



# Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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## *UCC leader talks of ‘Disrupting the Narrative’*

**Karen Georgia Thompson,  
general minister and  
president/CEO of UCC**

Speaking on “Disrupting the Narrative” at the PNC-UCC Annual Meeting in April, the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, general minister and president/CEO of the United Church of Christ, opened with a poem “nonplussed” she wrote in 2020, seven months into the Covid pandemic.

Karen Georgia said she came to celebrate, wonder, grieve, fellowship and love those gathered at the PNC-UCC Annual Meeting as family and as church. She reminded the PNC that the UCC and is part of the body of Christ at work in the world bringing the good news in this age.

As the conference discerned its theme, “Forward Together,” Karen Georgia’s sermon was informed by the  
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**Karen Georgia Thompson, general minister and president/CEO of UCC**

## *PNC votes June 18 for designated conference minister*

In a special meeting on June 18, 125 of 139 present on Zoom voted to call Phil Hodson as designated conference minister to serve until July 2026.

The PNC-UCC Board of Directors brought a motion “that the Rev. Phil Hodson be called as the Designated Conference Minister (DCM) of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ through June 30, 2026, with eligibility and first right of refusal for the Settled Conference Minister candidate position should it be offered by the Board after evaluation.”

In June 2023, a search committee was organized to call an intentional interim conference minister and a position description was posted. In July there were three candidates, In August, the

**Phil Hodson will  
serve PNC-UCC  
for a designated term.**

finalist declined. More candidates were interviewed in the fall and the finalist chosen declined in December. Phil was suggested by the national setting to serve as acting conference minister.

At Annual Meeting, the special online conference meeting was announced for June 18. During the meeting there was discussion of definitions of designated and interim ministry. One difference is that an interim cannot be consid-

ered a candidate for the called position but a designated minister may be. First right of refusal for a settled call agreement may be offered, but if they decide not to enter a settled call agreement the conference may post a profile and receive clergy profiles, PNC-UCC Board Moderator Indigo Brown explained.

At the meeting, Phil expressed his joy in walking beside members of the conference, coming to know stories of churches and clergy.

“I look forward to walking with you to see where the Spirit leads us,” he said, noting he will help focus on search and call for congregations, next steps to be an anti-racism conference, and living into the world of practical, faithful next steps for the PNC.”

# Time of remembrance is call to move forward

## Conference Reflections



By The Rev.  
Phil Hodson  
Designated  
Conference  
Minister

*Speaking during Annual Meeting at the Saturday, April 27, evening worship, Phil Hodson, who is now designated conference minister, used the time to remember PNC clergy and others who died in the past year as a call for those gathered to join their hearts, renew themselves and pledge to move forward together.*

“As the annual meeting, we are remembering all of those who have come before us, who have built the United Church of Christ and its predecessor bodies in the Pacific Northwest,” he said. “Remember that we are not the same church we were before and we are not the same church as we were last year.

We’re not the same church we were in 1957 or 1961 but we are here today praising God and welcoming new congregations. We are not the same because of so many who have come before us and have made marks on our spiritual journeys.

I’ve heard some of that today from some of you as you shared, saying “I’m here because of this person who spoke into my life.” In a few minutes we’re going to remember those who have gone before us, specifically who have gone on to glory in this last year since we last met.

As we remember and give thanks for those who have gone before, may we draw upon the wisdom, knowledge and incredible experience they have poured into us. We remember today those who brought us to this place from all the places we come from.

As we think about what it means to go forward, to move forward together, not one step back, let us bear in mind that that means that someday somebody is going to remember what we may have done.

This is our opportunity, church. I have witnessed it in those I have encountered at Annual Meeting, that we gathered to chart a course, to have a plan and to invest in it with hope, joy and confidence in who we are and who God is calling us to be.

We wrestle with the things that challenge us and we are thankful for the things that go well. It’s for the next thing that God will call us into being, that next faithful step that we are taking now will matter for those who will gather in a room like this and someday remember us and give thanks for what God did in this moment.

God raised up leaders at Annual Meeting. We had to go back and revise the nomination slate because more people heard the Spirit’s call saying, “Come and serve, share in this way of co-creating and co-conspiring with the Divine to be the body she’s calling us to be. We are called to be a place of radical inclusion, a space where when we say, “All are welcome,” and we mean it.

Every time that we recognize where we come from in all our traditions, we recognize that the church we are becoming ain’t always going to look that way. Thank God, the one that embraces more and more diversity in worship, in discipleship, in understanding all the streams from which we come, and pulls them together.

That God might meld those streams together through us into the next new thing this is. Where we are going? Forward together! That’s right and may we do that with great courage and may we give thanks for those who have led us to this moment. May we someday, by God’s grace, be people for whom others give thanks for inspiring them. May it be so for us. Amen and Amen.

In installing new officers, leaders and committee members for the PNC-UCC, we pray God’s wisdom and God’s blessing. We pray for endurance for the good work each will do, for the openness of their hearts and for the vision they will share, for their willingness to say, “Yes, let’s move forward together.

We give thanks for these faithful servants, for the wisdom and experience of their lives that they will pour into our collective story. We give thanks for the ways they will stretch us, challenge us, make us laugh and fill us with wonder.

