



Pacific Northwest CONFERENCE NEWS

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September-October 2010

Campers celebrate 75 years at N-Sid-Sen

**Worship and sharing
included singing
favorite camp songs**

Joy Peterson remembers coming as a child with her father, Charles Randall of the Vera Congregational Church, and a group from area churches who decided to accept an offer by Arthur Ford for the property that is now N-Sid-Sen.

Her sister Jean Payne, who turns 90 in October, remembers when she was 14 and attended the first camp in 1935 in primitive conditions. She plans to donate her scrapbook of that camp.

Both were among 40 attending the 75th anniversary celebration of N-Sid-Sen Sept. 5 and sharing their memories.

Randy Crowe, managing director of N-Sid-Sen, said the State Conference of Congregational Churches in Washington and North Idaho used the original seven-acre site before the Rev. Arthur and
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Jean Payne and Joy Peterson share about early years at N-Sid-Sen.

Mental health chaplain trains clergy, churches

Based on his ministry of companionship through the Seattle's Mental Health Chaplaincy since 1987, the Rev. Craig Rennebohm plans to train clergy, pastoral counselors, congregations and mental health workers to work together respond to people suffering mental illness, substance abuse, trauma and children's mental health issues.

"Mental health ministry is integral to a healthy congregation's life," he said. "We all are vulnerable, need tenderness and understanding. As we attend to mental health issues and care for each

other as neighbors, we are healthier as individuals, congregations and communities," he said.

**Sessions
will be offered
in Cowlitz,
Thurston and four
other counties.**

Rennebohm is forming Faith Group Mental Health Training Cooperatives in various counties. Pathways to Promise, a national, interfaith, mental health organization, is funding this project, working with local clergy and congregations interested in training and collaboration with community mental health providers.

He is offering day-long training programs with a morning session on Mental Health 101 to help clergy discern their

role in mental health healing, recovery and wellness. The afternoon session for congregations is on Building a Mental Health Team in a Local Congregation.

In Chehalis, 51 clergy and 20 congregational leaders from Cowlitz County came on Sept. 9. On Sept. 13, sessions are planned in Olympia for Thurston County clergy and congregations.

Rennebohm is setting up groups to organize trainings in South King County, Snohomish County, Ellensburg for Central Washington and Spokane for Spokane County.

He also plans future sessions to equip local trainers and to train people for congregational companionship ministry, mental health first aid and mental
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Camp will have impact on environment

Conference Comments



Conference
Board
of Directors
approves
covenant
to establish
a UCC
Environmental
Justice
Center
at
Pilgrim
Firs.

August news seemed crazy—the Gulf oil spill, floods covering one-fifth of Pakistan, drought stoking fires in Russia, record heat on the East Coast, icebergs the size of states breaking off glaciers, genetically modified and hormone enhanced food and the obesity epidemic reversing life expectancy. These seem like over-the-top plots of science fiction.

With everything these days, there is political, scientific, media, institutional and industrial wrangling and manipulation. Daily doses of non-sequiter answers are attached to the wrong questions that are repeated until they seem rational. This media culture creates an entertainment-ready conflict-based sport in which one person—depending on their debating skills—wins or loses while those providing the coliseum set aside responsibility to explore whether the information is factual to increase their ratings. The “winner” is usually not the person with the best information but the one who presents information in the most believable, convincing way.

Folks wrangling for power and money set aside the common good for what is only good for them—one definition for sin. Systems have been given life and breath to such a degree that they reward those who serve the systemic addictions.

The Church does not escape clean. Although our influence is not what it once was, we participate in the culture of winning. We have fed the beasts. Our buildings, denominations, institutions and other structures have sometimes become monuments to us as opposed to pointing to God.

One of the most important functions of the Church continues to be providing a place where people seeking to faithful can gather and make a difference. There are few U.S. hospitals, social service organizations, senior communities or social justice organizations that don't have roots in the church. Many movements for equality and peace were started in prayer meetings, camp retreats and church social halls.

Churches were the first places to address environmental issues through the lens of workers exposed to chemicals, unsanitary conditions of poor communities and community health. The UCC Commission for Racial Justice was an early leader in the cause for environmental justice, releasing in 1987 a report, *Toxic Wastes and Race* and a 2007 report, *Toxic Wastes and Race at 20*. The UCC Network for Environmental and Economic Responsibility formed in the late 1980s, promoting “Whole Earth Churches.”

In coming months, the UCC Environmental Justice Center will emerge at Pilgrim Firs. Over the last year, a partnership has developed between our camp, our conference, the national church and a growing number of organizations concerned about the environment. The hope is to provide a space of dialogue and training where environmental issues can be discussed, solutions to problems can be considered, commitments can be made and, movements are launched or enhanced.

Pilgrim Firs is within four hours of just about every environmental issue. That *also* means that it's within four hours of people and organizations figuring out ways to deal with these challenges.

The programming of the Center will fit around, and sometimes within, the other regular programming of Pilgrim Firs. We expect to start small and, over time, the Center will grow into something that enhances the mission of the camp and becomes another of its core functions.

We're also looking into ways to make the center's programming flexible enough to be adapted programs in other parts of the UCC. Eventually, we hope to have programs that appeal to ecumenical and interfaith colleagues.

The UCC has three other centers in other parts of the country. One focuses on advocacy training in DC; another on issues related to racism on grounds of a former slave plantation in North Carolina (The Franklinton Center), and a third focuses on border and immigration issues in Southern California (Centro Romero).

