



# Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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## Sculpture calls for end to homelessness

**Tree of Life helps people be more aware of people who have no home**

After nine years of planning, homeless women, faith community leaders, designers, artists and social service providers involved in the Homeless Remembrance Project dedicated and celebrated the Tree of Life, a sculpture installed in Victor Steinbrueck Park in Seattle north of Pike Place Market. The ceremony was held on Sunday, Oct. 21.

Surrounding the sculpture is space for gathering to find hope, beauty and healing. The Tree of Life is a place to continue what started in 12 years of vigils, which have been held for King County men and women who died outside or from violence while they were homeless. The sculpture is a gathering place, engaging people from all walks of life.

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People gather in Victor Steinbrueck Park in Seattle to dedicate Tree of Life sculpture for the Homeless Remembrance Project. The project artist, Clark Wiegman, worked with the design team, Karen Kiest and Kim Lokan.

Photos courtesy of Marcia McLaughlin

## ***PNC Council's November meeting sets priorities***

The Nov. 10 meeting of the Pacific Northwest Conference's Council, which includes representatives of committees and the Board, recommended that positive work of committees needs more recognition, said Chris Hanson, moderator, of Peshastin UCC.

The Board and Council discussed how to focus on what the new mission statement—developed at the Leadership Retreat—means: “We are justice seekers called to embody our faith.”

The Council, which met at All Pilgrims UCC in Seattle, met the young adult interns who are working in the Seattle area on justice issues.

Hanson said the board reported on choosing four priorities: justice, communication, youth and young adults, and

new church starts and church renewal.

The 17-member Board is also evaluating ways to make its structure be more efficient and be more representative of the committees. In the current structure, the area representatives are on the board and find it difficult to have an area gathering they represent.

“If committees are on the board, there will be better communication among them,” Hanson said. “We have assigned a task force to review our structure.”

Out of the Council meeting, a task force formed to determine how to support the work of the committees, which “are the healthiest they have been in a long time,” she said.

There was also request by some for staffing, which also requires considering

other options for conference structure and staffing, she said.

The Council meeting also served as a budget summit, Hanson said, with each committee bringing their budget requests and talking about what they are dreaming.

“I thought it was a great gathering, because one of my goals is better communication,” she said.

“The Council was a good opportunity for representatives of each committee to hear about the work of the others and to look at the budget early to see how it can be a reflection of our work together and how we can share our conference's resources.”

***For information, call 509-679-7430 or email donandchris@hughes.net.***

# Proclamation is embodied in word and deed

## Conference Comments



By The Rev.  
Mike Denton  
Conference  
Minister

**We need  
industries  
that  
will clean  
our water,  
air  
and  
earth.**

God calls us to proclaim love, faith and grace. Those proclamations have to be embodied in word and deed. This is where our Christian commitments to service and social justice are rooted.

**Its never really easy, is it?** Every day has contradictions and hypocrisy in it.

Many of the electronics I use are made by people who aren't always being treated well by those that sell the electronics.

I drive and fly a lot for work and the gas I burn contributes to environmental problems. The neighborhood I live in has a lot more restaurants, coffee shops and entertainment venues than it did when I first moved here but that's only because a lot of poor folks have been moved out over the last few years and those businesses looking to capitalize on the higher salaries here have moved in.

**Even doing the right thing** sometimes has complications. The debate about increasing the number of coal trains coming through the Pacific and Inland Northwest to export coal to China through coastal ports has been one of those debates where, I admit, my feelings are mixed.

People need work and these increased exports would create some good ones; solid union jobs in port cities up and down the coast as well some good jobs in the coal mines.

**Generally speaking, I'm in favor of jobs** where the workers are paid and treated fairly.

However, in this case, these good jobs would end up supporting some bad things.

I know some don't believe in climate change but, anymore, that's like saying you don't believe in air and water. Water levels are rising. Ocean acidification is increasing. Insurance companies could tell you that weather related

disasters are increasing in severity because their claims and costs have gone up. General air quality is down. Last year's average global temperatures were the highest on record.

**The fact that the climate is changing** more and more quickly and the likelihood that these changes are as a result if human activity are as real as the increasingly dirty air we breath and polluted water that sustains us.

The expense of some new jobs at the expense of the health of ourselves and those we love is simply too high.

**I don't believe that a God who calls us** to proclaim love calls us to support systems that harm others. I don't think we are faithfully following Jesus when we support systems that cause some to need healing, comfort and shelter. I don't think we are servants of grace when we serve and create systems that support corporate actions that can best be described as sinful.

**Ask me to stand next to a union** sister or brother demanding jobs that make the lives of people better and I will be there. Ask me to stand with a union sister or brother calling for jobs that help heal, comfort and shelter and I will be there. Ask me stand with a union sister and brother demanding work is so in line with making the world a better place that we can be a world community of grace and I will be there there.

**We need industries that will clean** our water, air and earth not more that will pollute or destroy these things and harm all of us who live here.

There is good work to be done and good jobs needed to support this good work.

The jobs that would be created by more coal being shipped out of Pacific ports are just not those jobs...

## Transitions announced

**Leon John**, son of Conference Minister Mike Denton and Lauren Cannon, associate minister at Keystone UCC Seattle, was born on Dec. 22.

**Jennifer Russell**, 61, died Nov. 29 and her memorial service was held Dec. 8 at Prospect Congregational UCC in Seattle. She gradu-

ated from the University of Washington in 1980 and from Bangor Theological Seminary in 1984. Her seminary study included a year at United Theological Seminary in Bangalore, South India. Jennifer and her husband Rick served churches in Maine, New Hampshire and Washington. She also served on the United Church Board for World Ministries from 1989 to 1995, led several mission trips to India, Bosnia and China, and worked two years as a global ministries consultant for the PNC. She survived four years after a liver transplant in 2008.

**Dexter Edwards**, a retired UCC minister living in Lind, died in Nov. 24 and services were held on Dec. 1 in Lind. After earning a master of theology from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1961, he served UCC churches in California, Illinois, Iowa, Hawaii, Michigan, Oregon and Washington. He continued to serve churches as a pulpit supply minister.

**Kevin Brown** and **Lisa Horst Clark** were installed Oct. 21 to serve in ministry at First Congregational UCC in Bellevue.

**Mark Miller**, former interim conference minister, has moved from Texas to Seattle with his wife Diane. He has been writing novels since retiring.

**Peg Faulmann** of Keystone has been called to serve St. John's UCC in Owosso, Mich.

**Lauren Joy (Anderson) Baker**, who was married to the Rev. Larry Baker a retired minister in Seattle, died Sept. 20.

**Mike Cuzzetto**, former cook for Pilgrim Firs, died in September.

## PNC Men's Retreat is Feb. 1-3

The 21st Annual Pacific Northwest Conference Men's Retreat will be held at Pilgrim Firs Conference Center February 1 to 3, 2013 with the option for a Day of Silence on January 31.

On Friday night, tribal chair, minister and college professor Chief Roy Wil-

son will share about the spirituality of the Medicine Wheel. On Saturday, the Three Interfaith Amigos, the Rev. Don MacKenzie, Rabbi Ted Falcon, and Sheik Jamal Rahman, will share their message and reflections on what it means to be a man in today's interfaith society.

*For information, call 360-876-2031 or*

*visit [www.pilgrimfirs.org](http://www.pilgrimfirs.org).*

## Conference updates website

The conference has updated the look of its website at [www.pncc.org](http://www.pncc.org).

The homepage is highlighting a different church each week. For information, call 206-725-8383.

To coordinate with the design of the conference website, Mary Stamp, editor of the Conference News, has redesigned the website for the Conference News at [www.pnccnews.org](http://www.pnccnews.org). For information, call 509-535-1813.

## Plymouth will host 2013 UCC Musicians Assn. Conference

The UCC Musicians Association Conference will be held July 14 to 17, 2013, at Plymouth Church, UCC, in Seattle. It will include four days of worship, plenary sessions, special concerts and workshops for worship leaders and musicians. The association involves colleagues seeking to help each other as they live out their call to minister through music.

