



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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November-December 2010

UCC students study theology at Seattle U



Karen Kennell, an STM student, is part-time licensed pastor at Fountleroy UCC.

Ecumenical theological studies programs includes 13 UCC students

Dee Eisenhauer describes Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry as "a lively model of creative cooperation in theological studies connected with a Jesuit school that emphasizes doing justice."

The pastor of Eagle Harbor UCC in Bainbridge Island co-chairs the executive board for the STM, which recently reorganized, dropping separate boards for its former Institute of Ecumenical Theological Studies and Institute for Catholic Theological Studies.

"We're 'ecumenical,' too," said Catholics.

"Imagine a priest unpacking words with a Baptist or a Catholic sister helping people claim their spiritual wide in courses with Community of Christ, Mennonite, Unitarian Universalist, United Church of Christ, United Methodist, Presbyterian and Episcopal stu-

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LED justice training gives Conference 20 trainers

Twenty regional UCC justice trainers were trained and certified as Justice Leaders Engaging and Developing (Justice-LED) at the close of a three-day workshop Oct. 14 to 16 at Plymouth UCC in Seattle.

Participants from Nevada and Oregon joined 18 from the PNC.

The Christian Life Service and Action Committee decided the training would be a strategic way to help them serve the conference. Eight CLSA members were involved. Kathy Rule, a student in Seattle University's School of Theology and Ministry, helped organize the event with national UCC co-trainer for Justice LED, Lauren Cannon, interim minister for faith formation and service at Plymouth. Other national co-trainers came from the Northern California-Nevada

Conference and regional trainer, Deeg Nelson of Pilgrim Firs.

The 20 are now ready to offer Justice-LED Trainings so that teams of two or three leaders from a congregation can bring their church tools to help discern the community's new or next direction in justice work. Some trainings will be at Pilgrim Firs and as workshops at the 2011 Annual Meeting in April.



Lauren Cannon and Drew Nettinga, associate conference minister Northern California Nevada, co-lead session.

For information, visit www.ucc.org/justice/training or contact Lauren at lcaannon@plymouthchurchseattle.org.

Problems stem from approach to conflict

Conference Comments



By Mike Denton
Conference
Minister

Reflections
on conflict
in election
season
lends insight
into conflicts
in the life
of churches.

OK, ok... I know its after the heights of the voting season and many of you are tired of hearing about it, thinking about it, etc., etc. Regardless of how relieved I may not be about all of the results from this last election cycle, I am relieved the darn thing's over. Elections have become nastier, louder and cruder.

I go in to each voting season with low expectations and those expectations have been pretty consistently lowered further. I was tired of this round of things weeks ago and am thrilled its done. I'm done with it.

Well, almost done. In this last election cycle, many of the pre-voting polls were inconclusive because the "undecided" block of folks were large enough to make the results of many polls inconclusive. Its a growing voting block, and I think churches have something to learn from "the undecideds."

There have been times I've thought the differences were so clear that I couldn't figure out what this group of folks could exactly be undecided about. In the last presidential cycle, in particular, this group was frequently derided; it was suggested they were naive, stupid and excessively wishy washy.

According to Pew Research polls, those who describe themselves as "undecided" make up about 7 percent of likely voters and their numbers are increasing.

In an Associated Press poll released a week before Nov. 2, a whopping third of those polled said they were undecided about who to vote for in the upcoming congressional election. As these numbers increase, so does interest in finding out how those who describe themselves as undecided think.

There were two ideas that came from a recent study by Drew Westen, professor of psychology at Emory University, about undecided voters that stood out to me.

- The first was that undecided voters tended to be pragmatists. They don't have strong beliefs but simply want to see solutions and "don't care if they come from the right or left."
- The second was that undecided voters are

less likely to believe inaccurate or incomplete information that comes from candidates and backers of various initiatives than are decided voters.

These really are good reasons to remain undecided. Let's think about instances of heightened conflict we've been in. Essentially, election campaigns are a period of orchestrated conflict (in the midst of much larger conflicts) by folks who are trying to convince/manipulate us with the presentation of their perspectives.

Although usually to a different degree than an election, most heightened conflicts have this same element; disagreements in the contexts of larger conflicts where people are trying to convince/manipulate us to agree with them.

One of my frequent prayers is for "congregations in conflict and those that think they aren't."

Conflict is a normal and natural part of human life and so of course its part of church life. The problems don't come from the existence of conflict but by the way we approach it.

Most of these problems come from our impulse to choose a side instead of trying to solve the problem. Once we've taken a side, we tend to get so personally invested that we only believe what we hear from "our side."

We don't take enough time to figure out whether what we're hearing may be based on perspective, partial truths, projections or even outright falsehoods. The conflict becomes exacerbated instead of improved.

I think we have quite a lot to learn from "the undecideds." It's not as much that they never make a decision as much that they delay it.

Without question, there are urgent problems in the world where decisiveness is needed but, more often than not, it's worth taking the time to get the facts.

What are those places in our congregational lives where it might be helpful to move from trying to "win and argument" to solving a problem?

How sure are we that all the information that we have about this problem is an accurate description of the problem as opposed to a percep-

Fund raising helps cover costs of health insurance

The PNC's Insurance Assistance Fund, formerly the Pastors' Insurance Fund, still seeks to help struggling churches and retired pastors and their spouses afford health insurance, said Jane Sorenson, chair of the Stewardship Committee's subcommittee for the fund.

Previously the assistance was available to all churches and retired clergy, but with rising premiums, the per capita support was a burden on con-

gregations. The new program is need based, she said. Funds are raised by special offerings.

In 2009, the conference provided \$34,700 to 11 retired clergy or spouses, and \$36,400 to nine churches.

The PNC asks churches to contribute to offerings, to pray for those needing the assistance and to let retired pastors, spouses and churches know the assistance is available.