Our gifts to Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM), grants, and special gifts from churches and individuals support these centers. The hope is that the UCC Environmental Justice Center will become self supporting through participation fees. This will take a while.

Meanwhile, we will work with those in the national UCC to develop a plan with clear lines of accountability and responsibility; a realistic, sustainable budget; a prophetic, prayerful, powerful program, and a plan to raise funds to help this program get off the ground.

The covenant the PNC Board approved Sept. 12 with the UCC Justice and Witness Ministries includes sharing support of a program consultant, plus joint strategic planning.

More information will come about this center. Meanwhile, please pray about this idea in your local church as a part of your prayers for this world and time we live in.

Camps rely on churches for staff and campers

A conversation Deeg Nelson, managing director at Pilgrim Firs, started with campers on environment turned into a lesson on who owns and is responsible for the camp.

Given that only a third of those who come to Pilgrim Firs for the Pacific Northwest UCC Conference camps attend UCC churches, he found the question relevant.

"The churches own the camps," Deeg told them.



Enthusiasm at camp requires involvement in congregations.

"How do the camps keep going?" a camper asked.

Deeg said that it's important for campers and those committed to the camping program to be involved in their local churches, who are the owners.

"If the churches struggle, the camps will struggle," he said. "If the churches are strong, the camps will be strong."

For information, call 360-876-2031 or visit pilgrimfirs.org.

Transitions announced

Janet Matthew's installation as pastor at Fox Island United Church of Christ is on Sept. 12.

Jan Van Pelt's ordination is set for Sept. 19 at Plymouth Congregational UCC in Seattle.

Jason Boyd was ordained August 1 at St. Paul's UCC. He will be installed on Oct. 22.

Tammy Stampfli is interim at the United Churches of Olympia.

Jon Hoadley is interim at Newport UCC.

Tara Olsen is the new associate pastor at Bellingham First Congregational UCC.

Jason Gackle is pastor at the German UCC church in Seattle.

Judith Rinehart-Nelson is the designated pastor at Zion Philadelphia Congregational UCC in Ritzville.

Jill Komura and **Maureen McLain** have been approved for ordination.

Chris Causey is interim at Blaine UCC.

Disciples plan boundary training session Sept. 15

Minister's Boundary Training, sponsored by the Northwest Region of the Disciples of Christ, will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sept. 15, at First Christian Church of Kent, 11717 SE 240th St. To register call 253-893-7202 ext 100 or visit www.disciplesnw.org/whathappening/boundarytraining.html.

UCC youth leaders meet

UCC youth leaders—volunteers, paid staff and clergy—will meet from noon to 4 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 27, at University Congregational UCC, 4515 16th NE in Seattle. For information, contact Tara Barber

at barbertara@hotmail.com or Margaret Irribarra mirribarra@universityucc.org.

Our Whole Lives training may come to Pacific NW

There will be a free training for the "Our Whole Lives" curriculum in the Pacific Northwest Conference for congregations signing up by Dec. 31 to implement a 27-week or 13-week program for youth or to be part of a control group after the research of the Evaluation Promotion Project is complete. The more churches that apply, the greater the chance the PNC will be chosen as a Regional Training Site. Delegates will receive free training, materials and coaching.

Our Whole Lives is the Lifespan Sexuality Education Curricula developed by the UCC and the Unitarian Universalist Assn. For information, visit www.churchstuff.com or call 253-874-2084.

NW Women's Retreat is in fall

The Northwest Regional Women's Retreat #9 will be held Nov. 5 to 7 at Kah-Nee-Ta resort in Warm Springs, Ore., on the theme, "Come to the Oasis, Our Affirmation of Spirit, Inspiration and Soul," with keynote speaker Carolyn Kortge, author of *The Spirited Walker*. An award-winning journalist and past master racewalker with medals from the USA Track and Field Association's Masters Championships, she blends athletic performance with meditation—care of the spirit and Workshops are on fiber art, liturgical dance, stone carving, midlife transitions, labyrinth walk, eco-

economic diversity, stress reduction, fair trade and yoga.

Planners have invited First Lady Michelle Obama and hope she will come.

For information, call 503-631-3063 or email nrwr.ucc@gmail.com.

MissionWorks is Oct. 7-9

Ed Evans, chair of the PNC's Global Ministries Committee, will be emcee for the 2010 MissionWorks Global Mission Event Oct. 7 to 9 in Cleveland, Ohio. The event informs Disciples and UCC members about shared Global Mission efforts so they can tell the story in their congregations. For information, call 317-713-2571

by Sept. 17 to register. Training for Ministries and Mission Interpreters will follow. For information, email aeriej@ucc.org.

Ecumenical bodies call for prayer, action against hate

The Washington Association of Churches, the Church Council of Greater Seattle and the Lutheran Public Policy Office of Washington State urge that in these times, Christians in Washington "state unequivocally that intolerance and bigotry are our enemy, not Islam." While condemning acts of terror by any group or individual, the agencies call for affirming "Muslims in America as our kin in faith and fellow citizens," supporting their "right to practice their religion without fear of slander or harassment."

For resources call 206-625-9790 ext. 11 or email woldt@thewac.org.

