

July Post

We hope you all have a safe and wonderful Fourth of July!

Quick Links:

Mike's Denton's [blog](#)

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To view all of the conference news, please click: [website](#).

Transitions

Rev. Maureen McLain was ordained on June 26th at an in-person service at Magnolia UCC.

Rev. Amara Oden was ordained on June 5th and installed at Suquamish UCC.

The following are transitions confirmed by the Committee on Ministry in June.

Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown's 3-way covenant was approved.

Rev. Peter Ilgenfritz had his transfer his standing to the York Association of the Maine Conference approved.

David Weddington was granted a transfer of standing to our Conference. From the New Hampshire Conference.

The Committee on Ministry consented to having **Rev. Jermell Witherspoon** authorized as a minister in the United Church of Christ. He is serving at Everett UCC and Liberation UCC.

Conference Calendar

If you'd like your committee meeting or event added to the calendar, please send an email to office@pncucc.org.

June

- 21 Board of Directors meeting; online; 6:30-8:00pm
- 23 Stewardship Committee meeting; online; 6:00-7:30pm
- 24 Admin & Finance Check-in; Video call link to be determined; 1-2:00pm
- 26 Ordination of Maureen McLain; Magnolia UCC; 3:00pm

July

- 1 Admin & Finance Check-in; Video call link to be determined; 1-2:00pm
- 4 Conference Office Closed for Independence Day
- 7 Justice & Witness Committee meeting; online; 5:30-6:30pm
- 7 Moderators Check-in; online; <https://v.ringcentral.com/join/333224991>; 7:00-8:30pm
- 8 Admin & Finance Check-in; Video call link to be determined; 1-2:00pm

- 11 PNCUCC Moderator & Board Office 1.5 hours; new link to be determined; 6-7:30pm
- 13 Church Development Committee; online; 1:00-3:00pm
- 14 Westside Committee on Ministry; online; 9:30am-2:30pm
- 15 Admin & Finance Check-in; Video call link to be determined; 1-2:00pm

- 19 Board of Directors meeting; online; 6:30-8:00pm
- 21 Moderators Check-in; online; <https://v.ringcentral.com/join/333224991>; 7:00-8:30pm
- 22 Admin & Finance Check-in; Video call link to be determined; 1-2:00pm

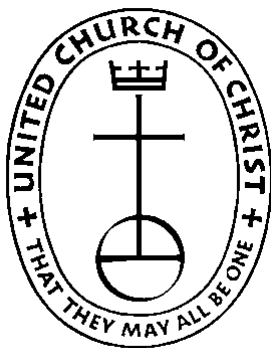
- 28 Stewardship Committee meeting; online; 6:00-7:30pm
- 29 Admin & Finance Check-in; Video call link to be determined; 1-2:00pm

August

- 4 Moderators Check-in; online; <https://v.ringcentral.com/join/333224991>; 7:00-8:30pm
- 5 Admin & Finance Check-in; Video call link to be determined; 1-2:00pm
- 10 Church Development Committee meeting; 1:00-3:00pm
- 11 Westside Committee on Ministry; online; 9:30am-2:30pm
- 12 Admin & Finance Check-in; Video call link to be determined; 1-2:00pm
- 13 Ordination of Amy Johnson; Wayside UCC; 3:00pm

- 16 Board of Directors meeting; online; 6:30-8:00pm
- 18 Moderators Check-in; online; <https://v.ringcentral.com/join/333224991>; 7:00-8:30pm
- 19 Eastside Committee on Ministry meeting; online; 10:00am-2:00pm
- 19 Admin & Finance Check-in; Video call link to be determined; 1-2:00pm

- 26 Admin & Finance Check



Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ

June 22, 2022

Dear Siblings in Christ:

Rev. Michael Denton

Conference Minister

325 N 125th Street
Seattle, WA 98133
(206) 725-8383 ext. 102
(800) 954-8777
Fax (206) 725-8394
mike@pncucc.org

Rev. Courtney Stange-Tregear
Minister for Church Vitality
325 N 125th Street
Seattle, WA 98133
(206) 725-8383 ext. 103
courtney@pncucc.org

Mr. Mark Boyd

Managing Director

*N-SID-SEN Camp and
Conference Center*
36395 S. Hwy. 97
Harrison, ID 83833
(208) 689-3489
Fax (208) 689-3098
mark@n-sid-sen.org

Mr. Wade Zick

Managing Director

*PILGRIM FIRS Camp and
Conference Center*
3318 SW Lk. Flora Rd.
Port Orchard, WA 98367
(360) 876-2031
Fax (360) 895-9348
wade@pilgrim-firs.org

September of 2019 was the 20th anniversary of my ordination and it set off a season of discernment. For the first time, I began to realize I was, likely, more than halfway through what might be my ordained ministry career. The last 11 years in this conference had been rewarding in work and life. The conference was on a good path. Lauren and I had fallen in love and married during the time I was here. We'd welcomed Leo into the world. Life was good.

