Due to its current financial difficulties, the World Church will no longer fund GPNW’s Mission Center President position. After reviewing our Mission Center’s financial position and the financial implications of absorbing this position, Western Field Apostle Ron Harmon and the GPNW Mission Center Council and Finance Committee unanimously endorse hiring the next Mission Center President through GPNW funding.

Harmon says, “I have consulted with Kathy Sharp and Mission Center Financial Officer Bill McFarlin about the short- and long-term feasibility of using existing assets in the Mission Center to fund a full-time Mission Center President for GPNW when Kathy retires. I am convinced that hiring a full-time, skilled Mission Center President is imperative to build on the current missional focus and forward momentum in the Mission Center. GPNW’s strong financial position makes this possible, practical and wise.

“We agree that such a new financial commitment requires a vote of the people—to ensure that the body shares our view. Your approval also will assure Kathy’s future

continued on page 2
The 2015 GPNW Mission Center Leadership Directory has now been published and distributed. This directory contains contact information for all Mission Center staff, council, committee members, special/event contacts, and congregational leaders. It also contains contact information and maps for each of our three campgrounds. Please note that it is not intended for public dissemination and should be limited in its use by those within the congregation for church-related purposes only.

All pastors have received directories for each member of their leadership team (Pastor/Pastorate, Communications Coordinator, Recorder, CFO, Counselors, etc.), as well as extra copies for the congregation facility. All committee members and various people who are identified as directors and contacts for events and organizations associated with the Mission Center have received a copy as well. We have extra copies if you find that your congregation requires more than those previously distributed. Please contact Kim Naten, Interim Mission Center Recorder/Membership Services Administrator (MSA) at knaten@cofchrist-gpnw.org or 360-748-3562 if your congregation would like extra copies.

This is not a complete membership directory. If your congregation wishes a directory of its members and friends, for internal use only, please have your congregational recorder contact Kim.

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successor that he or she has the same warm, enthusiastic support of the people as she did,” Harmon adds.

financial impacts for gpnw and congregations

The primary reason GPNW can afford to absorb the cost of the Mission Center President position is that two other staff members, in addition to Kathy, accepted the World Church’s offer for early retirement. Both Steve Pomeroy and Christie Ostendorp, World Church employees, were paid for entirely by GPNW funding. With savings from their discontinued positions and additional ministry and administrative support staff consolidations, the cost of the Mission Center President can be covered with no increases to congregational allocations. The budget for 2016 does call for a small increase in individual giving and voluntary congregational generosity to keep the budget balanced and to protect our assets for future years.

More financial and staffing detail is available on the GPNW Web site at www.cofchrist-gpnw.org. Go to the tab “Camps and Events” then “MC Conference,” watch for materials provided in our weekly e-newsletter NewsBrief in June, or ask your pastor for supporting documents.

world church financial position

Ron Harmon explains, “Community of Christ faces financial challenges on the one hand and unprecedented opportunities for mission on the other. On the financial side, we have a declining contributor base, increasing expenses, and a decline in earning assets due to global market fluctuations and strategic use of assets to fund mission over the past decade. These negative factors have converged and resulted in a significant gap between World Church income and expenses over the past several years.

“Church leaders and the World Church Finance Board have been working together to close the gap by controlling expenses and working to increase and create new revenue sources. This work continues, but our current financial reality requires a balanced budget by the beginning of fiscal year 2017 (July 1, 2016).

“What this means for fields in the USA is a significant reduction of World Church funded ministers. For Greater Pacific Northwest Mission Center, this means there will no longer be sufficient World Church resources to fund two positions (Mission Center President and Mission Center Financial Officer) effective January 1, 2016.”

More detailed information about the church’s financial situation will be shared in an upcoming statement, available on the GPNW Web site (www.cofchrist-gpnw.org), in NewsBrief, and through your pastor.

navigating the transition

Ron Harmon will serve as Interim GPNW Mission Center President effective July 1, 2015, to guide the process of selection and appointment of the new GPNW Mission Center President, contingent on conference approval.

