

Voices for Justice

Peace Church has a vital commitment
to working for justice.

We are energized and heartened
by hearing each other's stories.

In 2014 we began publishing a brief story
in our monthly newsletter, the Peace Bell,
featuring members of our community
with their many different voices
and ways of working for justice
in their everyday lives.

We are inspired by these stories,
learning from each other
while we expand our visions and hopes.

Thank you to Pamela Mittlefehldt
for editing Voices for Justice each month.

Every story is a gift

Voices for Justice

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Vi Brown: "Peace Pariah"

"It's good to report that I am part of the Acting for Justice Hub! My memory goes back a long way. [Vi celebrated her 93rd birthday December 1.] My models were the older women in the "Ladies of Kaleva" society, working for recognition of Finnish immigrants. I am still a Kaleva Lady today, and just last month demonstrated how to make prune tarts. My father, too, was a model. He worked in the copper mines for 12 years when he came from Finland, but got out as soon as he could. He was a real do-er. Joo piisaa lörpötys was a favorite expression. It means 'that's enough foolish talk--let's get down to business!' I like that."

"I got involved in environmental activism because of my husband, Bob, no getting around it. He was a real firebrand. I was always holding onto Bob's coattails so he would stay within bounds. We got called "commies," "tree-huggers". I wrote a letter to our local paper, the Daily Mining Gazette, about our community peace marches, which they titled "Peace Pariah Protests War" and put the headline on the front page! Well! We just laughed--I was 80 years old!"



Bob and Viola Brown, of Houghton, founding members of the Copper Country Peace Alliance, pause near the Portage Lift Bridge during a "Walk for Peace" in March 2002. (Photo by Michele Anderson)



Vi Brown with her granddaughter, Glenda Valdez, at Peace Church

Vi and Bob Brown were peace activists. In the mid-1970s, they worked to prevent building the ELF defense antenna network in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. "In retrospect, we really accomplished a lot and people came around to appreciate it. Of course I wouldn't have been so bold if I didn't know it was the right thing to do—being stewards of the earth as the Bible says."

It was the Browns' love of and admiration for the environment that led them to become actively involved in protecting it. The UP has not been used for uranium mining or as a nuclear waste dump site in part due to the Browns' environmental activism. They also were active in Michigan in the fight against Reserve Mining in the 1970s. "The environment is part of living--if we don't take care of it, we'll have nothing left for our children."

Together the Browns fought against the arms race and on the side of education, health care and social programs. Vi believes that excess military spending leads to more human suffering in the long run.

Bob and Vi took their love of humanity, kindness and compassion to China, Finland, Turkey and Trinidad. Vi invited many newly arrived foreign visitors into her home to help introduce them to their new life in the United States, teaching English, cooking and other skills. She still enjoys visiting with new people at church and making people feel welcome and is happy she can participate in Acting for Justice.

Joo piisaa lörpötys.

*Written by Lisa Fitzpatrick
January 2014*

John Szarke: Walking Humbly

Growing up in Buffalo, Minnesota, John Szarke decided early that he would do two things: become a priest and record his discoveries in a journal. He pursued his writing as an English major at St. Thomas. In the early 70s, he was drafted and served two years in the military, which gave him much to ponder as the public grew uneasy with the war in Vietnam.

After his time in the military, John decided to go on a Walkabout before becoming a priest. He travelled close to ten thousand miles, much of it hitchhiking, from Minnesota to California to Central America, South America, Europe, and Israel. He kept a journal, recording the riches he encountered. "The more I travelled, the more I felt fully alive and connected with the people I met." John recalled sharing his food with street kids in Central America. He saw Incan farmers chew *coca* leaves to relieve their hunger. He became more deeply aware of issues of poverty and justice. (For more on this Walkabout, google Neverending Happening, Vimeo.)



After his Walkabout, John entered St. Paul's seminary with a strong sense of the richness of Creation and the interpersonal riches he encountered wherever he travelled. While at the Taizé Community in France, he experienced a transformative encounter which made the 23rd Psalm personally vivid, leaving him with a profound belief that we are all being shepherded by God. This profound trust added more courage to John's commitment to justice.

John served as a priest at St. John's Cathedral in Stillwater for five years. But as he became more aware of those who were excluded from full welcome by the Catholic Church (women, gays and lesbians, the disadvantaged), he decided to leave the priesthood in favor of a more inclusive faith perspective: to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6: 8).

He married Lynn, and when they moved to Duluth they found in Peace Church that simple and active inclusiveness described in Micah. John continues his writing, service to church and community, and his work with the disadvantaged. From his ongoing commitment to trust and unity, he hopes to help give back to our beloved community for all he has received. He continues to trust in God, walk humbly, and turn to the Beatitudes as guideposts while he continues to hitchhike through life.

*Written by Bill Mittlefehldt
February 2014*

Cathy Carlson: Feeding the Hungry

Cathy Carlson puts her faith into action by feeding people. She grew up in Duluth, the ninth of ten children. Her family lived in poverty, but their home was always open to those needing a meal or a safe place to stay. She remembers having thirty people around the table after morning church. She loved growing up in a house that practiced such open hospitality. Cathy did not equate poverty with shame or embarrassment. Instead, she grew up with a deep appreciation for a pragmatic faith. If there is a need, act on it. Feed the hungry.

Food and faith have always been central to Cathy's life. Her father was a chef, and she grew up in kitchens where he worked, helping out by peeling potatoes. By the time she was fifteen, she was working at Glass Block's café. After several jobs, she retired from Lake Superior Community College where she was the supervisor of the kitchen. At one time, she and her sisters owned The Family Tree restaurant in Woodland.



