



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

Mary Stamp, editor
editor@pncuccnews.org

325 N. 125th St. - Seattle WA 98133 • (206) 725-8383 or (800) 954-8777 or (509) 535-1813

Winter 2023-2024

N-Sid-Sen grounds are cleaned up by youth team

AmeriCorps team does fire mitigation, trail clearing and beautification

A nine-member AmeriCorps Civilian Community Corps team of high school graduates has worked on fire mitigation, grounds maintenance and other tasks from early November through Dec. 18 at N-Sid-Sen, the PNC-UCC camp and retreat center on Lake Coeur d'Alene in Idaho.

Team members from ages 18 to 24 met at Sacramento, Calif., for orientation for 10 months of hands-on service opportunities to help communities.

Meghan Rhodes, who graduated from high school in Madison, Wis., joined the team without knowing where she would be assigned or what she would do.

“At N-Sid-Sen, fire mitigation has
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Eight of the nine AmeriCorps team helping with fire mitigation, trail clearing and beautification at N-Sid-Sen enjoy a campfire.

Photo courtesy of N-Sid-Sen

Vice Moderator reports on board actions, vision

By Esther Sanders - Vice Moderator

The Board has been busy with seeking to communicate better with one another and with the Conference. We gathered at Pilgrim Firs for a retreat in early November where we had good discussion, good food, fellowship and gained clarity about what the Spirit is leading us to prioritize.

One group volunteered to re-work the guiding vision. Another group volunteered to examine the Bylaws and make suggestions to bring to the Annual Meeting April 26-28, 2024. Each board member volunteered to connect with a committee or two to increase communication channels and ensure any action items will be brought to the board.

The essential piece of the retreat

**Annual Meeting
will be held
Friday to Sunday
April 26 to 28**

was to get to know one another because Zoom limits us. We had ice breakers and some games with snacks and shared stories about why we felt called to the Board.

The board is aware there are multiple facets of the conference that need support, including staff. In October board members and staff were matched so that each staff member would be offered support once or twice a month by

a board member, and this would not be related to personnel matters, just purely a listening ear.

The board is also aware of committees that may need more folks. The board has also had two resignations recently, in addition to coming into the new term with vacancies. We moved two churches in the Heartland area to the Southeast area, which makes only five areas in which to fill vacancies.

We are excited to say we just voted two new folks onto the Board, who will hopefully be confirmed by the Conference Annual Meeting in April 26 to 28.

We invite members of the Conference to stay tuned to their emails for more information regarding updates

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What is pulling you beyond believing?

Reports & Comments



By The Rev. Dr.
Jonna Jensen
Acting
Conference
Minister

**Affirmations
of
faith
often
include:
I believe,
or we
believe
beyond
believing**

I'm writing to you, dear saints of the Pacific Northwest Conference, before sunrise in Iowa and a few days away from the longest night of the year for those living in the Northern Hemisphere.

When my son was growing up, it was a night for candles. We would gather all the candles in the house and light them on a big table. We told our stories. And we were quiet together. And I don't know why the smoke detector didn't notice.

There may well have been other nights in other months this year that were the longest for you. My heart is toward you as you recall them.

If candles are possible for you, I invite you to light them. Candles have supported prayer and worship for a lot of years.

They serve as little suns where there is no sunlight. Even in a bright sanctuary, they invite us to ways of wonder and knowing that don't depend on electricity.

There are six hymns in The New Century Hymnal in a section titled "Changing Seasons."

435 is actually a Christmas carol that William Gay and Anna-beth McClelland Gay wrote in the context of the Vietnam War, "Each Winter As The Year Grows Older"

I wonder if your congregation is singing it this winter. There are verses of prophetic anger and lament. There are verses of faith and hope that rise from anger and lament.

There is an affirmation of faith that believes "beyond believing."

These days surely draw us in to believing "beyond believing."

There may be changes in your own life that have taken your faith beyond believing. There are surely transformations in our congregations that feel like Re-formation and pull us beyond believing.

When we practice the spiritual discipline of Paying Attention to news from our own neighborhoods and from neighbors around the world, we persist in faithful responses to news that feels beyond belief.

If our congregations' worship services include shared Affirmations of Faith that include "I believe" or "we believe," we might parenthetically add the words "beyond believing."

In your daily prayers, dear saints, and as your congregations worship, may there be "assurance of things hoped for and conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

Transitions announced

Deborah Tyler is serving as the designated pastor at Dayton UCC. Her standing was approved for transfer into our conference at the August meeting of the Eastside Committee on Ministry.

Adam Ogg, a clergy person ordained in the Presbyterian Church, USA, was called to serve as pastor of Congregational-Presbyterian Church in Lewiston. He was installed on Nov. 19.

At the November meeting of the Committee on Ministry-Westside, **Cydne Cochran** of United Church in Ferndale, was approved as a member in discernment.

Andy Gill was granted leave of absence status. Michael Ellick was granted transfer of standing. He is serving as the minister of worship and care at University Congregational United Church of Christ in Seattle.

Jermell Witherspoon continues serving Liberation UCC, but resigned from Everett UCC to serve part-time as associate pastor at a non-denominational church in Kirkland.

Eleven ordained Samoan ministers and five Samoan lay ministers completed their UCC History and Polity Course on November 11. The Rev. Elder Tauoa Head, moderator and dean of the United Samoan Ministries—COREM—United Church of Christ, presented 33 contact hours of instruction. The actual certificate of completion was titled: "Overview of the Ethos, Polity, Theology and Ministry of the UCC in solidarity with the Polity, Theology and Culture of the 194 years of Samoan Church History."

"This is a major step in the pursuit of dual standing in the UCC for these pastors and lay ministers," said Cameron Sharp of the PNC-UCC Committee on Ministry.

Anne-Marie Illsley, who serves First Congregational Church in Walla Walla, was approved for transfer of standing into the PNC-UCC conference.

Janel Rieve of Zion-Philadelphia in Ritzville, transitioned out of lay ministry.

On Dec. 6, **Jane Sorenson** of Monroe Congregational UCC celebrated 20 years of ordination. She has served on the Monroe church staff for 36 years.

Dennis Calhoun was approved for transfer of standing into the conference.

Michael Ellick was installed as minister of worship and care at University Congregational UCC on Oct. 22.