And yet when I was in seminary, I'd never thought about doing regional work. I expected to spend my entire career in small, urban churches called to service and advocacy. That description fit the first church I was called to, and I loved it. At some point, I expected to serve a local church like that again but it was my ordination anniversary that started me wondering when and where.

Lauren and I had sometimes talked about maybe moving back east close to family someday but we were pretty settled in where we were. We'd bought a house. Lauren was coming close to a decade of work at Keystone UCC. Heck, I was the new co-president of the PTSA at Leo's school.

Then, that December, my sister found out she had lymphoma. Suddenly, our family back east seemed very far away, and life seemed shorter and more fragile than before. I started actively talking with colleagues about leaving conference ministry and finding a position closer to our family.

It was on Ash Wednesday of 2020 when I sent a note your way about preparing for the pandemic. We all did the best we could with what we had and, with God's help, we did some amazing things. We brought our loaves and our fishes and were blessed with abundance. In the middle of so much loss, grieving, and disruption we supported each other and our neighbors. The fragility of the world was exposed and in the spaces left behind, we found little certainty but unusual clarity. There was no waiting for someone else to do something. It was up to us and we did well. I'd never been prouder to be part of any group of people, ever.

By the next fall, my sister's treatments were going well (she's in remission now). Still, our larger family continued to feel further and further away, in some ways. There had been other family health and life challenges that happened during that year. There were deaths from COVID in our extended family. I had some health challenges, too. Considering the state of the world, we started to wonder if we'd ever get to see some of our family again.

During that same time, our family of three had become closer than we'd ever been. It was a pretty big day towards the beginning of the pandemic when I was home for a whole month for the first time in more than 15 years. I've loved the travel that's been part of this position but ended up loving being with my family even more. The longer the pandemic continued, the clearer this became. Sometime in the late fall of 2020, we decided to be open to what the Spirit might do. I put my profile together and started searching for a local church position.

This past Sunday, South Congregational Church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, voted to call me as their next pastor. It's a designated, ¾ time position with a church that feeds about 700 families weekly through its food pantry. They are consolidating with another church in town, First Church of Christ (UCC), to form something new together. The challenges and the gifts of these churches and this place call out to me. The opportunity to be no more than a day's drive from our family is exciting and a relief. As with any significant change, there are some other feelings mixed in, too. Even though we'll be closer to family, we'll miss all those we've served with, played with, and grown with here. Moving to Pittsfield will be starting over in many ways. It's going to be exciting, and it's going to be hard.

We're at a complex moment in conference life. The turnover in local churches is unprecedented. Rich and challenging conversations are emerging about our budget, our commitment to being an anti-racist conference, restructuring, and how best to provide our camps with the support and accountability they need. There's always a lot going on in our conference, and, like any ministry, there has always been more to do than our capacity would allow. That's all part of discernment.

This conference is prepared for taking this work on. Over the last 14 years, I've seen more and more people claim this conference as their own. Instead of complaining about what wasn't being done, the people of this conference have pulled together and done some amazing things. People are doing more and more to self-organize around interests, support, and causes. Our collective response to the onset of the pandemic didn't come out of nowhere. We'd been working at developing and investing in the skills we used for years. The pandemic allowed us to practice all those things we'd learned and those same learnings will be helpful, now. In your staff, you have one of the best, smartest, and most skilled groups of people in the UCC. You have boards and committees ready to work, learn, listen, and try new things. The denomination has already started the process of coming alongside us and helping PNC through this time, too. This conference, your conference, is ready to be open to what the Spirit might do.

I'll start working for South Congregational Church in the 2nd half of September. In order to get Leo to school on September 1st, the last month I'll be working remotely. Between now and then, my most important tasks will be finishing what I can, handing over what can be handed over, and saying goodbye to all you wonderful, beautiful people. Soon, you'll hear from the board their plans for carrying the conference through this transitional time.

But, for now...

Take a deep breath. Let it out slowly. Take another deep breath. Let that one out slowly, too.

My wonderful, beautiful, Siblings in Christ, I look forward to seeing where the Spirit will lead us all.

With hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Denton', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

*Rev. Mike Denton
Conference Minister of
The Pacific Northwest Conference of
The United Church of Christ*

Staff Column

Reflections about working for Mike Denton

By now, most of you probably know that Rev. Mike Denton has accepted another position on the East Coast and will be leaving the Pacific Northwest Conference as its Conference Minister. I'd like to share with you my reflections about working with, and for, Mike Denton.

Mike hired me in November 2018. I had recently moved to Seattle from the East Coast (ironic in a way –Mike and I - switching coasts) to be with my daughter who was beginning her freshman fall semester at the University of Washington. I had been a CFO for 20 years, was tired of the stress, the long days, the constant demands of the businesses I worked for, and was looking for a part-time accounting position. My heart jumped for joy when I saw a help wanted ad that the Pacific Northwest Conference was looking for a part time accountant. Then, when I interviewed with Mike, I knew this was a man and a Conference I wanted to work for.