*For information, call 360-448-7531 or visit [ucma.org](http://ucma.org).*

## Linda Jaramillo will speak at 2013 Annual Meeting in April

Linda Jaramillo, the national UCC minister for Justice and Witness Ministries, will be the 2013 Annual Meeting speaker April 26 to 28 in Wenatchee. Tara Leininger, pastor of First Congregational UCC in Metaline Falls, is chair of the planning committee. *For information, call 446-2117 or email [mfcucc@yahoo.com](mailto:mfcucc@yahoo.com).*

## Young adult mission trip to South Korea set in 2013

The Global Ministries Committee of the PNC and Northwest Region of the Disciples of Christ is seeking participants for a Young Adult Exchange Visit to South Korea from June 17 to 26, 2013. The young

adults will learn about their counterparts in the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of South Korea, how the church ministers and serves in that culture. *For information, email [edevans@aol.com](mailto:edevans@aol.com).*

## Gathering honors soldiers returning from Afghanistan

The final group of Battle Company soldiers returned from their yearlong Afghanistan deployment on Dec. 9, are being welcomed back at 1:30 p.m., Sunday Dec. 16, at University Congregational UCC in Seattle. These soldiers were part of the group Jerry Montgomery had asked churches to adopt soldiers in Afghanistan. See story at [www.pnccnews.org/feb12pnc/02012012jerrymontgomery.html](http://www.pnccnews.org/feb12pnc/02012012jerrymontgomery.html).

## Application process begins for 2013-14 Young Adult Interns

Applications are now being accepted for young adults, ages 21 to 30, to participate in the 2013-2014 team of social justice volunteers in Seattle or five other sites across the UCC.

Applications are due Feb. 15 or March 15. The year of service runs from late August 2013 through early August 2014, said Lauren Cannon of the PNC Justice and Witness Ministries Committee.

*For information, contact Rich Gamble at 206-632-60212 or email [rich.gamble@keystoneseattle.org](mailto:rich.gamble@keystoneseattle.org).*

## Discussion has begun about doing a disaster-recovery camp

Bobbi Virta, pastor at Ferndale UCC who led work camps to rebuild homes in New Orleans, along with retired N-Sid-Sen director Randy Crowe, said she has been in discussion with Conference Minister Mike Denton about organizing a disaster recovery work camp to go to the areas devastated by Hurricane Sandy.

While they are ready and have people interested, Virta said they are waiting to hear about the needs and opportunities to help once the immediate emergency relief phase has ended and long-term recovery efforts begin.

*For information, call 360-384-3302 or email [bobbi@unitedchurchofferndale.org](mailto:bobbi@unitedchurchofferndale.org).*

## Missionary visits churches

Jeffrey Mensendiek, Global Ministries missionary from Japan, has been on itineration visiting churches in the region Dec. 1 to 14. *For information, call 206-382-3785.*





# UCC churches among sponsors of project

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“The goal is to recognize that we are one people, homeless and housed, and we can end homelessness,” said Marcia McLaughlin, spiritual director at Richmond Beach UCC in Shoreline.

In addition to the sculpture, bronze leaves of remembrance are placed on the sidewalks around Seattle. Each leaf represents someone homeless who died.

Organizers and sponsors of the Homelessness Remembrance Project include the Women’s Housing Equality and Enhancement League (WHEEL), the Church of Mary Magdalene, United Methodist, Episcopal and Catholic churches, Temple Beth Om, Horizon House, and Richmond Beach, Prospect and Plymouth UCC churches.

A website at [www.fallen-leaves.org](http://www.fallen-leaves.org) includes stories of some of the people whose lives are represented by the leaves.

“Story sharing is part of healing,” said Marcia, who has worked at Mary’s Place, a day shelter for homeless women. She started as an intern in seminary and was interim pastor for a year. She continues to go to jails to talk with women about the help available there.

Mary’s Place grew out of the Church of Mary Magdalene. Richmond Beach, Plymouth and Prospect UCC churches in the Seattle area have Mary’s Place ministries, as does Horizon House.

“Names of women I knew at Mary’s Place are on some of the leaves,” she said.

The leaves are important memorials, because in King County, when indigent people die, they are cremated and their ashes are kept and buried every two years in a grave in Renton.

“This year, for the first time, when they buried the ashes, they read the names of the



Marcia McLaughlin is among those dedicating the leaf memorials to homeless people.

people,” she said. “Each person is important.”

Marcia was asked to serve on the committee and has worked with it four years through ups and down to persuade government agencies and write grants

**On the website is a list** of all the names, the sites of their leaves and a map of the leaf locations. It includes stories of individuals represented by the leaves. Family members and friends can request a leaf for someone they lost while they were homeless.

Marcia encourages people to visit the locations where the leaves are in the city, as well as the Tree of Life.

In 2000, WHEEL, a grassroots organizing effort for homeless and formerly homeless women, and the Church of Mary Magdalene, an ecumenical ministry for homeless women, began to stand in one-hour silent vigils for homeless people. Participants dressed in black. In 11 years, they have had vigils for more than 400 people.

**Modeling their effort** on the international Women in Black movement, they started the local Women in Black to fight indifference to the many people who have died—stran-

gled, stabbed, run over by a train, overdosed or beaten.

In 2005, the Seattle City Council unanimously passed a resolution supporting the Homeless Place of Remembrance on public land, so organizers have worked with Seattle’s departments of parks and recreation, transportation and neighborhood, which funded the conceptual design process and partial construction of this permanent public art project and outreach to raise awareness of the dignity of people struggling with homelessness, Marcia said.

**The goal is also to build** cooperation to end homelessness.

“If we do not provide more housing, more people will die,” she said. “I’m struck how many times someone homeless is in the hospital and released with nowhere to go and with the likelihood they will die. If it were you or me with insurance, we might be allowed to stay in the hospital two more days.”

She told of one person who had a heart attack in front of the shelter just after the taxi dropped him off.

Many die of drug overdoses, Marcia said, understanding that she might use drugs or alcohol to numb the pain of living

on the streets.

“How dare we say people must be clean and sober before they have housing,” she said.

**“The project is geared** to build awareness so more people will work to end homelessness,” she said, noting that King County has no funding to shelter families, only single adults. “Families are the largest growing group of homeless people.”

Even if families call 211 to find housing, it takes three weeks to arrange an interview and months to be in housing.

Mary’s Place can shelter only 14 mothers and children and 14 couples, just “scratching the surface of needs.”

**Stories of people** on the website have helped family members find lost loved ones and add to their stories. Two formerly homeless women maintain the website and Marcia maintains the Facebook page.

She said several people who live near the park where the Tree of Life is had at first opposed it, but now have said they are sorry they did, because they find it beautiful.

**For information, visit** <http://homelessremembrance.org>, [www.fallenleaves.org](http://www.fallenleaves.org) and [www.rbccucc.org](http://www.rbccucc.org).

## Chaplain is writer in residence, disaster chaplain

Debra Jarvis is in ministries that help people express and make sense of painful experiences in their lives.

She's the first writer-in-residence at University Congregational UCC in Seattle.

Recently, she completed training to be a disaster chaplain for clergy with the UCC National Disaster Ministries.

These ministries are volunteer.

Debra has been in a covenanted relationship with UCUC for more than 22 years, including as chaplain at Seattle Cancer Care Alliance until 2008. Since then Debra has shared her gifts to produce books, workshops, videos and presentations coming out of her experience with patients as well as her own illness.

For those with "a moldering manuscript, a partial poem, a half-finished haiku, an incomplete essay, an idea for a screenplay, or some thoughts about a memoir or novel," she has been available since early in 2012 by appointment to offer guidance on writing projects from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesdays, in a room that is her office.

A sign on her office door says, "Writing help - 5¢."

### Jarvis has trained to be UCC disaster chaplain

During October, Jarvis trained in to be a disaster chaplain for the UCC National Disaster Ministries. She met pastors whose churches had assisted after the Columbine, Colo., high school shooting and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. In the midst of helping others, the clergy faced burn out.

Recently, as West Coast chaplain, she helped facilitate a retreat in Denver for clergy involved in the wildfires and the Aurora shootings. They spent time walking, meditating in nature, being present to each another and sharing their anger, grief, guilt and questions about hope, evil and self-care.

People come in for someone to talk with about writing. She guides them asking, "What are you thinking? Where do you want to go?"

Her role as writer-in-residence is to help people develop and share their writing skills.

In August, she started an every-other Tuesday evening workshop at University Congregational UCC on "Find Your Writing Voice: A Writing Workshop for Women Veterans" for any woman in the Puget Sound area who has served or is serving in the military.

Debra has been presenting this workshop as a safe place for women to express their creativity in writing in any form—stories, poems, essays, commentaries or other forms.

