



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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Winter 2021-2022

Two are among last to graduate from the STM

Seattle University's Board of Trustees voted in April 2020 to close the School of Theology and Ministry (STM)

Stevi Hamill and Amara Oden, two UCC students who graduated in June from the School of Theology and Ministry, are grieving the loss of the school's "solid program of theological study that has produced good pastors," Stevi said.

STM emphasized integrity and compassion which are important for people to be effective ministers, she said, noting, too, it was one space Catholic women could have a theological education in the Pacific Northwest and has been a safe space for queer students.

Stevi, who just had her final ordination interview, continues at SU, hired as campus minister for retreats.

"Many of us feel a gaping loss in
Continued on Page 4



Amara Oden is outside Hunthausen Hall which was used by Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry.

Photo courtesy of Amara Oden

Annual Meeting will be online in a new way

Based on current information about COVID-19, the Strategy Team—moderator Hillary Coleman, Vice Moderator Tara Leininger, Conference Minister Mike Denton, Minister for Church Vitality Courtney Stange-Tregear, and the Board—have decided that Annual Meeting 2022 will be online via Zoom Friday, April 29 to Sunday, May 1 not at Westminster Congregational UCC in Spokane.

They ask members to hold those days as a time to gather with the PNCUCC without overlapping commitments.

This decision is difficult and necessary, because current science is not such that we would honor our covenant to care for one another if we ask people to travel across the conference to gather in person.

We recognize there may be a sense of loss for some for not being able to gather in person, and a sense of relief for

**Annual Meeting 2022
will be online via Zoom
April 29 to May 1.**

others who may not feel comfortable or safe gathering in person. In these are difficult times, it is important that as a conference we meet in ways that feel safe and inclusive to as many as possible.

We will plan something more than a typical online meeting. We're thinking about many possibilities, based on science and capacity in the new year. Ideas include inviting small groups to participate and caucus at their churches; creating online small groups to caucus as churches or on issues; having a physical item each can have where we, and adjusting the

schedule to accommodate connections.

We will still see what the realities are around public health and technology. We'll share more in the new year.

This format is specifically for Annual Meeting 2022. Our Conference will have further discussions about how we gather for future annual meetings, considering members' safety and environmental justice concerns.

We know many members and pastors of color have not felt safe traveling to areas such as Eastern Washington. We also know environmental impacts are important and what many people traveling does to our earth.

To share questions and thoughts with the Annual Meeting Planning Committee, Board, staff and tech folks for a powerful time at Annual Meeting 2022, email hillarycolemanucc@gmail.com.

In this season, let Jesus flow through us

Conference Comments



By The Rev.
Mike Denton
Conference
Minister

***This
season
teaches
us
that
confronting
our
fragility
makes
us
strong.***

There are some days I think we are amazingly fragile, and other days I think we're amazingly strong. The last few years have proven both are true in different ways.

Between the pandemic, our equity reckonings, and our flirting with autocracy, the cracking of our institutions and systems is almost deafening. The curtain has been torn away, and that which was covered up by blustering, bullying and advertising campaigns is quaking.

The checks and balances of the US government—and many other governments throughout the world—are giving way to panic or grandiosity masquerading as power.

We're becoming increasingly comfortable with othering each other in a way that may lead to war between and among us. Things are breaking and shifting and falling apart.

The Church is not immune from this, and there are some ways in which we're part of this. There are some ways in which we are part of these crumbling systems, both complicit with them and victims of them.

We have promoted the false doctrine that to be a Christian is a position of privilege, and that the church has a responsibility to protect that privilege. We have promoted the idea that being a Christian means welcoming the abundance of everything instead of the abundance of some things, helping rationalize unsustainable practices. We have confused the idea of having enough with having what we want.

The path of equity reckoning and the pandemic has revealed the fragility of so much we've built with just a few hits of a hammer. It's not that these things created damage as much as these hammer blows revealed the weaknesses of systems previously described as indestructible. These systems are strong but not as strong and sacred as we were taught. Truly sacred things don't break this easily.

Still, that's only part of the story. If we were only surrounded by fragility, everything would already have broken by now. So many of our systems are fragile, but we are not.

We're vulnerable to a lot and are discovering more about our vulnerability every day in ways that are not always comfortable, but we are not

fragile. One Brene Brown quote that has always stuck with me is "We are hardwired for survival." We truly are.

Part of what's broken down is that many of the systems we created to be vehicles to serve and help one another became false gods we served. Anything false eventually becomes unsustainable when the facade takes more resources to preserve than the initially intended purpose.

We're vulnerable to the appeal of these false gods who call us to serve a purpose by a means that serve them. But ultimately, a threat to the facade cannot threaten a purpose deeply rooted in love and the call to serve. In fact, the crumbling of the facade helps reveal the power of the purpose.

In that purpose, our strength lies. It's not that our governments, financial systems and churches are dying as much as the purposes underneath them are being liberated and revealed. Some of which is crumbling will also decay, but the most important parts will survive and become the raw materials for the future we can build together.

I know this might seem like a strange Advent article, but it's also what Advent is. Mary sang a song of the One in her womb whose life would be a hammer:

"He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."

This is the season when we celebrate one coming into the world who would challenge his time's religious, financial, judicial and political systems. When the hope, peace, love and joy of Advent all become unified in the birth of Jesus, then Jesus's primary role becomes calling us to embody these values, too.

This is the season when we're challenged to let the strength of Jesus flow through our hearts, minds, and bodies and not just be liberated but liberate others, too, even those we may consider our enemies.

This is the season we're called to face our fragility and then come together in holy strength. This season teaches us that confronting our fragility makes us strong.

Transitions announced

Steve Jerbi was installed Oct. 24 as minister of worship and Christian formation at University Congregational UCC in Seattle. Visiting theologian Yolanda Norton preached at the service, Mike Denton was liturgist and Shelley Bryan Wee, bishop of the Northwest Washington Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America was presider.

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their COP26 experience.

“It was moving at many points,” said Roberta who was impressed with one man, Stephen Squire from the Episcopal Church in Paris. He told how COP26 was falling short, but was clear about his commitment to the cause and his message to churches to “keep on keeping on.”

Roberta messaged him in chat and asked if he would record a short video report for her church service. She shares the link to it in case anyone else would like to show it: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/yjobvz56hv6r7g/Stephen%20Squire%20-%20Movie%20on%2013.11.21%20at%2010.22.mov?dl=0>

For information, call 360-932-4562.

Help offered on insurance

The Insurance Assistance Fund Subcommittee of the Conference Stewardship Committee is responsible for allocating assistance to clergy and local churches needing help with the costs of health insurance premiums.

For help covering the costs of 2022 health insurance premiums, call Pacific Northwest Conference Treasurer, Martha Baldwin at 206-948-9799 or email mahtha@hotmail.com.