Conference
News
Briefs

Commitment of directors gives continuity

Camp sizes fluctuated up and down from previous years, but the long-term commitment from repeat directors brings a consistency to summer camps at Pilgrim Firs and N-Sid-Sen.

At its September meeting, the Outdoor Ministries Task Force reported that N-Sid-Sen and Pilgrim Firs drew 694 campers, nearly evenly divided between the two camps.

In addition to evaluations campers turned in each session, Sharon Linton, the task force convenor, tested an online survey tool and received 100 responses from campers.

Of those, 81 percent rated the overall camp experience as excellent; 85 percent rated camp leadership as excellent, and 74 percent rated the food as excellent, she reported.

Kid's Camp at Pilgrim Firs July 23 to 28 doubled to 42 campers. Kaila Russell of Tolt UCC in Carnation, who directed the camp with Katie Lloyd of Findly St. Christian Church, attributes the increase to churches being intentional about sending children.

"We focused on the theme 'Be a Hero' to let children know that everyone can be heroes by using what God has given them—smiles, being friends and helping people," she said.

Russell said they turned one snack time into acting out Jesus feeding 5,000 people, based on the "stone soup" model. Starting with no snack, counselors gradually contributed snacks to a bowl—crackers, pretzels, candy, nuts and more—to make an "awesome snack" to share.

While half the campers were there for the first time, this is the third year Russell has done Kids Camp and her 17th year of leading camps—every year since her first anniversary.

"I do it because I see what a difference it makes in the lives of children of all ages, from little ones to adults," Russell said. "Experiencing God in



Junior high youth float on the St. Joe River, a traditional part of aqua camps.



Anand Hernandez from Shalom UCC in Richland models the T-shirt he designed.

nature is life changing. I know it has made a difference in the lives of my two children."

She said her daughter Hannah, now 13, has come with her every year and now comes as an assistant, along with going to junior high camp.

Consistency is behind the commitment of Bob Watrous, of Shalom UCC in Richland, who led Intermediate Camp at N-Sid-Sen with Kim Schulz of Tekoa, too. He has directed intermediate camps since 2006 and before that came as a counselor since 1988.

The retired nuclear waste cleanup engineer has been involved in community theaters and brings those skills to camp.

Following the theme, "Be a Hero," he said, the campers did



Intermediate camper Kyle Carpenter gets close to nature.

an enactment of Joshua and the Hebrews crossing the Jordan and stacking up 12 stones for the 12 tribes. Campers dressed in period costumes and paraded around the camp before stacking the stones.

To involve the children in the story of the friendship of Jonathan and David, he had them enact it as an old-fashioned radio show, complete with sound effects.

For example, for the sound of walking on a rocky road, they crunched corn flakes in a pan, holding a microphone close. To make the sound of arrows flying, they twanged rubber bands close to the mike.

Because registrations were down from the average of 36 campers, he felt his role as director was to contact several churches to recruit counselors and children. He said that when adults come from a church, children are more likely to come

because they know someone.

"I like this age group, because I like to do theater and drama with them, working the Scripture into a play," he said.

One year, Watrous brought his shadow puppet theater, and the children created the shadow characters for the story.

A previous year, he had the children act out the story of the paralyzed man who was lowered through the roof into the house where Jesus was surrounded by a crowd and where he healed the man. Camp staff helped set up a pulley and scaffolding to lift and lower a camper on a stretcher. The children read their lines from cue cards. Randy Cross of Pullman made a video of the drama.

This year, he used another activity to teach camp rules and dining hall etiquette, based on the secret communication of Jonathan and David. Rules were Continued on page 5

Campers learn about various kinds of heroes

Continued from page 4
written with invisible lemon juice and fluorescent ink. The children developed the lemon-juice ink with red cabbage water, and used a black light to read the fluorescent ink.

At the end of the camp, Watrous and Schulz had the children write letters to themselves. They buried them in a time capsule to be dug up in 2016 when they near graduation.

"In January, I grab a copy of the curriculum and begin thinking about themes, stories and ideas for the next summer," said Bob, who hopes to continue directing the camp.

John Hubbe co-directed Junior High Aqua Camp at N-Sid-Sen with Dana Sprengle, both of Shalom Richland. To develop the theme of being heroes and living like Jesus, they had youth read at morning watch, program times and campfires from Brad Meltzer's book, *Heroes for My Son*. They read about such people as Mr. Rogers, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Jr., Houdini, Amelia Erhart, Harriet Tubman and others.

Some were included for little-known actions. For example, film director and producer Stephen Spielberg, for example, gave video documentaries of testimonies of 52,000 Holocaust survivors to the Shoah Foundation in hope that people in future decades will continue to learn from them.

Along with the camp's usual midweek float trip, talent show, dance and water activities, the 56 junior high campers discussed different heroes.

Directing camps most years since 2000, John said, while continuity is valuable, he mentors counselors so someone can move up.

After being a counselor for that camp 11 years and co-directing it last year. Rachel (Teigen) Brackett co-directed Senior High Camp at Pilgrim

Firs with her husband Sean.

"We have a good volunteer team for this camp," she said.

This year the camp drew 75 campers, more than the 50 average in the past.

As one program, her father, Terry Teigen, chaplain at Horizon House, spoke on his visit to the conference's global partner church in Korea and interest of Korean young adults in visiting the conference.

Brian Kay formerly of Tolt UCC in Carnation and his wife Dana Weir, formerly of Newport UCC—now in Port Angeles—showed ways to express faith in art, using wax to write messages on screen prints.