She said that writing is "treated as fiction unless the writer specifies that it is non-fiction. This helps us write more freely. We will write together using writing prompts, share our writing, have some treats and socialize, write some more and share some more," she described in a promotion. "No one is required to share their writing.

"Writing done during the sessions is not critiqued. Only writing that has been edited, printed out and distributed a week in advance to other group members will be critiqued," she said.

"I give them a prompt, such as placing an onion on the table and saying, 'See where it takes you.' One told of her mother cooking soup. Another wrote that it made her cry thinking of unpeeling it layer by layer," said Debra. "It's not a therapy group, but healing happens as writers share what they write."

They do not necessarily write about issues they face as veterans, but that's part of their life experiences.

As writer in residence, she also gives writing workshops, writes a church newsletter column, works on personal proj-



Debra Jarvis helps people claim their voice through writing.

Photos courtesy of Debra Jarvis

ects and does video interviews with elders in the congregation on the impact former pastor Dale Turner had on their lives.

She has also written the script for special events, such as an Easter musical and a Christmas pageant.

Debra earned a bachelor's in communication in 1977 from the University of California Berkeley. While she was working on a master's in Christian arts at New College in Berkeley—completed in 1984—a friend suggested she do clinical pastoral education. Three days into the program, "I realized this is what I was on the planet for."

After marrying and moving to Seattle 27 years ago, Debra realized she could not find work as a chaplain without a master's of divinity degree.

So she attended seminary at the ecumenical Northwest Theological Union, which later became part of the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University. She was ordained in 1989.

She worked 10 years with Hospice, the Multifaith AIDS Project Care Teams and the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance.

In 2007, she wrote a book, *It's Not About the Hair: And Other Certainties of Life and*

*Cancer*. In 2005, her mother she had been diagnosed with cancer. So she brought perspectives as a medical professional, a family member and a cancer patient.

Two of Debra's four books are on spiritual issues related to AIDS. One, a guidebook for family and friends, had a short shelf life after treatment for HIV and AIDS extended the lifespan and health of people.

Another book, *Take It Again from the Top*, she wrote as a memoir when she was 26 about training for a marathon.

She also helped produce *Palliative Care: Improving Quality of Life for People with Serious Illnesses*.

"I've always been writing since elementary school. Books have been a big deal for me—a way to escape," she said. "I love to put words together and take people to different places."

Debra knows if she has something to say, others do, too.

Curious about people, she loves listening to their stories, which she does as a hospital chaplain. She also wants to give people a voice.

**For information, call 206-660-8694. email [djarvis@ucucc.org](mailto:djarvis@ucucc.org) or visit [www.debra-jarvis.com](http://www.debra-jarvis.com).**



*Supporters decided to make organizing faith community a priority*

## Gail Crouch was UCC liaison for Referendum

Gail Crouch served as organizer for UCC churches in Washington to promote support of the faith community for Referendum 74, upholding the state legislature's February 2012 bill to legalize same-sex marriage by a vote of 53.7 percent to 46.3 percent in the Nov. 6 election.

"That margin of support was evidence of the role of the faith community rallied through grassroots organizing," she said.

**After a similar measure** lost in California, Gail said Washington organizers decided to make inclusion of the progressive faith community a priority and Washington United for Marriage hired a faith coordinator, Debra Peevey, a Disciples of Christ pastor who now lives in Arizona but previously served University Christian Church and Findlay Street Christian Church in Seattle.

She identified one person in each mainline Protestant denomination—American Baptist, Disciples, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Methodist and United Church of Christ—plus Unitarian Universalists, the Jewish community, Catholics for Marriage Equality and Mormons for Marriage Equality.

Those representatives in turn identified liaisons in as many congregations as possible. Susan Fairo, a member in discernment at University Congregational UCC, helped Gail organize some UCC churches.

**Forty-five Pacific Northwest** Conference and Central Pacific Conference churches in Washington had liaisons to help members understand the issues.

More than 180 clergy and 111 lay people endorsed the referendum, along with 125 communities of faith.

UCC churches participated in phone banks, holding cof-



Four UCC and 11 other Spokane clergy joined in an ecumenical "Love Rally," and a billboard photo.

fees, talking with friends, distributing yard signs and pins, going door to door, writing letters to the editor, speaking on a local radio show, putting messages on reader boards and banners outside their churches, and educating their congregations and neighbors.

**Several worked with** others ecumenically and interfaith on phone banks. Alki UCC and Kol HaNeshamah, the synagogue that meets in its building, hosted two phone banks each week. University Congregational UCC connected with a Jewish synagogue and Hillel on phone banking.

Pastors of Westminster UCC in Spokane, Cheney UCC, Veradale UCC and Colville First Congregational UCC participated in an ecumenical "Rally for Love" outside a lunch at which opponent Rick Santorum spoke opposing the referendum. Several of them joined in being in a photograph on a "People of Faith Support Marriage Equality" billboard, sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Church and set up in three Spokane locations.

**The message was simply** that people of faith support marriage equality, Gail said. That broke through the misperception in California that the faith community opposed marriage equality.

"Not every member of the United Church of Christ or other denominations with supporters supported the referendum," Gail said. "It's expected in the UCC to have diverse opinions.

**"The many members** who were involved, however, made a difference," she said. "One campaign organizer had at first not thought it worthwhile to have a faith community coordinator, but he eventually believed that the faith community turned the tide."

Several UCC churches held worship services the day after the vote or members participated in ecumenical services.

"It was satisfying and heartwarming," Gail said of her participation. "For me, it was a faith issue, not a political one. If we follow Jesus' commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves, then the same laws should apply to our neighbors as to ourselves."

She said it was important to name and frame the faith issue.

**For those who questioned** if churches as nonprofits could legally be involved in politics, Gail pointed out that churches can be involved in speaking out and educating on issues of faith, not making endorsements in partisan politics.

**"Our support was framed** as coming out of our faith and beliefs," she said. "There are



**Many UCC churches hung banners** declaring their stand.

always some who think the church shouldn't be involved in politics, and some in the UCC think that, too.'

Gail, who served on the team of ministers at University Congregational UCC in Seattle from 1985 to 2000 and at Bellevue First from 2000 to 2004, plus several interims, said she has been involved for a long time with Open and Affirming.

She was at University Congregational when it called Peter Ilgenfritz and David Shull as a gay couple.

"I had to deal with media presentations then," she said.

**For information, call 206-363-1432 or email [gecrouch@earthlink.net](mailto:gecrouch@earthlink.net).**

## As witness of solidarity

# Clergy across PNC went to county courthouses

Given how the LGBT community has felt excluded by the religious community, Darrell Goodwin, pastor of Liberation UCC in Seattle, was impressed that clergy wearing robes and stoles were welcomed as about 200 couples stood in line at the King County Recorders Office in downtown Seattle on Dec. 6.

“There was phenomenal energy and excitement, and openness to including clergy in the celebration,” said Darrell, who was there from 11 p.m. to 12:45 a.m. The doors had opened just after midnight.

**When his church choir sang Gospel music and serenaded one couple in their church, they chanted, “We are Liberation UCC.”**

“We love the UCC!” someone yelled back.

Darrell said one couple in his church applied for a marriage license to renew their vows Dec. 9, using the same service they had used 16 years earlier for their commitment ceremony. He expects more of the 500 applicants as of Friday, will seek a church ceremony.

Washington United for Marriage Equality published a list of pastors willing to perform same-sex weddings.

Despite Washington’s reputation as a “none” zone—with few having a faith preference, Darrell said his experience in the campaign and since has made him aware of how much people embrace faith and how important it is to them.

“**People appreciated** the faith component of the marriage equality movement,” he said, saying that when he left a clergy press conference, someone asked if he was a pastor and expressed appreciation.

**On Thursday, Dec. 6,** the first day when same-sex couples could file for marriage licenses at 39 county courthouses throughout Washing-



**Liberation UCC choir sings at King County Recorders Office on Dec. 6.**

ton, Jim CastroLang, pastor of First Congregational UCC in Colville, said many UCC clergy, like him, were present and available as a witness.

The Spokane County clerk had asked churches and nonprofits to bring coffee, cookies and donuts. Westminster UCC and the Unitarian Universalist Church complied. About 23 filed there the first day.