Cathy's parents each helped shape her faith. Her father's spirituality was expressed not through any religious affiliation, but through the concrete daily practice of caring for others. Her mother practiced a more formal faith, and was committed to raising her children within a church. As often as she could get a ride, she took her children to Sunday morning services. However, it was at the Duluth Bethel Mission that Cathy found welcoming love and sense of safety. As she put it, she was fed by the resources provided to children through the Bethel. She felt safe at the Bethel, and also completely welcome in all parts of herself. She was very aware of the contrast between the atmosphere of the morning services, where the God who was talked about was a punishing God, and her experiences at Bethel, which was full of Jesus in the stories and the singing, and where God was talked about as a loving God.

Coming to Peace Church gave Cathy the same sense of belonging and welcome that she felt at Bethel. "At Peace they do in the community what they talk about in worship. They don't just say feed the homeless, they feed the homeless." And Cathy is at the heart of that service, as she prepares a special meal at CHUM each month--continuing to feed the hungry.

*Interviewed by Jackie Falk
March 2014*

Gary Anderson: Leaning into the Divine



Gary Anderson began his journey as a big, gay kid from Floodwood. After struggling to find his place at UMD, Gary moved to West Palm Beach, where he found friends, connected with the Metropolitan Community Church, and developed business and management skills. In the 1980s he moved to Manhattan, where he worked in retail management.

Business was good and new friends in the gay community made Gary feel welcomed. But his sense of justice was simmering as he watched friends die from HIV. The pain and grief from these losses pushed Gary to take control of his life with AA. He realized how lucky he was to still be on the planet. Through AA, Gary recognized that he had to turn his will and life

over to the care of God if he hoped to survive as a healthy and whole person. With help from friends and community, Gary has been sober for twenty-six years.

Another turning point came on the morning of 9/11/01. Gary lived and worked a few blocks from the World Trade Center. That morning he was stunned as he watched the Twin Towers burn and collapse. Working and living so close to Ground Zero took an emotional toll. He wondered why he had been spared again, when so many had been lost.

During that period of loss and grief, Gary felt called to return to Duluth and become a teacher of yoga. The practice of yoga let him “lean into the divine.” Teaching was a way of living an integrated life and giving back to his community.

In December 2008, Gary lost a brother. This again made him deeply aware of the gift of life. In 2009, Gary chose to stand up for justice for all families, working with Minnesota United and Outfront Minnesota to defeat the proposal to ban homosexual marriage in Minnesota. Gary has continued to draw on his gifts and leadership skills in his work on the Minnesota Safe and Secure Schools Act, protecting students from bullying.

The words of Nelson Mandela have been a touchstone for Gary: “As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.” Building on the leadership skills he has developed, Gary continues to find ways to stand up for justice. He knows he is not alone on his journey as he works for people, prosperity and the planet. This pilgrim continues to offer guidance, leadership, and the strength that comes from leaning into the divine and letting his own light shine.

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
April 2014*

Linda and Dick Goese: Faith *Is* Action

“Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.” Matthew 25:45

These words from Matthew are at the heart of Linda and Dick Goese’s faith journey. As they put it, “Faith requires action. You can’t have one without the other.” Linda and Dick are committed to social justice issues. CHUM has been their focus and their passion. They believe that poverty is one of the key social justice issues because it encompasses everything else. It creates a lack of hope, which is stifling. CHUM works to break the cycle of poverty by providing shelter, a food shelf, services for people with health problems and mental illness, and a place for people to drop in for food and assistance. A major challenge is helping people learn to advocate for themselves. This is hard work, but Linda and Dick believe that when people have hope, it leads to action, which leads to change.



Linda and Dick have always felt that they get as much from their volunteer work with CHUM as they give. It has become, over the years, not about “them” but about “us.” “We are all in this together.”

Both Linda and Dick have served on the CHUM board. Linda has taught at CHUM church for many years. She also has been on the board of Lighthouse for the Blind, and has been a reader there for twenty years. You may have heard her voice on the radio reading the *Duluth News Tribune*. Dick has recorded books for medical students with learning disabilities. They also volunteer at the Food Shelf.

Peace Church has also been a focus for their energy. For them, Peace “is a place where you can find a group of people who care about the issues so much and do things rather than talk.” Dick is currently the Church Moderator, a position he has held several times. He has served as Treasurer and been on many committees, including Stewardship and Building. Linda has also served on the Coordinating Council, has taught Sunday School, and has served on many committees, including Christian Education and Social Justice. They helped create PALS, the adult learning and socializing group, because they feel that being a member of a church congregation should not always be serious but should also include having fun together to promote stewardship and membership.

They also put their faith in action in many other ways. Dick loves to cook. He has made meals for the Mens’ Retreat for many years. Together, Linda and Dick have organized a small group of Peace folks to make the Christmas food for Pastor Kathy’s staff party. Linda started a book group of Peace women and took it to the homes of members who had difficulty coming to Peace. She frequently visited people in nursing homes, accompanied by their three daughters.

In the midst of their full lives, the words “Be silent and know that I am God” remind Linda and Dick of the need to stop and listen. This, too, is at the heart of their faith journey.

*Interviewed by Joan Peterson
May 2014*

Mariah Berner: Giving Back

Many of us remember when Laurie Berner brought her infant daughter, Mariah Joy, home from China. We remember Mariah's cancer diagnosis at a young age, and the inspiration that Mariah, Laurie, and Mary (Martin) showed us all. How quickly the years have passed, and this June, Mariah will graduate from high school.

