the PNC continues to give the largest percent of any conference.

Administrative expenses are dropping from \$62,000 to \$38,500, including reducing the office space.

Meighan Pritchard, environmental justice leader on the UCC Council on Climate Justice, and pastor at Prospect, urged adopting the Emergency Resolution on the Green New Deal, noting that while U.S. carbon emissions are up 3.4 percent, many political leaders deny and fossil fuel market continues business as usual spending \$5 trillion on exploring and developing. The resolution goes to the General Synod.

Meighan cited children seeking the right to gain a world not wrecked by climate change and the Children's Trust lawsuit saying government has a duty to protect the climate.

"We need to develop behaviors, not just a statement. The Green New Deal resolution, which came from Justice Witness Ministries, was approved with one abstention.

At the closing, Bianca Davis Lovelace, thanked the PNC for progress to equality and justice: "May we continue to do the deep work to model racial justice and empower people in the Conference," she said.

Kelle Brown held up a strip with ripped cloth as symbol of lament, and said not to stop lamenting, but to "look at ourselves not with shame but with trusting in the renewal of God so we can go forward."

For information, call 206-725-8383 or visit pnucc.org.

Pride events express solidarity with LGBTQ community

The Spokesman-Review reported record-breaking crowds, with estimates of more than 27,000 attending and 100 groups in the Spokane Pride Parade and Rainbow Festival in Spokane on Saturday, June 8.

The parade's theme this year was "To Thrive, Not Just Survive," with the Rainbow Festival and an evening fireworks show.

Gen Heywood, pastor of Veradale UCC, reported that there were more families and children of all ages participating.

"The parade was so long that the beginning finished before the end began," she said.

The Spokesman Review quoted Michael Jepson, Out-Spokane's parade coordinator, that more than 1,500 marched.

There were also fewer protests than in previous years with just five people in the designated protest area, across from the Riverfront Park fountain.

Along with many of Spokane's UCC, Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Reform Jewish and other faith communities, parade participants included employees of companies such as Sephora, Starbucks, Nordstrom and Pemco Insurance, and organizations like PFLAG, Gay Straight Alliance clubs from some Spokane high schools, and the Trevor Project.

For information, call 509-926-7173.

Plymouth UCC is helping organize and promote the 45th annual Seattle Pride Parade from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Sunday, June 30, meeting at 4th and Union in Seattle and proceeding 2.5 miles to the Seattle Center.

The community-wide celebration advances awareness of LGBTQ issues and promotes mutual respect and equal human rights for all.

It features participation of some of Seattle's brands, busi-



Photos show spirit of Spokane Pride Parade June 8. Below, Hana and Henry Reinhardt carry the Veradale UCC banner.

Photos by Gen Heywood of Veradale UCC



nesses, community groups and civic leaders.

Renton Christian UCC set out a Pride Month display with six rainbow colored doors saying "God's doors are open to all."

On June 17, the display was vandalized, doors were knocked down and tried to set one on fire. Church staff discovered the vandalism Monday morning.

KIRO said that because it is considered a hate crime, the FBI is involved in investigating it.

The Rev. Cynthia Meyer, pastor at Renton, said neighborhood parents who heard about the vandalism brought their children to the church to paint a new door. They bolted down the display so it can't be knocked over again, and colored the sidewalks with positive messages. She said many members are in the LGBTQ community.

The doors were knocked over again two days later.

Colombia mission worker will visit Pacific Northwest

By Ed Evans

Global Ministries mission co-worker Michael Joseph will be visiting churches in the Pacific Northwest Region and Conference Sept. 14 to 30, hosted by the Pacific NW Global Ministries Committee. He has been serving in Colombia on behalf of Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church Disciples of Christ for the past 12 years.

As he ends his service in Bogota, Michael will be visiting churches across the UCC Pacific Northwest Conference and Disciples Region to share stories about his work and experiences with peacemaking organizations in Colombia.

The Global Ministries Committee is appealing for volunteers to host housing, provide transportation and offer invitations to speak.

Michael has been working as the coordinator of the CaféPaz Peace Studies Center in Bogota, Colombia, in partnership with Justapaz, an important peacemaking organization.

His work has focused on conflict transformation, restorative justice and human rights in the midst of Colombia's armed conflict.

Michael brings a depth of knowledge and experience with peacemaking efforts in Colombia.