UCC starts ‘Join the Movement’

The Rev. Traci Blackmon, the national UCC associate general minister of justice and local church ministries, invites people to “Join the Movement toward Racial Justice” to help them imagine a church free of racism and a world where all people live without fear of violence or systems that harm God’s human creation.

Join the Movement is an effort to answer God’s call to be an anti-racist church by sharing stories and learning from one another to build a just world,” said Traci.

Information is at <https://jointhementu-mentucc.org>, which began in late 2021.

A video about it is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M50t1TaP7oY&t=34s>

Eastgate sells building

Karen Jones, a trustee at Eastgate Congregational UCC in Bellevue, said the church—“with love, hope and trust”—is selling its 60-year-old building. The church has items to give to an interested church.

For information, call 425-736-3211 or email karen_wholeself@yahoo.com.

COP 26 resource offered

Roberta Rominger, pastor at Mercer Island Congregational UCC, said Michael Curry, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church USA, recruited 24 people to attend COP26 virtually. They had online meetings with key players and shared in a webinar

UCUCC teaches OWL

Margaret Swanson, director of children’s, youth and family ministries at University Congregational UCC, is offering an in person Our Whole Lives Sexuality and Our Faith class (OWL) for grades 10, 11 and 12 from January to April 2022. She welcomes friends to join in.

For information, call 206-524-2322 x3315 or 206-399-2213 or email mswanson@ucucc.org.

An interest form is at https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=DQSIkWsW0yxEjajBLZtrQAAAAAIAAAAAO_dLLDbBUMIVWRzExtjU-2OUJLnlWOERTMTBaTloyTC4u.

PNC helps on bookkeeping

The Conference has a team to address challenges small churches have in finding bookkeeping resources to enable them to carry out tasks required as an employer and nonprofit. The team has been gathering resource information from PNC churches on their bookkeeping set up, such as:

- Bookkeeping provided by a volunteer or outsourced to a third party;
- Third party payroll services that support unique aspects of clergy compensation;
- Accounting software that supports unique aspects of clergy compensation, church and nonprofit tax filings, and
- Resources and experiences churches can share or recommend.

With resources churches are sharing, the team is developing ways to share them.

One payroll service option is Paychex Partnership. The UCC Pension Boards partners with Paychex to benefit UCC-related employers by offering discounts on

services to UCC-related organizations.

For information, contact Courtney Stange-Tregear, minister for church vitality, or Andrew Warren, conference accountant, at 206-725-8383.

Christmas Fund gifts needed

Martha Baldwin of the PNC Stewardship Committee said the UCC Christmas Fund is “near and dear to my heart as my father was a retired UCC pastor and my mother still receives a small pension.”

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired UCC clergy and lay employees for more than 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums and Christmas gift checks to lower-income retirees.

She invites individuals and congregations to give to the fund.

For information, call 206-948-9799 or email mahtha@hotmail.com.

Profile portal trainings online

December training sessions on the new Ministerial Profiles Portal were recorded and will be available on the ucc.org website and on the YouTube of Suran Systems, which built the website. The national UCC created a new platform for the Ministerial Profile and Snapshot. Changes do not include content revision to the Ministerial Profile, but there will be enhancements and the layout will be more user-friendly, said Arlene Hobson, executive administrator.

For information, call 206-725-8383.

Global ties are being built

The Global Ministries Committee of the PNC-UCC and Northern Lights Region, DOC, meets monthly by Zoom with their partners, the Rev. Martin Nates of Justapaz, and Pablo Morales of the Peace Commission of the Evangelical Council of Churches of Colombia, as well as with the new mission co-workers, Alex Maldonado-Lizardi and Xiomara Cintron-Garcia.

Alex and Xiomara arrived in Colombia this fall from Puerto Rico for a four year assignment. They are supported by gifts to Disciples Mission Fund, Our Church’s Wider Mission, Week of Compassion and special gifts. Information is at <https://www.globalministries.org/mission-coworkers/>.

Plans are underway to invite partners and Alex and Xiomara to the PNC Annual Meeting in April and the DOC Northern Lights Annual Assembly in May, said Rick Russell, co-chair of the Global Ministries Committee with Mary Olney-Loyd.

For information, call 206-999-6968 or email myrtos@comcast.net.

STM began with a 1969 program, Protestant efforts

Seattle faith leaders partnered with Seattle University in summer 1969 to do an intensive program for master's degrees in religious education and pastoral ministry. By 1971, programs had more than 300 students.

From 1984 to 1990, the Protestant Northwest Theological Union had showed there were many students interested in theological education in Seattle, but it could not secure accreditation.

By 1994, the Association of Theological Schools accredited and approved three graduate degrees at the Jesuit Seattle University's Institute for Catholic Theological Studies (ICTS): master of arts in pastoral studies, master of arts in transforming spirituality and master of divinity.

In 1995, 10 Protestant, Anglican and Unitarian leaders created the title, Institute of Ecumenical Theological Studies (IETS), as they explored partnering with the ICTS to offer master's degrees, including a master of divinity.

In 1997, SU's Board of

Trustees established the STM as a graduate school. In 2000, it was accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.

The IETS and ICTS names in the STM were dropped in 2009. A common board formed, reflecting that students were studying together in a common curriculum. Each denomination set requirements for studying church history, polity, theology, ministry and worship, said Dee, who became co-chair of the STM executive board in 2010.

The STM began with nine denominations. Eventually 11 denominations and three faiths signed formal partnerships. They included African Methodist Episcopal, American Baptist, Church of the Brethren, Community of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, ELCA Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, United Methodist and Unitarian, and interreligious groups.

The STM was accredited for a master of divinity. It also offered master of arts degrees in transformational leadership, and in couples and family ther-

apy, and a doctor of ministry.

As a unique, inclusive school, committed to interreligious relationships, the STM gained national and international recognition for its approach to theological education, drawing foundation funding.

In 2010, Dee described the STM "a model of creative cooperation in theological studies connected with a Jesuit school that emphasizes doing justice."

She said students in each tradition needed to know about their tradition not only for their future ministries but also to discuss with other students what their church believes and does.

In 2010, there were 13 UCC students and 67 other Protestant students, among 272.

Founding denominations in early years helped fund the STM, but as their funds dwindled and the STM become such a unique model, it found other funders.

The STM's account of its closing is at seattleu.edu/stm and seattleu.edu/provost/updates.

Describing it as "a work in progress," they respond to ques-

tions raised about their decision by students, alums and others.

In April 2020, the Board of Trustees voted to close the STM as a freestanding school and authorized SU's administration, "in consultation with faculty, students and other relevant stakeholders, to develop and implement a comprehensive transition and communication plan which will include ending degree and certificate programs, integrating academic programs into existing university programs, and developing teach-out plans for affected academic programs."

They talk of forming a transition committee to look at future opportunities for ministerial and faith formation, and of consulting with "a broad range of stakeholders, including denominational partners."

In summer 2020, STM stopped enrolling new students in ministry programs.

In July 2021, SU formed the Center for Ecumenical and Interreligious Engagement for "Public Theology for a New Generation."

