April 22 –

PNCUCCNews Web Copy

Magnolia education leads to community action

Magnolia finds value in tiny homes and people in them

Monthly learning sessions on homelessness, racism and food insecurity inspire congregation to action

Building team from Magnolia UCC helps build a tiny house, one way to address homelessness in the Seattle area.

Photos courtesy of Betsy Fornoff

Team sets up wall, top. Betsy Fornoff, right.

Photos courtesy of Betsy Fornoff

In January, Magnolia United Church of Christ in Seattle chose to focus their intention and attention around learning about the causes and potential solutions of homelessness in their community.

In February, their focus was on racism, picking up from previous book studies.

In March, the focus was on food security and the congregation and its scout troops collected food for Ballard Food Bank.

Magnolia opens the learning sessions the church to the PNC, the Magnolia ecumenical community and the greater Magnolia community, said senior pastor Marci Scott-Weis.

For the first session on homelessness Greg Colburn, an assistant professor of real estate in the University of Washington’s College of Built Environments, spoke on the causes of homelessness.

Greg, author of Homelessness Is a Housing Problem, researches housing policy, markets, affordability and homelessness, and is engaged in community efforts to address the Puget Sound housing crisis.

In the second housing session, Andrew Constantino, manager for Tiny Home Villages, gave the history of Tiny Homes telling how the villages run and communities support them.

Magnolia also sent a team of 12 to Sound Foundations for one day to build Tiny Homes. Several members continue to volunteer with building.

The church set a goal to raise funds to cover the cost of building a Tiny Home.

Betsy Fornoff, a member of Magnolia UCC—also on the PNC Justice and Witness Ministries Committee and the PNC Dismantling Racism Sub Committee—became involved after the education sessions.

She worked with the team, her daughter and on her own to build Tiny Homes for the South End Tiny House Village, which opens in April on the 9100 block of Martin Luther King Way South with 40 tiny houses.

“Greg said the root cause of homelessness is the housing supply—real estate—not drug abuse and mental illness,” she said.

Betsy is impressed by the success of tiny villages moving people into permanent housing.

“Sound Foundations builds the homes, and the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) sets up villages,” Betsy said.

LIHI brings in electricity and community showers, bathrooms and kitchens. Each tiny house has one room with a bed, a hanging rack, two windows, heat and a door to lock.

Betsy and church members have also helped at the Interbay Village Port of Seattle land. It started in 2015 as Tent City 5 on Seattle City Light property and moved to the Port of Seattle in 2017. Now 76 tiny homes have replaced the tents—30 of which were added in November, 2021, Betsy said.

Six Magnolia and Queen Anne area churches help Interbay Village with meals, and collect clothes and household items for when people move to permanent housing. As they established relationships while serving meals and meeting people, Magnolia residents saw the Tiny Home Village as part of the community.

“Building tiny homes and volunteering in a tiny home village is an incredible way to do something concrete to help people get off the street,” said Betsy, whose husband is involved through the Episcopal Church and the diocesan Homeless Task Force.

Each Tiny Home village has a Community Action Council (CAC) that involves members in decision making with LIHI. An Ecumenical Group includes a member of the CAC, interested members from each church and one pastor.

Betsy, whose parents were charter members, grew up in Magnolia UCC. She studied nursing at the University of Washington, worked at Virginia Mason Hospital and Skagit County Health Department after graduating in 1975 and returned to the UW for graduate studies in nursing from 1977 to 1979.

After six years as a nurse practitioner with the Okanogan County Public Health Department in the Methow Valley and then with the Pierce County Health Department, she worked eight years with the Washington Department of Health immunization program in Olympia and TB program in Seattle. She then worked with Providence Health in Seattle and with Public Health-Seattle and King County’s immunization program, TB program and primary care clinics until retiring in 2019.

Living three blocks from the church, she returned to participate there.

While she wondered how to help with homelessnessin a tangible way, Betsy now sees hope in the tiny homes that are built to last 20 years. LIHI’s data show that people stay an average of 115 days before moving to permanent housing, so each house helps three people go from the street to safe housing each year.

“A tiny house takes people off the street into a safe space where they can be warm, dry and lock their things. Villages offer services and transportation to help people move forward, compared to staying in a shelter three feet from the next person,” she said.

“In a village, people gain stability not only with services but also by finding community with neighbors as they serve on committees and solve problems,” she said.

In February Magnolia UCC’s Learning Session featured Cheryl Cooke, who spoke on “What is Critical Race Theory and Why are Folks so Upset About it?”

In her practice as a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner, she treats children with ADHD and autism, as well as children and adults with anxiety and depression. She has researched the impact of incarceration on individuals, families and communities. She also discussed the experiences of people of color in nursing and academic leadership.

Betsy said Magnolia previously had book studies on Zoom, reading So You Want to Talk about Race by Idoma Uluo a Seattle author; Hot to Be Anti-Racist by Ibraham Kendi, andCaste by Isabel Witherson.

“After reading books we wanted to move to action and partner with black, brown and indigenous people on projects,” said Betsy, who completes her term on the Justice Witness Ministries Committee in April.

Magnolia began meeting in person in January. During the pandemic, most participated in livestream worship.

Now living in Lynnwood, 14 miles from Magnolia, she still attends Magnolia—online during the pandemic and now in person again.

For information, call 206-283-1788, or email marci@magnoliaucc.org or betsyblessing01@gmail.com.

Story of snow angels starts the theme of hope

‘Sharing Stories of Hope’ is theme for Lenten stories

“Sharing Stories of Hope (The Hopeful and the Hopeless)” is the theme for the PNC’s Lenten Story Sharing on the PNC-UCC Conference Facebook Page.

The scripture reference to inspire stories is: “And we boast in the hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2b) .

As Courtney Stange-Tregear, minister of church vitality, listened around the conference the first months of 2022, hope was an ongoing theme.

“Hope for glimmers of change, hope for what might come, hope as an antidote to despair. Some of us are feeling full of hope. Some of us are looking, yearning, eager for hope. Some of us are deep in hopelessness. Still some—most?—of us feel all of these ways depending on the day. Sometimes we feel all these ways in the same day,” said Courtney.

With Lent being a time of reflection and preparation, she invited people again to share testimonial stories with one another as a Lenten practice. The theme is “Sharing Stories of Hope.”

“I noticed that when one person shares their feelings of hopefulness it often makes others feel a bit more hopeful themselves. I hope that this series will include stories about hope to inspire hope in others,” she said, inviting PNC folks to share a story of a time they felt hopeful, or where they saw hope incarnated in the world.

“It is important to share these glimmers of hope when we see them. The hope of one person can fan the flames of hope in another,” Courtney said. “Hope is contagious. Sometimes the hope of others is just enough to get us through our own lack of hope.”

Aware that not everyone feels connected to any stories of hope these days, she clarified that more important than sharing stories of hope “is simply sharing yourself, sharing an authentic story that comes from you.”

She noted it might be a story about hope, may be about struggling with hope or may be about feeling hopeless.

