



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

Mary Stamp, editor
editor@pncuccnews.org

325 N. 125th St. - Seattle WA 98133 • (206) 725-8383 or (800) 954-8777 or (509) 535-1813

Winter 2019-2020

Tri Cities builds ties to immigrants through art

'Celebrating Our Immigrant Community Through the Arts' shows build ties

The Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition (TCIC) formed in the summer of 2017 to be in solidarity with immigrant communities who face the impact of the current dehumanizing rhetoric.

They also share with the wider community ways immigrant neighbors benefit that community, said Marsha Stipe, a member of Shalom UCC in Richland.

The Mission and Social Justice Committee of Shalom UCC realized that immigrant families were living in fear of separation and deportation.

So the church helped form the coalition to educate the community on immigrants, immigrant issues, immigration procedures and laws. Now it's a community coalition.

The Pacific Northwest Conference
Continued on Page 4



Marsha Stipe, Mickey Berry, Meg Thompson, Donna Kary and Carla Chiottie of the Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition stand outside the fence at the Yakima airport as shackled immigrants board planes for deportation.

Photo from TCIC Facebook page

Board drafting bylaws changes to address racism

Wendy Blight - PNC Moderator

The over-arching goal that emerged from last spring's Annual Meeting at First Congregational Bellevue was to address racism in the PNW conference. There are many ways to begin. Participants at the recent Fall Gathering in Richland discussed several of them.

It is clear that racism and racial inequity permeate every issue before the PNC—like health care, immigration and education. Together we identified some actions to take on each of the societal problems. People were energized to sign up for the work.

The Board of Directors recognizes that the PNC, as a nonprofit institution, is a product of white privilege. We are determined to change the PNC's cul-

**Annual Meeting 2020
will be April 24-26 at
Westminster Congregational
UCC in Spokane.**

ture. It is important to put our intentions into words to have an impact on how we function together. For the board, that starts with changing our constitution and bylaws. We are drafting bylaw revisions that call us to address racism in the PNC. We recognize it is essential that people of color participate as leaders on our conference board, leadership committees and other decision-making bodies.

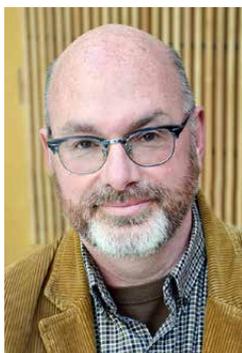
The Board will review these sug-

gested bylaw changes between now and the end of 2019 with input from people of color. When we have a final draft, we will share it around the conference. We hope these bylaw revisions can be voted on at our Annual Meeting in Spokane.

None of this work is easy, but it is essential to the health and well-being of each of us, the conference as whole, our churches and our communities. It is challenging to recognize bias and address it, but it is also rewarding. I have experienced the amazing power and energy that is unleashed when I've reached beyond my white understanding of the world and been blessed by gifts and perspectives of people of color. I pray each of us will find our way to deeper relationships and understanding.

Solidarity needed with autonomy and covenant

Conference Comments



By The Rev.
Mike Denton
Conference
Minister

One of the favorite parts of my job is working with search committees. The resources, recommendations and systems for search committees have changed quite a bit since I started with this work 15 years ago, but one of the things that's been remarkably consistent, regardless of process, are some of the stages of development for the committees themselves. There's one of these moments, in particular, that's my favorite.

When a committee first comes together, they are a great collection of wise individuals from the church's life. They have a variety of experiences, perspectives and hopes that they bring to those first few meetings. During the initial conversations, the committee figures out the basic roles of members, the basic tasks, and what local systems they need to create in order to best benefit from the denominational systems.

They also express their hopes for a pastor. Some may want a pastor who can attract youth and families. Some may be interested in a pastor who has skills in working with a church in financial distress. Someone else might be passionate about finding a pastor who can help the church be more involved in social justice.

We might not easily recognize it as such but when the committee first comes together this is a low level conflict—that gets hotter once in awhile—as committee members emphasize where their hope lies. Then, there is this moment.

There is this moment when the person who was passionate about finances speaks up for social justice, or the person most interested in social justice speaks up for youth and families, or the person interested in youth and families speaks up for finances. At that moment, there is this nearly imperceptible sigh of relief as the committee has this realization: "We're all on the same side." No conversation after this moment is the same.

Within the UCC, we have a similar tension as early stage search committees expressed in the ideas of autonomy and covenant. At its best, autonomy is a sort of congregational conscience through which the congregation works out how to best serve God and God's people within their context through freedom of governance, worship, theology and deed. At its best, covenant is a spiritual and structural interdependence that draws our definition of church widely and is a promise to turn towards one another to do those things together we couldn't do on our own. At its worst, autonomy is barrier to relationship that

simply leans on the idea that "No one can tell us what to do." At its worst, covenant is a cudgel used to beat down even a healthy sense of autonomy with a whole lot of "shoulds" and "shame."

At its best, this binary has always felt incomplete. In my sabbatical last summer, one thing I studied was the relationship between leadership and consent. It was fascinating on a number of levels but one organization I read about, Circle Forward, had some materials that stood out. One of their primary audiences is grassroots organizations. The way our denomination lives out our polity often resembles this. In such organizations, there is a high degree of autonomy. To have good governance—one key way our covenant lives—Circle Forward suggests we have to nurture solidarity.

As soon as I read that, bells and whistles went off in my head and heart. In our denomination of autonomous ministry settings, we have structures and resources built to help one another out, but solidarity is something that's lacking. We have structures and churches that respond and react and that's great. *Solidarity* is more of a state of thinking and being. It calls us to stand behind—or next to—another church in pain, recognizing we are in this moment of pain together *without* going too far and misappropriating that pain as our own. That commitment recognizes that an action of our church may have an effect on other settings of the church and, because of that, we need to involve our siblings in the process of discernment around that action. The recognition that what is done by the conference *now* has an effect on those who come into this structure *later*, and that we may have to make sacrifices *now* so that "each generation" has a chance to make this faith its own. Solidarity recognizes the web of connection we share and how weaving or cutting one thread can strengthen or weaken the whole.

With this one lens added, the idea of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12: 27) makes all the sense in the world. Solidarity begins to provide a map to "That they may all be one (John 17:21)." Solidarity helps us embody the idea that "...we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28)." Of course, this idea is bigger than our denomination alone. It points towards one of the ways we are called to interact with the world.

Dear God, help us see one another. Help us know one another. Help us to be so committed to solidarity that it can't be distinguished from love. Amen.