Wade Zick, former managing director of Pilgrim Firs, and his husband, Lalo, have been accepted as Peace Corps volunteers for 27 months in Thailand starting January 4.

The Clergy Compensation Guidelines has been updated with new figures. The revised document is posted on the PNC website.

WRYE recruitment begins

Margaret Irribarra Swanson, director of children, youth and family ministries at University Congregational UCC in Seattle, is working on the planning team for a gathering for youth and leaders for the western region of the United Church of Christ.

The Western Regional Youth Event (WRYE) will feature three days of programs from June 23 to 27, possibly in Long Beach, Calif., with the Southern California/Nevada Conference as host.

The event will include a day of workshops and worship, a day of service and a fun day, such as at Disneyland.

Margaret would like to hear as soon as possible from leaders of UCC church youth groups (for sixth to 12th grades) leaders whether their group would attend and how many to gain a sense of interest for planning.

"Please let me know right away whether you think your group would attend, and how many (see link below). We are trying to get a sense of real numbers and interest level," Margaret said.

For information call 206-524-2322 x3315 office, 206-399-2213 cell, email mswanson@ucucc.org or visitfacebook.com/margaretucc.

Jubilee applications due

Applications for the Justice Leadership Program's Jubilee are being accepted until Dec. 31 for the January to May online program.

Jubilee is a five-month online ecumenical program for adults interested in integrating faith and justice work into their lives in meaningful and transformative ways. Sessions are one evening a week.

In small groups, participants deepen understanding, learn practical skills and gain confidence to use their voice and find their roadmap to working for systemic change.

Each month includes skill and knowledge building workshops, spiritual reflection

and supportive discussion, hands on experience within an established organization, and resources for justice-focused congregational projects.

For information, call 206-245-5446, email elizapenick@justiceleadership.org or visit justiceleadership.org.

JLP sets online series

The Justice Leadership Program (JLP) is offering a five-part online series, "Introduction to Progressive Christianity," from 4 to 6 p.m., PST, beginning Tuesday, Feb. 20, exploring "an amazing and often hidden alternative understanding of what it means to be Christian."

Two-hour One Day Workshops are offered throughout the year to explore advocacy, forms of social change, nonviolence and social location. To learn about upcoming events follow the JLP website.

For information, visit justiceleadership.org.

Board proposes vision

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from the Intentional Interim Conference Minister Search Committee and the Annual Meeting Planning Committee.

The following is the proposed wording for the Guiding Vision, with a reminder that a vision statement is about what we envision our conference to be at its best. It is written in the present tense. We can use mission statements, goals and procedures to sketch out how we will specifically plan to live into this vision.

"The Pacific Northwest Conference is a deeply connected group of churches, camps, clergy and lay people who support, affirm and encourage one another as we engage in vital, creative and inclusive ministry. In partnership with the good work of others, we are transforming lives and building communities based on deep and caring relationships.

"We continually work to 'do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God' (Micah 6:8). In this effort, we specifically strive to create a just and anti-racist world, beginning with our own faith communities, knowing that the ministry of dismantling white supremacy culture is ongoing.

"Together with God, we are expanding the ways that God is expressed and revealed to the world."

May God's blessings be abundantly known through the Advent and Christmas seasons and into 2024.

Conference News Briefs

N-Sid-Sen grounds cleanup improves safety, beauty

Continued from page 1

involved clearing brush, clearing new trails, making old trails less steep with S-curves, painting cabins, washing windows and beautification of the camp,” she said. “We have hauled the brush to a burn pile in the middle of the meadow.”

The camp managing director Pam Peterson and the East Side Lake Coeur d’Alene Fire Department will supervise the burning to keep it safe.

Meghan said the nine team members were given saws, loppers, weed whackers, shovels and rakes and taught how to use them safely.

“We sawed down brush and trees to make space for new and healthier growth,” she said. “The fire department came to discuss mitigation, also teaching us how to identify what plants to remove and what ones to keep.”

Jane Baker, a volunteer trail blazer from Westminster UCC in Spokane, came out to teach the team how to build and maintain the trails, said Pam Peterson, managing director at N-Sid-Sen.

A lumberjack and his family came to cut down the big trees and the team will work with Dean Johnson, the maintenance manager at N-Sid-Sen, to finish the cleanup and split the wood for the camp’s firewood cache.

While they worked, they stayed in Syringa Lodge.

They were also able to meet other groups that came to use the camp, such as a quilting camp, and they helped plan an open house for the local community. They also assisted in hosting the annual East Side Fire Department Christmas Banquet.

Meghan listed other members of the team, who shared comments about their experiences with AmeriCorps.

Keathe Hess of Seneca Falls, NY, said that “Ameri-

Corps has been a great experience to meet new people and gain new skills.”

Elisha Howard of Houston, Texas, said, “AmeriCorps has introduced me to plenty of new and useful skills that can be useful in the future. Traveling and doing projects with new people has been an enlightening and insightful experience.”

Ethan Klemm of St. Petersburg, Fla., appreciates that “AmeriCorps has given me the opportunity to travel across the country while making lifelong friends and giving back to the community. It’s the perfect thing to do if you’re looking to take a gap year in between college.

Noah Stoltzfus of Ephrata, Pa., commented: “I joined AmeriCorps at the advice of my mother who had previously been in the program. I didn’t know what I wanted to do as a career, so I joined with AmeriCorps to get work experience and possibly find what I want to do.”

Joshua McRae of Gastonia, N.C., joined AmeriCorps to have new experiences, to travel, to make new friends and to find the right college.

Jack Knizhnik of Vernon Hills, Ill., not only joined AmeriCorps to travel, but also to “gain leadership experience, and better prepare myself to enter the workforce.”

Molly Hunt of Erlanger, Ky., said also joined AmeriCorps to travel, to “serve others and gain valuable life experience before going into college.”

Along with travel, Daniel Studzinski of Burlington, N.J., joined AmeriCorps to “figure out what I want to do with my life.”

In December they returned to Sacramento for two days before going to Eugene, Ore., where they will clear brush, make trails, and do beautification projects in parks for seven weeks, before going to Santa



AmeriCorp team members clear trails at N-Sid-Sen.

Photo courtesy of N-Sid-Sen

Cruz, Calif, where they will do similar work.

Meghan said other teams build houses with Habitat for Humanity and work with food banks.

During their 10-month commitment, participants receive a stipend and have housing, food and cleaning supplies covered.

