

## **PNCUCC Stewardship Reflection**

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There is a realignment happening in our world. Our lives, our priorities have been spun into chaos over this worldwide pandemic. The truth is this was happening in our world before the pandemic. Some of you may remember the revolutionary times of the 1960's when the values and privileges of white establishment America were doubted. Our cities exploded with push-back and erosion of trust in leaders and institutions that built our nation.

It turns out that the volcanic eruption of those times was an early warning sign of a much bigger disruption against a way of life that only benefited a few. It took social media and a pandemic to bring the simmering volcano to its full destructive potential. The volcano is now wildly active, and the debate is raging – Shall we rebuild what we had (or the illusion of what we had)? OR Can we build something new that will get us closer to a just world for all?

Things seem so dire in these pandemic times! Supply chains are disrupted. Jobs are left unfilled as people discern a different life. Our hospitals are full, and we all now have personal stories of COVID hitting our families and friends. Relational tension is high everywhere as the dueling continues between anti-maskers, anti-vaxxers and those who think that masking and vaccines are no-brainers. Voting rights are under attack. Texas ratchets up the threat to women's lives as they seek reproductive health services. And let's not forget – the human fueled Climate Change crisis that imperils the planet and exposes even more the racial inequities in our society.

The forming of the United Church of Christ in 1957 was an evolutionary step coming out of historical streams of Christianity. Our founders were steeped in many old established privileged ways, but they had a sense that something more inclusive was needed. The 1959 Statement of Faith uses the patriarchal language of the time while acknowledging that change was coming:

*He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit,  
creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ,  
binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.*

The UCC of 1960 looks pretty establishment and traditional through 2021 lenses. We have much to celebrate in our progress toward being a more inclusive and justice-oriented church. Yet, it was the vision and courage of those early UCC leaders who hit the “start button” that has led us to the present moment.

I want to invest in the UCC – in our Conference and beyond, to empower the next generation of transformative and revolutionary work. Our vision was seeded in the dawn of the 1960's by our early UCC leaders. It is time to prepare the ground and reseed for the next 50 years and beyond. Today we are focused on being an anti-racism Conference in all we say and do. We affirm that “Black Lives Matter”, and we commit to do the work. We have made a \$52,000 commitment in Conference budget toward this effort. Now is the time to bring the offerings of our time, talent, and treasure to bring this commitment alive.

The UCC is my trusted community. I believe in its possibilities. Together we can pay attention to the movement of the Spirit, creating and renewing our Church. Together we can do the work for a more inclusive society and strive to provide a just and peaceful world for all.

This PNCUCC community sustains me as I pastor a very small rural church. It is the reason I serve on the Stewardship Committee in the Conference. It is why I give monthly to the work of the Conference, to our camps and to the work of the wider UCC.

This is a critical time and I believe we can be part of the change for good. I urge you to invest in and help build communities of trust for the work that must be done! I hope you will join me in that effort in the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ.