



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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Winter 2022-23

UCC leader leads church conversation on racism

61 members of the United Churches of Olympia join in weekend journey in liberation, restorative justice

On Oct. 28 and 29, Velda Love, UCC minister of racial justice for Faithful Action Ministries, led “A Sacred Conversation on Racism” for 61 members United Churches of Olympia.

Through lecture, videos, music and body work, she invited participants to join black and brown siblings in a journey of liberation and restorative justice with Join the Movement, said Marcia McLaughlin of the Uprooting Racism Team of United Churches of Olympia.

Velda told how this journey started 500 years ago and how people of African descent and indigenous people became enslaved or were killed through the European-Christian Doctrine of Discovery.

“Not only did she tell about the

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Lara Crutsinger-Perry, pastor at the United Churches of Olympia, visits with Velda Love of the national UCC after worship Sunday, Oct. 28. Photo courtesy of United Churches

Board of Directors works to increase communication

Tara Leininger - moderator

The Pacific Northwest Conference is led by delegates elected by local churches at our Annual Meetings. Between Annual meetings, leadership is delegated to an elected Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is made up of volunteers, both lay and ordained, who have been called to serve the wider church and the conference through their leadership on the Board.

Over these last months and years the Conference has experienced myriad challenges, magnified by transitions. At the last Annual Meeting, held on Zoom April 30, 2022, delegates and friends of the conference lifted up significant concerns about the budget and leadership of the Conference. Wanting to truly hear

**Annual Meeting 2023
will be April 28-30
at First Congregational
in Bellingham - page 15.**

and consider these concerns, the then Moderator Hillary Coleman did not call for a vote to pass the budget or affirm election of Board Members.

At the Annual Meeting, Board leaders proposed that there could be another gathering of the conference, in Fall of 2022, to revisit and complete these items of business. We are writing now to acknowledge that a Fall gathering did not happen. Due to a variety of transitions

and challenges, we were, regrettably, not able to accomplish what we intended.

We understand that communication has been limited and covenant was broken. We are in the process of scheduling meetings for listening and learning across the conference and we hope you will all participate. More information will be coming soon.

In the meantime, the Board of Directors has had to approve the budget on a quarterly basis in order for the Conference to function.

The board also needed to approve the new officers, including: Tara Leininger, pastor at Metaline Falls Congregational Church, as PNC moderator and Indigo Brown, member at Plymouth Church, as
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Board reports on use of Anti-Racism Fund

Reports & Comments



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

Pacific Northwest Conference Board of Directors recently shared an update report on the Anti-Racism Fund, said Courtney Stange-Tregear, acting conference minister.

In 2020, the PNC board adopted anti-racism as a conference priority. The board heard and felt the call for every part of the conference to commit to anti-racism and figure out what actions the board, committees, staff, churches, camps and members can take in their settings.

At the 2021 Annual Meeting, the board proposed and the conference affirmed a change to the PNC constitution, amending it to “commit ourselves to dismantling racism and expanding our understanding and awareness of the impact racism has had and continues to have on our churches, our conference, and our world.”

Along with amending the constitution, annual meeting delegates demanded that the conference support this priority with meaningful funding, backing up the board vote with actions as well as intentions.

The 2021-2022 budget included \$52,000 that was set aside in an Anti-Racism Fund. The PNC board convened a working group to be in conversation with Black, Brown, Asian, Latine and Indigenous clergy in the conference to determine how the Anti-Racism Fund would be spent and how to spend it in an anti-racist way.

This group is convened by Board members Dawn Koloi and vice moderator Indigo Brown.

The Anti-Racism Fund Working Group recently made the following report:

“So far, we have distributed \$27,500 of the \$52,000 in the Anti-Racism Fund, contributed from the 2021-22 operating budget

and through donations from individuals and congregations in the Conference,” they said. “This work has been deliberate and intentional, acknowledging that urgency doesn’t create more impact.

An important guiding principle for this process has been to center the experience and knowledge of those most impacted by racism. The PNC Board is in covenant with this working group, placing complete trust in our Black, Brown, Asian, Latine and Indigenous clergy to identify ways that the Anti-Racism Fund can make a difference in our Conference.

This is an anti-racist giving strategy, a step towards reparations, and a covenantal promise that honors the wisdom of these leaders.

With prayerful consideration, the group has prioritized direct action and maximum impact: funding professional development opportunities, workshops, meetings, conferences and scholarship to camps for Black, Brown, Asian, Latine and Indigenous adults and children in our Conference community.

Anti-racism is a priority of the Pacific Northwest Conference—and the conference is all of us!

God calls us all to the work of dismantling racism in our camps, churches, communities and committees. The ongoing racial justice work happening in our local churches contributes to dismantling racism within our conference.

The PNC board encourages everyone to take meaningful action, to identify and dismantle systems of white supremacy and white-dominant culture, to cultivate and use an anti-racism lens.

Thank you for all the ways you and your churches are supporting this work! Together, we are creating meaningful change.

*Together,
we
are
creating
meaningful
change
with the
Anti-Racism
Fund.*

Transitions announced

Elyse Jaeguri was ordained in November at Eagle Harbor Congregational UCC in Bainbridge Island.

Several transitions have been confirmed by the East and West Committee on Ministry in November:

Tara Young Brown, a hospice chaplain who is a member of the Community of Interfaith Celebration in Olympia, has been approved for ordination.

Jim CastroLang will retire from his ministry at First Congregational UCC in Colville on Dec. 18. See article on his years of ministry and future plans.

Bob Feeney has been approved to transfer from Massachusetts to the PNC to serve as settled pastor at Westminster Congregational UCC in Spokane. He will be installed on Jan. 14.

Carson Hawk, who ministers to trauma survivors and other kinds of healing with a team at Magnolia UCC, has been approved to transfer to the PNC.

Yuki Schwartz has been approved to transfer to the Southern California Nevada Conference.

Sub-Committee assists

The Insurance Assistance Fund Subcommittee of the PNC Stewardship Committee allocates assistance to clergy and local churches needing help with the cost of health insurance premiums.

Confidential requests for that assistance for 2023 health insurance premiums go to Martha Baldwin of the Stewardship Committee. *For information, call 206-948-9799 or email martha@hotmail.com.*

General Synod announced

The theme for General Synod June 30 to July 4 in Indianapolis, Ind., will be "Making All Things New," based on Isaiah 43:18-19. Voting delegates will attend in person and planners are exploring ways to add cost-effective virtual elements.

For information, visit ucc.org/next-synod-now-a-year-away-will-be-in-person-hybrid-aspects-being-explored?inf_contact_key=58d474aa756bbfab8cbea5f8b71c165209c74070ac2bf3cfa7869e3cfd4ff832.

Webinar on climate issues

Monthly Creation Justice Webinars fo-

cus on climate justice in 2023 and beyond.

Co-hosts Brooks Berndt, the UCC's minister for environmental justice and Michael Malcom, executive director for Alabama Interfaith Power & Light and the People's Justice Council, will guide discussion on "When it comes to climate justice, how do we make it out of the wilderness and arrive at the promised land?" The discussion at 10 a.m., PT, Dec. 14, focuses on the midterm elections and the impact of young voters who care about climate issues. The webinar seeks to equip

faith rooted advocates for advancing climate justice in the coming year.

The link is [UCC.zoom.us/webinar/register/8716684482996/WN_AB2UsaK-kRtWIGJ4cfK4hUQ](https://ucc.zoom.us/webinar/register/8716684482996/WN_AB2UsaK-kRtWIGJ4cfK4hUQ).

Giving Tuesday draws gifts

Hillary De La Cruz, past moderator, thanked those who donated on Giving Tuesday "to make possible for us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God to create vitality in the Pacific Northwest Conference. *Those interested may still donate toward the \$25,000 goal at www.pnuc.org/giving-tuesday.*

Group for retired clergy begins

Bobbi Virta is leading a new Community of Practice group for newly retired clergy who are trying to figure out what life looks like in retirement. The retirees will meet over zoom with other newly retired colleagues.