Help us
to be
so committed
to solidarity
that it
can't be
distinguished
from love.

Transitions announced

Jerry-Ninja Chang was ordained Nov. 17 at the Taiwanese Christian Church in Seattle.

Cynthia Meyer was installed Sunday, Oct. 27, as settled pastor at the United Church of Renton, a merged congregation of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Tim Devine is retiring as pastor of St. Paul's UCC in Seattle on Jan. 19. He has served there since 2001.

David Anderson is retiring as church administrator at University Congregational UCC in Seattle on Feb. 2 after 22 years on staff.

Doris Waggoner died Nov. 20. She earned a MDiv from Eden Theological Seminary and was ordained in 1995, serving as an associate pastor, a chaplain in Florida, a CPE resident in Missouri, a computer instructor at the University of Wisconsin before transferring her standing to the PNC in 2004.

Berton Connerly died at the age of 100 on August 14 in Olympia. After earning his MDiv at Andover Newton Theological Seminary, he served as a Congregational (United Church of Christ) minister in Massachusetts, North Dakota, Nebraska, and Washington for about 20 years, then taught English for Clover Park School District for 17 years.

Tolt marks 125th anniversary

Tolt Congregational Church (Carnation) commemorated its 125th anniversary Nov. 16 with a feast and celebration at Carnation Farms in the historic Hippodrome, originally built in 1922 as a horse stadium.

A special worship service was held Sunday, Nov. 17, in the Nan Fullerton Stewart Chapel at the church.

For information, call 425-333-4254 or tolt@tolttucc.org.

Men's Retreat is Feb. 1 to 3

The PNC's 29th annual UCC Men's Retreat at Pilgrim Firs will be Friday to Sunday, Jan. 31 to Feb. 2, beginning on Friday evening with an optional day of silent retreat starting Thursday evening, Jan. 30.

The theme is: "Vitality in Our Own Lives and Communities."

The topic of this retreat will be "Climate Change: From Despair to Hope." Participants are encouraged to compile re-

source to share as part of small group discussions, while joining in songs, good food and walks around Lake Flora.

There will be a Saturday evening Wisdom Circle for sharing reflections guided by the Rev. David Schoen. He will draw on two books, *Invisible Hope: Living Courageously in Troubled Times* by Kate Davies and *Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change* by Jan Antal.

David, a hiker, birder, gardener, stargazer and photographer and advocate for creation justice. He lives on Whidbey Island. He has served as pastor of UCC congregations and worked in UCC national ministries. In retirement, he works part-time for the UCC Church Building and Loan Fund as minister for church closure and legacy.

"The Silent Retreat on Thursday is always meaningful for those able to participate," said Rick Russell, co-director for the retreat with Hans Dankers..

For information, call 360-876-2031 or email jdank@msn.com, myrtos@comcast.net or chris@pilgrim-firs.org. To register, visit pncucc.org and click on *Pilgrim Firs, then Events*.

#Giving Tuesday erases debts

Celebrated on the Tuesday after U.S. Thanksgiving, and fueled by the social media and collaboration, GivingTuesday inspires millions of people across the globe to give to causes and issues that matter to them. The UCC surpassed its goal of \$50,000, raising \$73,222 from 725 donors.

Donations to the national UCC #GivingTuesday campaign will be used to erase crushing medical debt for people living below the poverty level who are facing insolvency, and for whom medical debt is 5 percent or more of annual income.

- Medical debt contributes to more than 60 percent of all bankruptcies

- 43 million Americans owe about \$75 billion in past-due medical debt

- 75 percent of individuals in medical bankruptcy had health insurance coverage

Medical debt is an economic justice issue, leading people to cut non-medical necessities and needed medical services, and sinking people into a health-poverty trap.

The UCC has set a goal of \$50,000 on Giving Tuesday to erase some \$5 million in medical debts. The United Church

of Christ works with RIP Medical Debt, a New York-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that identifies and purchases medical debt for pennies on the dollar then abolishes unpaid and unpayable medical debt as a benefit to recipients and society.

For information, visit ucc.org.

UCC seeks Just Peace churches

Since the General Synod pronounced the UCC to be a Just Peace Church in 1985 and encouraged local churches to do the same, at least 178 UCC congregations became Just Peace Churches.

A new national UCC Just Peace Steering Committee encourages those congregations to find and review the covenants they voted on, and to renew their identity as Just Peace Churches. Those who have not yet become a Just Peace congregation are asked to consider this journey in justice and peace work. The committee will provide information, resources and a list of steps to become a Just Peace Church, said committee members Diane Weible (dweible@nncucc.org) and Lynne Lopez (pastor@ainsworthucc.com). They will send a list of steps for becoming a Just Peace church.

The list includes Community Congregational UCC in Pullman, but does not list other Pacific Northwest Conference churches.

For information, visit ucc.org/justice_just-peace.

National Youth Event in June

The UCC's National Youth event will be July 22 to 25 at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. It often brings 4,000 participants who gather to focus on faith, reflection, encounter, leadership, service, community building and social justice. The theme is 2020 is "Unite!" It is for youth who have completed sixth through 12th grade. Registration is Feb. 1 to 29.

For information, call 216-736-3871, email pottert@ucc.org or visit uccpages.org/nye2020/.

Puerto Rico camps canceled

The Global Ministries Committee had announced two disaster response mission pilgrimages in Puerto Rico for Jan. 26 to Feb. 1 and Feb. 2 to 8. Coordinator Randy Crowe said the camps have been canceled. Last April he led a group of 25 in a pilgrimage to help Puerto Ricans rebuild homes following 2017 Hurricanes Maria and Irma. **For information, email randy.crowe@gmail.com.**

Conference
News
Briefs

Coalition educates community and immigrants

Continued from page 1

of the UCC also provided a grant to support the group.

The coalition also reaches out by helping immigrants know their rights, building relationships with elected and appointed officials, and volunteering on the statewide 24-7 Hotline and Rapid Response.

“We network with our community to share information about immigrants and their contributions to our economy and culture,” said Marsha, the TCIC coordinator.

The coalition wants residents of the community to have accurate information about immigrants, laws and procedures and ways to work for comprehensive immigration reform.

In May 2018, they held a forum with Benton and Franklin County sheriffs, educators, a Pasco City Council member, Lee Gibbons, the pastor of Northwest United Protestant Church, was moderator of the discussion addressing questions about immigration, crime, education and other issues.

In October 2018, the Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition held their first “Celebrating Our Immigrant Community through the Arts,” with an art show at the Monarcha Winery in Kennewick.

