



# Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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## Justice intern helps plan bank boycott

Renee Lumia, a recent graduate of Pacific Lutheran University was looking for and found a way to apply knowledge from her environmental studies and biology degrees to understand how natural phenomena affect human activity.

Before she became an intern with the Pacific Northwest Conference UCC's Justice Leadership Program her personal spiritual journey had left her with a negative view of religion. While she believed in a higher power, she said she was an atheist for a while.

Her university advisor recommended the UCC's JLP program.

Renee was assigned to work with 350 Seattle because of her passion for environment and nonviolent civil disobedience. She was assigned to All Pilgrims UCC which has a passion for social justice.

October 23 was a highlight for Renee as she helped organize Divest the Continued on Page 4



Renee Lumia with her group call Chase to invest in renewables. Hundreds participated in Seattle's Divest the Globe event on Oct. 23. Photos courtesy of Renee Lumia

## Moderator sets forth the new, invites donations

A year and a half ago the PNC took a big step and invested in hiring a minister of church vitality to serve us. Conference leaders knew there was something about nurturing vitality that was integral to our ministry, even if they were not sure where that was going to lead us, or how we could pay for and sustain that work for the long term. It felt like a moment to take a risk and step into the new.

Sept. 30 to Oct. 1, more than 80 of us from the PNC gathered for a brand new kind of coming together at our beautiful UCC church camp N-Sid-Sen in Idaho.

As a conference, we've been in a time of deep change. Our old patterns and ways of doing things no longer serve us. The old work we did is different from the ministry we need to be doing today.

### Moderator's Reflections Peter Ilgenfritz

We have been living into turning our little boat of the PNC through the wind of change for many years, and I have been part of that intentional work for a year and a half, as I've served as moderator.

We've had partial successes, familiar failures and a return to old, comfortable patterns. At the Fall Gathering, something new happened.

Today, the PNC has new clarity that vitality begins with deepening relationships with one another. As our churches, communities, and world face huge challenges, we know we are strengthened

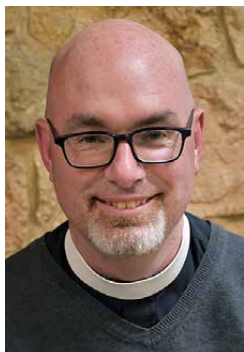
by our ability to stand together and not apart. At our Fall Gathering, we had a chance to talk in small groups and build deeper connections around issues in ministry, social justice, faith practices that concern us and the communities where we live and serve. I'm thankful to David Anderson and Carol Coleman for convening some of those conversations.

The heart of the work we are doing and the work of change the church is called into was embodied for me in our installation service for Courtney Stange-Treager on Friday night. Instead of gathering where I thought we would—on comfortable chairs lined up in neat rows in the beautiful room above us—we gathered on wooden benches in

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# Things are going to get worse-no way around it

## Conference Comments



By The Rev.  
Mike Denton  
Conference  
Minister

**The church  
is needed  
now  
like never  
before  
because  
things  
are going  
to get  
worse.**

Much of what I've written or preached has had a message something like this: "Things are going to get worse before they get better." I've been thinking about this message a lot recently and I'm not sure I believe it any more. What I'm starting to believe is something that makes me considerably more uncomfortable to say out loud but here it is: "Things are going to get worse. No shinier, more optimistic other side. Things are going to get worse."

I don't see a way around it. The environmental changes we're already experiencing are just beginning. What's started was what predicted if we didn't change the way we interacted with the Earth and we didn't collectively make the changes that were needed. So, as predicted, we're well into a human generated mass extinction event in which there is no certainty humanity—along with millions of other species—will survive.

Culturally, we're in the middle of what many have described as a cold civil war in this country and it's warming up. Many are treating their privileges as their right or inheritance. Many are waking up to their oppression, realizing it's killing them and saying "No" with stronger statements and actions. We're not being called to bridge the divide nearly as much as we're being asked to take sides over and over again. We were warned by many and saw the signs but...

Most everything seems to be viewed through the lens of a toxic individualism that establishes the privileges particularly of straight, white, well off, christian men as the norm. These privileges are presented as a reward for "good work" or services. We forget how many of these things count on the diminishment of someone else's life. We act as though we can also purchase freedom from accountability.

We forget that we are participants in this world not consumers of it and that means that sometimes "good enough" for us can be mean good for most. We forget that receiving the rewards for enforcing these norms is our share of the loot that Ta-Nehisi Coates describes as "plunder."

And our churches' resources (people, finances, time, etc.) continue to be pittered away as, in the middle of existential threats, people's

expectations of us are increasing.

We confuse mission with maintenance in a time when we sometimes seem to have forgotten what we have to offer. Our buildings, governance structures, our worship or our membership mean little if we aren't thinking about how these things save lives and help make life worth living.

Please hear those words as what has become for me an exasperated, heart rending confession. I am part of a tradition that was called to be prophetic but, all too often, was called to be prophetic without sacrifice. I have sometimes defended privileges of clergy persons as rights or defended the poor behavior of a community as inevitable. I have treated commitment as a commodity instead of as a responsibility and means for accountability. I have placed the false idol of the institutional church in the place where Christ should reside while forgetting who serves whom.

Things are going to get worse.

As they do we must figure out ways to serve like never before. We must pray like never before. We must sacrifice like never before. We must speak up like never before.

We must let go like never before and hold on to each other like never before. We must love like never before. We must ask seek out more sustainable behavior than ever before. We must recycle like never before. We must conserve water like never before. We must celebrate children like never before.

We must have more potlucks than ever before and more rummage sales than ever before. We must attend more funerals than ever before and visit the sick more than ever before. We must feed the hungry like never before and be an open space for our community like never before.

The most exciting and frightening news you may hear today is that the church is needed, now, like never before because things are going to get worse.

Grace and peace dear Siblings in Christ.  
Grace and peace.

## Transitions announced

Suquamish United Church of Christ installed **Mark Travis** as their pastor on Oct. 29.

## Annual Meeting vote planned

The 2018 PNC Annual Meeting delegates will gather April 27 to 29 at the Yakima Convention Center. Business will include a vote amendments to the national UCC Constitution and Bylaws, recommended by the 31st General Synod.

## WRYE will be in June in Hawaii

The Western Regional Youth Event (WRYE) of the UCC will be June 25 to 29 in Honolulu, Hawaii. The theme is "Come to the Water: E Hele Mai I Ka Wai" from Isaiah 55:1.