Jane said that pastors who

lived in parsonages have more financial stress in retirement, and churches that find it hard to pay utilities struggle to pay \$2,000 to \$5,000 for their pastor's health insurance.

Retired pastors and churches must apply for assistance by Nov. 15.

Churches are helped for three years and then there is a re-evaluation of the need.

For information, call 360-739-8744.

Retired clergy, their spouses and struggling churches may apply for assistance with health insurance.

Transitions announced

Jim CastroLang will be installed Nov. 13 as pastor of First Congregational UCC in Colville.

Kerby Jewell Avedovech will be ordained on Nov. 20 at Tolt UCC in Carnation. She will serve a church in Indiana.

2011 retreats, camps scheduled

The 2010 retreats and camps have been set for Pilgrim Firs and N-Sid-Sen.

Pilgrim Firs retreats start with Junior High Mid-Winter, Jan. 7 to 9, led by Mark Boyd of United Churches in Olympia, and Senior High Mid-Winter, Jan. 14 to 16 led by Margaret Iribarra and Kaila Russell of University Congregational UCC.

The Men's Retreat will be held Feb. 3 to 6, and the Women's Retreat is March 25 to 27.

Work Camp at Pilgrim Firs is May 27 to 30, followed by the GLBTQ Spiritual Retreat at Pilgrim Firs, June 3 to 5, and the Young Adult Retreat June 24 to 26.

The 2011 PNC Leadership Retreat will be June 17 to 19 at Pilgrim Firs.

Mid-Winter Youth Retreat at N-Sid-Sen will be held March 11 to 13; the Women's Retreat will be May 20 to 22, and Work Camp is June 12 to 18.

Summer camps at Pilgrim Firs are Senior High, July 3 to 9; July 10 to 16, Junior High; Intermediate, July 17 to 23; Kids, July 24 to 27, and Family, August 21 to 25.

N-Sid-Sen camps are Kids, June 26 to 29; Intermediate, July 10 to 16; Senior High Aqua, July 17 to 23; Family Camp #1, July 31 to Aug. 6; Junior High Aqua, Aug. 7 to 13, and Family Camp #2, Aug. 14 to 20.

For information, call 360-876-2031 or

208-689-3489 or visit pilgrimfirs.org or n-sid-sen.org,

Two Work Camps set in 2011

Randy Crowe, managing director at N-Sid-Sen will lead the 2011 Work Camp in New Orleans, continuing with assistance through the Little Farms UCC to rebuild homes after Hurricane Katrina.

Bobbi Virta, pastor at Ferndale UCC will lead her fourth work camp to New Orleans April 2 to 9.

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

Clergy Retreat is Jan. 30 to Feb. 1 at Pilgrim Firs

"Clergy Support and Renewal" is the theme for the 2011 Clergy Retreat from Sunday, Jan. 30, to Tuesday, Feb. 1, at Pilgrim Firs.

Annual Meeting will be held April 29 to May 1 in Seattle

The Annual Meeting Planning Committee is making arrangements for logistics related to holding the first Annual Meeting in years in a church.

The gathering is planned for Friday through Sunday, April 29 to May 1, at University Congregational UCC in Seattle. They are recruiting host homes to save hotel costs.

For information, call 206-725-8383.

James Forbes speak at WAC

James Forbes, Jr., pastor emeritus of Riverside Church in New York City, will

be featured speaker for the Annual Awards Dinner of the Washington Association of Churches on Sunday, Dec. 5, at University Christian, 4731 15th Ave NE in Seattle.

Forbes, who is recognized for his preaching and advocacy for social justice, will speak on "Let Justice Light Our Way," said Alice Woldt, director of the WAC.

The WAC is seeking nominees of ecumenical and interfaith programs and leaders to honor for their leadership in ecumenism, justice and interreligious relationships.

The WAC and Lutheran Public Policy Office will give presentations on issues before the Washington State Legislature at the Eastern Washington Legislative Conference from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 22, at the Cathedral of St. John in Spokane, and on Saturday, Feb. 12, at St. Paul's Catholic Church in Yakima.

For information, call 206-625-9790 or visit thewac.org.

Seven attend MissionWorks

Seven UCC and Disciple from the Northwest attended the fifth biennial MissionWorks! Festival Oct. 7 to 9 in Cleveland.

Clint Cannon, Ed Evans, Lillian Moir, Rick and Jennifer Russell, Lloyd Van Vactor and John Williams are available to share what they learned about mission as accompaniment, about missionaries and global partnerships, and about ways UCC churches and conferences are involved.

For information, call 360-683-4704.

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Ecumenical interchange deepens faith at STM

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dents,” Dee posited. “It’s the only seminary *founded* to be an ecumenical learning institution for Protestants and Catholics.”

Among 272 students at the STM in 2009-10 were 13 UCC students, along with students from 17 faith traditions.

With various regional Catholic partners, the other faith partners are the African Methodist Episcopal, American Baptist, Christian (Disciples of Christ), Church of the Brethren, Community of Christ, Episcopal, ELCA Lutheran, Mennonite, Presbyterian (USA), Unitarian Universalist, United Church of Christ and United Methodist churches.

People of other denominations attend, so “the diversity makes an exciting learning environment,” Dee said.

While many of the 80 Protestant students are working on master of divinity degrees, many Roman Catholic students are working on master of arts in pastoral studies. It’s a seminary for future Protestant clergy, but not for Catholic priests.

In addition to those degrees, the STM offers master’s of arts in transformational spirituality, pastoral counseling and transformational leadership.

Dee said the transforma-



Heather McKendry, left, of First Congregational in Bellingham, is a first year student in the transformational leadership program, and Susan Fairo, a sixth year MDiv student from University UCC

tional leadership program includes a dual degree with the law school, preparing students to work in mediation. The STM also hopes to develop dual degrees with the nursing, business and education schools, and to develop distance education in partnership with Heritage College in Toppennish.