It drew about 400 people to see original works by seven local artists, who were Latino, Muslims, Sikhs and more.

The art was in acrylics, fabric, mixed media, multimedia, video, sculpture, poetry and music. Both immigrants and children of immigrants contributed art.

Part of the show told a story of “Inspiring Latinos” through video profiles of four community members. The show also included an exhibit of photos of immigrants in the Tri-Cities.

The goal was for people in Tri-Cities to learn about their neighbors through art, said

Marsha.

“The goal is to counter the negative narratives, rhetoric and emotions presented in media and by the administration, and to create positive narratives for the Tri-Cities,” she said.

After viewing the art, attendees shared photos, drawings and comments, which became part of the exhibit.

“Those attending saw that the community is more progressive than they had assumed,” she said.

Some artists sold their art.

In September 2019, they held another exhibition with original art by immigrant and first generation artists with more than 500 attending.

They also shared photographic portraits of immigrant community members and told their stories.

Artists from Germany, Mexico, Indonesia, Egypt, Poland and Romania shared a water color landscape, a painting of a woman in her home, a carved and painted wood mask, photography, a 3-D sculpture, jewelry, music and poetry.

Marsha said the 58-member coalition, which holds monthly meetings drawing 15 to 20, has also connected by phone with other UCC churches, such as Fox Island and University Place, which relate with families of immigrants and refugees held at the Northwest ICE Detention Center in Tacoma.

On Oct. 23, five members of the coalition went to the airport at Yakima and joined the Yakima Immigrant and Refugee Network in a presence and protest of the Department of Homeland Security flights to deport people who have been detained. Marsha said most have not been represented by an attorney.

To express their solidarity and concern as people who were handcuffed and shackled boarded a plane to be sent out



Marsha Stipe is active in the Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition.

of the U.S., the group stood by a fence where they could see the plane and the people could see them, and hear them shouting “¡No están solas!”—“You are not alone.”

“We have worked to counter bias and build trust through education. We have met with elected officials and written letters to the editor, Marsha added.

In January, the Mid-Columbia Master Singers will give a program, co-sponsored by TCIC, called “American Dreamers,” uplifting DACA and the Dreamers.

The concerts will be held at 7:30 p.m., Friday, Jan. 10, at St. Patrick’s Catholic Parish in Pasco, 7:30 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 11, at St. Joseph’s Church in Kennewick, and 4 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 12 at St. Joseph Parish

in Sunnyside.

They will explore immigration issues with choral works by Melissa Dunphy and other American composers.

The Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition focuses on community education, engagement, advocacy and immigrant support services.

On Facebook, the coalition shares articles about how immigration makes America great, how border patrol arrest reports can sabotage asylum claims, the history of anti-Hispanic bigotry, and advice from the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network on how people can protect themselves in an ICE raid.

For information, call 541-720-0131 or email tricitieimmigrantcoalition@gmail.com.

Courtney Stange-Tregear reflects on Fall Gathering

By Courtney Stange-Tregear

Two weeks ago the PNC gathered in a new way. Nearly 100 people from around the region came to “Weaving Together: Fall Gathering 2019” at Shalom UCC in Richland. This gathering was unique in its mission, vision and structure. Leveraging the conference priority of deepening relationships, we practiced a process of moving from sharing personal struggles to beginning to take specific, measurable action, to change the world.

Instead of educational intensives, a keynote speaker, worship or a business meeting, the agenda was set, but loose enough to be revised as the event went on. More than 20 individuals had leadership roles.

Every participant joined in a time of small group testimony sharing. Through that sharing, about 50 personal, societal and systemic issues were named, and six action teams were formed—or expanded as in the case of the Climate Change and Racial Justice teams, which already existed as sub-committees of Justice and Witness Committee.

Event planners hoped one or two action teams would form so we could better focus conference resources.

As Bishop Dwayne Royster, political director of the PICO National Network of progressive faith-based community organizations, said at our 2018 Annual Meeting, we want to change the world in concrete, measurable ways. By focusing narrowly we increase the likelihood we can achieve success.

At the gathering, the idea of focusing on just one or two actions created a sense of fear and competition. While the hope was to form an action campaign that could win, there was danger some would leave the event feeling they and their concerns lost. Because there was an abun-



Courtney Stange-Tregear speaks at Fall Gathering.

dance of energy for working in these issues, six action teams presented their plans after considerable listening, research and collaboration, and the gathering affirmed the six teams.

Addressing the deportation crisis, an action team formed to target one of the main airlines carrying out deportations from Seattle and the Tri-Cities.

Frustrated with different, but personally significant medical issues, one group formed as a coalition to approach the Washington State Insurance Commissioner for improved health care access through specific, concrete demands.

Housing was a popular concern that broke into two action teams: one addressing the low-income housing crisis by targeting urban housing developers, while another group is working through a legislative strategy.

The Climate Change Action Group is also working on legislative action.

The largest action team is focused on racial justice and is pursuing a conference-wide approach to reparations.

This event was an experiment and not without risk.

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats were named at the end of the event during an in-person evaluation period. In-person evaluation was another new and different

thing for us to experience as a conference.

Some felt anxious that there wasn't a clearer or set agenda. Some expressed frustration that there wasn't enough clarity as to how this event's work relates to our existing structures and committees. Some felt like the time was simply too short to accomplish all that we wanted to accomplish. Still others wished for cookies and more silence.

Significant strengths and opportunities were also named. Some expressed appreciation for the new action oriented tools they had learned and practiced. Some reflected on the willingness of the group to lean into trying a new thing. Many named the opportunities to forge new partnerships, learn from existing committees, discover allies, make a difference and change the world.

Personally, I felt it was a success before we even started because so many were willing to travel and attend this new and different type of conference event, and there was a large and diverse group involved in the planning and leadership.

Like the 2016 Annual Meeting theme, this event was not only an “out on a limb” experience but also felt like we were out there, where we are supposed to be.

Mike Denton, conference minister, put it this way, “I’ve

been trying to say, in a few words, what our Fall Gathering felt like and the story that keeps coming to mind is Pentecost. The disciples were locked in the room, afraid and unsure of what was next when the Spirit blew in. After the initial confusion, I don't imagine uncertainty ebbed but I do imagine that they felt strengthened by the promise that something new was breaking forth.

That's how I've felt in the days following our conference gathering in Richland. Something important happened there. It felt as though the locked room was opened and now we're standing at the threshold saying, “Hello world! We have something to share.”