WRYE gathers youth from western UCC conferences to worship, hear keynote speakers and musicians, attend break-out workshops, engage in fellowship with other youth, and participate in service outreach and cultural appreciation, said Cristina Airaghi, pastor for children and youth at Bellevue First Congregational UCC, who is on the planning group.

Small groups will explore such topics as the spirituality of activism, "Blue Marine" theology, and liturgical music writing. There will be an afternoon of community service, plus traditional Hawaiian cultural experiences, like learning about the islands' history and culture at the Polynesian Cultural Center and the Polynesian Voyaging Society, plus beach time.

## Conference News Briefs

The WRYE is for youth in 8th to 12th grades from 10 western states in the UCC. Youth will stay at the University of Hawaii. Youth will travel June 24 and 29. The cost is \$500 plus flights ranging from \$700 to \$1,000. **For information, call 425-454-5001 ext. 1021 or email [cristina@fccbellevue.org](mailto:cristina@fccbellevue.org).**

## 'Faith over Fear' roadshow set

The Rev. Terry Kylo and Aneelah Afzali, Esq. are touring Washington state in November with a "Faith Over Fear: Standing with Our Muslim Neighbors" roadshow to counter Islamophobia and the \$30 million industry that promotes it.

"We are committed as a Conference to welcome and educate ourselves about immigrants and refugees through our Welcoming Resolution passed this April.

This is an excellent step on

this path," said Adele Reynolds.

A website with updated roadshow dates is at: <https://www.facebook.com/search/events/?q=fait%20over%20fear%3A%20standing%20with%20our%20muslim%20neighbors>

## Kizzie Jones is on BookStop

Kizzie Jones invites folks to bring up and comment on her page on the Society of Children's Writers and Illustrators BookStop event through Nov. 30. She said to click the bottom line, *Firma el Libro*. of a mustard-colored comment box is on the right to comment. **It is at <http://www.scbwi.org/scwibookstop-display/?id=476971>.**

## Interfaith Pilgrimage set

Corey Passons from Community for Interfaith Celebration in Olympia will be traveling Nov. 6 to 16 in Israel as a guest with an Faith Journeys, a religious tour agency. He is following Jesus' footsteps from Bethlehem to Galilee to Jerusalem, visiting holy sites of Abrahamic faiths. In spring 2019, he plans to lead Faith Journey's first interfaith pilgrimage.

## UCC Disaster Ministries online

The UCC Disaster Ministries has a webpage with updates on responses to recent disasters, Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Maria, Hurricane Irma in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, California wild fires, Mexico's earthquakes.

It also has follow-up on Hurricane Matthew in the U.S. and Caribbean, East Africa famine, West Virginia floods, Nepal's earthquake and more.

## PNC Men's Retreat is Feb.2-4

The PNC Men's Retreat will be at Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center from Friday, Feb. 2 to Sunday, Feb. 4 at 11 a.m. The theme is "Male Relationships: When We Were Boys." Men will talk about friendships that were meaningful and reflect on how they shaped them for life as adults. This is time away to be with other men for worship, music, sharing and hanging out.

There will be the usual Day of Silence option from Thursday night to Friday afternoon, Feb. 1 to 2. It may include a service component, said organizer Rick Russell

**For information, call 206-999-6968 or visit [pilgrimfirs.com](http://pilgrimfirs.com).**

## Moderator defines change he saw beginning at Fall Gathering

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the outdoor chapel on the shore of the lake.

It was 6:30 p.m. The sun had set. It would soon be dark. I wondered what we were doing there. As dusk turned to twilight, then deep dark, speakers had to use cell phones to light up texts and sermons. It seemed needlessly messy and difficult. We couldn't see a thing.

When we blessed Courtney and celebrated her new role in conference leadership, Conference Minister Mike Denton invited her to step down the

center aisle where we were gathered in the dark. He invited those with cell phones and flash lights to shine the lights up towards the sky.

Suddenly, the whole space was alight, a sparkling of shadows and light, and all of us together. Then I got it. This was exactly where we needed to be, not in our "usual" space in rows on comfortable chairs, but here on the lake shore where we needed to hold lights for one another, so we could sing, where we needed to experience the discomfort of the new, and

the wonder of sitting in the dark seeing and not seeing the way ahead. It was an installation service I'll not forget.

As church, we are called into the new by the Spirit of God who is always calling us into new creation. There will be challenging, disorienting, freeing, exciting and terrifying times ahead. It will be full of wonder if we keep our eyes open. On the lake shore looking into the dark, we cannot see our way. But the light is here. God is here with us. Together with God, we are finding our ways

into more life-giving, relational, communal, freeing ways to be and gather together.

There our conference experienced that newness. We found we need each other, and we are better because of it. Together the PNC is lighting a way forward to deeper connections that will strengthen our communities.

Please be a Friend of the PNC, so together we can support the UCC, singing of vitality, deeper connection and relationship through our region.

**Send support to 325 N 125th St. Seattle, WA. 98133.**

# Hundreds joined 19 groups to cover 100 Seattle banks

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Globe in Seattle, with hundreds of people in 19 action groups protesting at more than 100 banks. Four groups were willing to risk arrest. Six people were arrested for chaining themselves to a bank entrance.

Globally, people in 60 cities in 10 countries on four continents participated in the Big Bank Boycott that day, she said.

In Seattle, 350 Seattle worked with Divest the Globe and Mazaska Talks. Mazaska is a Lakota word for money.

“The goal of the campaign is to encourage businesses and individuals to pressure banks to divest fossil fuels investments or they would boycott the bank or close their accounts.

The focus is on holdings in tar sands oil, one of the most environmentally detrimental forms of fossil fuels, Renee said. Banks continue to invest in companies pursuing major construction projects like pipelines and export terminals to ship the oil to Asian markets.

Fossil fuel companies rely on loans from banks to fund the projects, she said.

“Divest the Globe tells the banks that their investment practices have consequences. Mazaska has the same goal. It grew out of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) protests as an ongoing effort to end financing of nonconsensual pipelines. Often fuel companies tell banks they have permission to cross tribal land, but don’t she said.

“We visited every bank in Seattle with tar sands oil investments,” she said.

At the banks, they entered and did different chants like, “Divest from the Pipelines.” They held banners saying, “Invest in renewable energy.”

Then they read a letter calling the bank to divest and asked the bank manager to give the CEO a letter and two petitions, one signed by people who have divested or plan to divest, and a

second from UCC churches that have divested or will divest.

