



# Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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Fall 2025

## *PNC grants 10 Samoan pastors dual standing*

**Dual Standing Installation  
was held on June 29  
Fauntleroy UCC in Seattle**

Cindy Bauleke, chair of the Committee on Ministry westside, reported that the sanctuary of Fauntleroy UCC in Seattle “overflowed with joy as Samoan hymns filled our souls and Spirit flowed through the Dual Standing Installation of 10 Samoan ministers” on Sunday, June 29.

The pastors and their congregations affirmed their covenant of commitment to the PNC-UCC with PNC-UCC clergy and members responding in kind, promising to “share the love of Christ, to be concerned with your welfare, be co-workers in mission and turn to each other for assistance in the work Christ calls us to do together.”

Those installed with dual standing  
**Continued on page 4**



**Samoan pastors, wearing white, are from the left the Rev. Kelekolio Koloi, Rev. Talosaga Patea, Rev. Tavita Tolu, and seated Rev. Etele Ma’aele; second row Rev. Savali Talalemotou, Rev. Elder Topelagi Siva and Rev. Nofoaiga Moi. First row continuing from the left to the right of Rev. Phil Eisenhower are Rev. Iotamu Falealili, Rev. Fili Togi and Rev. Elder Tauoa Head of the UCC Council for Racial Ethnic Ministries who taught UCC polity and history in Samoan to those granted standing Not shown is Rev. Aunu’ua Vasega.**

## *Board proposes changes to constitution and bylaws*

Six board members and Conference Minister Phil Hodson met Oct. 3 to 5 at Pilgrim Firs to discuss the PNC-UCC constitution and by-laws a length and edited them to fit our current needs as a conference.

The Board plans to take them “on the road” before the Annual Meeting, which will be March 13 to 15 at the DoubleTree Suites Southcenter in Seattle, so people can read them over and ask questions.

The Board will set that up as soon as edits are updated and will let everyone know of the dates and locations through the conference’s weekly e-news.

In addition to the constitution and by-laws revisions, the Board discussed Phil’s evaluation by the Personnel Committee in executive session. Because

**Board prepares  
Constitution/Bylaws  
changes for review before  
Annual Meeting 2026.**

several people did not complete the evaluation by the deadline, the Personnel Committee asks for their feedback so the Board can include their perspectives.

We plan to review the evaluations more thoroughly at our November meeting and vote on next steps.

Sandy was grateful to Mark Boyd, executive director of outdoor ministries, and the staff at Pilgrim Firs for hosting the Board, which shared the camp with a

women’s guitar group. Sandy said “One of their leaders joined the board briefly to thank us for our work and share how much the camp means to them.”

She also announced that the Annual Meetings theme for 2026 is “Come and See.” Annual Meeting planners are looking for congregations to make two-to three-minute videos highlighting their missions and achievements in the last year. The videos may be sent to Beth Astarte—office@pncucc.org. She will help edit them as needed.

“Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have a video for each church?” Sandy challenged.

**For information, call 360-3595-4821 or email [pastorsandywisecarver@gmail.com](mailto:pastorsandywisecarver@gmail.com).**

# Clergy need patience, not silence for today

## Reports & Comments



By The Rev.  
Phil Hodson  
Designated  
Conference  
Minister

*These  
times  
are  
a  
marathon,  
not  
a  
sprint.*

October is clergy appreciation month. It is a season in our life together where we give thanks for the faithfulness, compassion and dedication our pastors pour over all of us throughout their ministry—in our local churches, hospice settings, hospitals, academia and so many other settings where our clergy serve God’s people. Personally, it makes sense to me that we should acknowledge this all the time, but October is the “official season” for these acknowledgments.

Our clergy are working incredibly hard, and the events surrounding all of us are compounding that work. There’s so much to get done, and much more to respond or react to that it can be overwhelming.

**So, just as I lift up gratitude** here, I also want to offer a few thoughts on how to keep our work in balance in this season. My hope some of these ideas might resonate with and be a blessing to both clergy and laity. When considering when to speak, when to keep silent and where to pour our energies, these are the steps I take:

**Examine your own heart.** What stirs within that you feel strongly about giving voice to? What breaks it? What brings healing to it? Advocacy and prophetic witness can call attention to what is wrong in our world. Calling out sin, bad behavior, inviting folks to live into another way is part of what it means to be the church.

The challenge here continues to be echo chambers: if we’re upset all the time, rather than calling out specific things and finding space to refresh and renew our own spirits, folks quit listening and the power of our voices are diluted.

**It is equally important to give voice** to that which is good and life-giving, turning attention to things that offer hope. All around us, I believe, is a deep yearning for hope.

**Know your context.** Where can you focus your voice that will engage the commu-

nity where you are? What can you give voice to that will bring care to those in your midst who need it directly?

**The ministry of all believers** that we profess invites each of us to engage directly with the work of the Church in the world, to be active agents in bringing about heaven on earth. There’s no exception to that participatory invitation. So what will energize the people where you are and how can you channel that energy in tangible, measurable ways?

**Maybe you’re writing letters** to representatives weekly and taking the time to pray over these letters, then organizing to follow up with phone calls and words of encouragement—as well as correctives—with those same representatives to advocate for the issues that are reflective of your faith.

**Maybe you’re organizing food drives** for federal workers in your community and talking about the importance of life and health and what it means to truly be just.

**Go deep theologically.** Articulate well the faith that calls for your actions. The gospel compels us to be active agents of the Divine in the world. To advocate, to offer both a corrective and encouragement, to be well-springs of hope and givers of grace. Know the Scriptures, share the stories that inspire the work you’re calling folk to do with you by God’s grace. These are our stories, too, and we need to both know and tell them.

**Be patient. Be persistent.** This is a marathon, not a sprint. Give thanks to one another for the good work you are doing. Give grace to yourself and each other when it feels like you’re not doing enough. Share what you’re up to—with me and with others—through the Google Group or the eNews or the quarterly Conference News, so that we can learn from and with one another and all be better at this work that God has called us into together.

Remember that patience is not silence. May it be so for you.

## Transitions announced

The Committee on Ministry has approved **Kerri Berlin** to serve as the lay minister at St. Paul's UCC in Seattle/Ballard.

**Melanie Childers** was installed as pastor of Shalom UCC in Richland on Oct. 12.

**Adina Mairin Meyer** was ordained Oct. 19 by the PNCUCC at Keystone Congregational UCC and was installed to serve the church as designated pastor.

The **Christine Tata** is being installed Sunday, Nov. 9, at Chewelah UCC to serve as pastor of the Chewelah and Colville UCC churches.

PNW Conference Minister **Phil Hodson** joins more than 20 conference ministers from across the UCC to spend the week of Oct. 29 in Washington DC for a time of advocacy, witness and truth-telling under the theme, "Love Knows No Borders." He joined others in bringing messages and stories from conference congregations and members. He is gathering stories of the impact of federal policies on members and on neighbors to share them with policymakers in Congress. He joins in a public witness and prayer service on Oct. 29 to proclaim a message of love and justice.

**Carson Hawks**, covenant minister of spiritual growth and healing at Magnolia UCC in Seattle since 2017, died recently. Carson was also an interfaith spiritual director with Carson Hawks LLC, which led spiritual retreats, healing services, grief groups and book studies. Carson, who earned a master of divinity degree at Pacific School of Religion, a master of education from Old Dominion University (VA) and a bachelor's degree in physical education/recreation from the University of South Carolina, was ordained minister in the United Church of Christ in July 2022.

## Group helps with bylaws

Sandy Wisecarver, conference moderator, is starting a group for small churches who want to rewrite their constitutions and bylaws that don't fit their needs any more.

*For information, email [pastorsandywisecarver@gmail.com](mailto:pastorsandywisecarver@gmail.com).*

## Preaching workshop set

The Byberg Preaching Workshop on "The Road as Church: Preaching to our Fellow Travelers" will be offered Jan. 26 to 28 in Seaside, Ore.