“It’s great to have a place for students interested in ministry to go to seminary without leaving the conference,” Dee said. “It’s also ideal for us in the UCC with our ecumenical interest and identity to send students to seminary and expose them to students from different

traditions. It’s practical ecumenical cooperation of learning to be good neighbors.”

Many STM graduates are employed in the PNC conference, she said.

The STM started in 1997 and included the Institute for Ecumenical Theological Studies and the Institute of Catholic Theological Studies, each with separate boards.

The previous experience of the stand-alone Northwest Theological Union from 1984 to 1990 “let us know there was a market,” said Sue Hogan, marketing and communication director at Seattle University.

The first three years, the STM operated under a memorandum of understanding with Seattle University. In 2000, it became a university program and was accredited by the Association of Theological Schools, which recently granted accreditation for another 10 years, Sue explained.

The IETS and ICTS names were dropped last year. Having a common board reflects the reality that students are in classes together, said Dee.

The two institutes have been offering a common core curriculum, with each denominational institution setting its requirements for polity studies

and worship.

“Students need to learn from their own traditions, not only officially but also unofficially. They need to be ready to discuss daily what their church believes and does, because students ask each other,” Dee said. “It helps them appreciate their traditions and those of others.”

The STM has 15 full-time faculty, nine of whom are Roman Catholic, as well as several adjunct faculty, including four from the UCC.

David Kratz and Greg Turner are adjunct faculty responsible for polity classes. Rick Russell teaches pastoral care and Carol Scott Kassner teaches a year-long practicum in spiritual retreats.

Catherine Foote serves as liturgical consultant and Tara Barber connects students with the Committee on Ministry.

Sophie Morse, who completed the four-year program in June, valued having classes taught by pastors with practical experience.

In a class on ecumenical theology, students wrote on official positions of their denominations and one other on baptism, Eucharist and ministry.

“We presented our papers orally, listening and learning,” Sophie said, often saying, “I didn’t know *that* church believed *that*.”

Coming from New England where her parents’ generation still grappled with the Catholic-Protestant divide, she felt fortunate to have done studies that bridged that divide and also fostered dialogue between conservative and progressive divisions in the faith community.”

Engaging students spiritually, emotionally and intellectually, the STM seeks to educate “women and men as leaders in Christian ministry to serve, challenge, and heal churches, communities and all creation.”

For information, call 206-842-4657 or 206-926-5583.



Sophie Morse graduated with an MDiv in June.

Cradle UCCers teach polity to seminarians

Retired UCC pastor Greg Turner and Fautleroy UCC pastor David Kratz co-teach a two-part winter-quarter UCC polity class with the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University.

The 10-week class from 1:30 to 4:15 p.m., Thursdays, will focus on polity and ministry in 2011. In 2012, they will teach a second class on history and ministry. They offer the classes two of three years.

Greg and David also teach a weekend polity course in Eastern Washington, when the East Side Committee on Ministry recruits enough people, and they have led a polity seminar at Annual Meeting.

Their courses are authorized by the Committee on Ministry as pre-ordination courses or courses for people seeking privilege of call when they transfer from another denomination.

Greg also teaches a 25-hour 10-week polity course for people unable to take the STM course on the regular schedule.

"Many people come into the UCC from other denominations," said David, "so it's important for them to understand our ethos and the facts of our multi-splendored history."

Both grew up in UCC churches—Greg the son of Dale Turner who was pastor for 24 years at University Congregational UCC, after serving a Lawrence, Kans., UCC church, and David, the son of a Reformed, Evangelical and Reformed and then UCC pastor in Allentown, Penna.

Greg retired to Seattle to care for his aging parents. Since his father's death, he has been developing Dale Turner legacy resources with his father's sermons, newspaper columns and five books, along with teaching at the STM and teaching adult education at University UCC.

"Covenantal theology and polity give us understanding of



Greg Turner

how ministry happens in a non-hierarchical church," explained Greg, who earned a doctor of ministries degree in 1997 from Andover Newton Theological Seminary in the polity of covenantal theology.

"Students need to understand the joys and frustrations of working in a setting where relationships of substance honor many points of view and allow for the ability to provide administration to bring the many points of view together," explained Greg.

UCC members have to be responsible because of the freedom and authority given, both said, agreeing that it's not as easy as some other systems.

Through history, Eden Seminary graduate David said, covenant has taken different shapes.

"It's important to take time with the whole tradition of the UCC and its predecessor denominations back to the Reformation," he pointed out. "It's about learning who we are and how we came to be where we are. Some see the UCC as only open and affirming or as only social justice, because that's what draws them

"Covenant is a real life issue about how we organize our life as the gathered people of God, people who make prom-

ises to each other about how they will live the live together as Christ intends," he said. "We are shaped not by rules or doctrine, but by our common commitment to each other, the wider church and to God.

"There is always a tension between the autonomy of the local church and a congregations's relationship with the conference and national church," David said, adding that one element in covenant is the recognition of lay authority.

Another facet of UCC theology is the ability to deal with doubting as an integral part of faith.

"It's fun to grapple with issues and see students grapple with them," said Greg, who served churches in Brussels, Denver, Corvallis and Concord (N.H.) after graduating from Yale Divinity School in 1970.

Based on students in the STM classes, he believes "we are good shape for the future."

Similarly, David, whose 38 years in ministry have been at Olympia, in Lewiston and now in Seattle, enjoys the opportunity to walk students through the theological heritage of the UCC statement of faith, the Heidelberg catechism and the Apostles' creed, looking at the different ways people formulated their beliefs.



David Kratz at a baptism

"Some think that we can believe anything we want, but we need to be familiar with our heritage. Having great freedom does not mean anything if it's in a vacuum," said David, who earned a doctor of ministries degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 2003.