We thank God for this collective body, for those who have served before who have led us to this place and for those who step up now.

It’s going to be quite a journey and we’re so grateful that we get to take that journey together with our leaders.

At Annual Meeting, we have borne witness to what the Spirit is doing in our midst. We are only just beginning to see what the Divine has in store for all of us as we continue to become that open and affirming, anti-racist, inclusive, diverse Christian family in the Pacific Northwest. Let us move “Forward Together” not one step back.

Let  
us  
move  
forward  
together  
and  
not  
one  
step  
back!

## Transitions announced

The Westside Committee on Ministry has taken the following actions: **Marcia McLaughlin** has been granted exempt status as a commissioned minister. **Carol Scott Kassner** has resigned her standing as a commissioned minister. **The Rev. Stevi Hamill** has been called to First Congregational Church in Bellevue as their associate pastor, beginning June 30. The **Rev. Roberta Rominger** has completed a three-way covenant for exempt standing. **The Rev. Dr. Lorraine Leist** has accepted a call in the Rocky Mountain Conference, but her standing will remain in our conference. Transfer of standing was approved for **Rev. Jennifer Bannerman**.

United Church in University Place UCC UMC installed **Valerie Garrick** as pastor and teacher May 26

**The Rev. Margo Richardson** is bridge pastor at Everett UCC.

The Wallace Church is now being temporarily filled by **Rev. Alice Ling** and her husband, **Ben**.

A memorial service for **Lois Brown** was held June 22 at Sunnyslope Church of the Brethren in Wenatchee. She died May 21. Her husband, the Rev. David Brown, was conference minister from 1992 to 1996. She taught in Wenatchee schools.

Former pastor at Tekoa and Veradale UCC, the **Rev. Dr. Bob Haworth**, died July 15 in Bochum, Germany.

## Support groups resume

Communities of Practice, support groups of the Committee on Ministry, are led by trained facilitators for pastors in congregations, specialized ministers, retired clergy and members in discernment in the PNC-UCC. Most groups meet on Zoom, across mountains and time zones. An in-person South Puget Sound group is forming this year.

What people say about the program?

"I am new to the UCC ministry and find it helpful to be in a group with others who are further along and offer encouragement and guidance as I learn to do ministry the UCC way. Our leader poses good questions to get us talking and offers insightful reflections after each one shares."

"Being able to meet regularly with a CoP group of colleagues is one of the best things I do for myself. The group keeps me connected and related to the PNC and UCC, supports me in my life and ministry

and inspires me to grow as we support and learn from one another."

The cost is \$250.00 a year. Scholarships are available. Groups meet September to June, said the Rev. Amy Hitchens, pastor of Normandy Park UCC in Seattle, who is coordinating the groups. *For information, email amy@npucc.org.*

## Blog shares building stories

"What's Up with Church Buildings!" is a UCC Vital Signs and Statistics blog that explores how the understanding of what a church building is, is in transition, being re-visioned and repurposed. Congregations are leaving buildings, said David Schoen, minister for Church legacy and closure with the national UCC Church Building and Loan Fund in Cleveland. The blog includes church stories from Seattle and Portland.

*For information, call 216-736-3839, email dschoen@ucc.org or visit cblfund.org.*

## Partners in Building set

The 17th annual "Partners in Building Today" will offer ideas on how churches can transform their communities and create vibrant, sustainable futures. Held Sept. 26 and 27 on Zoom, it explores how churches can leverage technology and repurpose their property to meet their community's evolving needs.

Lindsey Peterson Black and her team at South Church UCC in Springfield, Mass., are "repurposing some of their church space for a community center promoting the arts, well-being and spiritual community."

*For information, visit <https://bit.ly/3Wn87KO>.*

## OWL session is Oct. 4

Our Whole Lives is partnering with Pilgrim Firs to offer all three levels of OWL training this Nov. 22 to 24.

There is training for grades K-6, 7-9/10-12 and for young adults and older adults. Register with Mark Boyd, managing director at Pilgrim Firs, by emailing him at [mark@pilgrim-firs.org](mailto:mark@pilgrim-firs.org)

For program details, contact Amy Johnson, who leads Our Whole Lives (OWL) workshops for the UCC.

For information, call 216-736-3718 or email [amy@diligentjoy.com](mailto:amy@diligentjoy.com).

## NW Women's Retreat in 2025

The Pacific Northwest & Central Pacific Conferences of the United Church of

Christ join together every three years to offer a spiritual and motivational retreat, the Northwest Regional Women's Retreat.

The retreat on "Embrace Joy!" will be held Nov. 7 to 9, 2025 at Skamania Lodge in Stevenson, Wash.

The Rev. Andrea Cano, a UCC minister serving as a clinical and palliative care chaplain who previously served with the World Council of Churches, the World Association for Christian Communication and the Latin American Council of Churches, is keynote speaker.

The Rev. Danae Ashley, an Episcopal priest and licensed marriage and family therapist in Seattle, is worship leader.

