



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

Fall 2021

Hybrid worship stretches churches continually

29 people from 18 PNC churches join in online meeting to learn and share how they are worshipping

During a PNC online meeting on hybrid worship, Leah Atkinson Bilinski of Fauntleroy UCC in Seattle described how her church has “done” worship since COVID, both in terms of the technical pieces and the processes for deciding what to do and how to do it.

In the spring of 2020, Fauntleroy formed a Regathering Task Force as the church began to plan about worshipping together, but in the fall of 2020, they realized it would be a long time.

“We did 16 months of Zoom webinars and live streaming,” said Leah.

“We usually we have our struggles in the area of tech as many churches do, but we had a tech volunteer committed to keep helping week after week,” she said.

Continued on Page 5



Fauntleroy UCC choir wears masks and sings along with video of pre-recorded songs prepared by the choir director.

Photo courtesy of Fauntleroy UCC in Seattle

Board forms sub-groups, Annual Meeting plans begin

I hope you are well and managing the continued uncertainty of our current times. As we are in the fall season, leaves are changing. September seems to have gone by in the blink of an eye. I realize many of us need more time for reflection, sharing updates and resting, rather than just go, go, going.

As I reflect, I have a few updates on the Board’s work this summer and fall.

In May, we welcomed new board members and gathered for a Zoom board retreat in June, when we deepened conversations and commitment to anti-racism and talked about our work ahead.

Board members have formed four working groups to keep our priorities moving along: the anti-racism group, communications group, financing our

**Board of Directors
Report
by Hillary Coleman,
Moderator**

vision group and Board/Conference structure group.

The anti-racism group, with Board members Indigo Brown, Dawn Koloï, Jennifer Castle, Esther Sanders and myself, is having important conversations with the Board, Dismantling Racism Team, and beyond as our conference continues to use an anti-racist lens in all of our settings. We feel the spirit continuing to move this work.

Jillian Hutton and Zoe Pfeifer are our communications group to help us take a deep breath and share the stories of work that is happening around our conference, in ways that are accessible and relationship-deepening.

Our Financing our Vision group, with Janet Ott, Ron Patterson and treasurer Diana Kutas, is helping bridge conversations between Stewardship and the Board to figure out how to finance our vision shared with Stewardship last fall: “In the coming years, we envision the presence of the PNCUCC being bigger than it is now. We see action steps being taken to undo white supremacy culture in how our conference runs so we can use an anti-racist lens in all aspects of our life and truly

Continued on page 3

How do we care for others when we disagree?

Conference Comments



By The Rev.
Mike Denton
Conference
Minister

**Division
is being
used
on both
sides
of
the
divide
to
consolidate
power.**

Our conversation went something like this: “Pastor, my Mom said you were a good man, and I should talk with you. She’s been telling me this for weeks, but I was too proud to ask for help. I’m at the point where I have nothing to lose anymore. I need help.”

I was working late at the church I served in Dayton, Ohio, and he’d come knocking on the door.

“Whose your Mom?”

“Annie Williams. She’s seen how you’ve been able to help other people in the neighborhood and thought you could help me, too.”

Our church had a small emergency pantry for when the community food pantry was closed. I had a small discretionary fund for emergency grants, too. This was the time before gift cards were so available.

“What’s your name?”

“I’m sorry. I was so nervous I forgot to give you my name. Anthony Williams.”

He extended his hand. We shook. I invited him into my office. We talked for a while.

He told me about his life and how he had been fired a couple of months ago. He’d just started a new job and was able to get enough of advance to cover his back rent but didn’t have enough food to make it through the week. His new job was also off the bus line, and his car was out of gas. It was clear he needed help.

“Well, Anthony, we don’t have much, but we can help out some. I can set you up with a bag of food and \$40. Would that help?”

He nodded. “Anything would help. I can figure out the rest. That will just about get me through.”

I pulled out the envelope in my top drawer with the discretionary money and gave him the \$40 that was in there. Then, I pulled out my wallet and added \$10 more to the mix. He was gracious and, still, a little embarrassed, too.

“You don’t know what this means to me. Thank you. I promise when everything’s good again, I’ll bring this money back to you.”

I said what I always said. “How about this? When you get back on your feet, how about you share this with someone else who needs it?”

“I will. I promise I will.” I sent him off with a prayer.

A couple of weeks later, I saw Mrs. Williams out for a walk.

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Williams! How’s Anthony doing?”

“Who?”

And right at that moment, I knew. Up to that point, I thought I had a pretty good con radar. Although the vast majority of people who asked for help or I offered help needed it, there had been a one or two I’d turned away. There had been another couple of times I had my doubts. But “Anthony” fooled me.

I felt bad about it. The fund we used to help folks out was down \$40, and \$10 of my own money was gone. I’d given away food that other people had donated. I didn’t tell too many folks about it because I was embarrassed. Unfortunately, there were consequences of this con that spread beyond “Anthony” and me, too.

I tried to convince myself that maybe he needed it and thought this was the only way to get help. However, after that, I listened to those who knocked on the door with a little more caution. I am sure I didn’t help some people as much as I could have because I doubted my judgment.

How many of you, while reading the story, were completely pulled in by it? How many of you have had a similar experience or know someone who was conned? What did you feel? What did they feel? What’s the response we should give to someone who was conned?

There is a lot of anger and rage these days aimed towards the unvaccinated and vaccinated; the unmasked and the masked. Each side is convinced the other side is conned. We were already divided in many ways. Now, this division is being used by some on both sides of the divide to consolidate power.

But there are those words Jesus says about “an eye for an eye” in Matthew 5:38-48 and those words about striving to “do what is good” in 1 Thessalonians 5:15.

What is our responsibility to those whom we believe have been conned? How do we care for one another even we disagree with one another?

Transitions announced

Jennifer Castle was ordained at Plymouth UCC in Seattle Sept. 26 on Zoom. She has served the church in a variety of staff capacities, and now continues as the associate pastor.