While he believes many in the UCC may appreciate the intellectual aspect of faith, he feels that many move from their head-based faith to their hearts and following through with actions.

"It's not a matter of piety or politics, but recognizing that devotional life and personal morality lead to and from action with other people to have impact on the world," David said. "We try to help students reclaim and hold those elements of faith together."

He recognizes that in his childhood, having Protestants and Catholics study for ministry in a Jesuit school would not have happened.

"The students have rich ecumenical relationships, while keeping and deepening their identities coming from different parts of the church," David said. "The school integrates and respects the students' different traditions."

For information, call 206-525-8885 or 206-932-5600.

Consultant reports on communication survey

Conference to Discuss Next Steps in Response to Communications and Technology Assessment

The Conference Council and Board of Directors received a briefing on Nov. 6, on the results of the Communications and Technology Assessment. The study was commissioned by the conference and completed by Kathleen Hosfeld of Hosfeld & Associates, Inc., a Seattle consulting firm.

The conference commissioned the study to “identify more effective ways to use the gifts and skills within the conference through efficient modern communications means, methods and technology.”

According to Kathleen, who is also moderator of All Pilgrims UCC in Seattle, the study combined surveys, in-

terviews and professional assessment to respond to 30 specific questions about communications means, methods and equipment used by churches, conference staff and conference leadership. Surveys and interviews reached about 50 percent of the PNC churches, with representation on both sides of the Cascades.

Under the leadership of Conference Minister Mike Denton, new life and enthusiasm have infused the PNC leadership structure. As new energy flows in to revitalize its role in engaging member churches and doing ministry, the conference lacks basic communications infrastructure to support full participation, to further facilitate such revitalization or to provide transparency of action.

The report documents a

significant “digital divide,” in which many churches have virtually no communications technology or infrastructure. This report says that the PNC as a whole, and the churches within it, lag behind nonprofit organizations of comparable size in communications practice and technology adoption.

The study also found that clergy who lead churches, congregation members, conference leaders, specialized ministers and youth have distinctly separate needs for communication, and varying degrees of interest in bettering their technology proficiency.

Hosfeld & Associates included in the report a series of recommendations for how to address technology needs and desires going forward.

One key recommendation was to bring all churches up

to a baseline level for email, Internet, Website and distance meeting equipment.

Another recommendation is to provide technical support and training to establish baseline proficiency with communications technology within the Conference.

Mike will be meeting with Kristine Zakarison, moderator, and Brandon Duran, moderator-elect, to digest the report in detail, to identify implications for the conference and identify next steps in response to the report’s findings.

Copies of the report are available for download from the Communications and Technology project blog, <http://pncucccomtech.blogspot.com/>

Those without digital access can request a printed copy from the Conference Office.

Conference moderator seeks feedback on report

By Kristine Zakarison - Conference Moderator and pastor of Community Congregational UCC in Pullman

As we engage in ministry and create community, we know communication is critical. It’s not about “new news” but about the Christian community as “one body with many members,” as Paul said. Only when they communicate and value one another do the individual members truly become the body of Christ.

Kathleen Hosfeld’s report on “Technology and Communication in the Pacific Northwest Conference UCC” reminds me that communication is at the heart of everything—who we are, our strengths and weaknesses. It is instrumental to living into a vision of who we are becoming as one body, gathered in the name of and doing the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Through surveys, interviews, observation and research, Kathleen brings an intriguing snapshot of who we are and how we are or are not using technology both to “get the word out” about who we understand ourselves to be, and to foster dialogue and enable us to effectively create “a new thing” in the Pacific Northwest.

The report gives us concrete informa-

tion to help us help congregations address their technology needs. As a conference, we can create a tangible path to enhance communication in congregations and communicate effectively on the conference level.

With this information, our next step is to work with the Stewardship and Church Development Committees to offer resources and support to assure all our congregations have the ability to share their current ministries effectively and to link us more closely as we foster dialogue and create ministry together.

Some observations and findings of Kathleen’s report to the recent Conference Council meeting particularly intrigued me:

“There is a sense of overall vibrancy of the Conference: It doesn’t feel like the PNC is *coming* back, it feels like you’re *BACK!*” Those working in leadership are enthusiastic about the work their committees are doing and want to share it.

• “Many individuals and congregations, however, lack knowledge about the resources available through committee work that could enhance their ministries. It is not obvious to committees how to let congregations know what they are doing, or create communication that would help

the committees assist congregations.

• The overall level of technology in the conference lags behind even the standard of equivalent nonprofits. Of our 84 churches, only 54 have websites. Some lack access to email. Of those with websites, many congregations find them hard to maintain, because they have been created with older technology that relies on a specialist. Even more sophisticated church websites lack what is needed for the site to show up in a search engine, particularly if a searcher who knows nothing about the UCC.

• In reviewing church websites, she found many did not convey the character, uniqueness or “charism” of the churches. Many are more geared to provide current members with information, than to excite someone searching for a church home about who we are and what we do.

Kathleen’s report is available at online. After reading it, send responses to kristine@pullman.com. How can improving technology and communication enhance your ministry, local church or community “do a new thing,” or connect to the exciting conversation of the Pacific Northwest Conference? What are your priorities and dreams?

North Idaho roots give pastor rapport with communities

Having grown up in Sandpoint, Bob Evans sees himself as continuing to live an adventure as he has returned to North Idaho to serve the 30-member Wallace United Church of Christ and the 35-member Osburn Community Baptist Church five minutes away.

“Serving these churches the last three years has taught me to speak to conservatives and progressives, and to love both. They are all the people of God and are people I’m used to,” Bob said.

Identifying as an adventurer in life, he worked 17 years as a commercial fisherman in Alaska. He’d return to Idaho in the off seasons to log and mine. So he understands North Idahoans’ work experiences, everyday lives and love of the outdoors. He talks their language.