*For information, visit [nrwr.org](http://nrwr.org).*

## General Synod is July 2025

Deadlines and information are available for those who want to submit business to General Synod 35, the next major gathering of the UCC which will be held July 11 to 15, 2025 in Kansas City, Mo.

It is the last time the Synod will be held biennially, because the UCC voted to meet every third year at GS34 in 2023.

The theme for General Synod 35 is "Into the Deep," based on Luke 5:4, which says, "When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.'"

General Minister and President Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson said, "Planning for GS35 is well underway, and we look forward to seeing the UCC well-represented in Kansas City."

**Resolutions may be submitted to resolutions@ucc.org by Dec. 31.**

## Resource available

The Rev. Joanie Henjum is offering a presentation and resource for congregations entitled "How We Will End the Sexual Abuse of Children."

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

## Justice Jubilee begins Oct.

The three-month Justice Jubilee program, beginning in October, is for adults interested in weaving social justice into the fabric of their faith and learning tools to build a more just, compassionate world. Scholarships are available for this online program that boosts knowledge, skills and confidence in working for change.

*For information, visit [google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSelQwGAEfsMrQELg49hAzcm1WICE59f1jxHb4p8gbtPOCCg/viewform?pli=1](https://forms.d/e/1FAIpQLSelQwGAEfsMrQELg49hAzcm1WICE59f1jxHb4p8gbtPOCCg/viewform?pli=1).*

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## Leader says a single story leads to generalizations

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text for the theme: “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.” 2 Cor. 4:8-10

**Her poem catches** the confusion of imagining how the past normal—with injustices of patriarchy and generational trauma from tyranny—could yield to a new way of living with privilege overthrown and rituals of healing and resistance “conjuring new identities welcoming new alliances and seeking resurrection.”

Karen Georgia wrote the poem as poet-in-residence in response to academic papers on the theme “Doing Theology in the New Normal.”

**“What was the normal** to which we had grown accustomed? This normal would need to be confronted if anything new was to emerge in the world and if our theological rumination were to be responsive to what we see in the world,” she said. “Four years later, we are grappling with the same topsy-turvy, upside down world where injustice prevails by many names and social conditions.”

“Nonplussed” implies a person is so surprised or confused, they are unsure how to react. They are bewildered, Karen Georgia explained, suggesting that nonplussed is not the way to be in these days

“Inactivity renders us complicit to perpetuate what inhibits others’ flourishing,” she said.

**Instead of being caught off guard,** she called people to be ready to step into action that “detects, disrupts and dismantles” injustices and inequities.

Karen Georgia agrees with author Chimimande Adichie on “The Danger of a Single Story”

related to media, saying one perspective can support default assumptions, conclusions and decisions that are incomplete and lead to misunderstandings and generalizations.

Karen Georgia said the church needs to be wary of a single story, prevailing narratives that create complicity, lead to generalizations and leave people nonplussed about what is happening.

**“Neocolonialism is alive** and well. A globalized economy continues to ensure the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer,” she said, noting that the global condition is evident on streets where homelessness prevails, in classrooms where children go hungry, and in businesses where the disparity of earnings widens the wealth gap.

“Neocolonialism is evident in the use of politics, culture and other pressures to control developing countries”—with loans they can’t repay and pressure to conform with votes or face recrimination and loss of aid, she said.

Karen Georgia clarified that, while neocolonialism refers to pressure of colonizers on formerly colonized, the U.S. currently colonizes other countries and asserts its will based on greed and wealth.

**“A single narrative says** this is the land of opportunity, the best place to live. It compels us to believe all can be wealthy if they work hard,” she said.

In the midst of this is the narrative the church is in decline, she said, citing a recent Gallup poll, reporting that 3 in 10 U.S. adults attend religious services regularly—67 percent of Mormons and 44 percent of Protestants, including non-denominational churches.

The data affirms what is evident Sunday mornings across faiths: Many are disaffiliating.

Along with that narrative, the world is at war, with conflicts escalating globally, bring-



Karen Georgia Thompson converses. Photo by Gen Heywood

ing death, starvation and human rights abuses, she said.

The Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights that monitors more than 110 armed conflicts, notes that some conflicts make headlines and others do not. Some started recently and others have lasted more than 50 years.

**“What does this mean** for us?” Karen Georgia asked, turning to the rise of white Christian nationalism, which according to a Yale university blog has roots hundreds of years ago and “bubbles up during periods when white Christians feel threatened by outside forces—amplified by war, immigration and economic instability.

“This brand of Christianity is hate-filled and destructive. It espouses values antithetical to the gospel call and scriptures ‘emphasis on love and loving neighbor as self,’” she said.

**The apostle writing** the new church in Corinth addresses issues it faces, disrupting the narrative of the day with the word “but,” a small, overused, misunderstood word, introducing a phrase or clause that contrasts with what has been said.

“This little word corrects the first thing said by bringing a new thought or idea to the table. The example at dictionary.com is, ‘She stumbled, but didn’t fall.’ When a person stumbles, the conclusion is

they will fall. “But” makes a different conclusion,” she said.

In 2 Corinthians, there are assumptions and conclusions from what is going on in the new church. The people were persecuted, challenged and confused as they learned what it meant to be Christian. The author wrote these people to disrupt the narrative of the day. The narrative was that they were afflicted, perplexed, persecuted and struck down.