Others have reflected, “The Fall Gathering helped us discover a new way of approaching the societal issues that we all lament. We learned to define a problem that we care about in a deeply personal way, then identify action steps that can lead to specific positive outcome. It is a map for addressing overwhelming issues in a way that targets specific problems at the human level. Done right, the approach generates energy in people and enables them to make a tangible difference in the world.”

People were energized. People were inspired. People saw hope and a new way forward.

At the end of the Fall Gathering, I felt real work is going to happen. It may be small at first, but the possibilities are endless.

In the coming weeks and months there will be continued learning and reflection, as well as continued progress with the action teams. As always, feel free to get in touch with me if you would like to hear more about the event, join an action team, or give further feedback.

For information, email courtney@pnccucc.org.

Six form team to promote a sustainable farming bill

By Meighan Pritchard

At the Pacific Northwest Conference's Fall Gathering at Shalom UCC in Richland, a group of people interested in environmental justice decided to mobilize around the Washington State legislature's Sustainable Farms and Fields Bill, SB5947/HB2095.

This bill would create a fund that would award grants to farmers seeking to transition away from fossil-fuel-intensive farming practices and toward more sustainable methods.

They are to reduce use of fuel, fertilizer and pesticides, adopt regenerative agriculture practices—no-till, cover crops, manure, compost and biochar—and plant trees and shrubs to sequester carbon, according to carbonwa.org.

The bill was first introduced in the 2019 session. It had co-sponsors throughout the state and from both political parties.

The featured presenter at the Fall Gathering, the Rev. John Edgerton of First United Church of Oak Park, Illinois, invited us all to consider what issues most speak to our hearts.

Participants narrowed the list to five issues: racism, health care, housing/homelessness, immigration and environment.

People chose one of these topics and met in small groups to discuss strategies for action.

John said that if tackling a huge problem such, as climate change, will be overwhelming, but if we narrow our focus to one specific action within that topic, we can come up with a plan that has measurable outcomes.

We will know exactly when we win or lose, when we accomplish what we set out to do or don't.

So the climate team chose this one bill.

Members of the environment small group have been invited to join forces with the



Susan Chamberlin, Chewelah UCC; Lora Rathbone, Shalom UCC, Richland; Meighan Pritchard, Prospect UCC, Seattle; Lin Hagedorn, Northshore UCC, Woodinville; Judi Edwards, St. Paul's UCC, Seattle; Kathy Dawson, All Pilgrims Christian Church, Seattle. This is just a subset of the small group working on climate justice at the Fall Gathering.

Pacific Northwest Conference Environmental Justice Team, which has been meeting for approximately two years under the wing of the conference's Justice and Witness Ministries Team.

The Environmental Justice Team invites every congregation in the Pacific Northwest Conference to identify one member—clergy or lay—to attend these monthly meetings, help strategize and convey information back to their congregations.

The group meets via Zoom at 4:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of each month. Meetings last one hour.

Our current plan regarding the Sustainable Farms and Fields Bill centers on writing letters at key moments during the 2020 legislative session, and/or calling our legislators.

We need help of people who are willing to gather signatures on letters at their congregations in support of this bill.

Support of this bill will help us see our farms operating in as sustainable a way as possible. We can we support our farmers as they make these choices.

We can make a difference if we stand together and focus on specific actions. The climate team has chosen this one bill.

We can also find ways to support the other teams that formed during the Fall Gathering in whatever actions they are choosing to pursue.

Let's find ways to work to-

gether and support each other in creating the Realm of God, where justice, peace and a healthy, sustainable environment reign.

For information, email pritchardmeighan@gmail.com.

Meighan is pastor of Prospect UCC in Seattle.



More than 10,000 people, led by UCC young people, came out for the International Climate Walkout on Friday, Oct. 20 to march from Cal Anderson Park to Seattle City Hall. Roberta Rominger, Congregational Church of Mercer Island, and Angela Ying, senior pastor at Bethany United Church of Christ in Seattle, supported the youth, children and their children's children.

Photo courtesy of Angela Ying

John Eisenhauer launches b14ucc.com to connect churches

Along with his roles as past PNC Board member, national UCC leader, enthusiastic camper and musician for PNC events, John Eisenhauer has made a living as a software developer.

The last two years, he applied his skills in that work to help UCC churches locally, regionally and nationally better communicate so they can collaborate and cross-pollinate on their passions and issues.

“Progressives do not have the tools that conservative churches are using,” he said. “A web page is a point of marketing and evangelism for any church.”

So John set aside his income for two years to develop b14ucc.com, “an affordable new technology platform for shared UCC ministry and service.”

The URL is based on the UCC motto “that they may all be one.”

“In the UCC, we have tended to misinterpret the scripture to be that we may *each* be one, rather than that we *all* be one,” said John, who spent time researching to develop the b14ucc platform.

John has produced a tool churches can use to build typical websites but with other churches on the same platform, they have access to information about calendar events, worship ideas, study programs and mission outreach.

“There are 5,000 local UCC churches in the U.S.,” he said. “There would be data on every church, on what interests and excites them. An open and affirming church can find what other UCC churches are doing homeless ministries. It can pinpoint what area of the country, what conference and what community.”

“I can view them on a map, see a list and sent emails to them,” he said, “or people do-



John Eisenhauer is most visible in the PNC as guitarist and singer, but he's also a software developer.

ing hunger ministries can similarly connect.”

He seeks to create “connections and compassion between individuals, local churches, the wider UCC and more.

John can then access the church's profile, manually click to find out what they do and connect with them.

b14ucc also has a dashboard to help churches connect people and places through their passions and causes, such as racism, homelessness, earth stewardship, immigration, the economy, jobs, sanctuary, LG-BTQ, social justice, mental health and more.

It can also connect people based on ministries of worship, service, education, fellowship and prayer.

What are special needs a church has? What are constraints for volunteer opportunities? What dates are events happening? What special offerings do churches do? Can children participate?

“The platform helps people consider the UCC as more than just me,” John said.

At a recent Justice Witness Committee meeting, he demonstrated tools for designing a blank page, using color, re-sizing photos, changing fonts and

creating web page content. He showed tools for combining articles, photos and calendars for a newsletter.

“The platform works like churches work,” he said.

Plus, there's a donate button, which connects to Paypal that charges nonprofits no interest.

“I want to interest churches in using the platform as a tool to build a website, to build blogs, to archive sermons, to do calendaring and to communicate with other churches,” he said.

His goal is to help people belong, believe, be love and be aware.

“It gives each person agency to share messages in the world,” he said.