Andrea CastroLang, pastor at Westminster Congregational UCC, said she went to the Spokane County Courthouse Dec. 6 as an expression of the congregation’s love and support for couples lined up to apply for marriage licenses.

“It was a wonderful way to start the day,” she said. “There was so much joy and laughter, and yes, I cried. I cry at weddings all the time!”

**Jim CastroLang was at** the Stevens County Courthouse all day, wearing his clerical collar and marriage equality supportive attire as a visible of support from the Christian community.

“I told my congregation I would be there, because it’s not necessarily safe in Stevens County to be gay or lesbian,” he said.

“I expect most who wanted to apply would go to Spokane County. It’s one thing to pass the law, but it is still not safe in

every county. We have more work to do to make it equally safe to walk in a county courthouse,” Jim added.

A couple for whom he did a religious wedding had told him they were afraid of meeting nasty words and threats.

“**That is an example** that there is still more work to do,” Jim said. “It’s also necessary to overturn the federal Defense of Marriage Act. Even if same-sex couples marry in Washington, they cannot file joint federal tax returns or receive benefits if married to a federal employee. If they move to another state, their marriage will not be recognized. So, while Referendum 74 is a major step, there is still more to do to support same sex couples.

“Equality under the law is still an important step for justice,” said Jim.

**At 11:30 p.m. on Dec. 5,** Diane Darling, pastor of Alki UCC, posted on Facebook:

“Wow...just pondering...30 minutes from now Mary and I could go to the King County Courthouse and get a marriage license! A real, honest to goodness license to marry in Washington State. The same kind of license I have signed for hundreds of straight couples over the last 31 years—except for the last seven or eight years

when I stopped signing licenses for anyone until I could sign them for everyone. I can’t stop thinking about how I never imagined to see this in my lifetime. Can’t stop thanking God, who is able to do more than we could ever ask or imagine. What a holy night!”

**Becky Withington was at** the Snohomish County Auditor’s Office about 30 minutes before it opened, wearing a purple stole and her “People of Faith Approve...” button. She handed out roses to half a dozen couples waiting in line for marriage licenses.

“I introduced myself, gave each couple a rose, congratulated them and told them there are Christians who support marriage equality,” she said.

At 9 a.m., the office opened. As each couple left, witnesses clapped and cheered. About 9:30 p.m., she had given out all the roses.

Everett UCC, where she is pastor, has two same-sex weddings scheduled in 2013.

**Marj Johnston, pastor at** Dayton, accompanied friends Roger and Justin to the courthouse to pick-up their marriage license: “Yes, right here in little ol’ Columbia County,” she said.

**For information, call 509-998-7203 or email [jcastro-lang@gmail.com](mailto:jcastro-lang@gmail.com).**



## Camp adventure establishes spirit of being at home

Mark Boyd, managing director of N-Sid-Sen, said at the start of his first summer that he was just starting on an adventure.

"It has been an adventure, a gift watching groups come in with excitement and make a connection, feeling that camp is their home," he said. "While they are here, it is their home."

"People come and relax," he said, noting that helped him relax, knowing the campers were comfortable there.

Participants in one camp told him that the closer they came to coming to camp, the lighter they felt, knowing that when they were at camp they could just be.

"Many campers see the sacredness of this space, where they can come and just be themselves, be with God and be with a group talking about God," Mark said.

He found many ways the camp is part of people's faith.

"People find inspiration here. Whatever struggles they come with, the camp and directors help create an environment of inspiration," Mark said.

"We are blessed to have all volunteers here," he said.



Idaly Hernandez of Shalom UCC Richland hangs out tie dye shirts in intermediate camp at N-Sid-Sen. Photo courtesy of Mark Boyd

Staff for the camps—kids, intermediate, junior high, senior high and family camps—are all volunteers, a total of 40 directors and counselors come to support campers.

Camps would not come together without volunteers giving time and talents, he said.

Local churches also come for retreats and camps, connecting and also feeling they are coming home.

Campers ask to have a service project to help improve the camp, something relevant so they can say, "I did that."

He and his wife, Julie, were

concerned that, with church being far away and summers being busy, he would miss attending a church. They soon found that they joined in the worship experiences of the camp.

"It was great to feel I could go to church here," he said.

In the rest of the year, he intends to travel to churches in the area to share about camp.

"When I first came here and looked at the lake, I thought, 'Wow! Thank you God for all falling into place.' Julie now has a job down the road teaching at the school in Harrison," he said.

When someone asked if there were surprises, he said the adventure is in meeting people in different ways.

"God has a piece in all I have done in my life, and this brings together my background in business, the wholesale industry, plumbing, youth work and at Pilgrim Firs," Mark said. "I needed each of the skills to work with youth and adults."

He is grateful Mary Japenga stayed as cook for a transition time after Randy Crowe retired. Crowe was available to show him things and allow him to discover things about the camp on his own.

He has enjoyed meeting people in Harrison and finds it new for him to be part of a small community. He plans to host banquets through the year to gather people from the community to get acquainted.

Mark is impressed how the volunteer leaders give up time to give the campers an opportunity to discover their own faith and be open to the questions of faith and life.

This 2012 summer camp theme, "Secrets of the Kingdom: The Parables of Jesus," led many to use drama.

**2013 N-Sid-Sen  
camp schedule is:  
Junior & Senior High  
Midwinter Retreat  
March 8-10**

**Women's Retreat - May 3-5**

**Leadership Retreat - May 17-19**

**Work Camp - June 17-22**

**Young Adult Camp - June 21-23**

**Intermediate Camp - July 7-13**

**Kid's Camp - July 7-10**

**Senior High Aqua Camp**

July 14-20

**Family Camp #1**

July 28 to Aug. 3

**Junior High Aqua Camp**

Aug. 4-10

**Family Camp #2 - Aug. 11-17**

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

## Campers dive into water and parables

John Hubbe, who has directed camps for many years at N-Sid-Sen, has seen some of children and youth over and over.

He and Dana Sprenkle have co-directed N-Sid-Sen's Junior High Aqua Camp for several summers.

In addition, Irene Willis, also from Shalom UCC in Richland, helped for her third year as camp chaplain, organizing morning watch, involving youth in readings and skits, and facilitating discussion groups.

John said they tweaked the theme, "Secrets of the Kingdom: The Parables of Jesus" to

"Treasures of the Spirit."

"We did not want to convey that the parables were about secrecy, but about something special," he said. "I liked sharing the parables, which show that Jesus spoke to people using stories and elements of their times."

"The word, 'kingdom,' meant something different then than today. It was about the power structures of the time, when kings had power over common people," he said.

Campers acted out some of the parables.

"Our junior high aqua camp has many built-in traditions, such as spending all afternoon

in the water and craft room," said John. "It built a wonderful community. Campers enjoyed each other. We try to give program content to enhance their experience with meaningful content."

"Co-directing the junior high aqua camp is one of the best ways I can give back. I want to give the youth something. The camps are valuable," he said. "I want to keep them going and I encourage counselors to think of becoming directors."

"N-Sid-Sen is one of my homes," John added, "sitting on the edge of the wild world."



# Campers gain a connection to the wider church

Two youth in Ferndale UCC who had been to camps at Pilgrim Firs made and sold chocolate-covered pretzels and popcorn at the Christmas bazaar to raise funds for camper-ships for next year.

Bobbi Virta, pastor at Ferndale, said her participation as co-director of Intermediate Camp for two years with Stephen Haddan of Tolt Carnation raised the number of campers in her congregation from one to six.

Because she has already announced the dates for 2013 camps, several families whose children were not there last summer have put the camp dates on their vacation calendars, because of excitement generated by returning campers telling stories of their experiences.

**“Campers’ involvement** has deepened their understanding of church and faith beyond the local church,” said Bobbi, who also presented a slide show for the whole congregation about the camp she directed.

For children and youth in local churches, going to camp helps them see the church in “a bigger way,” she said. They make friends at camp with peers in other churches.

“Some only know church through their local church, but we live in covenant with other churches across the conference, nation and world,” Bobbi said.

**She believes the “bigger”** idea of church helps retain young people.

Campers who do not attend local churches have, as everyone at camp, a time to reflect on what faith means to them, a chance to know that they are beloved children of God and an experience of what it means to be in community.

**“At camp, we serve meals** family style. Many young people have no idea of what it means to sit down to eat a meal together as a family. Many eat in front of TV or in a car going



Intermediate campers often sang in free time outside the lodge.