Brackett, who teaches grade school music in Kirkland and attends University Congregational UCC in Seattle, included plenty of music, so campers were singing through the day—for grace, before programs and at campfires. Campers brought guitars and drums.

Deeg Nelson, managing director at Pilgrim Firs, gave a presentation on what it will mean for Pilgrim Firs to be an Environmental Justice Center.

Campers spent time in nature reflecting on its value and did service projects to clean up the camp. They also learned about ways to save energy and preserve nature, Brackett said.

Emily Tanis-Likkel of Eagle Harbor UCC in Bainbridge Island was a first-time camp director for the Pilgrim Firs Family Camp. Many of the 42 campers were "old-timers," which she said showed when they did the talent show. Two teens asked to be emcees.

"It didn't matter if it was a professional-sounding singer or a seven-year-old throwing a hula hoop in the air and catching it or not, their banter affirmed how amazing each performer was," Tanis-Likkel said. "It was grace running over."

For information, call 208-689-3489 or 360-879-2031.



Intermediate campers act out Hebrews crossing Jordan.



N-Sid-Sen camper makes basket, a craft led by Nancy Minard of Veradale UCC.



Emily Nightingale interacts with friends in a camp activity. Photos provided by camp staff



Jared Hipol gains sailing skills at N-Sid-Sen.

Group shares stories of N-Sid-Sen camps

Continued from page 1
Margaret Ford deeded the land to them in 1937.

In 1939, volunteers built Forrester Lodge, named in 1985 for Franklin and Mimi Forrester of Ione and Metaline Falls who helped choose the site.

“Cabins 1 to 6 were barracks brought after World War II from Farragut Naval Base. They were barged across the lake and winched up the hill to their locations. The bunks were also from Farragut,” Randy added.

The property now includes 270 acres and 4,780 feet of waterfront on Lake Coeur d’Alene, nine miles north of Harrison. In 1953, the Schrader family gave (for \$1) the Iris Farm property across the road. In 1963, Mrs. Ford gave seven more acres, land on which cabins 7 to 12 were built from 1964 to 1966.

John Eisenhower, who played camp songs for the 75th anniversary morning worship and afternoon sharing, said his parents, Phil and Pat Eisenhower helped build those cabins.

In 1967, the conference purchased the balance of the Ford property with waterfront,

their cabin and the cove. The Fords originally bought the land in 1918 and built a log cabin in 1925.

Randy said the Ford cabin has two chimneys. One is for the fireplace inside. The other is for a cook stove in the basement, where camp food was first cooked.

Over the years, Joy said, she was a counselor, lifeguard and “did every job at camp but cook.” She often brought youth groups other times of the year.

“The spiritual atmosphere here is important. I often brought boys who were in trouble, and they would discuss questions here they would never ask anywhere else,” she said. “I’ve grown spiritually here.”

Randy first came in 1951 when he was four and again in 1954, both times as a tag-along with his mother at a women’s camp. The boys’ cabins south of the lodge were Matthew, Mark, Luke and the John. Girls cabins were down the hill.

His wife, Linda, pastor at the Veradale UCC, first came in 1961. She lived in North Spokane and attended Westview UCC. Cabin windows were



Inspiration Point is the goal of many hikes at N-Sid-Sen.

shutters. There were no heaters in the cabins, and the showers were only cold water.

Volunteers were responsible for improvements, such as building Forrester Lodge, cabins, manager’s house and maintenance cabin, said Randy.

A contractor built Spirit Lodge, and volunteers worked with a contractor on Stillwater Lodge.

The first full-time camp managers, Amel and Elise Witter, came in 1969 from Nebraska. Amel was ordained, and Elise was a commissioned

minister.

Randy said Amel’s journal told of straightening nails and scavenging wood for projects to save money. He typed one or two paragraphs a day, until the day he wrote only “bone tired.” The next day he resigned.

Amel made the clock over the kitchen counter.

Eric Johnson served as camp manager for 14 years before going to manage a UCC camp in North Carolina.

Randy, who has managed the camp and conference center since 1990, said that more than the UCC family love and use N-Sid-Sen.

Other regular users include the Spokane Folklore Society, a Sufi group, Palouse Patchers and an HIV/AIDS group.

Les Harder said he brought his daughters to camps when he attended Covenant Christian, which was part of the United Ministries regional ministry for the UCC, Disciples and Church of the Brethren.

Dee Eisenhower, who helped with worship leadership for the 75th, said she and John brought their children every year to family camp, from diaper-ages on up.

“Now, no matter where our children go or where we live, here is home,” she said.

For information, call 208-689-3489.



John Eisenhower, guitarist at many camps, and Faith Ikefuna, 4, of Veradale UCC.

Linda Crowe has designed 16 of N-Sid-Sen's T-shirts



Linda Crowe points to a favorite design.

Of the 19 years of T-shirt and sweatshirt designs for N-Sid-Sen Camp and Conference Center, Linda Crowe, pastor of Veradale UCC, has done all but three. Before she became a pastor 16 years ago, she was a graphic artist.

One T-shirt shows a camper diving into the water. One camper suggested she put deer in the meadow on a T-shirt. A third is a view Linda sketched of the lake, while sitting on a rock looking south. Another shows a loon, waterfowl more prevalent before personal watercraft began chasing them.