Mike Bessonette, Steve Pomeroy, Bill McFarlin, and Stacie Simmons Bates will serve as an interim leadership team advising Ron Harmon during the transition. In addition, Sean Langdon will join the team in helping to select a new Mission Center President.

attending the june 28 special mission center conference

Lewis River Family Reunion, featuring Scott Murphy, member of the First Presidency, begins immediately following the conference.

If you would like to stay for dinner, reserve your meals in advance by contacting Reunion Director Christie Ostendorp at LRreunion@cofchrist-gpnw.org.
FISH WITH WHEELS
by Bishop Bill McFarlin, Mission Center Financial Officer

My kids must have inherited my offbeat sense of humor. For my birthday a couple of years ago, as a gift they gave me a fish with wheels—the one in the photo on this page. The fish makes it home on my desk and catches my attention on a regular basis. It causes me to ponder the nature of fish and wheels…and just why my kids gave that thing to me.

The other day I was staring at the wheeled fish, and it dawned on me that the church is like a fish in our communities. We swim in the sea of the culture along with everyone else. We share the sea of those communities with all who live and work there… those who teach and learn there… those who want to make their part of the larger sea healthier and happier.

Unfortunately, although our church buildings reside in certain communities, most of our members do not live near our buildings. Most of our time is spent swimming where we live and work. When it is time to go to church, we strap on our wheels, drive to church, swim in the church neighborhood for an hour or three, strap on our wheels and drive back to our part of the larger sea.

I think I’ve stretched the analogy far enough, but the underlying issue remains. When we live 10, 20, 30 minutes or more from where our congregation gathers and has its hub of activity, it makes it very difficult to engage in meaningful mission in that same community. When we roll in from the outside, gather, and roll out, our positive impact on the surrounding community is usually rather limited. To effectively engage in meaningful missional ministries in the communities where our congregations are found, we must live in the neighborhood that the church building is located, or go to extraordinary lengths to be a consistent, well-connected, authentic presence in the neighborhood.

Realistically, not many of us are going to sell our homes and move into the neighborhood that our church serves—but that’s not a bad idea. One viable alternative is to spend more time in the neighborhood and at the church building. When we focus on God’s purposes… God’s mission… we can find the time and the energy to invest in the neighborhood of the church. By being present, we can get to know the neighbors, partner with the nearby school, shop at the local stores, and hang out at the local gathering places. When we get to know our church neighborhood and neighbors, we can begin to make a difference. God is already busy in the communities where our church buildings are located. Many congregations have started investing the time and energy to make real connections and to start making a difference in the church neighborhood.

So why am I talking yet again about the importance of mission? Because it is the sustainable future of the church. It is how our congregations can and will thrive. When we live out Christ’s mission in our congregational neighborhoods, we make a difference in the world, and that generates excitement and interest. People want to be part of something like that and are then willing to partner with us and invest their time and resources to further our shared mission. It is my hope that we will continue to find ways to connect deeply with the neighborhoods within which our congregations are located.
Discipleship NOW held its first retreat this spring, and the cohort of participants is a powerful representation of the diversity of our Mission Center. Discipleship NOW is a three-year spiritual and leadership formation series focused on developing a sense and understanding of Christ’s mission in our lived world. It includes seven weekend retreats and a year-long individualized practicum.

Over 140 individuals were nominated to participate in the program by pastors, GPNW Mission Center staff, and individuals. After completing an application process that included essay questions and references, a selection committee identified 24 participants for the first cohort. An important priority for the selection committee was preserving diversity in the group: geographic, racial, age, priesthood office, and gender.