Photo courtesy of Bobbi Virta

somewhere,” Bobbi said.

At camp tables, we sit together. Campers ask for food to be passed rather than physically getting up to grab what they want from across the table. They work on how to have a conversation at mealtime.

“That seems basic, but it’s not,” she said.

**The 2012 Intermediate** Camp had a team of young adult counselors who had grown up in camp and knew each other well. Bobbi and Stephen told them that their role was to create a safe, sacred space for the campers. They were to be there for the campers. Being a counselor was not about them experiencing camp for themselves but to create an experience for the campers.

Bobbi found that the cohesiveness of these young adult leaders made it possible to weather two experiences—one guiding one camper to apologize to and receive forgiveness and grace from another camper, and the second to address as a camp that it was not appropriate to make homophobic remarks.

“By calling people out in these instances, I pray that we helped people walk away from camp changed,” she said.

**During free time,** one counselor often sat outside the lodge, played her guitar and began singing. A group gathered

and sang with her. That singing, plus all-camp singing drew the community together.

Bobbi said that each year she and Stephen, who will be on sabbatical next summer, have set up a communion table in a different secret location on the last day.

Before they led the group back to the lodge to meet their parents, one camper suggested that they sing to their parents.

“That was powerful for them to come in and sing before running to hug their parents,” she said.

**Another unifying** experience was that one day every camper, counselor and director went swimming.

One day when a thunder storm curbed planned outdoor activities, one counselor taught the campers line dances in the lodge. Weather also impeded the usual night hike, replaced with a movie night.

**Campers took home art** pieces they made to express the theme of finding the “treasures” within themselves.

One piece was tie-dyed cloth with a unique tree campers painted on it. They glued four buttons on it to hold affirmation messages: joy, peace, faith and love.

They made “treasure chests” they decorated inside and out. Each had a mirror in-

side to speak of discovering “the gift of who we are inside.”

Campers also painted tiles with one layer added each day. Then they scratched images in them, discovering the layers of color.

Each also made a sculpture using natural materials.

**While doing crafts,** Bobbi and Stephen developed an idea to involve small churches to help provide craft supplies. They suggest one or two churches adopt a camp, and camp directors send them their supply list, so the churches provide the supplies as a way to connect with the camp.

For information, call 360-384-3302 or email [bobbiv@unit-edchurchofferndale.org](mailto:bobbiv@unit-edchurchofferndale.org).

## 2013 Pilgrim Firs camp & retreat season

**Junior High Midwinter Retreat,**  
Jan. 11-13

**Senior High Midwinter Retreat**  
Jan 18-20

**Tara Barber and Kristen Almgren** co-direct both.  
**Men’s Retreat**  
Jan. 31 to Feb. 3

**Other pre-summer camps:**  
the GLBT

**Spiritual Renewal Retreat**  
May 31 to June 2

**Work Camp** June 12-16

**The summer schedule is:**

**Senior High Camp**

June 30 to July 6

**Junior High Camp**

July 7 to 13

**Intermediate Camp**

July 14 to 20

**Kids Camp** July 21 to 24 and

**Family Camp** Aug. 18-21

**Fall Environmental Justice**

retreats drew 13 pastors

Oct. 16 to 18 and 13 young

adults Nov. 16 to 18.

**For information, call 360-876-2031 or visit [pilgrimfirs.org](http://pilgrimfirs.org).**

## Four visit PNC's 25-year global partner in Berlin

**Jim Spraker finds value in a global exchange with a partner church facing common struggles in a multi-cultural world.**

Leading a delegation of four visiting the Pacific Northwest Conference's global partner, the Evangelical Church Synod of Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia (EKBO), two weeks in early September, Jim Spraker found that while Germany is a leading country in the European Union, Berlin still has a disparity between rich and poor.

**He sees value in** the partnership with an equal, and sharing concerns about life in an increasingly secular society and the role of the church shifting from professional clergy directed to one with more lay leadership.

Joining him were his wife, Barbara, also of Plymouth UCC in Seattle, Ron Robinson of the United Church in University Place and Makena Schmidling of First Christian in Bellingham.

**The goal of the visit** was to explore the future of the relationship with the church. The PNC adopted a partnership with the former West Berlin Synod in 1987, making this the 25th year of the partnership.

That partnership was transferred to those in the Berlin-Brandenburg Synod who had previously connected with the East Berlin Synod's partner, the Central Pacific Conference. Some exchanges were held in common, and the number decreased in the last few years.

Jim found that the Deanery



Jim and Barbara Spraker share a meal with Roland and Anna Herpich. Roland, who is director of the Berlin Mission Society, was part of an exchange in 1993.

Photo courtesy of Jim Spraker

of Charlottenburg, a division of the synod, is interested in continuing the partnership. They will soon merge with the deanery of Wilmersdorf, creating a deanery of 20 parishes with 70,000 members.

Jim said the churches in Berlin-Brandenburg share common concerns with the Pacific Northwest Conference.

"They search for what it means to be a church in a secular society in which 75 percent of the people of Berlin are non-religious, non-Christian or lacking any religious background or education," he said.

Part of that is from the legacy under communism when few people were in churches.

**They are emphasizing** faith formation and empowering lay leadership as volunteers.

Their goal is to help people be able to explain their faith and as they need more lay leadership as funding for paid staff and clergy decreases.

"They also seek to interact with different religious groups and minority churches," he said. "There are 130 minority churches in Berlin."

The delegation experienced

the religious diversity when they participated in "The Long Night of Religions" while they were there. Sixty religious groups put on the event from 6 p.m. to midnight in various parts of Berlin.

**The PNC delegation** also explored Berlin, visiting several social ministries, such as home care, soup kitchens and extensive involvement in education. As part of meeting with various groups, they learned that the EKBO and the Berlin Mission Society fund and help operate an 800-pupil school in Palestine.

Near the Brandenburg Gate, they visited a memorial exhibit for Jews killed in Europe, sharing stories of their lives and families.

"It was so painful, I had to leave after 45 minutes," he said.

**"We talked about what** we could learn from each other, struggling to be the church in the secular world," he said.

Other common interests are cooperation among churches, maintaining rural churches and fund raising.

They learned that the churches are moving from

the parish approach, drawing people from neighborhoods, to drawing people based on their interests and what communicates to them. One church, for example, may emphasize music while another may have a strong youth program. They are also incorporating rural churches into the Berlin-Brandenburg structure.

Jim, who has been both a parish minister and a hospital chaplain, believes that there is value in learning with partners in a multi-cultural society.

"This gives a different perspective than our mission relationships in developing countries," he said.

**"We face common issues** but share different perspectives," he said.

Jim has been on other exchanges and also hosted groups visiting from Germany. He feels that continual dialogue between the PNW Conference and EKBO would be beneficial to both churches.

**The delegation also visited** in Poland, visiting Lodz, where Liz and Doug Searles from the PNC were missionaries recently. The Evangelical Reformed Church in Poland consists of 10 churches established by Protestants in the Czech Republic fleeing persecution under the Hapsburgs in 1802

The delegation spent two days in Lodz, two days in Warsaw and did a service project, helping clean bricks to reuse for building a new kindergarten building in Zelow.

"Both cities had huge Jewish ghettos," said Jim, telling of visiting a Jewish cemetery in Lodz where there were 130,000 markers. "We can't comprehend the number of Jews killed. More Jews died in Poland than in Germany. It's overwhelming."

**For information, call 206-935-3214 or email jim@sprakernet.**



# Alki UCC receives grant to address homelessness

Alki UCC has “the audacious dream of eradicating family homelessness,” said Cinda Stenger, chair of its outreach committee.

The church is one of 14 faith communities in King, Snohomish and Pierce counties to receive a \$10,000 from a Gates Foundation grant to Seattle University’s School of Theology and Ministry (STM) for the Faith and Family Homelessness Project to increase awareness, advocacy and care about homeless families in the Puget Sound area.

The STM and the Church Council of Greater Seattle (CCGS) will help people “envision a world where the cycle of family homelessness is broken through creating new relationships, platforms and models for faith-based advocacy.”

For 10 months, nine Christian, three Jewish and three Muslim communities in urban, suburban, ethnic and economically diverse areas are using their social and political power to change attitudes, behaviors, barriers and policies on family homelessness.

**Alki plans education** events to promote advocacy of policies to reduce homelessness.

Participating faith communities receive support from STM faculty and CCGS staff.