Each action group had a route and banks to visit. One went on bicycles. One dressed as Lorax and used Lorax quotes about defending the environment. One had a band. One wore yellow biohazard suits.

Several banks shut down. The first banks visited called other banks about the protest. Later, banks had signs in the window: “Closed for security issues,” or “Closed due to protests.” Some called security.

“We chanted outside and gave fliers to passersby. Some let in one person to give the letter and petitions,” Renee said.

Action groups kept in communication with each other.

“It was peaceful and effective. Major banks have divested from fossil fuels because of the movement. BNP, the second largest bank in Europe and eighth largest in the world is divesting from fossil fuels,” Renee said. “U.S. Bank divested from an Enbridge Gas Distribution proposed pipeline.

“We need to do events like Oct. 23 over and over. It’s awesome to be part of such a large movement,” she said.

It was quite a contrast to sitting in the library for four years studying the environment, said Renee, who valued participating in such a protest, physically going to banks, being shut out and shutting down the banks briefly.

In early September, she started with 350 Seattle, which seeks environmental justice and a green economy. Planning the boycott was one of her major projects this fall.

Since the Divest the Globe, she has been working on challenging the Thin Green Line region—Oregon, Washington and British Columbia—where fossil fuel companies want to build pipelines and export terminals to export their products to Asia.

“We are forming a “thin



Larger group protests with signs at Bank of America.

Photos courtesy of Renee Lumia

green line” to stand against those efforts, to promote a sustainable, just economy for the future through renewable energy,” she said.

Renee is also documenting progress on such projects denial of a key permit for the Longview Coal Export Terminal, and the company’s efforts to challenge the denial.

She is updating a presentation to show at organizations to spread awareness. She is also preparing promotional fliers and handouts and an interactive map on the 350 website with updates on projects.

“Even after projects are rejected, companies repeatedly challenge the decisions and try to restart them when attention is diverted,” she said.

Renee is working on education for UCC churches on the bank boycott and divestment. Some UCC churches have divested. She seeks to inform other churches in the Seattle area about divestment.

She is also organizing Artful Activism, which is developing a musical movement. It is recruiting musicians who have written songs on climate change and social justice to perform at a concert. Thirteen Pacific Northwest artists recently made an album, “Protect What You Love.”

“Music can reach humans on a different level than other forms of activism,” she said.

In addition, she is rebuilding 350 Seattle’s Civic Action Team to help citizens contact representatives in Congress and the state legislature.

“I am new to the UCC,” said Renee, who is excited to be part of All Pilgrims. “The messages, sermons and mission resonate for her with their emphasis on social justice and care of the environment.

“It is what I have been looking for. I stopped going to church at 18. Now I’m 23 and enjoy being part of this church community,” she said.

She is working with Greg Turk, All Pilgrims pastor, to develop an intergenerational Young Souls’ Group to meet to bowl, eat or just be together.

Part of the JLP program is also the Sojourning Sundays Workshops, facilitated by the advisors, Elizabeth Dickson and Claire West.

“Workshops call us to do soul searching, to see how our experience is shaping how we are in the world, to be vulnerable to talk about previous relationships impacting us, and to share experiences and challenges,” she said.

It’s what I needed,” said Renee who grew up in Maple Valley. “I am glad to be involved with a church that believes in a God of compassion.

**For information, call 206-929-5950 or email [info@350seattle.org](mailto:info@350seattle.org).**

## JLP interns' experiences multiply as they share with each other

By Hunter Paulson-Smith

Two months into this year's Justice Leadership Program (JLP), there has been a shift from theory to practice in the interns' lives. In Seattle, the JLP, an affiliate of the Young Adult Service Communities (YASC) Network, puts young adults into community organizing and advocacy work.

As they have become involved in projects, JLP interns have gone beyond what's expected of them. The JLP roommates, now good friends, have done much in two months.

Every week, each spends 32 hours at their nonprofit agency, five hours at a UCC congregation, and three hours in class and spiritual sojourning. Each piece of the JLP model benefits their learning as they find connections between the nonprofits, churches and interactions.

As the intern at Keystone UCC and Earth Ministry, I've made connections between the two groups and will staff an Earth Ministry "Colleague Connections" event at Keystone later this month.

The event connects folks already involved with Earth Ministry and those interested in being involved. Earth Ministry is a nonprofit doing environmental advocacy with a faith-based lens. Connecting the various nonprofits shows the power of building coalitions.

Leda Zakarison, a JLP intern from Pullman, also works at Earth Ministry. She attended two hearings to ask decision-makers to block new fossil fuel infrastructure projects.

One was a Tacoma City Council meeting hearing comments on a proposal to temporarily halt fossil fuel projects in the industrial Tideflats region. Leda testified for Earth Ministry and people of faith.

In her testimony, she said, "Being a person of faith means valuing responsibility, integrity and justice for all, as well as



**Top, Leda Zakarison and Jessica Zimmerle of Earth Ministries in Longview Nov. 2 after a hearing. Left, E West testified on budget priorities Nov. 1 at Seattle City Hall.**

Photo courtesy of Hunter Paulson-Smith

Seattle (CCGS). E has testified twice. In October, E spoke in opposition to a housing displacement in a North Beacon Hill community.

"One soon-to-be displaced tenant, Esther 'Little Dove' John, is a long-time Black and Native activist and community leader. I had a day's notice to learn about the displacement and write a speech for public comment at the community meeting," E said.

"The energy in the room was electric. I was immediately welcomed and gained a sense of the situation by chatting with folks sitting near me," E said.

"I thought of a mantra I often repeat to myself when I am nervous, 'Speak the truth, even if your voice shakes.' When I spoke, I abandoned a much of the speech I prepared, opting to speak extemporaneously.

"The audience of more than 200 people interrupted me several times to cheer and whistle support in my two minutes. That moment has been the most exciting moment of my time at CCGS," E said.

E testified again at a Seattle City Council budget hearing. E spoke passionately on behalf of those unfairly impacted by housing and development policies.

Renee Lumia's story is on pages 1 and 4.

Amanda Agrellas of Seattle

and Bri Little of Washington, D.C., are at agencies addressing homelessness.

Amanda, who is at Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness, said, "Our main work is in city budget advocacy and securing funding for social services homeless people rely on. We registered many to vote and did get-out-the-vote action in shelters and hygiene centers to give people a voice in the democratic process."