This first cohort represents well the exciting diversity of the Mission Center, with participants from 17 congregations, from all three states: 13 from Washington, 10 from Oregon, and one from Alaska. There are six men and 18 women. There are Elders, Priests, Members, Teachers, Seventy, and a High Priest. There are life-long members and recent converts. Six participants are under age 45, and 18 are over age 45. We have assembled a powerhouse of experience and potential, with some very exciting personalities. We are excited to lift up this cohort for your prayerful support in the coming three years:

- Ann Brandt – Puyallup
- Bev Burk – Eugene
- Christie Skoorsmith – Woodland Park
- Dan Jackson – Southridge
- Darlene Hudlow – Salem
- Janelle Jegglie – Albany
- Jarom Mills – Salem
- Jo Anthony – Crystal Springs
- Karolyn Sharp – Crystal Springs
- Kathryn Young – Highland Park
- Keri Hill – Cowlitz Valley
- Kevin Young – Highland Park
- Laura Eastham – Mat-Su Valley
- Mary Dell Williams – Rainier Valley
- Rachel Mills – Salem
- Roberta LaHue Brown – Tuality
- Sandy Slover – Albany
- Secledna Meclmurry Poynter – Portland
- Shawn Sahlberg – Bend
- Stacie Simmons Bates – Bremerton
- Steven Sauvé – Selah
- Teresa Taylor – Southridge
- Tracy MacDonald – Lower Columbia Fellowship Group
- Vanessa Grace – Garden Grove

Spiritual formation and companioning pilot begins

by David Brock, Presiding Evangelist

Early this year, the Community of Christ Spiritual Formation Team initiated a program envisioned in 2000 following invitation in Doctrine and Covenants 161 to “Understand that the road to transformation travels both inward and outward.” The Spiritual Formation and Companioning Pilot is an invitation to a transformative journey in the pattern of Christ for the sake of God’s shalom. It was developed with the conviction that “Being spiritually formed is foundational to obtaining a clear and compelling vision of mission. A compelling sense of mission springs from the overflow of deep communion with the Spirit” (Stephen M. Veazey).

The three-year training is designed for exploration and discernment of personal spiritual callings, questions, and yearnings. It includes reading assigned texts, writing reflection papers, working with a spiritual director monthly, and undertaking daily spiritual practice. Training also includes two gatherings each year at a campground in California and a retreat center in Oregon. We are appreciative of the support of the Apostle and Mission Center staffs as we initiate and test the program in the Western USA Mission Field.

Those who complete the program will be trained in holy listening, spiritual companioning, discernment principles and processes, forms of prayer, meditation for diverse spiritual types, facilitating spiritual practices with individuals and groups in congregational life, spiritual formation retreat planning and facilitating, and integrating spirituality and mission through receptive and active spiritual practices.

Participants in the program are from 20 Mission Centers across the U.S. and Canada. Ages range from the mid-20s to 80. Of the 54 participants, we are grateful to include 11 from GPNW. In addition to the Spiritual Formation Team, faculty includes President Veazey, Tony Chvala Smith, Dwight Judy, Loretta Ross-Gotta, Sandra Lommasson, and others.

Because it is a pilot program, we will be evaluating extensively and surely learning considerably along the way. We hope to start additional three-year programs in other locations in subsequent years.

Get your news in the next Chinook. Send to kbeckman@cofchrist-gpnw.org by August 1, 2015.
PORTLAND’S SHELTER
by Shari Amos, Portland Office Administrator

Utilizing a Bold Moves grant, Portland Congregation started a new ministry in 2014 after partnering with Human Solutions, a Multnomah County non-profit that works tirelessly with low-income persons while they search for permanent housing.

One of the programs run by Human Solutions is called “The Daybreak Shelter.” Families can stay at the shelter during the day to receive training and services, take showers, eat, and clean laundry. At night, they are transported to a congregation in the Portland area. Many churches take turns in hosting the families for a week at a time, and Community of Christ is one of those host churches.

The host churches set up sleeping rooms, transport families, cook dinner, engage with the guests, spend the night, prepare breakfast, and launder the linens and towels. Portland Congregation members and friends have eagerly volunteered to help with this ministry. Others who have helped in this ministry include Tuality and Garden Grove congregations and some of the organizations who use our building, including American Indian Ministries, FolkTime, and a Montessori school. It takes a big village to provide the assistance needed.

We have very much enjoyed getting to know the families, and they have become dear to our hearts. It is very rewarding when we learn they have received housing.