“We earn a \$7,000 credit for college tuition,” she said, explaining that AmeriCorps volunteers can work for four years.

“We have worked all day with new people who have become our friends and we have gained skills we did not have,” she said. “We have also been doing things we have not done before. It has been great to work at N-Sid-Sen beside the lake.

“We went swimming one day when it was 40 degrees, had campfires and karaoke nights, talked late and went on hikes—including hiking to the new Inspiration Point,” she said.

Pam said this was N-Sid-Sen’s first endeavor at hosting an AmeriCorps CCC team.

“It was a great experience and we all learned so much from each other,” she said. “We previously benefited from a CCC team’s volunteer efforts last summer and we felt that being a host sight would take us to the next step of developing a long-standing relationship with the AmeriCorps organization. We look forward to continuing that relationship.”

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

Camps gear up for the 2024 programs

The Outdoor Ministries Committee has been hard at work getting the dates, curriculum, and volunteer staff lined up for “Linked by Love” Summer 2024 Summer Camp, said Pam Peterson, director of N-Sid-Sen.

The Women’s Retreat for ages 16 and older will be held May 17 to 19 and the Emerging Young Adults dates are TBS for ages 19 to 35.

The summer dates are as follows:

- Intermediate Camp (entering grades 5 and 6) and Junior High Camp (entering grades 7 to 9) run are both July 14 to 20;
- Senior High Camp (entering grades 10 to 13) is July 21 to 27, running concurrently with You and Me Camp (child entering grades 1 to -5 with an adult family member) July 21 to 24 and Kids Camp (entering grades 2 to 4) July 24 to 27.
- Family Camp for all ages is July 28 to August 4 and Camp Together (a family style camp for all ages) is August 4 to 10.

The committee is still confirming the volunteer camp directors, who this year will be referred to as the camp deans.

A new member of the staff will be a camp chaplain. Dana Sprengle, who is a member in discernment (MID)

for ministry, will serve as the chaplain for all of the camps rather than each camp having their own chaplain.

The theme for this summer’s camp is “Linked by Love” and all of the camps will have the opportunity to follow the same curriculum as in the past.

Registration for N-Sid-Sen Summer Camp 2024 opens on Feb. 1, using the portal found on the web site.

Interviews for paid summer staff—lifeguards, cooks and housekeeping—begin on Feb. 1. Applications are accepted any time. To apply, email Pam Peterson at director@n-sid-sen.org.

The Outdoor Ministry Committee is recruiting camp deans and cabin leaders. Anyone interested in volunteering for summer camp should contact Pam.

Registration will be online at n-sid-sen.org.

Pilgrim Firs Camp and conference Center is offering the Men’s Retreat for ages 16 and older Feb 1 to 4 and the Junior-Senior High Midwinter Retreat for grades seven to 12 on Feb. 9 to 11.

In the summer, there will be a You and Me Camp for grades 1 to 4 with an adult and Kids Camp for grades 2 to 4 June 14 to 16.

Registration will be online at pilgrim-firs.org.

Pilgrim Firs does deep cleaning to prepare for 2024

Mark Boyd, who spent the first month of his sabbatical flying to New Orleans, helping his daughter Nicole pack and driving back with her as she moves back to the Northwest, is unsure when the next segment of his sabbatical will come as he expects Pilgrim Firs Camp and Retreat Center to be full through 2024.

The Annual PNCUCC Men’s Retreat will be Feb 1 to 4 followed the next weekend by the Midwinter Retreat for middle school and high school youth Feb. 9 to 11.

Because the facility will be well used in 2024, camp staff will spend a week and a half in December doing a deep cleaning of the grounds and buildings.

“We will clean cabins and carpets, paint rooms, wash linens and curtains, and do maintenance upgrades,” said Mark, who is the managing director. “Then we will keep up with doing one cabin a month and stay on top of maintenance.

“We have a busy calendar, because we have worked to recruit more UCC churches to use the camp. Among the churches that have scheduled retreats for their congregation or groups are Liberation, University Congregational, Bellevue youth, Richmond Beach and United Churches of Olympia,” said Mark.

A new group, “Black Girl Empowerment,” has reserved Pilgrim Firs during March.

There are many of the regu-



lars coming back, such as Warrior Pathh who hold several retreats a year and Our Whole Lives to train people in January and for all-age session in November.

Other regulars include 12-

step groups, a Unitarian Universalist group, a Sufi retreat and guitar camps have dates.

Mark said Pilgrim Firs seeks two more staff

For information, visit pilgrim-firs.org.

Corey Passons leads World Religions workshops

Corey Passons, pastor of the Community for Interfaith Celebration and executive director of Interfaith Works in Olympia, not only attended the Parliament of World Religions (POWR) in August at Chicago but also co-led two workshops.

Eight years ago, he attended a Parliament of World Religions online. This was his first time to go in person. POWR is held every three to four years.

"I attended because of my work with the congregation and nonprofit agency," he said. "I shared my experiences as a practitioner of interfaith relationships, ideas and concepts.

"It was incredible to participate in the POWR with diverse workshops, people from many cultures and 80 nations," said Corey, whose participation was supported by Interfaith Works.

He led a workshop on the Dances of Universal Peace, with Ted Ryle, using Aramaic prayers of Jesus. The dances are liturgical dances using scriptures and poetry from world religious traditions and based on the Sufi tradition, Corey said.

"The Community for Interfaith Celebration finds Dances of Universal Peace a powerful practice," Corey said.

The second workshop, "Interfaith Spirituality in a Post-Modern World," was a panel with Corey and two other practitioners sharing on interfaith dialogue and spirituality in a culture that is largely unchurched.

The leaders explored the people interfaith spirituality serves, and how interfaith ministers honor multiple traditions with authenticity and reverence.

With Corey, there were two other interfaith leaders.

Jen Briedman is a chaplain and executive director of the Dances of Universal Peace who grew up in a Christian home, open to encounter diverse faith traditions. She spoke of the power in moving the body in



Corey Passons

connection with others.

Tahil Sharma of the United Religions Initiative in Los Angeles is a community organizer with this coalition of denominations, focusing energies of congregations to work together for social justice. He spoke of his cultural background with parents who were Hindu and Sikh. He understands the importance of people connecting and recognizing their different religious identities and common humanity.

