



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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Program supports longevity of new clergy

Young pastors gain support through two national UCC programs

Lisa Horst Clark, pastor of spiritual formation at First Congregational UCC in Bellevue, brings some of her connections with the wider UCC with her as she starts in ministry in the Pacific Northwest.

She is a participant in both the 2030 Clergy Network and the Next Generation Leadership Initiative: Target 2030, programs designed to support young clergy in the United Church of Christ.

"Mobilization and support of younger clergy has gained support over the last several years," she pointed out.

The most recent data is that four percent of clergy in the UCC are under the age of 40. Echoing trends in other main-line denominations, the small numbers

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Lisa Horst Clark is one of the young clergy participating in both the 2030 Clergy Network and the Next Generation Leadership Initiative: Target 2030.

PNC moderator reports on Leadership Retreat

The leadership of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ met May 18 to 20 at Pilgrim Firs for a the annual Leadership Retreat. About 40 people attended.

Worshipping, playing, meeting and fellowship made for a lively and productive weekend, said moderator Christine Hanson of Peshashtin.

The primary facilitator was Susan Towner-Larsen, a member of the General Ministries team who facilitates communication between conferences and the national UCC. She helped participants work through PNC mission and vision statements to define a timely mission statement for the coming year.

"This mission statement, 'We are justice seekers, called to embody our



Chris Hanson, PNC moderator

faith,' will help us focus as a conference, in our churches, on our committees and in other interactions with each other, on what we feel is important in this time and place," she said.

"Mission statements need to be timely, not timeless. That is why we needed to focus on a more defined statement," she said. "What we show as a mission statement on our website is more of a vision statement. It is a wonderful vision and beautifully describes how we see ourselves," she said.

The statement is available for review at <http://www.pncucc.org/who-we-are/pnc-vision-and-mission.html>.

Hanson said there is no need to invest much work or time in coming up **Continued on Page 4**

National, conference leaders laud 2012 NYE

Conference Comments



By The Rev.
Mike Denton
Conference
Minister

**National
Youth Event
provides
lessons about
church's
present
and
future.**

On July 13, during the UCC's National Youth Event 2012, the Collegium of Officers and the Council of Conference Ministers of the United Church of Christ published a pastoral letter on the future and the relevance of the denomination and the youth who are its caretakers.

A Pastoral Letter from Leaders of the United Church of Christ

Dear sisters and brothers of the United Church of Christ:

Greetings in the name of Jesus, the wise, young teacher who taught the elders of the temple!

M. K. Asante, the opening worship speaker at this year's National Youth Event (July 10-13 at Purdue University), said, "If you make an observation, you have an obligation." It is with that persistent spirit of holy engagement, that we—the five national officers of the church and 21 Conference Ministers in attendance—feel compelled to write this letter of profound gratitude and urgent response.

First, we wish to begin with gratitude. Thank you to the more than 2,500 youth of this church who gave of yourselves—so generously and sacrificially—to be here and to open your hearts, your lives, to this faith-filled moment. You—our sisters, our brothers—are amazing; every single one of you. This was your event and you helped us all feel extravagantly welcomed into it.

Our gratitude extends to national staff and organizers who spent years planning, orchestrating and executing this empowering event; to many regional organizers who coordinated travel plans and helped care for those entrusted to you; to chaperones who offered loving guidance, presence and patience; and to churches, agencies, Associations and Conferences of the UCC that prayerfully and financially encouraged and supported the attendance of our youth. Thank you, also, to parents and guardians who gave encouragement to this event as a priority in your child's life. And thanks to every UCC person who encourages ongoing all-church support for Our Church's Wider Mission—our common ministry fund—which provided the critical financial resources necessary to make NYE possible.

Second, beyond gratitude, National Youth Event leaves us with important lessons about the church, its present and its future, and our response to this critical moment. There are days when it seems as though all we hear are voices of

concern about the church's status, its relevance and its future. You, the youth of NYE, helped teach us about the sacred responsibility of claiming this time and this place as God's moment to change lives. There are days when it seems as though all we hear are voices lamenting a disconnect between youth and the church. You reminded us of the importance of celebrating and supporting the youth that are faithfully encountering God's presence in, through and even beyond the church. There are days when we hear resistance to change in traditional worship. You taught us that the deep beats of God's activity live in hip hop rhyme, flow easy in laughter, and rattle in roars of sustained ovation and praise. All, we passionately believe, are sounds of a new Pentecost opening the church to new realities, new days of vitality, inclusivity and engagement. Thank you, wise and wonderful teachers.

In the preamble to our constitution, the United Church of Christ "affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God." We believe we must seize and build upon this powerful NYE moment—in response and gratitude to UCC youth—to realize the significance of what has happened here and how we are leaving this event infused with expanding hopefulness for the United Church of Christ, our distinctive message and impact, and the need for an intergenerational movement of hope.

Let this be the moment where the church truly imagines its new reality and its hopeful future, under God's watchful love and tender mercy.

Imagine, God is still speaking,

The Collegium of Officers of the United Church of Christ:

The Rev. Geoffrey A. Black - General Minister and President

W. Mark Clark - Associate General Minister

The Rev. J. Bennett Guess - Executive Minister, Local Church Ministries

The Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo - Executive Minister, Justice and Witness Ministries

The Rev. James Moos - Executive Minister, Wider Church Ministries

The Council of Conference Ministers of the United Church of Christ, including the Rev. Mike Denton - Pacific Northwest Conference.

Transitions announced

Elsa Peters has been called as senior pastor at the United Churches of Olympia, beginning in September.

Becky Withington was ordained on Sept. 8 at Everett UCC.

Jason Boyd has announced his resignation at Kirkland UCC.

Deborah Nelson has been approved for ordination pending a call.

William Youngdahl, who served churches in Minnesota, California, Oregon and at University Congregational UCC in Seattle—died Aug. 15 in North Carolina.

Ted Hastings, who died on July 7, served churches in California, Oregon and Washington. A member of the United Churches of Olympia, he served as a mentor to in-care students.

Greta Jensen, who died June 24, served two United Methodist churches before she was ordained in the UCC in 2004. She did interim ministries at St. Paul's and Normandy Park in Seattle and at Tolt in Carnation.

Jim Gilliom, who served UCC churches in New Jersey, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and at Mercer Island, died on June 4.

Planned giving workshops set Sept. 27, 28 and 29

Donaldson Hill, minister and team leader of financial development in the Office of General Ministries at the UCC national setting, will be in the Pacific Northwest Conference to lead three workshops on planned giving.

He speaks from 3 to 7 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 27, at Community Congregational UCC in Pullman; from 3 to 7 p.m., Friday, Sept. 28, at First Congregational Church in Bellingham, and from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 29, at Plymouth Congregational UCC in Seattle.

The workshops are an outreach of the Stewardship Committee of the Conference and Our Church's Wider Mission.

Jesus Seminar speakers set

Eagle Harbor Congregational Church is hosting the Jesus Seminar On the Road, featuring speakers Bernard Brandon Scott and Jarmo Tarkki, for a weekend seminar on Bainbridge Island on Friday, Sept. 21 and Saturday, Sept.

22. The topic: "Politics of the Real Jesus."

For information or to register call 877-523 3545 or visit <http://westarinsti-tute.org>.

University Congregational announces lecture series

University Congregation continues its Lecture Series in October with John Bell, a pastor in the church of Scotland who did youth ministry before focusing on music and worship.

The hymn writer, author and broadcaster lectures, preaches and conducts seminary in Europe, North America, Australasia and Southern Africa.

He will give presentations on "Spirituality and Music" at 7 p.m., Friday, Oct. 12, on "Ancient Celtic Gifts for Contemporary People," from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 13, on "Why do God's People Sing?" and at 9 a.m., Sunday, Oct. 14, on "The Importance of Imagination."

For information, call 206-524-6255, ext. 3447, or email lectureseries@universityucc.org.

Plymouth hosts workshop on sexuality education

OWL Trainings for junior/senior high and young adult/adult levels will be held Friday through Sunday, Sept 21 to 23 at Plymouth Church, UCC in Seattle.

For information, visit www.ucc.org/justice/sexuality-education/our-whole-lives.html.

Faith Action Network hosts advocacy trainings this fall

The Faith Action Network of Washington will host two Advocating Congregations Summits in Western and Eastern Washington in September and October.

The Western Washington summit will be held at 4:30 p.m., Sunday, Sept. 30, at Seattle First Baptist, 1111 Harvard Ave.