Even though there are occasional challenges, especially if a family has to be removed from the program, our congregation has been deeply enriched and blessed through working with the families and Human Solutions. The program they established is effective and beneficial, and we are grateful to be a part of abolishing poverty and ending suffering. Portland member Bret Westwood first organized our involvement with Human Solutions and sums this up nicely, “These families are uniquely those brothers and sisters that God has given us, Portland Community of Christ, to care for, pray for, shelter, and feed on a short-term basis in anticipation that God and Human Solutions will help them find permanent housing sooner versus later. We also are blessed with the opportunity to witness and reflect the deep love of God, not only with those we serve, but to each other as well. It is from our own personal experience of the grace of God that prompts us to good works in serving others. Praise God for the grace and love He shares with us that moves our hearts tenderly into giving ourselves up in the service of others.”

Scott & Shari Amos, Portland Congregation, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary on March 31.

Molly Groat & Zachary Contreras, Southridge Congregation, are engaged. Their wedding date is July 11, 2015. Molly’s parents are Dennis & Kathy Groat and grandparents are Lowell & Netta Groat.

Katlin Jackson, Southridge Congregation, & Brian Svic are engaged. Their wedding date is September 12, 2015. Katlin’s parents are Dan & Fae Jackson and grandmother is Elva Eliason.
Conversation, not numbers, was the intent of the 2014 Pastors’ Survey. Pastors and pastor leadership team members shared their thoughts about ministry, mission, relationships and support in this annual review of congregational life.

When asked about their congregation’s focus, respondents cited community outreach, worship, and pastoral care as the main areas of ministry that excite their members. Christian education efforts and increasing emphasis on spiritual growth activities were other areas that drew mention. Community outreach and participation in ecumenical activities were increasingly found to be a good setting in which to share the church’s story and invite others to share in the ministries of our congregations. Internally, a number of our pastoral leaders expressed a desire to increase the activity and commitment level of priesthood members in their congregations.

Many of our congregations, in partnerships with others, with the support of Bold Moves grants or entirely on their own, are giving expression to sharing Christ’s mission in a wide variety of ways. Continuing missional efforts have given many of our congregations a visibility and effective presence in their communities. Use of alternative worship styles and spiritual practices, walking the neighborhood, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, sharing their congregational homes with tenants, stretching their ministerial comfort zones—all were cited by pastoral leaders as ways in which their congregations are willing to risk something new and/or build upon past successes in mission.

Pastoral leaders found congregational relationships with God, among members, or with their community had all deepened in some way. Though there are times in the life of any congregation when relationships can become strained, one pastor noted, “Times when we hit bumps in the road, we naturally focus on our differences. But when we look to reconciliation, we live more fully in community and meet the Divine. When we drop the chains that bind us, we look to what is possible and what can happen by changing our paradigm.”

For pastors and pastor leadership team members, their relationships with Congregational Support Ministers, Mission Center communications and publicity efforts, training opportunities (such as the Nuts & Bolts workshops), and the Mission Center’s Visiting Ministry program were all of great assistance in helping them personally in their congregational leadership roles. They also noted the importance of these support relationships in the strengthening of their congregations. In the words of one, “The congregation absorbs every aspect that is offered to us through the MC...the personal interaction between MC Staff and the individuals is of great importance. My congregation now feels that they are becoming a part of a bigger picture through this overall warm and caring interaction with others outside our (congregational) community.”

In the one statistical element still included in the survey, a snapshot of congregational attendance (recorded in the month of October 2014) showed an average of about 820 in attendance for weekly worship services across the Mission Center’s 37 congregations and groups.

One hundred percent of our congregations participated in the 2014 survey. The information received will inform and guide both the congregations and the Mission Center as they continue to work together to share the identity, message, mission and beliefs of the church throughout the Greater Pacific Northwest.
Those were just some of the responses of the 64 GPNW pastors and pastor team members who attended the first-ever Mission Center Pastors’ Retreat at Lewis River Campground, April 10-12. The weekend included opportunities for worship, discussion, and learning mixed with spiritual formation activities, fellowship, and sharing collectively as a pastoral community—all entwined at a relaxed pace that provided our congregational leaders with time for personal reflection and renewal.