The panelists shared from experiences in different functions of chaplaincy, organizational leadership, social justice advocacy and education, and interfaith congregational ministry.

Corey said that in each of these settings there is a through line of seeking connection and offering support and care for those they serve at the level of the human heart. Their ministries exist in a moment of record growth for those who are religiously unaffiliated and those seeking a more diverse, plural community of teachings and practices for their spiritual lives.

They shared their experiences, hopes, challenges and joy in the work they do fostering depth on their various paths of service in interfaith ministry.

"We explored how we practice faith without causing harm as we present and pull from practices other than our own,"

he said. "It's important not to represent a tradition that is not authentically our own practice."

He said sometimes in interfaith settings, leaders share a practice from another religious culture without fully understanding it.

Corey explained that often Christians to drew practices into their tradition from pagan, pre-Christian traditions.

Some traditions are part of Christian celebrations, such as the Advent wreath, bringing a tree with lights into the home, Christmas Eve being near the solstice, and the cross symbol—with different meaning—from the Roman Empire.

"Appropriation of symbols is at the heart of every religion born out of another or as a way to promote it to a religion they encounter," Corey said.

As pastor of an interfaith congregation and organizer for social justice, Corey's approach is to honor people's spiritual walk, encouraging them to explore their spirituality and helping them identify the social justice reality of their tradition.

"At the Community of Interfaith Celebration, we not only talk of different religions, without promoting them as truth, but also reflect on them in our Christian setting through the Bible as the source of truth at the Community of Interfaith Celebration. Members decide for themselves the authority and relevance for their lives."

In seminary at the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University, Corey worked as a graduate assistant in interreligious dialogue. His classes were on interpersonal communication and world religions.

Corey, who grew up in Spokane, has traveled and explored different world religions. He studied at the University of Montana and Eastern Washington University before completing his undergraduate degree in

English literature and classics, eventually finishing it in 1997 at Seattle Pacific University

For 20 years, Corey made a living as a carpenter with a constructing company and expressing himself an artist musician—a singer and songwriter in bands and solon.

With an evangelical church, he joined a team that would visit at the Monroe Correctional Facility in a ministry to those serving life sentences.

"I learned the biographies and incredible traumas of these men. It opened my heart to the power of presence, just being open to someone and giving full attention," said Corey.

He studied at the STM from 2009 to 2016 and began exploring other traditions. For a while, he attended a United Methodist Church, but then moved. The closest church was Bethany UCC, which he began attending in 2010.

"I learned what it meant to be open and affirming. I wanted to be in solidarity with friends I saw rejected in evangelical churches. I wanted to be in a church where I felt comfortable and in a church with people who were able to ask questions. It felt authentic in my spiritual identity and understanding of how to do theology."

Corey ended his work as a musician and carpenter the last two years of his study, to be a full-time student, graduate assistant and intern with All Pilgrims Disciples of Christ and UCC Church on Broadway.

After he graduated in 2016, he was called to serve the 90-member Community of Interfaith Celebration in Olympia.

"It fits well with my understanding of the UCC, which is not creedal and non-doctrinal, •trusting people on their spiritual journeys," he said.

For information, call 360-943-4822 or email coreypassons@gmail.com.

Elizabeth Maupin shares insights from POWR

Along with Corey Parsons attending the Parliament of World Religions in August in Chicago, Elizabeth Maupin and Cynthia Figge of Spirit of Peace UCC in Issaquah.

Elizabeth attended because she won a drawing at Seattle University and received free passes. She just paid transportation and shared a room with a friend from the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

"The Parliament of World Religions is what set off the interfaith movement," said Elizabeth, who works with the Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council and is concerned by interfaith strife across the world.

With more than 8,000 people attending from across the globe, there were many plenaries and workshops with many speakers.

This year the Parliament of World Religions returned to its birthplace in Chicago where this interfaith movement began in 1893.

"Call to Conscience" was the overall theme, with sessions dealing with such issues as climate action, faith and interfaith understanding, peace and justice, the global ethic document, women, the next generation and indigenous peoples, said Elizabeth who was particularly drawn to sessions on climate action and indigenous peoples.

"Indigenous communities contribute the least to climate change but have the most wisdom to share on ways to live to end climate change," she said.

Elizabeth reported on several sessions.

• **The first session** she attended was "Protecting the Rights of Future Generations: The Time for Intergenerational Justice Is Now." Vanessa Nakate, the UN Secretary General's envoy on youth and a climate activist from Uganda,



Elizabeth Maupin of Peace UCC and the Eastside Interfaith Concerns Council in Issaquah attended the 2023 Parliament of World Religions in Chicago during August.

Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Maupin

reported that biodiversity is being rapidly destroyed and people must act quickly to leave a better planet for future generations.

• **Carroll Muffett**, president of the Center for Environmental Law, emphasized the need for a moral and legal system that gives tools to leave children's children a livable climate and world. He said that a Montana court found that young people have a constitutional right to a healthful environment and that the state must consider potential climate damage of projects.

• **David Hales**, chair of the Climate Justice Task Force of the POWR, noted that "we are winning the soft law battle on future generations human rights" with these principles and many resolutions, policies and treaties, but strong

arguments for these rights are not accompanied by answers about enforcement. Overlapping jurisdictions keep anyone from being responsible for carrying out resolutions.

He suggested: "Not only do we need a mandatory phase down of fossil fuels, but also we need to be cautious about what we are putting in place of fossil fuels. We need to be conscious of the unintended consequences of our choices."

He believes carbon capture and injecting sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere are dangerous solutions. Even solar panels have impacts in terms of mining critical minerals and a failure to recycle outdated panels.

• **Tom Goldtooth**, a Navajo and Dakota environmental, climate and economic justice activist, noted that "rights" are

hard to translate into indigenous languages. The Indigenous worldview is about right relationships. The Dakota term, "mitakuyapi," translates as "all my relatives" and includes belief that all of nature, even rocks, have spirit.

Rather than rights, he suggests speaking of concern and respect, for we are all part of the Great Spirit. At Standing Rock, he said the cry of "mni wiconi" was "water is life."

"Water, Mother Earth, and Father Sky are all sacred," he said, concerned that earth is being destroyed by legal systems of societies that have no concept of the sacred connection with the earth.

"The western idea of human dominion is foreign to Indigenous spirituality," he said, referring to the Bimidi Statement on Seventh Generation Guardianship.

