



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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Spring 2023

N-Sid-Sen names designated managing director

Arrives and begins work on April 1, ready for spring retreats and summer camp seasons

Pam Peterson, who comes with six years of camp management and a passion for eco-theology and worship in the wilderness, has been named as the designated director at N-Sid-Sen. She is moving from Red Lodge, Mont., to join the PNC staff on April 1, working with other new staff at the PNC's camp and conference center on Lake Coeur d'Alene.

While she is most recently from Montana, Pam's mother, siblings, nieces and nephews are scattered in different parts of Chautauqua County in western New York, where she grew up in Mayville on Chautauqua Lake and established her love of the outdoors.

She was a stay-at-home mother of two sons—Kevin now in Colorado and
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Pam Peterson is the new designated managing director at N-Sid-Sen.

Photo courtesy of Pam Peterson

Moderator looks forward to in person Annual Meeting

By Tara Leininger - Moderator

The plans for Annual Meeting 2023 are shaping up quite well. We have a great committee planning around many details.

We will be meeting together—physically—for the first time in too-many years. This will be a joyful occasion—to see each other, to hear each other's voices, to feel the energy and the spirit moving amongst us. Many of us see each other only once a year at the Annual Meeting, so this is a joyful time of fellowship and reconnection.

This year there may be trepidation as well: the ghost of Annual Meeting 2022. What started out and was planned as an in-person meeting became a virtual one. That was not a real problem, just a dis-

**Annual Meeting 2023
is April 28 to 30
in Bellingham.
Details on page 9.**

appointment. The meeting itself, while starting full of energy and possibility, fell into disarray and pain. There is no denying this, and we need to begin AM23 with acknowledgment that there are some open wounds still to be healed, and we must heal them!

We cannot let the scars keep us from rejoicing in what has been done this past year and in what there is yet to do.

The Board of Directors and various

committees have continued to work towards healing and unification during a time of transition and uncertainty.

Let us give praise to these individuals! Let us praise the PNC-UCC staff—Arlene, Andy, Mark and all the camp personnel. They have held firm while at times they were overwhelmed. God truly blessed us with these wise and strong people.

God has also blessed us with the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Courtney Stange-Tregear, who shifted from being minister of church vitality to become our acting conference minister, after Mike Denton left as conference minister to accept a call.

In all of this, Courtney has done the
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Conference staff are backbone of PNC life

Comments

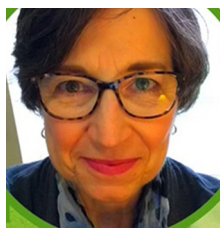


By The Rev. Dr. Courtney Stange-Tregear
Acting Conference Minister

Believing it's important to know who is doing the work of the PNW-UCC Conference, I have provided stories about who some of our staff and leaders are through the PNC Google Groups email listserv and Facebook page.

The Pacific Northwest Conference is made up of local congregations, pastors, specialized ministers, lay members, and you. Our Conference stretches across the vast geography of Washington, Alaska, and north Idaho. One priority identified by the Conference Board of Directors is deepening relationships across the conference. I seek to highlight staff in this column and board members (pages 4, 5, and 6) as some of the leaders of the conference.

Arlene Hobson, executive administrator of the PNC, started working with the conference in March 1997 and has had changing responsibilities through the years. Her role is to provide support for the conference minister, maintain clergy and church files for the local and national level, and support the Committee on Ministry.



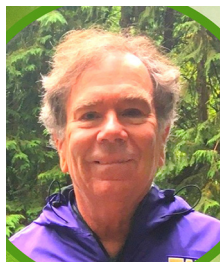
Arlene maintains the conference website and creates the Monthly Pack-

et, the monthly newsletter. She has tremendous institutional knowledge and is the best person to call first. If she doesn't know the answer, she will know who does.

A native of Ohio, she moved to the area in 1981 and lived in Lynnwood, Bellevue, Seattle and now Shoreline. She attends Keystone Congregational UCC, where her son leads the music.

Contact her at 206-725-8383 or email arlene@pncucc.org.

Andy Warren, the PNC accountant since 2018, earned a bachelor's degree from Marietta College in Ohio and a master's in business from the University of Connecticut.



He previously was chief financial officer for several public and private multinational companies ranging from \$50 to \$300 million budgets in the New York City area, responsible for directing treasury, finance, accounting, human resources and information

systems departments.

Active in a UCC church in New Jersey as moderator, treasurer and deacon, he is now finan-

cial secretary at Everett UCC.

His two of his three children—Geoff and Rob live on the East Coast. Daughter Anna is working on a master's on public health at the University of Washington.

Andy's conference accounting responsibilities include making and recording deposits, paying and recording bills, processing payroll, setting up new employees for W-2s and 1099s, filing payroll taxes, preparing monthly reports to the Stewardship Committee. Board of Directors and other committees.

He maintains financials in accordance with the latest FASB guidelines, answers informational requests, sends updates to PNC churches, sends year-end tax statements to donors, maintains the conference and camp donor database, and sends fundraising campaign letters as directed by Stewardship. He also assists conference churches with PPP Loan guidance, Employee Retention Credit guidance and general accounting questions.

Contact him at accounting@pncucc.org.

Mark Boyd, the new managing director of Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center, provided leadership a decade at Camp N-Sid-Sen and previously was Pilgrim Firs' facilities manager and camp director for PNC Confirmation Camps and Junior High Camps. Mark recently expressed his excitement to be at Pilgrim Firs and "part of the amazing work taking place here."



Mark brings deep faith, humor, and humility to all that he does. He has a profound gift for hospitality, extending radical welcome to all. He is particularly excited about the Arts and Music programs at Pilgrim Firs, and how they provide space and time for healing and replen-

ishment. What he most looks forward on returning to Lake Flora is "meeting all the folks who call Pilgrim Firs home. God is truly at work here."