Creating a “sabbath” experience for those who give so much in leading our congregations was the guiding focus in planning of the retreat. Each day began with an opportunity for reflective worship, beautifully led by Mission Center Financial Officer Bill McFarlin. Mission Center President Kathy Sharp facilitated a varied and interactive session to begin the time together on Saturday, on the nature and importance of sabbath in our lives.

The “formal” learning portion of the weekend focused on the book, Slow Church, which was given to all leaders at the Pastors’ Breakfast, during our last Mission Center Conference. Mission Center Learning Officer Christian Skoorsmith facilitated a time of exploration on portions of the book on patience and gratitude. One of the co-authors of the book, John Pattison, joined the retreat for a time of conversation regarding the principles of relationship-building and leading congregations in the 21st century that are presented in the book. John was immediately embraced by the body of the retreat, and both he and our pastoral leaders fully enjoyed the exchanges that took place.

Sunday morning, Apostle Ron Harmon shared regarding the current financial situation within the World Church and its possible impacts in our Mission Center. His openness, candor, and willingness to answer difficult questions were greatly appreciated by all present. Ron’s dynamic ministry of presence, participation, and presentation added much to the retreat.

Stacie Simmons Bates planned and led a powerful communion service, and Evangelist Blake Puckett brought a special blessing on the pastors and pastor team members that drew the weekend to a close.

The positive impact of the retreat was clearly expressed by one pastor who said, “I feel renewed and refreshed, ready to continue with energy and enthusiasm my role as pastor.”
gpnw campgrounds prepare for the season

lewis river campground
by Dave Polly, Lewis River Campground Association Board President

We are busy working on many things: the lodge got new windows, classrooms received new paint, the area between the restrooms and chapel got leveled and grass seed planted, and the chapel got new tables.

We are working with the county to update the septic system. The septic system must be brought up to code before any new cabins or other new buildings can be built. We are looking at a couple of options for this work. We hope to begin this project late summer or early fall.

This camping season will be a busy time for the campground, with new clients scheduled in the open weeks of the past years. With extra users, the community that loves the grounds expands. There are many that enjoy the beauty of our grounds and come to find the same sacred spaces that generations of Community of Christ members have enjoyed. Being able to share this with our clients is a part of the reward that we get from the effort of managing and investing in the campground.

remote campground
by Mike Grohs, Remote Campground Association Board President

We are having a very busy spring at Camp Remote this year, with a new building, a major repair, and some badly needed infrastructure upgrades.

As part of a plan to improve the “brown building” into a larger, more usable conference or classroom, we built a material storage building on the north side of the road, next to the pump house. We will move everything from the brown building into the new storage building, and then remodel the brown building into one large room.

The major repair has to do with our walk-in cooler/freezer. The ceiling had started to cave in, and the floor was very “spongy.” As we started to demo the ceiling, we found decayed 2x4s, bad insulation, etc. It soon became apparent that we needed to just tear out the whole thing and start over new. We looked at buying a factory-built unit, but the price was considerably more expensive than building our own. We made some improvements in design, and hopefully this cooler will last the life of the building.

Lastly, we are doing some electrical upgrades to the kitchen/dining hall and shower building that are overdue and will allow us to expand more easily in the future.

samish island campground
by Mark Chapman, Samish Island Campground Association Board President

There is much to celebrate at Samish this year. We had our first of 35 events in February and are scheduled into November. We welcomed Pam Bauer as our new Food Service Manager/Caretaker, who has made a great impact already. This year our summer caretakers will be Tim and Barbara Sellers from Independence. We will also enjoy the service of Larry and Nancy Dobson, who are making Samish a home base for a few months. This makes an incredibly strong caretaker team with Don, Sydney and Cloe Brady, who are our camp manager family. There is plenty of work to keep them all busy!

In addition to new faces, you’ll see bright new benches, a refreshed “brown restroom,” new windows in the west residence, new floors in the east residence, a new Kubota loader/backhoe, a de-junked “freezer room,” an RV for summer caretakers, and, in June, a new camp van and sport court in a new location.