“No matter what, you, the real you, are welcome here,” Courtney said, reminding that in the UCC we say, “No matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you know you are welcome here”—with or without hope.

She invited people to share their stories and read the stories of others.

To subscribe to the daily story series, go to http://eepurl.com/gfCsyv

To submit a story, click https://forms.gle/kcfK6pivwfjG2Upc9.

Angels All Around

My senior year of college, there was a huge blizzard that covered Annapolis in about three feet of snow. Maryland Avenue, where I lived in my tiny basement apartment, wasn’t plowed for several days.

Before long there was a walking path through the middle of the street made by previous walkers tramping down the snow.

It was January, and Senior Essay writing season. The beginning of the process of thesis writing and defense required for graduation. A full month is dedicated only to this. No pressure.

One night, feeling frustrated and hopeless, my roommate and I left our apartment, and walked down the path in the middle of the street. We made our way to the pub for some comfort food and a couple of pints.

Time away from my paper, a warm cottage pie, and encouraging words from my roommate, had me leaving the pub feeling the tiniest hints of hope. Or almost hope.

I was still certain I was doomed, but I figured maybe that wasn’t so bad. Besides, the snow was beautiful.

Leaving the pub, walking home along the narrow foot path, surrounded by high walls of snow on either side, I started to feel just a little lighter.

Maybe I could get through this, maybe. I suddenly flopped myself down in the soft snow. I lay in there, looking up at the starry sky, and started waving my arms. Willing an angel to appear in the snow. An angel surrounding my paper wouldn’t hurt either.

Years later, at a UCC event, I met a clergy person who had also lived in Annapolis during college.

We reminisced about what it was like there then. He even remembered the same snow storm! The days of unplowed streets. Turns out he lived just past the end of Maryland Ave. Such coincidences!

Then he told me the story of how one night, during that snowy time, he was walking home and he saw a snow angel along the path.

He remarked that it brought him a bit of joy and a tiny glimmer of hope, in what had been a hard time for him. He still remembered that snow angel all these years later.

Prayer: Thank you for putting people and places and angels in our path to give us hope when we feel that we have none of our own.  
-Rev. Courtney Stange-Tregear

“Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” (Romans 8: 24-25)   
  
I have the immense privilege of being a pilot and a flight instructor, which means the view out my “office window” is all of the Washington mountains, islands, and (since I fly out of the Skagit County airport) tulip and daffodil fields. However, there are many days when I have the unique privilege of exercising my instrument rating privileges, teaching student pilots how to fly an airplane without any outside visual reference, whether by using a special view-limiting device or actually flying in clouds.  
  
It’s an eerie, surreal feeling, to be totally encapsulated by clouds. Everywhere you look around you is white or gray (or total blackness, at night). Stranger still, you cannot trust what your body is telling you. Your inner ear and eyes will sense you are moving in a different direction than you actually are.  
  
Without any visual cues outside it is alarmingly easy to become disoriented and acquiesce to fear and uncertainty. As pilots we train to rely on the cockpit flight instruments (and know when they’re lying to us and then cover them up with a sticky-note!), to listen to and abide by air traffic control talking in our ear, and maybe most importantly, to trust the airplane. There are some great life lessons here: Know what information is true and what is not. Remove unhelpful voices from your life. Be able to tell the difference between reliable and unreliable information and sources. Don’t overcontrol yourself, your life, or others around you.  
  
There is an old pilot quip that your number of takeoffs should always equal your number of landings, and thus all flights must eventually come back down. It’s one thing to be maneuvering in clouds several thousand feet up, but entirely another when you are close to the ground! Descending to land in clouds requires following precise maneuvers spelled out on an instrument approach procedure, which also dictates the minimum altitude you may safely and legally descend to without seeing outside visual reference. The diagram for each of these procedures shows the length

I didn’t say gay for quite awhile - not in relation to myself, anyway. I would say to those whom I trusted, “I just fell in love. With this one amazing person, and yes, she’s a woman.” How else could I describe it? Until just before that, I was straight (but not narrow, as the magnet on my fridge testified). Before that I was married and a mom to a toddler. But in that short week following divorce and in the months after, I fell in love. And it was the best gift that could have been born out of that otherwise painful and confusing time.

But I didn’t, I couldn’t really, say gay. That felt so much bigger. Like a whole reorienting of how I saw myself, let alone how others saw me. So for awhile I didn’t. I focused on how it felt to begin a new, wonder-filled relationship. And parent, and oh, respond to a call to start seminary.

It’s been in those hardest times that I have been able to feel hope. Feel it in me, deep down. Those times, when security and a future feels so murky, that somewhere faith and hope have bubbled up and I have known that I am held and seen and will somehow find a way through.

And even though it took me awhile to claim gay, to say it aloud to myself, and an ever-growing circle of trusted folks (many of whom you would know as PNC church folks), even though this figuring out of self is ongoing, I am so grateful for those braver and bolder who have gone before me. Who have said gay out loud (and proud) and who have allowed me to claim my orientation and my love of an incredible woman to you and those who would ask.

It’s important that we have language to describe our experiences. Language like hope and struggle and yes, gay.  I’m grateful that our children are growing up with these essential words - and so many more - to say who they are. And we’ll keep reminding them and each other whose we are.  
  
-Rev. Tara Barber  
Liberation UCC, Seattle

and width of the runway you’re descending to, what the airport looks like, and what lights you’ll see coming through the clouds. Flying such a maneuver perfectly so that you look up at 200 (yes, only 200!) feet above the ground and find the runway approach lights right in front of you leading you in for a landing is one of the most gratifying feelings as a pilot.  
  
Hope as wishful thinking has never resonated much with me, but hope as conviction certainly does. Hope is knowing with absolute certainty that you are safe, that you know what is trustworthy and true, that you can manage any scenario that arises, that you have a supportive team surrounding you, and that you can always see the Light guiding you home.  
  
I don’t need to hope for a safe flight. Who hopes for what is already seen? My hope - and our Christian hope - is the dramatic irony that when all seems lost and you cannot see, there is still certainty that you are safe, you are loved, and your landing on your feet (or landing gear, as it were) is a foregone conclusion.  
  
-Kevin Peterson  
Normandy Park UCC and Wayside UCC

A quote from the movie “The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel” sticks with me: “Everything will be alright in the end so if it is not alright it is not the end.” I have come to believe that insight strongly in human relationships over the years. It’s not that all our relationships sort themselves out as if by magic, but I do believe that there is hope for reconciliation between people even when things have gone awry.  
  
I remember a time one of our members left our church in a big noisy huff over a difference of opinion about whether the American flag belonged in our sanctuary. He was so angry when he left, making such a point of saying he would never be back, that I thought it was the end of our relationship. But his wife stayed in the church; when I visited her after an illness, the old gent and I began talking again. By the time he died we were feeling genuine closeness and gratitude for one another, without either one of us needing to overhaul the other.  
  
