



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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February-March 2012

Mark Boyd will be manager of N-Sid-Sen

Brings together skills in management and in your ministry

Mark Boyd, who directed PNC summer camps, mid-winter and confirmation retreats at Pilgrim Firs and was a counselor for family camp at N-Sid-Sen, was named Feb. 1 camp manager of N-Sid-Sen on Lake Coeur d'Alene. He replaces Randy Crowe, who is retiring in April after 22 years in that role.

Boyd has served as youth ministries coordinator at United Churches of Olympia, where he has been a member since 1989 and has been facilities manager at Pilgrim Firs, responsible for maintaining camp buildings and the grounds since 2010.

As resident camp manager at N-Sid-Sen, his role will be the fiscal and physical management of the site and
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Deeg Nelson, Pilgrim Firs manager, Mark Boyd, new N-Sid-Sen manager and Randy Crowe, retiring N-Sid-Sen manager converse after Boyd was selected. Photos courtesy of Jim CastroLang

Keynoters look at rural and national church

Along with keynote speakers, Elizabeth Dilley of First Congregational UCC in Red Oak, Iowa, and J. Bennett Guess, executive minister of Local Church Ministries (LCM), workshops and worship will help PNC Annual Meeting participants explore the theme, "Connect," said Jane Sorenson, chair of the Annual Meeting Planning Committee.

"We will look at how we connect to God, to one another, across churches and across communities," she said of the gathering from Friday through Sunday, April 27 to 29, at the Pasco Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center.

Gilley will focus on the vitality of smaller and rural churches. She is pastor of a small, thriving, progressive church that promotes "the world-changing pow-

er of small churches."

She earned a bachelor's in educational theatre at New York University and a master of divinity in 2003 at Pacific School of Religion. She is also a part-time health educator with Planned Parenthood, where she promotes healthy life and sexual choices.

At the national UCC in Cleveland since 2000, Guess served as communications director for Justice and Witness Ministries, news director and editor of United Church News and director of the UCC's Publishing, Identity and Communication Ministry, before he was elected executive minister of LCM.

He served 12 years as pastor of a church in Kentucky. He earned a bachelor's in journalism from the University

of Kentucky, a master of divinity from Vanderbilt University Divinity School and a doctor of ministries in preaching from Chicago Theological Seminary.

With limited space, there will be fewer workshops, Sorenson said, but they will cover a range of themes.

UCC spiritual directors will discuss the spiritual need for quiet and how to locate quiet, retreat time, whether for a few minutes or for a day or in a more formal time away.

A workshop on Contemporary Worship will discuss differences and similarities of traditional and new models. After the Friday contemporary worship, there will be a discussion of the experience.

Other workshops will be on "What
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In political season,

How can churches help us hear others' opinions?

Conference Comments



By The Rev.
Mike Denton
Conference
Minister

**Political
season
may be brutal.
How can
churches
encourage
civil civic and
religious
discourse?**

I'm making less and less fun of Seattle when it snows. I moved here four years ago in January and wasn't here for a month when, on Martin Luther King Day, it was predicted there was going to be some snow; four inches of snow. The news reports were practically suggesting people run for the bunkers and prepare for the apocalypse. It was the leading story on the radio and one of the headlines in the newspaper.

Mind you, I'd just moved here from Chicago and had grown up in the Midwest. It becomes news around there only when there *hasn't* been a winter snow for a significant amount of time. Seattle freaking out about four inches of snow was just weird.

I woke up the next morning to the sound of spinning tires throughout the neighborhood. My apartment was right next to a fairly busy road on a hill. I grabbed a cup of coffee and sat by the window. From there I watched the surreal ballet of vehicles fish tailing their way up the hill until they started to slide back down backwards; cars slowly sliding down the hill with drivers still politely waving at other drivers when they missed hitting other cars by inches; a snow plow sliding through a red light.

My report back home was, of course, "These people have no idea how to drive in the snow." I mean, come on, it was four inches of snow. The only places I went to, I walked to. It was not safe to drive with these people.