He will be providing updated information about the progress, or lack thereof, of implementation of the Colombian Peace Accords adopted by a vote of the people in 2016.

Quoting Cornel West, Michael writes in his Global Ministries profile, "To be a Christian is to live dangerously, honestly, freely – to step in the name of love as if you may land on nothing, yet to keep stepping because the something that sustains you no empire can give you and no empire can take



Michael Joseph will tell of work for a just peace in Colombia.

away."

The Global Ministries Committee, a shared ministry of the Pacific NW Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Northwest Region of the Christian Church Disciples of Christ is exploring the possibility of forming a partnership with Justapaz, the Christian Centre for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action in Colombia.

Justapaz, which means "a just peace," was created by the Colombian Mennonite Church in response to violence and injustice across Colombia.

It was, and continues to be, a necessary religious response from the church. Justapaz focuses on the practical training of like-minded churches, communities and individuals in the practice of non-violence.

It seeks to enable the creation of structures and ways of life it believes can ultimately lead to real peace in Colombia.

Justapaz executive director Martin Nates said during a Colombia partnership conference

call April 30, 2019, that implementation of the Peace Accords has not been going well.

He said 2018 has been the most violent year in recent years with 155 killings of community leaders, members of social organizations, human rights defenders and people associated with the peace process. The killings have been orchestrated by military and paramilitary organizations.

Members of the Pacific NW Global Ministries Committee have been participating in the Colombia partnership calls.

The 2016 Peace Accords brought an end to decades of war and upheaval with the country's main rebel group agreeing to lay down their arms. However, New York Times reporter Nicholas Casey reports that the militants are beginning to pick up their arms again after many of the promises made by the government are not being honored making the prospect of a true, lasting peace appear far from certain now. (NY Times: "Colombia's Peace

Deal Promised a New Era. So Why Are These Rebels Rearming?" May 17, 2019.) When the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as FARC, reached a peace agreement in September, 2016 after years of negotiation, much of the world applauded. Colombia's president at the time, Juan Manuel Santos, won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Casey reported in the May 17 article that the head of Colombia's army had recently ordered troops to double the number of criminals they kill. Two days after publication of the article, Casey left the country telling Colombian newspaper El Tiempo he left following "false accusations" published by lawmakers on Twitter. He said such accusations are serious due to the lack of security and safety in Colombia for journalists.

With that as a backdrop and in the midst of such rising tensions, it has become increasingly apparent that churches need to walk alongside and be in partnership with peace making organizations like Justapaz and CaféPaz in their journey towards reconciliation. Partnership provides us with a broader understanding of the many ways in which God is at work in the world and challenges us to expand our vision of the church in order to help make a just world for all.

To volunteer to provide housing and/or transportation for Michael, along with invitations to speak during his visit to the region, contact Ruth Brandon at arembem@me.com

For information on the *Colombian peace initiatives through the Global Ministries Caribbean Initiative*, visit <https://www.globalministries.org/caribbeaninitiative>.

For information on hosting, email edevans@aol.com.

Church Council marks 100 years of work for justice

More than 200 gathered on June 1 at Plymouth UCC to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Church Council of Greater Seattle (CCGS) and the difference it has made since it was founded in 1919.

That year, as World War II was ending, workers closed the city with a general strike and Seattle's population had quadrupled in 20 years, 62 congregations came together to challenge injustice and build community through relationships coming together across historic prejudice.

"World War I awakened faith leaders to intolerance between branches of Christianity," said Beth Amsbary, coordinator of philanthropy and member of University Congregational UCC, in a March article on the founding.

In 1919, there was also a global effort for Christians to come together to prevent another world war.

Beth said only one person attended the first meeting of the proposed Seattle Federation of Churches in early July 1919, but on July 22, 200 "churchmen" from 60 congregations met in Seattle's hockey rink.

That federation re-formed and transformed several times.

"Differences brought us together. Embracing differences unifies and makes us powerful today," she said.

Through the anniversary year, participants are sharing stories about how working together across differences changes the region.

Today the council continues to make a difference by responding to injustice, said Michael Ramos, executive director.

In early years, the council worked to end red-lining in Seattle so there would be adequate housing for people of all races; to desegregate schools; to support immigrants and refugees facing dehumanization.

"Together, the community of faith addresses hate and violence against people of different religious faiths and marginalized communities," he said.

Now 16 denominations with 320 congregations join in programs working on behalf of immigrants, living wage, housing and homeless advocacy, and interfaith relations.