Corey Passons was ordained by the PNC and Community for Interfaith Celebration on Aug. 22 at Priest Point Park in Olympia. Corey graduated with a master of divinity degree from Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry in June 2016 and began work that summer with Community for Interfaith Celebration in Olympia and as an interfaith minister and program manager for interfaith relations with the social-justice organization, Interfaith Works.

Conard Edwards died in June. He served churches in Idaho, California and Washington. He was also an army chaplain and served in Europe, Panama, Korea, and Vietnam as well as the U.S. He is survived by his wife, Judi. A memorial service was held at St. Paul's UCC and via Zoom on Saturday, June 26.

Anna Edmonds died Aug. 4 in Omak. She served with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission and later Global Ministries from 1949 to 1952 and then from 1955 to 1959 teaching English in in Uskudar, Turkey, and from 1960 to 1990 as an editor and author with Redhouse Press, in Istanbul. She served with her husband, Bill, who died in 2009. After they retired they moved to Bainbridge Island.

Communities of Practice groups are underway

Communities in Practice groups began in September and continue through June 2022. They have begun online, open to change as the pandemic protocols change.

The groups, coordinated by Brigitta Remole, include the Pacific Northwest, Montana-Northern Wyoming and Central Pacific conferences. Communities in Practice groups are for active, retired and specialized ministers and members in discernment.

The fee this year is \$250 with the option for payment plans and scholarships.

For information, call 206-914-5684, email brigitta.ucc@gmail.com or register at <https://bit.ly/3AM5nc9>.

Conference News Briefs

Care Fund tax added

Conference accounting manager Andy Warren reports that a new employee tax, the WA Cares Fund, is being implemented in Washington beginning in January 2022.

Everyone who works and contributes .58 percent of their wages for at least 10 years will be eligible for long-term care, up to \$36,500 in a lifetime. Funds can be used to hire a home-care aide, pay a family member, modify a home or receive residential care.

For information, visit wacaresfund.wa.gov.

UCC offers racial justice tie

"Join the Movement toward Racial Justice" helps UCC churches imagine a church free of racism and a world where all people live without fear of violence or systems harming God's human creation. At jointhemovementucc.org, the UCC is offering a way to share stories to help people grow together and learn from one another to build a just world.

For information, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M50t1TaP7oY&t=34s>.

History provides lessons

A UCC webinar on "Movement Lessons: The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit 30 Years Later" will be at 10 a.m., Wednesday, Oct. 13, on Zoom. The first summit, organized by the UCC's Commission for Racial Justice in 1991, redefined the word, "environment," to focus on where people lived, worked, studied, played and prayed. It included the water one drinks at home, the air one breathes in their neighborhood, safety in one's workplace. The summit produced 17 environmental justice principles that are still used.

There is also access to a recording.

For information, visit https://ucc.zoom.us/join/8516270122480/WN_s23u_KjQVTP-WuzxT7ceKW8Q.

Farm Worker Forum is Oct. 23

The Farm Worker Ministry Northwest, a faith-based farm worker solidarity organization working for justice, will hold a Farm Worker Ministry Northwest Community Forum from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 23, on Zoom or in person at Englewood Christian Church, 511 N. 44th Ave., in Yakima. It is an opportunity to learn how

farm workers are organizing for their rights and how to support them.

For information, email fwm-nw@mn-fwm.org.

UCC website being updated

The transition of the UCC website will soon be completed. It will allow people to up for email lists from the daily devotional to upcoming events, opportunities for advocacy and more. It's a way to see what this denomination is doing; find resources and participate. **The denominational site is at: www.ucc.org.**

Board report continues continued from page 1

deepen our inclusion. We see churches, members and people in the conference increasingly connected so we can support one another in the work we are called to do.

Tara Leininger and Nathaniel Mahlberg continue to look at board and conference structure through an anti-racist lens and with an eye to what is working and what could be shifted, building on previous work to bring bylaws changes on our structure to Annual Meeting.

I am grateful board and staff who move our work along. Board members are reaching out to listen to the diverse voices in the PNC.

The Conference Council—leaders from committees and board members—meets in November. To hear from folks around the conference, we hope you will join us at 6 p.m., second Mondays for office hour, or reach out to a board member. We all make up the conference!

We look to Annual Meeting 2022, Friday, April 29, to Sunday, May 1, as a time to be together, however, what that might look like is still to be determined. With uncertainty from the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to decide about the location and type of meeting, but we are progressing on content and theme.

Based on information in early December, we will decide how to gather in the spring. I know many hope to be together in person, which we have not done the last two years. I hope we are able to do it in a way that is safe and accessible. We just can't make this decision yet. Thanks to Westminster UCC who has been ready to host since before the pandemic, and thanks to our Annual Meeting Planning Committee, staff, conference leaders and everyone in the conference for your flexibility and understanding.

I look forward to continued gatherings in safe forms in the coming year and to our

Eagle Harbor pastor describes in person/hybrid life

Eagle Harbor UCC on Bainbridge Island began meeting in person at half capacity on Pentecost Sunday, May 30, taking reservations via Sign Up Genius.

When the state guidelines shifted, by July they were no longer signing up to attend in person and began to be fully open in person.

“We have been attentive to Washington state public health recommendations,” said Dee Eisenhauer, the pastor.

The masking practice has remained consistent with all participants masked unless speaking or singing at the microphone in a leadership capacity.

As people come in they sign in to report that they do not have symptoms, have not been exposed, are vaccinated and where to contact them.

“We have had to forgo eating at a coffee hour. The worshiping community attends without distancing because the sanctuary is not big enough,” said Dee. “We also have an on-line option. We chose early to do livestreaming.”

Meetings include two Bible studies online, a book club that is in person or online, and the board is also hybrid—in person and on Zoom.

“We borrowed the senior center which has a big screen so people at the meeting can see each other better,” Dee said. “We spent money on equipment so we could do live screen webcasts in the sanctuary and watch live stream projections.

The church has also restarted its choir, buying performance masks, that look like duck bills, giving space for projecting their voices. The choir rehearses and performs distanced.