Two years later, Lauren and I were driving home. Yeah, we knew it was supposed to snow but we'd both moved from the Midwest. Heck, she's grown up in New England, even. What was the big deal?

Then, well, there was this hill we, um, kinda got stuck on. We were driving up just fine, at first, when our wheels started losing traction. We started losing traction and sliding backwards. It was one of "those" moments. We looked at each other sheepishly

with an embarrassed sense of recognition. It might have been in that moment that we officially became Seattleites.

Context makes all the difference. It's one these lessons I need to seem to have to learn again and again and is sometimes blindingly true in church life.

Although it's not completely clear who said it first, one of the most used maxims for church life is the saying, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." By charity, they're not talking about something you give away, here. Charity, during the time this was written, was understood more to be something like "love for other people."

We're entering in to a political season that looks as though it has the possibility of being the most brutal in recent memory. Between the likely vote about gay marriage in Washington State, the presidential politics already being lobbed about, and the increased attention to class and income divides, this next year is going to be hard on all of us. It's going to be hard in some of our churches, too.

Context is no small thing. Opinions don't emerge in vacuums. How can we best hear the stories of others' opinions?

As we move in to this difficult season, what might be some of those things we can do to help us prepare for it?

What conversations might we have now to help us get ready for what's coming later?

What role might the church have in encouraging civil civic and religious discourse?

I'll print some of your responses in my next column. Please send your suggestions to: revdenton@gmail.com.

Workshops will cover range of issues in PNC

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Your Pastor Learns at Boundary Training,” “Marriage Equality: What It Means, Why It Matters and How to Be Part of the Conversation,” “Oikocredit as an Opportunity for Mission and Stewardship,” “Technology Issues in the Local Church.”

Other workshops are still being selected, Sorenson said.

Four hearings will be on a

resolution on the “Personhood of Corporations,” the change in governance for the national UCC, a Global Ministries mission statement and the budget.

During the weekend, the conference will thank Randy Crowe for his years of service and dedication as manager of N-Sid-Sen. The Sunday worship will install the new camp manager, Mark Boyd.

After Annual Meeting, delegates may celebrate at 2 p.m., Sunday, with Shalom UCC at 505 McMurray in Richland as they dedicate their new space.

To help people new to the conference and annual meeting, organizers provide orientation to processes and acronyms. Packets will include a glossary of UCC terms and a map indicating what area local church-

es are in—for area meetings. There will be tables with take-away resources on the greater UCC, Sorenson said.

Dana Sprenkle and others at Shalom UCC in Richland are planning a service opportunity.

For information, call 206-725-8383. A packet with Annual Meeting information will be sent to churches in mid-February.

Transitions announced

Mark Boyd has been named the new manager of N-Sid-Sen, succeeding Randy Crowe who retires in April 2012. **Crowe** will be honored at an event on April 14 at N-Sid-Sen.

JustFaith set at Plymouth

“JustFaith: A Call to Transform Our Hearts and the World,” an ecumenical small group program, is being offered at 7 p.m., Friday, Feb. 17, at Plymouth Church UCC in Seattle. Jack Jezreel, executive director of JustFaith Ministries and author of the “JustFaith” curriculum, will lead the program. He is a national speaker and justice educator who has been involved in parish-based justice ministry for 25 years.

The program, arranged by the Church Council of Greater Seattle and the Missions Office of the Archdiocese of Seattle, helps individuals and churches learn to live the Gospel in response to the world’s needs.

For information, call 206-382-4580.

FaithTrust plans webinar

Susan Yarrow Morris will present a webinar on “Opening the Door to Healthy Relationships: Addressing Domestic Violence in Premarital Counseling” for the FaithTrust Institute in Seattle from 11 a.m. to noon, Tuesday, Feb. 28, as part of a series sponsored by the Lutheran Community Foundation.