"We believe we can make a difference together," Michael said. "We focus on areas that would not otherwise have attention, working across traditional religious lines to address homelessness and affordable housing to stop displacement, in the area of rapidly unaffordable housing for most folks."

The council is gathering with partners from different sectors—government, labor, community-based organizers and human services to work together to address ways to alleviate poverty so people survive and thrive in the Seattle area.

Michael, who previously worked in advocacy with the former Washington Association of Churches (WAC), began as social justice minister with the CCGS in 2004. He became executive director in 2008.

"We have transitioned from an emphasis on direct social services with two transitional housing buildings, a furniture bank, an elder companion project, a youth employment program to move those services to

other programs providing similar services on a larger scale," he said. "We emphasize building relationships among congregations to engage in social justice in the public square."

Michael said the Faith Action Network, formed when the WAC and Lutheran Public Policy Office merged in 2011, does local community organizing in King County cities.

- In Burien, churches challenged zoning so Mary's Place could build affordable housing for women they serve.

- In Bellevue, 20 congregations helped pass an ordinance to allow siting and building permanent shelters.

- In different cities, the focus is on local efforts, bringing congregations together over time to have impact on communities for the common good.

In King and South Snohomish Counties, there are 39 cities. Seattle has had the most attention, so the council now focuses on other cities.

"We have our own way of doing community organization. Similar to the Industrial Areas Foundation, we focus on personal relations among faith leaders and constituents invested in people so they love and gain more strength together, more power to work for social change where they can make a difference where they live.

"We began the transition

from programs in 2011 to community organizing, we moved from a \$3 million budget in 2008, initially to a budget of \$300,000. Now we have a budget of \$650,000," he said.

Now support comes from foundations, congregations, denominations and individuals, with increasing emphasis on congregations and individuals.

Immigration accompaniment is led by Briana Brannon, who began with the CCGS as a PNC Justice Leadership Program intern. She trains people to accompany immigrants—including many women asylum seekers separated from children at SeaTac Federal Detention Center—to court.

Normandy Park UCC has been involved in her trainings that foster cultural humility in white congregations committed to be with immigrants in respectful ways. University Congregational UCC is also involved in accompaniment.

Bellevue First Congregational UCC is involved in advocacy for women at the shelter, raising \$3,400 for phones.

Beth is also community organizing in Highline area part of ecumenical learning circle, building relationships.

Northshore UCC has been involved with hosting homeless people at Camp Unity.

The council has had one or two PNC Justice Leadership interns since the program began. There are also interns from other denominations.

"I see renewal is possible. In fact, congregations that focus on mission, gospel and engage in social change, are revitalized and make a difference in communities, compared to those focusing on self-preservation and financial survival," he said. "Public engagement is energizing and renewing."

For information, call 206-525-1213 or visit thechurch-council.org.

N-Sid-Sen directors tell how camp is part of their lives

N-Sid-Sen has been building interest in the summer camps with Facebook postings by 2019 camp directors.

Leda Zakarison, who is co-directing Junior High Aqua Camp at N-Sid-Sen, first attended camp there as a toddler with her mother, Kristine Zakarison, of Community Congregational UCC in Pullman, who was counseling.

Since then she attended camp as a camper, counselor-in-training, counselor and summer staff.

“At camp, I have experienced what it means to be in real community—to discover our values together, to challenge one another to grow and learn together, and to live out our values in the ways we treat one another and ourselves,” said Leda.

Along the way, she has met some of her best friends, learned campfire songs, and become passionate about doing crafts.

“This summer, I’m excited to be part of the community that we’ll build together. We will explore and grow through laughter, crafts, shared meals, singing, conversation, maybe a few tears, and of course lots of time playing in the sun.

After graduating from Whitman College in Walla Walla, Leda moved to Seattle to participate in the year-long UCC Justice Leadership Pro-



Mark Boyd speaks at Annual Meeting about camp “ownership.”

gram, working at Earth Ministry, a nonprofit that empowers faith communities to advocate for environmental justice.

Now a member at Prospect UCC in Seattle, she works as a nanny.

Bruce Wilson, who will be directing Emerging Adult Camp at N-Sid-Sen July 19-21, first went to camp, Camp Uskichitto, a Methodist Camp in Leblanc, La., when he was in the seventh grade.