At Real Change, Bri works with vendors to distribute and publish the weekly newspaper. Real Change "provides opportunity and a voice for low-income and homeless people while acting for economic, social and racial justice." Bri has a column for interviews with different vendors, to shed light on their lives and humanity.

JLP intern Daniel del la Rosa has done multiple campaigns and roles in SLocal 6, a labor union. He worked with security guards, janitorial staff and other service workers at Amazon and at SeaTac Airport.

Each of the nonprofits offers challenges and opportunities. The most valuable part of JLP is the convergence of the interns' work. After long days testifying, protesting, creative writing, managing databases, tabling and canvassing, they share a meal and talk about their work and the overlap of their agencies.

The work tackles ideas like equity and justice that seem abstract. These concepts become tangible on the front lines.

Sharing experiences gives us a more holistic understanding of social justice. It's a crash course in environmental advocacy and faith-based community organizing. Each has six other points of entry into Seattle's world of social justice.

**For information, call 206-632-6021, email [justiceleadership@gmail.com](mailto:justiceleadership@gmail.com) or visit [justiceleadership.org](http://justiceleadership.org).**

# Don Mayer likens visions of UCC and STM

As Seattle University's School of Theology at Ministry (STM) celebrates its 20th anniversary, retired UCC pastor Don Mayer, who helped in its formation and taught UCC history and polity from 2001 to 2004, believes the STM embodies UCC's founding vision.

A brochure on the Don and Lynnea Mayer scholarship fund states for him how the STM reflects that vision.

"For us, STM is a singular contemporary institutional embodiment of the theological passion in which the UCC was conceived and born," he said.

That vision in the 1943 Basis of Union affirmed "our devotion to one God" and said, "Confronting the divisions and hostilities of our world, and hearing with a deepened sense of responsibility the prayer of our Lord 'that they all may be one'...we do declare ourselves one body and do set forth the following articles of agreement as the basis of our life."

Given that faith communities continue to confront "our world's divisions and hostilities," Don said, "the prayer that all may be one calls us to a deeper responsibility than our UCC forbears could have imagined in 1957.

"For those of us who love the UCC's history and contemporary life, the STM is an astonishing response to that calling," he said.

While 2017 is 60 years since the UCC's founding, merging the Congregational Christian and the Evangelical and Reformed churches, Don sees its context in other commemorations this year.

Oct. 31 was the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, Don said that date is also significant in UCC history. It was also the 300th anniversary of the imperial order in Germany that founded the Evangelical Church, one of the UCC's four denominational roots.



**Lynnea and Don Mayer were at a recent STM anniversary.**

Photo courtesy of the School of Theology and Ministry

Before 1817, followers of Luther (Lutherans) and John Calvin (Reformed) could not take communion together, so Reformed Prussian monarch, Frederick William III and his Lutheran wife Louise never took communion together. After her death, he united the churches as the Evangelical Church, Don said.

On Oct. 31, 1817, he called leaders of the two denominations to celebrate communion, bringing their own understandings to communion, but being united in communion.

Frederick William III declared: "May the promised point in time not be far away when all believers, holding one belief, one love, and one hope come to be members of one flock under one shepherd."

German immigrants to Midwest rivers valleys in the 1830s formed the Evangelical Church of North America.

In 1934, the Evangelical Church united with the Reformed Church in the United States, to form the Evangelical and Reformed (E & R) Church, which almost immediately initiated the move toward union with the Congregational Christian Churches, he said.

Don has a personal connection to that history. When he was two years old, his mother, Helen Mayer, went in 1934 to

that convention. She was one of two women delegates elected by the Pacific Northwest Synod of the Evangelical Church. From 1931 to 1935, his parents lived in Portland, where his father served an Evangelical mission church.

The 12 German Evangelical churches in Washington, Oregon and Idaho were served by Eden Seminary graduates who were close friends, he said.

"My parents dropped me off with my grandparents in St. Louis and went to the Evangelical and Reformed Churches Merger Convention in Cleveland," he said.

After the E & R merger, Samuel Press, president of Eden in St. Louis, and Truman Douglas, pastor of Pilgrim Congregational Church there, had convened an congenial group of Congregational and E & R pastors. They initiated a national dialogue, which led to the formation of the UCC, an event theologian Reinhold Niebuhr called "a landmark in American religious history."

In 1935, Don's family moved to the Midwest and he spent his growing years in Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin. In his young years, he caught his parent's enthusiasm for the time when "all would be one." His studies at Elmhurst College, an E & R school led him

to seminary.

After graduating from Eden, Don was pastor of a new church in Mexico, Mo., followed by 14 years as pastor of Hope UCC in St. Louis, where he also served on the Board of Education. After a 10-year pastorate in DeKalb, Ill., and an interim in Wenatchee, Don and Lynnea began a 10-year pastorate at Eagle Harbor UCC on Bainbridge Island. After retiring in 1997, he served two interims at Plymouth in Seattle.

Don and Lynnea have been involved with the STM throughout its 20 years.

He was moderator of the UCC conference and became the conference representative to the new ecumenical theological school, which began as two institutions, the Institute for Ecumenical Theological Studies and the Catholic Theological School. They cooperated over the years and morphed into the STM, said Don, who now lives with Lynnea at Horizon House and attends Plymouth UCC.

"The STM is recognized as a forerunner in theological education, attracting students ranging from mainline traditions, to those with a more theologically conservative background but concerned about social justice, and including Jewish and Muslim students. Because it's cutting edge, it pulls in grants from the Lilly Foundation," he said.

Three years ago, Don wrote a piece, "Pterodactyl Speaking," expressing his enthusiasm for the STM carrying into the unforeseen future hopes of Vatican II, the Blake-Pike proposal for a wider Protestant-merger, and the ecumenical movement.

"Only a diminishing few of us living fossils remember those heady days, but from every STM gathering, I come flying home—on winds of the Spirit.

**For information, call 360-328-3555, [d.l.mayer@icloud.com](mailto:d.l.mayer@icloud.com) or go to [pncuccnews.org/sept17pnc/090117scholarship.html](http://pncuccnews.org/sept17pnc/090117scholarship.html)**

# School of Theology and Ministry marks 20th year

Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry (STM) became an ecumenical theological seminary offering various master's degrees for Protestant and Catholic students in 1997.

The UCC was among the original nine denominations that formed the Institute for Ecumenical Theological Studies (IETS), the precursor to the School of Theology and Ministry, an accredited theological seminary at the Jesuit-run Seattle University, which was founded in 1891 and has 7,400 students in graduate and undergraduate programs.

