

K. REPORTS OF DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS

CREST TO COAST MISSIONAL DISTRICT

As I reflect on the second pandemic year of ministry in the Crest to Coast Missional District, frustration and grief, collaboration and cooperation, and hope and creativity emerge as core themes.

Frustration and Grief

This has been a year of continued frustration and grief within our churches, communities, and world. We remember the volcanic eruption that impacted Tonga and the call of our United Methodist Tongan siblings to pray and act. Many churches responded to the war in Ukraine with special peace prayer services. The toll of anti-blackness and racism on our communities and churches continues to weigh heavily. The hatred and ignorance towards our trans siblings, especially trans kids, impacts us all. As we continue in the pandemic, to date, there have been 985,000 COVID deaths in our country (400,000 deaths since this time last year). The ache of continued isolation and the new normal of the rise and fall of COVID variants leaves all of us exhausted. We are heartbroken and overwhelmed.



Within our churches, clergy and laity yearned to return to in-person worship, held the weight of continuing to keep people safe, and struggled with the push and pull of the ever-changing landscape of the pandemic. The Great Resignation hit the church like other professions, with some clergy going on leave, sabbatical or early retirement. The continued delay of General Conference frustrates most and leaves some churches anxious about the future. What frustration and grief have you carried this past year?

Collaboration and Cooperation

Amid the frustration and grief, collaboration and cooperation continue to spring up, offering a growing number of churches a deeper sense of connectionalism and a new opportunity for ministry. Near Mount Tahoma, Morton, Randle, and Vader: Grace UMCs worship together in 4 locations (at each church and on zoom) weekly. They have a joint worship planning team and have experienced energy from the venture. The South Sound Co-operative has launched a new digital ministry, The Commons, and continues their other collaborative ministry efforts. The Grays Harbor Sub-District started worshipping together on fifth Sundays. Clark County churches started collaborating, which led to a joint Easter sunrise service and a joint confirmation program which culminates on Pentecost with local church confirmations and an all-churches picnic.

The Greater Northwest Area encourages churches to collaborate with others, whether ecumenical partners, other United Methodist churches, or community organizations. We see these collaborative relationships as potential paths for the flourishing of our churches and our communities. Where are the opportunities around your community for connection and cooperation?

Hope and Creativity

Finally, even, and especially in a trying year, signs of hope and creativity abound in the Crest to Coast Missional District. Many churches have made the challenging and rewarding shift to hybrid worship through livestreaming, YouTube channels, or Zoom and have done an amazing job! Thankfully, we had a great year of Zoom charge conferences with all our practice. We reflected on the ways decision-making processes can unintentionally create barriers to including a more diverse set of voices and opinions. Two churches completed work they started pre-pandemic to become reconciling congregations, thereby stating to the congregation and community that inclusion is an essential value of their church. Many churches continued the life-long journey of anti-racism work as a missional priority of our area.

Clergy and leadership teams have wrestled with the questions - what ministry or action will we intentionally leave behind because the pandemic has changed us, and what ministry or action did we begin or need to begin because we have been changed by the pandemic. As churches engage these questions, we will continue to make the shifts required during this liminal time.

I'm so very thankful for the ordained deacons, retired clergy, and lay speakers who stepped (and continue to step) into the pulpit so that exhausted pastoral leaders can take a needed renewal leave. It is a gift of love, sustenance, and care for those who have given so much during the pandemic. What are the signs of hope and creativity that enlivened you throughout the year?

Transitional Blessings

Finally, we ask for special transitional blessings for Crest to Coast churches and clergy. Ocean Park United Methodist Church will move into lay-led status, and Foothills United Methodist Church will come to faithful completion. We honor *Peter Perry* as he retires, the Sheers as they completed their leadership of Ocean Park Camp and Retreat Center, and Carrie Bland as she anticipates being commissioned. Like every year, some clergy will be leaving our district to serve in other districts, and we will welcome new clergy into our district. May God surround all these pastors and churches in this time of transition.

Beloved servants in the Crest to Coast District, it continues to be an honor to serve alongside you as we seek to work for the common good. May the Risen Christ boldly lead us forward into a new year full of opportunities to deepen our love of God and more fully express our love for our neighbor through equity, justice, and peace.