The leadership team for this project at Alki—Cinda, Shannon Thomas, Kathy Ablott and Shannon Peterson—attended an April training session.

As chair of the Alki outreach committee and someone “big on serving,” Cinda applied when she learned of the project, because Alki has been assisting Family Promise, serving meals at Tent City and Nickelsville, packing food at Northwest Harvest and mobilizing the community to do something about homelessness that addresses the causes.

One avenue for communicating about family homeless-



For Advent, Alki set up a tent on their chancel instead of a traditional manger scene. Photo courtesy of Shannon Thomas

ness is the project’s blog.

Shannon, housing case manager with the King County Adult Drug Diversion Court, assesses housing challenges of people graduating from that court. While he serves mostly single adult males, he’s now helping more single parents.

**Writing in the blog**, he said recently that “obstacles to finding safe, affordable housing for these families are extraordinary, decreasing the likelihood that they will be able to find, be approved for, or sustain safe, affordable housing.”

He said families are among the most vulnerable in the homeless population, because their lives are filled with anxiety, stress and chaos, with little opportunity to plan or enact positive change. With little time to rest, many relapse into drug abuse, mental illness or new criminal behavior.

Shannon urges project communities to expand homeless ministries to include families in criminal justice systems or struggling with drug addiction.

**“Many hold back** from engaging in this ministry because of their misunderstanding about the impact of generational poverty on families,” he said. “Our society, and many people of faith, believe once someone has broken the law, that person no longer deserves support.”

The tendency—counter to faith traditions of mercy and hospitality—is to punish, humiliate and ostracize such people, Shannon finds. Many

suffer from multi-generational abuse. Children become trapped in homelessness, growing up to be homeless single parents.

**“Drug abuse and criminal behavior** are linked to housing instability, passed from generation to generation,” he said. “Trafficking sex and drugs are survival skills—a system that delivers money to pay the rent. Homeless families in the criminal justice system are some of our most marginalized.”

He calls for faith communities to be compassionate and see their behaviors in the context of systems of social and economic injustice.

**Cinda said she hopes** the project will help faith communities transform society through education, breaking down barriers that leave people stuck at “it’s a pity.”

“We want our church and community to hear the voices, see the faces, look in the eyes of homeless people to feel compassion and empathy,” she said.

**Alki plans movies** and discussions with experts on causes and with homeless people sharing their stories of sleeping in cars and showering at the Y.”

“The faith community has a unique voice to speak power,” Cinda said. “When the city votes on a budget for transitional housing, we want 500 to come to ask for three times what they propose, speaking with intelligence and compassion to influence the vote.

“We also need to advocate

for more drug rehabilitation and job training,” she said. “When the city negotiates with a developer for a tax break to build affordable housing as part of a development, the affordable housing should be built first, not last, because it’s often dropped when funds run out.”

**The first event** of “Homeward Bound: A Home for Every Family” was Dec. 9, when Alki offered a community movie evening showing, “Where God Left His Shoes,” a 2008 Hollywood movie of a family struggling with homelessness in New York City.

After the movie, a case-worker talked about stereotypes on the plight of families.

Cinda promoted the event through West Seattle Family Promise connections.

**In January, they plan** an Advocacy Panel with professors talking about causes, how to mitigate them and how people can be involved.

Along with other movie nights, there will be a photo exhibit, “Faces of Homelessness.”

Now, 12 more Alki members are becoming involved.

Cinda, who has attended Alki 10 years, said this is to be the start of a lifelong project, planting seeds so people become more activist. “The more I’m involved and see the injustices, the more I want to advocate for solutions,” she said.

**For information, call 206-935-2661, email [pastor@alki-ucc.org](mailto:pastor@alki-ucc.org) or visit [www.faithand-familyhomelessness.com](http://www.faithand-familyhomelessness.com).**

## Four young adults engage in justice internships in Seattle

As four young adults are several months into their service as UCC justice interns in Seattle, applications are being accepted for the 2013-14 Young Adult Service Community teams through the national UCC.

Full-time stipended volunteer interns, ages 21 to 30, have been placed with nonprofits, churches and supporters in six U.S. cities for 11 months of service since August.

In addition to serving 32 hours a week with the agency or church, they participate in four hours a week of faith-based vocational training for justice leaders and they live in intentional communities of four to five people. They also spend four hours a week engaged in the life and leadership of a UCC or Disciples of Christ congregation.

In Seattle, partner agencies are the Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness, the Church Council of Greater Seattle, Puget Sound SAGE and the Faith Action Network. Supporting Seattle churches are Keystone UCC, All Pilgrims Christian and Plymouth UCC, reported Lauren Cannon, associate pastor at Keystone UCC.

Lauren said the interns, who were chosen from a national pool of candidates, were welcomed along with volunteers at other faith-based groups, such as Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Quaker, Mennonite and others.



Marianne Haney, Steven Boyles, Jenn Hagedorn and Kathryn Murdock in the photo on their blog.

Photo courtesy of Rich Gamble

The 2012-13 participants are Steven Boyles from the Ohio Conference, Jenn Hagedorn and Kathryn Murdock of the Pacific Northwest Conference, and Marianne Haney from Puyallup.

Steven is an intern with the Faith Action Network and serves at Keystone UCC. A native of Kent, Ohio, he graduated from the UCC-affiliated Heidelberg University with a major in political science and minor in religion.

Jenn is an intern with the Church Council of Greater Seattle and serves at Plymouth UCC. While completing a bachelor's degree in human services and rehabilitation at Western Washington University in Bellingham in 2011,

she worked with nonprofits in public health. She spent eight months in Ghana volunteering with government and non-governmental organizations on health outreach and education.

Growing up in the UCC, she has "instilled the importance of justice and equality."

Kathryn is interning with the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness and serves at Keystone UCC.

A recent graduate of the University of Puget Sound in foreign language, international affairs and music, she grew up in University Congregational UCC, where she learned the importance of social and economic justice.

Marianne, who is an intern with Puget Sound SAGE and

serves at All Pilgrims UCC/DoC, recently graduated from AmeriCorps NCCC after 10 months of traveling and serving communities throughout the Pacific Region, serving four nonprofits. She enjoys learning different languages and experiencing new cultures and philosophies.

The interns began a blog in September to share their experiences.

Kathryn told of registering voters at the Ballard Food Bank. She met one man who had committed a felony 30 years ago. He thought he could never vote again. She explained that the law denying felons the vote was changed in 2009 for anyone no longer under Department of Corrections supervision.

"Seeing the joy in his face when he found out he could vote was amazing," she said, telling how "his face lit up when he realized he could have a voice."

Lauren said PNC congregations can connect with the interns by hosting them for a meal and conversations with people at their church, or join their weekly course of study on faith-based justice theory and practice.

"Encourage a discerning young adult you know to apply next year," Lauren said.

**For information, call 206-632-6021, email [lauren.cannon@keystoneseatle.org](mailto:lauren.cannon@keystoneseatle.org) or go to [www.keystoneseatle.org](http://www.keystoneseatle.org).**

## JWM Committee promotes churches hosting one-day justice events

One way the Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) Committee will support efforts of PNC congregations to do justice ministries is to offer workshop resources for congregational, interfaith or community events or fairs between Christmas and Easter.

"We'll bring workshops to your back yard," said Rich Gamble, pastor at Keystone UCC and JWM chair.

He invites churches to gather area churches or their members for an All Day Justice Event.

Organizers can add their own workshops on how they

meet their community-service needs. Some may be willing to share those workshops at events others plan.

JWM is offering some workshops and leaders.

Rich is offering to lead two workshops:

1) "Ending Homeless-

ness" looks at the flood of homelessneses, its causes, solutions, appropriate housing and how public policy has helped create the crisis.

2) "Progressive Christian Values" explores what the values are, biblical understanding, *Continued on next page*



## PNC identity statement urges PNC to be justice seekers

**By Rich Gamble, chair of PNC's Justice and Witness Ministries Committee: reflections on resources to help the conference be justice seekers**

At this year's Leadership Retreat, members of the board and committees developed an identity statement for the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ: "We are justice seekers called to embody our faith."

**What does it mean** to be a conference that seeks to embody faithful justice?

Members of the Justice and Witness Ministry Committee have been working out how to support the conference as it lives in to that identity.

Across the conference UCC churches are active in diverse issues including environmental protection, interfaith relationships, marriage equality, homelessness and hunger.

