



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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Linda Allen seeks to influence hearts and minds

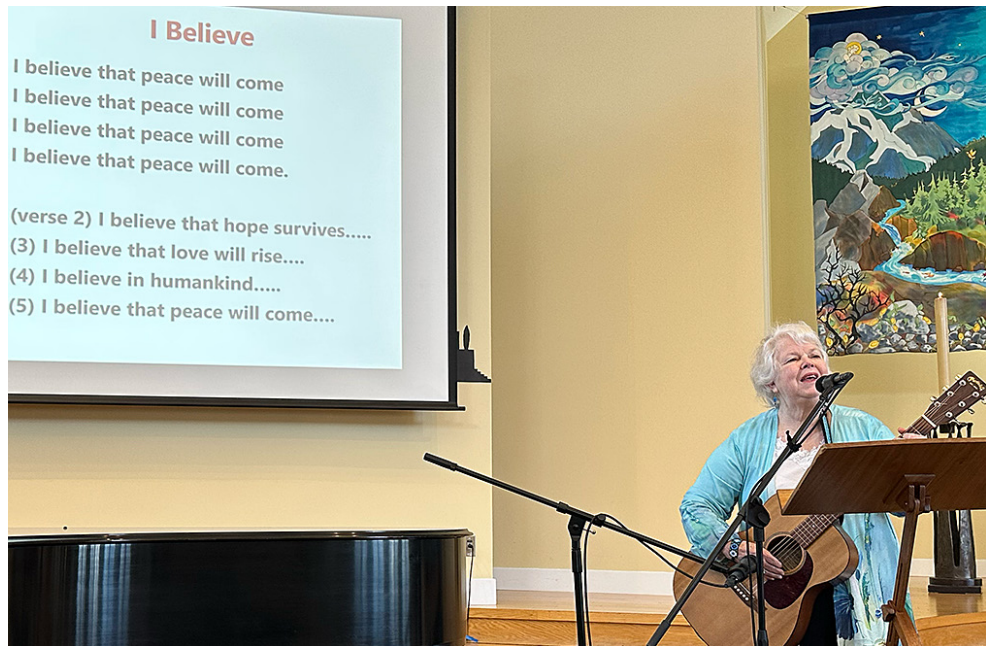
**Music is woman's tool
to do justice, tell history
and be with dying people**

Having learned in the 1970s that she could influence the hearts and minds of people through singing and composing folk music, Linda Allen, chose that path.

Linda, who was the music leader for the PNC-UCC Annual Meeting at Bellingham First Congregational UCC, was in a military family and moved often until her father retired in Olympia. After graduating from Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) in 1968, she taught for a year in Minnesota but decided that was not for her.

Three years in Berkeley, Calif., while her husband, Scott Slaba, was a Lutheran seminary student, convinced her that her calling was to be a songwriter, musician and singer.

Continued on page 4



Singer songwriter Linda Allen leads singing at the PNW-UCC Annual Meeting in First Congregational UCC in Bellingham.

Moderator reports on PNC search and board actions

**By Indigo Brown, Moderator and
Esther Sanders, Vice Moderator**

Here is what going on in the conference. The Board is meeting on the first Tuesdays of every month. We will have a retreat in early November to discuss the state of the conference and to do some team building. Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

The Intentional Interim Conference Minister Search Committee began the search in July. They have been hard at work looking at a second round of applicants after the first set felt led by the Holy Spirit to go a different direction.

It is reassuring that Jonna Jensen is willing to continue as acting conference minister, working remotely from Iowa.

We look forward to what God is

**Prayers, patience
and support needed
by Conference
in this time.**

doing in this process. We are grateful to Lee Albertson, on the national level, who is guiding us. We are grateful to the entire Conference for prayers, support, and patience in this time.

Annual meeting 2024 meeting date has been set for April 26 to 28. The Annual Meeting Committee is currently looking for a meeting space and we hope to announce that soon.

The Justice and Witness Ministry

and Outdoor Ministry committees have started back up and are in the process of finding members, creating guidelines, and finding regular meeting times.