We have had wonderful support at work days and work week. We are grateful for the generosity of many and in particular to the following for providing the resources to fully fund all this work: Stan and Bev Corrington (RV for summer caretakers), Woodland Park Congregation (sport court), Crystal Springs Congregation (sport court and tractor), and 2014 GPNW Samish Family Reunion (new benches).

The Samish Island Campground Association (SICA) Board held a retreat in April to continue work on a strategic plan facilitated by Tim Lewis. Please plan to attend the GPNW Mission Center caucus meeting this summer. There we will share more details about a refreshed vision and themes based on input gathered over last year through the survey and many conversations. Your board members have been highly engaged to assure that Samish will be of service for generations to come.

We are grateful for all of you who make Samish a special place of faith, joy, inspiration and community. We have much to celebrate!
Are you waiting for that dramatic phone call from God—THE God? Well, hearing and responding to the prompting of the Spirit is just what 28 youth and 12 staff are doing as part of the GPNW Mission Center Youth Venture for Christ Caravan. They are listening to the call to be disciples ready to serve and carry the message that God is always calling us to service.

The theme for Caravan 2015 is “All Are Called.” Our program was written by our very own Sheyne Benedict. I encourage you to come to the program on Friday, June 26, at 7:30 pm at Rogue Valley Congregation, or to our final program on Sunday, June 28, at 10 am at Eugene Congregation.

This year we will travel to Sacramento, Suisun, Fairfield, Santa Barbara, and Simi Valley, California. The Caravan will then travel north through the redwoods to Rogue Valley and on to our final stop in Eugene. The Saints in all the congregations have been so very helpful in planning meals, sightseeing, and our outreach projects. Kathy McGuire and Denise Leichter from Santa Barbara have been so helpful in planning our missionary outreach while we spend two days in their congregation.

This is the 50th anniversary of Caravan, which has now become a true Mission Center Caravan. We have youth from as far north as Auburn, Washington, east from Bend/Redmond, and west from Myrtle Point, with stops up and down the I-5 corridor. We especially thank Lois & Ray Irby and Jean & Tom Coffman for their vision and response to the call of God as they started this program, which has been such a strong and enduring experience. Countless lives have been changed by their dedication to our youth and their desire to develop disciples to serve so many years ago.

Thank you, too, for the generosity of the Saints of this Mission Center. Our annual auction raised $6,500. We are still in need of funds for the matching donor of $3,000. Our largest expense is the bus, which costs around $9,500. If you feel you can make a donation toward the cost of the bus, please make checks payable to “Community of Christ” and send to Bob Dobkins, 618 St. Andrews Loop, Creswell, Oregon 97826. We will be happy to send you a tax receipt. Again, it is a blessing to serve this Mission Center through Caravan and see lives change as our youth build their relationship with Christ and develop their lives to serve their Master.

Shelby Reed, Roseburg Congregation, graduated from the University of Oregon last spring, earning a Bachelor of Arts in family and human services with an emphasis on early childhood development. She is presently working at Lane County Head Start with at-risk preschoolers. Shelby is the daughter of Craig Reed & Lisa King-Reed.

Sage King, Roseburg Congregation, graduated from Southern Oregon University in Ashland, OR this past fall with a Bachelor of Science in anthropology. She is preparing for a job with the Colorado State University Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands. Sage is the daughter of Michael & Gerrie King.

Mason Reed, Roseburg Congregation, graduated from Oregon State University this winter, earning a Bachelor of Science in exercise and sports science. He is presently volunteering at the Timber Hill Athletic Club in Corvallis, OR, while looking for full-time employment. Mason is the son of Craig Reed & Lisa King-Reed.
CREATING MEMORIES AT YOUTH CAMPS AND REUNIONS

by Sean Langdon, GPNW Camping Director

I was recently driving with some friends when “#Beautiful” by Mariah Carey featuring Miguel came on my play list. Immediately my mind was flooded with camp memories from the summer of 2013, when this song was in heavy rotation. We all have things that cause us to reflect on memories made at summer camps—maybe it’s the smell of a campfire, the laughter of a child, or the singing of “We Are One in the Spirit.”