The retired UCC pastor served 16 years as campus minister at the University of Washington and 16 years as pastor at two UCC churches in Seattle. FaithTrust Institute is a national, multifaith, multicultural training and education organization working to end sexual and domestic violence.

For information, visit www.cpsdv.org, click Training, then Upcoming Webinars.

Justice LED trainings set

To help churches do more for justice and create a more compassionate world, the conference is offering the Justice LED: Leaders Engaging and Developing training Friday through Sunday, March 9 to 11, at Pilgrim First Conference Center.

Justice LED is a leadership development program produced by the UCC and offering interactive exploration of the justice dimensions of Christian faith and discipleship. The program of Bible study, video resources, guided reflection and dialogue empowers participants to discern and act with others in their congregations for God’s realm of justice and love.

The training explores the faith and sociological grounding for charity and justice, helps people move from despair and inertia to engage their congregations.

The cost of \$115 includes overnights and meals through Sunday breakfast. The training is sponsored by the PNC’s Justice and Witness Ministries Committee and led by trainers from the conference.

For information, contact Kathleen Morgan, revkathleenm@cs.com, or Elizabeth Dickinson, elizabethdickinson@gmail.com, or by calling 206-320-0432.

Preaching Festival is in April

The Festival of Preaching Northwest April 23 to 25 in Seattle will feature Anna Carter Florence, Veronica Goines, Tom Long, Otis Moss III, Jose Morales and L. Roger Owens.

For information, contact rzwithington@comcast.net or visit festivalofpreachingNW.org.

Ed Evans teaches in Korea

Ed Evans of Peninsula UCC in Sequim and of Suquamish UCC will spend May teaching English to pastors in the East Seoul Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), a PNC global partner church. He will teach eight clergy about four days a week through leading Bible studies.

He was invited by the PROK. The first week of June, he will visit the Rev. Jung, Byeong-gil, who is now executive director of the Christian Rural Agricultural Institute of South Korea, three hours south of Seoul. Jung was Evans’ host when he visited with the PNC delegation in May 2010.

Evans made arrangements with the national UCC Global Ministries to go as a short-term mission volunteer.


For information, call 360-683-4704 or email edevans@aol.com.

Youth collect books for NYE

Youth from the PNC attending the National Youth Event (NYE) July 7 to 14 at Purdue University in Indiana will be collecting books at Annual Meeting in April to ship to Indiana for a Literacy Labyrinth.

While there, the ninth through 12th graders will be in community, engaging in worship, workshops, community service and social justice around the theme, “Imagine.” Workshops include the Bible, call, dialogue, technology, fun, globalism, history, leadership and arts.

For information, contact Susan Andresen susan_andresen@hotmail.com or Tara Barber barbertara@hotmail.com or call the conference office at 206-725-8383.



Conference News Briefs

Boyd seeks to offer a ministry of hospitality

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maintaining the integrity of the programs.

His vision as camp manager is to build a strong sense of ownership among the campers, fostering a covenantal relationship among the congregations in the conference, the PNC outdoor ministries program and the camps.

He said he seeks to maintain a welcoming and hospitable experience for everyone who comes to N-Sid-Sen.

"It's a natural next step for me, bringing together my skills in management, maintenance and camp programs," Boyd said. "I will seek to continue and build on the legacy of Randy.

"I will hold up who we are as the United Church of Christ for church groups and secular groups—not by preaching to them, but by showing them through offering a ministry of hospitality," he said. "The most important thing is to help people who use the camp realize it is their camp."

He seeks to make time at camp enjoyable, relaxing and an experience they want to come back to.

Boyd had been scheduled to be director for the junior high camp at Pilgrim Firs and is wrapping up his work at Pilgrim Firs and Olympia before moving with his wife, Julie, a teacher, to N-Sid-Sen the end of March.

The Boyd's four children are grown and living in Olympia, Seattle, Boise and the Republic of Georgia.

Born in Mountain Home, Idaho, and growing up in Olympia since 1956, he was not involved in a church until he began attending United Churches of Olympia.