There is still space in the October through May Community of Practice group offered by the Committee on Ministry, said Amy Hitchins, coordinator. *For information, email amy@pnuc.org.*

Men's Retreat is in person

The Conference Men's Retreat Planning Committee is announcing an in-person Men's Retreat the weekend of Feb. 3 to 5 at Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center. The retreat will be "back to normal" with music, singing, a wisdom circle and an optional silent retreat the evening of Thursday, Feb. 2.

"We were disappointed to have to cancel last year's in-person retreat," said team member Rick Russell. "We had hoped to follow up the success of the prior year's remote retreat and maintain our ties and

bonds. Unfortunately, it has been difficult the past few years and now normal isn't exactly what it used to be."

He and the other planners, Charlie Torres, Don Jenkins, Hans Dankers, Jim Gaudino, Larry Kiriluk and Paul Withington, recognize that living into the new sense of normal means varied levels of risk tolerance.

"Vaccines have reduced by not eliminated the chance of illness or ongoing symptoms," said Rick, advising men uncomfortable with the risk not to attend.

Because Pilgrim Firs has poor Wi-Fi connectivity, it is not possible to offer a remote video option.

"Our retreat will comply with state, local and conference center guidelines," he said. "Details will be provided soon."

For information and to register, visit ultracamp.com/info/sessionDetail.aspx?idCamp=367&idSession=382908&campCode=nss..

Board welcomes voices

Continued from Page 1 - Board the vice moderator.

While Tara and Indigo are our board leaders, we are all the Conference. There is much work before us. May God guide us on our journey.

Already serving on the Board were Hillary De La Cruz, immediate past moderator; Diana Kutas, treasurer; Jillian Hutton, scribe; Danette Koloi, Central West representative (rep); Esther Sanders, Heartland rep; Janet Ott, Northwest rep, and Ron Patterson, Southwest rep.

With diversity in mind, the board continues to work in engaging BIPOC and LGBTQIA conference members and people of a spectrum of ages.

The Board also keeps in mind the diversity of the conference when it comes to urban, rural and remote congregations.

Tara said the board is continually open to voices that may not have been heard or heard well enough, and it welcomes contact to board members and conference staff.

For information, call the PNC office at 206-725-8383 or Tara at 509-589-1044 or email mfc.ucc@yahoo.com.



Uprooting Racism Team plans to involve more

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generational trauma that black and brown bodies carry, but also she guided us in activities that support our being ‘in our own bodies’, to feel trauma in our bodies,” said Marcia. “We learned about policies across the financial, legal, education and religious structures that continue to support the dehumanization of black and brown bodies.

“Through conversation and relationship building, we became a community within this congregation who can support each other in doing the work of dismantling these racist systems and structures,” Marcia continued. “We began developing the means to implement a counter narrative that can transform our individual identity and the church in becoming a more inclusive and just culture.

The weekend was completed with Velda preaching on Sunday morning, a sermon on “The Cross and the Lynching Tree.”

One congregant, who had not attended the workshop, said after the service “something new is happening here.”

Within a few days of this workshop, the United Churches wrote a letter to the Olympia School Board, supporting the appointment of the first person of African descent to the school board. The appointment had resulted in racist push back from portions of the community.

“Our plans are to move forward to involve more of our congregation in the conversation and to continue to respond as needed to events in our community—to be first responders,” said Marcia.

“Based on our experience, we encourage churches in this conference to Join the Movement Toward Racial Justice,” said Marcia, and ask Velda Love for help.

“She moved us into a life-long commitment to dismantle

racism in our church and our community,” Marcia affirmed.

During worship that Sunday, member Kathleen Clark told of forming the Uprooting Racism Team two years ago to look strategically at all structures, ministries, committees, staff, clergy, communications and music to see where the United Churches “might transform ourselves to be more racially justice and inclusive.”

The team introduced an “equity decision-making tool” for planners and decision-makers to use to assure inclusivity as they make and revise decisions and plans so they respect all.

“We knew that to do this work we needed to look at our internal biases, how we walk through the day and how we may be complicit in racial injustice,” Kathleen said.

Because the team recognized the church needed input from the wider church community “to start the journey of internal reflection and to transform our church,” they planned the weekend which concluded with Velda preaching.

For several months, Velda worked with team members to prepare for the weekend of challenging conversations on ending racism and how racism has impacted the nation for 500 years.

As she began her sermon, Velda offered praise and prayers for saints in her life who grounded her identity as a woman of African descent and her faith in Jesus who walks with her. She is grateful for her matrilineal Nigerian ancestors who were Yoruba and Hausa—free people—and for her bits of Middle Eastern, Indigenous and other heritages.

On Sunday, she preached on “The Cross and the Lynching Tree” based on Luke 4:14-30 when Jesus announces he has come to preach the good news to the poor, release of the



Ellen Swetin joins Karen Watts, left, Matt Raron and Wendy Taylor in a discussion group as part of weekend workshop with Velda Love of national UCC on racism.

Photos courtesy of the United Churches

captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

Jesus preached a dangerous sermons then and during Holy week when he challenged status quo ideas of the elites with ideas of racial equality, gender justice, human dignity and redistributing wealth, she said, likening the crucifixion to lynching tree branches crossed to display the human body for all to see to instill fear and subordination.

“In first century and modern era, many communities of color remember old, rugged trees that bore strange fruit. Those memories tell a story rooted in antiblackness and racism interwoven in the soils and structures of the U.S.,” Velda said, inviting people of faith to link the cross and lynching trees in the “Jim and Jane Crow” era. “The history of racial terrorism reminds us that black babies, children, women, and men, and Jewish and white abolitionists standing with black communities were brutally hung from

trees as a form of crucifixion by white mobs in U.S. cities.”

She asked what happens in the soul and spirit of those who do not see God or humanity in people of black descent.

James Cone, author of the 2013 book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, said the U.S. government refused to outlaw lynching for more than 100 years, and many white Protestant churches were silent.

Growing up in Trinity UCC in Chicago, Velda’s pastor, Otis Moss, instilled in her the history of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth and Fannie Lou Hamer. This church grounded her reality, as did hearing “dangerous sermons” from Martin Luther King Jr. against racism, injustice and militarism before his assassination April 8, 1968.

The murder of George Floyd was an “opportunity for white America to realize racism is still with us. It had never gone away. It had gone underground.” Seeing that murder stirred many to do something,” Velda said. “It doubled my

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Church has options to be neighbors to homeless

In a recent exchange on the PNC Google Group listserv, one pastor asked what to do about a homeless person who was sleeping on the steps of her church in Seattle.

Among those responding was Bill Kirlin-Hackett, executive director of the Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness, whose published a workbook to address just such questions, “The Stones Would Shout: Homelessness and Place and Faith.”

PNC News offered an overview of it two years ago in an article at pncnews.org/dec20pnc/120120Billkirlin-hackettbook.html.

“The question of what to do when homeless people show up or sleep on a church’s property has risen as homelessness is no longer the third or fourth top issue municipalities are facing, but is now the number one issue,” he said. “That is the case because of the failures of cities and communities to address homelessness in terms of funding and priorities,” he said.

King County recently set up the Regional Homeless Authority after three previous priority plans failed, Bill said, commenting, “King County has been trying to nickel and dime its way out of homelessness.”

Recently Governor Jay Inslee and the State of Washington have directed more funding to housing homeless.

“We have an increasing number of homeless people because we have too little housing available for people at 30 percent of the area’s median income,” Bill explained. “We have housing that is too expensive, and we do not have enough housing.”

“Jurisdictions are trying to control homelessness on the streets because housing is underfunded, and there are no plans,” he said.

So Bill tells faith communi-



RV is being towed (top). Lake Washington UMC offers safe parking.

Photo courtesy of Bill Kirlin-Hackett

ties who own property and want to keep the property and people safe to turn their attention from what is making the property unsafe—people sleeping on the property—to understand why they are there.

“**Plymouth and University Congregational** know they are in neighborhoods where there are homeless people, so Bill suggests that, like them, other congregations need to keep the persons sleeping there safe, to look out for what they need to do as a mission of the congregation that extends outside the building.