The Eastern Washington summit will be held at 4:30, Sunday, Oct. 14, at First United Methodist Church of Ellensburg,

210 N. Ruby.

The FAN recently hired Sam Rennebohm of Prospect UCC as their new director of the advocating congregations program. An article about him is in the September issue of The Fig Tree, media covering the faith and non-profit communities in the Inland Northwest. The story is at thefigtree.org/sept12/090512fanrennebohm.html.

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

Two congregations vote to be Open and Affirming

After months of discernment, education, discussion and prayer, two PNC congregations became Open and Affirming.

On May 30, Fox Island UCC approved their Open and Affirming Statement.

On June 3, Lummi Island Congregational UCC voted y in favor of their Open and Affirming Statement.

Conference News Briefs

Young adult delegation goes to South Korea in June 2013

The 2013 young adult exchange delegation visit to South Korea will be June 17 to 26. The Global Ministries committee is recruiting young adults interested in learning about life in the churches of the PNC's global partner, the East Seoul Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea.

For information, call 360-683-4704 or email edevans@aol.com.

CROP Hunger Walks set

Ten CROP Hunger Walks will help hungry people in the Northwest and around the globe, said Christopher Carpenter, assistant regional director of the Pacific Northwest Church World Service.

There are walks scheduled on Sept. 30 in Watcom County; on Oct. 7 in Bainbridge Island, Everett, Kent, Lewis County, Pullman-Moscow, Richland and Seattle; on Oct. 14 in Snohomish, and on Oct. 21 in Yakima Valley.

For information, call 888-297-2767 or email pn@churchworldservice.org.

UCC seeks to encourage new generation in ministry

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of younger clergy and the high burnout rates in the first few years of parish ministry have been cause for concern, Clark explained. So within the last 10 years, two UCC programs have been launched to be proactive in supporting younger clergy.

"The church needs a diversity of gifts, both now and in the future. We need ways to support one another, to brainstorm together, to learn together in order to fulfill our call to leadership in the United Church of Christ," she said.

Clark, who grew up in the UCC in San Jose, Calif., felt called to ministry while working with local youth groups during her undergraduate studies at Pomona College in Claremont.

After graduating in 2005, she went to Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Conn. She graduated in 2008 and served as associate minister for children and families at First Congregational Church in Guilford, Conn., until 2011, when she moved to Bellevue.

At Bellevue First Congregational, her ministry focuses on spiritual formation and in-reach ministries of education, membership, parish life and communication.

The 2030 Clergy Network, founded in 2005, is open to all ordained clergy in their 20's and 30's.

**Young clergy
gain
opportunities
to interact
with colleagues
of similar age.**

According to their website, "the network began to create opportunities for fun, fellowship and mutual support," she said.

Over time, it has expanded its ministry to include clergy education and professional development.

Recognizing the tools available as a part of the digital age, the 2030 Clergy Network has fostered an active Facebook community, which has become a regular source for clergy peers to discuss, brainstorm and share information.

The network decided to make t-shirts as a way to help people recognize the diversity of ordained leadership in the United Church of Christ. The t-shirts read, "This is what clergy look like."

"As young clergy, we are geographically spread out. It can be isolating," Clark observed. "To interact with peers in a similar stage of life and ministry is a remarkable gift."

In January 2011, the United Church Board of Ministerial Assistance (UCBMA) launched the Next Generation Leadership Initiative: Target 2030, with the goal to develop transformative leaders.

Clark is a part of the first class of the program, which will be accepting applications for the fourth class next spring.

The initiative is designed for clergy 35 years or younger within their first five years of parish ministry, and seeks to build commitment to long-term local church ministry through 10 years of continuing education and incentive funding for retirement.

The goal is to energize and sustain younger clergy with the belief that "healthy, catalytic pastors" create "healthy, vibrant congregations," she said.

Through the first four years of the program, the class meets for two weeks a year for intensive sessions on topics ranging from family systems theory to adaptive leadership.

The next six years, the participants have more flexibility in their educational pursuits.

"The education compo-

nents are helpful," said Clark. "It's one thing to learn while in seminary and another thing to learn in the midst of ministry."

UCBMA has funded the program for the next 20 years, with 10 to 20 young clergy selected each year. By program's end in 2031, 150 to 200 clergy will have gone through the program and be empowered for ministry, she said.

In reflecting on her experiences, Clark notes "I am grateful to be a participant in these programs, and thank the UCBMA and the 2030 Clergy Network National Planning Team for all the time and effort they have put into these programs.

"In a time that could be difficult and isolating to be young clergy, I am heartened that our denomination is putting time, energy and resources into equipping young clergy with the support and relationships we need as the next generation of church leadership," Clark commented. "How wonderful to have so many people invested in supporting the present and future of the church, whatever that may look like"

Clark wants young people considering ministry to know these organizations are out there.

For information, call 425-454-5001 or email lisa@fc-bellevue.org.

Chris Hanson presents PNC mission and vision

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with something new in the vision statement each year.

"What we really need as a conference are periodic opportunities to sink deeply into that vision statement in order to ensure that the current mission statement is in sync with what is currently most important to us as a

church," she said.

Towner-Larsen also led the group through a "lexio-divina" process, where participants prayed and focused together on creating the new mission statement.

"We worked and discovered many common threads in our prayerful discernment together," Hanson said.

"Faith, justice and community consistently came up in almost every group. As a result, our new mission statement holds each of these main ideas," she explained.

Hanson observed that the 2012 Leadership Retreat helped to broaden the faith of participants, both as individuals and collectively as

the conference.

"The Pacific Northwest Conference is an awesome group of faithful justice seekers ready to embody our faith and work together wherever God wants us to be," she affirmed.

For information, call 509-679-7430 or email donandchris@hughes.net.

Annual meeting approves budget, resolutions

Nearly 180 delegates from 49 of the Conference's churches voted to approve new leaders, the budget and resolutions.

PNC treasurer Martha Baldwin announced in a hearing on the budget that the conference will vote at Annual Meeting 2013 on changing to a fiscal year starting May 1, 2014 through April 30, 2015. There will be an initial short year running January 1 through April 30, 2014. The 12-month budget cycles will then run May 1 to April 30.

She reported that OCWM was down \$10,000 in 2011 and expenses were down \$55,000 from the prior year. For 2013, 30 percent of the budget income will be sent to the national UCC. Staff payroll is up about three percent.

She said committees had \$26,000 budgeted for travel to meetings and the hope is that using gotomeeting.com will save travel costs.

A budget line was added for Partners in Education consultants. Contributions to Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley and the School of Theology and Ministry in Seattle made equal.

Noting that the budget for Common Ministry in Higher Education was eliminated as the vehicle for PNC involvement in campus ministries, Chip Laird, a pastor at Community Congregational in Pullman who serves on the governing Council of the Common Ministry at Washington State University said there campus ministry is in the process of re-envisioning their ministry model. It now is moving to an interfaith model that serves everyone in the university community who is seeking meaning, not just those who identify as UCC or any other denomination, he said.

"Although we will not be doing work as we used to, we need funding for campus ministries that are serving the

real needs of students," Laird said, noting that if the Pullman church knows the monetary support of the Conference is dropped, "members will continue to work to find support for these important ministries."

Catherine Foote of University Congregational UCC in Seattle said CMHE has dissolved, and facilities near the University of Washington have been sold. The campus ministry is cooperating with the Wesley Foundation.

Baldwin assured that money for campus ministry is in a fund and will be remembered.

She added that the conference seeks to do more aspects of its ministry through professional consultants offering specific services.

She said the conference has been tapping into money from the sale of the conference home for operating expenses and the camps. A \$170,000 deficit for the welcome center at N-Sid-Sen will be cleared, so Mark Boyd begins as managing director with no past deficits.

"Both camps and the operating budget had deficits back to the 1990s, but they are paper deficits and will be removed," Baldwin explained. "N-Sid-Sen operates with a surplus that offsets the paper deficits. Both camps have also sold some trees to add to their income."

In another hearing, PNC representatives on national UCC boards explained the resolution on unified governance for the national denomination. Those representatives are Bing Tso, a Bethany UCC Seattle member who represents the PNC on the national Wider Church Ministries board; Carol Stanley of Eastgate UCC in Bellevue on Local Church Ministries board; Katie Forman of University Congregational in Seattle on the Office of General Ministries board, and Chris Hansen of Peshastin on the Executive Council.



Chip Laird of Community Congregational UCC in Pullman asks about funds for campus ministries.



Kathie Forman has served on the General Ministries board.

Much of the opposition over the years, said Forman, has related to protecting endowments for Local Church Ministries and Wider Church Ministries. The goal is to streamline governance to strengthen people coming together around mission and programs.

Greg Turner, who teaches UCC polity at the School of Theology and Ministry in Seattle, said the question of unified governance requires recognizing what will be gained and what will be given up.