The leaders are ELCA Bishop Shelley

Bryan Wee, Rick Steves of public television's "Rick Steves' Europe," and Deacon Clare Joseph-Maier will lead the session.

*For information, visit [bybergpreachingworkshop.com](http://bybergpreachingworkshop.com).*

## Men's Retreat is scheduled

The Pilgrim Firs Camp and Retreat Center's annual Men's Retreat will be held from 5 p.m. Friday to 11 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 29 and 30 and Feb. 1. There is an option of a Silent Retreat that starts at 7 p.m., Thursday.

It's a weekend for deepening connection, exploring faith, fellowship and fun, focusing on the experiences of men.

*For information, visit [pilgrim-firs.org](http://pilgrim-firs.org).*

## NY conference plans sessions

Cindy Bauleke, Committee on Ministry Westside chair, announced that Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) requirement for all PNC ministers (who do not have Exempt Standing) is being offered exclusively for PNC clergy by the New York UCC Conference (Culture and Race).

There are plans for two identical trainings offered by the NY UCC Conference on Nov. 18 and Jan. 10.

*For information, visit <https://www.ultracamp.com/info/sessiondetail.aspx?idCamp=367&campCode=nss&idSession=536241> or email [cindybauleke@gmail.com](mailto:cindybauleke@gmail.com).*

## Youth retreat is Feb. 6 to 8

The Pacific Northwest Conference United Church of Christ Midwinter Youth Retreat will be held for youth in grades 6 to 12 from Friday to Sunday, Feb. 6 to 8, at Pilgrim Firs Camp and Retreat Center in Port Orchard. The retreat gathers youth for meaningful conversations, times of laughter and time in nature for reflection, renewal and connection. It's a chance to make new friends, deepen faith and be in a welcoming community.

*Registration opens in November at [n-sid-sen.org/retreats-events](http://n-sid-sen.org/retreats-events).*

## Youth have role in AM 2026

Pastor Va'a Alaelua, a member of the Annual Meeting Planning Committee, announced that PNC-UCC youth will have an active role in worship services for the 2025 Annual Meeting. Three youth groups

will take part in the Friday evening service, presenting the Gospel in creative, artistic ways around the theme, "Come and See." On Saturday, three other youth groups will share the Gospel through dance and celebration on the theme, "Go and Tell."

Individual PNC youth may also participate in leading prayer, testimonies, worship, music and other ways.

"It's an opportunity for our young people to shine, share their faith and use their gifts to inspire the conference," Va'a said.

*Interested youth groups or individuals may contact him at [blessedmusic580@gmail.com](mailto:blessedmusic580@gmail.com).*

## Podcast topic is investing

Cornerstone Fund chief relationship officer, Courtney Stange-Tregear, is featured on an Oct. 10 United Church Funds "Just Investing" podcast.

They dive into what is meant by "God Math" and how it can transform churches and communities for the better.

*For information, visit [ucfunds.org/just-investing-podcast/](http://ucfunds.org/just-investing-podcast/).*

## Church holds art show

Guemes Island Community UCC makes its well-lit main rooms available to island artists as part of their covenant to support island residents, particularly more than 50 identified artists, from children through retirees.

Samples of local artists' works are on display at the "Guemes Island Art Initiative" website—[guemesislandart.org](http://guemesislandart.org)—and click on any art piece with artist name, to see about 15 of their works, and how to contact the artists.

Their new show, "Masks" with about 70 masks from Halloween, Seasonal, Cultural, Indigenous, Religious, Personas and Decorative genres just opened.

"The aim of the show is to provoke thinking about the 'Masking' we do to hide, reveal and try on new personas," said Bob Anderson, gallery coordinator, show curator and retired UCC pastor. "The language of hiding and masking is appearing more recently in news reports."

The show runs through holiday events, which often use masks and end on Epiphany, Jan. 6, 2026. Those near Guemes Island can arrange a private showing with Bob or visit the show when the church is open 9:30 a.m. to noon Sundays or when the Gallery is open sign is in front of the church.

*For information, call 360-293-3770 or email [earthspiritcircle@myyahoo.com](mailto:earthspiritcircle@myyahoo.com).*

## Conference News Briefs



# Young adults learn legacy of nuclear weapons

The 11-day Fierce Non-violence Pilgrimage: A Journey of the Heart in Washington from July 28 to Aug. 7 drew 12 young adults to build relationships with people affected by racism, violence and the nuclear age and to train them as community organizers.

Eighty years after atomic bombs were dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the young people began by learning of the impact of mining, testing and storing nuclear weapons

**“Until we are friends,** nothing changes, so they established personal connections,” said Michael Ellick, a pastor at University Congregational UCC in Seattle and one of the coordinators.

The church co-sponsored the project with Dandelion House, The Hearth and the Austin Story Project.

**Lead facilitator** Fumi Tosu of Dandelion House in Portland said the immersion explored spiritual roots and nonviolent social change practices.

“We did inner soul work that fuels outer work of justice, in the lineage of Jesus of Nazareth, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.,” he said.

**The pilgrimage culminated** Aug. 3 to 7 with presentations, peace walks and anti-nuclear rallies in Greater Seattle.

“In a world facing threats of authoritarianism, climate crisis and war, we explored spirituality and strategies of nonviolent social change, asking how we create the beautiful world we so deeply desire?” said Fumi.

**Participants heard** from tribal leaders, Marshallese leaders and others impacted by the U.S. nuclear weapons program, including Fumi’s 83-year-old father, Norimitsu Tosu, a survivor of Hiroshima—hibakusha.

Training in nonviolent social change was woven through activities, introducing partici-



**Bombing survivor Norimitsu Tosu, organizer Fumi Tosu and Deb Abrahamson, top; Doresty and Laurel Daniel, left second row, and Irene Contreras, right; and the pilgrims on a two-day Peace Walk to Ground Zero.**

Photo from video prepared by Fierce Non-Violence Pilgrimage

pants to the history, strategies and spirituality of nonviolence, so they gained tools to apply in their own communities.

It included ritual, storytelling, reflection, contemplative practice and nonviolent action at the Trident submarine base.

Participants heard from communities impacted.

**Twa-le Abrahamson**, an environmental educator and cultural restorer from the Spokane Tribe of Indians, told of contamination from the Midnite Mine that employed tribal members to mine uranium from an open pit on the reservation, and transport it through town to Hanford. Her mother, other relatives and tribal members have died of cancer and other illnesses. She now works to bring healing by restoring cultural traditions with canoe trips

and Salish language.

“The same story played out from big companies across the world in indigenous communities,” said Twa-le. “They mine, pollute and leave. We went from grief to healing by restoring our traditions and sovereignty as we are on the waters, gathering food and being together.”

**Then the pilgrims met** Doresty Daniel, a Marshallese woman who lives in Spokane with other Marshallese, who can no longer live in the Marshall Islands after the U.S. “tested” 67 nuclear bombs, contaminating the islands and ocean, separating them from their homeland and culture.

Doresty’s daughter, Laura Daniel, wants to advocate for the elders to go back home and to have what they had.

“We can move forward and

be resilient. We can survive. We are a strong people,” said Doresty, noting that Spokane has one of the largest communities of displaced Marshallese in the U.S. as compensation for the destruction of their islands.

**The Yakama Nation** invited the young adults to visit the Hanford nuclear reactor site, one of the three original Manhattan Project sites that created bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and tested in the Marshall Island.

On a Columbia River boat tour of the site, Rose Ferri, the Yakama historic preservation officer, pointed to the B reactor where they made weapons grade plutonium for bombs.

Irene Contreras of the Yakama environmental restoration and waste management, told of songs and prayers specific to White Bluff, a sacred site contaminated by downwind releases.

**They also heard from** Norimitsu Tosu, who was three when the bomb dropped.

“Spiritual grounding was important for my journey, said Fumi, who began each morning with a song and poetry. “Silence was integrated in the afternoon and the days close with an evening ritual and stories.”