Having occasionally gone to church when he visited an aunt in the summers in Tacoma, he said he "felt a yearning for" a church community.

When he first attended United Churches, he said he felt immediately at home.

He soon began to volunteer with the youth group, seeking to share with them an outlet he had not had, "a faith so unconditionally accepting that I wanted to give back."

After high school, Boyd went to work at his father's wholesale plumbing business and continued to work 22 years

with Ferguson Enterprises, which bought his father's business. He moved into management, so had responsibilities for staff supervision, budgeting and purchasing.

At Pilgrim Firs, Boyd has added signs around the site to help visitors find buildings.

He has also helped improve the water system, by adding filters and reducing flow in toilets and showers. In addition, he created a juice bar in the lodge, maintained the lodge, done trail maintenance and shifted the mindset from emergency maintenance to preventative maintenance.

"I'm incredibly honored to be in this position and I look forward to the challenges ahead," Boyd said.



Mark Boyd in a 2009 photo.

Pilgrim Firs and N-Sid-Sen announce 2012 camp directors

The 2012 summer camp directors have been selected and will share with campers using a curriculum with the theme, "Secrets of the Kingdom: The Parables of Jesus."

At Pilgrim Firs, the PNC camp season begins with the Leadership Retreat, May 18 to 20; Work Camp, May 25 to 27; Spiritual Renewal GLBTQ, June 1 to 3; Young Adults, June 22 to 24.

The Senior High camp directors are Andrew Shanafelt of Bellevue First and Jenna Veatch of Everett, July 1 to 7. Junior High is July 8 to 14; Intermediate, led by Stephen Hadden of Tolt in Carnation and Bobbi Virta of Ferndale, July 15 to 21; Kids, led by Kaila Russell of University Congregational UCC in Seattle and Katie Lloyd of Finley Street Christian in Seattle, July 22 to 25, and Family, led by Rich and Leslie Porter of United Church in Yakima, Aug. 19 to 23. **For information, call Pilgrim Firs, 360-876-2031 or**

visit www.pilgrimfirs.org.

At N-Sid-Sen will hold a retirement party for manager Randy Crowe on April 14.

The MidWinter Youth Retreat is March 9 to 11; Women's Retreat, led by Lynn Nelson of Colfax, May 18 to 20; Work Camp, led by Mark Boyd, June 17 to 23; Kids, led by Doris Northrup and Trudy Lambert of Veradale UCC, July 8 to 11; Intermediate, with Bob Watrous of Shalom UCC in Richland and Kim Schultz of Tekoa, July 8 to 14; Junior High Aqua, with Dana Sprenkle and John Hubbe of Shalom Richland, Aug. 5 to 11; Senior High Aqua, with Lynn Stulz of Plymouth Seattle and Sam Yeaw of Newport, July 22 to 28; Family Camp #1, with Amy Johnson from Wayside in Federal Way and Ryan Lambert of Corvallis, July 29 to Aug. 4, and Family Camp #2, Esther Pfeifer of Eltopia, Aug. 12 to 18. **For information, call N-Sid-Sen at 208-689-3489 or visit www.n-sid-sen.org.**

**Randy Crowe
will be honored
for his service
as N-Sid-Sen's
director April 14
at N-Sid-Sen
and April 27-29
during the
Annual Meeting**

Veradale UCC votes to become Open & Affirming

At a Church Leadership Day in fall 2010, Veradale UCC decided to begin a study process to move toward becoming Open and Affirming, said Linda Crowe, pastor.

A committee of 12 formed to plan the study process, seeking to include as many people as possible by offering two sessions, one on Sunday afternoons and one on Wednesday evenings.

"The idea came forth from the people," Crowe said.

In December 2010, Crowe received an email from the Emmanuel Metropolitan Community Church, informing her that their church would be closing and that they were wondering if they would be welcomed at Veradale UCC.