Mariah had the good fortune in her life to learn very young that every day is a gift, and she has dedicated her life to making the most of the time she has, and to "giving back." As she says, "I have been given so much. I just want to be sure that I am helping others." She has done this well.

At East High School, Mariah gives back by her involvement with National Honor Society and Association, helping to build school spirit in such a way that all students feel welcomed. She is part of the core group of Students for a Future—a future of racial and social justice. They seek to cultivate an inclusive campus climate at East, raising awareness of issues of diversity among students, and letting students' voices be heard. They address racism, discriminatory remarks, and exclusion at school, and call on faculty and administration to respond appropriately. They participated in Rachel's Challenge (named for the first victim of the Columbine shootings), to create a chain reaction of kindness. They also created a documentary: PRIDE – P(eace), R(espect), I(ntegrity), D(iversity), and E(nthusiasm) which they showed to every class at East to raise awareness of issues of cultural diversity, and will also host a community forum on these issues.

Mariah has also been involved with the music program at East and is part of both Sterling Strings and Symphony Orchestra. Music is the joy of Mariah's life. She began playing viola in third grade at Lowell. Her teacher, Miss Kimmes, introduced her to the man who has so inspired her own musicality, Mr. Hoeschen, the principal violist of the DSSO, who invited her to be on stage with him! She has been a part of the Duluth Superior Youth Symphony and this year had the honor of being a part of the Side by Side program, playing next to her role model, teacher, and mentor.

Mariah has also devoted much time to her studies, hoping to become a pediatric oncologist. In the meantime, she volunteers with the Essentia Junior Volunteer Program, providing snacks, coffee, and good cheer and company to cancer patients going through chemo. She also works in the Cancer Research Center library, and has loved working on the pediatric wing. In September, Mariah will be attending the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, majoring in biology and psychology.

Mariah does not want to be defined by the fact that she had cancer at a young age and the resultant amputation of her leg, but this certainly has impacted her choices and goals in life. Mostly she is grateful for the miracle of her life-- that her mom, Laurie adopted her and brought her to the United States, where she was able to get the treatment she

needed. She says that the illness brought her family closer. Of her family--Laurie, Grandma Mary, and herself -- she says, "None of us is blood-related, but we're family. We care and love each other." She also credits her mom, Laurie, with who she is. "This part of me, (the part that gives so much of herself to others) is what she is. It's what she taught me." And she is grateful to the members of her Peace Church family, who have done so much to support her and her family. Mariah, we are grateful to you, for all the gifts of grace, kindness, and joy you have brought to us all.

Congratulations to you and all of our graduates!



Mariah with her Mom, Laurie Berner, and Grandma, Mary Martin

*Interviewed by Beth Bartlett
June 2014*

Bill Hardesty: Justice in My DNA

For many people, their commitment to work for social justice grows out of their faith. For Bill Hardesty, the opposite may be true.

Bill explained that the desire for change was "in my DNA." Back when he was five years old, he remembers causing consternation in his family for his choices - frequently being the one to befriend the outsider at school. While he came from what he describes as a conservative family, he had a brother with Down Syndrome, who his parents raised at home. There were no social services to provide assistance, so his parents founded a school to provide them. He saw his parents work for structural change to improve the lives of others.

When Bill was 16, he contracted polio, which played a significant role in the development of his own identity. He spent the better part of a year recovering from the illness - including a long stint with pneumonia—but still graduated with his class.

His childhood experiences solidified his commitment to work for social justice. He majored in social work at Hamline College. He earned his MSW at the University of Minnesota. His experiences in social work are too extensive to share in this article, though it is well worth asking him about some of them over a cup of coffee during fellowship hour. In 1964, he found his way to Duluth and began working at the Human Development Center (HDC). It was here that he developed his commitment to working with young people dealing with issues of addiction. This was at a time when the Minnesota Model, which approached alcoholism as a disease and not a character flaw, was being established. Bill helped to implement some of the programs in St. Louis County to help deal with issues of addiction, including a treatment center for addicted youth, which he designed and directed.

His passion for justice extended beyond his job. Believing livable and affordable housing is key to family and community stability, Bill worked for many years with organizations addressing neighborhood revitalization and affordable housing. He was involved in politics, and was an active supporter of Eugene McCarthy because of his anti-war position.

Bill's work also brought him in contact with Peace Church. While he was licensing homes for foster care, he met Bob and Kay Stevens who invited him to attend Peace Church. In coming to Peace, he found a loving community of people who were concerned about justice.

After retiring in 1997, Bill committed himself to being active in a way that hadn't been possible during his employment. In 2001, he attended his first protest at the School of the Americas in Georgia. The action took place on the heels of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, and there was a great deal of tension about what would happen.

From this experience, Bill decided to become part of the voice for voiceless people in Latin and South America who were being oppressed by our own government's policies. He became very active with Witness for Peace, traveling to Latin America, and speaking out about needed changes in U.S. foreign policy when he returned home.

All of this has helped Bill to formulate his faith as a follower of Jesus who recognizes the power of a larger community. Through more than 30 years as a member of Peace Church, Bill has also had a significant impact on this place. From the beginning, he has been deeply involved with issues of peace and justice. He has persistently asked penetrating questions about what we as a church are doing to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities. He played significant roles in capital campaigns for making the building more physically and spiritually welcoming. Through it all, Bill is clear that the work is not about him as an individual, but about serving a larger community that attends to justice on both a structural and individual level.