With nonviolence training woven into each day for the peace pilgrims, they reflected on the region’s desecration by nuclear weapons, and considered Fumi’s question? “How we can chart a different course towards peace and healing?”

**The group’s nonviolence** training included storytelling.

On Aug. 3, they arrived to Seattle. On Aug. 4 began a two-day Peace Walk from Bainbridge Island to Chief Seattle’s grave on the Suquamish Reservation to Ground Zero. Aug. 5 they did a “Day Before Destruction” action at Trident Nuclear Submarine Base in Ban-

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## Cindy Bauleke shares background on Samoan pastors

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in the United Church of Christ were included two leaders with positions of authority in the Samoan district.

- Rev. Elder **Nofoaiga Moi**, of the Ekalesia Fa'apopotoga Kerisiano Amerika Samoa (EFKAS) Seattle IV (#4) Church and a regional leader in the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS), and the

- Rev Elder **Fopelagi Siva** of Emanuel Church in Algona and regional leader of the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa (CCCS).

The CCCS traces its roots to the arrival of missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1830, according to the Global Ministries of the UCC. In the early years the LMS missionaries developed a written Samoan alphabet. By 1855 the whole Bible was translated into Samoan. In 1844, they founded Malua Theological College. Global Ministries said that the pattern of ministry by the end of the 1800s “was modeled on the Samoan village structure and value systems with the pastor as the spiritual leader.”

The CCCS, which separated in 1980, promotes the Samoan language and offers spiritual and practical support for members.

The CCCS and CCCAS work closely. There are also Catholic and Methodist churches in Samoa.

The other pastors installed with dual standing are:

- Rev. **Etele Ma'aele**, pastor of the First Samoan Congregational Church in Seattle (#1);

- Two pastors of the Samoan Congregational Christian Church II (#2) in Seattle, the Rev. **Kelekolio Koloi** and the Rev. **Savali Talamoto**;

- The Rev. **Fili Togi**, pastor of Ala I Le Ola Church #5 in Seattle;

- Two pastors at the Savali o le Malamalama Church of Samoan Congregational Christian Church #6 in Seattle, the Rev. **Aunuua Vasega** and the Rev. **Talosaga Patea**;

- The Rev. **Tavita Tolo**, pastor of Live in Salvation, which worships in Tacoma, and

- The Rev. **Iotamo Falealili**, pastor of the first LMS Church Samoan Alaska V in Anchorage.

Other Samoan churches that

are part of the PNC-UCC are Alaskan churches—Faavae Fou, led by the Rev. Edwin Galeai, Feagaiga Fou (New Testament), led by the Rev. Niutunu Faiupu, and the Christian Worship Center UCC, led by Va'a Alaelua, in Anchorage—and First Samoan Congregational UCC (#1) of Auburn, led by Ili Tuiasasosopo; First Samoan Congregational Church of Tacoma, led by the Rev. Ulumo'o Ale.

Cindy said the pastors granted dual standing worked on that status for two years with the Westside and Eastside Committees on Ministry.

Worship was led by the Samoan pastors, sharing their music, followed by a meal served with Samoan hospitality.

“As I have learned more about the Samoan culture, I have learned that the pastors' wives, *tin-as*, have a very important role in the church, as mothers have an important role in their culture,” Cindy said.

Most of the wives attended seminary with their husbands but are not ordained, she added.

Pastors and their wives return to American Samoa for their church's General Assembly every two years.

Dawn Koloi, who is on the PNC-UCC Board of Directors, has been actively incorporating Samoan singing, dancing and gift giving in recent PNC Annual Meetings. She and her husband Kelekolio (Jay) are on sabbatical in Samoa.

Va'a was ordained in the UCC after graduating from the seminary in American Samoa and studied at Pacific School of Religion. He is now working on a doctor of ministry degree. His wife, Mai, is a member in discernment.

Edwin served on the Eastside Committee on Ministry and was ordained as a UCC pastor. He is now on the Board of Directors.

Cindy added that many of the pastors' ministries focus on education and youth programs because of their mission to teach them both the faith and the culture so they can continue the churches. They involve youth in local, regional and national youth events.

**For information, call 360-303-1941, email [cindy-bauleke@gmail.com](mailto:cindy-bauleke@gmail.com) or visit [https://www.globalministries.org/partner/eap\\_partners\\_congregational\\_samoa](https://www.globalministries.org/partner/eap_partners_congregational_samoa).**

## Peace pilgrims gain skills for social justice action

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gor. Aug. 6 was a Peace Walk from Lake Forest Park to Green Lake and the “From Hiroshima to Hope Lantern Event.” Aug. 7 was the closing ceremony.

Fumi, who founded the Dandelion House Catholic Worker community in Portland, is a long-time nonviolent activist, storyteller, community-builder and peacemaker.

**Norimitsu who was born** in April 1942 in Hiroshima, and was at his home on the morning of Aug. 6, 1945, 1.3 kilometers from the epicenter of the atomic bomb. He lost two siblings, but

he, his twin brother and their parents survived.

He earned a doctoral degree in linguistics from Yale University and now a retired professor. He lives in Tokyo. His story is at [ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/interview-survivor-hiroshima-bombing](https://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/interview-survivor-hiroshima-bombing).

**Michael, who has served** at UCUC for three years, promoted events in Seattle and co-designed the pilgrimage.

After visiting sites used to produce the first atomic bombs, the pilgrims presented their findings at several public events, he said.

“The Peace Walk was a contemplative experience for the next generation to gain the skills of meditating, teaching and engaging in social justice ministry and action,” he said.

“We used the truth and reconciliation model to create contact with local Indigenous, Marshallese, Japanese and African American communities,” he said.

“This work is not just teaching us academically but engaging us in meaningful relationships with people impacted. Social change is built from relationships,” said Michael.

The **Fierce Nonviolent Pilgrimage** exposed the young people to facts about the impact on communities as a way for them to learn how to make meaningful change.

Two participants who live in Olympia hosted as “Teach-In” on the pilgrimage and nuclear weapons on Oct. 27.

**For information, email [fumi@dandelionhouse.org](mailto:fumi@dandelionhouse.org) or [mellick@universityucc.org](mailto:mellick@universityucc.org) or visit [fiercenonviolence.org/2025-pilgrimage-or-universityucc.org](https://fiercenonviolence.org/2025-pilgrimage-or-universityucc.org). A video is available at [https://youtu.be/hVvmQ3FLg\\_Y](https://youtu.be/hVvmQ3FLg_Y).**



## *Iotamo Falealili's ministry is to show God's love*

Iotamo Falealili, who has lived in Alaska for 35 years, has been pastor of the First L.M.S. Samoan Congregational Christian Church for 11 of those years.

Until he was 16, he lived in America Samoa and spent several years performing traditional dances for tourists.

In 1980 he moved to Long Beach, Calif., where he attended high school and played football. He began college with hope but had to leave early to support his family during a time of financial hardship.

He began working at Grossman's Warehouse pushing carts and handling customer service. Over time, he advanced to assistant manager and eventually became one of the store's managers.

**When his father** passed away in 1990, Iotamo, his wife, Tuloa, and two of their children relocated to Anchorage. There, he began playing piano for his father-in-law's church.

The Rev. Mamaeula and Osoese Poti were the first Samoan missionaries to establish a Samoan church in Anchorage.

"They laid a spiritual foundation that would impact generations to come," Iotamo said.

In 1996, when Iotamo was manager at Alaska Pipe and Supply, he said, "God stirred a new vision in the hearts of the Rev. Moevao, Fesootaiga Laasaga and Osoese Mamecula Poti to plant another Samoan church in Anchorage.

"It was a new chapter of ministry built on the foundation laid, expanding the reach of the gospel and deepening the spiritual roots of the Samoan community.

**From 2006 to 2012**, Iotamo and Tuloa, who married in 1990 and have six children, completed their theological training at Kanana Fou Theological Seminary.