**In the midst of that,** the author provided hope by reframing the narratives of the day: “We are afflicted in every way, *but* not crushed; perplexed, *but* not driven to despair; persecuted, *but* not forsaken; struck down, *but* not destroyed.”

Karen Georgia pointed out that “but” indicates the impossibility of anything other than what is stated happening, “but God.”

“The contrasts and disruption in the text lead to the impossibility of anything but God because we always carry in the body Jesus’ death, so Jesus’ life may be visible in our bodies,” she said. “This is the power available to disrupt the narratives of this day.”

Verse 7 makes it clear the extraordinary power to disrupt belongs to God, and “does come from us.”

“So we can walk with pow-

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## Annual Meeting welcomes four Samoan churches to PNC-UCC

Highlights of the Annual Meeting business sessions were welcoming four Samoan churches into the PNC-UCC.

The Board of Directors had voted March 8 to approve two churches in Anchorage for membership in the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ

They are EFKAS First London Missionary Society Congregational Christian Church with the Rev. Iotamo Falealili as pastor, and the Worship Center Christian Fellowship, with the Rev. Faatauva Alaelua, as lead pastor.

At Annual Meeting in April 27, they were welcomed to the PNC-UCC along with two Seattle area churches, First Samoan Congregational Christian Church #1 with the Rev. Etele Toilolo Ma'aele as pastor, and Samoan Congregational Church #6 with pastors, the Rev. Aunua Vasega and the Rev. Talosaga Paten.

The Church Development Committee (CDC) and Committee on Ministry (COM) worked with these churches last year.

In September Dawn Kolo and Karen Nooney from CDC and Morag Stewart from COM-East visited Anchorage to meet with three congregations seeking affiliation, as well as a new church community in formation.

After conversations, First LMS (London Missionary Society) Christian Church of Anchorage and The Christian Worship Center decided to join the conference.

The CDC also nurtured relationships with the Seattle #1 Samoan Church, and Seattle #6 Samoan Church in Kent.

In Anchorage, Follow the Star, new faith community, is in discussion with the CDC about becoming a church in discernment in the PNC-UCC. While in Alaska, Karen, Dawn, and Morag met with the Rev. Bill Maury-Holmes and members of Follow the Star.



The CDC seeks to support Ministry Leaders in New Contexts, and this spring invited those serving in non-traditional settings to create a cohort of ministry leaders.

Building relationships with new affiliating congregations continues after a congregation has been received. The CDC will work to strengthen relationships with new churches welcomed in the conference.



**Samoan singers, members, dancers share their faith and culture.**

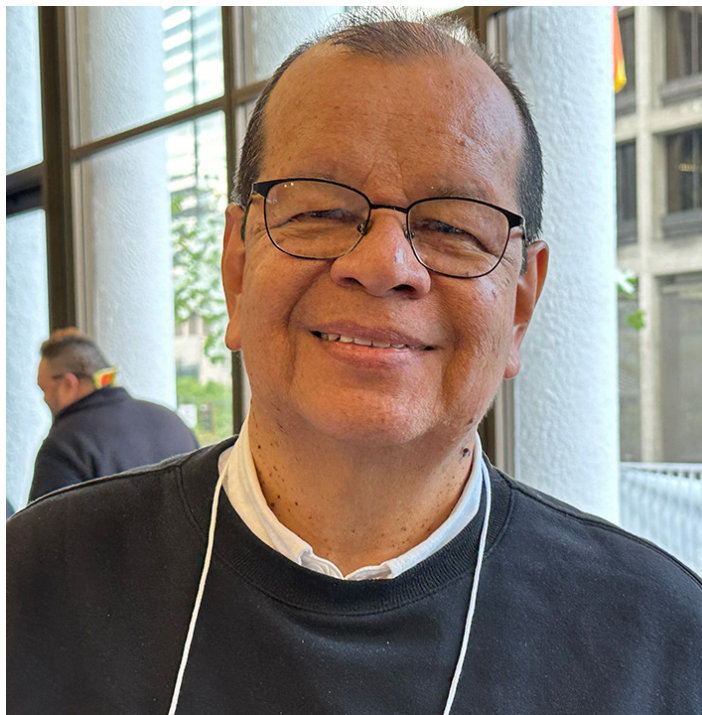
## Two speakers discuss justice issues in Colombia

Pablo Moreno with CEDECOL and Xiamara Cintrón-García Global Ministries, mission co-worker, gave presentations for the spring PNC-UCC Annual Meeting, the Disciples of Christ Northern Lights Assembly and several churches on the global partnership of the conference and region with Justapaz and the Peace Commission of CEDECOL.

They told people what has been happening there since the 2016 Peace Accords between the government and the FARC, one of several armed groups that have controlled regions of Colombia.

**The conflict there** for decades stems from one percent of the people owning 99 percent of the land, said Pablo. The Peace Commission accompanies churches in the countryside with pastoral visits, legal assistance for victims and training for survival efforts.