Mark also serves on the United Church of Christ Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA), providing vital connections between OMA and other northwest camps as well as participating in and leading national camp events.

His roots are in the Pacific Northwest where he was raised in the Puget Sound area, and served as youth minister for the United Churches of Olympia, as well as managing plumbing distribution facilities in Tacoma and Tumwater.

His love of the outdoors and his nature-inspired poetry inspires many of us! We know that Pilgrim Firs will thrive under his care.

Stories
summarize
lives
and
roles
of PNC
staff
and
leaders.

Transitions announced

Bobbi Virta, who served as pastor at Ferndale UCC and was doing specialized ministry, died on Feb. 12. There was a celebration of her life on Feb. 18 at First Congregational UCC in Bellingham, where she was ordained in 2004 after earning a master of divinity from Seattle University and a post-master's certificate in transforming spirituality/spiritual direction.

Patricia Eisenhauer, a teacher of home-bound students in Montana and gifted students in Seattle, died Feb. 21. She was active in the PNC. Married 72 years to Phil, who served churches in Bellevue, Cheney, Great Falls and Seattle (Magnolia), where she taught gifted classrooms in Fauntleroy and a bilingual classroom on Queen Anne.

Bob Feeny was installed as settled pastor on Jan. 14 at Westminster Congregational UCC in Spokane.

Tara Young-Brown was ordained Jan. 21 by the Community for Interfaith Celebration at the United Churches of Olympia. She is called to the work of hospice chaplaincy in covenant and supported by the Community for Interfaith Celebration.

Emily Tanis Likkel was installed as pastor of Alki UCC on Jan. 29, after 18 years of serving in ministry in several denominations since her ordination in 2005 at Eagle Harbor UCC in Bainbridge Island.

Patty Ebner concluded her ministry at First Congregational Church in Bellevue.

Steve Van Kuiken completed his ministry at Community Congregational Church in Pullman in January.

Joan Sulser transferred to the South-west Association of the Wisconsin Conference UCC as of Jan. 12.

Rachel Haxtema was approved for member in discernment status.

Cristina Airaghi has resigned as pastor at Tolt Congregational UCC.

Gary Southerton, pastor at Broadview Community UCC in Seattle will be on sabbatical from April 11 to July 11.

Caroline Urban, manager of the N-Sid-Sen kitchen from 1973 to the mid-1980s, died in February.

General Synod theme set

The biennial General Synod will be held June 30 to July 4 at the Convention Center in Indianapolis, Ind., with voting delegates will be in person and virtual ele-

ments. The theme is "Making All Things New," based on Isaiah 43:18 to 19.

For information, visit <https://general-synod.org>.

Church Council has Assembly

The Annual Assembly of the Church Council of Greater Seattle (CCGS) is March 28. on Zoom.

Michael Ramos, who has been executive director for nearly 15 years and has served a total of 19 years with the CCGS, is resigning as of May 1, when he and his

wife Donna move to be closer to family on the East Coast.

The Annual Assembly is the CCGS's time to celebrate, deepen connections, and explore its mission and vision in organizing. Business includes approving its budget, board and officers.

With the theme "Bridge to Flourishing," it celebrates its work with congregations in the Faith Land Initiative, fostering discernment toward stewardship of land and its work walking alongside immigrant communities through its Accompaniment Program.

The CCGS will share about its process for creating new bylaws, reflecting a new model for shared leadership, decision-making and structuring its work. It builds collective power through faith-rooted community organizing for transformational change toward liberation and justice.

It envisions a future when justice is realized, where all people experience liberation, profound peace, expansive equity, and joy-filled human flourishing, said Tara Miller, CCGS operations manager.

For information, call 206-204-3855 or email tmiller@thechurchcouncil.org.

Blog urges sharing stories

A blog on [Stewarding Your Church's Story](#) offers biblical and theological reflection on the work of caring for preserving the history and memory of a congregation with resources on record-keeping and archiving, said David Schoen of the PNC-UCC Church Development Committee.

"The blog includes a shout out for New Pilgrims UCC in Anacortes' stewarding of their church story and records," he said.

With it being the season for congregations to update their church information in the UCC Yearbook, he suggested that updating church records is helpful process both for congregations to keep current as well as for the denomination demographics.

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"Only about 60 percent of congregations update their information each year," said David, who is also minister for church legacy and closure with the UCC Church Building and Loan Fund.

Each year, the UCC Center for Analytics, Research and Development, and Data (CARDD) produces the "Statistical Profile of the United Church of Christ" with reflection and discussion questions for church leaders.

For information, call 216-736-3839 email dschoen@ucc.org or visit cbfund.org or ucc.org/what-we-do/office-of-the-general-minister-president/center-for-analytics-research-and-development-and-data-cardd/yearbook-and-directory.

Priory offers program

The Priory Spirituality Center in Lacey offers a two-year formation program for clergy or laity interested in being a spiritual director. The program, "Listening with the Spirit 2023-2025," will be on Zoom.

For information, call 360-438-2595, email lucywyncoop@gmail.com or see stplacid.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Overview.LWS_2023-25.pdf.

Program continues

In conjunction with the Montana Northern Wyoming and Central Pacific conferences, the PNC Communities of Practice groups began in September 2022 and run thru May 2023 online. Active, retired, specialized ministers and members in discernment are participating.

For information, email Brigitta.ucc@gmail.com or amy@npucc.org.

Moderator comments....

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impossible. She has kept us afloat when the storms around us were raging. She dug in and did what was needed without anyone pointing her in any direction. This was possible because of Courtney's wide experience and knowledge of both the UCC and the PNC. I doubt we would be standing today without her.

So we will come to Bellingham this April with healing to be done, decisions to be made, budgets and a slate of individuals to approve, and time to have fellowship with one another. No bridges were burned down, merely singed. Be ready to ask forgiveness and give forgiveness. Be ready to do some work, and be ready to rejoice in who we are and where we are going.