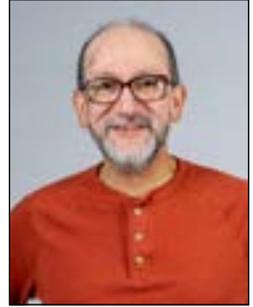
Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Kathleen Weber, Crest to Coast District Superintendent

INLAND AND SEVEN RIVERS MISSIONAL DISTRICTS

Gratefulness is the first word that comes to mind. I am so grateful for the kindness Seven Rivers and Inland Districts have shown me throughout this, almost completed, first year as superintendent of such a large geographic area with many churches and clergy. Year one has been smoother than I had expected, thanks to our previous district superintendents, *Gregg Sealey* and *Joanne Coleman-Campbell*, who took the time to teach me the ropes.

With everything being new in this first year of supervision, the work of Seven Rivers and Inland presiding pastors has been such a gift, especially considering the continued limitations the pandemic has posed and the unexpected surprises along the way. Due to the number of churches under my care, our districts are divided into ten cohorts, each led by a presiding pastor. These presiding pastors take responsibility for churches under their care and stay in close touch with their cohort clergy and with me. These ten presiding pastors have been so helpful in assisting me so that all the work gets done.



Rev. Sheila Miranda, Associate for Connectional Ministries, and I, along with district lay leader John Townsend, meet monthly with our cohort pastors to stay on top of issues and talk about missional strategies for our districts and cohorts. We hope to soon add lay leaders to each cohort so we might bring the voice of laypersons into our discussions to have a more rounded missional journey. This is our work, to discover together how we might welcome new persons into our churches, serve each other and our communities, and do so in a way that is constantly striving to be inclusive.

As the Pacific Northwest and the Greater Northwest Cabinet, we continue our anti-racism work because we see in scripture that God's kin-dom is made up of many races, cultures, nations, and languages. It will be so beautiful when we gather in all the vastness and variety of our beauty with God in heaven, so why not start practicing now, here and in our churches!

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that many of our people are tired, anxious and weary in the midst of all our work. These symptoms are, to a large degree typical, due to the liminal time we are all living in; things are different, but we have not yet arrived at some new normal, so we feel unsettled. We now use terms like "both-and." Live worship **and** online. In-person meetings **and** a Zoom-in option.

Despite the liminality, unsettledness, and fatigue that many are experiencing, God is still at work in us, with us and through us. We can do "both-and"! We can grieve and work. Not being entirely back in our building and yet being a living, thriving church! Being in conversation about disaffiliation and still being faithful to our call!

A note of gratitude to retiring clergy, *Mike Graef* and *Joyce O'Connor-Magee*. Thank you for your faithful service and blessings on your continuing journeys.

I am grateful for churches in our Inland and Seven Rivers Districts, for the clergy, deacons, licensed pastors, certified lay ministers, extension ministers and, of course, our lay-people. Together we are seeking to find ways to hear God's call for how we can transform our world in our various settings.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Daniel Miranda, Seven Rivers and Inland District Superintendent

PUGET SOUND MISSIONAL DISTRICT

I suppose after over a year of being in a pandemic, nothing should surprise us. Still, after the COVID cases were getting better from late May to mid-June 2021, I did not anticipate that many of our churches, if not all, would go back to online-only worship for the remaining months of 2021 and even up to the early part of 2022.

So, with the COVID numbers steadily getting better and many congregations recently returning to in-person worship (or at least hybrid worship type), I am cautiously hopeful that I will get to see you all in person again very soon!

Now being someone who always looks for the silver lining, let me share with you some of the lessons I have learned and am taking with me as we are coming out of this Pandemic:

We Can Pivot and Adapt Quickly

During the pandemic, many churches had to figure out online worship without any warning. Neither the congregations nor many of our pastors had much experience or knew the ins and outs of the technology we now depend on for worship. Yes, we were forced into it, but looking back, I realized that it is a lesson for churches to learn – that we can (and need to) pivot and adapt more quickly to respond to the needs of the people around us.