After violence from 1949 to 1959, there was a rise of guerrillas from 1960 to 1990. Paramilitarism grew from 1980 to 2004, Pablo said, followed by a humanitarian crisis that led



Pablo Moreno spoke of his work with CEDECOL.

to the peace process with the Armed Revolutionary Force of Colombia (FARC), which laid down arms after passage of the Peace Accords in a 2016 vote.

**Pablo showed a map** with different colors marking control of rural areas of indigenous

or Afro-Colombians by different revolutionary groups. The people, who live off the land, are at the mercy of the armed groups, killings, recruitment, kidnappings, forced relocations, sexual/physical violence and river pollution from illegal

mining and over-spraying coca crops making land unfarmable.

The armed groups, he explained are Marxist/Socialist Groups seeking to end the wealth inequality. Paramilitary groups contract with legal and illegal mining companies from Canada, China and the United States. Drug gangs, and the government uses paramilitary groups to cover up their participation in illegal drug extraction.

Pablo said that the Peace Commission includes Unbaptists, Justapaz, Prison Fellowship, World Vision, Peace and Hope and the Corporation for Community Social Development.

**He told of CEDECOL's** work to educate on peace, share the history and memory of the conflict, explore biblical perspectives on reconciliation, study the Bible and gender, develop a pedagogy for peace, defend human rights by pastoral visits to churches to accompany communities, work with the Women's Network for Peace to promote networking

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## With God churches can disrupt old narratives

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er and authority to disrupt narratives and single stories of our day," she asserted. "Numbers in pews may be decreasing, but we are serving our communities, feeding the homeless, tutoring children, and advocating for women's rights."

**While some in the church** may be silent, the church is the voice of the voiceless, in streets marching and standing up for the rights of others, she said.

"The church may have been complicit, but we will decolonize the church and ensure the right for all to be free. The world may be at war, but we will advocate for peace and

justice, calling our legislators to ensure we are not supporting efforts that bring death and limit the flourishing of others," Karen Georgia said. "We can do this because in this body that is the church, we carry Jesus' death so Jesus' life may be made visible in our bodies. This is the resurrection power."

**It's the power "to punch** beyond our weight, live into the impossibilities and know we can do the impossible—but God!" Our faith matters in this day," she said.

"The theme, 'Forward Together,' is about being unified in resistance. We can make a difference. We do not have to suc-

cumb to the narrative that drains our energies and maims our spirits. We do not have to create or support narratives that do not witness to Jesus' life made visible in us and the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us, around us and through us," she affirmed.

**"We are the disrupters** of this day, bringing new life and freedom to a world in need. The church is alive and well disrupting prevailing narratives and creating new life through Jesus," Karen Georgia said. "We can do this—together—but God!"

She asked the PNC as it goes forward together what are the prevailing narratives they

need to disrupt. In disrupting these narratives, what is the vision might they create?

"We are disrupters and creators daring to bring new light to the confusion of our day," said Karen Georgia, closing with a poem, "together," she wrote two years ago for the Strengthen the Church offering campaign.

**It's about walking** side-by-side as people of faith, boldly building new communities as the presence of God, embracing unity in diversity, visioning possibilities of churches revitalized, strengthening the churches, tearing down walls and building bridges together, she concluded.

# Global partners tell of struggles in Colombia

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and prevent violence, document human rights violations and advocate for victims.

Pablo said the UCC and DOC support these ministries through churches affected.

“CEDECOL promotes church participation and improves communication among churches,” he said.

**The Peace School** facilitates people sharing their stories. It accompanies more than 100 churches affected by conflict, displacement, threats and violation of international humanitarian law, training 150 people a year in peacebuilding, strengthening ties with churches and forming a women’s network in five regions.

Xiomara is in Colombia with her husband, Alex Maldonado-Lizardi. Both are from Puerto Rico and serve Global Ministries—which works with 250 faith groups in 90 nations—as commissioned missionaries with the DOC and UCC.

“**Global Ministries** accompanies partners, sending and receiving missionaries and financial support to form lasting friendships,” Xiomara said. “The Latin American mission is not limited to ministries, but partners to defend life, including a focus on justice and peace.”

She said Justapaz, founded in 1990 with Anabaptist ties, activates citizens’ efforts to promote just peace.

“It has had 30 years of experience locally, nationally and internationally training people for a lifestyle of just and sustainable peace,” she said. “It supports churches in advocacy and decision making.”

**She summarized its work.**

1) Peacebuilding and reconciliation include accompanying local dialogue between opposing parties and promoting reconciliation in faith communities as a foundation for a reconciled society.

2) Through training in faith



**Xiomara Cintrón-García is Global Ministries mission co-worker.**

communities and church organizations, it promotes nonviolence and conscientious objection to prevent recruitment of young people by legal and illegal armed groups. It emphasizes the right to conscientious objection to military service as a tool for peacebuilding.

3) For historical memory, human rights and policy advocacy—Alex’s focus—Justapaz accompanies evangelical Christian communities, victims of armed conflict, individuals and organizations to retain their historic memory to defend human rights and access to truth, promote justice and reparations, and prevent repeating the cycle of violence. This effort includes registering human rights cases, hearing victims’ stories and mediating to bring healing and reconciliation.