"Our journey was marked



**Iotamo and Tulua Falealili serve the First L.M.S. Samoan Congregational Christian Church in Anchorage, Alaska.**

Photo courtesy of Iotamo Falealili

not only by deep spiritual growth but also by rigorous academic study," he said. "Days were filled with preparing sermons, writing term papers and engaging in theological discussions that sharpened our understanding of Scripture and ministry."

Alongside their studies, students were assigned practical chores, like cutting grass, picking up trash and handling everyday tasks.

"It was a test," Iotamo recalled, "to prepare us for the everyday challenges we would face as ministers. These humble responsibilities weren't just about discipline. They were about shaping character, building resilience and cultivating servant leadership for the calling ahead."

Iotamo shared that, from an early age, his parents, Fualelei and Talalelei Falealili, deeply influenced his spiritual journey and church life.

"Their guidance and example laid the foundation for my lifelong commitment to faith and ministry," he commented. "My grandfather, Moeva Luapo Asuega Falealili, and three

passed on their knowledge of the Bible, teaching everything they knew and instilling in me a strong foundation of faith."

In December 2012, shortly after returning to Alaska, Iotamo had a stroke and began dialysis three times a week. Despite the physical challenges, he continued working and serving his church, demonstrating his commitment and strength in the face of adversity. In 2019, he went to Seattle for a life-saving kidney transplant.

"It was a miracle. I no longer needed a wheelchair or walker," he said, "and I began the challenging journey of re-learning how to speak. It was a powerful testimony of healing, resilience and God's grace.

**"My focus in our church** and ministry is to serve the community and help address homelessness," he commented. "To better meet these needs, we recognized the importance of renovating our building, transforming it into a space that's welcoming, functional and suitable for community outreach.

"Over the years of my ministry, we have welcomed numerous homeless families and individuals into our doors, pro-

viding them a place to stay at no cost," he said. "At the same time, they are working toward financial independence and receiving support to transition into stable, self-sufficient living."

At the 2025 Annual Meeting of the PNC-UCC this spring in Yakima, his congregation was welcomed into the conference. He and Tuloa also attended UCC General Synod this summer in Kansas City.

Iotamo appreciates visits from conference minister Phil Hodson, former Committee on Ministry member Morag Stewart and Board member Dannette Koloi, who invited his church to join the UCC.

He also expressed gratitude to Lecturer Tau'oa, whose class ultimately led to Iotamo receiving dual standing with the United Church of Christ and the Rev. Tialavea for their support during the Synod.

Iotamo, who also serves as the regional secretary of the CCCAS in Alaska, understands that ministry demands perseverance through every challenge.

**"Being a minister** is difficult, both financially and spiritually," he shared, "but here in Alaska, we have learned to endure and grow through every experience."

He recognizes that ministers are called to serve God, yet some expect to be served.

"While we are respected, in our roles as *faiifeau*, we are still responsible for everyday tasks and must remain humble servants," he said.

"Ministry is not about our stature," Iotamo continued. It's about serving both God and God's people.

"Each of us has a purpose: to be a servant of God," he reflected. "When God blesses us, our actions should in turn bless others."

**For information, call 907-744-6633 or email ifalealili@yahoo.com.**

# Samoan church feeds homeless, gathers youth

In 2025 the Neighbors in Need Offering, one of the United Church of Christ special mission offerings, supported 26 recipients across the UCC engaged in direct service and advocacy. The Northern Lights Food Share of the Christian Life Center UCC in Anchorage, Alaska, was one recipient.

The project began when Va'a Alaelua, the lead pastor, and church members were looking for a way to promote the church to their neighbors.

The church rents space in a church building surrounded by homeless camps. As they have gathered to worship for three years, they saw outside their doors people facing hunger and hardship.

"Then we heard the Spirit whisper," Va'a said in a video on the NIN grant.

Members found it hard to walk by people, so they decided to see them, share meals and show them love.

**"We're a small growing** church plant, a mission church with limited resources, but we could offer a pot of soup and what we had," he said. "We invited our neighbors in to sit at a table and eat with us. Something that feels holy has grown from that."

The church chose the name Northern Lights Food Share, "because northern lights shine brightest in the darkest sky and they hope their ministry brings light in the darkest places as we show up with warmth and hope.

The ministry includes donors and people who pray for it. "We do more than hand out meals. We build hope, restore dignity, show up where love is needed and create a community where no one is forgotten," he said.

**From a small start,** the project grew beyond the block around the church. They go to encampments all over Anchorage, bringing hot meals, sleep-



**Youth are at the heart of the Northern Lights Food Share.**

Photo courtesy of Christian Worship Center UCC

ing bags and whatever they can to show their love for hungry, homeless people.

Va'a is humbled, realizing that God took that little they had and multiplied it.

**With the NIN grant** and other donations, the church serves hundreds of meals and buys sleeping bags, blankets, pillows and supplies to help their friends survive freezing Alaskan nights.

"We are also saying you matter, you are seen and you are loved," Va'a said. "We just stopped to see who was next to us and what they needed so they do not feel alone."

As the church reaches out to serve bigger encampments, the youth, who are at the heart of the ministry and bring their parents to church, lead the effort. They sit and have conversations with their neighbors.

**"The youth are learning** that church not just building go to on Sunday but a way of being in the world," Va'a added. "Through their hands and hearts they are shaping a compassionate, inclusive and just future."

The youth have gone out eight times to the encampments, sharing meals Sunday evenings after worship. Va'a and his wife, May, gshop for the ministry, buying for hundreds of people.

To identify the teams of

youth, they wear a T-shirt with the name of their ministry and a UCC comma, as a reminder that God is still speaking.

**"The story not over.** Every gift given for the ministry provides a comma not a period," he said.

In February, about 10 youth helped. Now 60 youth help, because they invited their friends.

On a recent Sunday, there were 200 at church, and they ran out of communion.

**Youth are a big part** of our ministry. They show up more when we go out. They come to worship to hang out with friends and to sing.

"Youth are the today and tomorrow of the church," Va'a said. "While there is a lot wrong in the world, there is a lot we can do to address it. The need is growing in Alaska and all corners of the world, and so is the opportunity.

"This work is holy. We are committed to show up again and again to feed, to listen and to care," he added.

**As a result of visiting** the Mountain View homeless camps with the Food Share ministry, the church found many Samoan families were there. In addition, from speaking with other chaplains and ministers, Va'a learned that many Samoan youth are in prison.

**So the Christian Worship**

Center UCC launched a Community Youth Gathering on May 2 at the Loussac Library Theater, inviting seven church youth groups—Catholic, Congregational, Methodist, Pentecostal and Seventy-Day Adventist—to come together to share faith, hope, friendship, songs, dances and presentations on the theme, "Rise."

"We began that as the first of four gatherings this year to tell youth that we love you, we believe in you. We hope to build unity in a safe place, celebrating everyone's unique way of lifting up God," said Va'a.

About 350 came in May. On August 22 about 350 youth from seven churches came for a back-to-school Community Youth Gathering at the LMS UCC Samoan Church, inviting youth to ignite their faith, find their voice and fuel their purpose with dynamic speakers, live music, powerful worship real talk sessions and 15-minute youth group presentations on the theme, "Stand Firm."

**"Youth shared music** and ideas to help with struggles their families are going through," he said.

The third Community Youth Gathering is being held in October with 10 youth groups invited. There will be a "trunk or treat" for the community.

"We are doing this because see what is happening here with homeless families and incarcerated youth. In six months, three Samoan youth were killed by police. Their families are now in the church, which is helping them with their grief. We will launch a prison ministry soon," Va'a said.

In July at General Synod in Kansas City the Christian Worship Center was one of 19 UCC congregations recognized as "new and renewing" church.