The Justice and Witness Ministries Committee supports a wide variety of organizations working on these issues and more.

**So what would it look like** if social justice were not only something some of us occasionally do but also something that identifies us all?

How can we as a conference be an example to other



Rich Gamble, pastor at Keystone, invites PNC to be justice minded.

conferences and other denominations on how to be a creative and effective force for social justice?

**One pilot program** that began this year is the Young Adult Service Community.

Initiated by Keystone UCC, it is supported by All Pilgrims UCC/Disciples of Christ, which is housing the interns, and by Plymouth UCC in Seattle.

The Young Adult Service Community is a program of the national UCC centered in congregations.

**Originally created** with an eye to social service programs, it supports young adults and

organizations doing good work by providing the organizations where young adult workers serve for 32 hours a week.

**It also provides** young adults an opportunity to do meaningful work, live in community and have spiritual support.

Here in the Pacific Northwest we have focused the program on social justice.

Our placements are with organizations working for change: Faith Action Network, Church Council of Greater Seattle, Puget Sound Sage and the Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness.

Not only do the volunteers

work for these organizations but they also participate in a year-long "justice leadership" course.

Just over three months into the program, the vision is becoming a reality.

**Through these volunteers,** organizations that do justice are able to accomplish more. Through their experience and education, young adults become justice leaders.

What if this program were just the beginning?

What if we could recruit and support 20 or more justice volunteers every year from across the country?

**What if we were willing** to invest that heavily in the work of justice today and in the leaders of tomorrow?

What would happen if young adults saw the UCC as a conduit for their participation in the work of justice?

**What would it mean** to us and the world if we seeded a new group of experienced and empowered justice leaders into our communities year after year?

This small pilot program offers an opportunity to envision what living into our identity as "justice seekers called to embody our faith" could look like.

If it is to grow, it will take more visionary support.

Hopefully, this program is just the beginning of a season of newness for the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ.

**In this season of hope,** we celebrate those who not only saw but also followed the light.

The journey of the wise men was a journey into the unknown with hope as a guide.

With the light of hope may we be guided to new opportunities to seek justice and embody our faith.

## JWM offers workshop suggestions and presenters

*Continued from previous page*  
the gap between progressives and conservatives, and the call of faith to transform the world.

3) David Bloom of the Church Council of Greater Seattle and Faith Action Network has a session on "**God and Money**" focusing on the role

of faith communities in understanding and taking action to address systemic economic injustice.

4) Jeaneane Hill of JWM has a workshop on "**Sowing Seeds of Change**." She suggests people develop elevator speeches and wear buttons so

they can slip controversial topics into conversations. Always carrying signs, she pops out of her car and holds one on a street corner. She offers everyday ways to make changes.

**For information, call 206-632-6021 or email rich.gamble@kestoneseseattle.org.**

# Faith Formation replaces Partners in Education

By Lorna Kropp

The research and report Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi prepared for the national United Church of Christ, “Foundations, Findings and Future: Christian Education and Faith Formation in the UCC,” was delivered in September 2012.

Ben Guess, executive minister for Local Church Ministries, mentioned this work last April at PNC Annual Meeting.

Recommendations in the 137-page report have resulted in the decision to end the focus on Partners in Education and education consultants who have been available to help local congregations and conferences plan for education programs.

The future will bring an attempt to expand access to current resources and encourage more people in every congregation to look at faith formation or spiritual formation in their own settings. Everyone is invited to share their best practices and to learn from each other.

One insights from the Partners in Education program, as resources were gathered, was that, in addition to the traditional curricula written by church educators and collaborative multi-denominational efforts, the four UCC covenanted ministries’ staff also have written educational materials and small group, retreat, workshop materials that they offer. These include the Still Speaking series, the Church Vitality series, global ministries and stewardship materials. There was no shortage of resources.

A second insight is the shift from understanding learning in the church setting as age-group, classroom-based learning to holistic learning that is “life long,” active and involves more than intellectual understanding. It includes worship, social action and community sharing.

Learning in the church is now understood as faith formation or spiritual formation.



**Gale Peterson and Lorna Kropp, who have been education consultants since 1999, are shown at a 2010 training.**

Practicing faith involves worship, working for justice, gathering for potlucks, celebrating and playing around events and having deep conversations.

The third reality to impact the decision to end the education consultants and Partners in Education is the reduced financial support to national structures and the need to use financial resources wisely.

Resources for churches to use will still be available from the UCC store, and many more will be accessible online.

The new bi-weekly “edUCators epistle” features books, curricula and sale items and more from the UCC, available by signing up on the ucc.org website and adding “educator” to your profile, or by emailing [jannsoha@ucc.org](mailto:jannsoha@ucc.org). The eight modules of “Faith Practices” are available now for \$300.

In addition to the all-ages curricula—Seasons of the Spirit, Gather Round, Present Word, Our Whole Lives, Caffeine, Embracing Series—the website will include resources produced by local congregations.

The three Partners in Education for the Pacific Northwest Conference have been Gale Peterson of Kirkland UCC, Lorna Kropp of Westminster UCC in Spokane and Donald Schmidt of Admiral UCC in Seattle,

and initially JoAnne Conard of Broadview UCC in Seattle.

Moving forward, congregations must note the change and be aware of their life as an opportunity for faith formation at all stages of life—“wherever you are on life’s journey.”

John Roberto in *Faith formation for everyone, anytime, anywhere: A lifelong faith formation network for the 21st century* said: “Faith formation will look, feel and operate as a network and an ecosystem that assumes learning is a process of active inquiry with the initiative residing within the individual.”

He continues: “a variety of content, programs, activities and resources should be offered to individuals and groups who want to engage in faith formation. Because people’s own faith paths and needs are diverse, a number of ways to engage are necessary. A network offers the opportunity for individuals to create their own personal learning pathways.”

For those who wish to follow up, the full document and executive summary by Lizardy-Hajbi, minister for Christian faith formation research with Congregational Vitality and Discipleship, Local Church Ministries, are available to download at [www.ucc.org/education](http://www.ucc.org/education): “Foundations, Findings

and Future: Christian Education and Faith Formation in the UCC” and “Christian Education Faith Formation—Executive Summary.”

The following are samples of resources listed in the report:

- Darkwood Brew, Omaha, NE, at [www.darkwoodbrew.org](http://www.darkwoodbrew.org), is a UCC church that broadcasts a weekly webcast from a coffee house, including Skype interviews with the UCC Stillspeaking writers group.

- Vibrant Faith Ministries, related with the work of Roberto, provides cutting-edge technology and resources in ministry with families at home. The website of resources called “Vibrant Faith @ Home” at [www.vibrantfaithathome.org](http://www.vibrantfaithathome.org) has activities families of all ages.

- Resources for children include Godly Play, Godly Play Foundation at [www.godlyplay-foundation.org](http://www.godlyplay-foundation.org).

- A Joyful Path: Spiritual Curriculum for Young Hearts and Minds (Ages 6-10), Center for Progressive Christianity is at [progressivechristianity.org](http://progressivechristianity.org).

- Youth resources include “re:form, sparkhouse” at [www.wearesparkhouse.org](http://www.wearesparkhouse.org), “Which Way to God? A Christian Look at World Religions, Faith Alive Resources” at [faithaliveresources.org](http://faithaliveresources.org), and the Caffeine series for youth.

- Adult resources include “Embracing...” Series, Church Publishing Incorporated at [www.churchpublishing.org](http://www.churchpublishing.org): “Embracing an Adult Faith” with Marcus Borg, “Embracing the Prophets in Contemporary Culture” with Walter Brueggemann, Stillspeaking Bible studies, and other short-term, small group resources.

Conferences are encouraged to plan support and training that makes sense for their settings, and grants will be available to add up to \$500 to conference resources for events and projects. For information, call 509-448-2291.



## Four from PNC participate in youth ministries network

Because PNC has no staff person for youth ministries, it sent four lay leaders involved in Outdoor Ministries and in the Youth and Young Adult Task Forces to attend the national Network of Wider Church Youth Ministries in early December in New Orleans with 12 from other conferences.

Margaret Irribarra, Susan Andresen, Tara Olsen Allen and Kristen Almgren participated.