This will not be the last crisis that we will all be in; thus, we must be willing to continue adjusting and learning new skills to be more responsive and relevant. In the past year, many of our congregations became more intentional in learning how to do hybrid worship and authentically engage more people online, understanding that this is the way forward for our churches. There is no coming back to how things used to be. Some of our pastors and worship teams are now quite knowledgeable in video production and editing, skills not taught in seminaries but are necessary to help our churches become more accessible and relevant in our times and for them to expand their reach.

I am also grateful to our staff at the conference office, who never got tired of assisting our churches in the past year through consulting, training, and coaching. A big shout out to *David Valera* and his team, whom I know I can always rely upon and call whenever I receive questions or requests regarding technology-related issues from churches.

We Can Be Resilient

Our resilience has been tried in these last two years. But one thing I learned is that many of our churches and our pastors are strong enough and elastic enough to bounce back after even a prolonged crisis. Yes, it is difficult, but I know we can weather this crisis together. We could shift things or even change them and yet remain true to who we truly are.

For two long years, many of our buildings remained closed, but our congregations never stopped being churches in the communities they belong to. In times of uncertainty and vulnerability, many of our pastors and local church leaders reexamined their congregations'



mission and ministry foci and started shifting their strategies for worship, pastoral care, and community engagements to meet the current needs of the people around them. It created opportunities for more collaboration and creative work among and between pastors and their congregants as well as with neighboring congregations and community organizations.

Also, amid a pandemic, pastoral changes still happened. Our pastors, their families and congregations made those transitions with all the COVID health protocols still in place. I acknowledge that these protocols have precluded many of the ways we say and do our good goodbyes and warm welcomes, which made these moves very difficult. Still, through it all, our pastors, their families, and laity in our congregations have faithfully done all they can to make these transitions still good for all.

We Can Be Creative and Resourceful

As this pandemic dragged on, I realized that our churches and our pastors are not just resilient but also very creative and resourceful! They have surpassed the standard of just being resilient because they have shown a higher level of creativity and resourcefulness in times such as these!

What I am saying is that as the pandemic went on much longer than we initially anticipated, our churches and pastors seem to continue to find new and creative ways to serve their communities and be church. So, I am truly grateful that instead of complaining “how it is to be church during a pandemic,” many of us have decided to lean in more to the Holy Spirit and see where God might be leading us and, in the process, we have made the best out of our difficult situation.

This posture of openness to the work of Spirit has led to a lot of creative ministries, which in turn also exposed your resourcefulness. Both creativity and resourcefulness are essential for us for the next leg of our journey together.

The last two years of COVID changed us in ways we could never have imagined before 2020. But the next year or so will be going to ask much more of us because we will need to reenter a totally redesigned and rearranged world that would look, sound and feel different from what we were used to.

Thus, we need not only resilience but also a significant amount of creativity and resourcefulness if we hope to find all the opportunities, that I believe God still has in store for us.

With this great anticipation of what still lies ahead that I say, it is my deepest joy and honor to continue to be alongside you in figuring this all out as we now enter this new great adventure of being church post-COVID.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. J. Mark Galang, Puget Sound District Superintendent

SEATAC MISSIONAL DISTRICT

Dear colleagues and friends.... It is hard to imagine that we've made it through two plus years of a pandemic.... but not without many stories and experiences of ways God has worked in and through the pandemic to shape us into new people and moved us to new ways of being and doing ministry: stories of successes and losses, of setbacks and victories, of hard but necessary choices, of hardships and struggles and sacrifices, of both "forced" and "invited" innovation... and in all of these things, we have even still seen God working in miraculous and life-saving, life-giving ways!

During the pandemic, we learned how to be church without a building and without gathering in person, with the help of Zoom and Microsoft Teams and YouTube and Facebook Live; and now that we are moving back into our buildings and gathering once again in person, we can see the opportunity to build on this by living into both of these ways of being in ministry, and seeing how this expands our vision of ministry in new and innovative ways. One of the things we know for certain: there is no turning back.... no returning to how ministry once was.... for the pandemic has changed us and our ministry in enduring and indelible ways.



In terms of the appointment year 2021-22, a few things to note as we remember this year in ministry.