“It was a magical place,” he said. “Camp has always been a place of experiencing God in community. It is where I have met friends who talk about the messages of Jesus and reflect on the impact it could have in the

world,” said Bruce who is an ordained minister in the PNC, a board certified chaplain, mental health therapist and aspiring spiritual director in Tacoma.

“I am still excited about people coming together to form community, for a weekend or a week, to live intentionally and draw closer to themselves and their faith,” said Bruce.

Mark Boyd, managing director at N-Sid-Sen, reinforces that community happens at N-Sid-Sen, whose name means “Point of Inspiration.”

“The Point of Inspiration is gathering of community for community within community,” he said. “It’s time to come together as church to know

more than in coffee hour, to discuss how to deal with the rest of the world.”

Speaking at Annual Meeting to delegates of PNC churches, he made the point that “we do not have ‘outside groups,’ but have partners.”

That understanding changes how “we see what the site is and has brought an increase ownership among the partners,” Mark said. “That includes inviting partners to give, reminding them as PNC users that it’s your camp.”

Some of those groups include Unitarian Universalist senior high youth, two Montessori schools, a week-long SUFI group and, the largest, a Lady of the Lake Dance group has been coming for years.

He said UCC groups are reserving for retreats, too.

Capital improvements for 2019 include building shelters for overnite use on the east side of the highway and an improved well in cove.

Mark told of developing a management plan for the property’s timber, creeks, wetlands, waterfront and sacred spaces.

“We need to log the landscape to manage it” he said, telling of taking out diseased trees. “Areas where we took out timber, we are planting larch and white pine.

To register, visit <https://www.ultracamp.com/info/sessionDetail.aspx>.

Youth camps at N-Sid-Sen focus on ‘Peace Works’

Campers for 2019 youth and family summer camps at N-Sid-Sen will focus reflections around the theme, “Peace Works - Empowering the Next Generation of Peacemakers.”

Kaila Russell of the Outdoor Ministries Committee said campers will consider peace as a prayer and as life’s work. They will look at stories of peace and justice in Scripture.

The Intermediate Camp is July 7 to 13 led by Stephen Hadden and Kaila. Junior High Aqua Camp, the same week, is led by Leah Atkinson Bilinski and Leda Zakarison.

Eric Anderson directs the Kids Camp, July 14 to 17, overlapping a few days with Senior High Camp, July 14 to 20. Cory Mclay and Anna Colwell lead Senior High Camp.

Other camp directors are Bruce Wilson for the Emerging Adult Camp, July 19 to 21; Amy Johnson and Ryan Lambert for Family Camp 1, which will be July 28 to Aug. 3, and Janet Malley for Family Camp 2 (Camp Together), which will be Aug. 4 to 10.

Registration will be online at n-sid-sen.org.

Art, music are central to Pilgrim Firs' ministry

Art and music groups have become central to the ministry and mission of Pilgrim Firs, said Wade Zick, managing director of Pilgrim Firs.

"This is not a new reality – rather it is something we are embracing as part of how we help shape and change the world," he said in a recent column.

More than 70 percent of the groups and income for camp involve art in various ways.

"It is an important way we are helping to breathe life and hope into the world – hoping to change it just a bit for the better," Wade said.

"Tapping into creativity can open the imagination to solving problems. Art can bring about healing and hope. Music can bring together people for common purpose," he said, inviting people to think about how important music and art are in worship.

A song bringing back memories of loved ones can be powerful and comforting.

"Singing together can unite and reinforce how we are reassured of the love that surrounds and the hope of a better time," he said.

"Music and art require space to feel, to breathe, to experiment. We are so blessed that Pilgrim Firs provides that space for art to be expanded in our world," he said.

Recently enjoying a garden of a UCC church member, he noticed a sculpture.

The sculpture was created by one of the artists that come to camp at Pilgrim Firs with the Northwest Stone Sculptures group.

The sculpture has been both a source of beauty and inspiration.

"As we give space to the artists, those artists then are able to shape the world," Wade said. "At times that world is directly ours and more often, it is



Wade Zick shares updates on camp use and long-term goals.

a broader impact that is no less important."

During the past year, Pilgrim Firs has hosted songwriter groups, music groups, yoga groups, sculpture groups, scrapbooking groups and spirituality-centered groups that have focused on art as their primary program.

"For each of these groups, the space provides time and place to be restored and nourished to help create more hope, more justice, more love in the world. It is our common value that brings us into partnership," he said.