**For information, call (907) 440-6095 or visit facebook.com/cwcanchoragecampus.**



# Camp musician reviews N-Sid-Sen's 90 years

Camp singer-guitarist John Eisenhower took those gathered for N-Sid-Sen anniversary's through 90 years of campfires while exploring what campers sang and the camp's history.

John said Arthur and Margaret Ford "fell in love with this place on a Sunday drive in 1918 from Kellogg" where Arthur was pastor." He bought it in weeks, and advertised for a farmer to move there to run the farm. He would provide chickens, pigs and a tractor.

**After two years** of discussion, a committee with many from Westminster—John and Mimi Forrester—the conference minister and area ministers—accepted the site as a gift from the Fords.

On a windy, rainy day 90 years ago, at a picnic in the cove, they decided, "This is the Place." Anniversary campers sang, "I Come to the Garden Alone."

**In the Depression era**, John said, people who wanted to hear music had to make music, so they sang familiar, nostalgic, patriotic songs around the campfire. Songbooks then included such favorites as: A Mighty Fortress, Faith of Our Fathers, America (My Country 'Tis of Thee) and Onward Christian Soldiers.

**John no longer sings** those songs, because they expressed Manifest Destiny and notions that cis-gendered white men are inherently "best," that might makes right, and that love of country equals love of God.

He now believes those foundational concepts are wrong. They were hurtful and harmful cornerstones of an outdated, colonial, patriarchal, misogynistic and entitled national (and American Christian) ideology, he said, adding, "They are obstacles on our faith and we have to stop teaching them, because they are steeped in institutional racism, sexism, faithism and wealth-ism."

**He noted that new songs**



**John Eisenhower offers overview of camp and song history.**

may live to be old songs.

A barn in the meadow in 1938 was the boy's dorm. Girls slept in the Ford Cabin. Forrester Lodge was built in 1939. In the 1940s, three boys cabins and an outhouse were christened: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the John. A Susie was dug for the girls. The Iris farm was purchased for back taxes in 1946. Electricity and running water were in place by 1949, he summarized.

**Recovering from** the Great Depression and World War II, folks sang songs about home, hope and family with a few hints of protest: You Are My Sunshine, Sentimental Journey, I'll Be Seeing You, songs from musicals and the Crawdad Song.

**The 1950s brought** flushing toilets to N-Sid-Sen and "us" and "we" songs about fellowship and spirituality, said John, inviting the group to sing "Let Us Sing Together."

"Campers also began singing Gospel tunes like Amazing Grace, Kumbaya and Just a Closer Walk with Thee," said John, "and we've spent 50 years trying to resolve the tension between our love of them, and the pain and injustice some of their theology and words hold."

**"New" songs were** The Ash Grove, Peace I Ask of Thee Oh River and Now Let Us Sing.

In the 1960s, cabins 7 to 12

were built and songs shifted to sentimental/political, justice/peace and some minor chords

**Campers sang protest**, anti-war and worker-justice songs like: If I Had a Hammer, The Times They Are a Changing and Blowin' in the Wind.

"We embraced love and longing songs like Moon River, Five Hundred Miles and Get Together, and new visions of religion with Lord of the Dance. We finally invited Woody to the campfire," John said, introducing, This Land Is Your Land.

**Even the new songs** were about men, Jesus wearing a crown tho he called us loving siblings, and "not every American felt like this land was made for them," John continued, challenging the anniversary campers to "constantly expand their understanding and evolve their vocabulary so that lyrics do not cause pain."

**The 1970s brought** Spirit Lodge, and campers understood that *any* song could be sacred, like: Fire and Rain, Today, Sounds of Silence, Teach Your Children Well, Morning Has Broken, One Tin Soldier, Lean on Me and John Denver's Sunshine on My Shoulders.

In the 1980s, campers began to think about inclusion and the global family. Clergy and spiritual leaders began to write camp songs. Jim Manley, Don Eaton,

Jim Strathdee, Tom Chapin, Tom Hunter wrote Part of the Family, Rock Me to Sleep, Jesus Is the Rock, We Are Drops of Water, Dance, Comin' Home, Circle of Friends, Pass It On.

"We discovered other cultures offered amazing, inspirational songs like You Who Have Come to the Lakeshore," John said.

**In the 1990's**, campers started correcting lyrics to acknowledge a second gender, inclusive songs like: Little Blue Top, Little World Spinning Blue, Rainbow Connection, Jubilation, Place in the Choir, Bring Many Names and more.

**John reflected back** to 1939 when Ken Claypool, who was asked to name the camp, found Ignace Garry ("White Cloud") of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. White Cloud said when youth, 12 or 13, prepared to enter the tribe, the leader would say, "Cross the valley, climb that mountain, stay in that place, be quiet, listen and after a while the Great Spirit will speak words of wisdom and guidance. You will learn what to do with your life and receive inspiration. Then you may return to the tribe as a member."

The tribe calls that spot is an "N-Sid-Sen." That story inspired John to write "A Place on the Planet...N-Sid-Sen."

**In the 1990s, 2000s** and 2010s, songbooks were revisited every few years, eliminating some songs with male-only pronouns, feudal references to Lord and Master, patriarchal language and songs that see gender and sexuality as binary and cis-gendered, he said.

"Many song lyrics evolved and survived," John said. "Others were replaced in our hearts and songbooks with new songs for our evolving awareness and our widening circle."

Syringa, the new shop and Stillwater were added.

**John invited honoring the**  
**Continued on page 9**



## Dee Eisenhauer offers blessing for N-Sid-Sen

Dee Eisenhauer, pastor of Eagle Harbor UCC at Bainbridge Island, offered a 90th anniversary blessing for N-Sid-Sen on August 17, 2025.

**I've been musing** on the kaleidoscope of experiences that have taken place in this sacred place where people step away from their machines and routines to enjoy earthy beauties and one another. The kids nowadays call putting the virtual world on hold to go outside to the real world "touching grass." I'll call it "touching Grace."

I want to lift up and give thanks for a few of the many opportunities we have had to touch Grace in this place of inspiration.

**We remember and give** thanks for little kids skipping millions of rocks into the lake, and for the little kid that re-emerges within the seasoned adult who skips the rock WOW 10 TIMES! God bless the rocks and the skippers and a pure form of play.

**We remember and give** thanks for a mouthful of perfect cookie after a satisfying meal in Forester; for the folks who baked with care; for the shar-



Dee Eisenhauer blesses camp.

ing that ensured everyone got a cookie before the teenagers were turned loose to clean the plate.

God bless the sweetness of shared meals to nourish body and soul.

**We remember and give** thanks for the deer sightings in the meadow, especially those bathed in the hues of early morning and dusk light; for the way the deer look at you with an air of nonchalance that says hello visitor, you're welcome for a visit but don't forget I live here; however, we can share this meadow for this moment. God bless the deer and all the

other critters that make room for company here.

**We remember and give** thanks for the cool waters of the lake, the immersion that makes you yelp and then sigh with relief on hot, hot summer day; for the endless delight of children who are part mer-people who get to swim all afternoon; for the trivial and non-trivial conversations that unfold while bobbing on pool noodles and inner-tubes while your body is nearly weightless in liquid grace and the dragonflies use your floppy sun hat as a landing place. God bless Lake Coeur d'Alene.

**We remember and give** thanks for all the trees that stay while we come and go—for the perfume of pine trees on a hot day; for the rustling of the cottonwood leaves as the breeze stirs them to applaud; for the lovely old walnut that holds the lovely old swing that accommodates every body and affords moments of peace accompanied by the quiet squeak of the rope. God bless the trees that help us breathe in more ways than one.

**We remember and give** thanks for the human interactions that take place as we cre-

ate and dismantle temporary communities here—for the shouts of laughter erupting as our belly-laugh muscles get a workout; for the thoughtful questions that give birth to new insights; for the tears shed as pain is shared with a compassionate listener; for the high-fives and warm hugs and hands held; all the moments that shape us in a place holding us in grace. God bless the meeting of humans in beloved community.