Pam Peterson helped revitalize scout camp

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Kyle now in Florida—when she began working nearby at Camp Merz Boy Scout Camp on the lake, running it from 1994 to 1999, followed by a year at the YMCA Camp also on the lake.

She helped revitalize that camp that had fallen on hard times, building it to be the safe, sustainable camp it is today. She also worked on year-round program development, marketing and recruitment for a YMCA camp, also on Chautauqua Lake.

In college, she stayed close to home, earning an undergraduate degree in nonprofit administration in 2005 at the State University of New York Empire State College in Fredonia—in North Chautauqua County.

For a few years she worked at Evenstart, a federal literacy program and then was administrative coordinator at the Achievement Center, an early intervention education nonprofit.

Having grown up in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, when she felt called to ministry, she headed to Lutheran Theological Seminary in 2008 at Philadelphia. Because her younger son was living in Connecticut, she shifted to Hartford Seminary, focusing studies on being a health care chaplain. She earned a master of divinity in 2011.

“There, I realized I was a broader thinker,” Pam commented, “and I transitioned to

the United Church of Christ.”

She was ordained and worked as a trauma chaplain Thursdays and Fridays and then drove to the Adirondacks to camp.

“My parsonage was a tent in the summer,” she said.

While there she met members of the Presbyterian Community Church in Old Forge, N.Y. Their pastor left so she trained to be an interim pastor and served a year until they were found a settled pastor.

Pam then accepted a call to the Red Lodge Community UCC Church, where she finished a doctor of ministry degree through Hartford International University—the new name for Hartford Seminary.

In Red Lodge, she had envisioned developing a parallel church, offering a standard worship and worship in the wilderness, geared to tourists in the summer.

Just as she planned to start those services, the summer skies were filled with smoke from wildfires. With COVID, the next summers’ plans included some outside worship along with online worship. Last summer, the Yellowstone ecodeaster and flooding damaged her house and the church, again refocusing attention. The next months were spent rebuilding the church. Then members wanted to worship inside the newly rebuilt building.

Much as she loves the outdoors, she also learned that



N-Sid-Sen seeks someone to fill the lifeguard’s chair.

tent camping was not wise in Montana because of the grizzly bears.

“To be a camp and retreat administrator living on a lake front, I see potential to do worship in the wilderness as part of summer camps and retreats,” Pam said. “I’ll also have opportunity to educate pastors about worship in the wilderness, especially as I travel to visit churches to promote the camp experiences.”

She begins April 1 with a PNC Outdoor Ministry Team, a camp maintenance person and cook in place, but more hiring to do for summer staff and work

to recruit for summer camps.

Members of the Search Committee recommending her were Leah Atkinson Bilinski, Alice Ling, Eric Johnson and Kaila Russell.

Assisting at N-Sid-Sen as volunteers through the leadership transition were Alice Ling, Ben Crosby, Shirley Asmussen, Karen Nooney, Jane Baker, Brian Wallace, Kaila and Mark Russell, Vince, Hayden and Dan Sprenkle, Mark Kreilkamp, Tom and Marcie Williams, Eric and Lori Ford, Janet Malley, and John and Marilu Hubbe.

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

Board vice moderator Indigo Brown active in community outreach

Indigo Brown, who serves as vice moderator on the PNC Board of directors, graduated in ethnic studies from the University of Washington and now works with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for Washington State in the Elementary and Early Learning Department.

She is instrumental in many community outreach efforts for the Greater Seattle area.

She finds creative ways to express herself through art, cooking, and travel.

Indigo is a member of Plymouth United Church of Christ in Seattle.

In addition to regular board

work and as vice moderator, Indigo attends Stewardship Committee meetings, helps plan the PNC Annual Meeting and helps convene the PNC Board working group in conversation with Black, Brown, Indigenous and Asian clergy in the Conference.

For information, email indigo.brown@outlook.com.



Indigo Brown

Leda Zakarison brings insights from Lebanon

Three years of living and working in Beirut, Lebanon, has given Leda Zakarison new perspectives on the war and refugee crisis in Syria, the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, interreligious dialogue in that region, and everyday life in the U.S.

It has given her a global perspective and opportunity to see through the eyes of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian friends she made.

The lifelong member of the Pacific Northwest Conference and Community Congregational UCC in Pullman, Leda returned the end of December after three years living and working in Beirut, Lebanon, as a global mission intern with Global Ministries, a joint ministry of the UCC and the Christian Church-Disciples of Christ.

She worked at the Beirut-based nonprofit Forum for Development, Culture and Dialogue (FDCD), which promotes peace building, active citizenship and human rights in Lebanon and Syria. It also engages in the long-term work of creating spaces for dialogue and community building for civil society groups to be catalysts for peace.

FDCD offers workshops, dialogue, and trainings on peace building and citizenship. It also provides humanitarian aid in Lebanon and Syria, including after the August 2020 Beirut port explosion and the 2023 earthquakes in Southern Turkey and northern Syria.

FDCD focuses “on skill building to give local organizations and individuals tools to be change makers in their communities,” said Leda, who worked as communications and program associate, strengthening the English social media presence to spread FDCD’s message. She also wrote grants to support its program.



Leda Zakarison visited a World Heritage Site of archaeological ruins in Baalbeck, Lebanon. Photos courtesy of Leda Zakarison

Leda was in Lebanon through as the country faced the multiple and complex crises of the COVID pandemic, political protests, economic collapse and the 2020 port explosion.

Through this time, she gained insight into disaster response, the long-term impacts of crises on individuals and communities, and the importance of community and faith in building resiliency amid disasters.

Growing up in Pullman, she spent summers at Camp N-Sid-Sen as a child, youth, counselor and director.

After high school, Leda studied religion and interfaith relations at Whitman University in Walla Walla, graduating in 2016, when she entered the PNC’s Justice Leadership Program in Seattle.