Fourteen Christian denominations have signed formal partnerships, and the STM has collaborative relationships Christian and interreligious groups locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

**Graduate theological education** at Seattle University began as a summer program in 1969 with faith partners.

From 1984 to 1990, the independent Northwest Theological Union showed there were students interested in theological education in Seattle.

In 1993, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) approved Seattle University's master's degrees in pastoral studies, transforming spirituality and a master of divinity.

For two years, 10 Protestant, Anglican and Unitarian traditions explored partnering with Seattle University. In 1997, SU's Board of Trustees formally established the STM as a graduate school.

**From 1997 to 2000**, the UCC had a memorandum of understanding with Seattle University, reported Dee Eisenhauer, pastor at Eagle Harbor UCC in Bainbridge Island, in the November 2010 PNC-UCC News.

Since its founding, the STM has offered accredited master's degrees in divinity and spiritu-



ality. Keeping up with changing needs the school now also offers master's degrees in transformational leadership and in couples and family therapy, and offers a doctor of ministry.

**When Dee was co-chair** of the STM executive board, she said it was "a lively model of creative cooperation in theological studies connected with a Jesuit school that emphasizes doing justice."

Students were in classes together in a common core curriculum, and each denomination set requirements for studies in their history, polity, theology, ministry and worship.

"The students need to know about other traditions not only for their future ministries but also to be ready to engage in discussions with other students about what their churches believe and do," Dee said

**Denominations now** involved are African Methodist Episcopal, American Baptist, Church of the Brethren, Community of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, ELCA Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian, UCC, United Methodist and Unitarian.

The STM has 13 core faculty, nine extended faculty, 32 adjuncts and seven extended adjunct and emeriti faculty.

**Over the years, many UCC** pastors and members have been involved, with its formation, on its board and teaching.

**Gail Crouch**, retired pastor from University UCC Seattle, and **Don Mayer**, retired pastor from Eagle Harbor UCC, taught for several years. Gail was also coordinator for UCC students for several years.

**Susan Yarrow Morris** taught UCC liturgics, including history and theology, for about

five years in the early 2000s as liturgical coordinator for UCC students.

Retired pastors **David Kratz** and **Greg Turner** from 2009 to 2013 co-taught a class on UCC history, theology, polity and ministry. David continues to teach.

For early years, founding denominations helped fund the STM, until their funding dwindled. The STM, as a unique model of theological education, has drawn other funders.

Conference Ministers from **Jim Halfaker** to **Mike Denton** have supported it, and UCC students who have attended to earn master of divinity and other degrees. Jim was senior development officer from 1999 to 2004 raising Protestant funds to remodel Campion Hall chapel into an ecumenical chapel and multi-faith prayer room, and to renew Chieftan student center into the main STM building, Hunthausen Hall.

**Maria Groen** of Fauntleroy UCC now is senior director of development.

**Rick Russell**, retired from Eastgate in Bellevue, taught ministerial and theological integration, which is the field education component of the graduate degrees, from 2002 to 2017.

**Carol Scott-Kassner** of University UCC taught a practicum in spiritual retreats.

**Joy Haertig** is in her third season as the Faith Formation Chaplain for the UCC students. This year there are five students in master's programs locally and one doing the doctoral program from Ohio. Current UCC students are **Allison Decker** of Fauntleroy, **Cheryl Ellsworth**, **Amara Oden** of Tolt in Carnation, **Marci Scott-Weis** of St. Paul's, **Jermell Witherspoon** and **Karen Georgia Thompson** (in Ohio).

The number varies annually. There were 13 in 2010, when 80 of 272 students were

working on master of divinity degrees. It's not a seminary for Catholic priests.

Susan, **Tim Devine** and **Catherine Foote** were liturgical consultants. Tara Barber connects students with the Committee on Ministry.

Greg was on the UCC Outreach Committee for a while, retiring from that responsibility earlier this year.

Others involved with the STM include **Karyn Frazier**.

**"It's great to have** a place for students interested in ministry to go to seminary without leaving the conference," Dee said. "It's ideal for us in the UCC with our ecumenical interest and identity to expose our students to students from different traditions. It's practical ecumenical cooperation of learning to be good neighbors."

**"It sees ministry** in the broadest context," said David. "Being a seminary these days is a tough and uncertain, but the STM is a great opportunity."

"STM students find a solid ecumenical experience. SU as a whole, is an intellectually stimulating setting, with ties to and study of most issues facing ministry today in the church and society," said Greg.

The STM, a unique, inclusive school committed to interreligious relationships, brings together people from different religious and spiritual backgrounds through special events, panels and worship.

**Now its Center** for Religious Wisdom and World Affairs uses insights from faith communities to address some of the world's complex issues.

At the celebration, STM dean Mark Markully reported that the STM has had its first Muslim graduate. The STM also has a relationship with the government of Vietnam.

**For information, call 206-926-5330 or visit [seattleu.edu/stm](http://seattleu.edu/stm).**

# Sabbatical is time to listen to post-fire grief

Following recovery from a March 2016 fire at St. Paul's UCC in Seattle, its pastor Tim Devine chose to focus a month-long sabbatical in June 2017 visiting eight UCC congregations that had experienced a building fire.

In the aftermath of the fire at St. Paul's, some of the pastors from those churches who were his friends told him he would be "exhausted, emotional and even forgetful at times" from the trauma of the event.

They also told him there would be unexpected "grace-filled moments."

Now Tim has captured their experiences and advice in a paper he wrote on his visits, "Re-Formed by Fire."

He shared what he learned from visiting or interviewing pastors and members at Pilgrim/New Pilgrims Community UCC in Anacortes, First and St. Stephen's UCC in Baltimore, First Congregational UCC of Berkeley, Memorial Congregational UCC at Cannon Ball, N.D., on the Standing Rock Reservation, two churches in Wisconsin—Plymouth UCC of Eau Claire and Redeemer UCC of Sussex—and First Congregational UCC in Vancouver, Wa.

"There were two elements: I wanted to listen to stories. When I did, I realized how significant it was just to hear the stories," he said.

His hope was to learn from the shared experiences.

In the "postlude" of the paper, Tim wrote that by sharing their experiences, pastors and members countered their feelings of isolation and being overwhelmed by the details of recovery.

Circumstances of the fires and their effects varied. Some churches burned to the ground. Some had smoke damage. Some could continue to worship in their buildings. Others were welcomed by nearby



Tim Devine speaks on his church's experience with a fire.

churches to use space while building repairs or rebuilding was underway.