**We remember and give** thanks for the myriad moments of being awe-struck in this place—for the moon rising, stunning us into silence; for the stars finally visible in blessed darkness; for songs that touch us so deeply we can't finish singing them; for a rainbow colored sunset; for the way a campfire can remind you of Light Divine; for the quietness that allows the still small voice of God to be heard, finally.

**God bless all the ways** God invites us to remember who and whose we are in this sacred place.

May this continue to be a place to touch grace for years and years to come.

## John Eisenhauer says music helps inspire campers into ministry

Continued from page 8

perpetual, faith-filled effort at N-Sid-Sen by singing. Somewhere to Begin, what Pete Seeger called a "Zipper Song." Every verse is identical but one word "zipped" out or in.

John pointed out that the effort with songbooks is important because more than half of PNC clergy say camp was where they heard their call to ministry.

**He attributes** his inspiration to be camp musician to Bob Fitzgerald and Rusty Harper, professional musicians from the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference. They spent time each summer when John went to the UCC camp as a youth.

The 2020s, John noted, were the last few years of Cisgendered Old White Men mansplaining patriarchy and speaking for marginalized siblings.

**Many new songs speak** to today's values. John has been weeding out well-intended and well-loved "COW-Men songs"—except his own—and seeks singable songs that allow other visions and voices to shine.

"Twenty percent of songs in the new songbook are from The Indigo Girls, Peter Mayer, Andra Day, Christine Aguilera, Holy Near, Jewel, Carrie Ann Newcomer, Iris Dement, Malvina Reynolds, Meline DeMore, The Wailin' Jennys and

one by Sara Bareilles, urging people to start speaking up.

**Calling for new faces,** voices, songs, instruments and attitudes, John said, "I pray some of you will be brave and agree to lead music at camp." He offered training.

John sang a Native American version of "This Land:"

"...This land is my land, from California to the Texas border through Juarez mountains, with the migrant caravans, this land was made for you and me.

"... my land from piers of Charleston to fields of cotton, from the crowded prisons, the streets of Ferguson, this land was made for you and me.

"... my land from the Jamestown landing to Lakota badlands, from the trail of tears to the reservations, this land was made for you and me."

**John closed, leading,** "If I Had a Hammer" and then quoted Arthur and Margaret Ford at N-Sid-Sen's dedication on April 19, 1939:

"May [this] be in years to come a place where wills are strengthened, imaginations are kindled, and lives dedicated to the service of God, as well as a place where friendships are formed which will bring happy memories in the years to come"

John then led singing requests of anniversary campers.

## Crowes, volunteers keep busy renewing N-Sid-Sen

N-Sid-Sen was busy through the summer and continues to be busy through the end of October. Previously, it was busy just into mid-November, said Randy Crowe, who is volunteering with his wife Linda to manage and restore the camp.

**“Our focus has been to restore, renew and rebuild the camp,”** said Linda.

The being busy included new groups, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints girls, a Unitarian Universalist Group and Seventh-Day Adventist young adults.

“Folks of different faiths appreciate this place as much as we do,” Linda said.

“They appreciate our sense of welcome and the serenity of the place,” she emphasized.

Jan Krakenberg, who came this summer for a family reunion and one of the quilting groups, also came for a day of fall work camp, taking home four of 18 aprons made at work camp to finish them.

Randy and Linda attended a national UCC outdoor ministry gathering in 1989. “The Ministry of Hospitality” was the theme of the event, held at Craigville on Cape Cod.

During that event, as the Crowes reflected on their years of volunteer work leading camps at N-Sid-Sen, they decided to heed God’s call to ministry.

That decision led to a change of careers for both of them.

The ministry of hospitality has been an essential focus of Randy and Linda during this volunteer season at N-Sid-Sen.

**Linda told of taking** hospitality touches seriously, putting flowers in the men’s and women’s restrooms and saying many thank yous.

In addition, they have worked with the complexities



**Randy and Linda Crowe share their enthusiasm for restoring and rebuilding N-Sid-Sen.**

of diets and allergies in planning meals.

**“We talked with campers** about their dietary issues—allergies, no nuts, gluten free, no meat, vegan, dairy-free and more,” said Linda.

“The fact that we listened, was a good starting point and we did the best we could to meet their need,” she pointed out.

“We are bringing N-Sid-Sen back where it needs to be, rebuilding trust and relationships,” Randy added.

**Randy and Linda walked** through the camp to develop a task list for the first Fall Work Camp.

He mentioned some of those tasks that filled five pages: redeck cabin six, patch holes in plaster in Ford cabin and the craft room, winterize the bathhouse so pipes won’t burst as

they did a year that was not done, close the pavilion walls, put away canoes and kayaks, split wood, wash windows, vacuum the cushions, dust and clear away spider webs from around the windows and much more.

**Near Forrester Lodge,** they cut dead fir trees to open the view.

A hot water heater was relocated and an outside hand-washing station was plumbed.

In addition, wor campers replaced the storm door for the kitchen and built a new split rail fence in front of Forrester Lodge.

Four people from the Lady of the Lake dance camp stayed for the work camp.

One woman cut and sewed two quilt tops in two days and took them home to complete. Quilts that are long enough

for tall campers are needed for beds.

**Avista gave N-Sid-Sen** a \$53,000 grant to replace lights with LED lights through most of the camp lodges and cabins, providing and installing the lights as a way to lower electric bills.

One work camper helped sort photos that Linda will frame and display to share visually the camp/s history and life.

Each week during the past summer, campers and volunteers have spent many hours on “giving back” tasks and projects.

“Priceless gifts of time and energy by those who love and care for N-Sid-Sen are essential for the future of the camp,” said Randy and Linda.

**For information, call 208-689-3489 or visit [n-sid-sen.org](http://n-sid-sen.org).**



# Outdoor Ministries teams explore ideas for camps

Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center has usually been busy into early September, but this year is busy until the end of October, said Mark Boyd, executive director of outdoor ministries.

"We have been intentional to save spaces for churches as more churches are coming back or coming for the first time," he said.

St. Paul's is sharing with United Churches of Olympia and Fox island is coming with Suquamish. Alki and Spirit of Peace are also having church retreats.

**Pilgrim Firs will host** a first Buddhist silent retreat in December and added the Northwest Women's Sculptors, along with regulars like Warrior PATHH (Progressive Alternative Training for Healing Heroes) and Guitar camps.

While hosting camps, staff are keeping up on maintenance projects and improvements, like replacing electrical outlets with outlets that include USB ports.

**On N-Sid-Sen,** Mark reported that 80 percent of partner groups have come back as that site continues to "climb back up and out to have its income be greater than expenses," he said. "The state of the economy does not help."

**He pointed out that** both camps need to price use so people will come and come back, but they need to take into account that food prices are up. For example, coffee is affected by tariffs because it's imported.

Often groups sign up this year for dates next year, but costs next year are uncertain, Mark explained.

At an Outdoor Ministries meeting in September at N-Sid-Sen, it was announced that the nurse and two lifeguards were hired, and the leaders of youth and family camps are returning.

The committee divided



**Mark Boyd reports on his first few months as executive director.**

work into teams, such as to address safety plans and curriculum. Those teams will recruit others to help them.

**Mark has met one-to-one** in person or on Zoom with all but one summer camp director to find out what worked, what didn't work, what concerns they had and what ideas they have.

Those who were interviewed said they appreciated the on-site staff, clear policies and good feedback from volunteers.

**In mid-October, a team** from the committee are meeting with directors and managers of other area camps to find what works for them, what their models of staffing are, how

they recruit campers and how they have built a sustainable donor base.

"We can't just visit another camp and apply what they do to Pilgrim Firs and N-Sid-Sen, but we need to be willing to try new things," said Mark, looking forward to those reports.

**"As with any nonprofit,** camps need to have 20 to 30 percent of their income from donations," Mark added.

"Both of our camps struggle with that," he pointed out. "We need to be more comfortable with asking people to support the camps or to meet specific needs."