"If we are to leave clean water and a healthy earth, we will need to learn from those peoples who have carefully observed the ways of nature in their environments and learned how to live in harmony with nature and maintain balance in their ecosystems," said Elizabeth.

"We were encouraged to look at our varied creation stories and our relation to the Creator," she continued. "We could be asking questions about why oil is in the ground, the purpose of gas in the natural order, the impact of individual property rights and how to move from a death-dealing extractive economy to a living economy."

"Our Eurocentric colonial mindset needs to be replaced with a communitarian approach if our species and many others are to survive," she said, summarizing one session that offered Indigenous voices.

For information, call 425-677-8043 or email eli410maupin@gmail.com.

Faith Action Network presents 2024 priorities

The Faith Action Network (FAN) of Washington is planning its Interfaith Advocacy Day in-person on Thursday, Feb. 8 in Olympia, as an opportunity for advocates from faith communities to bring their voices to the state legislature.

The day includes opportunities to attend plenaries and workshops to explore the issues on FAN's 2024 Legislative Agenda.

The 2024 Legislative Session that starts on Monday, Jan. 8, is the short, 60-day session.

"Our network has broad interests, and we know that there are intersections for justice everywhere among our categories of work to make our state a more just and equitable place to live," said Elise DeGooyer, executive director.

FAN shapes its legislative priorities with more than 25 coalition partners, its statewide network, its Policy Committee and the FAN Governing Board.

"We advocate for policies that advance our values grounded in faith and spirituality: belonging and human dignity, justice and equity, interconnectedness, collaboration and pluralism," she said.



Faith Action Network Advocacy Day is Feb. 8 at Olympia,

The FAN legislative agenda is at <https://fanwa.org/advocacy/legislative-agenda>.

The agenda includes eight priorities.

1) to promote economic justice through the Working Families Tax Credit Expansion, Guaranteed Basic Income Pilot Projects, Extreme Wealth Tax, WA Future Funds, and WA Gift Card Accountability Act;

2) to protect and expand the social safety net with funding for food banks, free school meals, senior nutrition and ensuring families on TANF keep their child-support payments;

3) to address climate change and environmental justice through the Cumulative

Risk Burden Pollution Act, WA Recycling and Packaging Act, Clean School Buses and Hold Oil Companies Accountable and Address Gas Prices;

4) to increase safe affordable housing and prevent homelessness by increasing real estate excise tax, limiting rent increases, protecting tenants, protecting licensed long-term care and increasing Housing Trust Fund;

5) to advance immigrant and refugee rights through unemployment benefits, health equity and fund, and legal and emergency services;

6) to reform the incarceration system related to solitary confinement, sentencing

emerging adults, jail based voting and legal financial obligations; 7) to foster public safety and civil rights, and

8) to expand access to health care.

In response to requests for additional orientation before Interfaith Advocacy Day, FAN will offer an online Legislative Briefing/Preview from 3 to 4:15 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 7, to give an overview of the issues being addressed on the legislative agenda.

At 7 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 10 and at noon, Thursday, Jan. 11, FAN will provide Advocacy 101 online to train people in advocacy skills.

FAN is also collaborating on planning the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 27, at Spokane Valley United Methodist Church and online.

FAN urges early registration for the Interfaith Advocacy Day 2024, because the capacity is limited to 200 people at United Churches of Olympia. Registration closes Monday, Jan. 29.

For information, call 206-625-9790 or visit fanwa.org.

Church voices concerns on Israel-Hamas War

Guemes Island UCC passes statement on war

On Sunday, Oct. 15, the Council of the Guemes Island UCC, a member church of the PNC, discussed and passed the following statement regarding the current Israel-Hamas War, "as a witness to our common faith," said Robert.

"The Guemes Island Community Church, United Church of Christ, stands with both the Jewish and Palestinian people, and we oppose growing anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim rhetoric and gatherings. We recognize and affirm the rights of both communities to exist, thrive and live in peace.

"We support neither governmental efforts to marginalize specific populations or violent terrorist activities that target specific communities while bypassing the social and political processes that are fundamental to creating lasting and meaningful change," the statement says.

"We hope this statement will encourage other concerned communities of faith and conscience to make their own public witness for justice and compassion," it continues.

"We encourage all recipients of this information to share

it with all appropriate staff and affiliated colleagues, and to publish it through news channels and all other appropriate outlets.

"While we do not feel that our local witness on a small Island in the Pacific Northwest will likely change a war, we do this as our necessary witness to our Christian faith, and in the hope that the flutter of butterfly wings in our part of the world might actually make significant change in a distant place because we are all connected," it concludes.

The statement was based

on content from statements in the national setting including a UCC and disciples letter to Congress, a statement by Churches for Middle East Peace and a statement by the UCC Global Ministries.

Robert pointed out that the statement expresses support for both sides and for all innocent citizens to live in peace and for people to stand against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

When he submitted it as a letter to the editor at the Skagit Valley Herald, it took much persuasion of local editors to publish it.

Guemes Island UCC hosts social justice art show

The Guemes Island Community Church, United Church of Christ (UCC) recently set up a Social Justice Art Show, “Till All Voices Are Heard,” featuring 45 pieces of 12 local artists—paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture.

It will be displayed through next March in a room that was built to replace a courtyard in the U-shaped building. The church often uses that space as a gallery, said Robert Anderson, a retired UCC pastor, artist and social justice advocate.

He organized the show with church member Carol Steffy.

The art show is one of two recent initiatives he has encouraged at the church.

Standing for social justice and producing social justice art have been a themes through Robert’s ministry.

Two of the pieces on display are from his collection of art. They are two posters from JR, a French artist who sought to make the invisible and voiceless visible and given a voice.

He included a large sculpture he made of his children playing “Keep Away” with a ball, an image of one of the “power games we learned early in our lives to keep people powerless, an image of the power struggle behind most social justice issues,” he said.

Carol recruited local artists and prepared large signs. Robert did small signs, publicity and set up the show.

Robert, who grew up in the Congregational Church in Brookfield, Conn., completed his undergraduate degree from Wesleyan College at Middletown, Conn., in classical civilizations, which allowed him to study history and art. After college, he studied art history in France from 1957 to 1958 on a Fulbright.

A 1961 graduate of Union Theological School, he was ordained in the UCC, which



Hovering - toxins in gardens



Power to the Animals

Robert Anderson shares four of his contributions to the Social Justice Art Show which raised issues of environmental justice, pesticide use, animal rights and exclusion/inclusion of voices.

Photo courtesy of Robert Anderson

formed in 1957.

While serving a parish in Milford, Conn., Robert, commuted three years to learn a master of science in art education at Southern Connecticut State College in North Haven. He focused on sculpture and bas relief, with artists as his teachers.

In 1973, he was called to be on the staff of University Congregational UCC in Seattle as associate pastor of outreach, mission, justice and parish care.

In his eight years of ministry there, he helped the church resettle about 100 refugees from Vietnam and Laos at first and later from Argentina and Ethiopia. He served during that time on the Washington State Commission for settling refugees, providing English classes and other training too settle in.



Finding the Lost



Spiritual and Other Leaders

“I’m still a member of University UCC, because after leaving the church, I served Overlake Presbyterian Church, a continuing Congregational Church in Shoreline, and as interim at Admiral in West Seattle, Renton and Sunnyslope in Wenatchee,” he said.

He purchased vacation property at Guemes island in 1997 and moved there in 1999, having retired from full time ministry at the age of 62 in 1995.

Robert has nurtured his artistic interests by attending and teaching workshops over 20 years at the Grunewald Guild, an art and faith community in Leavenworth.

He worked over several years with the First Congregational UCC in Bellevue that had 15 three-by-three-foot

windows originally created by children as mock stained-glass windows with tissue paper collages. When those were worn out, the church contacted him to work with members to make real stained-glass windows, primarily depicting the life of Christ.

He worked three years with six people from the church and then finished the rest of the windows in three more years.

For bas relief pieces, Robert works with vegetable matter that comes as a mash form. He creates molds and then the bas relief wall hangings harden without firing and can be painted. He has done numerous bird forms, like the peace bird and phoenix.

“Much of my art is around social justice themes, but much also picks up some early art of pre-Hispanic Mexico and Mayan art he encountered in numerous wintertime visits throughout Mexico,” Robert said.

“I don’t do art to sell it, but often come to an ‘understanding’ or just give it away,” he said.

About a fourth of his pieces also have religious themes around traditional Christian imagery the wisemen, the resurrection, the open tomb and crucifixes.

When he preaches, Robert, 80, said he is traditional UCC, preaching on a text.

The Guemes Island UCC is a community church with about 20 to 30 people of many faiths, not just Christian.

“We need to be a community that demonstrates what God’s kingdom looks like,” Robert said, believing that the Social Justice Art Show and the statement supporting Jews and Palestinians (on page 8) represent what the church is to do and be.”

For information, visit spiritofiguemes.org.

Pastor tells the story of Pia the Peacemaker troll

Speaking on “Caring for Community” at the Nov. 21 Interfaith Council’s (IFC) Thanksgiving at Bainbridge Island, Dee Eisenhauer, pastor of the Eagle Harbor Congregational UCC, spoke of Pia the Peacemaker, “a new member of the community,” who arrived at Sakai Park in late August. The wooden troll is part of “The Way of the Bird King” troll story by Danish artist Thomas Dambo.

Telling how the troll strengthened the community there, she said her church and council are two communities within the larger communities of Bainbridge Island/Kitsap County, within the larger community of Washington State, the U.S., neighbor nations, “the global society of trees and other living beings, the good green earth, the assembly of planets in this solar system, and on out to infinity and divinity.”

She sees the communities nestled together like Russian dolls from smaller communities to the largest.

“All are a blessing in their own ways,” she said, inviting gratitude for “our overlapping, interlocking communities.”

The story of how Pia came is “as magical as the finished piece,” said Dee, “Her existence is a parable of community.”

Pia is one of 10 troll sculptures from New Jersey to the Northwest which has six—Bainbridge, Vashon, West Seattle, Issaquah, Seattle and Portland—built from Aug. 1 to Sept. 17.

Dee said the artist hopes the sculptures “not only showcase the beauty of repurposed materials but also inspire people to reconnect with nature, spark their imagination, and foster a greater sense of environmental responsibility.”

The artist has collaborated with each community where the trolls have been built.

Dee said Bainbridge Is-



Pia the Peacemaker is a gathering point in Bainbridge Island.

land Park Commissioner Dawn Janow coordinated the effort to bring Pia, when nearby Poulsbo was unable to. Their parks people called Bainbridge Island so there would be a troll in Kitsap County.

Even though much effort was needed to plan and raise funds, the parks department offered a place, but no funding beyond lead funders, Scan Design Foundation and the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation.

“**So the Friends of the Bainbridge Troll** formed. A group of seven gathered community partners to make it happen,” said Dee, listing those responding.

Arts and Humanities Bainbridge would receive the funds. Eight media partners spread the word. Thirteen businesses became donors and sponsors, 18 other organizations and businesses became partners.

Friends of the Troll took Pia’s head to the Bainbridge Island Museum of Art 10th anniversary to build support.

Refashion Bainbridge made “Way of the Bird King” T shirts with leftover clothes from the Rotary Auction and sold them at the festival for donations.

A coin drive means individ-

ual donations to the troll ranged from one penny to \$10,000, meaning many people participated.

“All of us involved with nonprofit communities know the importance of people donating money as a tangible emblem of support, and know that the penny people are just as indispensable as the thousands-of-dollars people when you’re building a community,” Dee said

Given that the trolls encourage recycling and re-using materials, Ace Hardware collected and donated most of the pallets for Pia’s body.

“Her hair came from apple tree branches given by a Poulsbo neighbor, so there’s a bit of Poulsbo in her even though she lives here,” said Dee.

The construction crew included professional troll builders and volunteers who helped for eight days. Some came from Seattle—including a person experiencing homelessness who has taken part in several troll creations traveling on the ferry.

Some Boy Scouts camped in the park on “troll patrol” during the build to make sure materials and tools were protected until she was all put together.

The day she was awakened, Scrappy Art Lab provided festive decorations and the Bainbridge Youth Symphony came to play “The Troll King.”

“What a fantastic embodiment of so many interlocking communities Pia ended up being,” she said. “We hope she will continue to be a place to embody community.”

Dee then announced prayers for peace would happen at Pia’s feet Sunday, Dec. 3. Dee planned that with two other women clergy.