"I could honestly say that the welcome mat was out," she said. "Our church has become more welcoming over the years as some who were uncomfortable with the denomination's Open and Affirming process and the 2005 General Synod's vote supporting marriage equality left the church.

Two PNC churches recently joined about 993 Open and Affirming UCC congregations in the nation. Veradale, now in its 102nd year, voted on Dec. 11, and Mercer Island voted in Jan. 29.

"We already had several same-sex couples in our congregation," Crowe said.

Emmanuel Metropolitan Community Church members joined in early 2011.

Marj Johnston, now pastor at Dayton and the east side PNC member on the PNC Coalition of Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Concerns, met with Veradale UCC's cabinet last spring.

Crowe said Veradale UCC's Open and Affirming statement is wide as they proclaim that as they seek to live out Christ's inclusive love for all people: "We will not discriminate."

The statement continues: "Jesus modeled hospitality and openly affirmed diversity and so do we. Because we believe that all people are created in God's image, all people are

loved equally by God, and we are called to love and bless one another, we welcome all persons of every age, gender, gender identity and expression, race, national origin, faith background, marital status and family structure, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, economic and social status, and educational background, to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings and joys of our church family. As we grow together in faith and love, we will continue to strive to celebrate the diversity in which God has created us."

"Our goal is to retain a broad range of people, including those who are conservative," she said.

"There is a range of theo-

logical diversity in any congregation," said Crowe, who became part of the UCC when she joined the Warden church in 1956. In 1960, her family moved to Spokane, and attended Westview UCC.

She and her husband, Randy at N-Sid-Sen, who are both retiring this spring, attended Kirkland UCC while they lived there and became active in summer camping. When they moved to Spokane, they attended Westminster Congregational UCC, before she went to seminary and then became pastor at Veradale in 1994.

Crowe said she played a supportive role in the process, leading a workshop with Randy and Carol Bellinger on an overview of the United Church of Christ in social justice issues, including its involvement in the anti-slavery movement, its ordaining the first African-American pastor in 1785, the first woman pastor in 1833 and the first gay pastor in 1972. In 1977, it was a leader in disability ministries. **For information, call 509-926-7173.**

Mercer Island's vote affirmed their reality

Mercer Island Congregational UCC had started the Open and Affirming process about 20 years ago, when the conference first visited the issue. They voted to become open but not affirming, because some said they did not want to affirm any "lifestyle."

Mark Travis, pastor at Mercer Island, said the church revisited the policy again about 10 years ago and more recently, but did not act.

Discussion at the PNC Annual Meeting last year and the vote to encourage churches to enter the process to be-

come Open and Affirming gave impetus and "a powerful witness" for the church to reconsider the issue, he said.

The church council decided the church should be open and affirming, given that the congregation was already open to performing same-sex marriage.

So they embarked on what was planned as a year of study about what it meant to be affirming.

The congregation engaged in five months of surveys, meetings and presentations.

"The response was over-

whelmingly pro," said Travis.

A survey showed that members were on board about adopting and marriage equality, plus they had no biblical issue against affirming gays or lesbians.

In calling Travis, they had already expressed their affirmation.

"I am an openly gay pastor with a husband and three children," he said.

So the church decided to shorten the process and at a meeting in which they were voting on the church budget and capital campaign on Sunday, Jan. 29, they voted

unanimously to be open and affirming.

Three-fourths of that meeting focused on the other business. In five minutes, the congregation voted to be Open and Affirming.

"We decided that to spend a full year would mean we were going in circles on an issue we agreed on," he said.

"The parishioners were excited to proclaim prophetically what was a spiritual and emotional reality of the church," he said.

For information, call 206-902-8542 or email revmarkt@yahoo.com.

Chaplain connects soldiers with people at home

Jerry Montgomery keeps soldiers and local partners connected through

Just before Thanksgiving, Jerry and Ruth Montgomery of University Congregational UCC “adopted” 160 soldiers at Fort Lewis. The soldiers were about to deploy for a year in the mountains of Afghanistan.