"I favor the need to administer more efficiently and faithfully in the national set-

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Bing Tso has served on Wider Church Ministries.

Proposal adopted despite concern about representation

Delegates discuss national governance

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ting. I don't know if more efficiency will save money," he said. "What will the structure do to help us move to be more multicultural? Will incorporating quotas do that in the UCC, which is still basically white, middle class in local churches.

Stanley said there is a quota system on all boards.

Concern is about loss of representation geographically, meaning the PNC may not be represented, because it's a small conference.

Forman said the proposal moves from four covenanted ministries that are separate corporations with separate bylaws with boards of 50 to 60 people.

Other business included the following:

- A resolution calling for action to challenge the United States Supreme Court's decision to give corporations rights of personhood passed nearly unanimously. The resolution asserts that money is not speech.

Tom Colwell of Plymouth said the Supreme Court decision is "a direct attack on the sanctity of one-person-one vote."

- A resolution calling for the conference and member churches to find ways to divest their funds from large banks, submitted by the conference Justice and Witness Ministries Committee, arose from a national UCC General Synod resolution to encourage conversations in different settings. It passed nearly unanimously.

The PNC has moved accounts to Banner Bank, but credit card still links to Bank of America. Washington state has many credit unions and community banks.

Mark Travis, pastor of Mercer Island said there is need to examine all banks.

Jeannette Solimine of Af-

firmational UCC-Plymouth Congregational Church in Colfax said each church needs to evaluate local banking options.

- The Annual Meeting also passed a proposal by the Global Ministries Committee to have 16 members, with eight from the United Church of Christ and eight from the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in recognition of the way the national church does Global Ministries as a partnership of the two denominations. It passed near unanimously.

- A resolution proposed on the floor by Greg Turner to support women religious in light of the recent Vatican effort to challenge ministries of American Catholic women religious was tabled for study. The aim is to consult with women religious partners of many who work ecumenically and with the School of Theology and Ministry.

- In other action, the Annual Meeting welcomed Liberation Ministries as a congregation in the Conference. The founder and pastor of this multi-cultural, charismatic, inclusive church is Darrell Goodwin, who is ordained in the Church of God in Christ and is associate dean of students at Seattle University.



Carol Stanley shares perspective on governance from work on the Local Church Ministries board.



Becky Colwell, Jim Spraker and Eric Johnson converse around a table at Annual Meeting.



Del Korte, Donna Byrd, Tracy Bowens and Darrell Goodwin of Liberation Ministries join the PNC.

Mike Denton calls for seeing the Spirit moving

For his report to Annual Meeting 2012, Conference Minister Mike Denton called for more openness to process and to the possibility that “the Spirit is moving among us.”

Responding to delegates’ questions on the life and future of the church, he shared opportunities to be open to the Spirit.

“Mission and visioning are important for any institution to do in times of transition and paradigm shifts in the larger life of the church and communities,” he said. “The church is one of the few places that has five generations.”

He encourages more cultural experimentation within and among churches to see “what we will move into.”

Denton encountered implications of the cultural changes in a visit to Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley.

“There is more conversation about what the seminary will look like, perhaps moving to more of an online educational experience,” he said. “That can challenge conference members about face-to-face contact, and it could mean more people in churches can take classes. We need to figure out how to adjust to the changes.”

Denton responded to several questions:

How does the church encourage cultural experimentation?

In church life, he explained, people tend to wait until everything is in place and people have proof something will work. He said openness to the “Spirit moving among us” means being open to discern the opportunities “for this time and this place.”

What previously looked like church may not work now.

“The church may change to something that does not look like church now,” Denton said, calling for people to discern “how to be more faithful.”

While some new approaches may fail, he said, “the Spirit will move us to the next thing.”

What is the PNC’s relationship with the new Faith Action Network (FAN)—a merger of the Washington Association of Churches and state Lutheran Public Policy Office?

Denton said that the previous organizations were geared for the ecumenical reality, which FAN perceives to be interreligious, turning competition into cooperation on advocacy to give a larger voice.

While he was participating in Advocacy Day in Washington, DC, he joined 300 others to pray as the Supreme Court was preparing to uphold the Affordable Health Care Act.

“We need conversation so we can have a unified voice for speaking and acting together,” Denton said.

Given the predominance of older people in pews and fewer youth being attracted to mainline or UCC churches, will we be able to turn the corner?

“Yes and no,” Denton responded. “The question for me is not that the UCC remains as the UCC, but that those of us in the UCC figure out how to be faithful together. Today’s institutions may not look like the institutions of early this century or hundreds of years ago.

“I hope that the UCC of more than 50 years ago will be different as it and other denominations respond to God’s call,” he said. “If we are still the UCC, it may mean we were not able to adapt and be faithful. Some things end. We need to recycle what we need, but if we are the same, we may not be listening to the Spirit moving among us.”

What does the Occupy movement mean to churches?

“We are in a paradigm shift



Mike Denton reflects on new opportunities for churches.

and perhaps in the death throes of patriarchy and hierarchical systems which are not functioning. Both the Tea Party and Occupy movements have no leaders,” Denton said.

“The primary role of a leader is to disseminate, manage and package information,” he explained. “We are in a different time. We are in a time when we have more information than we can digest. We are moving to a time when ‘movementship’ development is healthy.

“Institutions look to a goal. Movements rely on faith to call us to look and reshape everything,” he said.

“Occupy is a new way to be together. Some say it has failed, but it is not over yet,” he said. “Occupy, the Tea Party and the environmental movements try something new and see if it works.

“In this time and place, we are living in ways we have never lived before,” he observed, noting that the National Youth

Event intentionally included conference ministers and 27 of 38 were there to lead workshops.

Given that the PNC budget does not allow for an associate conference minister, what are you doing for self care?

“Because budgets in these times go up and down, the volunteer time being put in is astounding,” Denton said, assuring people of sustainability. “We will turn over more tasks to consultants. I can’t do more, but as we need to do more, we will use more consultants.

Other UCC conferences and judicatories across the nation are engaged in similar conversations, considering more regional cooperation and sharing staff and consultants. National staff is helping with different pieces as judicatories look for alternative staffing.

Follow Denton’s blog at <http://thoughtsandprayers-mike.blogspot.com/>.

Ben Guess optimistic about faith formation

Youth and young adults want action-oriented faith formation.

Formed in faith by camp, sermons and parent's discussions, Bennett Guess, executive of the national UCC Local Church Ministries, said Friday evening at a Conference Annual Meeting workshop, it's important to articulate beliefs in a safe place where others may hear and affirm.

In the book, *Solomon's Porch*, author Doug Pagitt said the "important stuff" tends to be reserved for clergy—reading the lectionary texts and reflecting on them. He believes everyone should do it, said Guess.

Pagitt says spiritual formation is the entirety of community life—hymn sings, potlucks, Sunday school—everything.

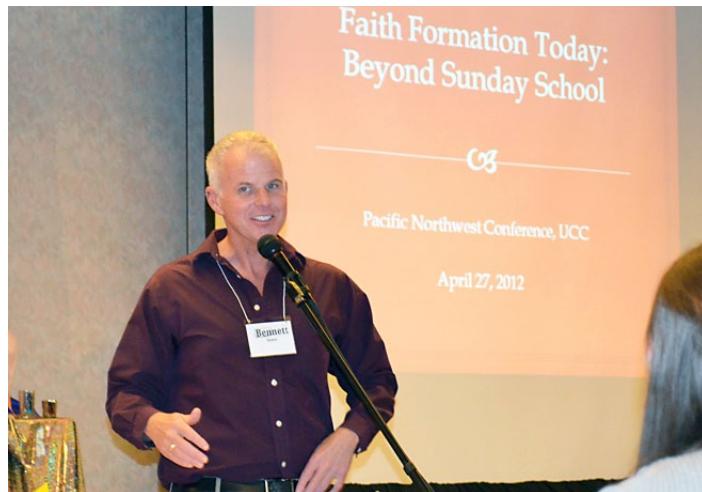
UCC Partners in Education consultants and Association of UCC Educators offer Christian education resources in each conference.

Guess also quoted theologian Marcus Borg who says culture indoctrinates people to value "achievement, affluence and appearance." The church's role is to offer counter indoctrination—faith formation that allows people to think of the three A's in different ways through the top 25 stories of the Christian tradition, Guess said.

Guess said that UCC President Geoffrey Black said the religious right "has had the microphone" to define the story for so long that many are confused about what is the Christian story is and how to tell it."

The UCC "Faith Practices" resources—at ucc.org/faithpractices—Guess said, are accessible for volunteers and professional educators, offering non-lineal activities.