It was the third year for Irribarra, youth minister at University Congregational UCC in Seattle and chair of the Youth and Young Adult Task Force. Andresen planned the National Youth Event and Western Regional Youth Event. Almgren is co-chair of the Outdoor Ministries Committee. Olsen Allen at Bellingham First Congregational serves on the Youth and Young Adult Task Force.

“Gathering with others around the UCC, we shared ideas and resources for our work with youth and young



Network of Wider Church Youth Ministries gathering in New Orleans.

adults,” said Margaret.

Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi of the national network presented a report to the UCC on faith formation she prepared on contract with the national UCC.

She explained the distinction between Christian education, spiritual formation and faith formation.

“Christian education is a school-based approach with a

teacher-student model,” said Margaret. “Spiritual formation is more about sharing faith through spiritual experiences, rather than Bible stories. Faith formation brings together biblical stories with practice of faith in life. It brings Christian education and spiritual formation together.

“The UCC is now talking about faith formation for youth,

adults and families,” she said.

Kristina also discussed the role of the conference youth ministries in helping local churches, and discussed the difference between being creators of resources and curators of resources.

“Creating resources can mean we overwork or reinvent the wheel,” Margaret said. “The each division of the national UCC has many resources. Now it needs to put those resources in one place, so they are easy for people to find.”

Because the PNC has no conference youth/young adult staff, she suggests that curating resources is more practical.

“To be curators of faith formation resources at the conference level, we need to build relationships, so people know what the resources are, know where they are and know they are not alone,” she said.

**For information, call 206-399-2213 or email [mirribarra@ucucc.org](mailto:mirribarra@ucucc.org).**

## Donald Schmidt introduces new biblical translation

Donald Schmidt, pastor at Admiral UCC in Seattle, finds that it “freaks out a congregation to have the pastor or lay reader take out a cell phone to read Scripture.”

He shared at the PNC Annual Meeting in a Sunday Bible study his reflections on translations. He introduced the United Methodist’s Common English Bible translation.

“Encountering God’s Word in different ways happens any time we read the Bible, because any time we read the Bible we interpret,” he said. “If you don’t want interpretation, don’t read the Bible.”

Given that the average adult reads at a third or fourth grade level, he believes it’s important to make the Bible readable.

“If people are not comfortable reading the Bible, they don’t read it and there’s no point to have it,” he said.

He finds the Common English Bible a readable, understandable version that fits with the move in worship away from churchy words—doxology, benediction or escatological.

For example, it translates the parable of the talents as the parable of the dollars.

Donald believes it’s important for progressive churches to encourage people to read, study, love, despise and question the Bible, rather than letting “others take it away from us” by giving the impression they know it and “we don’t.”

At some churches, fear about the Bible is so great, the pastor can’t lead a Bible study.



Donald Schmidt

“You can hit someone over the head with a book that’s closed,” he said, advising people to open the Bible to find stories of people of faith struggling with their belief. “I take the Bible metaphorically, because it means more to me.”

Telling a friend who is in an evangelical church about metaphor, he explained that people think “metaphor” means something is “wrong,” so the Bible must be taken literally.

On taking Mark 4:35-41 literally or metaphorically, he suggested: “Literally, it means if I’m in a boat on the Sea of Galilee with Jesus and there’s a big storm, I know the storm will stop,” Donald said. “Metaphorically, when I’m unemployed and about to be evicted, I remember that Jesus is on my boat and will help me.”

He added, “Emmaus happens all the time. If we look, we may discover any time that Jesus is there talking with us.”

**For information, call 206-932-2928 or email [pastor@admiralchurch.org](mailto:pastor@admiralchurch.org).**

## Earth Ministry rallies opposition to coal exports

More than 10,000 people have turned out in Oregon, Washington and Montana at 11 official hearings and three people's hearings to testify and express solidarity with the movement to stop development of Oregon and Washington ports to ship coal from Montana and Wyoming to Asia.

In Seattle, more than 150 Earth Ministry /Washington Interfaith Power & Light (WAIPL) members and other people of faith came, said LeeAnne Beres, executive director and member at Fauntleroy UCC.

About 30 religious leaders testified, each emphasizing this is a moral issue: "Our faith calls us to care for creation and love our neighbors. Exporting coal goes against these values."

Religious leaders also stood in solidarity with the Lummi Nation on whose sacred land the Cherry Point coal export terminal would be built.

"There was also a good faith community turnout at Spokane's hearing," she said.

There, 700 of 800 who came wore red, a symbol of opposition to coal mining, transport and exports.

Jessie Dye of Earth Ministry/WAIPL held three Faith Leader Breakfasts for Creation Care in Spokane, Bellingham and Seattle before the hearings



LeeAnne Beres with faith community opponents to coal exports.

in those cities, providing background information and training for clergy and lay leaders who wanted to testify.

"Trainings prepared faith leaders to speak from the heart on moral, health, environmental and economic issues at stake in the process," LeeAnne said.

As of mid December, 225 religious leaders had signed on to Earth Ministry/WAIPL's "no coal export" letter to the Commissioner of Public Lands, and signatures are still welcome.

Another 13 denominational executives and religious organization leaders signed a letter calling for a comprehensive review of the Port of Morrow project in Oregon.

LeeAnne said clergy and

lay leaders may still sign an interfaith statement to stop coal exports.

She hopes more UCC members will speak out to protect the health and livable conditions in the Northwest. The goal is to have 250 religious leaders sign it. The comment period lasts through Jan. 21.

The letter is at [http://earth-ministry.org/take-action/advocacy/PPC\\_Religious\\_Leaders\\_Letter/endorse-principles](http://earth-ministry.org/take-action/advocacy/PPC_Religious_Leaders_Letter/endorse-principles).

"Big coal companies want to ship coal from Montana and Wyoming to Asia through coal export terminals that are proposed to be built," she said. "If that happens, mile-and-a-half long uncovered coal trains will disrupt communities across

Washington, coal dust will pollute surrounding neighborhoods, and harbors and fishing grounds will be damaged."

In addition, she said burning "dirty coal" in Asian power plants will poison air and water. The pollution will blow back over the Pacific to give U.S. children asthma, disrupt the climate and acidify waters.

LeeAnne said coal companies say the choice is between jobs and a clean environment.

"In fact, coal produces fewer jobs than any other exports," she said. "Coal hasn't been an economic boom for West Coast cities in the past. It will destroy more jobs than it will create."

In 2011, with the help of the faith community, Earth Ministry/WAIPL passed a bill to end burning coal for power in Washington, and to invest in local economic development and a growing clean energy sector.

"People of faith will not allow coal companies to put profits before the best interests of our families and the world we leave our children," LeeAnne said. "We know we can work together to solve problems we face and leave a legacy of clean and healthy renewable energy for the next generation."

**For information, call 206-632-2426 or visit [www.earth-ministry.org](http://www.earth-ministry.org).**

## Coal trains would have impact in all along the route through five states

At a recent adult forum at Westminster UCC in Spokane, members Randy and Linda Crowe presented concerns about coal trains coming through Spokane from Wyoming and Montana enroute to West Coast ports.

Randy and Linda, recently retired from ministries at N-Sid-Sen and Veradale UCC, shared information they learned a Faith Leader Breakfast for Creation Care in Spokane.

"We are called into covenant with the whole creation and called to pray for healing

the planet," said Linda, quoting Carlos Correa, of the UCC Justice and Witness Ministries. "As we consider coal trains coming through, what does it mean to be in covenant with God and caring for creation?"

They attended the Dec. 4 hearing in Spokane on broadening the scope of the environmental impact statement if a coal terminal is built at Cherry Point near Bellingham.

Randy said proponents want the focus limited to the immediate area of the terminal, rather than the 1,500 miles the

coal will go through Montana, Idaho, Washington and Oregon. They also want to overlook the impact on Native Americans.

"The Corps of Engineers should consider the noise pollution, coal dust, diesel fumes and traffic congestion of having 60 more trains a day go through Spokane," he said, even though just 13 will go to Cherry Point.

"Each terminal wants its impact considered separately, rather than considering the cumulative impact," said Randy.

Spokane is a "choke point" for trains, which will go along

the Columbia Gorge.

"I hope enough people attend hearings so the Army Corps of Engineers broadens the scope of the environmental impact statement," he said.

Linda is grateful the Washington State Environmental Protection Act gives people the opportunity to have a say: "We know from work with the Spokane Alliance the influence of showing up," she said. "It matters. I have contacted elected officials to let them know my concerns are motivated because I'm a person of faith."