4) In Communication for Peace, Justapaz works for a communication system to reach the regions. The radio system reaches allies of peacebuilding, with multiple journalism genres, networks, technologies and techniques.

5) Women, Peace and Envi-

ronmental justice seeks to bring dramatic changes for the world and Colombia. It empowers actions and leadership of women to rebuild Colombia’s social fabric. Women are victims of all types of social and political violence. The lack of justice on climate change issues is partly behind the armed conflict. It’s not just about macho men, but most fighting is to control land. The effort emphasizes how social and political violence against women affect their participation in just peace.

“**Colombia is a patriarchal** society. Victims of patriarchy are not just women, but the whole system—churches, communities and society. Churches both help and hurt people,” Xiomara said. “The goal is to build participation in decision-making.

“Women are left with the results of the armed conflicts when men are taken to war, killed or disappeared. Women are heads of families and communities,” she said. “Even though they say men are head of the house, if a man is not there, women are, and we do workshops to hear

their stories and deliver tools to empower them.”

**Xiomara has heard stories** since 2021 about conflict in churches where few women are ministers. Saturdays, women sit in a circle to tell stories, telling of militia taking men at Sunday services. They met weekly to make a memorial quilt, bringing squares to honor a family member taken. Through quilting they began to heal, she said.

One woman whose son was taken said, “God loves you. I forgive you.”

To reach women’s groups in western Colombia, Xiomara took a plane one hour from the capital, a bus two hours and a motorcycle three hours to a village through mushy, rocky roads.

“**Women were so happy** we came, knowing how hard it was to get there and valuing that their voices were validated, hoping the government would listen,” she said. “We give them legal tools to go to the government and show they will help the community economically and socially.”

In 2021 and 2022, Xiomara and two colleagues from Justapaz visited villages to give workshops on types of gender-based violence and on legal actions to address the violence. While there they saw vegetable garden and chicken egg laying initiatives women started.

Even with mandatory education for women, when girls walked to schools they would be raped, killed or disappeared, so parents did not let girls go. They asked the government to build a road and provide a school bus so there could be equity in education, she said.

Xiomara said the UCC and DOC help support these ministries and help displaced people with humanitarian aid.

*For information, email [xcg419@gmail.com](mailto:xcg419@gmail.com) or visit [globalministries.org/resource/pray-with-colombia-august-18-2024](http://globalministries.org/resource/pray-with-colombia-august-18-2024).*

# AM 2024 passes two resolutions and budget

The Pacific Northwest Conference UCC Annual Meeting 2024 delegates meeting April 26 to 28 at Plymouth UCC Seattle voted to approve two resolutions.

One will require antiracism training for all conference staff and board members, to be renewed every 3 years. Training will be provided by organizations vetted and approved by the Board, in consultation with the leadership of the PNC-UCC Antiracism Fund, the COM, and the Dismantling Racism Ministry Team.

All UCC clergy and local moderators are encouraged to attend anti-racism training at their own initiative or to join the trainings offered to conference staff and board.

No funds from the Antiracism Fund will cover the cost of trainings. Funding streams will be added to the annual budget.

The second resolution expressed PNC-UCC opposition to two initiatives on Washington's Nov. 5 ballot: 1) Initiative 2109, similar anti-capital gains tax initiatives and other laws enacted that support and further regressive tax policy, and 2) Initiative 2111 adopted by the state legislature on March 4, 2024 and any efforts to limit future possibility of implementing a graduated income tax.

The resolution stated opposition to all regressive tax structures in Washington, Idaho, Alaska and across the nation, and calls on conference members and churches to vote and be vocal in their communities and to their legislators when regressive tax structures participate in systemic oppression.

"We believe that when graduated income taxes are implemented in conjunction with limits and reductions on other regressive taxes, we will take one of many important steps forward in unveiling the just world for which Jesus strived,"



Moderator Indigo Brown leads the business sessions.



Wendy Blight presents budget.



Participants symbolically tear purple ribbons then tie them together. Photo below by Gen Heywood



Vice moderator speaks while online delegates listen.



the resolution stated. The plenary also passed the proposed budgets for 2024 and 2025 for conference operations, Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center and N-Sid-Sen Camp and Retreat Center.

For information, call 206-725-8383 or visit [pncucc.org](http://pncucc.org).



The Rev. Jermell Witherspoon leads a time of prayer.





## Duwamish leader welcomes meeting to Seattle

Ken Workman, Duwamish, is the great-great-great-nephew of Princess Angeline and great-great-great-grandson of Chief Si'ahl (for whom Seattle is named).

Born on Alki Beach in West Seattle, he grew up playing on the beach and in the woods.

When Ken spoke at the PNC-UCC Annual Meeting, he said, "A long time ago my great-great-great-grandfather Chief Si'ahl stood on the shore of Alki Beach and said, 'Come ashore, my friends to the lands of the Duwamish.' In that spirit, I say the world is small and we welcome you, as part of the whole family.

"We welcome the whole world, as my great-great-great-grandfather did on the beach 174 years ago," he said. "Since then the land has been transformed from a place of trees, river, bear to a metropolitan society.