- We give thanks and celebrate the churches in our district that have continued vital ministries even in this pandemic: who have increased and made more effective their online and social media presence, and discovered the vital ministry opportunities that are created for worship, study, fellowship, and administrative support in an online format; who have created new ways of providing of support and care and connection for those who are not computer-savvy; who have engaged in anti-racism work; who have increased the depth and breadth of their community engagement, outreach and development; who have worked with and supported immigrants from places like war-torn Afghanistan and Ukraine; who have created opportunities for interns who are learning ministry for local churches and community engagement. Even amid the tragedy of the COVID pandemic, God is still working!
- We have continued to meet with church lay leaders on a bi-monthly basis, and other lay leadership on the off months, and also have drawn in lay leaders from other PNW districts to create a collaborative space built on supporting and training lay leadership for our church and all that it is becoming.
- We also celebrate two ministry development projects that will create new worship and community spaces for their churches and provide new housing for their neighborhoods and communities: University Temple (now re-named University Gathering) and Woodland Park UMC.

- We celebrate and give thanks for those who have moved forward in their process of commissioning and ordination with the Board of Ordained Ministry: those who will be ordained as deacons and brought into full membership at Annual Conference 2022, Sonja Davis and Mary Stanton Nurse; and those who will be commissioned as provisional elders at Annual Conference: Mele Aho, Carrie Bland, Ashley Skinner Creek, Gayle Tabor.
- We give thanks to God for the years of faithful service of Pastor Sia Puloka, who will retire this year and return to her native Tonga as she completes her service at Seattle: Seaview/Tongan Fellowship.
- We give thanks for churches who have responded faithfully – even in the face of this pandemic – by giving 100% of their apportionment askings for 2021: Auburn First; Bellevue: Aldersgate; Bellevue: St. Peter’s; Burien: Highline; Covington: Cornerstone; Des Moines; Federal Way; Federal Way: Good Seed; Kent; Mercer Island; Renton; Renton: Fairwood; Seattle: Blaine Memorial; Seattle: Bryn Mawr; Seattle: First Tongan; Seattle: First; Seattle: Green Lake; Seattle: Haller Lake; Seattle: Magnolia; Seattle: Queen Anne; Seattle: Sand Point; Seattle: Seaview/Tongan Fellowship; Seattle: Tibbetts; Seattle: University Temple; Seattle: Valley and Mountain; Seattle: Wallingford; Seattle: Woodland Park; Shoreline; Tacoma: Bethany; Tacoma: Browns Point; Tacoma: Kalevaria; Tacoma: Mason; Tacoma: The Bridge; Tukwila: Riverton Park.

In terms of vision for district ministries in 2022-23, our hope and prayer is to continue to create more ways to encourage a collaborative spirit, allowing us to work together and support one another in new and innovative ways.

- We will continue to meet with church lay leaders bi-monthly and wider lay leadership groups on the off-months, seeking to create more support opportunities, share best practices, and grow into new learnings for our changing church.
- We will continue to create new “cultivation events” teaching/learning engagements that lift up what our local churches are doing in ministry and how these examples can inspire each one of our churches and ministries.
- We will encourage collaboration and support amongst clergy as we create new vehicles for engagement and relationship building with each other and with me as we move through the conference year.
- In the new year, we will be inviting churches into a resource called The Good Neighbor Experiment, an asset-based community development model that our IV Team has approved and is being used in other PNW districts. Check it out at <https://neighboringmovement.org/good-neighbor-experiment>

As I close, I want to thank our SeaTac District Lay Leader, Andy O’Donnell, and our PNW Conference Lay Leader, Nancy Tam Davis, for their support, idea sharing, partnership and vision. Andy has been a constant support of our churches and me by attending as many charge conferences as possible in the Fall. Along with Nancy, the two have been indispensable in helping to organize our bi-monthly lay leader gatherings. I also want

to express profound gratitude to district administrative assistant Anna Conklin for her tireless support for us, Puget Sound and Crest to Coast Districts and Superintendents, helping us get important work done and helping us to problem solve in the new things we seek to do.

It is an honor and privilege to serve the SeaTac District as your superintendent. I am grateful for all of the ways we work together for our churches, our district, conference, area, jurisdiction and our United Methodist Church. May God continue to pour out blessings upon us that in our work together, we may bring light and hope to our world so in need.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Derek Nakano, SeaTac District Superintendent