She was assigned to work with Prospect UCC and Earth Ministry/Washington Interfaith Power and Light, continuing with Earth Ministry to support Initiative 1631. It was an effort to put a price on carbon. She also promoted other environmental protection bills in the Washington State Legislature.

While working with the JLP, Leda had attended a Gen-

eral Synod, where she met a Global Ministries leader told of the UCC’s global work and invited her to serve as an intern.

“She asked if I wanted to go anywhere in the world where would it be. I said I was interested in interfaith dialogue and would be interested in going to the Middle East,” Leda said. It was not what I planned.”

Leda arrived in March 2020 as COVID was beginning. She was in voluntary quarantine before three months of full lockdown began. As it lifted, there were restrictions limiting days people could drive based on whether their license plate had an odd or even number. Shops were open limited times and they could not eat inside.

“I was able to go to the office in May 2020,” said Leda, who lived at the Protestant seminary, the Near East School of Theology, with 12 others—an American, a Canadian, Syrians, Lebanese and a Palestinian.

From them, she learned about life in Canada, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.

“I had friends at the NEST from Aleppo who told of 6 million refugees Syria,” said Leda.

The spoke English, Arabic, Armenian and Turkish. Leda

learned enough Arabic to order food and take a taxi.

“It was humanizing to hear stories of what Aleppo and Damascus were like before the war,” she said. “When the earthquake happened, I was with friends from Aleppo.”

While in Lebanon, she saw the work of the UCC sending food parcels to Syrian refugees, for relief after the Beirut port explosion in 2020 and following the recent earthquakes.

FDCD helped rebuild houses and structures damaged in the explosion.

Leda was also struck at how nations welcomed people fleeing Ukraine after the war broke out, in contrast to knowing how hard it is for Syrian refugees to be resettled.

“It’s hard for us to see people in crisis as people who went to school, played soccer and had hopes and dreams,” she said. “We see huge numbers of people affected by the war in Syria or explosion in Beirut, but behind each number is a person with a family and dreams of what they want to do with their lives.”

Leda also learned about the impact of American policies in Syria. While not involved in the war technically, the U.S. established “Caesar sanctions” in 2020, targeting people doing business with the Assad government in Syria, making it hard to buy gas, medicine and food.

“I could see the difference before and after the sanctions,” she said.

She also learned that the U.S. government has much influence on what happens in Palestine and Israel.

“We can do more to help the situation in the Middle East than just sending donations,” said Leda.

“On behalf of those who do not have access to the halls of

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Returning mission intern looks to entering ministry

Continued from page 5

power, we need to talk to U.S. leaders about what is going on related to the sanctions, U.S. funding of Israeli weapons and planes, U.S. training Israeli police and U.S. support for blockading Palestine," she said.

Each month, the UCC has Third Thursday Action suggestions related to the Middle East. They are at globalministries.org. Leda urges people to sign up and email Senators and Representatives.

"They to listen to constituents," she said.

Leda helped promote FDCD's three skill-building workshops reaching 100 young people a year, training them on their rights, citizenship and project management.

She was also involved in interfaith dialogue with faith leaders of 18 sects of Christians and Muslims, like Orthodox and Maronite Catholic, Sunni and Shia Muslim.

Dialogue wasn't just between Christians and Muslims, because among themselves Christians didn't even agree. It was quite a contrast from her studies of interfaith dialogue and her interfaith work with the office of religion and spiritual life at Whitman.

"In Lebanon, we needed to balance interfaith understanding with practical realities we needed to address in day-by-day life," she explained. "It was

less about dialogue between two faiths and more about two people coming together, people whose lives are complicated by religious conflicts.

Leda pointed out that dialogue is a long, hard, slow process. FDCD works long term, still addressing sectarian divides since the conflict in Lebanon ended in 1990.

"FDCD creates safe spaces for people to come together for conversations, for Sunni and Shia sheikhs with Orthodox and Catholic priests to discuss sectarian tensions and what it means to love neighbors of other religions," she said.

On one level, FDCD seeks to prevent sectarian clashes.

On another level, Lebanese and Syrian faith leaders face the same struggles as PNC church leaders: the reality that few young attend worship.

"Faith leaders discussed their common desire to involve young people. It's a common concern globally," she said.

"The younger generation is less concerned about worship and more concerned about creation care, environmental destruction and the future," Leda said.

Faith leaders have other common concerns: to feed and house people.

"There are people suffering and we are called to help people in need," Leda said. "Christians and Muslims are all children of



Leda Zakarison learns from a partner after Beirut explosion.

God, obligated to respect and ensure dignity.

"In interfaith dialogue, we can disagree on theology and religious practice. The dialogue will not make us agree, but Lebanon is in crisis, and everyone in the room wants to help the people, so we looked at effective ways to respond to the crises," she said. "We need to stay grounded in our love and concern for people."

Leda, whose work was supported by One Great Hour of Sharing donations, said the UCC has long ties in Beirut. Congregational missionaries founded American University in Beirut in the 1800s.

The UCC and Presbyterians have ties with Armenian Evangelical churches and other organizations there, said Leda, who attended the National Evangelical Church in Beirut.

Having looked at going to seminary to become a minister before she went there, she noted there were only five ordained Protestant women pastors there.

The PNC has been a support throughout her life, especially as she served the church overseas. She is now ready to give back, preaching and giving presentations on Lebanon, Syria and Global Ministries.

Leda returned to the Pacific Northwest in December 2022 and is available to speak with congregations and groups. She is available to preach and provide presentations about Lebanon and Syria and Global Ministries' work in this region.

Meanwhile, she is again exploring going to seminary and entering ministry.

For information, email ledazak@gmail.com.