Having been a local UCC church deacon, treasurer and moderator, this seemed like the perfect fit; an answer to my prayers. I could now use my technical skills in a job which aligned with my personal values – caring about people, caring about fairness, doing good in the world. No longer was increased profitability and shareholder value the sole measure of how well the organization was doing and how my contribution and value as an employee would be measured.

I loved working for Mike Denton! Mike is one of the best bosses I have ever worked for. Mike cares about people. He cares about fairness. He cares about family. I love his great sense of humor. He listens. He is humble. He is thoughtful. I loved that Mike, when presented with a problem, would frequently respond with “Say more about that.” He made me feel listened to, valued, respected. He brought calm and reason to many highly emotional issues.

Many, most of you in fact, have known and worked with Mike far longer than I have. You all know all of the wonderful qualities of Mike I mentioned. You have heard or read the many wonderful reflections Mike has authored. There are probably many more qualities and stories about Mike you know that I haven't mentioned. I know you will all share them with Mike and the conference, in your own time, and way.

I will greatly miss working for Mike, his wise council ever present. I know the Conference will miss him too. I also know that we, as a Conference, will continue to do the great work that Mike has guided us to do. Thank you, Mike, for your wonderful leadership these past 15 years. Be well, Mike, as you embark on your next call. God speed.

Andy Warren, Conference Accounting Manager

Shaping Generations: Queer Justice and Love in the UCC

2022 NATIONAL ONA GATHERING



Celebrate 50 years of Open and Affirming Ministries!

Join the churchwide Open and Affirming movement to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ONA Coalition and the ordinations of Bill Johnson and Anne Holmes. We'll honor the past, celebrate the present, and claim a vision for the future. In this turning point in the movement for LGBTQ+ ministry and advocacy in the United Church of Christ, help our growing family of 1,800 congregations and other settings turn towards the future!

Join us online from wherever you are for the 2022 National Gathering of the Open and Affirming Coalition! Our first virtual Gathering!

August 5 – 7, 2022

7:00pm-9:00pm EDT each day:

<https://openandaffirming.networkforgood.com/events/44056-2022-ona-national-gathering>

WARTIME THREAT: INCREASED FOSSIL FUEL PRODUCTION AT HOME

FREE WEBINAR | JULY 6TH, 1 PM ET



UCC Webinar—Wartime Threat: Increased Fossil Fuel Production at Home

The fossil fuel industry is using the war in Ukraine to push for ramping up production in the United States. As a result, communities on the frontlines of the industry face the wartime threat of more pollution and more harm to their health. In this webinar, we will learn about the history that shapes the threats faced, and we will hear directly from those fighting at the grassroots to protect their families and communities. Featured speakers will include Roishetta Ozane from Healthy Gulf, Lois Bower-Bjornson from the Clean Air Council, and David J.X. González from the University of California-Berkeley. Even if you can't make the scheduled time of 1 pm ET on Wednesday, July 6th, still sign-up, and we will send you a recording. [Register now!](#)

[Hyperlink: https://UCC.zoom.us/webinar/register/9016547907178/WN_IXsb95VsS5qleHRpaJXTaA]



We will Stand with You in Protest

Long before the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the United Church of Christ, by action of the General Synod, affirmed the right of every individual to follow their personal religious and moral convictions regarding their reproductive healthcare. Read this story and [more](#) on the UCC website.



July Celebrations

Best wishes to our clergy and their partners on their special days.

Ordinations

1	Jim Halfaker	60 years	18	Amy Hitchens	18 years
8	Judith Bardsley	32 years	20	Bill Kirlin-Hackett	37 years
10	Jennifer Rupp	17 years	20	Esther Sanders	25 years
14	Bonnie Dalious	37 years	22	Tara Leininger	16 years
14	Katy Lloyd	26 years	23	Jeffrey Lee Barker	29 years
14	Steve Van Kuiken	37 years	29	Tara Barber	21 years
15	Niutunu Faiupu	17 years	31	Bob Ingalls	50 years

Birthdays

2	Ronald Hutchinson	8	Joyce Wyanski	27	Andrew Gill
2	Jennifer Jerbi	9	Stephen Eriksen	27	Edith Jackson
3	Sally Balmer	9	Georgia Nelson	28	Kevin Bechtold
4	Steve Van Kuiken	10	Amy Furth	28	Amara Oden
5	Robert Rieke	14	Ann Eidson	28	Bruce Wilson
5	Sandra Rosen	17	Georgann Peck	29	Robert Anderson
5	Kathryn Sharp	20	Faaulu Faiupu		
6	Marj Johnston	25	Angela Ying		

Anniversaries

2	Paul & Kathie Forman
4	Kendall & Sonia Baker
7	Tara Leininger & Donovan Johnson
11	Kris & R. Michael Ostrem
16	Bianca Davis-Lovelace & Melvin Lovelace
16	Bill & Susan Kirlin-Hackett
24	Steve & Jennifer Jerbi
29	Amy Hitchens & Shannon Thomas
29	Mimi Lane & Peggy Jo Skill
29	David & Marcia Royer