I remember another time a conflict resulted in the end of a collegial relationship. It was extremely painful. We both spent many months crossing the street of our small town if we saw the other one coming. But one day we were eating breakfast in the same restaurant and she walked the thousand miles between our neighboring tables to ask me to pray for her sick son. We held hands and prayed together over the remains of our waffles. Spirit restored our relationship—it was not the same as it had been, but we have been able to respect one another and have compassion for each other ever since.  
  
Such episodes keep my hope alive. People can change; injuries can heal; forgiveness (even when left unspoken) breaks down what once seemed like impregnable walls. Grace abounds.  
  
Whenever I hear someone expressing a belief that a person in their life “will never change,” I beg to differ. If we leave the door open for change, making room for ourselves and our neighbors to evolve, the Holy Spirit accomplishes remarkable things between us. She is always at work repairing the world. Spirit at work in us gives me indomitable hope that we truly can love one another.  
  
“Everything will be alright in the end so if it is not alright it is not the end.”  
  
-Rev. Dee Eisenhauer  
Eagle Harbor Congregational UCC, Bainbridge Island

…..endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint…..”  (Selected from Romans 5:4 & 5)    
   
            It’s probably heresy, but my understanding of hope and its substance has nothing to do with optimism or the idea that things will somehow work out in the end.  In fact, any hint that hope is looking at the world positively or embracing the prospect of a brighter future makes no sense to me. I admit that those attitudes are commendable and necessary, and I do my best to live them, but for me, that’s not hope. Let me share a story to make my point:  
  
            We met around 1960 when I was seven or eight years old.  From then on, every summer for the next seven years found us continually together. With a couple of large hounds at my heel, I was rarely without the hoe I was handed the first week I stayed on my great-grand parents dairy farm in rural Ohio. I carried that hoe most of the time because I was afraid of some of the critters that roamed the hills of that farm, particularly those that slithered or those my hounds chased up a tree from time to time. I carried that hoe like a walking stick, and I used it most days in the garden or in the fields.   
  
            The head of my hoe was hand forged in 1915, so when we met, it was already over fifty years old and today it’s over a hundred. I managed to wear out a couple handles in those early years and one since. I’ve packed around the hoe head for over twenty years without a handle. I finally found one, but lack the skill to attach it. (Can anyone help?)  
  
            Where’s the hope in this story? The job I dreaded most as a child was being told to hoe corn. While my great uncle cultivated most of the twenty or so hilly acres of corn with the tractor, there was always an acre or so too steep and too dangerous for the tractor. In the heat and humidity of late June/early July, my job was to spend the day riding that hoe through endless rows of weedy corn. I hated that job.  At first, I did all I could to avoid it, but no matter how hard I tried, the job still had to be done.   
  
            For some reason, whether it was a Sunday school lesson or a random act of childhood Bible reading, Paul’s words on the source and power of hope came to be associated in my child mind with getting that corn hoed. Wishing or waiting would not hoe the corn. Standing in the sun and thinking how hard I had it did nothing useful. Positive thoughts only gave the weeds more time to grow. Moving that hoe with endurance did. What followed might not have been character building, but the work I was called to accomplish led me to a sense of hope. Hope flowed from the endurance of a day in the field. Hope happened as I looked back over rows of corn growing with fewer weeds.  
  
            I cannot think of hope without remembering what it was like in the field as I hoed that corn. In my heart, hope springs from the efforts of people who don’t cave to trouble. Hope has its deepest reality in the struggle for justice or the effort to combat racism or the dogged determination of the disciple servants of the risen one to do something good or kind or that just needs doing for the sake of a neighbor. Hope defines what it means to belong to a congregation that lives the love of Jesus for one another and for others.  Hope is what happens next.    
  
            These last months have been tough in so many ways. But I define hope as the product of tough times.  It is that miraculous quality that shows up on the far side of any effort to love. It arrives after perseverance.  So despite appearances and the obvious discouragements that we have faced and may yet be facing, our call is to keep on hoeing!  
   
   
Rev. Ron Patterson

Lenten snow angel sets theme for stories of hope.

By Courtney Stange-Tregear

Story: “Angels All Around”

My senior year of college, there was a huge blizzard that covered Annapolis in about three feet of snow. Maryland Avenue, where I lived in my tiny basement apartment, wasn’t plowed for several days.

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Andy CastroLang transitions into retirement

Andy CastroLang retires after 20 years at Westminster UCC.

After 20 years as pastor of Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC) in Spokane, Andrea (Andy) CastroLang will retire Aug. 31—because she is turning 65.

“I’m retiring on a high note with Westminster and me in a good place, so we will have a good good-bye,” she said. “Westminster is ready to be challenged by a new leader. I’ve given them my best. It’s someone else’s turn.

Rather than the usual 60 to 90 days notice, Westminster consulted with Pacific Northwest UCC Conference Minister Mike Denton and Minister of Church Vitality Courtney Stange-Tregear on options.

Unlike usual transitions in the UCC to have an interim, Westminster chose a mentor successor model. On April 4, they called their new pastor Bob Feeney, who will move from Wellesley, Mass., to Spokane July 1 to have two months of overlap time with Andy.

When Andy leaves, she will cut contact with the church for 18 months, so the new pastor can establish bonds. She will attend worship at First Congregational UCC in Colville, where her husband, Jim, is pastor, or will worship with many churches are doing hybrid worship. She can also worship with her first UCC home, United Churches of Olympia and other PNC churches she knows from serving two years as moderator and on the N-Sid-Sen Camp Advisory Committee.

Andy helped establish the PNC model for someone to serve as vice moderator one year, moderator two years, and one year as immediate past moderator for continuity.

She realized it would be hard to follow a pastor who had served the church for 20 years. She remembers arriving at Westminster in 2002, being handed two folders by the interim minister and then having to take time to meet the people and sort out the ministry.

The usual pattern in the UCC is for an interim to help a church heal from any problems, but Westminster is not in any conflict.

It has momentum that includes:

• Ekklesia groups are looking at future options for the church to use its space at 4th and Washington and options for ministry beyond the location.

• Tuesday Night Talks, started in COVID and replaced Sunday adult forums. They explored racism last year and are looking at spirituality and activism now.

• A strong, active youth group is studying issues, taking cookies to elders, finding ways to serve Afghan refugees, learning about the Holocaust and connecting with Samoan efforts to remove a racist statue.

• Spokane Alliance involvement over more than Andy’s 20 years provides ongoing relationship building and community organizing, involving members in sharing stories to discern issues such as health care, apprentice workers, affordable housing and more.

• Strong financial support and the possibility of 200 new neighbors in a six story apartment building planned for part of the block the church is on.

In 2005, the church was in a financial crisis and sold an apartment building next door, the Discovery School—formerly the church’s education wing—and a parking lot for Spokane Housing Ventures to develop affordable housing.

“We put some proceeds in our Second Century Fund and used the rest to help the church sustain itself,” she said.

The 2008 economic downturn meant Spokane Housing Ventures sold the property. The new owners discovered asbestos, stalling plans. A new developer plans apartments for young single people, health workers and college students who want to live near downtown.

The church decided not to pause to search for an interim and then for a permanent pastor.