“I’m an **adventurer** in the theological spectrum, too,” he said. “Having left the area and returned, I preach to people who have traveled and those who always lived here.

“I’m learning how to speak with compassion to those who hold fundamentalist Christian views, choosing parts of the Bible to justify war and hate Muslims,” Bob said. “I speak to them with compassion, seeking to understand and find a way to talk with them.”

When he sees people pick on people on the edges of society, however, it stirs his feisty side because he remembers being picked on as “a small guy.” He said he has “broken through” to some who thought they were supposed to take the Bible literally.

“**People want to talk** about God’s love for them, not be threatened with hell. To get them out of a bar or off drugs is tough,” said Bob, who goes into the bars to talk with people who would not come to church.

He also understands their rejection of church.

As a second grader in a

Methodist church in Missoula, Mont., he became “a fan of Jesus,” but was puzzled about Jesus “being murdered on a cross then resurrected.” That led the Vietnam vet to study the Bible, then leave the church and practice Buddhism for a while, which shined more light on his Christianity.

In 1991, a Lutheran minister doing a boat ministry in Alaska, took on his questions about Christianity.

“**I realized Christians** were asking the questions I was asking. I was ready to come back to a church of compassion and justice,” Bob said.

In 2001, he went to Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine, graduating in 2005 in a program in which he simultaneously completed an undergraduate degree at Sheldon Jackson College in Sitka and the master’s of divinity.

Bob chose Bangor, a UCC seminary with students from many mainline denominations, because it was a progressive school in a small town. He was student pastor in Kenduskeag, Me., and shifted from the Presbyterian Church (USA) to the UCC, going in-care with Newport UCC.

Starting in ministry at 61, he incorporates his lifelong love of music—from playing in a teen band, groups in Portland and Las Vegas, and on a TV show in Toronto—to communicate to people in the church and community. Bob has played, taught and composed country, fusion, jazz and rock music.

“Because people want a message of hope, we have a service with music to draw people from the community for great songs with good theology,” he said. “To love people into faith is tough, even though they want love.”

Aware that people hear the same sermon or music in different ways, he has also developed a coffee house service that includes a Scripture story, songs



To communicate, Bob Evans uses music as part of his ministry.

and a meditation that apply to everyday living.

“Music pulls more people from the community than a traditional service,” he said.

“**Music speaks** to everyone,” said Bob, who describes himself as a product of 1960s and 1970s music. Songs like “Put a Little Love in Your Heart,” “Try a Little Kindness,” and “Blowing in the Wind” say more to him than some hymns.

“They speak to people in the pews, too,” he said.

Songs help him tell of real life. “I Saw God Today,” performed by George Strait, speaks of seeing God in childbirth, a flower blooming through cement and in everyday life. For Bob, it’s “the heart of the gospel without threatening theology.”

He also does many songs written by Charlie Packard, songs about spiritual struggles.

Bob played Charlie’s song, “Over the Wall,” at an Annual Meeting. It’s about “walls created by our problems from God’s point of view.” Drugs are a wall for some unemployed young people in the area. Church polity is a wall for others.

“God calls us over these walls,” he said.

“Hasty Words,” another song Bob often sings, warns about hurting friends with words and urges people to let love and forgiveness flow freely.

Despite the Silver Valley’s reputation as being conservative, he said, there are many progressives. The UCC church, which had tabled a decision on open and affirming before he came, voted to be open and affirming after he came.

“I encouraged them to reflect on what their hearts were telling them. I visited people one-to-one. People realized everyone is fully human, created in God’s image and loved by God. If we know something is right, we need the courage to stand for it,” Bob said.

While some clergy colleagues see him as a heretic, he works with others on ecumenical Thanksgiving and Easter services, and reaching out to serve poor people with meals and donations to the food bank.

For information, call 208-753-6351 or email sevans_46@yahoo.com.

Pastors welcome Guatemalan student into their family

Parenting experience enhances pastoral skills

Peter Ilgenfritz and David Shull were on vacation in August 2009 when they checked their email and read about need for a home for 18-year-old Pedro from Guatemala. He aged out of his foster home while seeking political asylum.

The two, who had tried to adopt a child, looked at each other and agreed with a glance that's what they wanted to do.

They emailed Lutheran Community Services and were approved. They returned home on a Tuesday and Pedro moved in on Wednesday. They met with his social workers and started him in a bilingual program in the Seattle schools. This year at 19, Pedro is a 10th grader.

David said he was growing tired of just preaching about the need to offer hospitality and make a home for strangers.

"I felt I needed to do radical hospitality to I understand and follow Jesus without making room for an outsider," he said, pointing out how different this is from going to a protest for justice. It's a way to embody open-armed welcome of Jesus as one who is forgotten and vulnerable. This is also a way to do justice."

"He will be with us as long as he is in this country. His asylum is being considered soon," said Peter, who is pastor at University Congregational UCC, where both served until five years ago.

"He is a gift, adding adventure of jumping into parenting's challenges and joys to our lives," he said.

With both in ministry, they knew it would be hard to be pastors and have children.



Peter Ilgenfritz, Pedro and David Shull vacation in California.

"With Pedro, it clicked," said Peter, who grew up in a UCC church in Lynnfield, Mass. He attended Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y., and Yale Divinity School in Hartford, Conn., where he met David. In 1987, Peter graduated and went to a UCC church in Ithaca, N.Y., until moving to Chicago to start an HIV and AIDS support organization.

David grew up in Wooster, Ohio, graduated in political science in 1981 from Carleton College in Minnesota and worked three years as a legislative aide in the Ohio house of representatives. After Yale, he was pastor two years near Pittsburgh. In 1991, he earned a masters in social work at the University of Chicago and did family therapy for three years before he and Peter were called to University UCC.

In 2007, David started the Recovery Cafe in Seattle for people traumatized by homelessness, addictions and mental health challenges, along with doing a part-time therapy practice and beginning as half-time pastor at Spirit of Peace UCC in Sammamish.