**Mark particularly praised** the gift of time Randy and Linda Crowe are giving as they

serve as on-site volunteers at N-Sid-Sen, connecting folks and recruiting volunteers.

The Pullman Community Congregational UCC, which usually has 20 come for a retreat at N-Sid-Sen the same weekend as Richland Shalom UCC, which usually has 40 come, recruited 50, filling the camp with 90.

While they were there, Linda told the campers that N-Sid-Sen needed to a used sewing machine dpmated.

At the end of that church retreat, one woman gave a check that would cover the cost of a sewing machine.

**"People want to be asked.** They want to be involved in the camps and churches. We need to ask for what we specifically need," Mark said.

Pilgrim Firs was using bedside stools as bedside tables, Mark mentioned to one camper the need for bedside tables, and she gave him a check for 40 tables.

At N-Sid-Sen, when he mentioned several years ago that there was need for a new oven in the kitchen, one Richland family camper went home and raised funds in her church to buy a double convection oven, so camp could continue to bake the beloved cinnamon rolls.

**"It's about relationships,"** Mark said, adding the importance of campers reporting to their churches about their experiences at camp. "Younger voices make a difference."

Mark added that he and Phil are developing a job description for the associate director at N-Sid-Sen, so the search for that position can begin.

"Like we do in interim ministry, we need to look at who we are, who the camp wants to be and how we get there," he added.

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

# St. Paul's programs build hope in neighborhood

An Oct. 5 Gala and Auction, "Building Hope," was held by St. Paul's UCC at the National Nordic Museum in Ballard to celebrate a new era for the church offering a vital community space as it launched a new nonprofit to preserve that space the church has provided in the community over its 120 years.

For decades, St. Paul's UCC has quietly offered its building as a safe haven for North Seattle neighbors in need, said Courtney Stange Tregear, consulting pastor.

From dozens of addiction recovery meetings started 40 years ago to the free weekday breakfasts Edible Hope began last year, the building has been a lifeline for people facing homelessness, addiction, poverty and isolation, added Kerri Berlin, the lay pastor.

St. Paul's also has a history as a shelter—first as an overnight SHARE shelter, and then, during the pandemic, as a 24-hour refuge so vulnerable neighbors could safely shelter in place.

"With property values soaring, the congregation is launching Building Hope, a nonprofit to preserve the property as the newly named Building Hope Community Center," said Courtney.

"This move is designed to ensure the site remains open to all, no matter what tomorrow brings," she explained.

Now renamed the Building Hope Community Center, the space provides free meals, daily recovery groups, and other programs serving marginalized and underserved neighbors.

St. Paul's UCC used the



**Courtney Stange-Tregear, Darrell Goodwin and Phil Hodson were on the program for the Building Hope Gala and Auction.**

Photo Courtesy of St Paul's UCC

event as an opportunity to celebrate its 120 years of ministry, its 40 years of recovery ministry, its 30 years open and affirming ministry and its one year anniversary of feeding neighbors with Edible Hope, as expressions of St. Paul's UCC faithfully serving Ballard for generations.

The church appealed for attendees to help preserve the space for future generations of service.

The event raised \$52,000 to launch the new nonprofit, which will steward the building and property, said Courtney.

"St. Paul's UCC is doing a new thing. While we are a small and mighty congregation we know how much the community relies on our building," she added.

"In addition to meeting physical and emotional needs, St. Paul's has been a leader in radical welcome," she continued. "The church has proudly been an Open and Affirming

congregation for more than 30 years—openly celebrating and affirming LGBTQIA+ people long before most churches, and even before much of society."

Kerri pointed out that the spirit of inclusivity has shaped the space into a refuge for those who often feel left out elsewhere.

Last year, with the help of generous community support, St. Paul's raised more than \$60,000 to renovate their kitchen so Edible Hope could relocate from St. Luke's Episcopal Church on Ballard Common.

Edible Hope now continues its 30-year-long tradition of providing free, hot breakfasts every weekday to neighbors experiencing hunger and homelessness.

St. Paul's members say their mission "isn't to change people" but to "offer a place where growth can take place."

The new Building Hope Community Center will ensure

access to affordable gathering space for programs serving marginalized and underserved neighbors, including free meals, recovery groups and other grassroots efforts that foster healing, connection and hope.

The effort officially launched at the Gala and Auction, raising funds to go toward securing the future of the Community Center, keeping its doors open to the many grassroots groups and programs that rely on the space.

Local businesses, community members and supporters joined the gala and donated sponsorships to help sustain this neighborhood resource.

For the Gala and Auction, one of the featured speakers is Darrell Goodwin, executive conference minister of the Southern New England Conference of the UCC. He served as pastor and founder of the Liberation UCC in Seattle, Everett UCC and chaplain intern at VA Puget Sound Health Systems.

The second speaker was Courtney, who previously served as minister of church vitality with the PNC-UCC. She brings a wealth of experience fostering church growth and vitality and has helped revitalize numerous congregations.

The effort is made possible with the support of the church's friends, neighbors and covenant partners. Sponsors include the Pacific Northwest Conference, United Churches of Olympia, Keystone UCC, Seattle First Baptist and others.

**For information, call 425-205-9071, email [berlinkerri@gmail.com](mailto:berlinkerri@gmail.com), [pstcourtney@gmail.com](mailto:pstcourtney@gmail.com), or visit [buildinghopeballard.org](http://buildinghopeballard.org).**



# Eagle Harbor joins in CROP Dance and Walk

Eagle Harbor UCC on Bainbridge Island participated in the recent Bainbridge Island North Kitsap Interfaith Council's community efforts in a week of "Everybody Eats!"

From Sept. 21 to 28, events to fight hunger included an interfaith prayer, a food drives, high tea, a CROP Dance and independent CROP Walks.

The week began with "Prayers for a Hungry World" at 6 p.m., Monday, Sept. 22, at Pia the Peacekeeper, an 18-foot-tall troll made by Danish artist Thomas Dambo of recycled wood in Sakai Park.

Prayers were shared from a variety of faith communities and those who came filled a trunk with food for Helpline House, which provides a food bank and social services for Bainbridge Island residents.

From 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Wednesday, Sept. 24, for the Food Drive at T & C, volunteers received 1,064 pounds of food and paper goods, which were delivered to Helpline House.

About 45 attended High Tea for Helpline House at 3 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 25, at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church.

Chef Greg Atkinson, who prepared the food, and Helpline House executive director Maria Metzler spoke about the spirituality of providing food. Helpline House received \$2,866 in donations at the event.

At the Food Drive at Bainbridge Safeway from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 27, volunteers received 803.5 pounds of food, paper goods and \$80 for Helpline House. Other food drives were held by faith communities and other organizations. They delivered 66 pounds of food to Helpline House.

CROP Dance/CROP Walks were held Sunday, Sept. 28.

The CROP Hunger Dance at 1:30 p.m., at Eagle Harbor Church included circle dances for all ages, accompanied by



**Bainbridge Island "Everybody Eats" week collected food for Helpline House and included CROP Dance/Walk activities.**

Photo courtesy of Eagle Harbor UCC

interfaith music.

Church World Service (CWS) liaison Amir Khan and CWS board member Nobu Kanaeda joined others at the CROP Dance, which was led by the Dances of Universal Peace.

"We are unsure about the total number of participants who may have walked or danced among the 11 teams and 21 participants registered on the CWS/CROP walk website, but we think there were more than that who participated," reported Dee Eisenhauer, pastor of Eagle Harbor UCC on Bainbridge Island.

"Regardless, the generosity of the community is apparent. To date, \$24,166.84 had been donated to meet the match of \$20,000 offered by an anonymous donor," she said, adding that more donations may yet come by mail to Eagle Harbor Church. "That donor has agreed to match the full amount.