UCC graduates share value of STM studies

Continued from page 1

theological education in the region and felt STM added to the university and the religious community in the Pacific Northwest," she said, noting the interreligious center announced in July has a place, but is not theological education for a MDiv.

Amara, who took seven years to complete her master of divinity degree, is now seeking a call as a pastor. She received a Donald and Lynnea Mayer endowed scholarship.

She started at Tolt UCC in Carnation and then was a member at United Churches in University Place since she and her husband moved to the area 20 years ago. She became UCC as

an adult and seeks a full time ministry.

"I feel sad the STM is closing because my first nudge to my call to ministry was 10 years before I went to seminary. I dismissed it because I was a mother of one and wanted more children. It seemed illogical and impractical, so I put off the call until I couldn't ignore it.

"STU was the only school I could go to work and go to class at the same time. I would not do well online. No other seminary could meet my needs and allow me to meet my call," she said. "It is not positive for those with unconventional calls to ministry. I could not move my family to go to seminary. So, while there are online options, the in-

person ministry training in the richness of ecumenical training are important to minister to people in this region where there are so few churched or religious people left."

Amara appreciated being educated with classmates in other denominations, something that could not be replicated in online studies or a UCC only seminary. Sometimes she took just one class a year.

She was among those who helped organize Speak Out group to challenge SU, but could not stay with it.

"I mourn for people like me who need ministry formation who in the future will not be able to pursue a call to ministry," she said, knowing some

students who had to stop or move home.

"I have questions about the decision. It's hard to accept that it was the only option or in line with the values we were taught, raised to think creatively and imaginatively about God who moves through the world," she said. "I did not see effort to find options. I was only told there would be a two-year teachout, extended now to three years."

Amara said she was in Speak Out to join in re-imagining theological education, noting that the Center for Ecumenical and Interreligious Engagement is not theological education.

For information, email stevihamill@gmail.com or hel-loamaraoden@gmail.com.

UCC leaders comment on STM history, closing

The Seattle University Board of Trustees passed a resolution on April 30, 2020 closing the School of Theology and Ministry (STM) as a freestanding school offering master of divinity, other master degrees and a doctoral degree.

Many serving in ministry in the Pacific Northwest Conference UCC (PNC-UCC) and other regional denominations and faiths earned these degrees.

Many in the PNC-UCC were instrumental in its formation, funding and leadership. Several pastors taught there and many in UCC ministries graduated from the ecumenical-inter-religious theological school.

Dee Eisenhauer, pastor at Eagle Harbor UCC in Bainbridge Island, who served on STM boards since 2002 and was on the Advisory Board when it disbanded, was disappointed it closed because of finances.

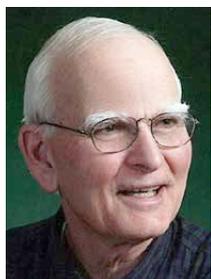
“The SU administration, considered the STM a financial drain. In the pandemic, SU made tough choices,” she said.

Dee remembered hiring Mark Markuly as a creative, visionary dean, even as “STM recognized that in 10 years many seminaries would close. Given there are fewer churches, there would be less need for people to earn master of divinity degrees.

“**With fewer churches**, it was not seen as a marketable degree,” said Dee. “Other seminaries already began distance learning. More theology degrees are now earned online. My last intern, a student at Meadville Lombard in Chicago, only went there for two intensives a year. The STM did not move online until the pandemic pushed it.”

As a unique, inclusive school, committed to inter-religious relationships, the STM gained national and international recognition, drawing foundation funding.

In 2010, Dee described the STM “a lively model of creative cooperation in theological



Jim Halfaker, Dee Eisenhauer, Lynnea and Don Mayer were involved with the School of Theology and Ministry over the years.

studies connected with a Jesuit school that emphasizes doing justice.” She said students needed to know about their traditions not only for their future ministries but also to engage in discussions about what their church believes and does when students of other traditions asked.

Conference Minister Mike Denton said: “As the numbers of those in church have declined, many seminaries have struggled. The Association of Theological Schools says seminaries have suffered more than a 25 percent drop in enrollment in the last 10 years.

“As seminaries and theological schools close, the question becomes, What will come in their place? We have an opportunity for great creativity,” he challenged.

Jim Halfaker, who was Washington North Idaho Conference Minister from 1971 to 1991, helped nurture and fund the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University along with other regional faith leaders and other PNC clergy over many years.

After retiring, he worked five years with the national UCC Make a Difference Campaign and returned to apply his fund-raising skills from 1999 to 2005 to raise nearly \$7 million in endowed scholarships for students from 11 denominations. He also raised funds to remodel Champion Chapel as an ecumenical worship space and to remodel Hunthausen Hall.

“Seattle University will

keep the physical property,” said Jim, “but it could shift some endowments to other seminaries, such as the Loren Arnett Endowment to the Disciples’ seminary in Indianapolis.

Jim worked with Phyllis Anderson, the Lutheran director of the Institute for Ecumenical Theological Studies that transitioned into the STM. After she left, Protestant funding declined, and there were fewer ecumenical volunteers.

“**If not involved**, why would ecumenical partners give,” Jim said of SU’s efforts at consolidation. “The STM without the institutes was left to support of the Catholic Archdiocese and Seattle University, along with a few loyal ecumenical friends and alums,” he said. “The reorganization and consolidation led to the shrinking of involvement and resources.”

He said others with named endowments may redirect them for scholarships at other schools.

“**It is painful to me**,” Jim said. “I talked with people and congregations, telling them what a wonderful ecumenical school it was. I see no way to go back, but I hope donors to endowed scholarships for Protestant ministerial education will shift those funds to seminaries that share the vision and ministry.

“What we lost is eloquently described by alums and students on page 7,” Jim said.

Several PNC-UCC clergy served as adjunct faculty and on the advisory board, and were students, who now serve

in congregations, spiritual direction and other ministries.

For 14 years, retired UCC pastor Rick Russell was adjunct faculty. He was aware two years ago the STM was running out of money, transitioning to close and helping students complete degree programs they began.

David Kratz, a retired UCC pastor, was adjunct faculty teaching UCC history and polity 10 years with Greg Turner.

“Family counseling, pastoral care and community leadership are transferred to other SU departments,” he said. “The STM lacked enrollment to be sustainable. We needed five students to teach a class. When I didn’t have that many, I did independent study with them.”

At a 2006 surprise party, Don and Lynnea Mayer, learned Jim raised funds for endowed scholarship named to honor their commitment to ecumenical theological education. They hope to shift the fund to a UCC related seminary.

“As STM lost enrollment and funds, SU’s Law School subsidized it,” said Don, who chaired the STM Advisory Board a few years and taught UCC history and polity three quarters. He then invited David Kratz and Gail Crouch to teach.