Dawn, who Dee calls the “troll shero,” said that early in the process of planning to bring a troll someone in a Board meeting raised a reasonable question: “What is the point?” Dawn talked about bringing something joyful to the community that would bring people together.

She recalled the story of Stone Soup—the story of a community that slowly but surely gets involved in making a big pot of soup for the village, as everyone does their part.

“**The troll process** has been very much like that. Pia the Peacekeeper is even more beautiful when we know how many communities, nested and linked together, cooperated to bring a thing of beauty and a source of joy here,” Dee said.

“As we live in a secular age and a fairly non-religious part of the country, I suspect many people outside religious communities wonder, “What is the point?” about those of us involved in spiritual enterprises,” she commented. “Our inherent value might not be obvious to those who aren’t involved. How might we answer someone who wonders what is the point of assembling in spiritual communities?”

“Our answers may be about intangible things. We speak of compassion, love, peace,

Continued on page 13

Rabbi sums up sentiments at Dec. 3 peace vigil

Dee Eisenhauer, pastor of Eagle Harbor UCC on Bainbridge Island, was one of three local clergywomen—UCC, Episcopal and Presbyterian—who organized a peace prayers event on Sunday, Dec 3, by Pia the Peacemaker in Sakai Park.

“Representatives from Sufi, Jewish, Christian, Earth-based and Unitarian Universalist faith communities prayed from their traditions, and then invited everyone to voice prayers for peace while lighting battery candles,” she said.

Comments at the vigil spoke of peace in general, but Dee said there have been several other vigils in Kitsap County calling for a ceasefire in the Holy Land.

“There is lively interest to end this horrible war,” she said.

Dee has touched on the war in the Holy Land a bit in her preaching, condemning attacking civilians by both sides—but mostly critiquing our own U.S. military industrial complex that constantly invests so much in the machinery of war around the world.



Luminaria line the path to Pia the Peacemaker for vigil.

“We spend more than the next eight high-military spending nations combined,” she said.

At the peace vigil, luminaria bags were set along the path is from the parking area to the troll, Pia the Peacekeeper.

Dee was moved by the words of Zann Jacobbrown, the Pardess Jewish Community’s rabbinic guide, who raised questions, addressing the community who long for peace.

In this time of violence and needless suffering, when trauma after trauma is inflicted on a new generation, Zann asks,

“How can this end? How can the children of Palestinians and Israelis, Ukrainians and Russian, Syrians and other Syrians ever live together? How can the racism and lack of inclusion of all sorts in our schools, the pollution of our oceans and streams, the burning of fossil fuels ever end?”

She said there is no way with current mindsets, habits and systems of power.

“This despair keeps us from coming together, trusting others, lifting our voices, feeling compassion for the suffering of the Palestinian as well as Jew-

ish children—and parents.

“May we remember in times of despair that we are not made for perpetrating violence and cruelty,” she said. “We’ve only come into the world to encounter and know You.”

Zann reminded that people are wired for compassion, so the brain “floods us with compassion before we’ve even thought about it. We did not come into this world for anger and bloodshed” or to “commit atrocities.”

“I pray we will remember that healing can take place, that we know how to heal trauma, that we know how to transform the systems of oppression. This indigenous wisdom is within each of our lineages deeply buried, but it has been brought to the surface,” she said.

Without healing and rebuilding, nothing is possible. With it, anything is possible. May we each in our own ways, through our own traditions and beliefs that have so much in common, find ways to encounter and know the Source of Healing,” she invited.

Arranging to have a ‘troll’ was community effort

Continued from page 12

prayer, hope, justice, faith, help, connection and joy,” she continued. “Christians speak of our sacraments as visible signs of an invisible grace. That’s what our spiritual communities are—visible signs of many an invisible grace that is embodied in our gatherings and in the gathering places some of us labor mightily to maintain.

“We hope that people who see us take form in tangible spaces and speech and action would stand before us with the sense of delight and even awe that Pia the Peacekeeper inspires,” Dee said.

She sees Pia’s visible form, made of 160 recycled pallets, as

a metaphor for what the spiritual community is made of.

“We are, like pieces of pallets brought into the world for service—not the beautiful people, the celebrated or the popular. We’re humble folk. We’re serviceable. Some of us have even been recycled through more than one faith community on our journeys,” she said, “but put us together and just look what living art can emerge from such humble parts.”

Dee pointed out that in North Kitsap County, the Interfaith Council is like the scaffolding inside Pia that holds disparate communities together.

“We assemble to work, pray, learn, cry, organize, cre-

ate, make music, celebrate, give thanks and laugh together, making connections that may not be obviously visible but are a significant part of the interlocking communities in which we are nested,” she reflected.

Dee then told another secret about Pia the Peacekeeper. She has a heart.

During the build, troll shero Dawn asked one of the builders if she was going to have a heart inside. It wasn’t part of the original design, but they made one out of wood and installed in her.

“Our spiritual and nonprofit communities don’t always get attention or respect. We can even feel practically invisible at times, but we are meant to be

the heart inside the larger community in which we have been built,” Dee pointed out.

“Folks don’t always perceive it, yet at our best we function as the heart of this community: to bring more compassion, peace, justice, love, hope and joy to this place,” she said.

“We don’t have to be headline news if we are engaged in being good news in our communities. If we do what we are called by Spirit to do, individually and collectively, perhaps one day nobody will ever need to ask about our Interfaith Council, ‘What is the point?’ Everyone will know: the faith community is our heart, Dee concluded.

To create a quilt with a social justice message

Pullman church devotes a Sunday to quilting

During a worship service last summer, members of Community Congregational United Church of Christ in Pullman, stitched together pieces of cloth to make a quilt with a message against banning books.

Since then, the church has shared the Banned Books Quilt with other congregations, organizations and libraries in Pullman and Moscow for two weeks at a time. That gives people time to see it and sign 'library' cards with the message, 'We're with the banned,'" said Lisa Carloye, who felt a quilt would be a powerful way to address the issue of book banning.

"Quilts have been used historically to communicate about justice," she explained. "Slaves used them to communicate about the underground railroad."