They thought with an overlap the new minister would get to know the church and community while the church builds trust in that person. Andy would share what she knows and her connections in the community.

“Westminster has many committed, energetic lay leaders,” she said. “We have already set statements of who we are.”

Andy said that her sticking through 20 years at the church was inspired by a book she read early in her ministry about pastors needing to commit to a place through good times and bad as “a form of spiritual discipline.”

That spoke to her, because she was influenced by Benedictine spirituality often going with her parents to a Benedictine monastery.

“Benedictine vows are not just poverty, chastity and obedience, but also include a vow to stability—not to get up and go when things get tough but to see if they can work through,” she said.

“There is much dismay, distrust and toxic relationships in churches as in society, but we are not to give up on people,” she said, telling of a conflict with a small group. The church evaluated her ministry and decided she was a good fit, so she renewed her call to the church.

“In my 20 years, there have been ups and downs,” she said. “By hanging in, the church was able to see what it was capable of, what it wanted to be and where it was going.”

Community organizing with the Spokane Alliance taught Andy what she felt intuitively that relationships endure beyond differences of opinion. Building meaningful relationships is more than talking over coffee on Sunday.

“The UCC covenant holds us together based on love and commitment,” said Andy, adding that she is ecumenical and interfaith.

“What I love about the church is we grow and grow and grow. We want to do better so we challenge ourselves to be better Jesus followers,” she said. “We show up and do what we have to do.”

For information, call 624-1366 or visit westminsterucc.org.

Shalom Richland opts to connect donors with needs

Volunteers load furniture for Afghan refugees in Tri-Cities.

Photos courtesy of Shalom UCC Richland

Shalom United Church of Christ in Richland has found a niche to support and welcome Afghan refugees since October.

“We did not adopt a family but recognized there was a need to coordinate donations,” said Marsha Stipe of the Mission and Social Action Committee and the Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition.

Shalom’s church secretary, Lauralee Sorenson, developed a spread sheet of items and services that matches people in the church and community who offer items and services with Afghan refugees who have those specific needs.

The services and needs include furniture, bedding, household items, clothing, gift certificates, English tutoring and or transportation to buy coats, grocery shop or go to a prayer service.

The first four families came Richland in September. Then seven families came Nov. 16 and four by Dec. 20. Two individuals came in January.

The families range in size from one man to a family of 12, a mother, father and their 10 children. The children range in age from newborns to 18 years. Most families have young children.

To date, 17 Afghan families with 75 individuals have arrived in the Tri-Cities through World Relief, which had cut back its capacity and staff under the previous administration.

World Relief resettled 16 families in 2020 and now have more than 100—including refugees from other countries. Marsha said they have been working to hire staff.

“Having the spreadsheet has allowed us to match items and services to needs without stock piling items at the church or giving unneeded items to families,” said Marsha.

People can email or call the information to the church office. Ppotential donations are entered onto the spread sheet then matched with families’ needs.

Two members have volunteered to teach English classes at the Family Learning Center.

In addition, through its Mission and Social Action Committee, Shalom UCC has donated $500 to the Family Learning Center for English Workbooks and Oxford picture dictionaries.

“These items make a difference for the new families in learning English, but are difficult for them to afford,” she said. “The people receiving these books were thrilled and thankful. Each book has a bookplate noting Shalom’s contribution.

Shalom UCC works with Tri-Cities Afghan Resettlement, which was started by Sabiha Khan, a member of the Islamic Center of Tri Cities.

Originally Sabiha planned collect donations. Then Shalom suggested it would manage the exchange of goods and services.

“Our members started with helping deliver furniture and items to newly arrived families,” Marsha said.

Marsha has begun to know families by going on home visits with Sabiha, who is from Pakistan and speaks some Urdu. Over tea they find out a family’s needs.

One need she discovered was for big bowls for the women to mix the big, round flat bread they eat at every meal. The church had big bowls it wasn’t using.

The Mid-Columbia Altrusa Club donated $50 gift cards for each person. Marsha and Sabiha take them to people.

When families first come, they stay in a hotel. One family was in a hotel for a month and did not have food, so the gift cards helped them buy food.

“Our church members just work with families as they need it, rather than adopting one family,” she said.

With a large Ukrainian population in the Tri-Cities and plans to resettle 100,000 Ukrainians in the U.S., primarily with families, Marsha is aware attention may turn from Afghani to Ukrainian refugees.

From conversations with Irene Hassan the national UCC minister for refugee and migrant ministry, Global HOPE (Humanitarian Opportunities for Progress and Empowerment), Marsha knows of concern that attention may shift.

For information, call 541-720-0131 or email tricitiesimmigrantcoalition@gmail.com.

Sarah Peterson petersk@dshs.wa.gov

Wa St Refugee and Immigration

Photos of Shalom members helping Afghans

Irene Hassan- Jordanians and worked in Jordan – series on Ramadan in a new country on YouTube.

support and welcome Afghan refugees since October.

“We did not adopt a family but recognized there was a need to coordinate donations,” said Marsha Stipe of the Mission and Social Action Committee and the Tri-Cities Imigrant Coalition.

Shalom’s church secretary, Lauralee Sorenson, developed a spread sheet of items and services that is matching people in the church and community—offering furniture, clothing, bedding, household items, clothing, gift certificates, English tutoring, teaching how to use the bus or transportation to buy coats, grocery shop or go to a prayer service—with Afghan refugees with those specific needs.

The first four families had been in Richland two months and when seven families came Nov. 16 and four families came Dec. 20. The last refugees who came to the Tri-Cities were two individuals in February.

The families range in size from one adult male to families of 12, 10 children, their mother and father. Children range in age from newborns to 18 years. Most families have young children.

To date 17 Afghan families with 75 individuals have arrived in the Tri-Cities through World Relief, which had cut back its capacity and staff under the previous administration.

World Relief had resettled 16 families the previous year and now have more than 100—including refugees from other areas. Marsha said they have been working to hire staff.

“Having the spreadsheet has allowed us to match items and services to needs without stock piling items at the church or giving unneeded items to families,” said Marsha.

People can email or call that information into the church office. The potential donations are entered onto the spread sheet then matched with families’ needs.

Two members have volunteered to teach English classes at the Family Learning Center.

In addition, through Mission and Social Action, Shalom UCC donated $500 to the Family Learning Center for English Workbooks and Oxford picture dictionaries.

“These items make a difference for the new families in learning English and yet are difficult for them to afford,” she said. “The individuals receiving these books were thrilled and thankful. Each book has a bookplate noting Shalom’s contribution.

Shalom UCC works with Tri-Cities Afghan Resettlement, started by Sabia Khan, a member of the Islamic Center of Tri Cities.

Originally Sabia thought she would collect donations.

Shalom suggested it would manage the exchange goods and services.

“Our members started with helping deliver furniture and items to newly arrived families,” Marsha said.

Marsha has gotten to know families by going on home visits with Sabia, who is from Iraq and speaks some Farsi. Over tea they find out a family’s needs.

One need Marsha discovered was for big bowls for the women to mix the big, round flat bread they eat at every meal. The church had big bowls it wasn’t using.