“My enthusiasm for STM was grounded in the belief that it embodied the theology behind the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational and Christian Churches uniting in 1957 to form the United Church of Christ,” said Don, recalling that in the spirit of Vatican II, a previous SU president and archbishop had prodded Protestant bishops at their breakfast not to send seminary students to Berkeley or Vancouver, because they wanted to offer theological education.

For information, contact Don Mayer at 206-715-9572, Jim Halfaker at 206-363-3653, or Dee Eisenhauer at 206-604-2167.

Students, alums seek answers on STM closing

Jessica Zimmerle, program coordinator at Earth Ministry/Interfaith Power and Light, and Lorenzo McDuffie, a doctor of ministry student, graduates of Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry formed Speak Out for STM, a student alum group concerned about "sunsetting" the STM.

For them it was "an innovative, ecumenical seminary that cultivated creative methods for learning and meaning making for spiritual leaders. With dwindling resources for students, the STM will close in spring 2023.

Jessica, an ELCA Lutheran who graduated from the master of arts program in spring 2021, said ministerial programs offered pathways to careers in chaplaincy, ministry, counseling, nonprofit leadership, activism and more.

"The closure represents a loss of an intentionally inclusive, diverse space where students from different walks of life could learn from and with one another," she said.

As Mark Lloyd Taylor, STM professor emeritus, said it bridged "either/ors" with "both/ands," bringing people together across differences of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, theological conviction and religious practice.

They are concerned SU's Board of Trustees' decision to close the STM in April 2020 involved little communication with students and stakeholders. Some did not learn until June.

About 200 attended a student-called meeting in July 2020, when Provost Shane Martin said the transition was an opportunity for SU to engage stakeholders in re-imagining its commitment to theological education, religious studies and ministry formation.

In March 2021, President Steve Sundborg announced by email that SU would not explore future graduate theologi-



Jessica Zimmerle and Lorenzo McDuffie are organizing students and alums to raise questions about the closing of the STM and to help find paths for there to be theological education in the region for students like them.

Photos courtesy of Jessica Zimmerle

cal education, said Jessica.

She and Lorenzo are concerned that there is an absence of "progressive, ecumenical, graduate theological education at a time of upheaval, change and lack of institutional trust.

"As the pandemic and political polarization show, the challenges of climate change, economic inequality and systemic racism require culturally competent, justice-oriented leaders to help imagine a new way forward," they said.

"STM bore witness to the transformative nature of inclusive theologies, which create a beloved community. This unique school has been intentionally educating leaders and ministers as agents for change, through faith-informed, justice-oriented listening, presence and action in our places of worship, homes, workplaces and beyond," they added.

"STM was a space to reimagine and reform church, a beacon for those wanting

to engage in this work in the largely secular landscape of the Northwest. We hope the Seattle community will recognize this absence and consider how we evolve progressive, theological and spiritual education for future generations."

The program was unique with a Catholic institution offering degrees to women and students from other traditions, said Rose Hesselbrock, one of the last students to graduate in Spring 2023, noting parishes depend on women as administrative and spiritual lay leaders.

Master of divinity student Jin Lee said the STM helped in her/his calling as a Korean American leader and minister since 2016, noting its closure "based on market values, contradicts values of transformative change" Jin learned there.

Lorenzo said STM opened doors to him as a black, queer Catholic to serve the church, but after it closes, queer Christians of color "will lack welcoming

options to pursue a holistic ministerial education and live their vocation in the region."

Eliana Maxim, an alumna and leader for the Presbyterian Church (USA) in Seattle, told of the unique approach to ministerial education gained by "many of our current pastoral and community leaders." She spoke of the presbytery's investment in STM and disappointment that the process of closing the school lacked transparency, forgot partners and leaves the area without a program for ministry formation.

In a 2018 document, "STM 50 Years of History," SU said the program "emphasizes personal and spiritual development as critical learning outcomes." The STM built a national and international reputation as a unique educational institution addressing changes in religion and religion's role in society. A hallmark of the school was its ability to change in response to "signs of the times" and local and regional community needs.

Jessica said a committee has formed to discuss "carrying forth the charism of STM within the life of the university." They also plan an event to honor STM and mark its closing in Spring 2023. The committee has a few outside representatives, including two from Speak Out for STM.

She knows of no opportunity for "stakeholder input" from the broader STM community.

She also referred to a Dec. 3 Washington Post article on the rise in seminary enrollments during COVID: [washingtonpost.com/religion/2021/12/03/theological-seminaries-enrollment-covid/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2021/12/03/theological-seminaries-enrollment-covid/)

Speak Out prepared a timeline that is at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1haCj9catMbjcfuhDfGPTlq5E-7BC-4s6kKyM01jdh7II/edit>

For information, email jessica@earthministry.org.

Eliza Penick organizes Justice Jubilee for 2022

The Justice Leadership Program (JLP) is accepting applications for a six-month virtual Justice Leadership Jubilee Program that runs from January to June for adults who want to deepen their understanding of justice and learn practical organizing skills with a community of peers.

Eliza Penick began working part time in February with the Justice Leadership Program, a nonprofit located at Keystone UCC in Seattle, to organize this program for adults.

“Doing the Jubilee program virtually opens us to more options, like not being limited to the Puget Sound area,” she said.

Already there are applicants for the up to 12 openings from Hawaii, Missouri and Texas.

“We will need to be creative working across time zones,” she said. “Taking it virtual also means we can reach areas that have limited justice resources, so anyone interested can be involved with justice work.”

“The program is designed to involve lay people in justice work. It provides an introduction to both theory and skills so someone who is new to justice work gains the knowledge and encouragement to take action and become a leader,” she said.

In six to 10 hours a week for six months, the Jubilee program will open doors to different types of social change, to non-violence as a method, and to introduce and examine social location. The goal is for people to know what resources there are and the various areas of justice.

She recognizes that for many, the world is not as they would have it with divisions between haves and have-nots, racism and harmful discrimination, the impact of climate change, increasing violence and growing dependency.

“Here I Am. Send Me” is a theme.

Eliza worked 12 years



Eliza Penick is coordinating the Justice Leadership Jubilee.

Heifer International in volunteer management and community engagement with churches, schools and businesses, working to help people bring positive change.

As a life-long member of Keystone UCC in Seattle, Eliza has known of the Justice Leadership Program for years. Rich Gamble, Keystone’s pastor, is also executive director of the JLP, which began through the UCC and is now also ecumenical. He invited her to be involved.

Other JLP assistants are Elizabeth Dickenson, coordinator of the Pilgrimage Program an intensive dive into an issue like homelessness or environmental justice in Seattle, and Yuki Schwartz, curriculum developer and a teacher for the JLP, as well as assistant professor of constructive and political theologies and Louisville post-doctoral scholar at Claremont School of Theology at Willamette University.

The Jubilee program consists of 1) education through reading, films and workshops led by different people, 2) sojourning with participants sharing in discussion to build community as they reflect and support each other, 3) community work volunteering with a social justice agency to engage

in change work and gain awareness, and 4) church engagement, partnering with one’s existing faith community to incorporate learning and practice new skills in ministry.