The terms of service for using b14ucc include the word “sacred,” calling for sacred use of words and images, so no one is a “morality cop,” but if two people flag content as inappropriate, it can be discussed. Only things that are illegal or soliciting for profit would be removed.

Justice Witness Committee issue teams could connect with the Fall Gathering action teams and with PNC News articles on justice action in congregations.

John plans to have a schol-

arship small churches can come on the platform. Otherwise, there is a sliding scale of fees for set up and a monthly subscription.

“I hope we will see this as a shared ministry,” John said. “Connectedness makes us stronger. It would overcome the isolation of churches and clergy.”

Without intentionally connecting, he believes, clergy and churches lose good ideas, ministries, resources and expertise.

“The technology disparities between churches are unjust. There are technology haves and have nots. This would equalize the ability of a church in up-country Maui to connect with other UCC churches,” said John, who is initially recruiting 10 churches to use the platform.

“The goal is to raise and level the technology playing field with easy-to-use, world-class tools and resources for all UCC settings,” says the website.

It also includes automated posts to social media, short message services—like texting—and e-newsletters.

If the conference pays to be on it, all the committees and entities of the conference would be on it, he said.

John, who is now doing this platform full time, describes himself as a “church nerd.” He's a member of Eagle Harbor UCC in Bainbridge Island, a PK (son of Phil Eisenhauer), a “minister's wife,” a “camp rat,” a “servant,” a “wise guy” and an ATM—donating more than \$500,000 across the United Church of Christ and rocky Mountain College.

He owns and runs Kombi Corp., a managed service provider under contract with each of the eight UCC Conferences in the Western Region.

For information, call 206-780-6101, email john@kombicorp.com or visit b14ucc.com.

Kizzie Jones publishes new book churches can use

Kizzie Jones has published another book in her series about Dachshunds, uplifting themes of kindness, compassion and honoring diversity.

She said the books are adaptable to use for Sunday school and children's sermons.

In early November, she launched the book about dachshunds, who dress up one day and want to stay dressed up forever that way.

Seattle's University Congregational UCC Pastor Catherine Foote, her Border Collie, Annie, and former PNC moderator Scott Ward and his Schnauzer, Dexter, are connected to Kizzie's newest children's picture book, *A Tall Tale About Dachshunds in Costumes: How MORE Dogs Came to Be*.

After Kizzie published her first two children's books in her Tall Tales series, *How Dachshunds Came to Be: A Tall Tale About a Short Long Dog* (2012) and *A Tall Tale About a Dachshund and a Pelican: How a Friendship Came to Be* (2016), she received much kidding: "When will you include other dogs?"

"Over the years, I have been impressed with how our National Parks Welcome Centers highlight and label the local vegetation each season. How might I combine more dogs, Pacific Northwest foliage and dachshunds?" Kizzie asked herself.

One winter day, her wire-haired dachshund, Lacey, romped through the snow. Soon covered in flakes—she looked like a little snow bear. That gave Kizzie the idea of dachshunds being covered in local foliage to become other dogs.

She shared the story line that once upon a time, long, long ago, after an autumn storm, a little girl's dachshunds go out to help her clean up. Instead, they begin an adventure of playing dress-up in the strewn-about foliage.



Catherine Foote's border collie, above, and Scott Ward's Schnauzer, below, inspired Kizzie Jones' book.

Photo courtesy of Kizzie Jones



"Then, just like young children who don't want to change out of their costumes, some of the dogs want to stay dressed up. Through the power of love and a magical sea, eight dachshunds are transformed into eight new dog breeds," she said.

Kizzie's dilemma was to choose which dog breeds to use

from among so many.

"I reflected on the dogs that had caught my affections and imagination over the years," she said.

That's where Catherine's Border Collie and Scott's Schnauzer come in.

Scott and Kizzie met at a Seattle art gallery almost two decades ago when he facilitated

a class, based Julia Cameron's book, *The Artist's Way*.

"Over the years, I took other classes from him, and we kept in touch. He joined my home church, Magnolia UCC, and eventually became Moderator for our Pacific Northwest Conference," she said.

When Kizzie wrote her first Tall Tale, Scott agreed to illustrate it and has since illustrated the entire series.

"When Scott and husband Cameron Vail got their Schnauzer, Dexter, he became my nephew," she said. "Of course, Schnauzers would be included in my new book."

Kizzie had long admired how Catherine's love of sheep and Border Collies modeled a fascinating way to participate with Mother Nature.

"Each spring her Facebook fans, including me, eagerly await 'Lamb Watch' season and the birthing of the new babies," Kizzie said. "Trusty Border Collies help Catherine tend the sheep. Annie, with a champion lineage, came to Washington State from Yorkshire, England. So Border Collies would be included."

Six more dogs round out the tall tale. Kizzie Jones, Author Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Kizzie-JonesAuthor/> tells their back stories, which will also be blog posts on <https://kizziejones.com/blog.html>.

A Tall Tale About Dachshunds in Costumes includes three glossaries about the dachshund types, new dog breeds, and vegetation Written in anapestic tetrameter—like *The Night before Christmas*—it gives perspective on the pups' antics.

Costumes is available in English and Spanish. The other two are in various combinations of English, German, Spanish and French.

For information, visit kizziejones.com.

Olympia church supports temple's sanctuary family

United Churches of Olympia has an Immigrant Refugee Covenant Group (IRCG) of eight and is among 16 faith communities in Greater South Sound Faith Network for Immigrant and Refugee Support supporting Temple Beth Hatfiloh, which took an undocumented family into sanctuary in September.

The United Churches, a union of UCC and Presbyterian churches, studied sanctuary two years, and in November 2018 voted to be a sanctuary church. They formed a task force to make a plan and offered town halls between worship services to educate and make people aware of the temple's trainings and how to help once the family arrived.

Their church and the temple were the only two facilities where it was feasible to welcome someone into sanctuary.

The church's task force had recommended a room for use, but postponed plans to accept someone, in order to assist the temple. For now, members of the covenant group and the church join in volunteering to help with a mother and son fleeing domestic violence in Guatemala and denied asylum. They are providing Christmas gifts, decorations and celebration, and will purchase and deliver groceries in January. Twenty-five are trained to help the temple with 24-7 shifts to keep the mother and child secure.

Information on the family in sanctuary is protected for their safety. Because the mother's appeal will take two years, so the covenant group is also helping with legal fees.

Cynthia Cook and Ruth Shearer were the first co-chairs of the United Churches covenant group, but because of Cynthia's death and Ruth's health, Wendy Taylor and Nancy Welton became co-chairs.