“We have had the finances to do it because people have been generous,” she said. “Money can solve some problems.”

Dee’s husband, computer



Top, Eagle Harbor UCC choir sings wearing performance masks.

Below, members returning from Sept. 26 CROP Walk gather around the church’s “Blessings Arch.”

Photos courtesy of Dee Eisenhauer



expert, John, does tech work and consults with nearby churches.

When people enter they patiently wait in line to sign in. They note if they have any symptoms, exposure, vaccination and contact information.

Dee said that close to 100 percent of those coming are vaccinated, but the church does not require vaccination to attend. It does require that the choir is vaccinated.

“Overall, our congregation

has weathered COVID well,” she said, noting she has observed a rise in loneliness and frustration at deferral of funerals and memorials.”

Rather than focusing on what’s not possible, she has been using the “Bless to Me” series of Worship Design Studio materials of Marcia McFee, to which the church has subscribed for seven years, combining the core ideas with her own.

Recently the congregation has circulated a blessing box with prayers taken house to house. Members take a prayer and add one.

The church also set up a blessing arch outside, where people post their prayers, and instead of a coffee hour fills a “giving table” with produce, crafts and other gifts people want to share.

“It’s important to keep generosity on the front burner,” she said. “It gives a reason to come into the fellowship hall.”

While attendance has been nearly back to pre-pandemic level, Dee said that her focus has been on engagement, keeping people engaged.

“We had hoped by fall we would be back to normal. That would have been heavenly,” Dee said, sighing.

Sept. 26, church members joined in the Interfaith Council’s CROP WALK, which had been done virtually and independently last year. This year about a quarter the number of previous years walked and raised \$5,700. That amount was matched 2:1 by an anonymous donor.

The Bainbridge CROP Walk raised more than \$33,000 this year for Church World Service and two local food banks, said Dee, adding that it has raised nearly \$1 million over several decades.

For information, call 360-842-4657 or email dee.eisenhauer@gmail.com.

Online worship raises question of how to engage people

Continued from page 1

The tech volunteer has helped produce the service.

“When we focused on how to regather, we asked what is important for the congregation and what new steps would be needed to be live into it together,” she said.

A Regathering Task Force was chosen based on recommendations of the council, church life, parish life and other committees.

The staff of Fauntleroy researched who was engaging with the church, who was opening emails and how they would reconnect with people.

“We knew there was a lot of online growth through families, like the parents of members in several states who began attending regularly. We also found that many home-bound individuals were able to reengage with the church,” she said. “No one should age out of the church or no longer be able to come because of moving into an extended care center. If someone wished to be the congregation, they should be able to come.

We were seeking to foster community in families and maintain community in the congregation, living our welcome statement that ‘no matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.’ Looking further, we realized several members had limitations of sight, and that online worship could help them to fully participate. Observations like this informed our thinking toward how to better live our welcome,” Leah said.

Along with the tech volunteer, they found process people and looked at funds.

“We were fortunate. Before we ever had a plan, a member gave \$20,000 toward whatever it would take to regather,” she said. “Later, after we had a plan, another person gave \$5000, unsolicited.”

“With a team of volunteers,

we crafted a plan for regathering. We decided to use the office beside mine that once had been a crying room and have it be the tech room, overlooking the sanctuary,” she said.

They then looked at what equipment they needed and took time to select it.

The task force evaluated their 45-year-old sound system with old hearing loops and analogue hearing aids, but associated costs pushed addressing these things to a second phase yet to come in the future. In the meantime, members have sought to optimize the present sound system as best they can.

They decided to set up three cameras in the sanctuary and determined they did not need to be top of the line.

“The Regathering Task Force took its plan to the Finance Ministry and the Church Council for approval,” she said.

Over three months, the tech volunteer installed the cameras and a rear projection screen.

“We did carbon dioxide tests to help us see what was happening to the air, because we have no windows in the sanctuary we can open for ventilation,” she said. “There isn’t a direct correlation, of course, between rising CO2 levels and air movement of virus particles, but it gave us a portrait of how long exhaled air hangs around in general.”

The Regathering Task Force made decisions about what safety measures to take, what the ushers needed to do, how to be welcoming to children who were not vaccinated.

“We decided not to limit attendance to only those who were vaccinated, but we knew that part of being welcoming was to offer a strong sense of safety,” she said.

To include children, who were not vaccinated, they decided to offer Sunday school outside for an hour with all ages together.



Fauntleroy tech room.

Photo courtesy of Fauntleroy UCC

“It felt like we were setting up 10 lines of dominos all in different directions and all related,” Leah said.

Starting in person in June, they realized it would be a long time before they would sing in church. So small ensembles of vaccinated, distancing people do the singing, not the congregation.

The music director had previously worked in video editing and helped the church develop a music library with more than 100 songs. The church has five copyright licenses.

Instead of singing hymns, videos of hymns were played and ensembles sing along with the videos.

A question of how to add warmth and engagement opened for everyone to discuss.

Jim CastroLang of First Congregational in Colville said even though it’s a small congregation, when the delta variant spread more began coming again on Zoom than in person.

“Instead of me giving a sermon, we have the congregation share in discussion. Instead of one person reading a call to worship, different people read sections, giving people voice in the worship so they are not just watching,” he said.

Gloria Koepping of Spirit of Peace in Sammamish said that after church they now have 15-minute breakout rooms for connecting as in a fellowship time. Then they come back together to discuss the sermon.

“We scramble people in

groups, so they are not talking to the same people every week as they might do at an in-person fellowship hour,” she said.

Patty Ebner of First Congregational in Bellevue said they still pre-record a virtual service even though they started in-person worship in the summer.

Instead of doing communion in person, they invite people forward for a blessing or private prayer, but use no food.

To create a sense of relationship, they moved from a soloist to two singers who establish eye contact as a way to establish meaning and relationship.

Janet Ott of First Congregational in Bellingham said they are no longer doing hybrid, but decided to go back to doing worship all on Facebook because of the high rates of COVID in Whatcom County.