Teachers include Rich on community organizing, progressive Christianity and social change; and Lauren Cannon of Keystone on non-violence as a form of social change.

The justice training will happen via Zoom with workshops and sojourning to help participants learn practical skills and methodology with spiritual grounding and peer support, said Eliza.

“Jubilee signifies the responsibility of each generation to contribute to future generations’ struggle for social, economic, racial and environmental justice,” a flier says.

After working with Heifer, which she began at age 27, she spent a year consulting with the Gates Foundation on community engagement, familiarizing her with doing online content for middle and high school students instead of having them come to Discovery Center for exhibits about the foundation’s work in vaccines, disease prevention and food justice around the world.

Growing up in Keystone, where her mother is still a member, Eliza attended the an-

nual Festival of Hope, which raised funds to support local and global hunger and poverty relief programs.

“As a child, I ran to the Heifer booth, which led to my involvement with Heifer and eventually a job,” said Eliza, who majored in history and minored in American Indian studies at the University of Washington, expecting to teach.

“Ten years ago, I took over organizing the Festival of Hope. Our biggest push was to put funds into the world and to encourage people to be part of an alternative Christmas economy with shopping that supports people,” she said.

The festival grew over 10 years from raising \$10,000 to \$20,000 annually. The last year in person was 2019. The last two years, Keystone sent a flier listing organizations the festival supports, encouraging support and offering to send donations.

This year an anonymous donor matched \$5,000 of gifts.

Keystone has been having Zoom worship Sunday mornings for 25 and no in-person worship. Eliza expects that will start in the new year. Because there are many vulnerable members, the church will do both, with one Sunday a month in person and the rest continuing on Zoom beginning the first Sunday of February.

“For me with a young family, meeting for worship once a month works,” Eliza said.

“We have widened our community with Zoom, adding someone in Texas and the pastor’s mother in Missouri,” she said. “We are a small but mighty church, and JLP is a small and mighty nonprofit.”

“We look forward to reimagining what the program will look like and hope it will grow and reach more,” she said.

For information, call 206-245-5446, email info@justiceleadership.com or visit justiceleadership.org.

Everett UCC outreach focuses on housing, food

Everett United Church of Christ on the corner of Everett Ave. and Rockefeller in downtown Everett refers to itself as “a small but mighty activist church endeavoring to do God’s work,” said the Rev. Ruth Brandon, retired UCC pastor and Everett United Church of Christ’s (EUC), vice moderator.

The community refers to the church simply as “The Rainbow Church.”

Much of its community outreach focuses on homelessness and food insecurity.

There is a 24/7 homeless shelter in space rented by the county and being run by the Everett Gospel Mission in the lower level of the church.

The shelter also uses the fellowship hall on the main level for meals, movies, TV and just a quiet place to be that is bigger than a bed.

Forty people currently reside in the shelter.

Beginning this year, when winter temperatures fall too low, the church is allowing the Gospel Mission to also handle an emergency overnight only shelter in the fellowship hall.

Thursdays Everett UCC has a free dinner that feeds not only those in the shelter but also any who need a meal.

For those not in the shelter, a takeout meal continues to be a popular option, she said. Approximately 75 to 125 meals are given out each Thursday, Ruth explained.

Mercy Watch, a Snohomish county nonprofit medical team, regularly provides medical services in a separate room of the church at the same time as the Thursday meal.

COVID-19, shingles and hepatitis vaccinations are given. The staff is also available to assist with other medical needs. These services are free.

Everett UCC also has a small “pantry” open on the last



Worshipping in person began in mid June. Photo shows Everett UCC worship leaders on the second Sunday of Advent.

Photo courtesy of Everett UCC

two Mondays of each month to give out bags of food in three categories: 1) for people who are able to cook, 2) for those who have no access to cooking and 3) snack bags for those living downstairs who already have three meals a day, Ruth said.

Church members donate food for the pantry.

Finally, the congregation is in the middle of planning with Housing Hope, a Snohomish County nonprofit housing organization, to replace the current building with a new one, Ruth said.

The church will be on the main floor and parts of the second, Ruth said.

In the six to eight floors above, Housing Hope will run housing and services for people 55 years and older in about 80 residential units. Half of the residents will be recently unhoused and all will be in need

of affordable housing.

Housing Hope, which will do the fundraising, has two projects before the one at Everett UCC begins.

“They will staff for the new housing and already provide job training and other transitional services, so many residents may have short stays and move on, although that will not be required,” Ruth said.

Besides its own congregation, Everett UCC shares its space with two rental churches: one Micronesian and one Latinx.

Before the pandemic, the church had nearly 60 members. Its young, black, gay pastor for nearly three years is Jermell Witherspoon, who also serves Liberation UCC in Seattle, and also has a secular position doing school consulting.

“We are excited about the work we do and try to always be open to where the Spirit leads

us,” Ruth said, sharing that the church’s vision is to “become more of an urban, multicultural and multiracial congregation of Jesus’ disciples” welcoming one another as “Beloved in God and gathered by the Spirit to call forth, equip and share the gifts of all persons, while we intentionally encourage and build a reconciling, compassionate Christ-centered community.”

EUC’s vision statement continues: “We seek Christian unity and interfaith dialogue through diversity in age, abilities, culture, race, economic status, gender, sexual orientation and creation-keeping. Through biblical and theological inquiry we keep as our guiding spiritual law the practice of the two Great Commandments to receive and offer God’s unconditional love.”

Members from diverse backgrounds have found a home at Everett UCC, which celebrates and embraces people from a broad variety of traditions in its life—Catholic, Evangelical, LDS, and Pentecostal, including gay and lesbian Christians not welcomed by other churches, said Ruth.

EUC’s outreach also includes programs like Bread for the World, Church World Service, Earth Ministries, Faith Action Network, Meaningful Movies and Neighbors in Faith, she added.

In person services resumed in mid-June at 10 a.m., Sundays, with about 25 in the sanctuary, wearing masks and social distancing.

Jermell than leads the same service and preaches the same sermon online at noon on Facebook live and Zoom, and it has an online coffee hour after the service.

For information, call 425-252-7224, email churchadmin@everettucc.org or visit everettucc.org.

Renton opens doors to clothing bank for refugees

Aware that the United Christian Church in Renton was not yet using its sanctuary for worship, a volunteer organizer with SCM Missions in Seattle asked to use the space short term to provide resources for Afghani refugees.

“As Afghani began to settle in the area, their needs have been great,” said Cynthia Meyer, the pastor.

“In one day organizers and volunteers set up all our tables and unpacked bags and boxes of donated clothing. The next day a clothing bank was up and running, with families and individuals eagerly choosing general clothing, coats and boots for our area’s weather, and some toys and books for children. They also received hygiene and household cleaning items.”

The clothing bank was open to clients two days a week for four to five hours a day. For safety, all were masked and an outside door remained open. They also limited the number of people in the building.