Those interested in being involved may contact Jenn Hagedorn for the Justice Witness Ministry Committee at pastor@spiritofpeaceucc.org or Leah Atkinson Bilinski for the Outdoor Ministry Committee at leah@fauntleroyucc.org.

N-Sid-Sen seeks volunteers to share their time, talent, or treasure. Those interested may contact Pam Peterson at director@n-sid-sen.org.

As we enter this time of autumn let us reach out to one another. This can be a hard time of year for us all and we want to create a community where everyone feels truly cared for. John 13:34.

Musician has written hundreds of songs, on 13 CDs

Continued from page 1

She said Scott, who later became an accountant, supports her singing, service and activism helping by taking videos. Married for 33 years, they have three adult children.

Faith and the power of music to change people are central to her career as a musician, said Linda, who grew up Baptist, became Lutheran after PLU.

She and Scott moved to Bellingham in 1976. They attended Unitarian and other churches before finding Bellingham First Congregational UCC.

"In the 1990s and since, I have sung in many churches and have concerts in many different venues," she said. "My largest audience was for a national United Methodist Church conference.

"I sing anywhere I'm asked," she said.

"While I sing in many churches, the UCC church is my home," Linda said.

Eventually, after Linda discovered Matthew Fox and creation spirituality, she went to graduate school and seminary at the University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland and studied under him.

After graduating in 2006, Linda held an interfaith blessing of her ordination as an interfaith minister in creation spirituality in Bellingham.

From 2011 to 2013, she and her husband were at Holden Village in the Cascades, where he was business manager, and she was program coordinator and worked in the post office.

For the PNC 2023 Annual Meeting she chose songs from her CD, "Lay It Down: Images of the Sacred," one of 13 CDs she has produced with hundreds of original songs and a varied repertoire.

One CD is "Daughters of Lilith," from a Jewish midrash or story of Adam's first



Linda Allen travels to sing in churches and other venues.

wife who rebelled against the rules God imposed. Linda has also composed songs of other women of the Bible, like Mary and Mary Magdalene, giving her interpretation of them with strong feminist imagery.

Linda's current focus in ministry is as a hospice certified clinical musician.

This work led her to start two choirs, Bellingham's Women with Wings and the Bellingham Threshold Singers. She has two songbooks with songs to "lift the heart and heal the spirit." They are in two CDs "Carry Us through This Night" and "Into the Promise of Morning."

Linda has facilitated retreats and training workshops on music in palliative care. In

2010, she was inducted into the Northwest Women's Hall of Fame for her work with the choirs.

She has produced two CDs with songs of comfort, songs to sing one-to-one at the bedside of patients who are dying and needing comfort.

Her latest CD, as she turns 78, is "Emergence," reflecting on aging, justice and more.

"I came to activism through music," Linda said. "I have written many songs addressing many issues."

"Emergence" focuses on songs ranging from homelessness, the impact of the pandemic, girls fighting discrimination in schools, hospice care to immigrants at the border."

Linda now also enjoys

now is doing salons, singing in homes and talking about the songs and issues—such as choice or the war in Ukraine.

"At rallies on local political issues, there are often many speakers. I encourage planners to include music breaks, so it's not one speaker after another, but they break up talks with music," said Linda, who may read a headline and turn it into a song.

"There are so many issues to write about. Events come up and I write a song specifically for them," she said.

For one church service, she was inspired to write a song expressing the lament of many women in churches, "God, I cannot call you Father."

"Many women have been abused, badly treated and made invisible by men in their lives," Linda explained.

"Many women resonate with the truth I express in songs," Linda said, explaining that much in the Bible is about the overall truth or message, like in the Jewish tradition of midrash commentaries and stories.

"There is the Torah and then scholars and teachers write notes in the margins, expounding on what they read, explaining the biblical stories," Linda said. "It's a rich source of storytelling.

"It's also fun to create pieces with humor and poignancy," she added. "I enjoy bringing new perspectives to churches."