The lessons, available by subscription, are on 600 practices, such as giving and receiv-



Ben Guess leads workshop on faith formation approaches.

ing hospitality, keeping sabbath, loving neighbors, living stewardship. It's about play, love and joy, justice and witness, and living practices in daily life, he said.

"Faith Practices" offers ideas for integrating lessons into every setting of the church, such as talking about stewardship at choir rehearsal.

Ken Ostermueller, retired, developed the curriculum through the Faith Formation Research Project, which sought to learn how faith formation happens in the UCC.

Some use curricula of different denominations.

"We spend OCWM funds on research to develop new curricula," Guess said. "In the past, the model has been that you give us money and we publish. Now we are using many centers of expertise."

Guess listed five things drive changes in faith formation related to cultural shifts:

1) Technology's impact on the way people form relationships has implications for the church as churches use social networks and communicate diverse ideas.

Email has expanded from reaching 2,000 congregations—35 percent—to reaching 90 percent now.

Congregational websites

plateaued and then declined because of the difficulty in maintaining them.

Guess said that 40 percent of congregations use Facebook now, and 53 percent of UCC congregations use projection in worship.

"In more than half of small congregations, technology is lagging," he said, "but half of churches with 250 or more members use technology."

"Embracing technology is crucial to reaching new audiences. It is more than just a tool for the younger generation," Guess said. "Increased use of technology increases a church's spiritual vitality."

"If we ask young adults what we need to do, we will find we need to be online. If there isn't a video, it hasn't happened," said Guess. "To reach youth and young adults, that's where they are at, so youth and young adults need to help shape curricula."

2) Generally, younger people seek transformation less from hierarchical-intellectual means and more from collaborative-experiential forms.

The average age in 52 percent of mainline or oldline churches is 65 years or older, Guess reported. Of them, the UCC membership is the second oldest after the Presbyterians.

Meanwhile, in the society, 34 percent identify as both spiritual and religious, 23 percent identify as spiritual—a total of 57 percent—and 14 percent identify as religious, he reported.

"What does it mean to be spiritual? Believing in God gives purpose to life and gives a sense of inner peace," Guess said. "Only 10 percent claim no spiritual dimension to life."

Youth and young adults want faith formation that is action oriented. They are book smart and want to be street smart—integrated in daily life. They want to experience God, but have short attention spans," he said. "Their brains processing information differently. They want hands on and social justice opportunities."

3) Churches' vocabulary needs to change, he continued. Church language is not understood by the majority of Christian educators.

"It connotes older models that are more didactic. 'Faith formation' shapes learning by life and experience. Spiritual formation does not sell a doctrine," Guess said.

In the UCC there is a shift in language from talk of Christian education to talk of faith or spiritual formation.

4) Inter-generational and family-centered movements recognize that not all faith formation happens in the church, he pointed out. If they have resources, families can experiment with praying before meals and recognize that people learn across their life spans through caring conversations, daily devotions, service actions and traditional rituals.

5) Money has impact, he said.

"The decrease in funds drives how we envision faith formation and affects paid staff," Guess said. "As resources for congregations have decreased, morale has decreased."

Preacher expects new church models will emerge

Preaching at the PNC Annual Meeting closing worship, Ben Guess of the National Local Church Ministries said he has found that "people in exile worry about what matters," because people crossing the wilderness undergo deep change.

After World War II, there was a surge in service organizations and churches. People wanted to belong. With Woodstock, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, rock 'n roll and the sexual revolution, everything that was certain fell apart, he said.

Right after the UCC formed in 1957, membership groups began stepping into exile without realizing it, he said.

"It was a symptom of a broader dis-ease," he said. "The reality is that the biggest issue facing the church 20 or 30 years ago is the same one facing the church today. We just feel it far more acutely now, because our prominence and resources then afforded us the luxury of avoiding it for so long."

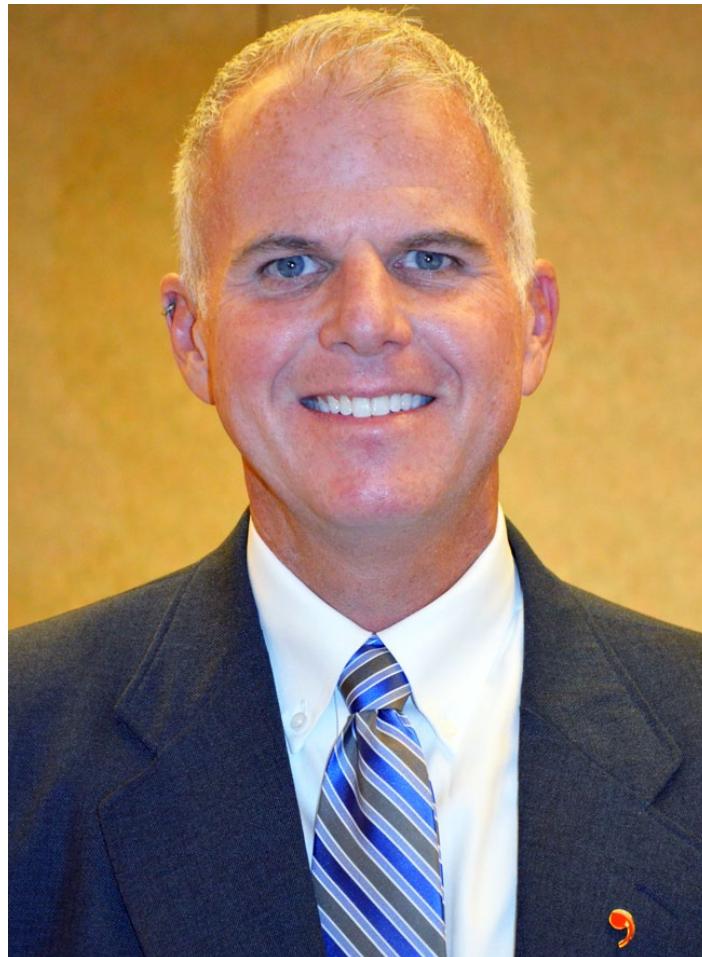
"The first step of adaptive change is realizing the urgency for change. While unsettling, the urgency is a blessing, not a curse," Guess said.

With a similar age and ethnic makeup, he said the Missouri Synod has experienced a similar decline in membership and funding nationally in the last 30 years, despite its different stands on social issues. Guess suggests the spiral of change is happening from conservative to liberal religious and service organizations.

He believes people do not join churches today because they want more relationships. They join because they want to serve and make a difference.

"Socially conventional Christianity is no longer the driving force bringing people into our doors," he said. "Christianity, thank God, is becoming deliberate again."

"While our numbers may be adjusting to that new real-



Ben Guess is featured speaker and preacher

ity, the discipleship and stewardship of those who remain is being reformed and deepened," Guess said, finding hope in that.

"It's not that people don't or won't take the gospel seriously anymore. It's that they want to explore it and engage it more seriously. They want a faith that keeps them looking upward and outward, even inward, but not in any insular way," he observed.

So Habitat for Humanity and other service programs are thriving. People want to hammer nails and engage in social issues so they have purpose.

He said the new generation does not want to support institutions ancestors built, but want to share money at home and abroad to fulfill God's mission, so there is a future with hope.

He told of Mount St. Joseph near Owensboro, Ky., the

once-thriving mother house for Ursuline nuns, where he went for a two-week mission camp in high school.

It is now a nursing home. Large buildings rise out of soybean fields, he said. Later he went on a retreat and loved seeing nuns wearing shorts and tennis shoes in the late 1960s.

The average age is 85. Dorms were empty. Classrooms were closed. The only activity was in the graveyard.

He asked a nun what would happen. She said the sisters will sell the center, when there are only a few left and if it no longer is an instrument to fulfill their mission. They will move into an apartment that overlooks 15 acres of farmland. He heard liberation in her voice, a sense that God has plans as they wander in the wilderness.

"The UCC is likely to con-

tinue to get smaller, in membership, denominational budgets, and perhaps the number of congregations," Guess said. "Maybe we do not need a monastery when an apartment will do."

He believes more people will be touched and changed by the UCC than in the past, because the church's "extravagant welcome, continuing testament and changed lives resonate."

"We see bubbling from grassroots churches that want to be part of the theology and polity we offer," he said, telling of 20 congregations joining the UCC in spring 2012, churches like Liberation Ministries that want the inclusive fellowship and polity the UCC offers.

"Our united and uniting vision is taking us places we did not envision," he said.

Although membership is declining, constituents are rising as people are interested in more than the number of names on a list, he said.

"If we just look at money and numbers, we may not see that more people want to serve and make a difference," he said, noting that's unsettling for a professional on the UCC's payroll.