In all cases, the fires were traumatic events for the congregations and pastors.

"In insurance language, 'acts of God,' can make for complicated feelings," Tim said.

A lightning strike in Eau Claire, a prairie fire at Cannon Ball on a direct line to the building raised theological questions for some, he said. Arson fires in Anacortes and Vancouver raised deeper levels of anger and concern about targeting persecution.

"Seeing the church burn from near or far, and even the lingering post-fire smell can take a long time to fade and may need to be dealt with directly," Tim said. "The personal sadness for pastors and staff who lost everything or many things in their offices was enormous."

The next concern was the complications of insurance coverage. Tim said all would have benefitted from knowing more about their policies, such as Cannon Ball having no property insurance because of an association minister's decision, the lack of insurance for personal items of the sexton's family in the Berkeley fire, and having coverage for only half

of what was needed to rebuild in Sussex.

"All found the process slow. Baltimore hired an attorney, and Sussex changed carriers, Tim added.

Another common concern was having documentation and inventory of what was lost for making a claim. In Eau Claire, computer files were backed up on site, so the fire claimed all the information.

Tim said grief resurfaced, so the times of returning to the sanctuary or a new worship space were emotional.

"For some, the fire was an opportunity. St. Paul's added renovations and building security upgrades useful for a building heavily used by outside groups without staff present," he said. "Berkeley is leaning toward affordable housing, and selling a parking lot and another building to use the space for much needed low-income housing."

Dynamics related to pastoral leadership also varied.

"Pastors with long, settled leadership stayed to see the process through. For two, the fire was early in their ministry and re-defined their vision. In Cannon Ball, church life is on hold, but the pastor is available. In Anacortes, the pastor moved," he said.

Tim also found that as in any time of loss or grief, there is much support, with "surprises about who is present and who is silent."

He found it helpful to have a list of how people can help.

"These experiences also raised theological questions: Why us? Where does God live? What constitutes a church 'home'? Is the relationship to the building or to the people?" Tim said. "The predominant answer was a realization that the connections were to the people, but there was a hunger to reconnect with the physical space in periods of reconstruction and recovery."

Another observation was that new people who come after the fire have no experience of that time, so it's important to let go of the public "remember when" statements if they are to be integrated into the church, he said.

Tim said the question, "Why us?" is better framed as "Why not us?"

"God does not direct these actions to punish or make a point. God does not intercede, but God accompanies us on the journey. We are offered support and presence and not left alone. There are times for silence, lament, listening, decisions, hard work and celebration. Each story is unique," Tim said.

"We are told that contemporary church life in the UCC needs to be about transformation," he said.

"So the question becomes, 'Now that it is us, but what do we learn from this experience and how will we move forward incorporating the lessons learned?'" he said.

Tim suggests taking a cue from the prophet Isaiah at a time of suffering or loss and to trust that God is "about to do a new thing."

**For information, call 206-783-6733 or access report at [st-pucc.org](http://st-pucc.org) - click Fire Recovery.**



# YWCA Olympia honors Leslie Cushman

As attorney Leslie Cushman pushes on her quest with De-Escalate Washington to pass Initiative 940, the YWCA Olympia chose her as their 2017 Woman of Achievement for her work in racial justice and civic leadership.

Tammy Stampfli, her pastor at the United Churches of Olympia, nominated her.

**In her acceptance speech,** Leslie said that evidence proves that racial violence is “a huge factor in policing. The outcome is an over-representation of people of color in the jails and in the morgues.”

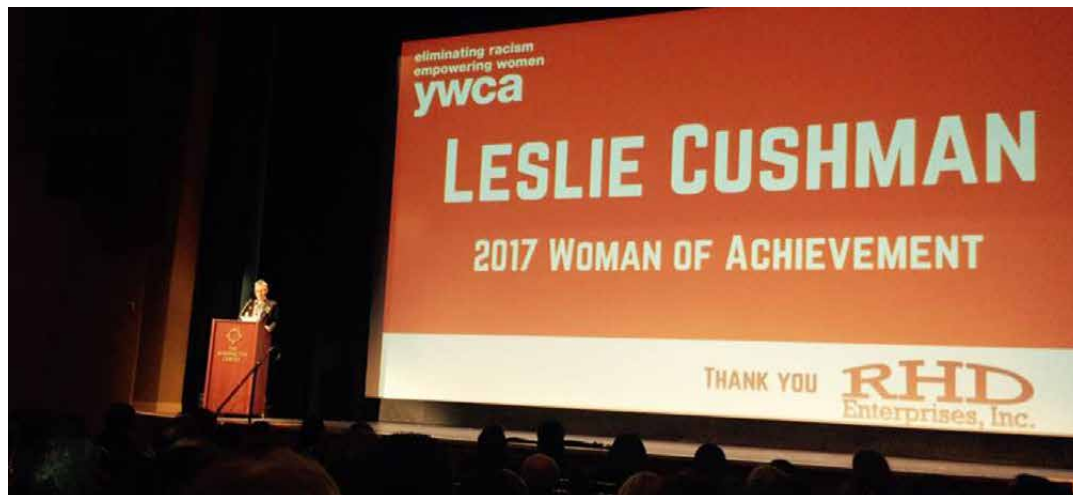
The YWCA Olympia chose her because she exemplifies its mission to eliminate racism.

“De-Escalate Washington in a bare bones, grassroots effort to change the law on use of deadly force,” she said. “It is led by people of color and families who have lost loved ones to police violence. It is real work by real people.”

**Leslie, who is policy director** of the campaign, recognizes the fundamental role white supremacy plays in the U.S. She believes the truths shared by people of color, indigenous people and women, said the YWCA.

After the May 21, 2015, shooting of Andre Thompson and Bryson Chaplin, she co-founded the Olympia Coalition to Reform Deadly Force Laws with Kathy Baros Friedt, a Latina woman who has been working for human rights for years. That coalition is now a partner of the Black Alliance of Thurston County.

In the 2016 legislative session, she and others worked with a coalition of community advocates on legislation to reform the state law related to Use of Deadly Force. The legislation was not successful, but a legislative task force was formed to study the issue.



Leslie Cushman speaks at YWCA Olympia 2017 Woman of Achievement Awards.

Photo courtesy of

Leslie, a member of the PNC Justice Witness Ministries Committee, and her colleagues then established De-Escalate Washington, a political action committee promoting the statewide I-940 to the legislature.