Out of her passion for the history of women's rights, Linda worked with the Washington Women's History Project, the Washington Centennial Commission, the Washington Women's History Consortium, the Inquiring Mind program of Humanities Washington, the Cultural Enrichment and Folklife Programs of the State Arts Commission and the Folklife in

Continued on page 5

Pastor serves two churches, works with nonprofit

Along with serving as pastor of Everett UCC and Liberation UCC, Jermell Witherspoon, promotes diversity, equity and inclusion with area school districts through the nonprofit, Zeno that creates a love for math and competency in math among children and parenting adults. He works with families and children of color to make more equitable practice in study of math.

"My heart work is to open doors and create better ways to be on earth with others. We are all people and we are all spiritual beings," Jermell said.

In each setting he applies different skills to touch the hearts and lives of different people. The two churches have unique journeys.

Everett UCC is a more traditional, predominantly white church with 120 members on the rolls and 30 to 40 attending each week. It's a church that is envisioning a new journey as it sells its 130-year-old building to Housing Hope "to fulfill our vision deeply steeped in providing siblings who are unhoused with housing," Jermell said.

"We sold it at a lower than market price as part of our vision to be partners with our siblings who are unhoused. It will



Jermell Witherspoon is pastor at Everett and Liberation UCC.

be torn down and replaced with housing for people 55 years and older," he explained. "We are now waiting for revelation of what the spirit is calling us to do in ministry."

Those on the roster are being consulted in the process of discerning the mission and vision for what is next.

"We are reaching out to envision. It's been a beautiful journey, but is hard on folks, too. We are rejoicing and mourning," Jermell said.

"We have a big, beautiful, old building. Our mission and vision has been part of how we use the building. The spirit is guiding us, and we have made connections in the community," he said.

The Everett church has offered a food pantry and served meals to unhoused neighbors and about 50 unhoused people who stayed in its basement as a shelter and many of whom are 55+. They have partnered with Union Gospel Mission to pro-

vide wraparound services for those in the shelter.

Those in the shelter sleep on portable beds and can spend the day upstairs. The church has also been open as a cold weather shelter, when people come in and stay upstairs, including sleeping in the sanctuary.

Everett UCC has had this ministry for many years.

"We have made it work, even though it has not always been comfortable," he said. "We have learned much in the process about the many different ways people become homeless. We hear their stories. All of us are one paycheck away from being homeless. We have also learned about the impact of mental breakdown.

"It is vital to address the systemic issues that promote, bring about and keep people in homelessness," he pointed out."

Housing Hope has two other buildings in Everett, one of which houses families and this one for seniors, which fits zoning for downtown Everett.

The program owns and runs more than 600 units in 24 housing sites around Snohomish County and Camano Island as part of its mission to promote

Continued on page 6

In 2020, she produced 'Here's to the Women!' on suffrage

Continued from page 4
the Schools Program.

A CD, "Washington Notebook," includes original songs for Washington's centennial.

She collected and edited songs for two songbooks, "The Rainy Day Songbook" and "Washington Songs and Lore," and then traveled to schools, museums and libraries to do workshops and concerts.

Linda also created a traveling one-hour presentation, "Here's to the Women!" for the

100th anniversary of the state and national efforts to pass the 19th Amendment for the women's right to vote.

Because she made it in the pandemic, she prepared a virtual presentation on Powerpoint with images, stories, poems and songs on women's rights, the history of women's roles, multicultural perspectives, the Equal Rights Amendment and ongoing discrepancy in wages for women.

Her 53-minute video pre-

miered in 2020 at the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Historical Park.

Linda has toured not only in the U.S., but also abroad, including in 2006 visiting Israel and Palestine and then recording children's songs for the Peace-builders program in Bethlehem.

In all her songs and presentations, she seeks to honor her forebears by "continuing their fight for justice."

Her life's work, she said, seeks to uncover injustice and

create songs to help mend the injustices and help people move through their lives and struggles.

"I still respond when I'm invited," she said.

While she has done much voluntarily out of her interest, her songs and concerts are her career and ways she continues to earn a living.

For information, call 360-920-7533, email linda@lindasongs.com or visit lindasongs.com.