"I am hopeful, because I know God has plans for us," he said, telling of the Nexus Café tech saavy new Southern Baptist church start near the UCC office in Cleveland.

"We can learn from glimpsing into what the church is," he said. "We need to be values and mission driven."

"While many predict the demise of small churches, they will evolve. As believers behave as Christ, there will be a resurgence," he said. "Small groups of faithful people will not go out of style."

"In the midst of discerning, our vision, love and energy will emerge to a future crafted for our world in the mind of God," Guess said.

For information, call 216-736-3801 or email guessb@ucc.org.

Elizabeth Dilley values small, remnant churches

Elizabeth Dilley, former pastor of First Congregational UCC in Red Oak, Iowa, shared in her address and sermon at the 2012 Annual Meeting in Pasco about her ministry in the “small but mighty community of progressive souls” in a setting where the “mainline is no longer prominent, but is now the oldline” with structures a reminder of what used to be.

Since then, she has become minister for ministers in local churches with the national UCC, continuing to work for “small-church excellence.”

“While some lament, rage about or feel hopeless despair about the new reality,” she said that some are dancing. “We are the remnant of what used to be. Hooray! People are no longer in the pews for social convention. We are liberated, the remnant chosen by grace.”

In Scripture, Paul rejected the idea that God rejected and Christ superseded Jewish people, she said.

“As then, we have the opportunity to live in a state of grace, throwing out the old practices and relying on God’s power above the delusions of self-sufficiency. We are weak, puny, useless and irrelevant. If we rely on ourselves, we will not survive, but here we are. The remnant tends to pull through one way of the other, wearing different outfits.”

Dilley said small churches survive in towns that are dying because factories are closing. They may draw less competent, more transient pastors.

Congregations worship from 10 a.m. to noon Sundays and continue to, year after year, decade after decade—even dysfunctional congregations.

“A remnant is preserved for a purpose, they may not know, but God has a future in store for the remnant. In fabric shops, remnants are used for quilts or sold for low prices,” she ex-



Elizabeth Dilley gives sermon and keynote address at PNC.

plained. “I find treasures on altars made from remnants.

Dilley loves small, remnant congregations. “Many ministries pour love for God and God’s people into congregations. Love is enough to sustain a congregation for another season. Sometimes congregations love mediocre or dead ministries into excellence they would not recognize,” she said.

For nine years, Dilley was at Red Oak, a town of 5,000, a county seat of respectable size in Iowa.

“Most rural areas are politically and theologically conservative,” she said. “Previously, bank presidents, school superintendents and town leaders used to attend when church membership was the price they paid for civic leadership.”

The Red Oak church had dwindled and cut the salary to half time. When her predecessor, who was retired, came, he said, “You can live or die, and I can help you do either. It’s up to you to decide which. If you want to live, you need to choose God’s call for you.”

The church, which had been a country club church, had

also been a place “for oddballs and free thinkers,” she said. In the 1970s, it had offered transcendental meditation classes.

“The church embraced a call to be a progressive Christian witness in Southwest Iowa. In 2001, it became the only Open and Affirming church in a 120-mile radius,” she said.

In 2003, she came as the first full-time minister. They sold the parsonage to pay her salary. The remnant congregation of 50 has married 15 same-sex couples since Iowa adopted marriage equality in 2009.

“People note our hospitality. Some who come for weddings, worship, pray and often stay with us,” Dilley said. “All a remnant congregation has to offer is our love and God’s grace. Our church has loved me, and I reciprocate.”

About 35 now worship on Sunday. There are more younger families, with four generations on occasion.

“The church no longer see ourselves as a remnant of what used to be but as a re-emerging congregation, becoming a quilt,” she said. “Most are in remnant churches that had their

glory days. Some are doing positive, vibrant ministries.

“As the Israelites traveled in the wilderness, married and had babies, and as teens snuck off for thrills, people are still filled with love saw the sojourn as an adventure, not as punishment. Manna and quail still delight. There is still adventure on the dirty, dusty sojourn road. We are part of a remnant congregation, not a rich, powerful one,” she said.

“We may continue to turn inward in grief or we can celebrate our new liberation from false traps of power,” Dilley said. “We can celebrate on the margins where interesting stuff happens. We can try new things. We are a remnant congregation chosen by God. God chooses what is foolish, shameful and weak to make it strong, she said.

Dilley said remnant congregations are forced to rely on God, and “God shows up and pours out everything, because God loves us. We have been preserved for a future of God’s choosing—a future of justice, mercy, compassion and peace on this earth.

She said people need to learn the church is a safe place, and more is required than showing up.

“More than half the people in the UCC worship in congregations with fewer than 100 people,” she said, asking: “What is God up to in those churches? The conversation about that is missing in wider church settings. There are thousands of congregations whose stories we do not hear?”

“What is unlikely works. It might be that we in the UCC are called to move from a monastery to an apartment with deep engagement in justice and equality, bringing a bring future where realist is visible.

For information, call 216-736-2100, email dilley@ucc.org.

Workshop explores safe use of social networks

An Annual Meeting workshop on the use of social networks online raised concerns and opportunities for churches.

Brandon Duran of Plymouth Church Seattle and past PNC board moderator, facilitated discussion.

Participants discussed the changing role of Facebook, standards for safe media use, accountability in posting pictures, and the potential for groups to share ideas and prayers.

Social media include Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+ and LinkedIn.

Duran's handout explained that social media are online platforms that expedite conversations, in contrast to traditional media that deliver content but don't allow readers, viewers or listeners to share in creating content. Social media are ways for people to talk, participate, share, network and bookmark.

They integrate technology, telecommunications and social interaction through words, pictures, videos and audio. They are ways to share ideas, likes and dislikes, and comments with the world at large.

One pastor in the workshop said that his church asks people not to post concerns about people's illnesses on Facebook.

Another expressed the potential for counseling via email.

One told of a member starting a Facebook group for sharing ideas and prayers. Church members were invited to pray for someone who had an accident, resulting in an outpouring of care. When another person shared about illness in the family, there was no response. Perhaps it was because of the time of day it was entered, people did not chime in and the pastor did not respond.

"Facebook is too random as a regular prayer network," said Duran.

Social media present issues because they are part of the culture of immediacy, so they



Brandon Duran facilitated a workshop discussion on social networks and offered resources.

raise expectations of immediate responses, as in that case. The group was not run or regularly checked by the church staff or pastor, but they were blamed for not responding.

The family was contacted, nurtured and given an apology.

It's important to understand what media are appropriate, Duran pointed out.

"We need to understand the purpose of Facebook, know the audience and understand different ways we need to deal with an institution, people and a community," he said.

"Internet is ink when it's posted," he said. "Once something is out there, it can be shared and becomes public."

He called for being mindful of layers of communication: What is appropriate for texting, email or social media?

Duran does not believe social media are appropriate for counseling.

One participant cited a Gallup poll that said people discern 52 percent of meaning from someone's tone of voice, 43 percent from body language and just 5 percent from words. Email is words only, so on an emotional issue, it's important to call, he said.

"Social media is about balancing communicating what we want to say and who we want to communicate with. We need to think when we put up a website not just what we want to say but what will get the message out," Duran said.

He asked, what if a part-time employee at a church lists the church as an employer on Facebook and sometimes posts things about the church, what does it communicate about the church? He advises having separate pages.

"If you work for a church, there are social expectations, and there should not be potty talk online," he said.

One dynamic of social media is for people pass postings on to friends.

Duran advises churches to set policies on social network:

- Pastors and church leaders should create separate personal and church/professional accounts.

- Privacy settings should block professional contacts from seeing personal posts.

- Church people need to be in appropriate groups.

- Pastors should not friend request youth and children in the church.

- Children and youth in photos online or in brochures should not be named.

- It is useful to have media release forms for videos and photos of those under 18.

- There need to be ethical guidelines for pastors who leave. Do they "defriend" people. Pastors should have separate church and personal accounts to maintain boundaries.

- As a forum for people in a church to talk, there should be guidelines about racist remarks and cyber bullying. There need to be multiple administrations for safety and accountability. It must be clear if the forum is member or staff driven.

Duran suggests the following resources: UCC Connecticut Conference Internet Safety Guidelines at www.ctucc.org/resources/onlinesafetyguidelines.html and its "Facebook for Churches" at www.ctucc.org/resources/2011_fb_page.html.

Social Media Handbook has a chapter on "Writing a Social Media Policy" <http://mediaengage.org/socialmediahandbook/index.cfm>.

For information, call 206-622-4865 or email brandon@teamduran.com.

48 PNC youth attend National Youth Event in July

Thirty-five youth and 13 adults from 13 PNC churches traveled to Indiana in July to participate in a mission project and the National Youth Event.