The onsite manager from the Muslim Community Resource Center, a program of the Muslim Association of Puget Sound (MAPS), assisted and translated for clients choosing items and managed at least 50 volunteers from many organizations across the area.

Church members also donated items for the event.

With one day for moving in and one for moving out, the clothing bank was open for nine days over five weeks.

It served 93 families, nearly half of whom were newly arrived Afghan refugees. Others were refugee and low-income people from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Iran, Burma, India and Uganda.

“What a gift to welcome neighbors from around the world through our doors,” Cynthia said. “We connected with leaders at SCM Medical Mis-



Volunteers set up clothing bank for Afghan refugees and others.

Photo courtesy of Cynthia Meyer

sions and the Muslim Community Center.

SCM Medical Missions usually helps refugees in Jordan and resettled in Washington State. Its focus is to provide aid to refugees in and people of Lebanon, who are suffering a major economic crisis.

They also assist newly arrived Afghan refugees, many of whom are falling through cracks. If they are not registered with a federal resettlement agency, they need assistance with rent and groceries.

MAPS Muslim Community Resource Center is a social and humanitarian service organization helping less fortunate people, partnering with Muslim and non-Muslim nonprofits, city and local services, assistance providers to serve those in need with food, a health clinic, legal clinic, emergency relief, counseling, housing and refugee services.

“We will continue to support these efforts as we are able, with donations. I hope that in the future we can interact in more personal ways and get to know one another,” Cynthia said. “We look forward to continuing to support this effort, which has moved to a new lon-

ger term location nearby.

“We are just returning to in-person gatherings and appreciate that our sanctuary has new stories to tell as we gather again in worship and in preparation for service, justice and love of our neighbors,” she said.

Another event at from United Christian Church opening its doors on the Transgender Day of Remembrance on Saturday, Nov. 20, to offer a service of remembrance, livestreamed on Facebook, in cooperation with the LGBTQIA+ Community of Renton.

Several leaders offered prayers and readings and the names of transgender persons whose lives were lost to violence in the past year, while a candle was lit for each and one for those unknown.

For that service, the church also offered resources from open and affirming organizations of the UCC and DOC.

During COVID, United Christian has prioritized safety for the most vulnerable in their community and congregation.

“Therefore we have gathered for worship online throughout the pandemic. Sundays, we gather on Facebook for a live streamed service, in-

cluding scripture, message and prayers, and sometimes a more complete service including communion,” said Cynthia.

This is followed by a Zoom gathering where prayer concerns are shared and a pastoral prayer offered.

“We unmute and everyone shares the Lord’s Prayer in their preferred version. It’s a joyful noise,” she said.

The choir records hymns and anthems, which are shared during Zoom.

Face-to-face on Zoom, the congregation celebrates communion every Sunday, a tradition of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

On two Sundays in December Cynthia said they are offering worship in the sanctuary and live streamed. Christmas Eve will include an in-person afternoon service and a Zoom only service in the evening.

“We are still working out what will be feasible for in-person and online worship as we move into the new year,” she said.

Cynthia shared highlights of church life during COVID.

For Drive-In / Drop-Off events, folks bring donations for the church’s Little Free Pantry and Library, and for community ministries.

They received bags of items appropriate to the season, to support worship and devotions, and for fun.

As Christmas drew near in 2020, the choir recorded a CD of sacred and secular Christmas music.

Members also created a Christmas tree ornament featuring the church’s “God’s Doors Are Open to All” display.”

Cynthia said a mid-week Zoom social hour helps many stay connected.

An AA Group has returned to meet in the sanctuary.

For information, call 206-501-0053.

Catherine Foote retires after 20 years at UCUC

As Catherine Foote, one of the team ministers at University Congregational United Church of Christ in Seattle has retired after 20 years, she shared how she valued working in that team ministry.

“In 2001, I joined a team ministry that began four years before I came,” said Catherine who has appreciated working in a team that balances leadership and responsibility.

“**We were in community** so we could lead a community of faith,” she said. “Each of us led one area of ministry and supported the others leading in their areas of ministry.”

Each is responsible for spiritual development and worship. In the model of I Cor. 12 each brings their gifts, leads in one area of ministry and supports others with Christ as the head.

“I liked that we did not need to do ministry alone, but we could use our gifts. We did not have one voice, but shared different perspectives in our preaching, so we each continued to learn,” she said.

Catherine worked over the years with ordained ministers—Amy Roon, Peter Ilgenfritz, David Shull and Don McKenzie—and non-ordained ministers—Kyna Shilling and David Anderson as church administrators—as a team with everyone in the congregation.

“**Our job as ministers** was to help the congregation discover their ministries,” she said. “Team ministry embodies mutuality in ministry.”

Don began at UCUC as head of the staff and retired as part of the team ministry. He embraced the mutual ministry that he helped mold.

Catherine said Letty Rossell’s book *Church in the Round* helped shape her to seeing a ministry around a round table with no head or foot.

“In team ministry there is inherently no dominant voice, but we listened to each other,”



University Congregational UCC says goodbye to Catherine Foote. Photo courtesy of UCUC

she said. “Typically in ministry we expect a dominant white male voice. Instead, we listened to each other, so those traditionally marginalized were able to be heard. The team ministry has taken every voice seriously, gay, women and black.

“**It’s still rare,**” she said, “but UCUC figured out how to work against the dominant story. There are always challenges.”

Even as she retired, she said that UCUC is still learning how to do team ministry in an institution and world in which a CEO has greater salary and authority.

“We have been a model of how the church can operate in an alternative way. Our salaries were based on other factors, given that we all assumed the same authority,” she said.

Catherine grew up in Southern California and migrated to Kentucky for seminary, worked in Northern California 20 years after she was ordained in the UCC, then in Oregon enroute to Washington.

She studied theology and Bible at Pacific Christian College in Long Beach, a conservative college where everyone majored in religion. She once thought she would teach math, but in college fell in love with the Bible and religious philosophy, beginning a spiritual jour-

ney that led her to help people on their spiritual journeys.

The college related to the Independent Christian Church, in which women did not preach.

After graduating in 1973, she went to seminary at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky, where she earned a master’s in religious education in 1975 and then a doctoral degree in 1982,

While doing doctoral study, she taught at San Jose Christian College from 1979 to 1989.

“I was left of folks in my church when I discovered the United Church of Christ,” she said. “My church taught me to take the Bible seriously and literally. That led me to the UCC, which takes the Bible seriously.”

Catherine’s conservative roots with rote memorization gave her knowledge of the Bible she is thankful for.

In San Jose, she found a church that was more open to women: First Congregational UCC, where the woman associate preached once a month.

“Having a women lead worship and preach opened my interest in the UCC,” she said. “I left teaching at a college in a conservative theological world I could not live with any more.”

When she resigned from the college, First Congregation-

al UCC was looking for a youth director. She was hired. Over 10 years became youth minister and in 1992 was ordained in the UCC as associate minister, after doing independent study of UCC history and polity.