Wendy, a retired UCC pastor who began attending



United Churches of Olympia's Immigrant and Refugee Covenant Group members are: Deb Wallace, Wendy Taylor, Nancy Welton, Ruth Shearer, Eleanor Van Noppen, Therese Sprunger, Jacky Crow and Joan Knapp.
Photo courtesy of Wendy Taylor

the church in 2009 when she moved to Ocean Shores and became more active after moving to Lacey Panorama Retirement Community in 2013,

After graduating from Whitworth College in 1966, she taught English, Spanish, humanities and reading in California, Puerto Rico and Oregon. She graduated from Pacific School of Religion, was ordained in 1988 and served a UCC church in Belmont, Calif., before starting and serving 10 years at the Puente (Bridge) Hispanic Ministry at Pescadero UCC. In the 1980s, she initiated the Northern California Nevada UCC Conference's welcome an El Salvadoran family in their office.

Wendy said United Churches has had a sister church in San José, Costa Rica, for 20 years, with people visiting back and forth.

Along with that mission tie, the church's Mission 2017 called for a compassionate response to sanctuary and homelessness. Their congregation, youth and community members recently helped finish building two tiny houses in their parking lot for Hope Village at Westminster Presbyterian.

Temple Beth Hatfiloh's Rabbi Seth Goldstein said the Olympia congregation's decision to take in the family was out of their faith and history.

"Our Torah teaches over and over again that you should welcome and love the stranger," he said.

Their tradition of good works comes from a history of experiencing oppression, Wendy said. "Offering sanctuary is an act of partnership and solidarity. Scriptures motivating the United Churches are Matt. 25, Leviticus' "no longer strangers" and the Golden Rule.

"We have a few Spanish-speaking members who have experience with laborers and justice work," said Wendy, who used her book, *No Longer Strangers: The Practice of Radical Hospitality*, as part of training.

"The national culture is overwhelming, terrorizing, deprecating and unwelcoming to immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers," she said. "We could not tolerate that and took a stand for these brothers and sisters. We act as Christ's hands and feet."

Wendy said that while progress seemed slow, there are 120 volunteers trained at the temple to bring physical sanctuary in partnership with the other faith communities.

The United Churches "are blessed to live into" what is realistic and discerning whether Olympia needs more than one physical sanctuary, she said.

"When God calls us, we listen and set aside personal expectations," she said.

To share the church's and city's commitment to sanctuary work with the congregation, the covenant group has had open sessions and questionnaires to

gather feedback to assure the IRCG and church council.

There is a donation box for specific items needed by AID-NW (Aid for Immigrants in Detention Northwest).

At an on-site welcome van, members serve people newly released from the detention center. They serve the people awaiting hearings at the two hospitality houses in Tacoma.

The group keeps in contact, sending emails to 45 who attended the first open meeting two years ago, to report local and national events and news.

Members go to the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma to bring refreshments, hold supportive banners and offer Spanish/English listeners to families visiting their incarcerated loved ones.

The group also joins rallies for immigrant rights at the Capitol across the street.

They communicate in the church bulletin, the weekly eBlast, the monthly Voice newsletter, a bulletin board in the church and TV monitor that lists announcements before, between and after both services.

They set up a table at the mission fair for sign ups and a questionnaire as soon as the Temple needed support.

They also share what they are doing with the larger coalition. The group has learned the importance of communicating their studies, films and activities.

Their efforts are recognized by the pastoral staff—co-pastors Tammy Stampfli and Lara Cruetsinger-Perry—the Church Council and Community Connections Ministry.

"Worship and personal prayer time were times to share hopes and fears about immigrants traveling from impossible living situations, crossing attempts, terror at the southern border, detentions and family separations," Wendy said.

For information, call 650-743-5294

The Ground Floor is space for youth to belong

Since the end of January 2019, about 25 homeless and at-risk young people come from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Mondays through Fridays to The Ground Floor in the remodeled basement of First Congregational UCC in Bellingham.

They come to this drop-in space to hang out, take showers, rest, use computers, join in activities, do laundry, address substance use, and access job training, vocational, educational, health, mental health, dental and housing services.

It is space for them to feel they belong, and are safe, heard and valued.

The church raised \$1 million to redesign and renovate the basement. It is continuing to raise funds. Church and community members donated, and they received grants and some assistance from the PNC Church Development funds.

Northwest Youth Services offer the services for youth in Whatcom County.

From December through February, they will host an overnight shelter for up to 35.

The young people also have access to clothing, nutritious food, cooking classes and supportive staff.

The church opened the 3,500-square-foot space as a day-use center last February

There's space for the young people to spend time together and build self-reliance.

Emerson McCuin, The Ground Floor's coordinator with Northwest Youth Services, hopes see it as home

Members of First Congregational Church of Bellingham dedicated their space, time and funds to create the space.

Church members worked with Northwest Youth Services to design the space to be accessible and hospitable to young people.

The youth can develop supportive relationships and con-



The space for The Ground Floor is now filled regularly with young people who access services to move out of homelessness.

Photo courtesy of First Congregational UCC Bellingham

nect with community resources to help them find housing. Northwest Youth Services collaborates with other local nonprofits.

“The partnership will draw us into many opportunities for generosity, service and systemic justice work alongside young people and their allies,” said David Weasley, pastor of youth, young adults and mission.

Church members help by driving to pick up food for breakfast a local hotel offers, provide in-kind donations and last summer cooked meals with vegetables local farmers donated, he said.

There are outreach services at schools and libraries, and there are events designed to meet youth where they're at to build relationships and connections to resources.

Emerson said that since 1976, Northwest Youth Services has offered programs to help thousands of youth progress.

While much in the community has changed since then, Northwest Youth Services' commitment to support each youth has been constant. It believes that young people need to have a place to belong, to be

safe, heard and valued.

They believe that adolescence is an important time of transition, and youth need and deserve compassion, encouragement and support.

“We want children and youth to be recognized and valued as a vital part of our community,” he said. “We advocate for changes in society to create a safe and healthy environment for children and youth. We also encourage youth to make their own choices for their own well-being, to honor their differences and to build on their strengths.”

Northwest Youth Services provides tools so youth can change and it advocates for their interests in their families and communities.

It also has a street outreach, emergency housing, transitional and permanent housing, behavioral health services, a vocational readiness program and a teen court for restorative justice and diversion.

David said he is part of the advisory task force as a representative of the church.

He steps in to see how things are going, but relies on staff to do the program. There are usually three staff there at

any given time.

The church is glad to see so many nonprofit agencies interface with the youth in their space—local health care agencies, educational programs to connect youth with vocational schools or community colleges.