Tara Barber of Alki UCC in Seattle, a member of the Education Ministries Committee's Youth and Young Adult Task Force, reported on the NYE and what led to having a large delegation from PNC.

Two years ago, the task force decided to focus on bringing more youth and young adults to Annual Meeting, on building relationships through periodic gatherings and on recruiting participants for the National Youth Event.

Youth and young adults began connecting with some depth by discussing what it means to live as progressive Christians in today's world, she said.

PNC recruiters accommodated the youths' varying schedules for travel.

Arriving in Indianapolis, the PNC group were welcomed at First Congregational UCC (FCUCC) of Indianapolis where Kerby Avedovech, formerly of the PNC, is the pastor.

The first day, the group "jumped into serving and making connections. One group designed the Sunday children's curriculum, applying the lectionary to the church's summer theme on animals."

They related Mark 6 about sending out the disciples to the migratory ways of animals, emphasizing the power of trust in traveling from one place to another.

They helped prune outside and spruce up the sanctuary before going to Gleaners Food Bank, a local warehouse and food distribution center, where the youth sorted meat and paper products.

Later, Nate Thomsen, one of 10 youth and two adults from Richmond Beach UCC in Shoreline led the group in cre-



Members of the NYE delegation who attended Annual Meeting were commissioned.



Tara Barber was one of the PNC adult advisors.

ating a conference banner, integrating delegates' handprints.

In the evening with PNC and FCUCC youth, Staci Schulmerich, also of Richmond Beach, led a prayer-poem exercise using songs about imagining, to coincide with the NYE theme, "Imagine."

Tuesday, the group went by

van to Purdue University, the site for the NYE, touring the Hundred Acre Wood and Art Museum enroute.

"Opening worship had us up on our feet, with our conference leading the way for a participatory experience. That evening Margaret Irribarra of University Congregational

UCC in Seattle was a star in a mock Celebrity Squares game show," Barber said.

On Wednesday, cousins Philip and Tyler Coleman from University UCC participated in service projects along with Susan Andresen of Normandy Park in Seattle.

Two PNC adult leaders facilitated workshops. Irribarra led one on developing leadership in youth groups, and Dana Sprenkle of Shalom UCC in Richland offered one on interfaith youth groups.

PNC youth participated in a wide variety of workshops—ranging from creating Mandalas to the Gospel according to "The Simpsons" and "Harry Potter," a workshop called "Tattoos, Piercings, and Jesus" and more.

"Each day we were inspired to imagine the world as it could be," said Barber.

Lolisa Gibson talked about living with HIV/AIDS and how her struggles have been transformed as a gift.

J.R. Martinez, an Iraq vet and now TV star urged youth to keep two skills in their pockets—their abilities to adapt and to overcome.

Youth offered testimonies to the power of faith in their

Continued on page 13

Youth have time to serve, imagine, pray and play

Continued from page 12

lives.

"The music had us standing and swaying, singing and dancing," Barber said.

The UCC Collegium of officers were present at NYE, bringing messages of hope and connection, and engaging with the youth via twitter!

The NYE encouraged the use of personal technology.

"We used our phones and contact lists to pray for each other," she said. "We lit virtual candles, tweeted, texted and used Facebook to communicate with folks back home."

We engaged the theme beyond the usual activities by participating in a literacy labyrinth, where stacks of donated books created a larger than life path to imagine a world where all can read," Barber continued. "There was a flash mob one day, and a celebration of faith and fitness."

Thursday, there were more workshops, plenaries and an evening worship, in which seven PNC youth offered the call to worship, enacting the dynamics of bullying.

"It was a risky testament. Our youth embraced the opportunity to speak powerfully to name this awful reality," she said.

An after-worship concert in an outdoor amphitheater featured spoken word by Climbing PoeTree and sung word by Rhema Soul.

Friday, the focus turned to going home and imagining creating one church on returning, said Barber.

UCC General Minister and President Geoffrey Black rose through the floor of the stage in his armchair to offer greetings, insight and engage in a twitter town hall.

Conference ministers then hosted community town halls on a variety of topics.

"Most popular was our own Mike Denton's gathering,



Erin Lys Jensen, Madison Forhan and Hannah Russell help out at Indianapolis food bank.

where he inspired and challenged youth to imagine Jesus' disciples as a youth group and then to dare to dream what our youth groups could do to change the world," Barber said. "We were charged to bring the spirit and experience of NYE back to our conferences and churches. Our conference will be taking themes from NYE to shape our Mid-Winter events at Pilgrim Firs and N Sid Sen."

The evening closing worship Friday at the amphitheater included enacting the story of the loaves and the fish.

Philip Coleman of University Congregational UCC shared his perspective on what "Faith, is..."

"We helped inaugurate the national 'Faith in...' campaign," said Barber.

UCC minister for youth advocacy and leadership formation Waltrina Middleton offered "prophetic testimony to our abilities to not only imagine, but also to do it in the name of Jesus," said Barber.

"The week was good and intense," she said. "We stood tall as a conference, engaging well beyond what our numbers. The adult leaders were incredible, faithful, caring individuals.



Allie Paige Craswell, Russel Groves, Nate Thomsen and Ellen Clark cross the NYE state with the PNC banner.

Photos on this page by Aislyn Jeanne Crane

"Our youth represented us well. They came together and immersed themselves in all that was offered," she said. "We experienced health challenges and supported one of our youth through the sudden death of a family member. We embodied Christian community."

As NYE participants were changed by their experiences, Barber believes they return to their home churches, where they will bring change.

PNC delegates took several different flights home as part of an effort to keep costs

down. The last group to head West had time to go to the Indianapolis Zoo.

Youth groups raised funds for many months to be able to attend, and we wanted to be good stewards of their hard earned funds," she said.

They also had support from an Annual Meeting offering and the Youth and Young Adult Task Force.

For information, visit www.ucc.org/youth/nye/ **and at our facebook page** Pacific Northwest UCC National Youth Event Group.

Pilgrim Firs models green building with retrofits

Dee Nelson, manager at Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center, and Conference Minister Mike Denton recently described ways Pilgrim Firs has become a demonstration of green building as part of its being the location for the national UCC's Environmental Justice Center.

For the first training, 12 came for a weekend, half from the Pacific Northwest Conference and half from around the United States, including a representative of the Unitarian Universalists.

Those attending explored how people of faith can work for environmental justice for all, said Meighan Pritchard, of Keystone UCC in Seattle, one of the participants.

The goal is to help people explore how to do that through "train the trainer" workshop opportunities, in which participants learn about issues—through readings, film, discussion and a hands-on immersion experience—and then take this information back to their faith communities for further education and action, she said.

Mike Denton, PNC conference minister, said costs are self-contained so the training can be replicated, using an Environmental Justice Curriculum people can insert into their own local group settings. Participants learn the logistics and have a checklist of what to do.

Participants learned about Puget Sound Sage, Earth Ministry, the local Suquamish and Duwamish first people, and Port Gamble and Clellam. They visited the Suquamish community garden that helps people support themselves. The county connects with the tribe to purchase locally.

Through Farm to Table, a Port Orchard group connecting people to local family farms, Pilgrim Firs also is working toward buying more food from local farmers and working on cooperative projects with the



Deeg Nelson is overseeing 'green' developments at Pilgrim Firs.



Meighan Pritchard is a leader in Conference environmental and 'green' efforts.

South Kitsap Food Bank. Less food is delivered by trucks. Pilgrim Firs had a garden, but found it too labor intensive.

Two tracks of the center are the national UCC Environmental Justice Program and UCC-Pilgrim Firs' efforts to improve the camp to make it environmentally friendly as an example and to develop the national curriculum there.

Pilgrim Firs seeks to model green building, said Nelson, by taking the older facility and demonstrating retrofits that people can also do in their homes to save energy.

Once the site for the Seattle School District's environmental education, Pilgrim Firs seeks to draw it back from Islandwood, a new camp built on green principles.

Nelson hopes to do it by offering something different, by making things more reusable and recyclable.

Simple changes include developing a recycling program

that reduces trash consumption by two thirds, and replacing lighting fixtures and light bulbs in most of the buildings that saves one-third in charges on the camp's energy bill.

Because the camp buildings are basic, said Denton, people can learn how to do environmental upgrades using simple templates and retrofits.

As it has replaced all the roofs and put in more insulation, Pilgrim Firs has further cut energy costs. It has also taken out fire places and tightened air flow in buildings. Because cabins are no longer drafty, heaters are on less, and campers are more comfortable.

After the dining hall roof was replaced and insulated, it went from a space needing to be heated two days before a group came, to a space that could be heated four hours before.