The year she designed a friendly bear, she came to camp one day and saw a bear.

Other designs came from quotes related to curricula.

In the conference room on the south end of Stillwater Lodge is a quilt incorporating the T-shirt designs. Diane Roubal of Plymouth Congregational UCC completed it last fall before the National Outdoor Ministry Consult. For the 75th anniversary, she did a second quilt that hangs in the entry.

In the lunch line one day, her son, Keith, learned that Linda wanted to do a quilt with the T-shirts. He said his mother made quilts, so Linda talked with her and gave her T-shirts.

Linda earned an associate degree from Bellevue Community College before graduating from Burnley School of Commercial Arts in Seattle in 1980.

She worked with ad agencies doing production art in Seattle, where she and Randy lived from their marriage in 1969 until they moved to Spokane in 1985 for Randy's work with URM, a grocery wholesaler. They attended Kirkland UCC, Randy's childhood church. In 1982, they came to a family camp at N-Sid-Sen, and the next year directed the junior high aqua camp, which they continued to do for 14 years.

In Spokane, Linda continued ad agency design.

In 1989, while walking on the beach at Cape Cod during the Outdoor Ministry Consult, Randy and Linda resonated with the program's theme on the "ministry of hospitality." They both decided to go into ministry. Linda began night school at Eastern Washington University to earn a bachelor's degree required to enter seminary.

Since then they have not lived in the same state, but Linda said they have come to "understand what is important in life."

Randy's ministry began when he was chosen to be managing director of N-Sid-Sen. He uses skills from the grocery industry—budgeting, construction, visioning, people and handyman skills.

Linda earned a bachelor's degree in 1991 and completed studies at Pacific School of Religion in 1994.

"God has called us to different kinds of ministry and has blessed us with a good marriage and communication skills," said Linda, adding that they cherish their time together.

Randy is moved by the way the spirit at N-Sid-Sen and his ministry of hospitality has impact on people's lives, particularly youth. Several have entered professional and other ministries as their lives and faith have been stretched.

The T-shirts and sweatshirts were started as an identity piece and to raise money—about \$7,000 a year, Randy said. First they showed something about the camp, but in recent years, they have conveyed a deliberate social justice message, including quotes by Margaret Mead, Mother Theresa and Gandhi.

Campers tell of seeing a T-shirt, walking up to the person and starting a conversation.

For information, call 208-689-3489.



Diane Roubal took T-shirts home from the 2009 the Plymouth Congregational UCC family camp to make quilts. Above: Using a thimbleberry leaf theme, she stabilized the T-shirt fabric with iron-on interfacing and appliqued them on the background for a summer theme. Below: The second one has a blue-and-white winter feel with stars and snow flakes. Diane, who has attended Plymouth since 1991 and its family camps since 1995, works at a garment company and does quilting as a home business.



Concern about Muslims leads to interfaith outreach

To meet needs of homeless men and women, provide school supplies and pool information on needs and services, representatives of 35 congregations and 10 agencies in King County east of Lake Washington meet monthly as the East Side Interfaith Social Concerns Council.

After 27 years in the Philippines with national UCC global ministries, including several months as a hostage of a Muslim group, the Rev. Lloyd Van Vactor wants to continue to find ways to strengthen interfaith relationships, particularly with Muslims.

He is concerned about increasing Islamophobia and believes the way to counter it is for Christians to exert a special effort to understand Islam and strengthen relationships with their Muslim brothers and sisters in their communities.

"We need to have gatherings for discussions, to invite Muslims in the community to come to gatherings so we can talk and learn what we have in common," he said, adding a reminder from a Muslim friend at Microsoft of a quote that "we need to see the face of God/Allah everywhere we turn."

"Dislike is based on ignorance," said Van Vactor, who studied about Islam before he went to Dansalan College, where many students were Muslims. He went with an openness to that would foster interest in people learning about one another's faiths so they could discover what they have in common.

When he retired 18 years ago, after serving 11 years with One Great Hour of Sharing in New York City, he and his wife Myrna settled in Woodinville, near where his sons live.

For 16 years, he has represented Northshore UCC the East Side Interfaith Social



Lloyd Van Vactor seeks to build understanding of Muslims

Concerns Council. He now co-chairs the council.

Participating congregations are Catholic, Protestant, Mormon, Unitarian and Jewish in Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Northshore and east King County. There had been a Muslim representative until that person went back to school.

Van Vactor continues to meet with a few Muslims in the area to share ideas and concerns, and about five years ago helped Northshore UCC create a Pillar of Faith on its lawn as a symbol of the need to bring Christians and Muslims together.

He said Muslims who spoke at the dedication have spoken around the world about the pillar, but his contacts have been more limited than he hoped.

At each monthly meeting of the council, representatives of congregations and organizations share information and recruit volunteers, said Van Vactor, impressed with the number of programs available for area

communities.

Based on what the faiths have in common, the council sponsors three projects: 1) Congregations for the Homeless, a shelter for men; 2) Sophia Way, a shelter for women, and 3) Congregations for Kids, raising funds for school supplies and backpacks for nearly 1,500 children during the year.

"We have much cooperation in work for the homeless and good response to providing meals, food and funding when requests are made," he said.

The Congregations for the Homeless program shelters up to 50 men, sleeping in sleeping bags on the floor, in about 10 congregations for one month at a time. Beyond the host churches, other congregations provide an evening meal.