David realizes that he also seeks to do justice at the cafe, as he welcomes people many seek to avoid.

In 2006, David had spent three months in an intensive Spanish class in Guatemala, not knowing what was ahead.

Because Pedro is Catholic, he attends the Spanish Mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church. In Guatemala, however, Spanish is not his first language. A Mayan indigenous language is his first language.

In April, David went to Pedro's home community near Lake Atitlan, where he met Pedro's mother, grandmother and siblings.

"I saw his house and the fields where he played soccer," David said.

He showed Pedro's family pictures of him.

Pedro and his family talk by phone every week.

Since Pedro has lived with them, they have learned that human trafficking is behind the presence of some immigrants in the United States.

"We often assume we know how and why all immigrants are in the U.S. illegally. We don't realize how many people are here without documents because of human trafficking."

Pedro had been threatened by gangs in Guatemala, who killed some of his family members, Peter said.

Pedro was kidnapped three years ago. Because his family did not have ransom money, he was taken to the Arizona desert. His kidnapers expected him to work for a coyote to raise the ransom, but the border patrol showed up, took him into custody and entered him into the political asylum process.

"It's an incredible time of blooming, growth and self-learning for us. I enjoy being a parent, except when I haven't," commented Peter. "Being a pastor, I work with many children and youth, but now I have learned some of what parents experience."

Now he feels he can better connect and deepen his ties with parents of teens he works with at church.

"I share my stumbling and sometimes successes, as Dave and I work to help Pedro overcome the traumas of his past so they do not define his life," Peter said. "It teaches me to live in the present, because we do not know the future."

"It has deepened my respect for people from other countries who end up here. He did not choose to come, but at age 16 was dumped in the Arizona desert," David said.

"Uncertain if he will be granted asylum, we live in ambiguity and uncertainty, but the human spirit does not need certainty, he said.

"Pedro stretches us," he said. "We have learned to see the world through his eyes and have picked up his passion for soccer."

"It's a blessing to have someone in our home day-to-day to build a close relationship with," David added.

David's and Peter's prayer is that the resolution to his asylum case will what is best for Pedro.

For information, call 206-725-3785.

Pilgrim Firs has new signs, paint, map and more

Youth director puts plumbing skills to work at camp

Mark Boyd has made visible and practical improvements—wooden cabin signs, Pilgrim-red buildings, preventative maintenance, new playground equipment and more—at Pilgrim Firs.

As full-time staff, he has removed old, metal cabin signs and replaced them with wood signs that fit the camp setting. He has updated the camp map and put it in a central location.

Given that the cabin names are for pilgrims and theologians, work campers put up plaques in each cabin that tell about the person for whom the cabin is named.

“The names are all men, so I am looking up names of founding mothers and putting up plaques in Huckeberry House telling about them,” added Mark, who is also part-time youth pastor at United Churches in Olympia.

To add to the continuity of camp buildings, all are now the same color, rather than several different colors.

“It saves money to buy paint in bulk” he said. “The color, fittingly, is ‘Pilgrim Red.’”

Now Huckeberry Lodge, cabins and South Lodge are the same color.

Mark seeks to help simplify maintenance by preventative measures.

For example, he has set up schedules for replacing parts before they are broken and cause more expensive, emergency maintenance.

When he first began working at Pilgrim Firs in September 2009, there was concern about sand in the water clogging the aerators in faucets. So he put a sand separator in the pump house to eliminate the continual need to buy replacement aerators.

He knew what to do from his work in plumbing and with city water departments.

Another addition is an out-



Mark Boyd, with the help of Murphy the cat, put together playground equipment.

side playground structure for children who come to camp.

“The improvements are designed so people can come to camp and be comfortable without feeling it’s commercial,” he said.

Mark takes care to schedule mowing, chopping and noisy maintenance tasks for times when groups are not there.

“When people come, we need to provide a quiet space for them,” he said.

“The main thing camps should offer is a time to get away, to retreat in the sense of relaxing and not hiding. People come to retreats tired. It’s important to help them relax and take time away from what they left at home or work,” he said.

Mark has helped many years directing junior high camps in the winter and summer.

“Work with youth is an incredibly important way to give back,” he said. “Youth teach

us. We need to provide them with opportunities.”

“Pray...for What?” is the 2011 Mid-Winter junior high retreat theme.

“We’ll look at why we pray, what is prayer and how do we pray,” Mark said.

“Teens come to camp to have fun, but when they come, it’s a chance to open doors for them to talk about faith topics,” he explained.

“Youth come regardless of the theme, but it’s important to remind campers we are a church camp,” he said. “They need to know about what the community of faith does and why.”

So those attending mid-winter retreats will reflect on why they say grace and say prayers in worship.

It’s up to Mark and other retreat directors to find fun ways to reach them with the theme.

He likes working with junior high because they aren’t

afraid to ask questions and are willing to be honest.

“Junior high youth will probe questions,” he said.

“Camp gives youth a place to be themselves with acceptance, not judgement, and in that climate, to discover who they are,” Mark said.

Mark works at Pilgrim Firs from Wednesday mornings to Saturday evenings. He is in Olympia, where he has served on staff for 11 years, from Sunday through Tuesday.

He first became involved at United Churches 16 years ago, coming to the church with no prior church affiliation. He grew up in the Northwest, living mostly in Olympia, doing plumbing and other work with a family business.

He soon became involved with Pilgrim Firs camps.

For information, call 360876-2031 or visit www.pilgrimfirs.org.

Matt Smith starts new campus ministry from old one

Cooperative Ministries at the UW has been renamed the Progressive Christians at the UW

Cooperative Ministries at the University of Washington in Seattle has changed the name of its campus ministry to Progressive Christians at the University of Washington to reach out to today's students, not to shift from ecumenical partnership.