"Use of ceiling fans to move the heat down also saves money," said Nelson.

The new roofs include

natural lighting through skylights—five in the dining hall—so lights are turned on less.

As volunteers help make improvements, they gain training in environmentally friendly building practices.

Denton said Pilgrim Firs has worked on the improvements in pieces, figuring out how to repair a leaky roof so it is not only sound but also environmentally responsible.

For example, Madsen lodge was renovated two-and-a-half years ago.

With the Environmental Justice Center located at Pilgrim Firs, the site provides a context that gives the curriculum meaning, he said.

"We were discussing what environmental justice meant as we made improvements," said Nelson. "Mike saw what I was doing and suggested we be an Environmental Justice Center. I was into environmental issues, but did not at first understand the connection to justice."

"Now we work with other communities on issues such as toxic dumping," he said, pointing out that the program includes visiting the Port of Seattle and learning about pollution from its use as a toxic dump.

"We are looking at the impact of water, soil and air quality for ourselves and neighbors downwind," Nelson said. "At the Port of Seattle, the soil is polluted with dioxins and diesel that can cause lung disorders. Food grown nearby is not safe because particles blow off trucks going to the dump. We are also concerned about the rights and safety of truckers. In addition, airplanes use the area to dump fuel."

For five years, Puget Sound Sage, which began under the Church Council of Greater Seattle and is now independent, has led work on port issues.

For information, call 360-876-2031, email deeg@pilgrimfirs.org or visit www.pilgrimfirs.org.

Two Environmental Justice Retreats planned for fall

Retreats address environmental despair to build communities based on hope.

By Meighan Pritchard

The United Church of Christ launched a new Environmental Justice Center last fall at Pilgrim Firs Camp and Conference Center near Port Orchard to help people of faith explore how they can work for environmental justice.

Two environmental justice retreats are coming up this fall.

The first will be held mid-week, from noon on Tuesday, Oct. 16 through noon on Thursday, Oct. 18, so clergy can attend.

The second, on the weekend of Nov. 16 to 18, is intended specifically for young adults.

In initial sessions at both retreats, participants will explore five themes of a faith-based approach to environmental justice: gratitude, humility, responsibility, justice, and community.

Each theme is anchored with biblical readings, selections from the video, "Renewal," insights from leaders in environmental and social justice, and additional resources.

Participants receive a binder of materials to take home and share with their own congregations.

On the second afternoon of the retreats, participants will tour the lower Duwamish River and nearby neighborhoods with a guide from Puget Sound Sage, a coalition of labor, faith and community organizations to build an economy based on shared prosperity, to observe and experience how environmental destruction and environmental restoration impact communities and individuals in the region.

Air and water quality in the lower Duwamish and vicinity



Genevieve Aguilar of Puget Sound Sage leads retreat participants through a community garden during the April training.

Photos by Meighan Pritchard

are of particular concern because of industry and exhaust from diesel trucks.

Remaining time at the retreats will focus on responses to environmental challenges:

- working through issues of environmental despair to build communities based on hope;
- developing strategies and activities for participants' local communities;
- creating a plan for participants' own workshops in their home communities.

Each participant will be given tools to carry out these activities in their own communities.

After an environmental justice retreat in April 2012, one participant wrote, "The weaving of facts/education, faith-based questions, and anecdotes works so well. I am so grateful my church finds this a priority. The scripture portion will be so important for me to go forward. Well, well done curriculum. Powerful visuals on the DVD."

Another participant wrote, "The truth is, I arrived feeling discouraged and more than a little cynical, but I am leaving feeling called, renewed and curious to see where this will lead. I especially like the suggestion that we broadcast this material



Retreat participants, including Conference Minister Mike Denton in background, stroll the grounds at Pilgrim Firs in April.

through covenant groups. This makes the path part of the solution by building relationships."

A UCC minister who participated noted, "When Jesus preached, he preached the kingdom. When we talk about transformation to a different kind of system, aren't we preaching the kingdom?"

The fall workshop is co-sponsored by the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and UCC Justice and Witness Ministries.

A five-minute video from the first environmental justice retreat can be viewed online at ucc.org/environmental-ministries/center-for-environmental-justice/.

For information, call 206-370-4142 or email meighan.pritchard@gmail.com. The cost is \$175.

More information on the center is available from Jim Deming, national UCC minister for environmental justice, at 216-736-3722 or at jdeming@ucc.org.

Global partner visit build friendships, relationship

The Rev. Ed Evans of Sequim and Suquamish UCC churches found that his short-term volunteer mission appointment with Global Ministries from May 1 to June 8 was an avenue to break through divisions and schemes of the world to envision the global village of partner churches and new friends.

He was invited by the East Seoul Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of South Korea (PROK) to teach English to help pastors enhance their English-speaking skills.

That presbytery has been a global partner of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ since 1993. There have been exchanges of delegations every year since then.

Six Korean young adult women came in May 2011, and a Pacific Northwest Conference young adult delegation will be going to Korea in June 2013. The PNC will also host a delegation from Korea in 2013 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the partnership.

Evans visited Seoul as part of a delegation in 2010 and has helped host visiting delegations. He has also served as chair of the PNC/Disciples Northwest Region Global Ministries Committee.

The PROK, broke off from the Presbyterian Church of Korea in 1953 because of that church's fundamentalist theology, was founded in 1885 by Protestant missionaries.

"The PROK has become the liberal, progressive Christian voice, he said of the church, which is growing fast and now has 150,000 members. Christians are now one-fourth of the population of Korea," he said.

Part of Evans' time was to learn more about the Korean church and lives of Koreans.

Korean Christians have Wednesday evening services, Friday home gatherings and



Korean pastors wear stoles Ed Evans gave them as gifts.

daybreak home prayer services, in addition to Sunday worship, Evans said.

Pastors he taught in two-hour classes four days a week were mostly from small rural churches with 50 attending Sundays, but one pastor who came was from the Dang Kwang Church, a medium size church where Evans preached.

"Worship space is at a premium, so one PROK church worships on the 6th floor of a building that houses two other churches, a grocery store and business offices," he said.

Evans said he began each class asking: "How's the weather in your life?" From that story-sharing conversations began about health to theology to politics, including the divisive, complex issue of the reunification of North and South Korea.

He learned that PROK pastors tend not to comment on social justice issues when preaching. They emphasize the gospel of personal salvation.

"Some think that by being more conservative, they will draw more people, like conservative, evangelical congregations," Evans commented.

Pastors asked him what he thought of U.S. President Barack Obama's endorsing gay marriage. When he said he sup-

ported it, they were stunned. They had developed respect for him, and he supported gay marriage.

They spoke of the Bible condemning homosexuality.

Later, however, at Geumsan Church, established by early missionaries who preached a fundamentalist theology, he found that early preachers taught that the Bible mandated that men and women be separate in church because women were to be silent. Their sanctuary was L shaped, so women sat in the area to the right of the pulpit and men sat in front of it.

They told him they discontinued that practice in the mid 1970s because their understanding of Scripture had changed. While he didn't speak up at that point about changed understanding of Scriptures on homosexuality, he hopes his witness might have stirred some thinking and sowed seeds of change.

The Goebek Church in Jeonju, three hours south of Seoul, considers itself a Confessing Church in the tradition of Dietrich Bonhoeffer when Nazi German philosophy encroached into the churches.

Rooted in the tradition of social justice, that church considers the government a dicta-

torship and speaks out against oppression. When one of its pastors, Han Sang Yol visited North Korea to open doors of communication for reunification several years ago, he was arrested, tried and has been in prison the past year and a half.

"Members of that church experience discrimination in society and in the work place," Evans said.

The pastor of another church introduced him to Jung Byeong-gil, his host two years ago then at Song Pa Church, is now director of the Christian Agricultural Development Institute in Jeonju. He raises 5,500 chickens and sells 6,000 eggs a day to help support pastors and rural churches.

Evans felt overwhelmed by the generosity of his hosts, including him in family gatherings, clergy-spouse retreats, meals, and visits to Buddhist and historic sites.

"They exposed me to Korean life that is not on the beaten path of tourism," he said. "In the process, seeds of friendship were planted."

His hosts also took him to the Northeast Asia Mission Association Conference, the 39th since 1973, a gathering of church leaders from Taiwan, Japan and Korea. They were considering how churches assist undocumented foreign workers in their countries.

In the process, he and they were becoming friends.

"It was a time of understanding how we are all people of God, related to one another more intrinsically than we might ever have known," he said. We are living in the world, singing, praying and being church together."

For him, the experience was a gift he wants to share with PNC churches.