Speaking at the YWCA awards event, Leslie gave the names of nine of the people of color killed by police violence across the nation— Michael Brown, Freddy Gray, Eric Garner, Trevon Martin, Tamir Rice, Laquan McDonald, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling.

**Then she listed** the names of eight people in the state killed in recent years by police:

- Otto Zehm an unarmed autistic Spokane man beaten and asphyxiated by police;
- Leonard Thomas, an unarmed, despondent man in Fife, murdered by a police sniper;
- Antonio Zambrano-Montes, shot 17 times by Pasco police for throwing rocks;
- Daniel Covarrubias, an unarmed Lakewood man hav-

ing a mental health crisis and shot in daylight, holding a cell phone;

- Jackie Salyers, an unarmed woman shot in Tacoma, whose family in the Puyallup Tribe were kept in the dark about details of her death and unable to provide tribal ceremonies to her and her unborn child;

- Jay Taylor, an unarmed Seattle man shot with his hands up, handcuffed and left to bleed to death;

- Carlene Lyles of Seattle, holding a knife, shot in front of her children;

- Michael Anthony Rude, a young black suicidal army veteran, killed on I-90 near Olympia.

**“Why is it that it’s only** in Washington that it’s impossible to convict police officers for unjustified killing?” Leslie asked.

“I-940 will require statewide standards for law enforcement to receive training on de-escalation, mental health, and first aid, require that first aid be rendered at the scene, establish standards for the use of deadly force, and mandate completely independent investigations,” she said.

“It will also require the

involvement of diverse communities in developing policies—people of color, natives, people with disabilities, immigrants, noncitizens, LGBTQ, youth and formerly incarcerated people—people who should be listened to and believed,” she said.

**Leslie is also involved** in solidarity actions at the Northwest Detention Center, peace vigils at Percival Landing and Thurston Gun Sense, a group working to preventing gun violence through safe storage.

In addition, Leslie volunteers with Not This Time, a Seattle nonprofit founded by Andre Taylor whose brother was shot by Seattle police in 2016, and she is an advisor to Latino Civic Alliance, a state organization advocating for civic engagement and reciprocal relationships between the community and political representation.

She has close ties to the Puyallup Tribe and supports its work to achieve Justice for Jackie.

**Leslie is still** recruiting people to gather signatures, donations and volunteers.

**For information, call 360-280-0087 or email [leslie.cushman.olympia@gmail.com](mailto:leslie.cushman.olympia@gmail.com).**

## Lori Walke calls PNC into its ministry of vitality

The PNC is ready to do a new thing, Lori Walke, associate pastor at Mayflower UCC in Oklahoma City, told participants in the Fall Gathering at N-Sid-Sen's shore-side chapel as dusk turned to night.

Courtney Stange-Tregear, minister for church vitality, met her at a Next Generation Young UCC Clergy meeting.

By installing a minister of church vitality, the PNC is discerning how to be the church in this time. It's casting its nets on the other side of the boat as Jesus told fishermen on the Sea of Galilee to do," Lori said.

After 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus went to his home church in Nazareth and announced he was bringing good news to the poor. It went over "like a lead balloon," she said.

So Jesus went to Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee to recruit the disciples from the fishermen. They left everything to follow him and fish for people, she said, adding that there's more to the story. He went there to do community organizing in the largest town with the largest harbor, Lori said.

"If you want to get the word out, tell it to fishermen. They love to talk, Lori said. On the shores of the Sea of Galilee, there were many villages.

They also were oppressed and "occupied" by a fishing industry that was regulated for the urban elite benefited Greek, Roman and Jewish oppressors—the one percent. The fishermen were the poor, the 99 percent, she said.

In Capernaum, it's not just that there were more people and it's not that Jesus needed to start over, but his call was more political than theological, Lori said. His message was about class and poverty. This ministry began in a moment of misery with the occupation of Rome.

"Jesus came to a world of oppression and insider trading.

There was a tax on fishing. People bought boats and paid interest on loans. They paid to sell the fish in the market. Fishermen needed a union," she said.

"We are told there is no place in the church for politics, but without politics there is no church," Lori said. "Jesus did not start a union, but he did something more dangerous. He preached, taught and lived God's kingdom by the shores of the lake, where fishermen worked hard, but did not earn enough to feed their families.

"He preached to the working poor who knew the system was broken. Jesus occupied Capernaum," she said.

Where would Jesus go today? To a small town in South Carolina where textile and furniture building jobs have been shipped overseas; to Detroit where the car industry exists in a city walled off from a collapsing city; to a border crossing near Tuscon where undocumented immigrants cross in search of the hardest work for the lowest pay only to meet the scorn of those who are enriched by their labor and who use their brown skin and foreign tongue as political weapons.

Lori then contrasted the familiar verses of "Jesus Loves Me" that focus on Jesus dying for "me" and washing "my sins away," and then offered amending the lyrics to comply with the truth about Jesus:

"Jesus organizes, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. The poorest ones to him belong. They are broke but he is strong."

"See how limited the saving work of Jesus is," she said, comparing it to saying, "The day is coming when the rich and powerful will be brought down, when Mary's Magnificat will be realized.

"Those who believe in the biblical mandate to care for creation know we are not doing well at transitioning from a



Courtney Stange-Tregear and Lori Walke at N-Sid-Sen.



Jerry Chang and Chiao-Ling Kao bless elements in Taiwanese.



Sharing communion with each other in small groups.

petroleum-based society," she said, frustrated that millions gain access to health insurance but complain it's not perfect, or that Washington and Oklahoma are having a hard time funding public education.

If Christians stop talking

about blood atonement and talk about justice, they could see that Jesus was a community organizer, she said.

"No politics in the pulpit means no gospel," she said. "It's time for Jesus' followers to occupy and organize the PNC.

# Relationships bring power to change the world

Preaching Saturday after her installation as minister of church vitality for the PNC, Courtney Stange Tregear began by telling of two boys being caught in a rip tide on a Florida beach. The mother, grandmother and other family try to help are also caught.

A woman hearing their cries called people on the beach to form a human chain, holding hands, to reach them. About 80 joined in. All were rescued. Some on the chain could not swim, but risked, trusting and holding on tight so the family's lives did not end in tragedy.

Courtney invited people form a human chain out the door into the parking lot.

Next she told of her clinical pastoral education in the Westboro State Mental Hospital on a locked ward for severely mentally ill. Mental health workers had been attacked. She had no safety training. She was pregnant. She was there to meet one-to-one with patients.