"Church World Service will return 15 percent of the funds to Helpline House and 10 percent

to Fishline, which coordinates resources and offers programs in Poulsbo to help people enter a path to life self-sufficiently and reach their potential.

The CROP Walk was happening on Bainbridge Island about 30 years ago, before Dee came to Eagle Harbor 27 years ago.

"It used to be that we had 200 people from the different faith communities to participate in the CROP Walk," she said. "About one in 10 were from Eagle Harbor."

It fit in with Dee's commitment since doing her first CROP Walk in 1983.

This year, three members went to the CROP Dance and two participated on their own time in doing an independent CROP Walk.

Nonetheless, Eagle Harbor was "exceedingly generous, raising \$11,000, in part as way honor me as I retire," said Dee.

This year, there were 11 teams and 21 registered on website to do a walk on their

own. Last year the community had just a CROP Dance.

"We were trying to do something new to revive interest," she said.

"I have long had an interest in helping hungry people. After I got in the habit of doing the CROP Walk, the habit has grown and strengthened," she said. "I like the mix of the way we do it at Bainbridge Island, sharing with Poulsbo.

Of the proceeds, 75 percent goes to the work of Church World Service for disaster relief, sustainable farming and refugee resettlement. The other 25 percent goes to the communities, Bainbridge Island and Poulsbo.

Dee also likes that it brings together people of other churches and faiths. Teams are from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, Dances Universal Peace, two Episcopal churches, plus Presbyterian, United Methodist and two UCC churches (Eagle Harbor and Suquamish).

"Not having people walk all at one time. it's not as visible as when we walk through community in public, but our visibility was high with Everybody Eats Week, which we did with two grocery stores on Bainbridge to support our food bank. We raised money and people gave lots of food in addition to what comes from CROP events.

Everybody Eats Week is branded as a project of the Interfaith Council. Dee served on the coordinating team that did the organizing.

"I support providing food for hunger in our community and far away," Dee said. "It's apolitical to assure those not getting enough to eat get enough to eat. It's a great place to find common ground."

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# Rural pastor created a community ministry

Jeannette Solimine's daughters' disabilities—autism and a genetic disease—mean they will never experience living, studying and traveling abroad, which fed her life journey, but they are the light of her life. Their needs led her to stay in Colfax where she did specialized rural ministry with the UCC.

At the PNC-UCC Annual Meeting in April, she shared how her doubts led her to faith and a ministry that has given her the flexibility to “walk with my profoundly disabled daughters.”

“Over the years, I learned that many clergy struggle with doubt, as I have,” she said.

Baptized at St. John's UCC in San Francisco, she spent three years in Augsburg, Germany, where her father was stationed in the military. Returning to Davis, Calif., her ideas about doubt began when she and her sister attended a Church of Nazarene.

Those ideas were challenged by experiences abroad.

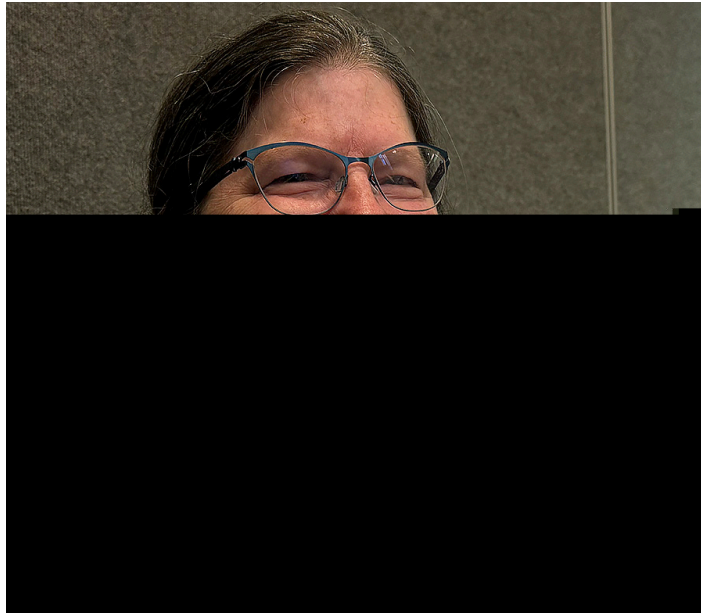
At 16, she spent a year studying in the Himalayas at Woodstock Christian International School in Mussoorie, India, with children of missionaries, businessmen, politicians and diplomats of various faith affiliations. A roommate was a Sri Lankan Buddhist. A friend's family fled Afghanistan, where they had been freedom fighters.

In contrast to that interfaith community, the Nazarene church, had taught her that faith and doubt were opposite.

After high school, Jeannette studied international relations in Scripps Women's College at Claremont and spent her junior year studying at the University of Heidelberg and traveling to Eastern Europe, East Berlin and the Soviet Union.

It was eye opening to visit concentration camps and learn of the horrors of the Holocaust.

After earning a bachelor's degree in 1986, she earned a master's degree in international policy at Monterey College, fo-



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cusing on communism in East Germany. That became irrelevant after the Berlin Wall fell and Iron Curtain collapsed from 1989 to 1991, so she went to Jiaxing, China with 20 others who taught English in other cities. The Tiananmen Square massacre of protesters led her to end her contract two months early.

Back in San Francisco, she found jobs for several years in three lawyers' offices with different emphases environment, banks and schools.

Having left the Nazarene Church when she was 20, “because I had too many doubts,” Jeannette began attending St. John's UCC, where she had been baptized.

“There, I learned faith and doubt were complimentary, not opposite,” Jeannette said. “For the first time I saw a woman pastor preaching. Then a member said with my interest in the Bible, music, worship and church history, I should go to seminary.”

Realizing women could be ministers in the UCC, she went to Pacific School of Religion in January 1997. While in seminary, she married John and her daughter Sophie was born. Chrissie was born after she

graduated. Their disabilities became evident later.

“As I traveled the road to ordained ministry, I still had doubts, but paths opened,” Jeannette said.

Interest in small rural churches led her to an internship in San Rafael. After graduating in 1999, she looked for a small rural church. PNW-UCC conference minister Randy Hyvonen recruited her for three year Renewal ministry at Plymouth Congregational UCC in Colfax, which called her in 2001.

“When I told my parents, they said my great-grandfather was born there in 1888. His father, a Civil War vet, had started a Presbyterian home ministry in Colfax and built the Presbyterian church there,” she said.

She felt the Renewal program did not make sense there. By then, Sophie's autism and Chrissie's mitochondrial disease was evident, so Jeannette, offered to work half time for six months to complete her contract.

She and John, who started a business, stayed in Colfax after she left the church, because they owned a house, but they faced financial struggles with health care costs.

As she began searching for a new church, she realized she was not going to find a full-time job in ministry. As Jeannette became engaged in the community—volunteering, serving on City Council and being a substitute aide at the school—she believed she still belonged in and was in ministry, so she pursued being a specialized minister.

With her involvements in Colfax and relationships with area churches, she officially established a three-way covenant in 2018 with the PNC and Plymouth UCC to do regular pulpit supply and community ministry.

She has preached in nearby Lutheran, Disciples of Christ, United Methodist, UCC and other churches in Colfax, Cheney, Dayton, Endicott, Pullman, Lewiston, St. John, MalDEN, Rosalia and Spokane.

Her community ministry from 2005 until retiring this year has included teaching Bible studies, visiting people in senior care facilities, conducting worship services for their residents, serving as volunteer chaplain at the hospital, leading services at a rehab center, doing funerals and weddings, and informally counseling and referring teens she had met as an aide at school.

Although retired, she continues preaching and doing community outreach, and recently joined the Community Congregational UCC in Pullman.

“Faith and doubt kept me going,” said Jeannette. “Even though my daughters will require 24/7 care the rest of their lives, it's a joy to be with them.”

Some might blame God, but she affirmed, “Life can give us more than we can handle, but by God's grace I can handle it with help from my parents, husband, sisters, dog, friends and people around world of many faiths who hold us in prayer.

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