Bill Hardesty's life story shows that the work of justice truly is in his DNA. Peace Church is lucky that he found his way to our community so his genetic expressions can touch all of us.



Jo Johnson: Quilting for Justice

Ever since she was a child growing up in Brooklyn Center, Jo Johnson has looked out for the “people on the fringes”—people who are seen as shadows, with no voice, devalued, and thrown away by society. Jo admires Hubert Humphrey and she resonates with his belief that a society should be judged by how it treats those in the shadows. Jo and her husband Mark moved to Albert Lea to work and to raise their son and daughter.



Jo’s 27 year career as a social worker and educator in the field of disabilities fulfilled her desire to make a difference in the lives of people who are often ostracized for being different. In her role as Senior Training Consultant for a national organization that provides supportive housing for disabled people, Jo led seminars on how to teach people with disabilities, taught leadership courses, wrote curricula and mentored staff.

After their retirement, Jo and Mark moved to Duluth to be near their daughter and three grandchildren. They came to Peace church last summer, looking for a church community that supports their values of inclusivity and social justice. Jo believes that “in many small, loving ways we can make beautiful lives for others. Jesus didn’t teach power and rules – he taught love and simple service for all.”

Within just one year at Peace church, Jo has found a perfect way to fulfill her passion for inclusion and connection with people living in the margins. She has created a quilt-making project and named it “Ties that Bind,” a creative and compassionate way to reach out to the homeless in our community. Jo is inviting faith communities to join her in creating hand-made quilts for every family that moves into the Steve O’Neil apartments. She envisions “each family receiving a unique quilt upon moving in as a way of embracing and ‘binding’ them to our community.” That means 44 quilts for 44 families by the end of this year!

As a teacher and trainer, Jo realized that she could help people understand how their words and actions affected others. Now she quilts, “using leftover fabric scraps and putting them together to make something beautiful, whimsical and warm.” She feels that the “Ties that Bind” quilts will help put lives back together into something that is better and beautiful.

Jo shared that she is inspired by Mother Theresa who said, “I am a pencil in God’s hand.” It’s clear that, in this time, Jo is a *needle* in God’s hand!

*Interviewed by Lyn Clark Pegg
August 2014*

Holly Bowen-Bailey: Teaching for Justice

You may know her as a pie making, Sunday School teaching, VBS and Christmas Pageant Queen, but there is more to Holly Bowen-Bailey than what meets the eye. For example, did you know she and Doug lived in Fairbanks, Alaska...yes, that's Alaska, the Last Frontier, Land of the Midnight Sun, and home of grizzly bears.

Or that Holly once swam from Bayfield to Madeline Island? Yes, Holly Bowen-Bailey is a force to be reckoned with.

Holly grew up in the Twin Cities: first in Minneapolis, then Wayzata, and finally Princeton. Her dad is a "landscaper"—he owns Prairie Restorations. Cool, right?! Holly attended Carleton College where she met Doug. They fell passionately in love, and formed the dynamic Bowen-Bailey duo fighting for social justice and equity that we know today. Okay, I made that up; Doug didn't even go to Carleton...he went to Macalester College. How they met is a story for another day. Anyway, Holly studied to become a teacher and it is here that we find how her heartstrings are pulled.



Issues surrounding education have always been important to Holly; it's why she became a teacher. But perhaps, in a cyclical way, it is because she is a teacher that education issues matter deeply to her. Holly is most concerned about the widening achievement gap, and she feels that the problem goes far deeper than we'd like to admit. Poverty is an obvious factor, but family life also comes into play. Families with means who flee the public school system, and schools being held responsible for standardized test scores and then receiving more or less funding based on those scores are also contributing factors. Having worked the last five years as a reading intervention specialist, Holly has seen the effects of the achievement gap first hand, and it has been both challenging and sad.

Holly finds inspiration in a number of different places but most especially in the person she is married to. Doug, for Holly, is an example of a life of action, focused on justice and equity, and he keeps her honest. She also draws strength from the stories of remarkable people like Jackie Robinson, Anne Frank, and Diana Nyad, and especially enjoys sharing their incredible and varied stories with her students.

When Doug and Holly moved from Fairbanks to Duluth, they wanted to find a community similar to the one they had at the Unitarian congregation they attended in Alaska. Through the grapevine, Doug heard about Peace Church. When they walked in the door and were surprisingly greeted by a college friend, they thought, perhaps, they had found what they were looking for. Then, sitting in the pew, they heard "For the Beauty of the Earth", which was one of the few songs sung at Holly and Doug's wedding, and they thought maybe they would come back. And they kept coming back.

I, for one, am so glad they did.

*Interviewed by Mark Hakes
September 2014*



Holly working with youth to present a bible story skit at Vacation Bible School.

Gunnar Aas: Speaking Out for Justice

Gunnar Aas has demonstrated an early interest in love, peace, and justice. Gunnar has enjoyed support and challenges from his family, Peace's youth group, East High's Green Team, Amberwing and the YMCA. Through these relationships he has woven fiber and content into his commitment to justice.

As an informed and engaged young man, Gunnar has developed a number of questions about the root causes of the violence and aggression we see around the world. He recalled a particularly vivid interaction when he was in middle school, talking with Pastor Paul Van Antwerp about injustice in the Middle East and the impact of violence on innocent civilians. Gunnar also recalled a number of one-to-one conversations with Pastor Kathy Nelson about the role of faith in the midst of so much confusion and aggression. He has come to understand that faith is carrying Jesus' message forward in your actions rather than simply identifying with the symbols and icons of Christianity. He noted that some folks claim to be Christian, but demonstrate no love or mercy. Gunnar has a good eye for irony.