Some had not spoken for decades, but started a Psalm reading group. Psalm 139 was a favorite. "Lord you have searched me and known me... you are behind me and before me and lay your hand on me."

"They wanted to be reminded that God knows and loves them completely. To be known is the greatest desire and greatest fear. Often we sabotage it, pulling back when we feel intimacy grow," she said. "People in that hospital deserved to be known. All of us want to be known and to know one another, but we sometimes sabotage it."

Courtney said people may fail to know each other. After a tornado in Oklahoma, a church group sent 12 handmade quilts to another church. The Oklahoma church gave them to Goodwill, because they could not use the quilts. "They did not think to ask what we needed."

In the great commandment



Fall Gathering participants form a human chain from lodge reaching into N-Sid-Sen parking

"to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves," she pointed out that "first, we need to love ourselves. Then, we need to know our neighbor to love our neighbor, the inner life of who they are, their hopes and dreams, so we love them as they need to be loved, not just do nice things," she said.

Participants then met in small groups to share a significant story of a moment in their lives and share a time they felt hurt, betrayed or afraid, and something changed.

"Through relationships we bring power. We think of power as power over, but building relationships in small groups builds power within the conference, power that can change the world, power of loving neighbors and saving a drowning family," Courtney said.

Relationships can help the PNC feel good so it can do good, Courtney said.

"The power of relationships, truth telling, vulnerability is how we bring God's will on earth. We do it with our bodies making a human chain, symbolizing our connection and reaching out," she said.

"Strong community knows who we are, so we build a sense of mission, learn about culture, are in partnership, know needs, reflect and are flexible, not going out to fix problems in a way that drains resources, but establishing long term relationships and working in partnership."



Kaye Hult, Judith Reinhart Nelson and Jan Marquis interact.



Larger group synthesizes ideas shared on sticky notes.



Small groups share lives and visions.

This photo courtesy of Gen Heywood.

## 'Common Fire' is the name of the new mission/service camps

Wade Zick, managing director at Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center at Port Orchard, said that to launch "Common Fire," mission camps serving the Kitsap Peninsula, in 2018 he has had to learn about the communities, culture, economics, nonprofits and people in Kitsap County.

The 2018 camps will be two weeks, one is June 24 to 29 and the other is July 15 to 20.

Pilgrim Firs will shift from youth camps to "giving back" to the community, he said.

"There are tons of needs," he said. "The Kitsap area has a mix of urban, rural and suburban issues, increasing with an influx of people seeking to move from rising housing prices in Seattle (up 13.5 percent), they are displacing vulnerable and poor Kitsap County residents from their homes, so homelessness is rising.



**Wade Zick describes the new mission/service camps.**

Other issues include food for families, environmental impacts with population growth, and the clash of population growth and protection of a suburban/rural lifestyle, he said.

In addition, there is a large military presence with 17,000 employed at the shipyard, so social and family support systems are absent in times of financial and personal crisis.

"How can Pilgrim Firs engage and understand this culture so we can be present in the community, working with area agencies as a partner, looking at the systemic injustices in the community?" Wade asks. "For the UCC, the question is how we can make a difference in the world?"

He said the camp will begin with time to orient campers to the community and spend three-and-half days in service, with late afternoons for camp activities, and evenings to talk about justice, about "going up-river to find out why there is need to pull people out of the water downriver."

"What are the systemic issues of environment, race, poverty? We will engage in action, reflection, learning about issues and acting," Wade said.

Mission is about logistics, taking time to focus on the

needs, he said.

Pilgrim Firs plans to partner with Habitat for Humanity, the Central Kitsap Food Bank, the Kitsap Community Food Co-op, other nonprofits and government agencies.

Of the \$475 cost to participate, \$100 will go to the local mission and service partners.

For the Common Fire camps, Pilgrim Firs is inviting local churches to send youth groups with seventh to 12th graders and adult leaders 21 years and older in a one-to-five ratio so they can continue to connect with each other and carry the mission experience home.

Eighty campers from different congregations throughout the U.S. and Canada will bring their youth groups and adults. While the service camp is designed for church groups, an individual youth may participate in the service week as space allows, joining a church group. Churches will choose an area of focus for their week.

The four areas of focus are housing (building, renovations, landscaping), food (food bank, meal distribution), environment (clean-up, trail work, park departments) and social services (homeless, elderly, at-risk populations).

"We will pair the church with area service organizations that sync with the church's chosen focus, said Wade.

Each day after breakfast and packing lunches, the teams will travel to service sites and return at 3 p.m. to swim, paddle board, kayak, hiking, fish, relax until 5:15 p.m. Then they will meet with their church groups. After dinner, they will join in justice discussions, have vespers and an evening program.

Thursday they return at noon so there is time later for a "sending ritual" before leaving Friday morning.

Groups must agree to participate in all the aspects of the week. The focus will be both on the development of relationships for the local church and building connections with the other participants through activities and discussions.

All the 2018 PNC summer camps for children and youth—kids, intermediate, junior high and senior high—will be held at N-Sid-Sen.

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

### 2018 N-Sid-Sen camp schedule is:

**Clergy Retreat**  
April 2 to 4

**Women's Retreat** - May 18 to 20

**Emerging Adult** - June 15 to 17

**Work Camp** - June 18 to 21

**Senior High Camp**  
July 8 to 14

**Kid's Camp** - July 15 to 18

**Intermediate Camp**  
July 15 to 21

**Rainbow Retreat** - July 20 to 22

**Family Camp #1**  
July 29 to Aug 4

**Junior High Aqua Camp**  
Aug 5 to 11

**Family Camp #2** - Aug. 19 to 25

*For information, call 208-689-3489 email [mark@n-sid-sen.org](mailto:mark@n-sid-sen.org) register at [n-sid-sen.org](http://n-sid-sen.org)*

### 2018 Pilgrim Firs camp & retreat season

**Middle School Midwinter**  
Jan 5 to 7 - grades 6-8

**High School Midwinter**  
Jan 12 to 14 - grades 9-12

**Men's Retreat** - Feb 1 to 4

**PNC Counselor & Director Retreat** - May 20 to 22

**Service Camp in the Kitsap Community**  
June 24 to 29

**Service Camp in the Kitsap Community**  
July 15 to 20

*For information, call 360-876-2031 email [wadezick.pf@gmail.com](mailto:wadezick.pf@gmail.com) register at [pilgrimfirs.com](http://pilgrimfirs.com)*