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Fauntleroy resettles a single woman from Iran

Fauntleroy Immigration Task Force volunteers Maria Groen and Ev Eldridge offer job raining for a refugee and translator. Photo courtesy Bob Wyss

Fauntleroy UCC in Seattle signed up with the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia Refugee Resettlement office to resettle an Afghan family, but were assigned a woman from Iran in February

One reason is that two members of the church’s 10-member Immigration Task Force has remodeled a garage as a studio apartment and made it available for the church to use for a refugee.

The space fit the needs of the 34-year-old woman from Iran, who had been in Turkey eight years.

“It’s a delight working with her,” said Bob Wyss, whose co-chair, Dianne Sprague moved with him to Seattle three years ago Connecticut to be near a grandchild and joined Fauntleroy.

Dianne had previously been involved with the Storrs Congregational Church in resettling Syrian refugees about six years ago.

Committee members at Fauntleroy are involved in different ways. Having housing provided free for as long as the woman needs it means the biggest task is ESL training.

Several members of the team are doing ESL lessons with her every day.

Others are providing transportation to the grocery store, orienting her to the bus system, finding medical and dental care, helping her find a job.

“She is learning English fast so she can find a job and be self-sufficient,” Bob said.

Fauntleroy has a history of working with immigrants, first after World War II and then after Vietnam. Later they were involved with asylum-seeking families from Central America.

As others, they began working with World Relief, but cut off after the issue about not hiring a gay attorney in Spokane.

For information, call 206-932-5600 or email bobwyss@gmail.com.

University UCC partners to share Afghan family

University Congregational UCC’s Immigrant Justice Committee is co-sponsoring a family through the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia Refugee Resettlement Office with Prospect UCC and University Temple United Methodist Church.

They began reaching out to learn about the agencies resettling in Seattle and participated in webinars with Irene Hassan of the national UCC.

“Refugee offices ramped up, but were overwhelmed with the numbers of refugees coming,” said Cassie Emanuel of the church’s resettlement committee.

Initially, they provided a welcome kit, stocking their pantry with food for a Halal diet. They also found a small mosque to attend in Renton

They have team of 25 volunteers divided in task groups to help orient them to the community. One is responsible for furnishings, a second is doing ESL work, a third is doing school enrollment and a fourth is providing assistance with finding health care and a fifth is taking them shopping for seasonal clothing and orienting them to the community.

The churches are also responsible for raising funds to cover rent and utilities when they find housing.

The diocesan resettlement office provides a case manager. The Episcopal Diocese is contracted with the U.S. government to assist them for three months, but suggests the churches commit to walk beside the family for a year.

The children ages six to 18 need to be enrolled in elementary, middle and high school and community college.

Only one member of the family has working knowledge of English, said Cassie. The rest have mixed levels of English.

“So we have been able to manage without an interpreter,” she said.

Housing is the main struggle, because the family needs permanent housing for the children to register for school and the parents to get jobs. The children have been out of school eight months.

They arrived in September at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, and came to Washington in late January, staying in an Airbnb, free housing and an extended stay in a motel.

“When they find an apartment, we can provide more support, helping them navigate the neighborhood, learn the nearby bus routes find medical care and furniture.

“We have good leads, but finding housing for a family of eight is hard,” she said.

“For our congregation, it helps members be more aware of the rest of the world and extend our ministry beyond our doors,” said Cassie, a retired UCC pastor from New Hampshire who moved to Seattle to be near grandchildren.

She has been involved with University Congregational UCC for 10 years.

Cassie also went with a group including some from Prospect UCC to take a welcome meal to the family and were surprised that the family had prepared a meal for them.

“They extended hospitality to us and served us a feast with their meager resources,” Cassie said. “They are teaching us as much as we are helping them manage in a new world for them,” she said.

For information, call 206-384-6111 or email cassieemanuel12@gmail.com.

Prospect UCC sponsors a family with University UCC

Prospect UCC in Seattle church is partnering with University Congregational UCC to sponsor an Afghan refugee family of eight.

Recently, eight volunteers from the two churches prepared a welcome meal.

Cora Trujillo of Prospect loaded it and five of the group in her car. They drove to Tacoma in rush hour traffic to deliver the meal to the family.

Whether it was because of a miscommunication or because of their generosity, they also prepared a meal,” Cora said. “Even though they speak little English and communication was difficult, we learned about their experiences and needs.

“I sensed frustration,” Cora said. “They have been moved at least four times from one housing situation to another. It’s a difficult task to find permanent low-cost housing in the south Seattle area, but they can’t look for work or enroll their children in school until they have permanent housing.

“All are anxious to learn or improve their English. The six-year-old girl showed me \ she could count to 100, name colors and parts of the body in English,” she said. “They are ready to start one on one tutoring as soon as possible”

Cora said the mother, a seamstress, asked for a sewing machine. The eldest son asked for a laptop so he can attend college to study computer technology. The two oldest sons and the parents want work.

To this family, coming to America means hope,” she said.

Cora drove home with renewed gratitude for being a citizen of the U.S.

“America, with all our problems, is a beacon of hope for so many. Why can’t I be grateful every day, just for where I live?” she asked.

“Please join me in praying for this deserving family and for the gratitude for the hope they have that their dreams will be fulfilled,” Cora said.

For information, call 206-322-6030 or email prospectucc@yahoo.com.

Plymouth UCC welcomes Afghan family of eight

Volunteers found sewing machine used by Irish immigrant. Photo courtesy of Vicki Schoettle

The Immigrant Committee of Plymouth UCC Seattle started efforts to resettle an Afghani family in August and finally received a family Feb. 14 through Viets for Afghans.

Carol Mooney, co-chair of the committee with Vicki Schoettle, said they had planned to work through World Relief until a new employee in Spokane was rejected by the national office because he was gay.

Viets for Afghans is a volunteer coalition mobilizing the Vietnamese community in Washington state because they relate to the trauma of Afghans fleeing after the U.S. military pulled out of their country and doors opened to resettle in the United States. The coalition has settled eight families in the Seattle area.

Plymouth is welcoming a family of eight—two parents with six children.

Viets for Afghans has suggestions for how to help families resettle in the first, second and third months.

Plymouth has connected with University Congregational UCC and Fauntleroy UCC in Seattle, which are also resettling families.

“We began talking with each other as the national UCC was encouraging churches help resettle Afghans,” Carol said. “We are also connecting with Aneelah Afzali with the Muslim Association of Puget Sound.

Plymouth formed a Welcoming Circle to divide responsibilities for legal work, settling children in schools, involving parents in English classes, dealing with medical and insurance issues, finding housing and jobs.

“The father and two elementary age children speak some English, but the middle school girls, two preschoolers and mother speak no English,” Carol said.

Because the federal government requires that refugees receive $2,275 per person, Plymouth has worked to raise funds from the Plymouth Community Action Board funds.

The temporary housing where they are staying is furnished, but the church is also seeking donations of funds and furniture for when they move into permanent housing. Families also receive food from food banks and the school.