“We need to live our faith

to address our neighbors—be it climate change, Black Lives Matter or violence against Asian Americans,” he said. “We need to stand in the tradition of caring for our neighbors.”

He recognized that faith communities may feel overwhelmed, feel too small to address a big problem or may not connect with their neighborhoods. He recognizes congregations do not know what to do, but suggests that it does not take much to change lives.

“Think about how the congregation can care for the person sleeping on their doorsteps,” he suggested. “We need

to listen to the person, not criminalize the person. We can act according to what we believe in as a congregation. We can extend our community to include our neighbor, the stranger, the vulnerable.

“**We don’t teach that** well enough. As part of the community, we are responsible for homeless people and for challenging homelessness,” he said, noting that there are plenty of people like him who can help a congregation talk with a homeless person on the doorstep.

That’s what his workbook, “The Stones Will Shout,” which is available on Amazon, is about. It shares the history of how the Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness started and gives a blueprint for how individuals and congregations can take steps to act.

One congregation with a big parking lot decided to start safe parking for people who had lost their homes. The task force has a flier telling congregations how to offer safe parking.

Bill recently talked with an Episcopal church in Tacoma that not only does that, but also is working with him to advocate for a bill in the legislature, ESHB 1774 in 2012-20.

“Congregations think they need a government permit to practice their faith by providing safe parking, safe camping or safe hosting inside,” he said.

“**Federal law says** faith communities can do those things, but cities and counties try to use a sledge hammer rather than a scalpel to sweep tents and force people into shelters or to confiscate RVs. That’s illegal based on the 2018 Martin v. Boise decision,” he said.

“In addition, Long v. Seattle declared that people have the right of homestead not to have their RV’s impounded and towed. I was on the phone with a woman, when a towing

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Sacred Conversations Group carries on work

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workload with people wanting me to preach, teach and help build solidarity.

“Jesus’ Gospel undergirds and permeates truth telling rooted in of black and women’s liberation theologies. It is time to get serious about how we can use our bodies to uproot and face the empire,” she said.

Floyd’s murder opened many to hear the realities of life in communities of color across the world, she said, challenging the idea of any people, languages or cultures is dominant.

“God did not create any superior human being. God created humanity to be in relationship with one another and with God,” Velda said.

She urges churches to live up to their call to end racism and to see that, even after



The Sacred Conversations Working Group at United Churches of Olympia includes, front from left Marcia McLaughlin, Karen Conover, Kathleen Clark and Jan Van Pelt. In the back row from the left are Peggy Smith, Velda Love, Lara Crutsinger-Perry, Eleanor van Noppen, Jude Van Buren, and Paul McCann.

Photo courtesy of the United Churches

President Joe Biden signed the Anti-Lynching Law on March 29, lynching continues in choke holds, knees on necks, no-

knock warrants, police shootings and policies, laws to eradicate historical truths, policies to erase cultures that helped build

the nation and narratives to create solidarity among all people.

“Enough is enough! Stop the hate,” she asserted, calling for people to protect all bodies, ban assault weapons, advocating for voting rights, learn about individual and systemic racism and decolonize Christianity.

“Are we raising our children to embrace every human being on earth?” Velda asked.

“Now is the time, no more waiting, hiding or silence. God is speaking and now is the time to join the movement toward racial justice, the national UCC leader challenged.

The full service is on United Churches YouTube channel at youtu.be/hNyRULr3LFI.

For information, call 360-789-9873 or email kathcoly@yahoo.com.

Low funding and land use exacerbate homelessness

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company wanted to charge her \$2,200 to return her RV. She offered \$1,500. I wasn’t going to try to negotiate when she might be left without the RV in 36-degree temperatures. I provided that, but then went to the city because by law the most they can charge is \$270. The overcharge was a clear violation. I wrote the city attorney to oversee such excess charges.”

Bill consults with both the National Homeless Law Center and Columbia Legal Services.

“Homelessness is caused by a circle: half is funding and the rest is land use,” he said. “Local governments sweep camps with no conscience, even though there is low harm by the camps. Then they criminalize homeless people,” he said, urging communities of faith to write letters to mayors and go to city council meetings to challenge those actions.”

Faith communities may

not have the skills to talk to a homeless person, but they can bring in people who do know how to talk with homeless people who can offer them paths out of homelessness.

Bill, who started with the Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness in 2004, encourages communities of faith to find out who are “our neighbors” in terms of who is homeless and who are other communities of faith doing something others can learn from within their denomination or across denominations and faiths.

“It’s not rocket science,” he said, telling of four wisdom statements he has cleaned from Inspector Gamache in Louise Penny novels.

The words of wisdom are:

“I’m sorry.”

“I was wrong.”

“I don’t know.”

“I need help.”

Bill applies all four in his work and urges others to use

those to express their willingness to be helped,” he said. “Homelessness is *our* problem. We sustain it with sweeping camps, rather than assuring people have homes.”

In King County, Bill said there are sweeps twice a week on people living in vehicles—RVs and cars—and there are sweeps two or three times a week on those tenting in homeless camps.

“Faith communities need write their mayors and city councils to say that this is cruel,” he said. “It makes no sense for people to be forced to leave their RVs to go to a shelter. An RV is a legal habitat, so we help many with fees when they are impounded, but there are so many we do not hear from. Many lose their RVs when they are towed to a lot. Few lots are guarded, so the RVs are ransacked.

“Without their RVs, people are on the streets. We could start with providing safe lots

for RVs, nesting groups of people living in RVs, such as parking five or six in a row in the right of ways, so we can visit them and help them find a path to housing,” Bill said.

He is advocating for legislation to change the laws in every jurisdiction to end the harmful practices.

Bill has done vehicle outreach on the streets with teams and seeks to train more younger people to do that outreach so he can focus on advocacy.

The Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness has since 2011 been working with the University Heights Center, a larger nonprofit, as the fiscal agent for the vehicle outreach. Bill seeks to transition to be a consultant trouble shooting with them and training new people, while he looks ahead to spending more time in advocacy.

For information, call 425-442-5418 or email itfh@itf-homeless.org.

Colville pastor retires to ministry with refugees

Jim CastroLang, who retires in December after 13 years as pastor at First Congregational UCC in Colville, has begun a new ministry as operations manager of Thrive International's program in a former Spokane motel that is now housing Ukrainian refugees.

The church will hold a farewell Dec. 18 and his last service will be on Christmas Eve.

Jim's ministry began as a Catholic priest in Colorado, but his roots are in New York City and Long Island, where his father grew up in an Italian and Greek neighborhood and his mother grew up in an Irish neighborhood.

"Three of my four grandparents were not born in this country," he said of his connection to refugee work.

His family moved to Baltimore, Southern California and then to Colorado when he was 15. After graduating from high school in 1977, his college and seminary studies were at St. Thomas College and Seminary in Denver, where he earned a master of divinity. After serving two years as a priest in the 1980s, he saw no future for himself in the Catholic Church.

Jim had met Andy, a Catholic lay campus minister whom he later married. In 1982, he moved to Tacoma, then Seattle and then Olympia. He did odd jobs and lay positions in the Catholic Church while he figured out what was next.

In 1986, he spent nine months in broadcast school to become a producer of morning news and do a talk show on KING-TV. Then he worked for the House Democratic Caucus in Olympia and did information systems with the Department of Social and Health Services.

In Olympia, Jim and Andy became involved with the United Churches of Olympia, after the church asked her to be youth minister. They joined as



Jim CastroLang

UCC, appreciating a non-hierarchical church.

"I found the Catholic power structure often conflicted with the theology of God's unconditional love," Jim commented.

"My life has had two tracks, the ministry track and everything else I have done," Jim said. "While I left the priesthood, I did not leave my calling to ministry. In 1992, I received privilege of call in the UCC."

He served the South Berkeley Community UCC from 1996 to 1998, while Andy was in seminary. While there, he also worked with a startup security software company, and continued consulting with them after they moved in 1998 to Nebraska, where Andy served two small churches. For two years there, he did children's ministry at one of them.