“When we did hybrid worship, people attending in person would pass the peace at the microphone. Now we have lay participation for the liturgist and time with children. Instead of in-person conversations, we use chat. We chat with the pastors on the service and sermon.

“We plan to institute a discussion group on specific topics after worship on zoom once a month,” she added.

Betty Fisher and Betsy Vaninetti of Everett UCC said they have a small, in-person worship at Everett and then at noon

Continued on page 7

UCUCC will continue with hybrid worship, meetings

Kyna Shilling expects that University Congregational UCC in Seattle, which just began in-person worship Sept. 26, will continue with online worship and meetings, too.

It will be going hybrid—combining in person and online worship—and likely continuing to have worship and programs on both platforms.

“We have had increased participation since going online with livestreaming worship. Pre-pandemic, we had 250 attending plus children, but viewership has been about 250 to 300 screens, so with couples and families, it’s likely 400,” said Kyna, who began as director of finance and operations just five weeks before the pandemic.

UCUCC did a survey and found that live stream was not everyone’s “cup of tea, and people missed in-person worship, but many appreciated having it as is evident in the worship viewing being more than those attending pre-pandemic.”

The survey found that eight to 10 percent will continue to be part of online worship only.

Some join who do not live geographically near. Some found it convenient. Some lacked transportation. Elderly who are homebound found it a way to participate. Some won’t return until their children are vaccinated.

“Everyone’s risk budget is full,” Kyna noted.

“People who retire and move to Arizona can continue to be involved because of online activities,” she said.

“In the future, people who do not feel well may more likely opt to stay home and participate online,” she added.

Worship went online in March 2020.

“We did not come back in person sooner because of tech upgrades we needed to do both hybrid and in person,” she said. “We also had a COVID Team to



In hybrid service, Catherine Foote, pastor, can go from opening the service in video on her farm, letting out her sheep, to preaching in the pulpit in person.



Amy Roon can bless the elements of communion at the church and at home with her son Benjamin



Photos from University Congregational UCC Facebook Page

assess when it would be safe to return.

Our pastors, lay worship team, music director and video editor prepared the livestream worship for Facebook and YouTube by Saturday evening.

It involved uploading files to a central location. There

were 50 to 100 files, because members submitted prayers and photos of themselves for passing of the peace.

“There was a new slide show of members each week,” she said. “It helped members feel connected to the community.”

The in-person worship planners also decided to have colored cards that slip behind the nametags to indicate comfort/consent about personal contact: Green means “ask me first, but I’m okay with hugs.” Red means “I’m keeping my distance.” “Yellow means “ask me my preferences.”

“It’s a helpful visual reminder not to make assumptions and to ask/respect everyone’s comfort levels before and after worship,” Kyna said.

While worship both in person and online is now happening, youth group is also hybrid on Sunday mornings, both live and online.

Staff—some live in Tacoma and some in Everett—plan to save their commuting, continue safety precautions and be in the office just two days a week, rather than five.

“Staff have learned to communicate efficiently online,” said Kyna, who grew up in and is a member at Plymouth UCC in Seattle. She has been active in the Conference as manager of the Facebook page, on the Communications Task Force, and chair of the Stewardship Committee until January when she will go on maternity leave.

Child care during worship will continue to be outdoors for those under five.

The building is again open for rentals, including some justice organizations that have used the building.

The rest of church activities are online—committee meetings, Christian formation, adult forum, workshops, book groups, social justice speakers and panels, racial-justice discussions, environmental action groups, and men’s and women’s fellowships.

Being online has increased participation in groups and committees, she added.

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

Synod impresses youth delegate with church's impact

Hana KealohaoTeAtua Reinhardt, the PNC's 2021 youth delegate to General Synod 21 in June, "went" via her computer—listening to keynote speakers and workshop sessions, and joining in worship.

"It was hard to connect with people online. I know it would have been better in person. I had hoped to make contact with the Pacific Islander Asian American Ministries group my father had helped start, but I was unable to do that online," she said. "It was sad it was not in person, because part of General Synod is being with people."

"I liked the theme, 'Rooted in Love,' and speakers on different issues," Hana said.

She was interested in discussion on resolutions, like the ones recognizing the Alliance for Associate Conference Ministers, calling for Israeli-Palestinian peace, eliminating the cash bail bond system, ending conversion therapy for LGBTQs, recognizing racism as a public health crisis, acknowledging the rights of nature and ending the 128-year war with the Hawaiian Kingdom.

"I learned from the General Synod speakers what is going on in the world and what we can do to change it," she said.

"I realized that the church is a ginormous organization that can do something and can have an impact on issues,"



Hana KealohaoTeAtua Reinhardt helped with cooking, cleaning, laundry and fund raising at N-Sid-Sen.

Photo courtesy of Gen Heywood

Hana continued.

"It's hard to do something on issues as a single person, but as a church organization with connections all over, I feel we can make changes in our individual communities and through the United Church of Christ as a whole," she said.

For seven years, Hana, 19, has been involved in Veradale UCC, where her mother Gen Heywood is pastor. She has helped with technology, decorating, fund raisers and more.

Hana has also attended junior and senior high camps at N-Sid-Sen.

The past two summers with COVID, she and her brother Henry, a senior at Central Washington University, volunteered at N-Sid-Sen, helping with cooking, cleaning, laundry, yard work and fund-raising meals.

This summer, she was there during July and early August.

Hana had been the youth delegate two years ago, but Henry went instead, because she was an exchange student in Tornisch, Germany, during her senior year at University High School in Spokane Valley. After 10 months in Germany, she returned early because of COVID.

At Synod, she was interested in environmental presentations. In 2018, she had been a delegate with other young people from around the world at the Summit on the Environment at George Mason University in Washington, D.C.

Now a sophomore majoring in wildlife ecology and conservation studies with a minor in German at Washington State University in Pullman, she is attending most classes in person for the first time. Last year was all online.