Vicki added that they have a car donated and are helping them get drivers licenses and find housing.

“It’s an honor to be part of the group helping them. They are incredible people working through a great deal,” Carol said.

She is also impressed and inspired by working with this Muslim family for whom prayer is part of each day, rising early to pray and praying many times in the day.

“I am humbled by the challenge they face in learning English, which has a different alphabet. Sometimes I’m trapped in my own world and don’t realize how blessed I am,” said Carol, who has attended Plymouth for 30 years and appreciates its focus on social justice work.

Having served in the Peace Corps in Togo and having visited Uganda, Nicaragua, China and Mexico, she is likes working with people of other cultures and is aware that “much of our world just needs fairness.”

Vicki said the committee were told that Afghan women need sewing machines. She had planned to donate an old one she had, but it was broken.

Then she learned through Viets for Afghans that someone had a sewing machine to donate.”

“When I went to pick it up, I found that the antique sewing machine was used by the woman’s great-grandmother, who immigrated from Ireland. It had been used by every generation in the family,” she said. “They wanted to give it to a refugee family.”

For information, call 206-622-4865 or email clmooney08@gmail.com or vicki.schoettle@gmail.com.

Richmond Beach UCC members resettle 10

Afghan refugee twins celebrate their second birthday. Photos courtesy of Richmond Beach UCC

Oldest son appreciates view of Puget Sound.

Richmond Beach Congregational UCC reports that members’ donations of time, materials and money are responsible for the successful resettlement of a 10-member Afghan family.

The church set up a “Circle of Welcome,” partnering with the nearby St. Luke’s Catholic and First Lutheran churches to co-sponsor an Afghan family through Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW).

The previous year, St. Luke’s and First Lutheran had resettled a family from a small village.

The goal has been to assist with housing, job search, education and cultural orientation, so the family will move to self-sufficiency in their first year. LCSNW provides volunteer training and support as well as case management and translation services.

The family of 10—two parents, four boys and four girls from ages two to 19—is from the northeast province of Badakhashan. The father served for 15 years as security guard at the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

After a hurried exit from Afghanistan, they spent two months in Germany, three months at a military camp in New Jersey and a month at an AirBnB in Seattle,” Donna Leggett, co-coordinator in Richmond Beach Congregational UCC in Shoreline with Martha Clay.

“Thanks be to God that through their perseverance and our commitment they are able to settle in their new home and all of us will gain new experiences,” Donna said.

It takes about a year of working with a family to help them find jobs, adjust to school, help with homework and adapt to the new language and culture.

“We expect to resettle another family in the coming year,” said Donna.

They are responsible for raising funds and recruiting people to be involved. Last year for the first, they just raised funds—$3,000. This year, members are involved as well.

“We had expected the family would be in permanent housing by now, but that wasn’t happening until March 28, when they moved into an apartment complex where the previous family lives. It’s close to a mosque,” said Peggy.

“I tutored the 16-year-old daughter, teaching her English and she taught me Dari, a language that has a different alphabet and reads right to left rather than left to right,” she said.

The father of the eight children ranging from age two (twins) to 19, had worked in Kabul for 15 years as a security guard at the U.S. embassy.

“Much has changed since last year for our church,” said Donna, a member for 25 years who moved to Seattle 50 years ago.

After nearly two years of observing COVID restrictions and the accompanying seclusion, the church’s desire to be directly engaged with a family grew.

The church also welcomed Jill Bierwirth as interim pastor, and worship services are now both streamed and in person.

Donna, who worked 10 years as an activity coordinator in a retirement community, as a bus driver, sandwich shop owner and actress over the years, said that the resettlement activity grew out of the church’s outreach committee.

That committee also does food drives for the local food bank, provides diapers and wipes for the Healthy Start program with low income mothers and has sponsored with five other churches a homeless encampment, Camp United We Stand, which moves locations every six months.

The church had hoped to use property it had for Housing Hope, but community opposition led them to sell the property to a developer who has built four homes.

For information, call 425-361-6499 or email donnajleggett@gmail.com.

N-Sid-Sen gears up for full summer program

The camp dog, Sage, swims in the sunset at N-Sid-Sen. Photo courtesy of Mark Boyd

After nearly 10 years as managing director of N-Sid-Sen Camp and Conference Center on Lake Coeur d’Alene, Mark Boyd will step down from that position the end of the summer season.

He and his wife, Julie, will move to western Washington, where he will become associate director at Pilgrim Firs at Port Orchard, where he previously served as associate director.

“Family needs are calling us back to Puget Sound,” he said in an announcement on Facebook, expressing appreciation for his work at N-Sid-Sen with “so many amazing people—our campers, partners, guest groups and all the incredible staff and volunteers.

So along with sadness leaving N-Sid-Sen, he celebrates it as “sacred ground-s, place to be cherished, where people grow in their faith live and work together in Christian community, learn about respect for themselves and others, and show God’s love by truly caring for all creation.”

In announcing the programs for 2022, Mark noted that church camp is both fun and a sacred place with intense relations and positive role models, as he invites churches to recruit campers for summer 2022.

‘Campers and leaders live, work, play and worship from early morning until late evening,” he said. “They grow together through shared experiences and form an intentional community as they hear faith stories and share their own.

The theme for 2022 is “What’s in a Name?” Campers will look at how people of the Bible confronted expectations, confounded assumptions and forged new identities.

Mark asks churches to select a Sunday as Camp Sunday and use resources he sent in a promotional packet.

Summer camp information was also mailed to camp families whose members came the last three summers.

“Summer camp at N-Sid-Sen is an important piece of year-round faith formation for PNC-UCC churches,” he said.

To encourage church families to come to camp and send children, many congregations pay part of the camp fee.

Families and campers may also pay “basic fees” or “gratitude rates,” the latter to cover the true cost of the camp.

“Recognizing families are differently gifted, we offer two rates for each camp. Families can chose the rate most comfortable for their circumstances,” Mark said.

The basic rate covers direct costs and the gratitude rate reflects true costs including facility maintenance, equipment repair and replacement, and program development.

The Early Bird Deadline, April 15, includes a discount. There is also a discount for families registering three or more for a family camp.

To assure children can attend, churches also provide scholarships and N-Sid-Sen has a scholarship fund.

N-Sid-Sen seeks volunteer cabin leaders, session directors, nurses and resource people.

There are paid positions from mid-June through August. N-Sid-Sen seeks summer staff to clean buildings and grounds, and there are positions for hospitality staff to assist in the kitchen with meal prep, service and clean-up. N-Sid-Sen also needs certified lifeguards to supervise lakefront activities two to four hours a day and assist with weekly float trips.

Staff need to be fully vaccinated and boosted.

Work camps are another opportunity to help. There will be a Work Camp from 4 p.m., Thursday to 9 a.m. Sunday, May 5 to 8 to spruce up the grounds with carpentry, cleaning, painting, raking, power washing and brush removal. Youth and adult fellowship groups, families and individuals may sign up.

Meals, lodging and supplies are provided, but volunteers must sign up to participate.