A soldier from the unit had lived with the Montgomerys for three months last summer after his more than six years in the Army, including two deployments in Iraq, ended.

Montgomery, who is retired and volunteers as a police and firefighter chaplain, offered to help soldiers who might need assistance and support in the U.S. while they were in Afghanistan. The soldier shared the offer with his sergeant, who told his commanding officer.

When he was expecting to meet with the sergeant and captain at a restaurant, 13 came. The unit’s leaders had met and decided to accept the Montgomerys as their “back home assets.” They set up the Battle Company Project.

Suddenly gaining 160 soldier/sons, Montgomery told Peter Ilgenfritz, one of the pastors at University UCC, who in turn announced the “adoption” in church.

“Most of the soldiers, who are 19 and 20, were anxious about this grand adventure of their lives,” he said. “They were not afraid of bullets but were afraid of being forgotten by Americans. I promised they would not be forgotten.”

After the soldiers deployed on Dec. 10, Montgomery was swamped by more than 110 soldiers and family members writing on his Facebook page.



Jerry Montgomery speaks to Peninsula UCC group and recruits five partners for soldiers.

He was also swamped by people who committed to do a year of writing letters, sending packages, praying daily and responding to soldiers’ needs—65 members of the church.

Montgomery also spoke to members of Peninsula UCC and gained five more partners. Montgomery knew retired pastor Ed Evans when both were news reporters in Seattle decades ago.

People from Alaska, the Carolinas, Minnesota and California have also volunteered.

Montgomery spends two to four hours a day on Facebook

connecting with and praying for the soldiers. Using his journalistic experience, he also blogs, encouraging the young men to think about themselves and their lives as their “grand adventure unfolds” in the remote mountains of Afghanistan, far from anything. The first thing they did when they rebuilt their camp was be sure they had an internet connection.

The soldiers have sent photos and video about their work. The blog sometimes reaches 1,000 hits a day, he said.

“All we really did was give faces and names to otherwise

anonymous soldiers,” he said, “and we opened up hearts.”

Montgomery, who has been chaplain of the Boeing Fire Department for 15 years, said firefighters have helped provide funds for postage, as well as being partners with soldiers and of “honey do” tasks for spouses.

Montgomery served Lakeview Community Church, First Congregational in Oakland and Anderson Island Community Church in Puget Sound. He runs Montgomery Communication computer consulting, does video productions and publishes books and training manuals.

When earning his doctoral degree in the 1970s, he developed the model of emergency services that were put into play in King County and became a model for EMS care.

He has met only eight of the soldiers in person, finding them “so young and yet so mature.”

He started his career with United Press International and also worked for the St. Paul Pioneer Press, the Port Angeles Daily News and the Seattle Times.

For information, call 253-582-1122, email gwmont@mo-comm.com or visit www.mo-comm.com/army/wordpress.



Soldiers photos are in photo galleries on Montgomery’s blog.

Photos courtesy of Jerry Montgomery

Ann Eidson testifies for marriage equality in Olympia

Ann Eidson of St. Paul's UCC in Ballard testified Jan. 25 before the Washington State Legislature in Olympia on behalf of marriage equality.

Since serving as co-pastor at All Pilgrims in Seattle and as interim at Admiral in West Seattle, she describes herself as semi-retired.

It began with an email from a friend, who is regional director of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. The friend encouraged her to contact Molly Griffords at the Human Rights Campaign in Northwest Washington.

Griffords asked her to write and call her state senator to urge her to vote for Senate Bill 6239, which grants civil marriage rights to same sex couples. Her senator, Mary Margaret Haugen, was undecided and one more vote was needed.

Eidson wrote "a heartfelt, personal letter that summarized "why I thought she should vote in favor of marriage equality."

She thought Sen. Haugen would be probably bombarded with calls and letters from the conservative district, so wasn't sure a letter would do any good, but she decided to try.

Griffords, after reading the letter, asked Eidson to share the letter as a testimony at Senate hearings the next week.