Hana was interested in General Synod in part because her mother had met her father at General Synod in Columbus, Ohio, in 1997. Hana said her father—whose native Hawaiian, Cantonese and German heritage is reflected in her name—died seven years ago. (KealohaoTeAtua means the Aloha of God.) Her parents were married several years while Gen was serving a church in Sunnyvale, Calif.

Other General Synod delegates were Jerry Chang of the Taiwanese Christian Church UCC in Seattle, Hillary Coleman of University Congregational UCC in Seattle, Danette Koloï of Burien, Mike Denton, conference minister and Courtney Stange-Tregear, PNC minister for church vitality.

For information, call 408-507-1365 or email genheywood@att.net.

Innovation, sensitivity to people enhance online and in-person worship

Continued from page 5

Zoom with Liberation UCC.

For communion, they ordered sealed cups with grape juice and wafers.

"I'm new to Washington," said Betsy, "so I connect here and with my church in Denver. The worship there is quite different. It's a high quality produced service like a TV show. It's less warm. Online Everett and Lib-

eration feel like a house church."

Heather Suursoo, administrator, said they have been in person since spring. They don't sing in worship, just have instruments. There is no coffee hour, so people do not linger, and there is a sign-up sheet for contact tracing.

Shannon Peterson at Alki UCC in Seattle said they have done Zoom from the beginning

and are still on Zoom, but the sanctuary is part of the experience with the pastor and a musician there.

For communion, people use whatever they have—water, juice, coffee, granola bars or eggs. The pastor asks each to share what they are using for communion. Those attending on Zoom share on chat what they are using for communion.

Mike Denton expressed appreciation for the sharing and commented on how different congregations have tried different things in their contexts.

"We have been figuring out how to get through this moment and we will continue to keep figuring out what to do," he said.

For information, call 206-725-8383.

Shalom UCC adds COVID relief fund to outreach

From her involvement on the church's Mission and Social Justice Committee, Marsha Stipe helped Shalom United Church of Christ in Richland form the Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition (TCIC) and continues to find avenues for the church to serve the community.

Because of struggles of people during COVID, TCIC recently formed the Tri-Cities Mutual Aid Project to financially help people in food service, agriculture and service jobs who do not qualify for any federal assistance programs.

With the expected influx of Afghan refugees, the TCIC is exploring what they can do.

On the Mutual Aid Fund, Marsha said that the community has been devastated by the pandemic: "We recognized that people needed cash to help with rent, utilities, food and health costs, so we started the fund."

The fund prioritizes undocumented people, seniors 60 and older, people who lost employment or work hours, people quarantined without pay, people with disabilities and grave illnesses, people experiencing homelessness, people of color and people in the LGBTQ community affected by COVID. Funds go to people in Franklin or Benton Counties who did not receive federal stimulus checks or unemployment compensation, Marsha said.

For the Mutual Aid Fund, TCIC partners with the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN) and Planned Parenthood. Applications for the program are available through the WAISN state Help Line—844-724-3737—which receives hundreds of calls from the Tri-Cities.

"Our initial goal was to raise \$5,000 and give awards of \$150 to \$300 to qualified individuals. When we first opened applications, we received 400, so we needed more funds.



Marsha Stipe

Photo courtesy of Marsha Stipe

With the urgency, we 'went on the road' to raise funds and increased our goal to \$50,000, then to \$100,000 and now we have raised \$120,000 on our way to \$150,000," Marsha said.

"The pandemic has gone on much longer than we ever imagined," she said.

By mid-September, the fund had given more than \$100,000 in awards of \$150 to \$500 to more than 300 people, primarily women with children. Funds have come from grants, businesses, local and state organizations and individuals. Some individuals regularly give \$25 to \$300 a month. Group Health Foundation gave a \$50,000 grant.

The TCIC, a nonprofit, through Shalom UCC, is the fiscal agent.

"Recipients have been more than grateful," Marsha said.

Organizers often hear: "I didn't know that anyone cared."

"This project has demonstrated that our community does care. All donations go directly to families and individuals in need," she said.

In August, the Mutual Aid Fund opened a second round of applications and received 110.

Donations are mailed to

Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition Shalom UCC 505 McMurray St. Richland WA 99354.

Marsha said the Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition, which she chairs, formed in 2017 in response to negative press about immigrants. Shalom's Mission and Social Action Committee sent a letter to churches and organizations inviting interested people to come together to counteract those messages.

An initial meeting in June 2017 for training with a group from Walla Walla drew 70. A Tri-Cities group formed. More than 90 people are on the TCIC group mailing list. The core is now about 25, many from Shalom, but also outreach people from other churches, community members, farm workers and labor organizations.

"We began by educating ourselves and the community, engaging with organizations and churches to network, do advocacy by writing elected officials, and support immigrants," said Marsha, who before retirement was a speech and language clinician, school administrator and assistant superintendent of schools in several communities.

"With COVID, we shifted TCIC from education talks and tabling to help people know their rights and holding community forums on economic and legal issues for immigrants, because those activities were face-to-face," she said.

They shifted to do the fund and advocacy through letters to the editor and petitions. They meet monthly, sometimes with a featured speaker, and to share information and network.

In September, Aneelah Afzali, executive director of the Muslim Association of Puget Sound-American Muslim Empowerment Network, spoke as part of the Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition adding another dimension to their mission: exploring resettling Afghan refugees through World Relief in the Tri Cities.

"Several expressed interest in resettling Afghan refugees here, so we are in the exploratory stages," Marsha said.

"We first formed to educate ourselves on undocumented Hispanic people to be a welcoming community," she said. "Now we are learning about welcoming Afghan refugees."

Marsha joined a Sept. 12 webinar with Irene Hassan of the national UCC. It is recorded and available to share online. She said the national UCC is calling President Biden to increase the number of refugees from 50,000 to 200,000.

There are enough members active in TCIC, so some can focus on supporting undocumented immigrants, and others can focus on welcoming new refugees.

Shalom's interim pastor Stephen Gentle and the Mission and Social Justice Committee are strategizing how to move forward as a congregation.