"Now as the Lushootseed



**Ken Workman, Duwamish tribal member, welcomes PNC-UCC to Duwamish lands in the tradition of his great-great-great-grandfather Chief Si'ahl (Seattle).**

words of the Duwamish, Makah, longer the language used here. I am thankful for the strength of Snoqualmie and Lummi are no

his words that come back," Ken added. "As I stand at this podium, I say thank you my friends and welcome."

Alki Beach is the beach where Chief Seattle welcomed the first white settlers on to their land, said Ken, a retired systems and data analyst from Boeing's engineering department, former Duwamish Tribal Council member and former Duwamish Tribal Services president.

He is a member of the Duwamish Tribe, the first people of Seattle, and board member of the Duwamish River Clean-up Coalition and the Southwest Seattle Historical Society.

Ken noted that while the world has changed radically since his grandfather welcomed the settlers and the world is smaller with airplane travel—the world is the same in that the Duwamish remain on the land and continue to care for it and welcome people who come.

## Church seeks positive connections with area schools

After vandalism in 2022, when four people tore down its Science Is Real, Black Lives Matter and Pride flags, and poured a message in diesel on its lawn, Veradale UCC now puts up new banners each month.

In August, their banner said, "We Love Our Schools."

Gen Heywood, pastor, said that church and community members are concerned about the bullying in local schools related to race and sexual orientation. The church wanted to express that it cares what happens in the schools.

In trials scheduled to start in October, the four are charged with the hate crime of malicious vandalism related to the 2022 incident after attempts at reconciliation failed.

*For information, call 509-926-7173 or email [veradaleucc@gmail.com](mailto:veradaleucc@gmail.com).*



**Veradale UCC displays a sign that says, "We Love Our Schools," as an idea for other churches.**

## Pam Peterson reports on changes at N-Sid-Sen

Reporting at the PNC Annual Meeting, Pam Peterson, designated managing director of N-Sid-Sen camp and retreat center on Lake Coeur d'Alene expressed her vision that N-Sid-Sen can be a place to create unity in the Conference.

"It's a place where people from Seattle and Wallace can come together to talk and build unity," she said, describing the 270 acres as a sacred space for children, youth and adults to come to share their gifts."

Pam, an ordained UCC minister, sees N-Sid-Sen as a place to sit around tables, porches, the beach and campfires to build relationships.

She welcomes clergy from the 76 churches, hoping they will help tell the camp story to recruit campers, directors and volunteers. She will also preach at churches on ecotheology.

**Arriving at N-Sid-Sen** last year, Pam thought she had a full staff, small budget and calendar full of guest groups. Within three weeks she had half the staff she needed, realized there was a budget deficit, and groups cancelled with fee increases.

This summer N-Sid-Sen brought back aqua camps float trips on the Spokane River.

"Last summer I directed camp from the kitchen, but this year we had professional cooks, maintenance staff and lifeguards," Pam said.

**"Rather than paying** a full-time chef, we have shifted to sourcing out our kitchen for the summer season and will continue to rely on local caterers for the shoulder seasons," Pam explained. "We have been fortunate to find local contractors, housekeepers and dishwashers to step in where needed, thus reducing the cost of providing housing for our staff."

Upper Crust Food Services of Missouri, provided staff who



Pam Peterson says N-Sid-Sen is a place to build unity.



Chris Hager and Tyler Smith are lifeguards and maintenance.

prepared and served meals for 65 camps May 1 to Aug. 26. They draw chefs from sororities and fraternities, providing summer jobs. N-Sid-Sen had chefs from the University of Idaho. They stayed in Syringa Lodge and also washed dishes.

Chelsea Gypsy Kitchen from Spirit Lake has come just to do meals since then, with N-Sid-Sen providing dishwashers and kitchen help.

**Irene and Mike Daanen**, who have a cottage nearby, asked if N-Sid-Sen needed help and are now doing housekeeping and offseason kitchen help through mid-October.

There are few groups November to April, Pam said.

**"The summer theme**, 'Linked by Love,' carries us into the future," she said. "We are committed to building relationships with our community and our churches, linking ourselves through a love for our faith and our traditions."

While numbers for N-Sid-Sen summer camps from UCC churches were up. Camps were run with the help of 52 volunteers from different churches.

**Kevin Bechtolt** of Plymouth Seattle and Mark Cuiller a Lutheran in Spokane teamed up to direct 30 high school campers—up 10 from 2023—

**From July 14 to 20**, there were 14 junior high youth sharing camp with 14 intermediate campers. Leah Bilinski of Fauntleroy Seattle and Bob Feeny of Westminster Spokane directed junior high and Shirley Asmussen of Fauntleroy led intermediate camp.

**You and Me Camp**, led by Kaila and Mark Russell July 21 to 24, and Kids Camp, led July 24 to 27 by Linda and Randy Crowe of Westminster, overlapped with Senior High Camp.

**Summer 2024 had** a staff chaplain, Dana Sprenkle of Shalom UCC in Richland. She assisted with administration and housekeeping, along with

planning worship and programs, and leading antiracism workshops at two camps.