In 2002, Andy accepted a call to Westminster Congregational UCC in Spokane.

Jim's ministry and jobs varied, including two intentional interims from 2002 to 2004 at First Congregational in Walla Walla and 2005 to 2007 at Ritzville Zion-Philadelphia, plus a three-month sabbatical interim

in 2007 at Veradale UCC.

He has served the Colville church since 2009.

"Like many churches it struggles with finances and numbers, but I helped the people grow spiritually and theologically, and understand why we are in the UCC," he said.

"Now they hold each other together as a church that believes in unconditional love in the midst of a world of churches that exclude people. They want to be part of a community that has open doors," Jim said.

Many of the 15 committed members travel to visit family and grandchildren, so Zoom helps keep them connected.

"We are the oldest church, and the most progressive, inclusive church in town," he said.

In 2012, when the church became open and affirming, members received hate mail.

"It scared some, but now they are glad they made that decision," he said.

Over the years, Jim has been involved with the PNC. While in Olympia, he was on the Board of Directors. For six years in the 2000s, he was on the Church Development Committee. He also served on Worship and Spiritual Life.

For five years since 2014, he coordinated communications and "tech stuff" for PNC Annual Meetings, and two years did the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference on Zoom during COVID.

In Colville, he put the church on Zoom before COVID, so when COVID came and they already had a laptop connected to a big screen.

"From all on Zoom, they moved to have just the pastor, music and lay leader do worship in the sanctuary. Two who did not have computer access could sit in the back," he said.

Jim has served on the board of the Faith Action Network (FAN) for five years and started

FAN's Spokane Dinner in 2018.

"We share interfaith stories and learn respect. We make decisions based on the common faith we bring to make more compassion and justice for people," Jim said. "When faith communities act together there is a unique power base motivated by faith perspectives."

When Andy decided to retire from Westminster in August 2022, he decided to leave Colville to be in Spokane more.

Then he read an article that Mark Finney was leaving as director of World Relief and seeking to help refugees for more than three months.

Thrive International opened transitional housing in June in a motel near downtown, where refugees gain stability so they can thrive.

Jim offered to help.

The center started with Ukrainian refugees, because funding was available.

"They are grateful to have a place to catch their breath after experiencing trauma in the war," said Jim, who became operations manager.

Even though it is an administrative role, he hears their stories of trauma, not just from the war but also from leaving behind all their belongings, their culture and family members.

"We provide three to six months of housing. The first two are subsidized, then they pay a portion of their rent. In mid-September, some moved to permanent housing and others on the waiting list moved in."

Forty families are on the waiting list.

Thrive now has some city funds to use with any refugees, so Jim expects the community will become more diverse.

In the midst of knowing their experiences, he values their smiles and gratitude.

For information, call 509-998-7203 or email jcastro-lang@gmail.com.

Shalom UCC and Steve Eriksen enter covenant

Steve Eriksen, who retired in 2020 after 22 years as pastor of Shalom UCC in Richland, was staying in Richland wished to continue to participate in the church. With a previous successful model of Wilbur Rees as pastor emeritus during Steve's tenure, the church conferred the title of "Pastor Emeritus" for Steve on Sunday, Dec. 4.

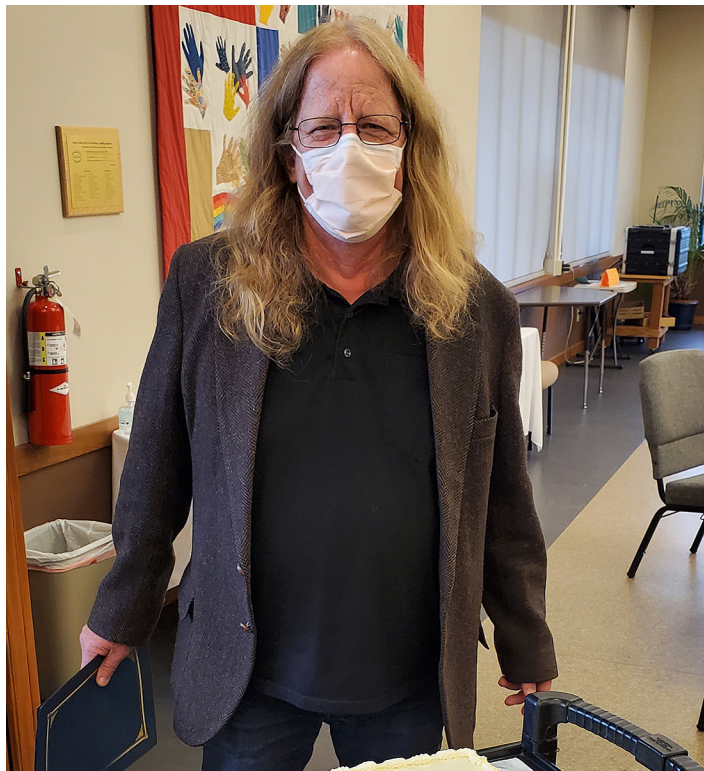
After Steve retired the end of December 2020, the pandemic began and he only recently returned to the church, attending online.

The pastor emeritus status is established in a covenantal agreement defining that role. The honorary title is recognition of the congregation's "deep appreciation for Steve's exceptional preaching, sage teaching, ecumenical and interfaith advocacy, affirmation of persons of sexual and gender identity minorities and his person-centered approach to pastoral care."

Before coming to Shalom in 1999, Steve earned degrees from Earlham School of Religion in Indiana and United Theological Seminary in Ohio. He also served UCC churches in Ohio and Kentucky.

With that recognition and acclamation, Shalom and Steve agree he retired with honor and has no responsibilities as pastor of the church. He does not perform Shalom-related acts of ministry and refers requests for services to the present pastor, but "as a layperson and member of the congregation, he is free to participate in the life of Shalom.

Shalom followed the process set forth by the UCC guidelines for this designation" and applied for and received the blessing of the Eastside Committee on Ministry (COM) of the PNC-UCC. With consent of the COM, church council and Steve, all parties agreed to the covenant and signed it as part of the Dec. 4 service.



Steve Eriksen honored as pastor emeritus. Photo courtesy of Shalom

Morag Stewart of Westminster Congregational UCC in Spokane represented the East-side COM.

Tim Ledbetter, chair of the pastoral relations committee who supports both Steve Eriksen and the 22-month interim minister, Steve Gentle, said the church includes in its pastoral search profile a statement that the church has healthy relationships with four other former pastors.

Those include Tim, Jim Dyson and Ray Smith, both of whom are former pastors of Northwest United Protestant Church in Richland, and Jim Pierce, former pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church.

A former American Baptist pastor, Tim had served the Church of the Brethren in Wenatchee in the 1980s before studying chaplaincy at Deaconess Medical Center in Spokane. He returned to Richland, where he was born, to serve as a hospi-

tal and hospice chaplain for 27 years. For 15 years, he has been a member at Shalom UCC.

He told of Shalom UCC's positive experience with Wilbur as pastor emeritus.

Tim offered some background.

Wilbur, who died in 2018 at the age of 93, held a bachelor's in psychology from UCLA, a master of divinity at Berkeley Baptist Divinity School and a master's degree in guidance and counseling from Idaho State University. He served nine churches in California, Colorado, Idaho and Washington, before serving 20 years at Shalom UCC in Richland, retiring from the ministry in 1987 and serving as pastor emeritus.

"Many in the congregation were familiar with the idea of 'emeritus' through their connections in academia and because of Wilbur," said Tim, adding that the church knew Wilbur's role was ceremonial. He was invited to church an-

niversaries, taught a Sunday adult class, wrote the pastoral column in the church newsletter and preached on occasion.

Other clergy in the congregation also have fill in doing pulpit supply.

More than 21 months ago, Shalom asked Steve Gentle, a Disciples of Christ pastor who has degrees in social services, community organization and theology from Texas Christian University and Vanderbilt University, to serve as interim pastor for 12 to 18 months.