"We don't necessarily use the same words such as God or ministry, but at least in my own theological thinking, these groups are making manifest the essence of God through creating, sharing and building community," Wade said.

Pilgrim Firs is a space that helps PNC churches live out

their common mission.

"We are doing the work together with the church's support and the gifts of so many years that have been given," said Wade, thanking the PNC on behalf of the art community that uses Pilgrim Firs for supporting creativity.

In his report to the Annual Meeting, Wade uplifted Pilgrim Firs as "a sacred oasis for creativity and community" with Puget Sound Art using the space.

He reported that the year of growth at Pilgrim Firs has included living UCC values, hosting Kitsap Pride, OWL trainings, Camp Fire Camp, Fox Island UCC, a Planned Parenthood Youth Camp, two Unitarian Universalist groups, four returning church groups, and the new Common Fire program, doing work projects in the community of Tacoma, building for people in need.

Discernment about the future has involved discussions with the Puget Sound guitar Workshop and Northwest Stone Sculpture Association, who together represent more than 65 percent of the Pilgrim Firs budget and attendance.

Conversations reveal shared values and love of Pilgrim Firs, he said in his Annual Meeting report.

"We have had a nine percent increase in income in three years," Wade reported.

To invest in the camp's future, he said Pilgrim Firs staff is working to correct deferred maintenance including roofs to replace, screens to build, a field to level, cabins to update, windows to replace, and vehicles to replace.

"The fact that we have not put money away through the years for these larger needs and have not had a robust giving program has meant that, whole budgets are in balance, the bigger picture for the site is in a financial stress," he said.

While focusing on hospitality, the center is also prioritizing deferred maintenance items so they do not become larger problems.

Pilgrim Firs purchased buffer of land for a land trust to prevent clear cutting and land development in adjacent property.

Staff has done maintenance at Huckleberry and septic system, and replaced the camp car, gator and riding lawn mower.

Working with Wade as year round staff are Mikey Staser, Chris Berry and Taylor Nagli.

SPACE AVAILABLE FOR UPDATE ON SUMMER COMMON FIRE CAMPS or for photo of art groups using the camp.

For information, visit www.pilgrim-firs.org.

Bellingham First's basement transformed for

Ground Floor drop in center for youth has opened in the remodeled basement space of First Congregational UCC in Bellingham



Guemes Community Church UCC is working on a year-long, participatory "Peace Pole Project," asking families, groups and artists to make peace poles on the island for constant visual reminders of peacemaking, said Bob Anderson.

There have also been some peace education events.

The church is providing poles, resources and financial help to any artist that requests it.

It is using a short resource sheet to recruit peace pole makers.

The project kicked off with a labyrinth celebration the evening of Sept. 21, the United Nations' World Peace Day and the Equinox. The celebration included readings, luminarias, candles and torches, and a soup supper to give out peace pole suggestions. ## signed up.

It continues into the spring of 2019.

Bob said the island project seeks to promote peace through awareness, art projects and action.

Peace Poles made by Island artists, families and organizations are to be placed in public spaces and private roadsides, "drawing on Island creativity and as a continuing future reminder to work together for peace, in ourselves, our community and in the world," said Bob, who is coordinating logistics. Gary Rainwater is helping with materials, placement and construction advice.

The church is providing some funding for materials peace pole makers need.

Bob said the hope is to inspire peacemaking, to support current and future activists to engage in local and wider community peacemaking.

"The church is one catalyst, and all Islanders and organizations are invited to initiate actions," Bob said.

Peace pole makers are starting with four-by-four or larger pressure treated poles six to eight feet tall. The bottom two feet are treated to be buried in the ground and the upper four to six feet are to be creatively designed with peace-related words or images.

"Other options include banners, plaques, panels, rocks, birdhouses, mobiles or chimes," said Bob.

Traditional peace poles often are simply white with the words in black.

Options for words include "peace on earth," "grow in peace," "find peace within," "believe in peace," "work for peace," "do everything peacefully," or "life is a peaceful garden."

Often the same phrase is on different faces of the pole in different languages.

"Simplicity in words and images is recommended so poles can be quickly read by passers-by," Bob said.

Dedication of the peace poles and peace art will be at Spring Equinox, Memorial Day or Summer Solstice events.

"We are 'locavores' and this project is all about Islanders inspiring and supporting each other and the local economy," said Bob.

For information, call 360-293-3770; earthspiritcircle@earthlink.net