Since former campus minister Monica Corsaro left in 2007 to work with the Greater Seattle Council of Churches, the campus ministry has been dormant, said Matt Smith, who began as campus minister in July.

The name change, Matt said, is "to say who we are, where we are at and what we are" in contrast to the historic name that spoke of ties and associations, but connects less with students.

"Students from the progressive Christian community can look at the roster of student groups and see us. The name gives us visibility," he said, adding that he has calls from students because of the new name.

"We hope the name 'progressive' has resonance and meaning for the students, who tend to be less tied to historical denominations but seek connection with a faith community."

Matt also plans to make denominational ties visible, but not prominent.

The 10-member board, with representatives from the United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, American Baptist, United Methodist and Presbyterian Church USA, is completing the sale of its property at Covenant House, which previously housed the campus ministry.

It is being sold to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which will carry on campus ministry with the Episcopalians in that location.

With funds that will be paid annually over the next 10 years, the goal is to establish an endowment to support campus ministry, said Catherine Foote, a member of the pastoral team at University Congregational UCC and a member of the CMHE board.

Each denomination owns a different percent of the property, which has complicated the sale, Matt said. Each denomination has agreed to receive and transfer to CMHE their share of the proceeds to fund the campus ministry.

University Congregational UCC is providing space for an office and gathering space in Pilgrim Room, originally intended for campus ministry. Other university churches are also offering space for gatherings.

Partners include University Christian, University Baptist, University Temple Methodist and a Presbyterian representative, said Catherine.

"We seek to strengthen our connection with the local university congregations, including University Lutheran and Christ Church Episcopal," she said.

Before July, Matt worked a near as multi-faith minister at Seattle University, chaplain on the campus for everyone who was not Catholic.

While completing studies at Pacific School of Religion, where he chose to enter ministry in the United Church of Christ, he did an internship with United Campus Christian Ministries at Stanford. He graduated from PSR in 2007.

Having grown up in a non-denominational independent church in Salt Lake City, he understands the rocky road stu-



Matt Smith is campus minister.

dents face as they open their faith exploration. Recently, however, he learned all four of his grandparents belonged to UCC churches.

Matt is aware that the different denominations in the Co-operating Ministries in Higher Education are at different places on different issues, so he said the common ground is that the ecumenical program means extending "radical welcoming hospitality to students who may not even have a faith home."

That means he may converse with atheists who have no interest in being in a church.

"Our goal is not to convert them to Christianity, but to be welcoming and give them an experience of community, however fleeting," he said. "That's the witness of the Gospel."

Given the slow decline in campus ministry nationwide since its heights in the 1960s, Matt likens this program to a new church start. He is starting with no student base, so if two students come to an event "it's a success compared to what we had before."

He leads a Sunday evening chapel service at University Congregational UCC and meets informally for hour Monday evenings, offering "Deepening Spiritual Practice" at the LG-

BTC Center.

In the winter, he plans to launch a time for students in transition, students who grew up in conservative churches and seek to process their move into progressive faith.

Along with increasing visibility through their name change and making informal connections with student, Matt said he and the board are working to have participating churches refer students who are attending the UW and participated in their churches.

"Denominations experience a big loss of students as they transition into university life," he observed.

By "progressive," Matt means a faith commitment that includes practicing social justice and living out the Gospel in extending community and friendship to people who are often excluded and devalued.

"We affirm the goodness of all people," he said.

"Progressive also means living in a sustainable way, valuing having 'enough' and recognizing that when we have more than enough we will share it," he added.

It also involves recognizing that people of all genders, races, ethnic groups and political orientations are part of the wide, diverse family of God.

For Catherine, who has served at University Congregational UCC for nine years, the progressive Christian voice on a college campus is about denominations joining in a common voice.

"Students' first concern is not denomination, but connecting in ways that make a difference in the community and world," she said. "Progressive is having passionate love for Jesus, God and our neighbors that is open and inclusive, drawing people to work toward justice in all of Creation."

For information, call 206-524-2322 ext 3100.

Counselor-pastor creates art with blacksmith skills

Blacksmith artist, counselor-pastor Chris Causey gives attention to process in his counseling practice, interim ministries and metal art.

As he works with steel, bronze or aluminum to create art that expresses a message about faith or society, he must be attentive to the process, using the appropriate amount of heat to shape the metal into the desired form.

"The end result may not be what I envisioned," said Chris, who began in August as interim at Blaine UCC.

"I have to negotiate with the metal," he explained.

His blacksmith art also intersects with his counseling in an office in a 2,000-square-foot Tacoma warehouse that houses his blacksmith art studio, and the hand-woven-wicker studio of his wife, Peeta Tinay.

In his part of the warehouse, he has a counselor's office with a carpet, couch, chairs and lights.

"Sometimes, a conversation meets its limits, especially with younger clients," he said. "At those times, the forge creates other ways of communicating."

Chris also has a counseling practice with Youth and Family Services on Vashon Island.

Following childhood as the son of a Southern Baptist pastor in Florida and Alabama, he began his seminary education at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga., as a Presbyterian. Deciding not to finish there, he spent 15 years as a clinical chaplain for hospice, eventually at Providence Hospice in Seattle.

He completed seminary in 1998 at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, and moved to Tacoma to serve as chaplain at Good Samaritan in Pullayup.

Chris also earned a master's degree at the Leadership Institute of Seattle at Bastyr University in 2008 and is accruing hours to be licensed as a counselor, which he eventually plans to do full time.

Before going to Blaine UCC, he served a year as interim pastor at Fox Island UCC.

"As interim, I'm more attentive to the process than the outcome, looking at a church's structure so it can function in a healthy way, so all voices are heard and so there is not a bottleneck of power," he said.