For information, call 509-946-6168, email marshastipe@gmail.com or visit tricitiesimmigrantcoalition.com.

30 volunteers helped feed children in summer

For seven summers, Chewelah UCC has been joining with 30 volunteers from local churches to feed school children during the summer months.

The church works through the Chewelah Faith Resources Group (CFRG) to provide nutritious food for students when they do not have access to school meals.

Holly Peterson of Chewelah UCC said they use funds from grants to purchase food for breakfast and lunch.

They then distribute the food to families with school-aged children on five occasions every two weeks during the second half of the summer.

The CFRG began the program in 2015 to fill the gap until Labor Day by providing boxes of food for pick-up on Mondays when the Chewelah Food Bank was open.

"We chose the name TASTY Kids' Summer Feeding Program, with TASTY is an acronym for Temporary Added Sustenance To Youth," said Holly, who moved to Chewelah from Montana 50 years ago with her husband, Ron. Both were teachers, so the opportunity to serve children was appealing.

The objective is to provide wholesome and healthy food to children in the Chewelah, Summit Valley and Valley School Districts.

Applications for the program were provided to the school districts and were made available at the Chewelah and Valley Food Banks.

The CFRG volunteers prepared an initial shopping list. They took it to the local Safeway to determine which products were lowest in sodium, saturated fat, refined grains and added sugars, she said.

The foods provided were reviewed by a registered dietician and were chosen for their



Top, Chris Johnson and Holly Peterson of Chewelah UCC join in community effort to provide food for children in the summers. Photo below includes members of Chewelah UCC, Colbert Presbyterian, St. Paul's Lutheran and the community.

Photos courtesy of Holly Peterson



nutrient content.

"We also partnered with the Chewelah Farmer's Market by providing \$25 vouchers, so kids could select fresh produce of their liking," Holly said.

"After the final food delivery, we decided we had enough money still available to be able to support the Chewelah and the Valley School Districts' weekend backpack snack programs during the school year in the amount of \$1,000 each," she said.

"We initially budgeted to

provide food to 175 children then raised the number to 200 because of the expected impact of the COVID-19 virus," she said.

CRFG gave food to 30 children the first year. The number peaked at 140 children from 54 families two years ago. This year, they provided food to 128 children from 51 families.

"We did a remarkable job of advertising the program but, truthfully, the Chewelah and Valley School Districts report that they provide free or re-

duced lunches to 670 kids so we can still grow," she said. We expect to increase our efforts next summer to reach even more families requiring assistance.

Each year, about six of the volunteers have been from Chewelah UCC.

"This program may help spawn other useful outreach projects in Chewelah, the poorest town in Washington, according to information a few years ago," Holly said.

Continuing their fruitful working relationship with the local Safeway manager, they are now given a 10 percent discount on all items purchased.

"Families have been appreciative and grateful for this program," she said. "In some cases, they have been introduced to foods they ordinarily wouldn't have."

Holly appreciates the opportunity to work with other churches in the community through the Chewelah Faith Resources Group. She and Ron were United Methodist before coming to Chewelah. As new teachers, the superintendent and principal, who were both in the UCC, invited them. Ron has been music director for many years.

Chewelah UCC, which is the first Protestant church in the Colville Valley, founded in 1879 by missionary Cushing Eells. One of the bells he donated to churches the area stands outside the church.

Holly, who is on the PNC Church Development Committee and the Ministry Resources Committee, said that the community volunteers, masked, packed food for the TASTY program through the last two summers despite COVID, packing food at the senior center beside the food bank

For information, email call 509-935-6572 or email hollyron@gmail.com.

Couple are mission co-workers in Colombia

The PNC Annual Meeting in April voted for the Conference to be a global partner with Justapaz, an ecumenical peace and justice organization in Colombia.

Mary Olney-Loyd and Rick Russell, co-chairs of the Pacific Northwest Conference UCC and Northern Lights Disciples of Christ Region Global Ministries Committee, reported that the new mission co-workers Alex Maldonado-Lizardi and Xiomara Cintron-Garcia arrived in September.

The couple moved from their home in Puerto Rico to Bogota to Colombia to work with Justapaz, the Christian Center for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action, which is the Global Ministries mission partner there.

They are following Michael Joseph who recently did a Zoom presentation with the Northern Lights Region Disciples, the Pugetarians, retired clergy and spouses in Seattle area, and the Global Ministries Committee. He preached at Prospect UCC in Seattle and some other churches. He is in Montana awaiting information on placement in the Philippines, where COVID is bad, said Mary.

Alex and Xiomara, members of a Disciples congregation in Puerto Rico, are teachers. The Disciples in Puerto Rico are a separate denomination from the USA/Canada Christian Church Disciples of Christ.

Their placement in Colombia waited for it to be safe to travel there, where there is little COVID vaccination. They were vaccinated before going there.

Through their work with Justapaz they will be in building capacity on peace issues with regional church leaders and allied organizations, documenting human rights viola-



Alex Maldonado-Lizardi and Xiomara Cintron-Garcia began as mission co-workers in September. Photo courtesy of Global Ministries

tions and theological analysis related to peace and reconciliation.

The organization gives workshops to overcome the normalization of violence in society, offers mediation of conflicts, supports the wellbeing victims, advocates against the recruitment of children and teens into armed conflict, pursues reparations, seeks fulfillment of national and territorial peace accords and helps with legal cases.

Xiomara has been a middle school math teacher and tutor at Puerto Rico Christian School in Toa Baja and was Sunday school superintendent at her church. She helped Brigada de Todxs respond to natural disasters in Puerto Rico.

She previously was involved with the Biblical Association University and participated in ecumenical student gatherings in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, and a service trip to Peru.

Alex was a Spanish teacher

at Laboratory School of the Inter-American University in San Juan and a math tutor. He also taught creative writing, literature and history.

Alex also was involved with Brigada de Todxs and the Biblical Association University with which he attended international student gatherings in Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Peru and Poland.