The program has a portable trailer with a shower and laundry facility that moves as the location changes. The men use sleeping bags and sleep on the floor. The sleeping bags and

belongings are locked in trailer when they go out to access services, find jobs and go to work.

Congregations for the Homeless helps men move out into permanent housing with subsidized rent and life coaches, said Van Vactor.

Sophia Way operates in a similar way for about eight single women. First Congregational UCC in Bellevue started the program and provides shelter year round on weekday evenings for up to eight women. On women, the women move to different congregations.

Last year, 50 women moved into subsidized housing, 12 at a time, he said.

The number of homeless fluctuates, said Van Vactor, who until two years ago served as an on-call chaplain at two area hospitals. For a while, the number of homeless was down, but now the programs are operating up to capacity.

For information, call 425-885-6993.

Diane Schmitz introduces Celtic spirituality

Celtic spirituality helps people connect to the earth and to each other in an inclusive circle.

Diane Schmitz, a UCC minister, consultant and educator, offers workshops and retreats on Celtic spirituality to help people connect to their physical surroundings, to people they encounter and to their daily lives.

She believes Celtic spirituality has been reviving over the last 20 years to counter the culture that separates the physical and spiritual, and that excludes and marginalizes some people.

Ordained in 2006 to do an outreach ministry of the divine feminine with University Baptist Church and University Congregational UCC, she does spiritual direction with individuals and organizational consulting with higher education, corporations, congregations and nonprofits.

She believes a holistic approach of reflection and action can help people become change agents for social justice in their communities and the world.

For Diane, Celtic spirituality affirms creation theology, women's spirituality and racial equity.

In October 2009, she visited Wales and Ireland, the roots of Celtic spirituality. There she solidified what she had read in books by being on the land and learning about Celtic history and spirituality.

Diane spoke of the rhythm in Celtic spirituality and healing that "comes by recognizing the body is sacred," she said.

"In every encounter there is a third person, something magical. Trusting in the sacred spirit means there can be healing even if the friendship goes awry.

Because senses are important in this spirituality, she arranged a workshop room with photos of Irish country, candles

and natural objects for people to feel and smell.

"In our bodies, we feel the changing seasons, cycles of life, and rhythms of the earth," said Diane, "but we have grown up in a culture that degrades the physical.

"The holy, however, is imbued in everything—biting an apple, jumping in leaves, everything we touch and smell. All nature is alive, holy and animate.

"A few minutes of experiencing such things can bring joy every day. Celtic spirituality calls us to be attentive to each gift, especially to the concept of a soul friend—Anam Cara," Diane said. "Celtic spirituality is about how people encounter each other in a circle of belonging, recognizing that love of others depends on love of self.

"We are so busy, it's hard to attend to ourselves or our friends. We need to use the blessings in our daily lives to spread gratitude for being alive. In Celtic thought, there is no separation of the visible and invisible, between earth and sky," she explained.

Diane, who has been director of commuter and transfer student services at Seattle University for 12 years, grew up unchurched until her family moved to Spokane and the pastor of Westview UCC invited them to church.

She became the church organist, but in high school grew disillusioned because not all church people are perfect.

After marrying, she studied journalism at Eastern Washington University, finishing in 1979. Moving to Seattle, she felt at home with the diversity of nature and people.

Until 1983, Diane worked



Diane Schmitz leads workshop on Celtic spirituality

as a manager with Hewlett Packard. Then she helped family in New Mexico start a computer business.

There Diane had a "spiritual awakening," exploring Buddhism, Sufi, New Thought and Native American spirituality.

When she moved back to Seattle in 1988, she sought a church community, in which she could discuss faith. Her involvement at University Congregational UCC led her to studies at the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University in 1993, initially to be a spiritual director.

Eventually, she decided to complete a master of divinity degree. After graduating, she served a year as minister-in-transition in Monroe UCC, and then returned to her work at Seattle University.

She started a doctoral de-

gree in educational leadership in 2005 at Seattle University, developing an outreach ministry to help the white community to overcome racism by "moving from privilege to partnership."

Her work in higher education and as a self-employed consultant includes creating professional development in multicultural competencies, understanding power and privilege, and becoming inclusive organizations.

Diane connects with Allies for Change, founded by Melanie Morrison—one of the keynote speakers for the 2009 PNC Annual Meeting—to facilitate social change through anti-oppression education and resources to promote working as allies across differences.

For information, call 206-365-4392 or email dschmitz@seattleu.edu.

Companion ministry helps neighbors be neighbors

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health issues related to children, substance abuse, trauma and aging.

Rennebohm said trauma affects veterans, abuse victims, immigrants, people with dementia and people suffering from “the destructive forces of history and society—slavery, racism, inequality and sexism.”

Through companion ministries of presence with those who suffer, he said, people learn the real stories of people, “unvarnished by media or by social-political myths so they can become informed citizens.”

After studies at Carlton College and Chicago Theological Seminary, he served five years as “minister to the community” at a Lowell, Mass., UCC church in a low-income neighborhood. As chaplain to the juvenile court, he realized mental health issues begin early.

In 1975, he came to Seattle as pastor of Pilgrim UCC, a dying congregation with about 18 at worship. From selling the parsonage, they had two years of salary. Rennebohm turned the church’s focus to one of mission to the neighborhood of seniors, low-income families, single mothers, heroin dealers and group homes.