For information, call 360-683-4704, email edevans@aol.com or visit youtube.com/watch?v=01J1-KbpY2U.

Mission today is about serving as a 'critical presence'

In three years as mission partners with the UCC-Disciples Global Ministries in East Timor, Tom and Monica Liddle helped improve conditions at Imanuel Clinic in Lospalos.

They shared their experiences on a visit to six UCC and Disciples congregations in the Northwest from Aug. 4 to 20. They were also at the Disciples' kids and junior camps at Gwinwood and family camp at N-Sid-Sen.

The Liddles and their children, Hannah, 8, and Simon, 2, went to Eagle Harbor UCC in Bainbridge Island; Broadview UCC, University Congregational and Horizon House in Seattle; Englewood Christian in Yakima, and Westminster UCC and North Hill Christian in Spokane.

Invited by the Protestant Church of East Timor, Tom helped with rural visitation, Sunday school, youth groups, preaching, teaching English, and rebuilding the roof and painting Clinic Imanuel, a ministry established in 1991.

Monica was the only health care provider at Imanuel, a primary care center for a region of 20,000 people. She oversaw patient care, including prenatal care, tuberculosis, malaria and malnutrition.

She also provided on-the-job training for staff in clinical, administrative, accounting and computer work.

Tom and Monica, both 39, grew up in Columbus, Indiana.

He earned a bachelor's degree from Prescott, Ariz., College in 1995 and was an instructor for the National Outdoor Leadership School through college and until moving to Seattle in 1997, where he was a carpenter. He now plans to study at St. Paul Lutheran Seminary in Minnesota.

Monica graduated from the University of Arizona in 1994 and studied naturopathic medicine at Bastyr University in Seattle, earning a doctorate in



Simon, Monica, Hannah and Tom Liddle visit Westminster UCC.

2002 and completing a certificate in naturopathic midwifery in 2003. She had a family practice in Duluth, where they attended a UCC church until leaving for East Timor in 2009.

They saw their mission as joining "God, who is on a mission to bring love, healing and wholeness to the world."

Their role was to participate in the mission of the Protestant Church of East Timor.

They also saw their role as going to a new place and making new friends. They believe one way to know more about God is through friendships. So they learned more about God and hope their friends also learned about God through their presence, work and caring.

To work and make friends, they had to learn the East Timorese language of Tetum, the primary of 35 languages along with Portuguese.

"Mission work today is about being a critical presence in places we are needed, where ecumenical partners invite us to come to meet a concrete, crucial need," she explained.

Beyond friendships, that presence included being in solidarity and partnership, giving and receiving gifts.

Clinic staff see 1,200 to

1,500 patients a month. Medical and lab services are free.

Along with seeing 60 of the patients each week herself, Monica demonstrated for staff new directions in health care that were applicable there. She helped five women on staff learn some basics of medicine, including how to do lab tests for malaria and tuberculosis.

About 40 percent of children are underweight from malnutrition. Poor sanitary conditions and lack of clean water led to health problems.

"To heal and cure people, you have to find the root cause, which is poverty—not enough food and no access to clean water," said Monica.

One boy was so malnourished he had diarrhea for six weeks before coming.

Visiting homes, Monica saw that six children living in a shack might eat only once a day.

A girl came twice, once with malaria and pneumonia, then with worms and diarrhea.

The Liddles helped their housekeeper's family install a toilet and inside water.

"Many people share their homes or rooms with family members who have tuberculosis," she said. "Most do not understand that germs spread by

coughs. They also don't know it can be treated and if treated they must take medicine for eight months. Because many don't complete the medicine, there are resistant strains."

At the hospital two blocks from the clinic, midwives were losing patients. They did not take blood pressure, test for HIV or anemia. So Monica started a prenatal clinic to do basic maternity care.

The Liddles told some history of East Timor. Portuguese and Dutch, who colonized Indonesia, fought over Timor for its sandalwood. They split the island. Although Indonesia became independent in 1945, the Portuguese did not leave East Timor until 1975. The next day Indonesia invaded, supported by western powers.

About 97 percent of the people are Catholic. Protestants are Dutch Reformed. Other religions are indigenous and Islam. Under Indonesian occupation, the church grew rapidly, supporting pastors and educators, but when they left in 1999, they no longer supported community leaders.

"The nation of one million people—half under 15—experienced 20 years of occupation and genocide," she said. Only 50 percent are literate. Now it wants to use its natural resources to benefit the young people, Monica said.

With support of Global Ministries, the Liddles have arranged for one clinic worker, Amena, to study in a three-year medical laboratory technician program at Lake Superior College in Duluth.

She will take intensive English so she can keep up in class, plus pre-med math and science courses before beginning the program. In exchange for sponsorship, Amena will then complete a three-year contract at Clinic Imanuel.

For information, call 651-395-9691 or email tomaslidle@gmail.com.

Managing director and cook transitions occur at N-Sid-Sen

At his retirement party and at Annual Meeting, Randy Crowe shared an overview of his camp ministry at N-Sid-Sen as he passed on tools to the new managing director Mark Boyd.

Boyd was previously on the staff at the Pacific Northwest United Church of Christ's Western Washington camp, Pilgrim Firs. He was also youth minister at Olympia United Churches.

Camp and conference center managers at N-Sid-Sen and Pilgrim Firs combine the roles of executive directors and managing directors responsible for maintenance, administration and ministry.

As Crowe retired after 22 years as managing director of N-Sid-Sen, the United Church of Christ Camp and Conference Center on the eastern shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene, there were opportunities to review



Retired camp director Randy Crowe and retired cook Mary Japenga, left, visit with camp director Mark Boyd and cook Coby Woodruff at N-Sid-Sen at Japenga's farewell party.

the scope of what it takes to keep a camp going.

The Rev. Linda Crowe, Randy's wife and now retired pastor from Veradale UCC, has

been active in outdoor ministries. She summed up the camp ministry as one of maintenance, management, interruptions, relationships and hospitality.

Tasks include installing light fixtures, changing light bulbs, and hammering nails for building and roofing projects. There is also need to be open to interruptions for crises and to take time with campers and camp staff.

Each element is part of a camp's overall ministry as a welcoming place for people coming to be nurtured in faith, life and recreation.

Tools Crowe passed on to Boyd include a songbook, a Bible and a book of prayers, because "people will expect you to be a theologian." Then came the tools for physical work—a drill, light bulb, hammer and full tool bucket for the camp handyman side of his role.

Ryan Lambert of Seattle said he was part of the first junior high aqua camp Randy and Linda led when they were members of Kirkland United Church of Christ.

"As you explored your sense of call, you inspired our sense of call," Ryan said. "That summer shaped the rest

of my life—from relationships formed at meals, on porches and decks, in boats and on the beach, we have stories to share with our children and grandchildren."

John Hubbe of Richland praised Randy for his ability to build community and for being a visionary to renovate some buildings, build new ones and renew the camp to serve people.

As Boyd steps into the legacy of hospitality, he is not only meeting people at the camp but also visiting congregations so people in the pews know who he is.

"I recognized early in my work with children, youth and adults, that camp gives them a place to be who they are away from their usual social barriers. It is a safe, sacred space where they can relax," he said.

For it to be such a space, Boyd discourages use of technology at camp. Once campers get beyond their hesitation about not having technology, camp goes easily," he said.

More on 2012 summer camps will be in the next Conference News.

For information, call 208-689-3480 or email mark@n-sid-sen.org.

Summer cook hired full time

Along with the shift in camp managers at N-Sid-Sen, there has been a shift with the retirement of 15-year camp cook Mary Japenga, to second cook Cody Woodridge.

Japenga came to North Idaho 22 years ago from Iowa to nurse her sister when she was ill. Her husband, Gary, began teaching business. Now her mother, 87, in her hometown of Sanborn, Iowa, needs help and she's returning there.

Coming from United Methodist background, she has been drawn by the United Church of Christ, which is now part of who she is. One son is a Presbyterian pastor.

"N-Sid-Sen is a sacred space for me," she said at her retirement party in August, which served her favorite meal, a taco bar.

Coby Woodruff from Kettle Falls has been coming to camp since he was seven. In his five years studying theatre and studio art—graduating in June from Eastern Washington University—he has spent four summers cooking at N-Sid-Sen, the last two as second cook. Now he's the full-time cook.

A long-term goal is to earn a master's degree in teaching.

"I had considered going into culinary arts, but chose theatre arts, loving the writing, painting and carpentry," Coby said. "I also love to cook for others and have others enjoy my cooking."

"I can't imagine what it would be for me without this place. I love the people who come here and the community they are," Coby said, who will have a room at N-Sid-Sen, but will also live in Coeur d'Alene.