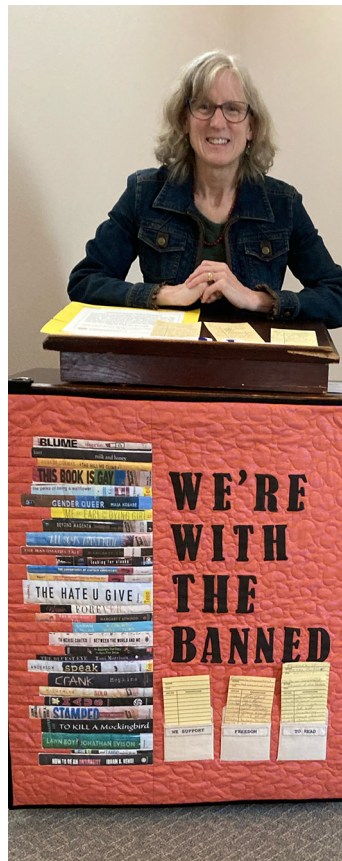
In social justice history, she said quilts are more than blankets. They are art that brings people together in community.

Lisa had been thinking about making a banned books quilt for a while. Teaching biology at Washington State University, she believed banning books related to people of color and LGBTQ+ people creates a dangerous world. Banning books limits understanding of other people's lives and experiences, cutting out awareness of slavery and the civil rights movement, said Lisa.

When interim pastor, Gary Jewel, suggested that people develop creative ideas for worship during the summer, she let her idea blossom into creating a Banned Book Quilt during worship.

Because the congregation attuned to social justice, Lisa thought the quilt would express faith in action and keep people's hands busy during worship.

Lisa, who grew up in Pullman, left for 25 years for school and work. When she moved



Lisa Carloye now takes the quilt to other congregations, libraries and bookstores to give presentations and offer a way for people to do something about their frustration.

Photo courtesy of Lisa Carloye

back in 2005, her family was attending the UCC church.

Lisa began attending when the pastor was Kristine Zakarison, who had been a year ahead of her in school.

"I liked her messages. She gave the historical and cultural context for biblical stories," said Lisa.

Like other congregations, Community Congregational has challenges in attracting younger people.

"Social justice issues are key to my faith. We want to be a community that helps people live their faith and address injustice. I think younger people want to do something about issues," Lisa said. "With Pullman

a college town, social justice issues are pertinent."

Growing up in the 1970s with the Civil Rights Movement, Lisa expected people to work—as Martin Luther King Jr. said—so "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

"It's shocking to be going backwards, unraveling what was done in my lifetime," she said. "We are all God's children. Traumatizing and marginalizing people is anti-Christian. Jesus reached out to marginalized people."

Lisa believes liberal Christians need to claim Jesus' teachings and challenge those who use Jesus' name to hurt and exclude people.

"Feeling helpless in the face of these changes, I wondered what I could do to make an impact," she said.

"The quilt idea spoke to me because quilts symbolize comfort, warmth and embracing, and making a quilt is a way people, especially women, come together," she said.

Banning books has happened throughout history, she said noting that they highlighted books people are less familiar with.

"Targeting books is targeting people. People wrote the books to tell their experiences," said Lisa. "Banning books marginalizes people and narrows understanding of what has happened in our culture and country. I'm alarmed that banning books spreads to critical race theory, cutting out honest discussions on slavery and experiences of black people and cultures," she said.

Lisa is concerned that generations of students could lack context for why society is where it is today, unaware of any information that might make them feel uncomfortable or ashamed.

With her experience in hand quilting and Nancy Mack's skills with machine quilting, they decided the congregation could hand piece and sew sections during worship.

They chose orange background fabric symbolizing flames and bought printable quilting fabric, on which they would print pictures of the spines of books to make it tangible what books are being banned,

One Sunday, worshippers sewed pieces during the service. They started the service as usual, with special music. Lisa gave instructions. They set up an assembly line. Lisa taught them how to stitch, provided pre-threaded needles and put cloth strips on the table.

"Some people pinned strips together. One drew a stitching line with a ruler. Then stitchers sewed strips that were the same size. The pile of fabric grew from two books to four until all of the 24 the strips representing books were sewn together.

Nancy added appliqued letters to the quilt to say, "We're with the Banned!"

The next week, Nancy put a back and border on it. Then she added old-fashioned library card holders. She printed library cards with the name of the church and the message, "We're with the banned."

Lisa brought the quilt the next Sunday and invited people to sign the cards after another church member, Bill Condon, who is Pullman's head librarian and a retired literature professor, talked about the value of books as a means to understand other people's experiences and empathize with them.

So Lisa now offers opportunities for others, who share her anger and frustration about book banning, to do something.

For information, call 509-332-9343 or visit pullmanucc.org.

Tolt UCC has weekly food bank, Nov. clothing bank

The Tolt Congregational United Church of Christ in Carnation's Mission and Justice Committee here at Tolt gathered warm clothing items in November.

"We do this event each year at the beginning of the colder months," said Barb Lewis, office administrator.

The church also hosts a Food Bank and Free Meal—take-out—event from 4 to 5:30 p.m., each Wednesday.

Those coming to that event also shop for fresh vegetables, fruit and other foods that church volunteers pick up that morning at Fred Meyers and Trader Joes, which donate food each week. Local farmers also provide fresh vegetables.

"Our events are for anyone in need of a meal or food for the week. All are welcome no matter what," said Barb.

She explained that Tolt UCC started the Food Bank and Free Meal during COVID in March, 2020.

"It have been going strong each week ever since," she added.

Anyone who attended the



Warm gloves and hats fill a table at the back of the sanctuary.
Photos courtesy of Tolt Congregational UCC

Food Bank and Free Meal in mid November were also invited to "shop" for warm clothing items.

The church also has an outdoor Food Pantry that people can access 24/7 and volunteers stock daily.

"We also offer a Good Neighbor Fund to help people throughout the Snoqualmie Valley in need with gas cards, rent assistance, utilities and other emergency needs," she added.

In addition, the church offers the Tolt Good Neighbor Preschool, providing a caring, stimulating early childhood educational setting for three-to-five-year-old children of "all races, nationalities and creeds."

The program features hands-on learning and multi-sensory discovery, using a variety of curricula.

It meets 9 a.m. to noon, Mondays through Thursdays

"There is a lot going on at our small but mighty church," Barb commented.

For information, call 425-333-4254, email tolt@toltucc.org or visit toltucc.org.



A rack of winter jackets spans the width of the sanctuary offering a wide selection for adults in need.



Two racks of children's winter coats and snow pants are set up for those at the food bank to choose from.