Hearing the song, I recalled being in Hawaii with other staff and campers from our Caravan ministry, as we did community service, provided program ministry in the congregations, and visited various tourist attractions on the island of Oahu. I then transitioned to thinking about co-directing Senior High Camp at Remote that summer. I recalled the many moments of struggle, laughter and growth in all who were present as we blended two senior high camps into one for the first time.

Before long, my mind drifted to being at Remote Family Reunion later that summer and writing my name on the picnic tables (shhh…don’t tell anyone), leading a healing communion worship, and actually attending every campfire.

Our youth camps and reunions help create special memories like this. They are places where we grow in our discipleship, experience true community being lived out, draw closer to God, and have lots of fun! We create friendships that last for a lifetime. This summer, you have the opportunity to create memories of your own. I invite all of you to attend any of our five reunions (three Family, one Singles, and one Adult). If you are between the ages of 8 and 18, then I invite you to attend one of our 11 campground youth camps. Senior high youth are also eligible for SPECtacular and/or can plan now to participate in Caravan beginning in January 2016.

Wherever your travels take you this summer, may you be safe. May you experience and come to know the Peace of Jesus Christ. May you create new, healthy relationships while also deepening growth in your current relationships. May your discipleship continue to increase as the experiences you have prepare you to move out in service to your Creator and all of creation.
“Since the women’s retreat, I’ve found myself drifting off in thought about each of the women... I think about their smiles, their laughter, their gifts of ministry, their stories, their struggles, and their losses. We return to this gathering each year because of the gentle, peaceful spirit that precedes us and envelopes us as we arrive. Although our time together was brief, my heart continues to be warmed by their love and strengthened by His Spirit.” — Mary Schlenker, Director

We were blessed this year with 49 women: young, old, moms with babies, and inspiring 90+ Elaine Linné who faithfully attends every retreat. Our theme, “While We Are Waiting,” brought us all together. Gorgeous decorations were provided by Jan Simpson and her daughters, Jennyl and Dawn. The room was complete with “magical stars” made by Jennyl’s son, Ty.

Laura Schlenker Gloman led our Friday night worship. We were encouraged to leave all our heavy concerns and worries in God’s hands, with a little help from Francesca Battistelli’s, “This is the Stuff.” We then learned that we are “Restless” (by Audrey Assad) until we rest in God’s hands. We finished with our theme song, “Worship While I’m Waiting,” by John Waller.

Saturday morning, we were met with glorious sunshine and fellowship. Val Walker gently refocused our thoughts on the theme, “While We Are Waiting.” Molly and Laura Schlenker hosted a class featuring special teas and goodies, provided by Jan Simpson. We learned about each other and reflected on the challenging times in our lives and how we wait.

Saturday night, Mission Center President Kathy Sharp led us through a special Emmaus meal. Based on the Gospel of Luke’s Easter story, she facilitated sharing our own similar personal stories with dialogue partners. Organized activities paused long enough for all of us to walk on the beach and take in a spectacular colorful sunset. We closed our evening watching a touching movie that portrayed the challenge of living faithfully when our dreams are not yet fulfilled.

At breakfast on Sunday, Katie Young gave each of us a pair of her handmade pocket crosses, one to keep and one to share. Susan Gregory led our closing worship and challenged us to think on our blessings, remember those that walk with us during difficult times, and to keep our eyes focused on Christ as He walks with us along life’s journey.

It was an amazing weekend in every way! We missed our sisters that could not be there and look forward to the year that will bring. God’s blessings as you wait!
invite people to christ

Below are recently reported baptisms and confirmations in the GPNW Mission Center:

Michael McLinis Christensen – Olympia
Derek Phillip Cummings – Salem
Patricia Ann Davis – Ellensburg

Rachel Christina Garner – Yakima
Joseph Michael Kerr – Salem
Ruth Esther Martinez – Salem
Juan Navarro – Portland

left: juan navarro is baptized by jerome simpson at portland

around the mission center

right: eleanor bessonette accepts the ecumenical ministries of oregon ecumenical service award on behalf of jericho road on may 7
far right: approximately 100 women attend a disney-themed tea at eugene congregation on may 2