Board moderator Tara Leininger took unusual route to ministry

Tara Leininger has served the Metaline Falls Congregational UCC since 1998, first as a lay-interim, then as their called lay-minister. After taking theological classes at Gonzaga, Whitworth and Eastern Washington University, she began an un-traditional, but intensely guided path to her ordination in 2006.

Since then she earned a mas-

ters in theology at Whitworth.

Tara has served on the Board of Directors and is now the moderator.

One of her joys is helping plan annual meetings.

Tara has been a director and volunteer for the Cutter Theatre, a community arts center. Since 2008, she has been mayor of Metaline Falls, a town of 240. She also serves on the Small

Town Committee of the Association of Washington Cities.

She enjoys reading murder mysteries and Jane Austen, and taking care of her husband, Donivan Johnson, a retired music teacher, and their new cat. She is the grandmother of eight and great-grandmother of three.

For information, call 509-446-2117 or email mfc.ucc@yahoo.com.



Tara Leininger

Ferndale welcomes House of Tears Lummi Carvers

The House of Tears Lummi Carvers arrived at the United Church of Ferndale on March 3, but without their totem carving, because of problems with licensing the trailer that the totem was on, said Marilyn Burwell of Ferndale.

This was the third stop of more than 32 days during March for the “Totem Pole Journey to Protect Oak Flat.”

The first 11 days of the journey were in areas in Western Washington before heading south to Oregon, California, and Arizona, where they have two days of prayers in Oak Flat, 65 miles from Phoenix. They return through New Mexico, Nevada and Idaho.

The destination spot, Oak Flat, is a holy place of prayer for the San Carlos Apache people, near Globe, Arizona. A subsidiary of Rio Tinto wants to build an open pit copper mine in this sacred place, Marilyn said.

The Totem Pole Journey to Protect Oak Flat is an awareness campaign by the Alliance of Earth, Sky and Water Protectors, Catskill Mountainkeeper and the Apache Stronghold to protect the Apache holy site.

“We viewed a slide show, heard speeches, saw artifacts and shared in a circle blessing that included a sacred eagle

staff,” Marilyn said, telling of the event at her church.

About 50 people attended, about half from other churches or from the community.

The program began at 3 p.m. and the carvers arrived at 4:30 p.m. for the spiritual blessing. Because they did not bring the totem, their program began at 5 p.m. and lasted until 7 p.m.

“We had been warned by our Unitarian friends not to fret, to go with the flow and to expect the unexpected,” she said. “Indeed, that’s what happened.”

The leader, Freddie Lane of the House of Tears, was fasting because he was carrying the sacred eagle staff. He carried in an ancient rock anchor, one like the kind the Lummi used to use to anchor their fishing nets.

Organizers prepared four portable bulletin boards with maps of the totem journey for guests to view while they ate and waited.

Wendsler Nosie Sr., former chairman of the San Carlos Apache tribe, has been living on the Oak Flat for the past two years defending their sacred site.

He invited the House of Tears Carvers to come for a hearing before the United States 9th Circuit of Appeals



Freddie Lane and Doug James, brother of Jewell James, the head carver, present Marilyn Burwell with one of three blankets they brought with them.

Photo courtesy of Marilyn Burwell

on the land swap legislation by Congress to a foreign national mining company, Resolution Copper of Australia.

“Our indigenous led climate justice efforts go far beyond protecting Xwe’chi’eXen and where our ancestors reside at Cherry Point,” said Freddie Lane, an organizer.

“It extends inter-tribally and internationally with our Alliance of Protectors speaking out for the lands, waters, ancestral burial

and sacred sites,” he said.

“We do this spiritual work with permission from our family elders and our spiritual leaders in a good way with ‘One Heart and One Mind,’ Protecting Mother Earth for our children’s great-grandchildren,” he said in a letter about the effort.

Other stops include the Interfaith Community of Olympia on March 1.

For information, call 360-391-7560.

Past Board moderator Hillary De La Cruz works for Kirkland

Hillary De La Cruz (she/her) was born and raised at University Congregational UCC where she still attends and now facilitates Our Whole Lives (OWL).

She is immediate past moderator on the PNC Board of Directors, which she joined as the young adult representative in 2015. She was vice moderator from 2018 to 2020, and moderator from 2020 to 2022.

Hillary supports the board, and moderator Tara Leininger

and vice moderator Indigo Brown in their work. Hillary believes the relationships in the Conference are vital and necessary to work together for justice.

After graduating with a master of public administration from the University of Washington in 2022, she started working for the City of Kirkland’s Parks and Community Services Department as a management analyst doing policy analysis and budget work. Her desire to work in local government is

driven by a passion for creating a more just community by listening to diverse needs and ideas of community members, supporting anti-racist policies and budgets that meet community needs, and building bridges between people and policy makers, so everyone can thrive defined on their own terms.

Hillary and her husband Livio were married in August 2022 and live with their dog Ollie in Lake Forest Park.

For information, email

hillarycolemanucc@gmail.com.



Hillary De La Cruz

Magnolia involves members again in Service Sundays

During congregational strategic planning in 2018, Magnolia UCC in Seattle identified that being of service to the community is a high priority.

“Our Community in Action Sundays were born out of that planning. We held two large events prior to COVID and this year were able to bring it back to our community and our congregation,” said Marci Scott-Weis, pastor.

This year there drew about 75 participants from the church’s partner Boy Scout troop, neighboring churches, the congregation and the community.

“We sent teams to seven sites working on making blankets for kids going into foster care to planting trees at Discovery Park to packing emergency cold weather bags for the Ballard Food Bank,” she said. “It is one of our most treasured events, providing an opportunity for the MUCC community to ‘be the church’ in our world.”

Projects participants joined included:

- A team made fleece blankets for kids going into foster care through PRproject Linus.
- At Thorndyke Park Habitat Restoration, a team removed aggressive weeds and maintained areas, restoring natural plants.
- A group went to Discovery Park to plant trees.