Registration is online at www.n-sid-sen.org.

Youth camp dates have been set at N-Sid-Sen

N-Sid-Sen has announced the dates for the 2022 summer adventures:

Kids Camp for grades 2-4 is July 10 to 13

Intermediate Camp for grades 5-6 is July 3 to 9

Junior High Camp for grades 7-9 is July 3 to 9

Senior High Camp for grades 10-13 is July 10-16

Emerging Young Adult ages 18-35 is June 30 -July 3

Family Camp 1 for all ages is July 24 to 30

Family Camp 2 for all ages in July 31 to Aug. 6

The Basic Rate per person for Family camp is $370 for adults and teens, $350 for ages 8 to 12, $295 for ages 3 to 7, and no charge for under 3. The Gratitude rates are $470, $450, $345 respectively.

Camps offer swimming, campfires, faith chats, canoeing, crafts, yummy meals, games, hiking, s’mores, singing and welcoming Christian community.

For information, call 208-689-3489 or email mark@n-sid-sen.org.

Conference invites donations to Anti-racism Fund

By Andy Warren

PNC Accounting Manger

Delegates, friends of the conference and conference churches will soon be receiving an appeal letter from the PNC Stewardship Committee asking for support to raise funding for the Conference work towards anti-racism.

The PNC-UCC has a $52,000 budget commitment that was unanimously voted for by delegates at the last annual meeting.

The Conference has two options to fulfill the commitment: use our board-controlled funds—money used to sustain the conference when OCWM and other contributions are lower than expenses—or receive additional financial support from people throughout the PNC for this antiracism priority initiative.

If we exceed this $52,000 goal, all gifts will go directly to the Anti-racism Fund and allow us to increase the impact made by our financial contributions

As a member of this committee, I wanted to share with you why I will be, and have been supporting our anti-racism fund. I believe I have been incredibly blessed and fortunate in my life. I grew up in white middle class suburbia, was fortunate enough to graduate from college without loans, and was even more fortunate to hold senior management positions in accounting and finance at a variety of companies over a span of 45 years.

Frankly, while I always worked hard, I believe I was also this fortunate because I am white. I benefited from our white supremacy culture and the systems that support it. I had opportunities that were simply not afforded to others.

I believe it is my duty as a Christian and my sense of fairness to share my time and money to help break down this unjust system so all may be afforded the opportunities I had. This is my personal belief.

Like many of you, I also believe in the work of the UCC and in the work of the Pacific Northwest Conference. The last four words of our Conference mission statement -“and working for justice”- says it all for me and

So I ask that when you receive this letter in the weeks ahead, prayerfully consider giving to justice and our anti-racism efforts. It is important that we make a difference.

It is important that our annual meeting votes are more than just words.

To donate, visit http://www.pncucc.org/donate.

Annual Meeting theme is ‘Promised Hope’

Andy CastroLang is the Annual Meeting preacher

The PNC-UCC Annual Meeting 2022, “Promised Hope,” is a virtual meeting again. It will be held from 9 a.m. to 2:30 a.m., Saturday, April 30, as a one-day, business only meeting, with a 10:30 a.m., Sunday, May 1, worship to conclude the event.

The Zoom gathering on Saturday includes an opening prayer, Mike Denton’s message, a budget hearing, two plenary sessions and elections of nominated leaders.

At 11 a.m., there will be written reports and visual presentations from various committees and organizations, said Tara Leininger, board vice moderator and nominee as board moderator.

After a break for lunch, the second plenary session will be a vote on the 2022-23 budget and the election of leaders to committee and board positions.

The day ends with the installation of those elected, handing over the moderator’s gavel and a concluding prayer and song.

Hillary Coleman ends her two-year tenure as PNC moderator and will pass the gavel to Tara Leininger, the pastor of Metaline Falls Congregational UCC, past vice-moderator. The new vice moderator will be Indigo Brown.

Tara and Indigo expect the next two years to be a time of transition in many ways. Hillary will be honored for her commitment to the conference and still be relied on as “moderator emeritus,” sharing her understanding of the complexities of the PNC from her time as moderator.

The documents for AM22 are available through the conference website at pncucc.org, including the slate for election, the annual reports from staff, committees and organizations, and the budget.

“Often the budget is a time-consuming issue,” said Tara. “This year, with questions about the expenditures for the PNC-UCC anti-racism work, Moderator Hillary will direct questions to those with the possible answers, keeping the budget hearing moving smoothly.”

To expedite matters, Tara suggests that everyone review the budget before the meeting. A budget and finance report packet is online at https://pncucc.org/new-page-1, Delegates can direct questions to the Stewardship Committee and Budget Sub-Committee, or to the treasurer or bookkeeper.

The budget hearing begins at 9:45 a.m., with a time to focus on the overall budget with questions and answers prepared in advance.

“The hard part of the meeting will be reviewing the nominees,” Tara continued. “Many positions on the board and committees are not filled. Finding individuals ready to do Christ’s work in the PNC is becoming more difficult.

“There is a post-pandemic weariness that most can see, but the work doesn’t go away simply because no one is there to do it. A call to duty is being given to all who find both the Spirit and energy to do so,” said Tara, speaking on behalf of the Annual Meeting committee.

What about personal connections made at Annual Meetings?

The committee plans an in-person fall gathering for the PNC with worship services, workshops and storytelling of the time apart—including “how we survived the pandemic thus far, what has changes and how we’ve grown,” she said.

The theme, “Promised Hope,” refers to the hope all have clung to in these difficult years. The fall gathering theme is “Hope United,” referring to the “Hymn of Promise”—or “In the Bulb There Is a Flower.”

“In it, we find what we have consciously or unconsciously held tight to all this time, the promise that God gives to us that all things grow but only once they’ve died,” said Tara. “We all died a little in this pandemic, but now we’ve a chance to grow in new and wonderful ways.”

Preaching for the Sunday worship will be Andy CastroLang and the service will be held in Westminster Congregational UCC in Spokane, where Annual Meeting was scheduled to be held for two years, but had the in person gathering canceled.

While most people will join in the worship on Zoom-—and Westminster is set up to do that—many of the PNC-UCC churches in Eastern Washington will close their doors and encourage members to come to Spokane to join in Annual Meeting worship in person.

One way this Annual Meeting will be different, or semi-post pandemic, is in the hope that churches will gather for the first time looking ahead to meeting in person the fall, Tara said.

Tara reminded that conference work and Christ’s church needs to be fulfilled and so attendance by the delegates and leaders is necessary.

Registration for $25/person is open at www.pncucc.org or registration may be done through congregations.

For information, call Arlene Hobson at 206-725-8383 or email arlene@pncucc.org.

World needs the church as a movement

I’ve been thinking about George Orwell’s book 1984 these days. It isn’t a book I’ve picked up since high school, but some of the themes sound more and more familiar.

It’s a description of a dystopian world where the boundaries of class are solidified by societal structure, propaganda, and oppression; all defined as boundaries that helped give protection and care for the citizens. There is always an existential threat at the door that helps rationalize it all.