"I had spoken in church many times about my family and life challenges," Eidson said. "I've stood on risers with the Seattle Women's Chorus and sung with 100 women about recognizing the value of gay and straight people and their relationships. These situations were reasonable safe."

Now she was being asked to talk publicly about her sexual orientation, family, experiences and hopes.

"That did not feel safe," she said, recalling being chased out of a California town by a man who thought she was "one of

them," and telling of her fear of being "outed" at work.

Speaking in front of legislators with hundreds of homophobic protestors around wasn't appealing, but after talking with her partner and daughter, she decided it was something she had to find courage to do. Restless, sleepless nights began.

Eidson rode to Olympia Monday, Jan. 23, with her PFLAG friend. They parked at United Churches of Olympia, across from the capital. She stopped inside for "a dose of spiritual energy."

Inside the John Cherberg Building, halls were crowded with people with buttons with a male and female figure on them. Then they saw a few younger people wearing "Washington United for Marriage" stickers, who escorted them to the room for those testifying.

Senator Ed Murray briefed them on what to expect in the hearing room and said the audience wouldn't be receptive and two senators might be confrontational.

Senator Craig Pridmore, the chair, however, set rules so the room would be a safe place for those on both sides of the issue. Media poured in. Each speaker had three minutes.

Eidson was in the third panel for the measure. Hearing the onslaught of testimony against it, she felt nauseous but also felt sorry for "how incredibly hard hearted the anti-marriage people were," she said.

The first two speakers in her group had gone over, so she had two-and-a-half minutes but had prepared three-and-a-half minutes.

"Once I started talking, I relaxed a bit because I knew my voice wasn't shaking," Eidson said.

When the hearing ended and she entered the packed hallway, she felt folks with the



Ann Eidson

man/woman buttons glaring at her. Down the hall were friends from the Seattle Women's Chorus who affirmed what she said.

Next was a press conference and she learned her senator would vote for the bill, the 25th vote.

"I was so happy, weary, but happy," Eidson said.

After the press conference and lunch, she went to the House Judiciary Committee on the companion bill HB 2516.

"We knew we had the votes to clear the house," she said, but the hearing room and overflow rooms were nearly completely filled with those against the bill. "The anti-marriage people were far more outspoken and nasty during the afternoon sessions."

It was much harder for Rep. Jamie Peterson, the chair, to maintain control of the room. He gave each speaker two minutes, but anti-marriage people went over their time.

When one representative challenged the president of the state teachers association, she said the issue had been presented to the annual convention and had nearly unanimous support. The room was so full of anti-bill speakers, pro-bill speakers had to be ushered to the back of the room just before their turn

to speak.

"We heard many snide comments like 'disgusting,' 'an abomination' or 'so sick,'" she said.

By the time Eidson spoke, the time was cut again—to one minute.

"I hit on the challenges I know as a pastor that gay and lesbian couples face. I mentioned that as a pastor, I have always had the right to decide who and under what circumstances I'll perform a wedding. Conservative clergy had argued they would have to perform gay and lesbian weddings and churches would have to allow space in their buildings for the ceremonies.

"Not so. Never has been," she said.

Maxed out on how much negativity and hate she could deal with in one day, she wanted to get home for a hug from her partner and daughter, but she wanted to thank her senator.

"Since that long day, I've been thinking about the power of stories. In her press release and television interview, Senator Haugen said she listened to stories of gay and lesbian people who lived in her rural, conservative district, and decided she could no longer support discrimination," she said.

"How important is your voice? Very important. I believe my story was one of those that influenced Senator Haugen," said Eidson, encouraging people to use their voices "as we proceed up this road to equality. Write letters and emails, visit in person, call on the phone. Contact any way you can as often as you can.

"The march for freedom and equality did not end with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We're still marching along that road," she said.

For information, call 360-445-5040 or email ajeidson@comcast.net.