Gunnar has appreciated growing up through the Peace youth group, where he developed many friendships. The loss of his friend Gregg Nugent last year had a huge emotional impact on Gunnar. Thanks to his work at Amberwing and guidance from Becky Halversten-Mellel, he was able to weave the pain of loss into his drive for more justice, love and peace. He has had a vivid personal lesson about how imperfect life can be. But dealing with this profound grief has helped Gunnar find focus and has added courage to his action.

Gunnar has been involved with the YMCA's Youth in Government program for three years. This helped him build skills for speaking, researching and organizing. Wrestling with his grief gave Gunnar an opportunity to act in ways that countered bullying. Gunnar, along with ten other Peace Church youth, participated in the Youth Summit at the Capitol rotunda in St. Paul, where they lobbied state leaders on the issue of bullying in high schools. Gunnar spoke with passion and reason to Senator Reinert at the Capitol. He felt very good about the delivered message. And he was delighted that the legislation passed with support from the Youth Summit. Peace Church has helped Gunnar find his voice and lends content and commitment to his drive for justice in the 21st century.



Gunnar at the state capital last winter, lobbying for Safe Schools.

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
October 2014*

Mary Martin: Hammering Out Justice

“If I had a hammer...” Over the years, Mary Martin could often be seen around Peace with a hammer in hand. She developed an early love of and skill in building things from her father, whom she greatly admired, and she has put that love to good use at Peace and elsewhere, helping to repair, restore, and create Peace. But more than this, Mary has helped to build relationships, community, and justice.

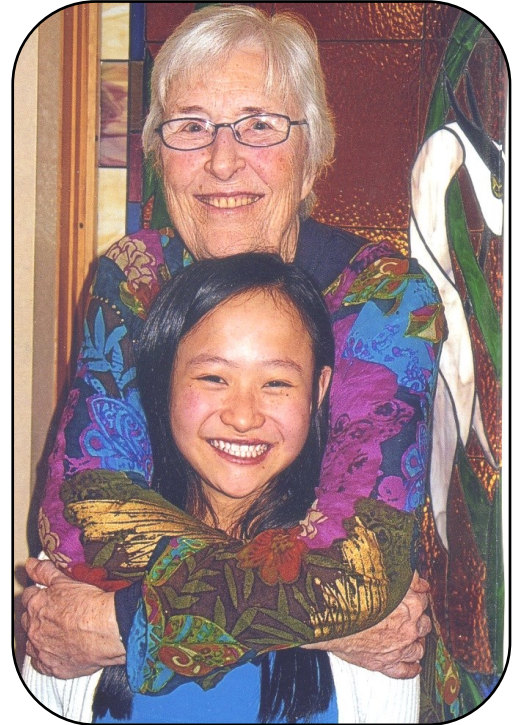
The most significant issue of justice in Mary’s life has been the women’s movement. Mary moved to Duluth at a time when the women’s movement was just gathering momentum. It was an exciting and inspiring time. Through her work at the Human Development Center, Mary often found herself dealing with women’s issues, and she was also surrounded by vital women who inspired her involvement. Mary has been an active partner in the women’s movement in Duluth through her involvement with the YWCA, the creation of the Building for Women, and serving on the board of the Women’s Health Center for many years, as well as being a support and inspiration to so many women. The contributions she has made in her life have been a “series of walking through doors,” each opening to the next.

Mary was inspired by her grandmother, a strong woman who was widowed early in her life. She left the farm with her three children to make a life for them doing whatever she could, always in a loving and kind way. She was also motivated by her friend Marilee, who “opened a new piece” of herself and got her to think beyond her original vision of herself and her life by encouraging her to pursue her PhD. Her family has had the greatest influence on her – her grandmother, her father, her Aunt Lucille and others who showed her the value of love and perseverance. More recently she has been inspired by Pastor Kathy, whom she nominated for the Woman of the Year for the Building for Women.

For many years, Mary believed that all of the resources one needs are within you, but a time came when she wanted something more, and she found this at Peace. She remembers early on being a part of nine-month Bible study with Kathy, and said that “seeing Kathy in her humanness, and other members in their humanness” made her feel comfortable, and she knew that Peace was a good fit for her. Peace has also brought her the great gift of her granddaughter, Mariah.

When asked what change she would most like to see in the world, Mary responded, “I would like us to be more personal with one another, listen, be there – face-to-face, person-to-person.” She has modeled this well, hammering out justice and singing a song of love between us all.

*Interviewed by Beth Bartlett
November 2014*



Charley Kendall: Healing for Justice

The issue that matters to me most is the plight of those in poverty, both in the United States and abroad. My desire to help those from poverty in our country comes from my work as a physician, my experiences working with inner city minorities and, for the past 18 years, at a tribal clinic on the Fond du Lac Indian Reservation. I also have a strong desire to reach out to those in other countries. A driving force for me came on September 11th, as I sat stunned, like everyone that day, and watched Palestinians celebrating in the streets. It disturbed me that they could hate America that much. It made me want to reach out to others around the world to show them how Americans can be, not just how we might be represented by the actions of our government.