Group removes invasive plants at Thorndyke Park, top. Other volunteers help with the Project Linus blanket project.

Photo courtesy of Magnolia UCC

- Another group visited the Seattle Animal Shelter to do help with sheltered animals.
- A team of six prepared 100 Warm Weather Kits for the Ballard Food Bank. Each went around a table and put kleenex, tylenol, hand warm-

ers, lip balm, a comb, socks, a toothbrush and toothpaste and shampoo in a bag.

• Two helped prepare welcome bags for Queen Anne Helpline multiservice center.

Sheila Vortman and Ruth Beckett had 17 help at the church to create fringe on fleece blankets given to children in crisis when police or firefighters come when they experience trauma.

“It’s something easy that children and adults can do indoors,” Sheila said.

Betsy Fornoff said the church first did the Community in Action Sunday or Service Sunday in February 2019. COVID meant this was the second year they could do the projects.

She wrote simple affirming messages that she put in the welcome bags for the helpline.

After the service projects, people gathered in the fellowship for a soup and salad lunch.

Betsy would like to see more people in the neighborhood involved, and shares the idea with other PNC churches.

“God was hanging out with us as we did these services,” she said. “We hope those not inclined to attend worship know there many ways to be the church without sitting in a pew.

For information, call 206-835-1788 or email marci@magnoliaucc.org.

Wendy Blight continues to serve on the PNC Board of Directors

An early memory of Wendy Blight was being baptized at University Congregational UCC in Seattle on Easter at the age of 5. She has been a UCC’er ever since.

In fact, she describes herself as a church geek, who inspired by what the church could be in the coming years. At heart, she’s a futurist and a strategic planner who tries to come down to earth when necessary.

Wendy is a member at Liberation UCC; she’s currently

the co-chair of the Conference Personnel Committee, and a past moderator of the PNC.

Wendy was the business administrator for more than 10 years at Plymouth Church, Seattle with oversight for operations and finance.

Her career in management and administration spans nonprofit and for-profit organizations in settings including Westin Hotels, the U.S. Navy (contractor), Horizon House retirement community, and Uni-

versity Congregational UCC.

She’s intrigued and convicted in her desire to figure out how white institutions center the voices of those who have had a seat at the table.

“I believe God is opening the doors and windows of our faith to let in the breeze of fresh ideas,” she said. “Through new voices and energy, especially from people who have not been heard until now and in concert with the more seasoned among us, I know God will help us de-

sign a path toward a more just, abundant world.”

For information, email blightwk@hotmail.com.



Wendy Blight

Mark Boyd reports busy seasons at Pilgrim Firs

Many regular groups have been coming to fill the times at Pilgrim Firs Camp and Retreat Center at Port Orchard, said Mark Boyd, who began as managing director in January.

“We have had a busy spring and the calendar is quite full through next winter with different church groups coming for retreats and regular community groups,” he said.

Mark described several of the regular programs that come to Pilgrim Firs for camps and retreats

- Warrior Path, which brings transformation for people suffering from PTSD, has week-long retreats 12 times a year in 10 months.

“It’s a big camp like Lady of the Lake is for N-Sid-Sen,” he said.

- Another regular program that has four sessions at Pilgrim Firs throughout the year is the Puget Sound Guitar Workshop.

- The Northwest Stone Sculptors members come in July for a week.

They bring huge stones that they carve. On Saturday before they leave, they have a public show and sale, using proceeds for charities.

“They have donated and left some of the stones they have carved here on the grounds,” Mark said.

The PNC-UCC Men’s Retreat in February drew 45.

Churches have already set retreats. They include Richmond Beach in early March, Fauntleroy the end of March, Taiwanese Christian in June, United Churches of Olympia in August and University Congregational, University Men and Bellevue Choir in the fall.

Mark said that the next Midwinter Youth retreat will be held Feb. 9 to 12, 2024, at Pilgrim Firs.

He commented that while COVID concerns affect some camps for older participants,



Top, retreat attendees for the Northwest Stone Sculptors left several of their carvings on the grounds at Pilgrim Firs.

Bottom, Mark Boyd continues to find photos to take of sunsets as he settles in at Pilgrim Firs.

Photo courtesy of Mark Boyd at Pilgrim Firs

they are not affecting many groups any longer.

COVID concerns are not affecting the many 12-step recovery groups, which are averaging 40 to 90 women participants. Most groups, he said, are 50 to 100.

“The approach at Pilgrim Firs as at N-Sid-Sen is one of providing hospitality. That’s the same at both sites, but the difference is the locations of the two camps and retreat centers, and what each site offers” Mark said.

“Pilgrim Firs, for example, is an oasis in the middle of a suburban area that lends to larger, more adult groups with people who want to walk around the lake or take a gentle walk along the ridge,” Mark explained.

“N-Sid-Sen on the east shore of Lake Coeur d’Alene as more remote. It is more action oriented with longer trails that go higher on the hillside and are for more conducive to hiking than walking.”

Both sites offer swimming, but the settings differ.

Mark added that there has been an ongoing need to find lifeguards for the summer at N-Sid-Sen.

Mark also pointed out that Wade Zick, who was the former managing director at Pilgrim Firs, had developed a master plan for the camp for the conference to review.

Before moving ahead to see where the proposed master plan fits today, Mark is beginning with making improvements at Pilgrim Firs to address several infrastructure issues related to the septic, water and electrical systems.

He continues his commitment to make the site hospitable to the groups that come.

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

Many people have helped in N-Sid-Sen transition

People have made a difference in a time of transition for the PNC camp and retreat centers.

Camps and retreats are keeping the PNC centers, Pilgrim Firs at Port Orchard and N-Sid-Sen on Lake Coeur d'Alene, active in the midst of those staff transitions.

Mark Boyd moved in December from N-Sid-Sen to be managing director at Pilgrim Firs. Pam Peterson is moving from Red Lodge, Mont., to N-Sid-Sen as designated managing director starting April 1.