Those controlling the limits have their actions justified by a control system that—they say—holds back chaos and death. Within this context comes one of the enduring quotes from the book.

The slogans of the ruling party are, “War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength.”

We’re in a precarious moment. These fictional ideas have become a larger and larger part of our present reality. We’re in a time of perpetual war that seems to be required to keep the peace.

We’re told that freedom comes to those who give up privacy, resources, time, and ideals.

We’re told that truth is limited to our immediate context and experience, or the opposite; that our immediate context and experience means nothing.

The Church gets wrapped up in this, too. We confuse living out our faith with nationalism. We confuse loyalty to our institutions with allegiance to God.

Out of comfort and convenience, we sometimes separate our religious way of knowing from all other ways of knowing.

Peace is peace. Freedom is freedom. Knowledge is knowledge. All these things aren’t worked out in isolation but in relationship. We still have to call for and work for peace in a long season of unjustified war.

As valuable as loyalty is, freedom is more significant and critical, and its limits and vastness have to be negotiated mutually and fairly. We might not always like what we hear and become uncomfortable when a different understanding comes from outside of our social, political, religious, or vocational sphere. However, we dismiss the meaning behind the articulation of that understanding at our peril.

Our faith is comforting but not always comfortable. Our faith becomes weaker in isolation but stronger through interaction.

I continue to believe the world needs the Church. Not as a force insisting on its way but as a movement that dares to love God, the world and all God’s people.

It is in that daring that we can strengthen peace and freedom as well as be open to the truth behind new knowledge.

Peace is peace. Freedom is freedom. Knowledge is knowledge.

NEWS BRIEFS” Transitions announced

Enoka Rex Gatolo’i died in 2021. He was serving the Ala I Le Ola Church #5 that met in Burien.

Retired pastor Ron Hutchinson died in February at age 89.

Mac Buff who is at United Churches of Olympia, has been approved as a Member in Discernment.

Kevin Carr, a hospice chaplain at Evergreen Hospital, completed his transfer of standing in February.

Transfering to other regions are Steve Davis, formerly of Plymouth Church, UCC in Seattle, received a call to the Penn Southeast Conference.

Nathaniel Mahlberg, resigned as of March 20 at First Congregational Church, Walla Walla and received a call to serve the United Church of Christ in Valley Forge, Pa.

Paul Ashby, formerly of Richmond Beach UCC in Shoreline, has transferred out of the PNC.

Chris Hayward, former pastor of Greenacres Christian Church, received a call to the Iowa Conference.

The Committee on Ministry has approved exempt status for Catharine Cline, Gail Crouch, Megan Crouse, Benji Files, Dennis Hollinger-Lant, Randall Mullins, Anthony Robinson and Wayne Wilson.

Amara Oden began her ministry at Suquamish UCC in January.

Newport UCC has called Larry Stalley as pastor. He began on January 2.

Bonnie Dalious was approved for transfer. She is a full-time chaplain in Anchorage.

Stevi Hamill has been approved for ordination pending call.

Kelle Brown, senior pastor at Plymouth UCC in Seattle, has announced that she and Stephen Smith will marry on May 28.

Women’s Retreat is May 13-15

The PNC Women’s Retreat on the theme, “Who Do You Say I AM,” is May 13-15, at N-Sid-Sen.

It’s a weekend of faith, fellowship and fun,intentional time for renewal both individually and collectively.

The retreat includes creativity, dancing the labyrinth and listening to Spirit.

The facilitators are Sharry Nyberg and Bobbi Virta.

Registration is at https://www.ultracamp.com/info/sessionDetail.aspx.

UCC seeks youth leaders

The national UCC is asking anyone who has regular contact with youth in the UCC to complete a short survey to provide additional insight to the Faith INFO team and national setting.

The survey is at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Youth\_Min2022. For information, email Trayce Potter, minister for youth and young adult engagement at pottert@ucc.org.

Jubilee Justice planned

The Justice Leadership Program (JLP) has kicked off the first online session of the 2022 Justice Leadership Jubilee, a six-month program for adults who want to deepen their understanding of justice and learn practical organizing skills.

The online format removes geographic limitations, so the five Jubilee associates from around the PNC are joined by one in Texas. Their home congregations include Richmond Beach UCC, Normandy Park UCC, Keystone UCC, Spirit of Peace UCC and Colby UMC in Port Orchard.

The group gathers via Zoom for monthly workshops and discussion, while serving in their congregations, and volunteering with a nonprofit addressing the roots causes of injustice.

JLP recently received a booster grant from Volunteer Ministries of the National UCC and are recruiting now for the next cohort of Jubilee associates to begin in September 2022.

Applications are being accepted for the fall session. Adults interested in being more active in the work of social justice grounded in faith are encouraged to apply.

For information, email info@justiceleadership.org or visit www.justiceleadership.org.

OWL trainings are online

Our Whole Lives training is now available on a limited basis online, said Amy Johnson, UCC Minister for Sexuality Education and Justice. Applicants must commit to all dates and times listed. An endorsement is required from a church leader, which will be sent automatically at the time of application. Cost is $250 plus OWL curriculum. There is a 20 percent discount available for OWL materials to UCC members taking OWL training.

Information and dates are at https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/justice/health-and-wholeness-advocacy-ministries/sexuality-and-our-faith/justice\_sexuality-education\_training-schedule/

Earth Day Seminar planned

The national UCC is planning an Earth Week Event, “The Faith of Prophets: Lessons for the Climate Crisis,” at 10:30 a.m. ET on Saturday, April 23 beginning with a keynote and followed with an 11:45 a.m. panel discussion. There will be suggested actions for congregations to take.

Planners say prophets are needed as the world confronts the climate crisis, but it’s not a time to wait for prophets. A recording will be available afterwards.

For information visit https://bit.ly/FaithOfProphets.

Join the Movements invites

The Rev. Traci Blackmon of the national UCC invites UCC members and congregations to “Join the Movement toward Racial Justice.”

“When love is the lens through which we see the world, justice is possible,” she said, inviting people to “imagine a church free of racism and a world where all people live without fear of violence or systems that harm God’s human creation.”

For information, visit jointhemovement.org.

Global partner video online

On March 14, Mary Olney-Loyd and Rick Russell, co-chairs of the Global Ministries Committee for the PNC and the Northern Lights Region of the Disciples of Christ recorded a Zoom Meeting with Angel Luis Rivera-Agosto, Global Ministries area executive for Latin America and the Caribbean, Xiomara Citron Garcia, and Alex Maldonado Lizardi mission co-workers in Colombia.

It introduces the work of Global Ministries with our partners, Justapaz and CEDECOL, in Colombia.

A link to 24-minute discussion is on YouTube link is below. A shorter version is planned. They urge sharing of it with congregations.

The link for the video is: https://youtu.be/4W1b3kMNB2c.

NOTE: Donations can be made for refugees and relief from the War in Ukraine at https://www.ucc.org/global-h-o-p-e/ukraine-emergency-appeal.  
This and other services are possible because of OCWM. It’s also possible to give to the PNC, at www.pncucc.org.