Catherine stayed with her sister in Cottage Grove, Ore., for a year and a half, attending First Congregational in Eugene and worked in a day treatment center for children, using her counseling and psychology skills, but she missed ministry.

“I did therapy an hour a day with children, rather than doing ministry with children from birth to baptism, at home and in school, and for graduation and weddings,” Catherine said.

She was called to UCUC in December, 2001.

When she left California, she had wanted a rural life, like what she experienced in Cottage Grove, where her sister raised sheep.

After moving to Seattle, she found a farm with acreage on Whidbey Island, where she raises two flocks with 18 to 40 Romney sheep, which she raises to sell wool to spin, weave and knit.

Catherine found Whidbey Island convenient, one hour by ferry and through traffic to the church. She spent time on the ferry taking phone calls, and often went by motorcycle, arriving in full motorcycle gear and shifting to pastoral attire.

During her ministry at UCUC, she helped with social justice work in the wider Seattle community, including hosting the Nickelsville Tent City in the church parking lot, working with the Church Council of Greater Seattle and the Muslim Association of Puget Sound and showing up at interfaith and community events.

She led a Bible study for 15 years, worked with youth and children, watching them grow and writing curriculum.

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N-Sid-Sen plans regular season of camps, retreats

The N-Sid-Sen Camp and Retreat Center website lists all camps for the 2022 season opening on a regular basis and registration will soon be open, reported Mark Boyd, managing director.

Campers will be required to be vaccinated and have a booster, but some protocols may change, depending on what happens with the new variant/s, he said.

“We will continue to have campers pick two of the three choices: mask, distance or outdoors,” he said.

Spring and fall camps and retreats are filling up.

“People are excited and want to come back to camp,” Mark said. “Two groups that did not like the protocols were replaced by two who were pleased with the protocols.”

Conversing with colleagues in camps and retreat centers at a recent national gathering, many said they were planning for a normal season.



Mark Boyd and grandson Jaxon ready to dive in at the beach.

Photo courtesy of Mark Boyd

“The challenge to find staff continues,” he said. “We need lifeguards and kitchen staff.”

Mark expects there may not be space for the Families at Camp in 2022, but there are openings through the end of December and into February. He also expects a full calendar with family reunions and weddings.

Cabin 8 is still awaiting approval of the county on plans, with anticipation it will be built

in the spring, because “we will need it for the summer,” he said.

Mark is also working with the U.S. Sailing Association and North Idaho College to offer a Sailing Camp in May.

The theme for 2022 camps is “What’s in a Name,” curriculum from Inside Out Publications, a multi-denominational group.

The spring and summer schedule includes:

- UCC Women’s Retreat is May 13 to 15.
- Junior High and Intermediate Camps are July 3 to 9.
- Senior High Camp July 10 to 16, overlaps with Kids Camp July 10 to 13.
- Plymouth UCC Church’s retreat is July 17 to 23.
- Family Camp 1 for all ages is July 24 to 30.
- Family Camp 2—Camp Together—for all ages is July 31 to Aug. 6.
- The Westminster / Colville / Chewelah UCC retreat is Sept. 9 to 11.
- The Pullman / Richland UCC retreat is Sept. 16 to 18.
- Walla Walla UCC’s retreat Sept. 30 to Oct., overlaps with the Fall Youth Event.

Mark said forestry work replanting trees and trimming of brush around cabins continue.

He added that clergy of any denomination may use the camp for individual retreats.

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

Sheep are more than metaphor, they need to be fed

Continued from page 10

She went on retreats, including service trips to Yakima, Alaska, Campbell Farms, San Juans, and Western Regional Youth Events in Seattle.

“We have had a phenomenal youth ministry with Margaret Swanson,” she said. “All the pastors are responsible for pastoral care, worship leadership, formation and financial strength. Team ministry is a luxury. Not every church can afford a team.

“After being shut down most of the pandemic, we began some in-person worship and activities the middle of October, but continued to do both in person and online. About 40 percent are in person and 60 percent online,” said Catherine.

Her Bible study in person previously drew 20 and in CO-

VID drew 30. Many older people have figured technology.

“People who were not able to come before because they did not have access were able to come,” she said. “Overall there was more access to ministries.

When Catherine started in ministry, dial phones and pay phones were in use. She remembers computers with a black screens and green letters.

“Computers have made it possible for people to be more deeply connected. We need to find deeper ways to hear each other’s stories,” she said.

In technology, she noted that in every grief there is a gift.

“Before COVID, we closed if there was a big snow storm, but with Facebook live, we were able to worship,” she said.

In retirement, Catherine, 70, will worship in other PNC

communities—probably not traveling farther than her living room or home office.

John 21, “Feed my sheep” has been an important verse for Catherine. When COVID began, she opened worship with a video of opening her barn door to release her sheep. She wrote a book on sheep for Pilgrim Press, *Shepherding the Season*.

The sheep are no metaphor to Catherine. She feeds and takes care of them every day.

“**Ministry is also about** real here and now, everyday needs of people,” she said. “My ministry included helping people express their stories and understand what life is about. I did it both by metaphor and being beside people in the moment.

“It was a joy to serve in the PNC and this congregation. I

feel a full heart as I retire and will take more time on the farm to do chores. The farm keeps me busy, as the church has,” she said.

In her last blog post, she said when her sister’s grandchildren say “goodbye” they add, “I love you.” For them, “goodbye I love you” is one long, quickly said word.

“Always there is the reminder that we are connected...and when we say goodbye, that between us there is love.” As she said goodbye to the congregation, she said there is still a connection from 20 years of ministry.

Catherine will travel to visit family, but mostly be home with the sheep.

For information, call 206-321-7604 or email farmerfoote@gmail.com.

Chewelah UCC partners with Hope Street in Colville

Chewelah UCC is making mission connections with the homeless ministry of Hope Street Project in Colville.

Recently Barry Bacon, a physician at Heartland Medicine Colville Clinic, spoke at the church about the ministry he co-founded with his wife, Shelley.

He discussed addressing the call to Christians to meet the needs of neighbors in need in the community.

Although Chewelah does not have a high population of homeless, just over 20 miles north in Colville, there is great need, said Becky Anderson, temporary pastor at Chewelah UCC.

The mission of Hope Street Project is, “To transform lives of people living without shelter or at risk of homelessness in Northeast Washington by creating shelter in connection with services needed to help them to be successful.”

The project has built tiny houses, operates a café where people can drop in, get essentials, take a shower, use a computer, and find resources and services.

They are also renovating buildings for housing, and some of their clients assist in the work, she said.



Food is brought to Chewelah from Hope Street Project in Colville.

Photo courtesy of Chewelah UCC

“I cannot think of a ministry that meets my ‘wish list’ of what a housing/homeless program should offer in a small, rural community to move people from homelessness to success than Hope Street Project. They are hitting so many of the necessary areas and are creative in using donations and volunteers,” said Becky.