He is now continuing as interim, renewing for six months at a time. He previously served churches in Washington, D.C., and Florida, but had been living three years in Richland since his wife, Miriam, became the pastor at Northwest United Protestant Church.

Richland UCC chose to have a long-term interim to give them time to discern their future and develop a church profile.

Steve Gentle's first sermons were preached from his living room because the worship services were held only on Zoom. In February, they returned to hybrid worship in person in the sanctuary masked. Masks are optional for those who sit in the foyer where they could see and listen to the service through glass.

"We have been following CDC guidelines on masking and other protocols," Tim said. "Worship is also on Zoom.

"We feel it is right for congregation to recognize Steve Eriksen as pastor emeritus," he said.

Shalom UCC members have embraced outreach to the Tri-Cities and are a charter member of the Interfaith Alliance engaging with members of other faiths in serving the community and advocating for

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Mission co-workers share stories of peace efforts

Alex Maldonado-Lizardi and Xiomara Cintron-Garcia serve with Justapaz in Colombia. Their appointments are made possible by gifts to the Disciples Mission Fund, Our Church's Wider Mission Prayers for Colombia.

On Dec. 11, Alex shared the following prayer:



Alex Maldonado Lizardi and Xiomara Cintrón García

tors within the framework of the public policy of "Total Peace"

- When establishing humanitarian agreements, especially in favor of children, adolescents and young people

- While discerning the different legislative initiatives that take place in Congress, and the uncertainty they cause in the territories; we ask that congressmen approach the initiatives of the people and not only legislate from their own perspective.

Xiamara told of learning from Justapaz about the work perseverance "because they keep betting and working toward peace in their country, which has been in an active war for around 60 years, even though they know the peace process is not coming immediately or easy for them.

"I have learned to live God's Word for peace and reconciliation in improbable places," she said. "I've learned how vital it is to accompany, organize, raise our voice and help in different ways our brothers and sisters who suffer injustice and struggle for peace and dignified living conditions.

For information and to make a gift to support the work of Alex and Xiamara in Colombia, visit <https://www.globalministries.org/resource/pray-with-colombia-december-11-2022>.

Our soul sings,
our Spirit rejoices
because you notice
because you realize
that there are governments
who prefer the
foolishness of bullets.
Because you know that
from 2018 to 2022,
Organized Armed Groups,
strengthened and extended
their reach to
604 municipalities;
that 191 massacres
were registered in
the national territory,
and that, only in 2021,
926 attacks on social
leaders were reported
to the
corresponding agencies.

Even so
our soul sings,
our Spirit rejoices
because our humiliations
they are no strangers to you
nor are they a state secret.
Our life stories
they don't have
a single face
nor do they please

the status quo.
They are not the norm
for the self-indulgent
happiness of this world
that demands performance,
cost-efficiency,
balances and symmetry.
You see our humiliation
and you don't think
less of us.
You don't rule us out for it
or look elsewhere.
You are not ashamed
that we are dust.
You entrust us
with hope instead
and insist on
what is possible

And when everything
was nothing
You arrived
And nothingness was
no more.**
Your promises are not
ours to keep
Your mercies are not

ours to keep
they are neither exclusive
nor do they exclude
others from it
they extend, they expand
as millenary mountain
ranges
and clear rivers
in the moors.
Look...Remember us...
so that we can sing again
so that we can party again
from generation to
generation...
Amen

With Justapaz we pray that churches will be "watchmen of hope" (Esquiva):

- During confrontations between armed groups for territorial control, and threats to social leaders especially in departments such as Chocó.

- Through dialogues with the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) and other ac-

Committee on Ministry explains 'Pastor emeritus'

Continued from page 8
social justice.

The Committee on Ministry (COM) explained that the terms, "pastor emeritus/a," are used by a local UCC church to honor a person whose lengthy ministry in that local church has been one of distinguished service. The designation recognizes an individual's retire-

ment from that particular local church and from active ordained ministry. Conferring this status is an act of a local church and is an honor that the church may wish to consider.

The title is not automatic but based on "recognition of exceptional service."

The pastor honored and church recognize the retired

pastor is no longer the pastor of that church to avoid confusion and difficulties.

The COM helps a church establish guidelines regarding the pastor emeritus/a.

Responsibilities involved in this honorary title:

- 1) Treat the present pastor as the pastor of that church.
- 2) Include the name of the

pastor emeritus/a on church stationery or website.

- 3) Invite the retired pastor to play a specific role in church celebrations/anniversaries.

- 4) Provide support for the ongoing pastor emeritus/a's health and happiness.

For information, call 509-943-3927 or email pastor@shalomunitedchurch.org.

Land acknowledgements open eyes, start ties

Several pastors and congregational leaders recently shared what their congregations are doing regarding land acknowledgement statements and connecting with local tribes for education and solidarity.

On the next pages are stories of what the land acknowledgements say, how the wording was set, what ties the congregations have with tribes in their area and what actions they are taking or have taken.

Ferndale United Church

Joel Aosved, pastor at the United Church of Ferndale, said his predecessor Bobbi Virta did a land acknowledgement.

"It is important to address the harms our church has placed on our indigenous siblings and to recognize that even in our hybrid worship with church members who teach abroad.

"At a totem pole blessing, I heard a Lummi neighbor say, 'If you just started your worship by reminding folks that the earth is sacred, it would have stopped the destruction.' That comment validated a change I had already made," Joel said.

In Ferndale's statement, a living document, they added a phrase about "the cosmos" in February and "our actions and inactions" in May

The Ferndale church has been working at developing relationships with their Lummi neighbors. One Lent with Christ Lutheran, they participated in a Holy Listening Lenten zoom Wednesday night study.

"We listened to some of our Lummi neighbors present information they felt we should know about them," Joel said.

In 2021, some Lummi attended a book study of Harriette Shelton Dover's *Tulalip from My Heart* on boarding schools and reservation life.

Joel said it's hard to judge the impact: "Does it make us feel good, but not inspire us to

"We pause to express our heartfelt repentance for the harms done—both in our action and our in-action.

"We pause to express our deepest respect and gratitude for our indigenous neighbors: the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Tribe.

Ferndale United Church

make effective change? Does it inspire us to build relationships? How does an institution truly repent for things done and undone long ago? Is building personal relationships different from institutional relationships? How much of our land acknowledgement is preaching to the choir and how much is a reminder of who and whose we are?" he asked.

Ferndale's land acknowledgement is:

"Let us begin our gathering here by acknowledging that the very Cosmos is sacred. For it is saturated with the One in whom we live and move and have our being. The very cosmos is the first and final cathedral. As such, all lands and all waterways are sacred.

"For most of us gathered here, we reside on the sacred lands and waterways of the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Tribe who have partnered and cared for these sacred lands and waterways since time immemorial. We pause to give our deepest respect and gratitude to for their enduring care and protection of these lands and waterways.

"We also pause to acknowledge the harms that church has placed upon our indigenous siblings—harms done in the name of God when we the church have not followed God's longing for us—the longing to

living deep Shalom with ourselves, our neighbors and the world around us.

"We pause to express our heartfelt repentance for the harms done—both in our action and our in-action.

"We pause to express our deepest respect and gratitude for our indigenous neighbors: the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Tribe.

"As new technology allows us to become a community spread throughout the world, if you live in another part of the United States or another country, I invite you to find out who first lived on the land and waterways you are living on, and who helped to build it into the community you know it as today.

"May we each commit to working alongside our neighbors to partner and care for the very cathedral, the very Cosmos we call home. In doing so, may we honor one another, and the one in whose image we are made.

"Let us center ourselves in silence and breathe deeply as we prepare to worship the beauty and goodness of the Divine.

"...No matter who you/we/I are/am, no matter where you/we/I are/am on life's journey, you/we/I are/am welcome here. Amen.

For information, call 360-384-3302 or email pastor@ucfl.org.