In my work, I have spent a lot of time studying and learning the dynamics of my patients from poverty, to help me serve them better as a physician. To reach out to the greater world, I took an idea of my wife's that we should support the microfinance movement, and brought that to Peace Church, in an effort which became known as Seeds of Peace.

My faith is a bit nebulous, but I believe that doing what we can for others should be a main tenet of our lives.

My greatest inspiration in my life has been my father, the most giving person I have known.

December 2014

Jebbeh Edmunds: Moving Forward Toward Justice

Jebbeh Edmunds has always been an activist. In the sixth grade, she organized a fundraiser selling sweatshirts to raise money for the people in Liberia fighting in the civil war. Recently, she undertook another big project: raising awareness of the Ebola epidemic and collecting over 25 boxes of supplies to send to her native country to help with the fight against the virus. Many of the people of Peace Church joined with Jebbeh in gathering those supplies.

Jebbeh was born in Liberia to Gbai Gutnecht and Emmet Metzger. She was named for her paternal great aunt who was Chief Jebbeh Hahja Sessay of the Vai Tribe. Her grandfather, the late Anthony Kley Yuoh, was a guiding inspiration for her with his words, "Forward ever, backward never."

Jebbeh emigrated to the U.S. with her parents because of civil conflict in Liberia. However, even though she was two years old when her family left, Jebbeh has always felt a strong connection to her homeland. Referring to her connections to Liberia, she states, "Even though we are not together, we still are (Liberian)." This strong attachment motivated her to organize the drive to collect supplies. Jebbeh's aunt runs the organization Liberian Medical Relief, the place where the supplies are being sent. Gratefully, the necessities began arriving in October to help fight this battle, a struggle she compares to the Liberian Civil War.

Jebbeh grew up in the Twin Cities, and came to Duluth where she earned a BA in Communication at UMD, and then completed a second BA from the College of St. Scholastica, majoring in Elementary Education. She has been active in diversity education and multiculturalism. She was the African American Cultural Specialist

for the Duluth Public schools from 2004 to 2011. Jebbeh has been a key project manager for many community events, including the Martin Luther King Rally program, Kwanzaa, Juneteenth, and Celebrate Africa (an event that she personally created). She currently teaches first grade at Myers-Wilkins Elementary School. Jebbeh states that her life work is "to teach all her students and our Duluth community the importance of tolerance of all cultures."

She shares this commitment and expertise with Peace Church by teaching Sunday school, and we greatly value her contributions. She inspires us, too, with her grandfather's vision: "Forward ever, backward never."

*Interviewed by Terese Tomanek
January 2015*



The Yuoh Family

My grandfather Anthony Kley Yuoh is pictured in the center holding my aunt Natu. My grandmother Agnes Yancy is pictured next to my grandfather and my mother Gbai is in the front row second from the left. These are my mother's siblings and my great aunts and uncle are pictured in the second row. My grandfather loved taking professional family pictures after church. They are dressed in their Sunday best :) The picture is taken outside of the Yuoh compound in Mamba Point, a prestigious neighborhood in Monrovia, Liberia in the mid 1960s. Our family compound is still there!

Steve Coll: Creating Community through Art

Steve Coll's perfect quote for a bumper sticker would say, "Have you hugged your community today?" Steve's passion is community building. He uses his creative talents as an artist and musician to bring people together locally and internationally in the pursuit of peace and harmony.

Steve views social concern as the need to be creative and to foster creative expression in others. One way he has done this is by serving as curator of the Peace Church gallery wall, which Steve has done since 2003. Among his most memorable hangings was Native painter and social justice activist Carl Gawboy's 2009 exhibition. While his paintings were on display, Gawboy gave a series of lectures on peace and social justice in the sanctuary. Another favorite gallery exhibition was the 2011 showing of Joel Cooper's prints, along with poetry by Deborah Cooper, Duluth's 2012-2014 Poet Laureate. This showing was such a success that it was up on the gallery wall for nine months.



Steve believes that "faith is about being able to question things." He does not believe that being faithful is having a locked-in sense of what is right and wrong, and what one must do and when they must do it. Faith is putting all of one's questioning into action and just showing up— showing up at the right time and lending support by just being present. Peace Church has been important in his faith journey. Pastor Kathy has been an encouraging force along the way, supporting an open-minded approach. Steve was a regular attendee of the long-running group "Questions along the Way." During its tenure, this group suited Steve well because of its flexible agenda: no book, no mission, just show up and talk. The credo of the group was, "There are no right answers, no dogma, and by experiencing doubt you can become more faithful."

Steve moved to Duluth fifteen years ago, landing in the Hillside neighborhood next to the Bowen-Bailey family. He has dubbed himself the Bowen-Bailey children's "gay uncle" and credits this active Peace Church family for steering him towards our church. Other Peace Church members who Steve names as being close friends and supporters of his faith and creative endeavors are Steve Horner, Tom Liddle, Gary Boelhower and Gary Anderson. Gary and Gary insisted that he play the piano at their wedding.

Susan Ranfranz and Annette Strom are close friends who are regular dancers in Peace Church's Cabaret. This beloved annual event at Peace began nine years ago when Steve voiced interest in putting on a cabaret and received support from the Worship and Arts committee to make it a reality. He laughs as he states, "if you do something well, they expect you to do it annually." He is grateful for the opportunity to bring together talented Peace Church and community members for this show. He recalls the very first production when the flutist he had lined up as the opening act cancelled two hours before the show. Young Paul Winchester, who was scheduled to perform, stepped in and called his father Dave, who came out and opened the cabaret with a bang! Steve states, "It's how our church keeps vital, keeps doing what is right over and over again."