To inform his ministry, he uses "the five developmental tasks of an interim's work" from his interim ministry training:

- 1) To help the congregation put its history in perspective;
- 2) To help them discover their new identity informed by their past and who they are;
- 3) To strengthen the relationship of the local church with the conference and national church;
- 4) To transition to new leadership, and
- 5) To help the church commit to support their new leadership.

He finds plenty of biblical imagery that is useful for people in transition in congregations and in counseling.

Chris first picked up a blacksmith hammer in 1988 in Mendocino, Calif. A friend with whom he fenced as a sport took broken blades and bent them in a forge.

During studies at PSR, he worked two years in a blacksmith shop in Berkeley and was among the California Blacksmith Association members who spent a week those summers, working at "a sweaty old coal forge" at a pioneer historical center near Yosemite,

Now his blacksmithing



Chris Causey, interim at Blaine, with metal art cross.

is about art. So he needs to understand both the process of art and the process of working with each unique material.

"A blacksmith has to work with the metal in the fire the least amount of time," he said. "Steel can only be heated so many times before it degrades. There is loss of metal each time it goes in the heat."

Before Annual Meeting 2010, where he prepared a display of his metal art, Chris added polyester-resin color inside metal cubes and circles he made to form a cross. Closing worship planners asked to use the cross behind the altar.

Another art sculpture he displayed was a six-foot dinner fork he calls the "Gluttony Fork." A bronze cross is on the

end. The inscription stamped on the side of the fork, reads, "Blessed are the hungry, for they shall be eaten first."

Chris wants people to come to their own conclusion about what the piece means.

He also has a "Chastity Helmet" made for a Tacoma show on chastity belts to make the point from religion that "if the eyes sin, the heart sins." A screen covers the eyes, but one of his wife's multi-color weaving designs looks like the brain "delightfully remaining the devil's playground."

For information, call 206-679-8722, email organicanvil@gmail.com, visit his blog at chriscausey.blogspot.com or visit <http://pncuccam.blogspot.com/2010/04/chris-causey-metal-art-annual-meeting.html>.

Donald Schmidt is one of PNC's three Partners in Education

Pastor shares insights on doing youth ministry

Ah, youth ministry. We probably all agree our churches need it, and that we ought to provide it. The questions are: How? What? By whom?

The first step in creating a good youth ministry is not to be afraid of it. Youth don't bite. (No, really, they don't.)

They are young, eager, unpredictable, excited, bored, confused, often readily distracted, and most of all they are eager for a forum to deal with spirituality—just not too seriously.

When starting a youth group, it's important to have good leader. The church needs to take some time to find the right person. Too often people readily assume that the local "cool dude with a guitar" will fit the bill, because he or she is close to their age and can readily relate to them. That's not always the case.

Age proximity does not equal good connection, especially when dealing with young people who can be all over the map in terms of developmental abilities.

In addition, when a church finds a young person—or anyone—interested in leading youth group, they need to check him or her out. Some of the best youth leaders in churches of all denominations are young people, often college students, who can provide leadership and also easily join the youth in their journey of faith discovery.

Some, however, have ulterior motives. Some people who want to prey on young people are not necessarily the proverbial dirty old men. More than one girl has found herself pregnant courtesy of a youth leader.

Conducting an interview and doing a background check of any applicant for



Tara Leininger, pastor at Metaline Falls, donates to Sophie Crapson of Ritzville, raising funds for a youth trip.

youth ministry is vital—an interview and background check is important for church school teachers as well. The interview should be tailored to the needs of the church and the youth group. The interview team should involve a couple of youth. Involving two helps diffuse the sense that they are just a token, and that the decision will be made by adults.

Churches need to recognize that youth are busy, and lower their expectations about attendance. Because some youth, are involved in some kind of sports activity, it's important to accept that and not imagine that everyone will show up all the time.

At the same time, leaders need to hold youth accountable. If they have enthusiastically agreed to go help at the food pantry, and the leader has set up that activity, it's okay to expect them to show up and participate, even if it means they go to a friend's house or the mall a little later than planned. Youth appreciate boundaries and people having serious expectations

of them, without using guilt.

Youth leaders can dare to be progressive. In the United Church of Christ, we're noted for extravagant welcome and acceptance of divergent theologies, viewpoints and identities.

That should be part of a youth group. There are many options in other churches for a rigid, "you-need-to-believe-this" style of youth programs, which work for some youth.

UCC youth leaders need to be assured that there are a huge number of youth for whom that does not work. They need to know they are loved and accepted, no matter what. They need to know they can bring up and discuss all kinds of issues without repercussions. After all, they're youth and they are exploring everything in the universe.

Simply learning that church is a safe place can be enough, and can equip youth for those times later in life when they need to turn somewhere. If they remember the church is an option, then we have done them an amazing service.

So while mega-churches may tell their youth what they must do one moment to the next, UCC churches can focus on helping youth learn how to live day by day.

That includes daring them to deal with tough issues, and tough opinions. Being flexible with youth doesn't mean our church doesn't have a theology, it just means we do not impose our theology.

Youth leaders can say, "That's intriguing. I have a different view, but you could be right," and then share their view. Telling kids what they have to believe will usually backfire.

The website www.re-thinkingyouthministry.com, offered by two Disciples of Christ youth ministers, provides resources, activities and a blog that brings up important issues.

It does that in a progressive vein, which can be a rarity in youth resources.

Finally, it's important to just do youth ministry, setting aside fears. Having a paid professional who can provide youth ministry is good, but volunteers can be excellent, too.

Having worked off and on with youth groups for about 30 years, I can tell you that the rewards are amazing.

I learn so much when I listen to youth. I think they listen to me sometimes, too, and that's a real bonus.

The Rev. Donald Schmidt has been a pastor in various denominations since 1978. He currently is pastor—and one of the youth leaders along with his partner—at Admiral Congregational United Church of Christ in Seattle.

For information, call 206-932-2928 or email pastor@admiralchurch.org.