Bellingham UCC

Ted Huffman, interim co-minister of faith formation at First Congregational UCC in Bellingham shared one land acknowledgement they have used:

"Today as we gather, we acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we meet. Since time immemorial the Coast Salish People have been the stewards of this land. The Lhaq'temish, or Lummi People and members of the Nooksack tribe cared for this land and the creatures of land and sea for many generations before the arrival of settlers. We recognize the elders and members of these tribes to have great wisdom for the care of the land, the creatures, and the climate. We pay our respects to elders past and present whose wisdom inspires our gathering. We offer our gratitude for those whose homeland we now inhabit."

Davi Wesley, pastor for youth, young adults and mission at the Bellingham church, said he has not yet convened a group to talk about what would be appropriate in their context. They have no official statement approved by the congregation.

For about five years, they have used a land acknowledgement in large formal gatherings.

"We are close to lands of the Nooksack and Lummi tribes," they said. "A few in the congregation have contacts but there is more we could do to be in relationship with our neighbors."

Davi said he has used resources from Doctrine of Discovery Coalition, which advises on land acknowledgements.

"Its resources cautioning that some congratulate themselves for having a land acknowledgement, but never do more," Davi said. "Their attitude is, 'We have a statement so we are done.' Our church has no illusion we are done. It is one of the things we need to be inten-

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Statements vary in length, content, emphasis and vision

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tional about in our life together.

“Land is about a complicated relationship with our indigenous neighbors. We need to name the reality we stole it, but that does not end the process,” they said.

Bellingham clergy participate in annual multi-faith blessings of totem poles the Lummi carve and send across country to call attention to their rights.

Sometimes when the church does a land acknowledgement in a meeting, they invite an indigenous neighbor to do a an education piece.

For information, call 360-734-3720 or email davi@fccb.net.

Suquamish UCC

Sophie Morse, a pastor and member who helped write the Suquamish UCC land acknowledgement, noted that “one Suquamish tribal council member who has a long-standing relationship with our church recently commented that, in her opinion, land acknowledgements—by themselves—do little. They need to be backed up by ongoing, mutually recognized support of regional tribal efforts and name what that support looks like.”

For example, at Bainbridge Island’s recent annual Trans Day of Remembrance, co-sponsored by the local Interfaith Council, the emcee, after the land acknowledgement, told how council had supported recent tribal environmental initiatives to help make the acknowledgement more concrete.

“I see it as an effort to make or keep our allyship growing and evolving,” said Sophie.

“When Mike Denton, former conference minister, gave his first land acknowledgement before worship at Annual Meeting about eight years ago, I remember sitting near worshippers who audibly scoffed and rolled their eyes,”

“We acknowledge that many of us are located and currently reside on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, the People of the Clear Salt Waters, whose ancestors have lived here from time immemorial, preserving the land and waters that we have benefitted from.

Suquamish UCC

she said. “We’ve come a long way, whether formerly resistant people have, and there’s always more to do.”

Amara Oden, pastor at Suquamish UCC, explained that the church’s land acknowledgement was in place when she arrived in January. At first the statement acknowledged the Suquamish Tribe, on whose reservation the church is located, but now it also acknowledges other area tribes.

Doug Daman, a member and former moderator, has told Amara that sometimes the land acknowledgment feels like the most important part of worship.

“We say it at the beginning of every worship service, council meeting and annual meeting,” said Amara.

This is the Suquamish UCC statement:

“As we begin our worship, let us take a moment to acknowledge with gratitude the land on which we gather.

“We acknowledge that many of us are located and currently reside on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, the People of the Clear Salt Waters, whose ancestors have lived here from time immemorial, preserving the land and waters that we have benefitted from.

“Today we express our

deepest respect and gratitude for all indigenous friends and neighbors living today, particularly for the Suquamish Tribe and the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe, for their enduring care and protection of our shared lands and waterways, and for healing and preserving this place for future generations.”

Amara pointed out that the church resides on the “check-board” reservation of the Suquamish Tribe.

“We’ve had good relationships with them in the past, and as a new pastor I am working on building on that relationship. Their tribe gave us a generous grant at the beginning of the year to support our church missions, including our 24/7 food pantry and the weekly community meals we serve,” she said.

They recently invited Amara as a representative of the church to their Good Neighbors Luncheon where they offered thanks to the Suquamish UCC along with others for being good neighbors.

For information, call 253-345-9980 or email pastor@suquamishucc.org.

Eagle Harbor UCC

Dee Eisenhauer, pastor at Eagle Harbor UCC on Bainbridge Island, quoted the land acknowledgement that church

reads every Sunday morning:

“We begin worship today by acknowledging that the land on which we live and worship is the ancestral home of the Puget Sound Coast Salish people, specifically the Suquamish tribe. We acknowledge the harm brought about by land being taken from indigenous peoples generations ago, hurt that lingers today. We seek healing.

“As we learn to respect the cultural heritage of the Suquamish people, we re-commit ourselves to our shared responsibilities to their homelands where we all reside today. May the pouring of this saltwater serve as a reminder of our solidarity with the Suquamish people, the people of the clear saltwater.”

The land acknowledgement is the last announcement before centering music.

“After reading it, we decided to reflect more of a sense of repentance and sorrow. Instead of using we seek ‘forgiveness.’ we chose to say, ‘We seek healing.’ I did not feel we were in a position to go to representatives of the Suquamish and ask for forgiveness. It would put a burden on them,” Dee said.

A seminary intern led an adult class on indigenous history based on *An Indigenous Peoples History of the U.S.*

Eagle Harbor is one of 13 faith groups in the Bainbridge Island North Kitsap Interfaith Council’s Good Neighbor Committee, which connects congregations and tribes, asking how they can help or advocate with them. About 18 months ago, the tribe wanted help to pressure King County Sewage Treatment Plant about broken pipes and leaks.

“They asked us to join with them to call the county to act. The repairs were made,” Dee said, “and we received a letter from the tribe thanking us for our allyship in the effort.”

Several years ago, Eagle

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Studying history informs church members of genocide

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Harbor joined an effort led by a young adult from the Suquamish Tribe to appeal for the Snake River dams to be removed. The church helped pay for postage for the campaign.

Dee expects more to come out of the land acknowledgement, adding that a church member serves on the Good Neighbor Committee.

She noted that the Suquamish have a casino, hotel, convention center and good leaders. They are doing well and have a school teaching Lushootseed, the Puget Salish language, once spoken by 12,000 people.

Some churches and businesses in the area pay rent to the Duwamish tribe every month.

For information, call 206-842-4657 or email dee.eisenhauer@gmail.com.

Blaine UCC

Sandy Wisecarver, pastor at Blaine UCC and a social worker in Bellingham, said the church seeks to give back by helping with the salmon habitats and by attending canoe journey gatherings.

For information, call 360-595-4281 or email blaineuccpastor@gmail.com.

Magnolia UCC

On Nov. 21, Magnolia UCC welcomed author B.J. Cummings to speak on "The River that Made Seattle: A Natural and Human History of the Duwamish."

B.J. said Seattle's Duwamish River was "once teeming with bountiful salmon and fertile plants. It drew both Native peoples and settlers to its shores over centuries for trading, transport and sustenance. Unfortunately, the very utility of the river was its undoing, as decades of dumping led to the river being declared a Superfund cleanup site," reported Marci Scott-Weis, pastor.

B.J. founded the Du-

We strive to nurture our relationship with indigenous peoples, especially our neighbors, by joining their efforts to work for social justice and to care for this land."

University Congregational UCC

wamish River Cleanup Coalition and manages community engagement for the University of Washington's Superfund Research Program. She was awarded the River Network's national River Hero award for her work leading community-based clean up and restoration of the Duwamish River.

More than 100 from the community attended the program Magnolia UCC offered. It was underwritten by a Humanities Washington grant.

"We discussed not only the history of the river prior to the colonists but also changes to the river after and the impact on Indigenous peoples," Marci said. "We also covered the importance of Indigenous-led coalitions to heal the river."

The event began with this land acknowledgement:

"We would like to begin by acknowledging that we present this program from the unceded, traditional land of the Coast Salish Peoples, specifically the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, original stewards of the land, past and present. We honor with gratitude the land itself and the Duwamish Tribe. This acknowledgment only becomes meaningful when combined with accountable relationships and informed actions and this learning forum tonight a first step in honoring the land we are on and their people."