On International Day of Peace Sept. 21, the national UCC/Disciples of Christ Global Ministries called for celebrating the work of peacebuilding in Colombia as a place that has been experiencing violence.

"This has been a particularly violent year in Colombia where widespread protests have elicited a brutal response from the Colombian police," reported Global Ministries. "More than 4,000 have been injured by police violence and at least 73 protesters and bystanders killed by police, mostly young people, many of them members of Co-

lombia's indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities."

Global Ministries has a report at <https://www.globalministries.org/colombia-cry-for-peace> about the social upheaval in Colombia and the government's military response to those raising their voices in concern.

On the International Day of Peace, Global Ministries partners in Colombia marched in a Pan y Paz (Bread and Peace) march calling for peace.

In solidarity, national staff called for UCC/DOC members to call on members of Congress to suspend aid to the Colombian police until police brutality stops and take steps to protect those who are protesting and advocating for social change in Colombia.

In September 2020, the DOC regional and UCC conference Global Ministries Committee arranged for several people from area congregations to participate in a Pilgrimage to Colombia, as a first step in establishing a global partnership with Justapaz there.

Virtually, people "traveled" by boat with representatives to villages and learned stories of people and conditions of people's lives. They also participated in a livestream ecumenical worship service.

Global Ministries is only able to support mission co-workers by raising additional funds. It seeks to raise designated gifts of \$115,000 to fund Alex and Xiomara's four-year appointments in Colombia and six-month home assignments at the end of their term.

Donations to support Alex's and Xiomara's ministry may be made through <https://www.globalministries.org/project/alexandxiomara/> or by calling 317-713-2555.

For information, email maryolneyloyd@gmail.com or myrtos@comcast.net.

Stewardship message reflects on changes

By Jim CastroLang
Stewardship Committee

There is a realignment happening in our world.

Our lives, our priorities have been spun into chaos over this worldwide pandemic.

The truth is this was happening in our world before the pandemic.

Some of you may remember the revolutionary times of the 1960's when the values and privileges of white establishment America were doubted.

Our cities exploded with push-back and erosion of trust in leaders and institutions that built our nation.

It turns out that the volcanic eruption of those times was an early warning sign of a much bigger disruption against a way of life that only benefited a few.

It took social media and a pandemic to bring the simmering volcano to its full destructive potential.

The volcano is now wildly active, and the debate is raging:

- Shall we rebuild what we had (or the illusion of what we had)?

- Or can we build something new that will get us closer to a just world for all?

Things seem so dire in these pandemic times!

Supply chains are disrupted. Jobs are left unfilled as people discern a different life. Our hospitals are full, and we all now have personal stories of COVID hitting our families and friends.

Relational tension is high everywhere as the dueling continues between anti-maskers, anti-vaxxers and those who think that masking and vaccines are no-brainers.

Voting rights are under attack. Texas ratchets up the threat to women's lives as they seek reproductive health ser-



Jim CastroLang at Fall Gathering in 2019 at Richland.

vices.

Let's not forget – the human fueled Climate Change crisis that imperils the planet and exposes even more the racial inequities in our society.

The formation of the United Church of Christ in 1957 was an evolutionary step coming out of historical streams of Christianity.

Our founders were steeped in many old established privileged ways, but they had a sense that something more inclusive was needed.

The 1959 Statement of Faith uses the patriarchal language of the time while acknowledging that change was coming:

He bestows upon us his

Holy Spirit,

creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,

binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

The UCC of 1960 looks pretty establishment and traditional through 2021 lenses.

We have much to celebrate in our progress toward being a more inclusive and justice-oriented church.

Yet, it was the vision and courage of those early UCC leaders who hit the “start button” that has led us to the present moment.

I want to invest in the UCC—in our Conference and beyond—to empower the next generation of transformative

and revolutionary work.

Our vision was seeded in the dawn of the 1960's by our early UCC leaders.

It is time to prepare the ground and reseed for the next 50 years and beyond.

Today we are focused on being an anti-racism Conference in all we say and do.

We affirm that “Black Lives Matter,” and we commit to do the work. We have made a \$52,000 commitment in Conference budget toward this effort.

Now is the time to bring the offerings of our time, talent and treasure to bring this commitment alive.

The UCC is my trusted community.

I believe in its possibilities.

Together we can pay attention to the movement of the Spirit, creating and renewing our Church.

Together we can do the work for a more inclusive society and strive to provide a just and peaceful world for all.

The PNC-UCC community sustains me as I pastor of a very small rural church, First Congregational UCC in Colville.

It is the reason I serve on the Stewardship Committee in the Conference.

It is why I give monthly to the work of the Conference, to our camps and to the work of the wider UCC.

This is a critical time and I believe we can be part of the change for good.

I urge you to invest in and help build communities of trust for the work that must be done!

I hope you will join me in that effort in the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ.

For information, call 206-725-8383 or visit www.pnccucc.org.

Smaller camps conducive to deeper conversations

The shift to campers being at N-Sid-Sen was different from the usual seven day camps that were go-go-go, said managing director Mark Boyd.

“Many folks liked the smaller camps that were more intimate and conducive to deeper conversations, especially the youth camps,” he said.

Mark saw that people sat on beaches and chatted, getting to know each other better with there being more informal times to be together and share who they are. In contrast, at previous camps, conversations would focus around structured learning activities.

“COVID made people ripe for intensive sharing, delighting in connecting face-to-face as they emerged from isolation,” he said. “They were asking questions beyond the usual coffee hour conversations.

“**We were more creative** in how we did things,” Mark said.

For example, the senior high dance was not inside in the dining hall, but outside on the dock.

The big news is that there were no instances of COVID among campers.

Junior high, directed by Stephen Hadden, had all the activities outside adapted to bigger spaces. Campers in five cabin group “pods” used hoola hoops to make spiritual prayer mandalas around the camp.

For the closing on Monday, they made a bigger mandala.

In junior high, there were 22 campers, about a third the usual size. Similarly, senior high camp had 35, which was also a third the usual size, as were two of the three family camps.