As the neighborhood “gentrified,” drawing higher-income families, the church drew them. He challenged members to welcome everyone.

Pilgrim developed a day drop-in for homeless, an emergency shelter, a meal program and a clothing bank. It became base for service groups. Sunday mornings, 150 to 200 came to celebrate the diverse community.

“As the congregation did mission and became a base of compassion and care, it grew,” said Rennebohm, who saw that his role was teaching laity to equip them for a ministry of outreach to the community.

He led a course to equip la-



Craig Rennebohm is visiting communities around the state.

ity to be colleagues in mission, education, worship and fellowship.

In 1987, he earned a doctor of ministry degree from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley in pastoral care with people suffering mental illness. In his clinical pastoral education at the Bay Area County Hospital psychiatric unit, he saw that spirituality and faith had an impact on patients.

“When people lose the capacity to hope, think and imagine, the brain becomes stuck in negative feelings and thoughts,” Rennebohm said. “It shuts down its capacity for prayer, studying Scripture and pastoral conversations.”

As he explored how to minister to such people, he focused on the power of a ministry of presence, being a companion with a person who is suffering, being in a relationship of support, healing and recovery in the context of a congregation.

“Mental health comes as neighborhoods create a fabric of care,” said Rennebohm.

Returning to Seattle, he started the Mental Health Chaplaincy with the Church Council of Greater Seattle. The goals

were to 1) do outreach on the streets with homeless, mentally ill and marginalized people; 2) serve as a chaplain on the inpatient unit at Harborview, following people from the street to stability with housing in the community; 3) train and equip local congregations to be centers of welcome and support for people released from hospitals to keep them off the streets, and 4) provide an accessible, effective mental health system.

Based at Prospect UCC, the chaplaincy worked with Plymouth Congregational UCC as “a downtown lab” for companion-ship training and models.

Plymouth started the House of Healing, where four volunteer companions live with sisters or brothers released from Harborview, so people don’t return to shelters or the streets.

Residents live there four to six months to regain strength before moving to permanent housing in one of two shared-living houses or two small apartment buildings.

Volunteer chaplains visit residents regularly.

Rennebohm became associate pastor at Prospect UCC to be the chaplain of the ecumeni-

cal outreach, as a model of specialized ministry.

At Prospect, 12 members serve a community lunch to 250 to 300 homeless, low-income neighbors on Tuesdays and Fridays. Volunteers move from behind the serving counter to greet people in line, share meals with them, listen to their stories, provide support and encouragement, and link them to resources.

“At Prospect and Plymouth, companions have had a profound transformation in their faith as they share their journey, walking side-by-side as neighbors with people on the margins,” he said. “Companions become champions for change, from greeting a stranger at the front door to sharing in creating housing and services.

“We begin with people where they are and where we are. We proceed as neighbors, not professionals,” he said.

“The heart of pastoral care through companionship is to listen to hear stories as a person is able to tell them, even if they are confused by their mental state. We listen for language of faith and the movement of the spirit. Where is it possible for them to find hope, strength and gifts? Where has love touched their lives? We do not bring God to a person. The Spirit is already at work.

“In the process of companionship, we are also companioned, and together walk with God in inexplicable moments and remarkable ways,” he said.

Rennebohm shares some stories of companionship in his book, *Souls in the Hand of a Tender God*, published in 2008 by Beacon.

“In the most hopeless situations with people suffering complex illnesses and issues, God is present and heals anywhere any time,” he said.

For information, call 206-622-2472 or email crenne@comcast.net.

Conference aid helps rejuvenate Everett UCC

In the spring of 2007, the pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ of Everett left, funding was low, endowments were down, membership was under 100, grounds were neglected, morale was low and there was little relationship with the Pacific Northwest Conference (PNC).

"The congregation was discouraged, but three clergy members and lay persons took leadership and kept us functioning," said Mimi Lane, who served on a committee that formed.

Interviewed just before the Rally Day Sunday, when the church dedicated a wheelchair and walker ramp to the chancel, a handrail to the chancel, an upgraded sound system and a sign with the church's new name, Everett United Church of Christ, she could hardly contain her excitement.

In 2007, the moderator, Sharon Gunnerson, contacted Mark Miller, interim conference minister. Stephen Hanning, who had retired from a Park Forest, Ill., UCC church and served nine months as interim at Ferndale UCC came as interim. The church also learned that the PNC Church Development Committee (CDC) offers funds, information and guidance to help churches rejuvenate. Paul Forman, Jim CastroLang and Don Hanson from the CDC consulted and visited.

The church formed a committee with the moderator, pastor, three lay persons and two retired clergy. Their survey on the congregation's needs and desires drew a 70 percent return.

Results showed that underlying the congregation's sadness, mistrust and lack of communication were sparks of interest and hope. The committee kept the congregation informed through the newsletter, mission moments and congregational meetings.

"Our motto was 'communicate, communicate, communicate,'" Lane said.

Three needs emerged to help turn around the decline in membership: 1) upgrade the church's sound system; 2) replace the computer system and 3) upgrade the website.



Cliff Benson spent 100 hours building the access ramp to the chancel.

A local marketing professional helped members emphasize strengths and increase visibility.

Expecting to call a half-time settled minister, the church made a request to the CDC.

Then the church's income changed, some younger members of the Ukrainian Congregation that rented the building for several years began harassing GBLTIQ and other members, Lane said.