Chewelah UCC just sent a van full of supplies to the Hope Street Rest Stop, which is open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Plans are underway to continue to increase the connection

between the congregation and the Hope Street Project.

Donations included toiletries, snacks, dental hygiene items, new socks, plastic forks, canned food items and more.

Hope Street Project operates under the auspices of the Tri-County Community Health Fund (TCCHF), which is a non-profit organization committed to addressing health disparities in Northeastern Washington, she said.

In addition to the outreach program, Chewelah UCC has initiated an in-person and Zoom book study that Becky is

leading on *Waking Up White* by Debby Irving.

About a dozen people gather weekly to discuss the book, which invites self-examination and awareness of how little people know of racial issues, she said.

Since formally retiring two years ago from Newport UCC, Becky has been doing research for writing her own book on race, *I Never Knew: Understanding Racial Issues Today through the Lens of History*.

The author of *Waking Up White* tells of growing up “privileged” but not realizing it, which many in the study group resonate with.

“Debby came to understand that white people often have advantage. They are not ‘racists’ in terms of exhibiting angry or demeaning behavior toward people of color,” she said. “They may never have intentionally used their ‘privilege’ to undermine progress of black people, but they may have acted upon stereotypes.”

Becky said the book invites readers intentionally to choose to be allies with people of color and to find ways to level the playing field everyone.

For information, call 509-935-8046 or visit hopestreet-colville.org.

Metline Falls and Newport UCC team up for mobile market

Newport UCC and Metline Falls Congregational UCC sponsors and volunteers helped at a Second Harvest Mobile Market from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Nov. 11, at Selkirk High School

Twice Metline Falls Congregational UCC has hosted the Mobile Market. The project is sponsored by the Newport UCC through a grant from the USDA’s SNAP program.

“Six members of our congregation joined 16 from Newport UCC,” said Tara Leininger, pastor of MFCUCC.

“Cars were in line waiting



Church volunteers feed people in northern Stevens County.

Photo courtesy of Tara Leininger

by 9:30 a.m. Volunteers started them through as soon as the mobile market was set up.

“We bagged fresh vegetables—carrots, onions and potatoes—put out cans of tuna,

peas and beans, bread, milk, chili mixes, boxed cereal and oatmeal,” she said. “There were fresh flowers for each vehicle.

“Everyone was so grateful,” Tara said.

Most of the volunteers were white-haired, but “energetic and spirit-filled,” she added.

Everything left over went to a drop-off in Metline Falls, to the Selkirk School District and the food bank in Newport.

“Generosity simply exists in the most wonderful of hands and hearts,” Tara said.

More than 180 families were served in about two hours.

“So many people from our area are in great need,” she said.

For information, call 509-406-3301 or email mfcucc1911@yahoo.com.

Pilgrim Firs hosts series of Warrior PATHH Camps

Pilgrim Firs is both thrilled and honored to be hosting the Northwest Passage Warrior PATHH Camps this fall and through next year.

The third camp Dec. 10 to 16 had six men. There were five in the first camp Nov. 10 to 18, and four in the second Dec. 1 to 9. There will be seven in January and more camps through 2022.

PATHH programs help participants transform struggle to strength. Warrior PATHH is the first program designed to cultivate and facilitate Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) for combat veterans and first responders to find a life worth living after the effects of trauma.

Warrior PATHH programs in the Pacific Northwest are based on sound, proven mental health and wellness principles, and decades of research into the proven framework of Posttraumatic Growth, said Chris Berry assistant director of hospitality at Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center.

"These programs use a unique blend of wellness prac-



Warrior PATHH group at Pilgrim Firs joins in song writing.

Photo courtesy of Chris Berry

tices to help participants and their families make peace with their past, live in the present, and begin planning for their future," he said.

Permission to Start Dreaming for Warrior PATHH class 006 began their lifelong journeys home to jobs and families, where they continue connecting through Monthly Huddles, Post-Traumatic Growth Workshops and Warrior PATHH.

"It is such an honor to walk the path with these incredible

human beings," Chris said. "They put the work in, bonded, shared and learned what it means to #strugglewell.

"The program is defined," he said. "It is healing, motivational, growth and life-skills oriented."

The camps have a fitness trainer who works with the participants daily. The program includes transcendental meditation, work in the recently enhanced and rebuilt labyrinth, and equine assisted therapy.

"Their diet while they are with us is an important component of the recovery program," Chris said. "A wonderful chef, Brittany Palmer, created a specialized menu with no processed food. Our food is important to us, and we enjoy working with PATHH and Brittany to accomplish their end goals."

As they continue the next 18 months working with their classmates and guides on their wellness practices, they will know that their stories are important and that their struggles will make them stronger.

The program connects men on similar paths and builds teams for them to hold each other accountable.

"To host these brave warriors and their guides is a learning experience for all of us here," Chris said. "It was profoundly moving and enlightening. These camps reach deeply into our mission and community involvement."

For information, call 253-273-5930 or email chris@pilgrim-firs.org.

PNC Men's Retreat plans to be held in person

PNC-UCC Men's Retreat at Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center will be the weekend of Jan. 28 to 30, 2022, with an optional Silent Retreat on Thursday, Jan. 27.

Although last year's zoom retreat was a success, the Conference Men's Retreat Planning Committee missed being together. So this year, they are planning an in-person retreat.

The topic is "Gratitude and Practices to Enhance Gratefulness." Sessions will draw from the book, *Grateful: the Transformative Power of Giving Thanks* by Diana Butler Bass.

The retreat begins with Friday dinner and goes through Sunday breakfast with lodging for two nights and five meals.

"These are difficult times



Pilgrim Firs has set up an outdoor dining area on the patio.

Photo courtest of Pilgrim Firs

for many of us, so discounted pricing is available on request," said Rick Russell of the Planning Committee.

The committee has been wrestling with how to make the retreat as safe as possible. While unable to guarantee a risk-free retreat, organizers set guidelines and ask that: 1) Participants must be vaccinated and, if eli-

gible, have a booster. 2) Everyone is masked except when eating, which may be outside in a covered area with patio heaters. 3) No more than two stay in a room, unless they are in a "bubble." 4) Singing is a major part of retreats, but it may not be possible to sing as a group. There will be music and humming.

"There is next year, so those

uncomfortable with the risk should not come," said Rick. "Pilgrim Firs has poor Wi-Fi connectivity so we are unable to offer an online option."

He said the retreat must comply with state, local and conference center guidelines, which may change before the retreat, so updates will be sent.

Other members of the Conference Men's Retreat Planning Committee are Charlie Torres, Don Jenkins, Hans Dankers, Jim Gaudino, Larry Kiriluk, and Paul Withington.

Registration is at [pilgrim-firs.org](http://www.pilgrim-firs.org) or <http://www.ultra-camp.com/info/sessiondetail.aspx?idCamp=367&campCode=nss&idSession=339807>.

For information, email myrtos@comcast.net.