Family camps also appreciated the small sizes. The first one had five families. The second one had eight families, as did the third.

They spread out in the lodges and cabins. They were



N-Sid-Sen sweatshirt design let people know they were missed.

Photo courtesy of Mark Boyd

more leisurely.

Family camps needed more flexibility because during those weeks in August there was smoke and heat.

“It did not help to jump in the lake,” he said. “One day they spent in Stillwater distanced because the smoke was so bad.

Meals were all buffet, not family style and tables were cabin groups.

“**Campers had** the opportunity to go on tours of camp to learn more about the camp beyond the waterfront. They went on trails and wandered in the meadows.

There were also two young adult camps, one in June exploring where they could go with camp in their future. The second in August was the class of 2020 that missed camp last year.

The first group wanted to know how to stay connected

with camp, said Mark, who led it with Allegra Ritchie. Two connected by returning as counselors for junior high camps and one did crafts for several camps.

“**The campers were** interested in hearing the history of N-Sid-Sen and the PNW-UCC Conference,” Mark said. “They wanted to know what happens outside the summer, not aware of how many N-Sid-Sens serves beyond the UCC—Buddists, Sufis from Montana, other churches and groups.

Many did not realize the amount of work it takes to keep up the camp. They asked what would be needed to serve more people and how to make it more inviting to people of color.

“We realize that one barrier is that we are in North Idaho and there is justifiable concerns,” he said. “Another barrier for some may be the cost, but we can apply for grants to

solve that.”

Eight of them toured “the dungeon,” the store room behind the craft room and the pantry downstairs from the kitchen level.

“**We will replace** cabin 8 this fall with 99 percent of funds covered by insurance. It will look like the other cabins but have heavier insulated windows and meet current codes,” Mark said.

The tent platforms were used both for outdoor breakout sessions, for meditation spaces and for tents.

Financially, Mark knew the camps ran at about one-third the size. Some expenses were down, but maintenance continued to be needed and done.

“Income was down about half of normal, but September was better than expected. We lost a dance camp but added three quilting groups of 16 to 20, drawn because they felt safe with our COVID protocols. Other groups we lost because of the protocols,” he said.

Mark knows the Stewardship Committee is discussing the needs and plans for an appeal.

Related to Pilgrim Firs working to develop a strategic plan, Mark commented that Randy Crowe, his predecessor, left the camp in “great shape” with revolving maintenance plans, aware of the life of the water heater in Spirit Lodge and setting aside funds for a new one when needed.

Part of strategic planning revolves around facilities and maintenance needs, Mark said.

Because he and Wade Zick, managing director at Pilgrim Firs are in regular conversation, Mark said that N-Sid-Sen will benefit from recommendations Kaleidoscope makes for that site.

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

Wade Zick tells of strategic planning, shares reflections

Wade Zick, managing director of Pilgrim Firs, the PNC camp and conference center at Port Orchard, sees that in the last 18 months, Pilgrim Firs has lived into the purpose statement the conference board of directors adopted a few years ago. That purpose is “to provide a sacred oasis for creativity and community.”

That statement has provided wisdom and guiding principles informing Pilgrim Firs’ direction.

The COVID isolation and quarantine center that Pilgrim Firs provided for more than 15 months was the community aspect to the statement.

“There was no way that we did not need the creativity and the communal resources from throughout the conference to provide that ministry,” Wade said.

COVID still has impact with groups not being present and what he hopes are just short-term financial implications in the camp’s 65 years of doing ministry.

Wade asks now, with the camp strategic plan for 2017 to 2021 ending this year:

- What is next for Pilgrim Firs?
- What does our site need to meet this next generation of campers?
- How do we stay relevant for many more decades of ministry?

Pilgrim Firs and the conference are partnering with Kaleidoscope to help us navigate a discernment process over the next eight months “to listen to our communities and what needs they perceive,” he said.

Those communities include the PNC churches, guitar camp groups, the stone sculpture



Top: Work is underway to enlarge the labyrinth at Pilgrim Firs. Below: Raised beds are being filled in the Pride Garden.

Photos courtesy of Pilgrim Firs



group and Warrior PATHH.

Warrior PATHH, the newest partner, will be on site 12 weeks a year working with post-9/11 veterans and first responders who have been struggling with the impacts of PTSD.

“This is an exciting time of asking how we might live into a fuller expression of being a resource for our current groups and building upon the vision of the previous generation of camp stewards,” Wade said.

Information will be coming about listening groups and

ways constituents can share hopes for Pilgrim Firs, can hear results of the strategic planning process and can learn about financial resources needed to move forward.

During the summer, Kaleidoscope was on site at Pilgrim Firs and started their eight to 10-year strategic planning for the camp and conference center.

They plan to present their suggested plan at Annual Meeting 2022, said Wade.

On current activities at Pilgrim Firs, Wade reported the following:

- His sabbatical from Nov. 1 to mid February will include going to Italy to look at how food relates to hospitality.

During the sabbatical, Chris Berry, who is the hospitality manager, will take on Wade’s responsibilities.

- The Pride Garden is progressing, and there are plans for a new pickleball / basketball court to be completed over the winter.

- There is an artist-in-residence coming in mid October to be at Pilgrim Firs through next spring.

Reflecting in the summer, Wade shared on Facebook his delight living on 90 acres amid primarily second-growth fir trees on a small spring-fed clear lake.

In paying attention to the small section of earth, he noted the dryness, the wildfire smoke and encroachment of development.

Wade observed that perhaps floods, droughts, fires, diseases and killer hornets are ways mother earth is trying to find healing and balance.

Some talk of climate change, numbers, disease and rising ocean levels.

Some see disasters as punishment from God for the sins of the people and as a call for repentance or as a sign of apocalyptic end times.

He knows the way one describes the unfolding “natural” balancing / disasters is a place of division. He wonders how others tell the story of what is happening to the earth, and asks: “How can these stories/narratives bring us together rather than further divide?”

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