Bill Bourdon, part-time executive director of the national UCC Outdoor Ministry Association, spent Jan. 18 into March on site at N-Sid-Sen while the Search Committee worked to choose Pam.

Before Mark left, he hired Dean Johnson as maintenance person. He started in January and moved on site in February. The new cook is Joline Ware, who lives in Harrison. She began the end of February.

Alice Ling and Ben Crosby have been going to N-Sid-Sen each day to meet with groups who are there. Ben grew up going to N-Sid-Sen. Alice recently retired as pastor in Wallace. They live at Carlin Bay.

Shirley Asmussen, a retired camp director from Ohio who lives in Western Washington has volunteered for seven months, reworking the website and helping with registration remotely.

When interviewed March 11, Mark had just met with the new Outdoor Ministry Team: Eric Johnson of Wayside; Linda Crowe; Cassandra Heide, Shirley Asmussen, Leah Bilinsky and Todd Kamp.

Mark recommended a visit to the websites—n-sid-sen.org and pilgrimfirs.org—to keep up with what's happening at the camps and register.

First on the list of Conference events are the summer camps at N-Sid-Sen.

New on the camp list is **You & Me Camp** for grades 1 to 5 with an adult is July 9 to 12.

Intermediate Camp for grades five and six, and **Junior High Camp** for grades seven to nine will share the site from July 2 to 8.

Kids Camp for grades two to four is July 12 to 15 the end of the **Senior High Camp** week for grades 10 to 13, running July 9 to 15.

Early in the summer is the **Emerging Young Adults** camp for ages 19 to 35, June 15 to 18.

Family Camp 1 is July 23 to 29 and **Family Camp 2**, "Camp Together," is July 30 to Aug. 3.

The website announces tiered pricing, named gratitude tier that reflects true costs of the experience and direct cost tier, covering programming, food and summer staff.

There is financial assistance to assure the camp experience is available to everyone.

There is also a subsidized tier, plus a "bring-a-buddy" discount of \$100 off for both the inviter and buddy, someone who has not been to camp.

"Fruitful Faith: Living a

Spirit Filled Life" is the theme for 2023 camps at N-Sid-Sen summer camps that offer canoeing, crafts, skits, nature, songs, campfires, worship, faith chats, swimming, paddleboarding, water games, river floats, hiking, volleyball, basketball, field games and more.

Action Work Weekends are from May 11 to 14 and June 15 to 18. A fall work weekend will be posted in mid-summer.

The 2023 PNC Women's Retreat will be May 19 to 21, at N-Sid-Sen.

N-Sid-Sen and Pilgrim Firs are also recruiting for summer camp and hospitality staff, including life guards for mid-June through August.

Churches have already set September retreats: the Westminster/Colville/Chewelah retreat is Sept. 8 to 10; Pullman/Richland is Sept. 15 to 17, and Walla Walla is Sept. 22 to 24. Other dates are still available for churches or church groups.

For information, call 208-680-3489 or visit n-sid-sen.org.

Annual Meeting theme will be 'Loving Deeply'

The Pacific Northwest Conference Annual Meeting will be Friday to and Saturday, April 28 and 29 at an in person meeting at First Congregational Church, 2401 Cornwall Ave. in Bellingham. There will be a closing worship the morning of Sunday, April 30.

The keynote speaker will be Traci Blackmon, associate general minister, vice president and justice and local church ministries of the national UCC, speaking and preaching on the theme, "Loving Deeply" is based on 1 Peter 4:8-10.

Although it is not a hybrid meeting, portions of it may be on live-stream. The business portions of the meeting will be in person. They include discus-



sion and approval of the budget and a resolution to change pronoun usage in the by-laws, to use "they" in three instances that "he/she" are used.

There will also be elections of the leaders serving on the PNC committees and the Board of Directors.

Details on the agenda, accommodations and registration are online. Resolutions were

submitted by congregations, committees or a petition of 10 members from at least two churches.

"Resolutions are one way we speak to one another in covenant," said Indigo Brown, board member and co-chair of annual meeting.

The planning team includes Wendy Blight, Ron Patterson, Amy Johnson, Janet Ott, Arlene Hobson, Andy Warren and Courtney Stange-Tregear.

Friday afternoon workshops will be a facilitated open forum and will include a "get to know your budget" session to help people understand "what everything means," Indigo said.

"We are also hoping that by doing both the budget hear-

ing and the vote on the slate in a 'committee of the whole,' everyone will be on the same page, said Ron.

Indigo added that there will also be clarity about how voting delegates and who is speaking are identified for votes and discussion. She pointed out that was difficult to do on Zoom and led to some of the confusion that arose at Annual Meeting 2022.

Registration information and the agenda are now online at pncucc.org, click on annual meeting under events. Registration is through UltraCamp.com. For display tables, email arlene@pncucc.org.

For information, visit pncucc.org/events.

Gathering Ground is about doing, story sharing

As an organization that reveres the earth and its seasons, Gathering Ground is offering a Compost and Cultivate event online on March 25 and 26.

Gathering Ground is a ministry nurtured by the PNW Conference and University Congregational UCC (UCUCC) in Seattle for spiritual-but-not-religious folk, said Beth Amsbary, Gathering Ground convener.

“The weekend events are suited for folk who follow earth cycles, Queer Creatives, doubters, seekers and anyone who loves good stories and good music,” she said.

The events feature Carrie Newcomer, a Quaker singer/songwriter, a collaborator with master educator Parker Palmer. She performs from 5 to 7 p.m., Saturday.

Related to the Spring Equinox, three master story spinners are sharing their real-life tales of compost and cultivation.

- What happens inside a compost pile?
- What if life becomes a compost pile?
- What can be grown or cultivated out of that glorious rot?