Despite good relationships with older Ukrainian members, who understood persecution, the UCC church decided in 2009 not to renew the Ukrainian church's lease, even though it would lose \$2,250 a month. Since then, they raised pledges, received CDC help and had a gift from a sister church.

The pastoral search was put on hold and Hanning agreed to continue.

"We also worked to improve the church's structure and asked people to serve on committees. We tightened our belts and increased members. Now the church has a positive, can-do spirit," he said. "When we meet an obstacle, we find a way to deal with it."

The first year, the CDC gave \$9,500 for a computer, software and business cards for members to give to people.

Lane said the cards had space for

members to put their names or information about an event. On the back is the church's mission statement.

The church welcomed 16 new members between spring 2009 and 2010, gained 23 percent in pledging units and 16 percent in pledge amounts.

The church's Thursday Dinner Bell Outreach for homeless and low-income families grew from serving 20 to serving between 40 and 60. Its food pantry open the last two weeks of each month Monday through Thursday aids 50.

It provides space for HIV testing, Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Gender Alliance, Everett Mountaineers, Sno Globe and PFLAG meetings.

The Annual Spring Auction brought in \$6,000 in 2010. Richmond Beach Congregational UCC shared half the proceeds from their spring concert.

The church has embraced a mission of environmental sustainability, involved with Transition Port Gardner and Green Everett monthly potlucks and educational movies.

"The church now has hope," says their May 2010 report to the Church Development Committee. "People ask questions. They agree and disagree, and they know they are heard."

The church requested a second-year CDC grant of \$6,070 to make the chancel accessible to people in wheelchairs, using walkers, or with hip or knee problems. Now they can come on the chancel to read, preach, serve communion and sing in the choir. The 2010 grant also includes new signs, stationery and envelopes with the new name, plus microphones and a mixer.

Lane is excited about new people coming and staying, forming a diverse congregation with older, younger (aged three to 96) and some young families, GLBTIQ and some racial diversity.

"We're no longer a discouraged church because we reconnected with the conference," she said.

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

Remodeling makes church-Y partnership visible

New building design will facilitate church's role as a community center.

Faultleroy United Church of Christ will dedicate its \$2.6 million remodeled building on Sept. 26.

For nine months, it moved out of its offices and now has new offices and a shared entry for the church and the YMCA that shares the building in the Southwest Seattle area of middle- to upper-middle class residents.

The Rev. David Kratz said the church has wanted to bring its building up to date, including installing an elevator to reach all five floors in its education building.

They started a capital campaign in 2005 and completed the first phase in fall 2008 replacing a large window in the sanctuary that had dry rot.

In June 2009, the church voted to create a new narthex, a gathering space with floor to ceiling windows that replicate the sanctuary window.

The elevator eliminated five bathrooms in the building built in 1951 and connected the sanctuary with classrooms in the education wing and fellowship hall built in 1958. Bathrooms were relocated.

On entering the older building, people immediately saw a wall. Now that wall is open and people see the church office and YMCA office. The two have worked cooperatively since 1923. The YMCA became an official branch in 1949.

In the new building, the two share spaces for children's activities and a multiuse place used for pilates classes for the Y and a music room for the



New entry to Faultleroy UCC opens up foyer so YMCA office is visible. Signs will be added.

church, Kratz said.

"With the new lobby, we feel we share the space," he said.

The project also includes new playground space, repairs to the rock wall in the memorial garden, a new phone system purchased in conjunction with the YMCA.

The church originally raised \$1.9 million, the cost a few years ago. Now it will need another campaign to pay off the debt to the UCC Cornerstone Foundation.

"It was a big project for our 380-members, especially with hard times hitting in 2008 and 2009," he said, "but the people are arranging to complete their commitments.

"The church's connection with the Y is an important part of our identity," Kratz said. "It the glory years of the 1950s and 1960s, many people were in the church, the Y and a public school across the street."

The vision was that the church and the YMCA were part of the community and were there to respond to needs of the

community.

After the school closed, there were fewer children for the church and Y to serve. So in the 1970s, some tensions arose between the organizations that still had some carryover when Kratz came as minister in 1986.

In 2007, the church and YMCA developed a memorandum of understanding about their responsibilities to ensure that the partnership is strong, based on respect and mutual support, as originally envisioned by Faultleroy leaders.

The church celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2008, but it wasn't a Congregational Church until 1911. Early settlers came from Plymouth Congregational UCCThe church was the largest from 1969 to 1971, when it was about 500.

When Kratz came, he said about 200 leaders, involved with the church since the 1950s, were ready to welcome new leaders in their 40s and 50s.

"We see ourselves as a community center, cooperating with the Y on a preschool and

a all festival that draws 1,500 for games, activities and performances in the former school building," he said.

The preschool, which serves 75 children, started in 1952 is now run on its own.

During construction, Faultleroy had to suspend hosting homeless families four to five times a year through Family Promise.

The program itself has temporarily suspended in the Seattle area because of need to recruit more churches to help provide funding for social services families need to find housing and jobs.

Faultleroy, a Greening Congregation, also installed a heat pump and triple windows as part of the remodeling to help the church save fuel.

The church's interest in church building extends beyond its community. It has sent five mission teams to help build a church and dorm for teachers at a village near Oaxaca, Mexico.

For information, call 206-932-5600 or email david@faultleroyucc.org.