**Two Camp America staff**, Ignacy Knopic of Poland and Can Walters of Germany trained at the lifeguard camp N-Sid-Sen hosted July 8 to 10, along with Tyler Smith and Chris Hager, who provide 1.5 FTE as maintenance staff, and Roger Hardy, a neighbor.

Float Adventures Spokane led the junior and senior high float trips, the first since 2018.

Volunteers brought boats, so there was tubing for all four weeks of camp—including two family camps.

**There were 85** at Family Camp led July 28 to Aug. 3 by Ryan Lambert of Kirkland and Emily Hanson. There were 55 at Camp Together, led by Janet Malley of Bellingham.

**There were new** and returning outside groups with the Unitarian Universalist Blue Boat Youth Camp drawing 75 campers and 25 adults in August and booking again for 2025. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints Girls' Camp drew 100 campers and 30 leaders in June. Lady of the Lakes Dance Camp returned with 130 campers. The Laestidian Lutheran Confirmation Camp had 30 youth and 15 adult leaders.

There were three weddings and one family reunion, plus two Yoga Retreats.

Westminster/Chewelah came Sept. 6 to 8, and Pullman/Richland come Sept. 12 to 15.

There are more openings for church retreats through the year, Pam said.

**"We have a capacity** to seat 130 in Forrester Lodge but have beds for 160 if all top bunks are used," said Pam, noting there were no major repair bills over the summer, but there was need to rebuild the showe house and fireplace/chimney in Forrester.

**For information**, visit [n-sid-sen.org](http://n-sid-sen.org).

# Mark Boyd reports on summer camp season

Mark Boyd, managing director at Pilgrim Firs, recently recounted the events of the summer.

“We started out our summer with the annual Kitsap Pride Picnic at Pilgrim Firs June 9. This picnic is open to everyone in the community and is hosted by Pilgrim Firs and Kitsap Pride. With the Pride Garden in full bloom folks were treated to a relaxing day in the fields, trails and garden,” he said. “Then we top it off with BBQ lunch at no cost.”

The money to support this gift comes from a fund provided by Ron Johnson and Bob Roblee, two longtime friends of Pilgrim Firs. Before Ron passed, they decided to leave a couple of gifts for the local community. One was a new aid vehicle to South Kitsap Fire and Rescue. The other gift was the funds to install, maintain and support the Pride Garden.

The ongoing support and monies help to fund events like the Pride Picnic and other camps and events for the pride community.

“This year about 120 folks came out and enjoyed a wonderful sunny day at Pilgrim Firs,” said Mark. “We are currently in conversation with Kitsap Pride regarding hosting a Pride Prom.”

In June, Pilgrim Firs brought in its summer staff to begin their seven-day-a-week schedule. In addition to the year-round staff of five, they added seven seasonal staff. After orientation, they jumped right in.

While Pilgrim Firs prepped for two youth camps, Kid’s and You & Me, neither came about.

“It is clear we need to spend more time communicating and promoting our summer camps in our local churches,” said Mark. “So, our Outdoor Ministry folks and I will come to your church. We love to talk about *your* camps and share stories and invitations.”



**Pilgrim Firs hosted community Pride picnic at garden, celebrated new fire truck and welcomed two churches for weekend retreat and communion.** Photos courtesy of Pilgrim Firs

The Seattle Taiwanese UCC church and their youth returned to camp this year.

“They filled the camp with laughter and delight,” said Mark.

At the end of June, Sam’s Camp came. Sam’s Camp is a group of folks honoring Sam Martinez, a former camper. The family and friends come out ev-

ery year and dedicate a weekend working and remembering Sam.

This year in addition to many projects, they built a lawn swing that is now installed in the Serenity Garden by the labyrinth and memorial trees.

July brought 120 Stone Sculptors as the Northwest Stone Sculptors returned for their annual symposium at Pil-

grim Firs. At the end of their week, there was a community wide event that displayed the handiwork from artisans from around the world and a community picnic.

In late July, Pilgrim Firs hosted a dedication for South Kitsap Fire and Rescue. Gifts of Ron and Bob funded a new state-of-the-art 4x4 aid vehicle. This was their way of saying “Thank You” to the first responders who assisted Ron and Bob in Ron’s declining health.

More than 50 folks from the community came to the dedication, including members of the PNCUCC Board of Directors and South Kitsap Fire Commissioners. Bob thanked everyone, including Chief Fawcett (SKFR) and Mark from Pilgrim Firs. The local press came, and everyone enjoyed a regional salmon lunch.

Because of these community connections, Pilgrim Firs also hosted a training for volunteer firefighters and a local guide dog training.

The rest of the summer was filled with music as Puget Sound Guitar Workshop, Summer Acoustic Music and American Banjo Camp came to play and learn.

“What a delight to be able to host hundreds of musicians daily and enjoy the music drifting throughout,” Mark commented.

The United Churches of Olympia and St Paul’s UCC closed the summer coming together to share a retreat with common time and time “for their own identities to shine through,” he said. “What a great way to close out the summer.”

During Labor Day Weekend, Pilgrim Firs opened the site for its hard-working staff and their families to come and relax.

“They did and it was good,” said Mark.

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