The story night features the Carrie (she/her) with Queer fantasy author Elijah Merrill (he/him) and creativity catalyst Shirin Subhani (she/her).

Carrie will offer an online workshop for the Equinox weekend retreat from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday.

“As part of our commitment to supporting Queer creatives, five workshop enrollments are reserved for folks of that identity,” said Beth.

Gathering Ground, now in its seventh year, received foundational support and counsel from Acting Conference Minister Courtney Stage-Tregear, who suggested story nights.

University Congregational UCC “planted” Gathering Ground, and the conference



Gathering Ground group gathers for a time of story sharing and singing in 2018.



Closing circle ends Winter Solstice celebration.

Photos courtesy of Beth Amsbary

provided grants allowing the organization to increase community connections.

They also partner with University Heights Community Center.

The March weekend is underwritten in part by the Adult Education Endowment of University Congregational, which makes it possible for all who wish to attend with a sliding scale admission.

“Gathering Ground is people of many ages, incomes and beliefs who meet in a city of wealth disparity, generational ghettos and diverse beliefs,” said Beth.

“We find gathering to creatively share practices, stories, and snacks to be deeply connecting,” she said. “Often playful, sometimes raw, there is something about doing and reflecting together that makes

space for authentic questions and deep listening.

“We are on equal footing after doing something side-by-side, rather than being in a relationship of helper-receiver,” Beth continued. “Practicing connection to wisdom, together we are more present for our world’s needs.

Beth said people at gatherings call their yearning for meaning by various names: spirit, higher power, collective unconscious, mystery, Gaia, becoming real.

By gathering, she said people are enriched by each other’s paths.

“We encounter truth by celebrating seasons of the earth, bringing socks to an encampment, writing bad poetry, cultivating strength to grow as a de-colonizer or playing with crafts,” Beth said.

Gathering Ground is a collaboration with activities guided by a convener and circles for writing, crafting and movement.

An administrative associate supports the effort.

Guest presenters lead some programs.

“We follow a model of sociocracy, which allows for horizontal power sharing and consensus-based decision making,” said Beth, an experiential educator and student of spiritual growth, who worked as a theatre artist, science educator and retreat leader.

Growing up in an Episcopal church in Champaign, Ill., she was her family’s fourth generation there. Beth earned a bachelor’s at the University of Illinois there and a master’s at the University of Nebraska, in Lincoln.

Her journey in the Christian tradition grew in a four-year course in lay ministry at the University of the South, an Episcopal seminary.

At her Episcopal church in Champaign, she began doing plays in church as a way to encourage people “to cross the moat and enter the church building.”

A third of the people at the performances were from the church, a third from the theatre community and a third from local creative people.

After directing plays there three years, the group she worked with wanted to start a

Continued on page 12

Beth Amsbary convenes people in meaningful spaces

Continued from page 11

theater company. They decided to move to Seattle as a place with interest in theater but with room for growth. In 1987, they moved and started Seattle Public Theater.

Beth described it as combining liturgy and theater, convening people in meaningful space.

Personally, she was struggling with the “he’s” in the Episcopal liturgy and found University Congregational United Church of Christ, which became her spiritual home.

While attending UCUC, Beth was working in performing arts, leading solo performing workshops, theologizing questions into performances and finding the “extraordinary in the ordinary.” For 10 years, she also worked part time as development director with the Church Council of Greater Seattle.

Seeking to create sacred space for people with different beliefs, Beth found UCUC support for her starting a new church plant.

“It was part a discerning group using a listening process to create a space for people who were spiritual but not religious,” Beth said.

Rather than to have people come, sit and listen in a spectator model, her idea was to engage them in experiential education: to communicate based on activities rather than a text.”

The group decided to call itself Gathering Ground.

Its mission is to provide “community for people of many beliefs—on many journeys—to share and forge meaning.”

Beth said, “We do stuff, reflect and connect.”

Rather than gatherings based on a liturgical calendar, “we have a rhythm of organically following the earth’s seasons.

“We have regular practices of crafting, visiting and writing together. It’s a practice of the



2019 Carrie Newcomer Concert has people dance in aisles.



Gathering Ground group makes a banner.

heart that involves sharing and listening to stories,” she said.

Courtney encouraged her to do story sharing.

“As we do things and share stories, magical things happen,” Beth said, telling of mak-

ing mobiles and talking about balance and then sharing stories about finding balance.

Many Queer folk are attending Gathering Ground and stepping into leadership positions. Hearing their stories has

broadened the perspectives of everyone, Beth said, noting, “Spirit is at work.”

Gathering Ground has an annual Story Night with people sharing stories on a theme related to their hopes, fears and yearnings, somewhat akin to the community organizing model.

“Recently we shared about stepping out and staying in related to COVID,” Beth said.

Gathering Ground has quarterly seasonal intergenerational gatherings for 50 to 100 and monthly gatherings of groups of about 10 for coffee and snacks under a grove of sequoia and redwood trees in the Seattle Arboretum.

A summer solstice event in June 2021 was the largest gathering for a labyrinth event in the state of Washington. There were eight large labyrinths at St. Mark’s Cathedral in Seattle.

“Usually we avoid church spaces, because for many, they are not safe,” Beth said.

“Insights from these practices of meaning making help me stay sane, displace empire and recover joy,” said Beth, who finds grounding in bird watching, qigong, music making, living without a car, going to coffee shops with interesting people, and losing at board games.

Beth also works part time at OneWorld Now, which seeks to create the next generation of global leaders in after-school language classes, leader workshops and study abroad. They teach Arabic, Korean, Chinese and Russian, which are languages “of some countries we need to have better relationships with.”

In those cross-racial, cross-cultural relationships she sees the Holy Spirit alive and moving in the world every day.

For information, call 206-880-3641 or email gathering-ground.seattle@gmail.com or [rsvp at gatheringground.org](http://rsvp.at.gatheringground.org).