For information, call 425-681-0909 or email [\[magnoliaucc.org\]\(http://magnoliaucc.org\).**](mailto:marci@</p></div><div data-bbox=)**

University Congregational UCC

Patti Brandt, Mary Jeanne Phipps, Jessie McAbee and Carol Nelson worked as a team for two years to prepare a land acknowledgement for University Congregational UCC.

Retired from teaching nursing at the University of Washington in Seattle and interested from three years as a nurse practitioner helping set up a clinic in the 1970s with the Navajos, Patti joined the team when University Congregational UCC was thinking about what to say and do for a land acknowledgement.

The church's Racial Justice and Sacred Earth Matters action teams initiated the Land Acknowledgement Task Force in October 2019. It began with research and education, including surveying land acknowledgements in use. They attended educational events, watched videos and read about indigenous peoples and racism, and consulted with native leaders.

After several months, they wrote three statements and discussed them with the Sacred Earth Matters and Racial Justice groups. With feedback from them, they wrote a single acknowledgement statement. Task force members contacted local Native Americans, who were Haida, Tlingit, Inuit, Duwamish, Tualalip, Yakama and Ojibwe, for feedback

"While the church thought

of emphasizing tragedies of the past, such as genocide and land stealing, the Native American consultants recommended we emphasize healing, relationship building and action, rather than belabor the past," she said. "They emphasized: why do a land acknowledgement without action.

The team made revisions and introduced the final version the Sunday before Indigenous Peoples' Day, when the church held a discussion on the Doctrine of Discovery and indigenous history.

Their statement is two short paragraphs and an action step that changes monthly.

"We gather as guests of the Duwamish people on their traditional land that touches the shared waters of other Coast Salish tribes. We understand that their identity and richness of culture are deeply connected with the mountains, valleys, waterways and shorelines that surround us all.

"We commit to learning about the Duwamish, other indigenous cultures, and historical and ongoing oppression of indigenous peoples. We strive to nurture our relationship with indigenous peoples, especially our neighbors, by joining their efforts to work for social justice and to care for this land."

As a land acknowledgement is a gesture of respect and awareness of the land and its history, it becomes meaningful when coupled with informed action that builds relationships. So the UCUC website offers a list of options for action at universityucc.org/love-justice-ministry-land-acknowledgement-statement.

Now the congregation reads the first paragraph every week, and both paragraphs with an action step each month. An example of an action step would be to support

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Churches join interfaith partners to engage with tribes on actions

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Indigenous priorities for climate justice with organizations like Earth Ministry, an ally with tribal groups in promoting environmental justice legislation.

One way UCUC's worship integrates indigenous issues and spirituality without culturally appropriating is to use the First Nations translation of the New Testament.

"It is important for church members to have continuous commitment to do activities to live into the land acknowledgement and allyship," she said.

After obtaining approval by the church council for the final statement, the Seabeck committee, led by team member Jessie, invited Dina Gilio-Whitaker, author of *As Long as the Grass Grows*, to lead four days of two-hour Zoom presentations at the church's annual retreat on the indigenous fight for environmental justice from colonization to Standing Rock.

A few months later, the team invited Na'ah Illahee, a women-led indigenous organization in Seattle to lead an ally workshop for members. The workshop was on ways to provide long-term support for the priorities of tribal groups in the region related to climate and environmental justice, food security and food sovereignty.

"The Sacred Earth Matters team and Love and Justice ministry continue to advocate for the church to be an ally in indigenous priorities such as care of salmon and habitat improvement," she said.

For information, call 206-524-2322 or email office@universityucc.org.

Westminster UCC

Westminster Congregational UCC in Spokane was opening worship each Sunday with a land acknowledgement when



Bob Feeny said Westminster is beginning a Truth and Reconciliation process with area tribes through the Spokane Alliance.

Bob Feeny came from Massachusetts to serve as pastor.

"I list the same tribes, but I do it off the cuff," he said.

In Massachusetts, he did land acknowledgements a few times, such as on Indigenous People's Sunday, but felt "it was not helpful if that was all we did," he said.

Bob believes it's important connect with a tribal community for a land acknowledgement to be meaningful.

Westminster does community organizing with the Spokane Alliance, which has started a Truth and Reconciliation Research Action Team to connect with local tribes.

A member, Mary Rupert, joined a training with the Kalispel Tribe in Missoula, wrestling with the truth of what happened in colonization, counteracting what most learned in history.

The alliance seeks to offer that training in Spokane in the context of relationships with Indigenous communities. It also seeks Indigenous voices in its efforts for the common good.

"To do a land acknowledgement requires relationships," Bob said, adding, "a narrative of Westminster is that Chief Enoch of the Spokane Tribe and his family helped found the church.

A painting on the wall of the

fellowship room in the church's basement depicts two tribal members at the founding."

Bob is discerning what justice can look like: "We can't just wave a wand, rewind time, give back the land and move. We need to face the awful history as we move forward," he said.

In land acknowledgements, Bob names genocide and erasure, not only as what happened in history but also as what still is going on.

"Christian communities played a role," he said, aware that as he drives nearby, he passes Cowley Street, named for Westminster's founding pastor. The next two streets are Sheridan and Sherman, named for generals who killed Indians.

As someone who loves the outdoors and being in the mountains, Bob said his theology centers around land. He is aware that many religions are rooted in a place. In contrast Christian faith came here "as a conquering force."

"Christians connect with the teachings of Jesus and Hebrew prophets who lived in Jerusalem and Rome," he said. "What do they have to say about Spokane? Christians talk about stewardship and responsibility for the whole world. Do we think of who God is in the Spokane River and what this

place reveals to us about God? Do we consider stories of God in this place where people have lived for thousands of years?"

Bob emphasized the need to keep in right relationship with the world/natural world.

For information, call 509-624-1366 or email pastorbob@westminsterucc.org.

Colville UCC

Colville First Congregational UCC started doing a land acknowledgement two years ago to make members more aware of where they live.

The statement says:

"We acknowledge that we worship on the land of the Colville Tribe, land that was taken unjustly by our ancestors and government. We desire to name this wrong and respect this land as part of our commitment to the struggle for racial justice, religious tolerance and inclusion."

Jim CastroLang, who retires as pastor there this month, wrote it and shared it with the church council. They have read it together out loud every Sunday since then.

"After we read that, we read the UCC welcome statement: "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are *always* welcome here."

Jim said a land acknowledgement "raises our level of consciousness 1) not to take for granted what we have or how we got it and 2) that it is another statement about who we are as a congregation and why."

The town of Colville is not on or adjacent to the Colville Reservation, so the church members have few interactions.

He also recommended reading the book, *Unsettled Truths*, to look at "the dehumanizing legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery. That book, he said is blunt and critical of apologies without reparations.

For information, call 509-998-7203 or email jcastro-

Pilgrims/New Pilgrims closes after 145 years

After 145 years of “being church” on Fidalgo Island, New Pilgrims United Church of Christ, founded as Pilgrim Congregational Church, will cease Sunday services and complete its mission as of Dec 31, 2022, due to declining membership and a desire to use its remaining assets as a legacy in the Anacortes community and beyond.

Pilgrim/New Pilgrims invites members, friends and former associates to attend its Closing Celebration Service at 10:15 a.m., Sunday, Dec. 18, in Boyd Hall, on the garden level of the United Methodist Church of Anacortes.

Becky Withington, who has served as pastor for Pilgrim/New Pilgrims since 2016, will lead the service with David Schoen, the UCC Minister of Church Closure and Legacy.

The congregation has been meeting in Boyd Hall since July 2014, after selling its 88-year-old church building at 2802 Commercial to a developer. The stucco building needed significant, costly repairs. It has now been demolished and replaced with a new mixed-used structure, said Marcia Neu, a member for 20 years and the recording secretary.