Keystone UCC brings Occupy movement to neighborhood

Occupy Wallingford has met three times since members and friends of Keystone Congregational United Church of Christ in Seattle held an Occupy Christmas event in the tradition of Las Posadas celebrations.

They meet again on Feb. 13 at the church. About 25 are involved, currently deciding on their direction.

One idea is to do a tool bank with neighbors in the north central Seattle area sharing tools and expertise. The idea is to move from dependence on monetary interactions in the community,

They are also working in children-friendly protest opportunities, like the Las Posadas.

On Dec. 22, a group of 20 adults and children chose sites along North 45th Street in the retail heart of the Wallingford neighborhood. They processed from site to site sharing information, stories and songs.

“The Las Posadas tradition highlights the Holy Family seeking refuge in Bethlehem on the eve of Jesus’ birth,” said Rich Gamble, pastor and chair of the PNC’s Justice and Witness Ministries Committee.

Las Posadas, a nine-day celebration that has been a tradition in Mexico, and is now also celebrated by Protestants and Catholics in Guatemala and the Southwest United States.

Traditionally, people process from place to place as pilgrims re-enacting Mary and Joseph seeking shelter and being refused. The participants go from house to house until they at last are invited inside to participate in a community celebration.

“We took this celebration and fit it into our time and place,” Gamble said. “We talked about the systems of our nation which exclude the poor and refugees.”

In Wallingford, the group stopped at three banks along



Tom Greene, Peg Faulmann and Richard Vogt were among 20 related to Keystone UCC in a Las Posadas Occupy procession.

Photo courtesy of Rich Gamble

45th Street—Wells Fargo, Keybank and Chase—and outside each talked about the banks’ practices that have harmed the U.S. and global economy and especially harmed people who are most vulnerable.

“We shared how the people who run these corporations prosper greatly while the rest of us suffer with crippling mortgages, foreclosures and huge student loans,” Gamble said. “We shared stories of people who had lost their homes, were struggling with school loans or had lost their jobs.

“We also stopped at a health clinic and grocery store to talk about how vulnerable people are being turned away from access to decent health care and nutrition,” he said.

Peg Faulmann, Keystone’s associate pastor, said of the evening event, “We followed the star—a makeshift epiphany light on a pole. We were people of many faith traditions singing in procession the songs of Emmanuel and of our oppressed people, engaging with those along the way who recognized the light.

“Afterwards, the glow of God’s light continues on through hearts on fire and burn-

ing within us still,” she said, “knowing that we are much more now than we were before we gathered.”

Gamble said he had been looking for ways to move the energy of the Occupy movement into local neighborhoods and churches.

“The Christmas story and the Las Posadas tradition fit into conversations about who is being excluded and exploited in our current economic system,” Gamble said. “The great thing was that the event carried all the themes of other Occupy events, while at the same time being a safe and enjoyable experience for the adults and children involved.

“We came away from the event feeling like we need to be doing more of this kind of thing,” he said.

Gamble said they seek ways to be part of the Occupy movement without long, rancorous conversations. They just want to bring together neighbors in a family-friendly, faith-centered form of protest.

Keystone UCC identifies with issues of social justice, so “the Occupy movement resonates,” he said. “The question is whether the Occupy move-



Erv Faulmann and Vandana Gupta join the procession.

ment will adopt a commitment to nonviolence.”

Gamble has participated in Occupy protest chaplains in Seattle.

Beyond Occupy, he said the church is committed to social justice. One other expression of that commitment is that Keystone has been accepted as a host congregation for four Young Adult Service Communities Program interns who will be assigned fall 2012 through summer 2013 to work with social justice agencies and work to bring social justice concerns into congregations.

They will be housed and live in community at All Pilgrims UCC in Seattle. The Church Council of Greater Seattle is the first agency to commit to work with them.

Gamble is recruiting other agencies and encourages young adults to apply to the national UCC at ucc.org/volunteer/yasc/YASC.html.

“They will spend the year learning to be social justice leaders,” he said. “I hope we can expand to more sites in the Northwest in coming years.”

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