Internationally, Steve has been an active participant in bridging relationships between Americans and the people of Cuba. He has travelled twice as a member of Witness for Peace delegations. He admits that at first he was drawn to the romantic idea of going to Cuba; however, once he had experienced the rich Cuban culture and generous people he was captivated. He loves the "wildness" of Cuba and was able to paint watercolors with themes including organic farms, green mountains, native people and animals. He is excited about continuing his relationship with the Martin Luther King Center in Havana. The Center is a community gathering place, with a watering hole. There is a water purifier at the Center and people come to collect fresh water. He feels a likeness between Peace Church and the MLK Center in Havana—both are places for the community to gather, quench its thirst, and support one another.

It was such a pleasure to talk with Steve. I was impressed with his excitement over the importance of community building. His laid-back, simple recipe for making a difference in the community gave me the hope that all of us can make a difference. Remember all we have to do is just show up!

*Interviewed by Colette Knudsen
February 2015*

Sarah Nelson: Planting Seeds for Justice



Sarah Nelson has been gardening all her life. "Since I was a little girl, I gardened with my grandma and my mom & dad. Then when I grew up and was on my own with an apartment, I still kept gardening." No surprise then that Sarah helped to start the Peace Church garden.

"For a while the Peace garden was part of Seeds of Success. After a couple of years it didn't suit their needs, so the congregation took over the garden. We organized to grow food for CHUM. The first year, people just brought their own seedlings. Then I was able to get seedlings from 'Growing for a Cause'

which is sponsored by Farmer Doug and Bob Olen. They donate seeds and seedlings to groups who grow veggies for the food shelves. The first year we grew 291 pounds of veggies and this past year 524 pounds of veggies were donated to CHUM."

"Gardening is fun — there is a good core group of 4-5 people (from the Food Energy Environment Team and the Property team, and people who just like to garden) who meet about one afternoon a week to garden and chat. There has been youth involvement at times as well. Other members of the congregation have also donated seedlings and compost to the garden."

When asked about the journey that led her to Peace Church, Sarah said that when she and her husband Joe moved to town, many people suggested checking out Peace. "Peace is such a welcoming family. There are lots of activities for kids and also groups concerned with social justice issues."

"Because of my medical background, I am very interested in how food and good nutrition can prevent disease. I also am involved in the Duluth Community Garden Program, local food systems and social justice around food. It's all interconnected: healthy bodies, healthy neighborhoods, healthy Earth."

*Interviewed by Lisa Fitzpatrick
March 2015*



Sarah teaching kids at VBS

Fire Before the Green — Remembering Mary Martin

by Doug Bowen-Bailey

April 2015

On Sunday, March 22, the congregation bid farewell to Mary Martin. One of her final requests was for a fire. The altar was draped with Pentecost banners—tongues of flame. Members attending the funeral shared a prayer for Mary as they lit a candle.

That Sunday was also the day that we were able to burn the Memorial Prairie garden. We had originally wanted to burn it Saturday afternoon, but the rain on Friday and cold on Saturday made it too wet. (There were plenty of whispers that Mary's spirit had something to do with the weather.)

For Mary's spirit also had something to do with the planting of the prairie. When Holly and I experienced pregnancy loss for a second time and brought the idea of a memorial garden to the Coordinating Council, our vision was significantly smaller. We wanted a small oval patch of prairie. It was Mary who argued that we should do the entire hillside. "Loss," she said in her wise and direct way, "is such a big part of life."

And so, we plowed under the hillside. The ashes of our children and others are mixed in with the soil that now nourishes the grasses and flowers (and some weeds) in the prairie. I wrote a poem for the original planting that included the line, "This holy ground is where we, the people of God, come to practice resurrection."

That is what we do now. Fire has turned the hillside black and gray. But as Easter approaches, so does the promise of new life. Green will find its way to the surface. Flowers will bud and blossom. The warmth of summer returns.

Yet loss is still a big part of life. We will miss Mary Martin in our Peace Church community, just as those of us miss the loved ones who are memorialized in the prairie. Grief accompanies all of the beauty and joy we experience.

In posting something on the website to add this burn to the collective history of Peace Church, I was struck by a picture that my son, Frost, took. (Beyond the miracle that our two kids, Sylvie and Frost, arrived after the pregnancy losses we experienced.) The image Frost captured (at right) shows the afternoon sun coming through the haze of the prairie fire smoke and the bell tower silhouetted in the midst of it all. Just above the flames, a purple shaft of light rises out of the ground. Standing tall and seeming to survey the flames. I can't help but wonder if it isn't Mary's spirit enjoying one final fire before moving on. We are surrounded by a cloud of angels.

We remember all of those who we have lost, and trust that death will not have the final word. We will remember you, Mary Martin. Go well on your journey. We look forward to seeing what you will do with the place before we get there.



Words from Mary ~ The following words are excerpts from Mary Martin's reflections on the Silver Gate, based on Angeles Arrien's *The Second Half of Life: Opening the Eight Gates of Wisdom*. The Silver Gate is the gate at which we review our lives and discover what is emerging, what fosters meaning and vitality for us.

I have always been drawn to fire—both a relaxing fire in the fireplace and brush fires that are almost out of control. I love the excitement that comes with the latter and love that feeling when I am on to something new that pulls me into action.

My life in my church gives me meaning, hope, inspiration, and curiosity. I enjoy finding things that need attention at church and just doing them.