In 2018 Pilgrim Congregational members voted to become New Pilgrims UCC, a name to represent the congregation’s progressive mission to be “a caring community that provides a spiritual home where we welcome doubt and inquiry, promote love of creation and support abundant life for all.”

In recent years New Pilgrims’ 15 to 20 members often marched in the 4th of July Parade with their large rainbow “Be the Church” banner, sold wares at Shipwreck Day to benefit first Project Homeless Connect and the Anacortes Family Center (AFC), she said.

Its other outreach to the community has included A Simple Gesture Food Donation



New Pilgrims UCC carried banner in Anacortes July 4 parade.

Photo courtesy of Susan Sanderson of New Pilgrims

Bag Program, Project Homeless Connect, Anacortes Cold Weather Homeless Shelter, the Anacortes Ready to Learn Fair, Earth Ministry, Links and Alliances Conference, the PFLAG of Skagit County and Stanwood, and the Center for Progressive Christianity.

Upon its closure, funds from the 2014 church property sale will be donated to the Anacortes Family Center that provides housing and jobs for homeless families, to the Pacific Northwest Conference of the UCC for its two camps and church development, and to various animal welfare charities.

Marcia shared the congregation’s history from an article that Nelle Jacobson, a 20-year member, compiled several years ago.

Pilgrim began in 1877 when two families from Antioch, Calif., made the difficult journey by steamer, train and schooner to Fidalgo City. Ewing Tade and Deacon W. H. Hagadorn were part of the home missionary effort by New England Congregationalists to establish churches and schools in the newly settled frontier areas. The missionaries emphasized education, believing people should be able to read the Bible for themselves.

They also believed education should be global, including

newly freed slaves and indigenous residents. Their school, Alden Academy, was first a log building located south of Anacortes near 32nd and J Ave. Later lumber additions were hauled from the water at the foot of 29th St. The school was dedicated in 1879. Ewing and Amanda Tade and the Rev. and Mrs. A. T. Burnell instructed students throughout Northwest Washington. It was the first secondary school in Skagit County and the first school to admit Native American children.

The Tades returned to California in 1884 and Alden Academy closed, but the church they established continued to express the founders’ values of education, service and interracial understanding.

Horace Taylor, Pilgrim’s second pastor, moved to the island in 1885, after serving as a foreign missionary in Micronesia, a home missionary teaching freed slaves in Alabama and pastor in Ohio and Tacoma.

The church owned no property. It held services in the Alden Academy schoolhouse. Horace established a church at Fidalgo City and continued with two churches until 1887 when he was called to Ohio.

Returning to Fidalgo Island in 1899, Horace established a church and school at Rosario and

was called as full time pastor to Pilgrim Church in Anacortes in 1902. A building at 26th and R was completed in 1903.

R. K. Anderson, the longest serving Pilgrim pastor from March 1925 to October 1943, planned the building at 2802 Commercial Ave. Built in 1926, it was a spiritual home and center for community events. The basement hosted thousands of meetings, classes and dinners, as well as skating parties, cooperative preschools and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

To honor contributions Pilgrim/New Pilgrims made to Anacortes, New Pilgrims moderator Suzanne Sanderson prepared “Special 145th Anniversary Editions” of the New Pilgrims Progress newsletter, at newpilgrimsucc.com/blog.

Becky earned a bachelor’s degree in women’s studies from the University of Minnesota and met her husband Paul there.

After earning a master’s in library and information sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, she and Paul moved in 1992 to Seattle, where she was a librarian. She became part-time director of Plymouth UCC’s children’s program, which stirred her call to ordained ministry.

After completing the master of divinity program at Seattle University School of Theology, two internships and a unit of clinical pastoral education, Becky was called in 2012 to serve part-time at Everett UCC.

Continuing there, in 2016, she began serving New Pilgrims half-time.

Members will disperse to Bellevue, Mercer Island and Everett churches, some through online worship, Becky said.

“They decided to choose when to close so they could share remaining funds with the community and PNC-UCC.”

For information, call 360-722-0185 or email bwithing@comcast.net.

At N-Sid-Sen

Volunteers help, camps planned

Offers to help at N-Sid-Sen yielded a short-term volunteer camp hosting plan that was coordinated with Mark Boyd for N-Sid-Sen's present low season.

Along with this plan, there is renewed interest in revitalizing the Conference Outdoor Ministries Task Force, and volunteers have stepped forward sooner than usual and with big "yeses" to direct some of the summer camps.

Volunteers are revising the website and promotional materials.

The Acting Conference Minister and Board know it isn't possible to maintain a volunteer structure for N-Sid-Sen operations for long, but it has helped buy time to shift gears, said Leah Atkinson Bilinski, N-Sid-Sen Search Committee member.

The committee is now engaging an open and denomination-wide search for a Designated N-Sid-Sen managing director, she said. This person will serve for two to three years then becoming eligible for the settled position.

The Conference Board and Search Committee revised the position description and created a site profile for release. Those interested may submit a résumé with relevant work experience and three phone references. **These can be sent to nsidsen-search@gmail.com by Dec. 15.** More details will come soon on the conference listserv.

Registration opening

Registration for summer camps opens Feb. 1. Details will soon be posted.

N-Sid-Sen camps provide faith-based immersion experiences, low-tech fun in God's inspiring creation and meaningful connections to peers and leaders.

Camp sessions are led by approved and trained volun-



The swimming beach is in "The Cove" at N-Sid-Sen.

teers, providing positive role models and guidance.

The 2023 theme is "Fruit-FULL Faith: A Spirit-Filled Life" COVID-19 protocols may change from summer 2022 and will be shared.

Van transportation to and from N-Sid-Sen for those in Western Washington will be provided in the Greater Seattle-Tacoma area.

N-Sid-Sen is the PNC-UCC camp and retreat center on Lake Coeur d'Alene north of Harrison, Idaho. It offers 300 acres of woodlands, creeks, meadows and waterfront activities.

The camp offers a tiered camp pricing structure in which those registering can choose between a subsidized or supported rate, a direct-cost rate and a gratitude rate.

The Action Work Weekend (formerly known as "work camp") will be offered May 11 to 14 and June 15 to 18.

The PNC Women's Retreat will be held May 19 to 21. Details are at n-sid-sen.org.

N-Sid-Sen is recruiting volunteers to serve as summer session directors, cabin leaders, chaplains, nurses and other resource persons to provide teams for each session.

N-Sid-Sen also seeks young adults as the paid summer hospitality team for mid-

June through August.

The dates for the spring retreats, work weekends and schedule for the summer camps are listed in the box on the right side of the page

For information, email office@n-sid-sen.org or visit n-sid-sen.org.

2023 N-Sid-Sen camp schedule is:

May 19-21

Women's Retreat

May 11-14 & June 15-18

Action Work Weekends

June 15-18

Emerging Young Adults - 19-35

July 2 to 8

Intermediate - Grades 5-6

Junior High - Grades 7-9

July 9-12

You & Me - Grades 1-5 +adult

July 9-15

Senior High - Grades 10-13

July 12 to 15

Kid's - Grades 2-4

July 23-29

Family Camp #1

July 30-Aug 5

Family Camp #2 Camp Together

For information, visit n-sid-sen.org

Annual Meeting is in April

PNC Board Moderator Tara Leininger announces that the 2023 Annual Meeting will be held April 28 to 30 on site at the First Congregational Church in Bellingham.

Sharon Benton, pastor at the church, confirms that FCC Council agreed to be the site. There are still details to work through on the site use, but the Annual Meeting 2023 (AM23) Committee, chaired by Tara and PNC. UCC executive administrator Arlene Hobson is support staff for the work of the first onsite annual meeting since before the pandemic.

The intent at this time is to also make the AM23 available online for those who prefer not to gather in person.

There will be a much of work to accomplish at this meeting, including changes in staff in the past year, the budget for 2023-2024, and continued work on anti-racism, church development, and other challenges the conference faces.

Tara is also looking for people to join the AM23 planning committee.

She seeks volunteers who would like to help in the details of the event, including worship services and especially in tech so that the meeting is a smooth process for everyone.

For information, email tm.leininger@yahoo.com.