“I'm glad our congregation has stepped up to partner with Northwest Youth Services, because youth homelessness affects many people,” David said.

The program gives them cause to explore homelessness and have conversations with the community.

“I'm glad we stepped up to model one response to the crisis,” he said, adding that it has been a powerful way for the congregation to learn the realities, opportunities and challenges the young people.

“It has drawn us into more conversations about homelessness, its systemic causes and how housing policies need to change for people to experience justice.

“Rents are too high. It's hard to access housing. There is need for more supportive housing for people with disabilities, mental health challenges and substance addiction,” David said.

“We are in a housing crisis and many people struggle to find a place to stay,” he said.

Other churches are hosting meals and hosting overnight shelters for the winter.

“This is a great fit for our congregation because we had space available in an unfinished basement we had used for storage. It also has an external entrance,” he said.

A TV program's overview of the space and its mission is at: <https://q13fox.com/2019/05/08/the-ground-floor-offers-shelter-for-homeless-teens-in-whatcom-county/>

For information, call 360-734-3720 ext. 1105 or email david@fccb.net.

Solar panels are part of efforts to inspire island to act

The Congregational UCC Church on Mercer Island has not only installed solar panels on its roof but also is hosting programs to inspire others on Mercer Island to take action on climate change.

The City of Mercer Island, which has a part-time sustainability officer and a volunteer Mercer Island Sustainability Group that meets at the church.

As a part of the effort of the community of 25,000 to find ways to reduce energy use and produce renewable solar energy, the church voted unanimously in September 2018 to install solar panels on its roof.

“We explored solar while the city was encouraging residents to install solar panels on their home as part of its Ready for 100 program—meaning 100 percent solar or renewable energy,” said Roberta Rominger, pastor there since 2015.

She contacted contractors about solar for the church and there were Washington state funds to pay for 50 percent of installation.

“We figured on that, chose an installer who went to the city for permits. We expected to have the panels installed the first of the year, but discovered there are different regulations for public buildings,” she said. “We had to jump through hoops, and by then the state incentive was gone, and it would cost more.”

In April 2019, the church council voted unanimously to go ahead with plans to install panels. They chose a smaller, higher quality, more expensive LG 14.6 KW solar panel system, because they can only cover part of the roof, which was not built to bear the weight.

“The energy produced covers two-thirds of the electrical bill and we are working to improve weatherization and switch light bulbs to reduce electrical use,” Roberta said. “It will pay for itself in 20.6 years, or sooner



The energy team—Roberta Rominger, Hans Fredrikson, Cheryl Malcham, Jonathan Harrington and Jay Mavoori—stand in front of Congregational Church on Mercer Island, which has new solar panels are on the roof.

Photo courtesy of The Mercer Island Reporter

if we use less energy.

“We didn’t do it to save money. We did it because it’s the right thing to do and an important witness to the community that we take the climate crisis seriously and are good stewards of creation.”

The church’s Climate Action Team also hosts monthly educational events and invites the community.

Last spring, Roberta preached a series of sermons on how faith can address emotions the climate crisis evokes, such as denial, fear, grief and hopelessness.

The church is hosting events to inspire others to take action, because doing something creates hope.

For the launch, the church held a “Solar Party,” with sunshine cookies and a vegetable tray arranged to look like a sunflower. They sang “Sunshine on My Shoulder,” “Here Comes the Sun” and Roberta’s version of “You Are Our Sunshine.” (The words are in the box.)

An Oct. 26 event, “From Active Hope to Embodied Hope” drew from spiritual resources to inspire hope.

ing information on recycling and composting.

Bellevue UCC’s choir and climate action team will present an inspirational event in January.

The church’s reader board also includes messages.

“Nothing we’re facing is more important than this,” she said.

She said the church’s solar panels were partly inspired by the city’s efforts to encourage climate action and solar panel installations on Mercer Island. The city has led two residential solar installation campaigns.

The city reports there are about 200 commercial and residential solar installations that altogether have a total generating capacity of 1660 kilowatts. That includes two systems on top of local schools.

The goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on the island and increase clean energy. The city’s goal 2050 goal is to reduce emissions by 80 percent below levels recorded in 2005.

For information, call 206-232-7800, email office@ucc-cmi.org or visit <https://www.ucc-cmi.org>.

On Nov. 2 they hosted “The Alaska Suite,” a multimedia program featuring a jazz quintet and poetry on threats to the Alaskan wilderness and signs of hope.

The church also partnered with the community for the global Climate Strike Day Sept. 20, when they did sign making and sign waving.

In January, they plan an evening with Recology present-

You Are Our Sunshine Jimmie Davis, Roberta Rominger

You are our sunshine, our only sunshine
A wondrous answer to skies of gray
You’ll never know, Sun, how much we love you
Solar panels harvest your rays

Your photons travel from burning lesions
They are abundant throughout the day
And now we’ll use them to light our building
For our worship and our play

Our brain cells boggle at all the science
and engineering behind the scenes
Briggs on the rooftop, wires to the store room
Is it miracles or dreams?

With you to help us, we’ll save our planet
We’ll save the oceans and orcas too
Majestic forests and shiny glaciers
So we sing our thanks to you

Lummi call for state Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Marilyn Burwell, a member at the Ferndale UCC, learned of a draft call for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) for Washington state from Lummi Tribal member Shirley Williams, a registered nurse with the Indian Health Service.

Marilyn urges PNC members to read and share the draft call for a TRC commission with members of their congregations, their pastors, area tribes and legislators.

Shirley, who is co-founder of Whiteswan Environmental, worked with Senator John McCoy, (D) Tulalip, on a bill that passed the Legislature in 2015, mandating teaching Native American history and culture in all public schools. She is again working with him on the TRC.

“The first step in this process will be to lobby the legislature,” Marilyn said. “Once formed and funded, a commission could gather testimony about past and present

peace and justice problems,” said Marilyn. “The goal is to do something like what is currently happening in Canada—that is to listen and hear one another in order to compensate indigenous people both materially and spiritually for the faults of the past in order to clear a positive path for the future.”

Sen. McCoy will sponsor the call in the legislature, supported by Rep. Debra Lekanoff of Skagit and Whatcom counties, as well as by the tribes and their leadership.

The Call to Action issued on Sept. 30 and signed by 29 tribes, calls for mandating the formation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

An open letter to Washington State legislators presents the draft call for action, which states the following:

“The sovereign Tribes of Washington and non-government organizations urge the government body of

Washington State including Natives in Washington Legislature, John McCoy (Tulalip), Deborah Lekanoff (Tlingit) and Natives in Congress, Sharice Davids (Ho-Chunk) and Deborah Haaland’s (Laguna Pueblo) to launch Truth and Reconciliation.

“In the spirit of public participation, we ask you to join the State of Maine and Canada and begin the process to fully implement this global, consensus instrument of healing, protection and realization of the human rights of Indigenous peoples and nature. It is critical that the laws of Washington State align with principles that support the Declaration which meet the minimum global standards for the ‘survival, dignity and well-being’ of Indigenous peoples.

“We ask legislature to redress the legacy of the root cause(s) of trauma that have impacted our Indigenous peoples and advance proposed actions that will foster reconciliation.

“As inherent right holders, we have a sacred responsibility to protect our inherent birth rights to the land, water, life and democracy for our future generations. In efforts to mitigate the human and environmental disaster, it is critical that we move swiftly to found and enforce policy, education and cultural knowledge that is in alignment with the global and international framework for reconciliation at all levels and sectors.

“We ask the federal and state government and organizations to stand with us as we begin the process to acknowledge the past, the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the cause and action to change the behavior.

Copies of a petition are at <https://petitions.moveon.org/sign/proclamation-of-support>.

Contacts with tribal leaders are available at goia.wa.gov/tribal-directory/tribal-chair-contact-information.

For information, text 360-815-2409 or email shirley.williams.we@gmail.com.

Fauntleroy UCC votes to lease Camp Second Chance

By Steve Clagett

A Nov. 22 community meeting applauded the announcement that **Fauntleroy UCC** members had voted Sunday to lease Camp Second Chance.

The camp of 48 tiny houses, providing transition housing to homeless individuals, was in danger of closing in March as a temporary Seattle land use permit expired.

Alki UCC members built 30 of the 48 houses.

Fauntleroy UCC’s decision to lease gives the encampment continued life under a special Seattle land use provision when the underlying property

is owned or leased by a religious institution. Camp Second Chance was developed and is managed by LIHI, the Low-Income Housing Institute.

Fauntleroy pastor Leah Atkinson-Bilinski told what the encampment means to her church. She witnessed God guiding them to this commitment and finding God through the loving and empowering community the Camp Second Chance residents maintain, even as the community continually changes membership.

Forty-four percent of residents succeed in finding permanent housing.

“To be honest, we found



The New Team includes Eric Davis, Camp manager and co-founder; Mark Worden: Tiny House Build co-leader; Sheryl Guyon, Fauntleroy UCC lay leader; Tomasz Biernacki, Tiny House Build co-leader; Cinda Stenger of Alki UCC, and Leah Atkinson-Bilinski, pastor at Fauntleroy UCC. Photo from Fauntleroy

God’s love when we walked into Camp Second Chance,” she said.

For information, call 206-932-5600 or email leah@fauntleroyucc.org.

CAMP

Kaila Russell of the Outdoor Ministries Committee reported that in the summer and fall of 2018, Pilgrim fir welcomed 10 new groups and camps among a total of 42 camps and groups. It hosted four wider community public events and its income ran about 10 percent higher than budget as it welcomed more than 2,100 campers and guests.

During the fall, the PN-CUCC Board of Directors adopted a purpose statement for Pilgrim Fir: "Pilgrim Fir provides a sacred oasis for creativity and community," she added.

That purpose will guide its story and give insight as it sets priorities for improvements and funding.

"How might this purpose statement strengthen our wider impact into the communities and groups we are currently serving? Imagine what may grow from our intentionality of being a sacred oasis for creativity and community!" Kaila said.

Wade Zick, managing di-

rector of Pilgrim Fir, reported that Common Fire, the mission-based youth camp program, welcomed 29 youth and leaders from Chicago for a week in June. They partnered with Rebuilding Together on five worksites making homes more accessible for low-income and disabled people.

"Fox Island UCC members led the work projects and look forward to being involved again next summer as we welcome groups June 23 to 28," Wade said.

"Part of each day was spent doing service work in the community with the rest of the day spent having a camp experience at Pilgrim Fir. Besides swimming, canoeing, hiking, and hanging out, there is evening program helping youth focus on the systemic issues that foster situations that many homeless, disabled and veterans in need are currently facing. Through discussions, youth came to realize that changing systems takes time and hard work," he said.

In June, Pilgrim Fir hosted about 150 people from the community for a family fun picnic, music, lawn games, crafts and hikes as part of Kitsap Pride. A grant from the national Outdoor Ministry Association helped underwrite the cost of this event continuing to make it free for the community.

Over the past three years, nearly \$5,000 has been raised from this picnic to support the Q Resource Center for LGBTQ youth in Kitsap and the Kitsap Pride Event.

Nearly 80 senior high students and their leaders from around Western Washington gathered for leadership training in late August led by Planned Parenthood.

Students were given tools for leading peer groups at their schools to combat bullying, build safer communities for LGBTQ youth, and look at ways to improve their own leadership skills.

Because some groups are too small to have the whole camp to themselves, this past

summer several weekends had groups from as many as three of UCC churches sharing space: Liberation, First Christian Taiwanese and Prospect UCC churches shared one weekend, and Mercer Island, United Churches of Olympia and St. Paul churches shared Pilgrim Fir another weekend.

"While the intention was often separate events, something amazing happens when people gather to share lives, share stories and share meals," said Wade.

Mid-Winter Youth Retreats are being held Jan. 18 to 20.

The Men's Retreat is Jan. 31 through Feb. 3.

On Nov. 28, Pilgrim Fir was selected for the 2018 Best of Port Orchard Award in the Conference Center Category by the Port Orchard Award Program, which every year identifies companies that have achieved "exceptional marketing success in their local community and business category."

For information, call 360-876-2031 or visit pilgrimfir.com.

The Coeur d'Alene Lake East Side Fire District 2018 Chiefs award went to N-Sid-Sen and its managing director Mark Boyd.

The award is for an individual or individuals whose dedication and commitment consistently rise above the rim in service to East Side Fire District and the community.

The theme for its 25-year celebration, "Power of Community," expressed the East Side Fire District's commitment to serve the community.

In the spirit of community, they chose N-Sid-Sen because of its continuous dedication, support and contribution to both East Side Fire and to the community.

Year after year this Mark and N-Sid-Sen contribute to the success of the district's Pancake Breakfast, host their annual banquet and are always there when the district or community needs help.

This year, N-Sid-Sen has stepped up above and beyond by supporting the upgrade of the fire district's fleet with a new home for its fireboat.

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