I experience fluency in the act of giving. Time with Mariah seems effortless, interesting, joyful and confronting as she beats me at games most of the time.

My work seems to be being myself with others from which they learn about themselves. I listen well, give undivided attention where discoveries can happen.

I renew and regenerate myself by finding new experiences—something to learn about and devote myself to. I am amazed.

See the November 2014 *Voices for Justice*: "Mary Martin: Hammering Out Justice"



Nettie Bothwell: Gentle Woman Loving Justice

I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. . . . (Philemon 1: 4-7)

These verses, from a seldom quoted New Testament book, are Nettie Bothwell's favorite Bible passage. Like these words, Nettie, too, is a rare find among the members of Peace Church—and the hearts of us all are refreshed through her love.

Nettie's most revered ancestor is her Great Aunt Lou who loved her unconditionally. When Lou was dying, Nettie was at her bedside and turned to her Bible, which fell open at these verses. They became her favorite passage. Nettie was blessed to be with her great aunt when she died, and she felt Lou's mantle, her ethic and spirit, pass on into her.

Nettie, whose given Indian name is Gentle Woman, believes in a God of her understanding, in seeing God in other people, and in being thankful. She claims Mother Earth is everybody's mother.

Her favorite political quote is: "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle." Nettie is one of our most unique feminists, as was her long-admired friend, Mary Martin. "Mary had a special way of offering approval and encouragement. Mary gently nudged me to try new things." Several years back, when Nettie was confined to a wheelchair due to Multiple Sclerosis, Mary told her to go to a golf clinic and swing your club from the chair!

Peace Church's ability to accommodate differently abled folks earns high praise from Nettie. Whether doing the Ropes Course at Wolf Ridge, helping with a Habitat for Humanity home, or attending work camp in South Dakota she has always felt welcome to participate and contribute.

The social issue that is dearly important to Nettie is equal rights for same sex couples. When she first attended Peace Church in 1997, Nettie heard Pastor Kathy say **lesbian** from the pulpit. This is one of her favorite stories of inclusion and welcome at Peace. From that day forward, her faith has grown. Nettie helps make Peace a place where prejudice isn't welcome, but every person is.

Both Nettie and her partner, Naomi Christensen, are known for their activism and hospitality at Peace. Among so many other acts of love and generosity, Nettie is our go-to leader for post funeral meals.

She also shares the spirituality of being free from drug and alcohol use. She says openly: "Steve, 32 years sober, most of the Peace folks know that." Her recovery work has taught her to reach out.

"By asking for what we need from each other we begin to form family." And that belief has helped her direct the Spring Peace Rummage Sale for many years (occurring this month on Saturday, May 16th). Her faithful cohorts Cindy Macaulay and Martha Minchak make the 3-day process look fun.

Among garage salers, Peace's annual sale is a favorite, and is a place where shopping for a good garment or home appliance also helps those in need. Nettie shows her pride in this fund-raising success momentarily during our otherwise humble interview. Nettie praises Pastor Kathy for listening to the Peace workers' suggestions about where the rummage sale proceeds should go each year.

As we wrap up our interview, Nettie says: "Steve, I am a miracle." And I know she generously believes that I am a miracle, too.

Thank you—for every good thing that is in you. *Megwich*, Nettie Bothwell.

*Interviewed by Steve Coll (with the bias of a 10-year friendship)
May 2015*

Matt Hunter: Seeing Injustice/Seeking the Divine



Changing the world to see racism for what it really is, is a dream and a lifelong effort for Matt Hunter. Racism, tribalism, and classism are social issues that matter most deeply to him. He believes that changing our world from a “them vs. us” mentality to an “our” mentality is a consistent challenge. We all were created in the divine image of God. What you do to others, you do to God.

This belief grew from Matt’s experiences during seminary when he went to South Africa to learn from the Woodstock Methodist Church. During this time, the Burundi and Congolese were fleeing the wars and inhumanities in their respective countries, becoming refugees in South Africa. The Zulus and other tribes native to that country believed these refugees were taking the jobs that belonged to the South African nationals. Matt saw blatant racism, based not on skin color, but on culture, linguistic accent, and tribal traditions. Matt used the power of his white privilege and his male, American voice to assist the refugees in securing housing and jobs. It became even clearer to him that we are *all* a part of the human race.

Matt says he is still in the process of discovery when it comes to responding to racism. He has traveled extensively throughout Africa, Central America, and the U.S.A. to study and learn from other cultures, to observe how others live. This knowledge and the vision Matt has developed have led him to what he refers to as his justice ministry, one grounded in a theology of solidarity. It includes organizing food and shelter for the homeless, and working toward peace and nonviolent reconciliation. Currently Matt is working for basic justice issues as he serves as president of the United Way of Greater Duluth.

The connection between his faith and his work is clear for Matt. He states that he is a big fan of Jesus. The Prince of Peace, the author of the Beatitudes, tells and shows us how to live lovingly, peacefully, and respectfully together. Matt does what he can to further the kingdom of God, to honor all people with respect, and to alleviate poverty.

Three individuals have had a profound impact on Matt. Peter Storey, a Methodist Bishop in South Africa and the former General Secretary of South African churches, appointed Bishop Desmond Tutu as head of the Truth and Reconciliation process. These two men taught Matt to see—really *see*—the inhumane inequities resulting from all forms of racism. The third man—Oscar Romero—was a bishop in El Salvador who was killed for speaking out about the plight of the El Salvadoran peasants. Matt found inspiration and courage from Romero’s life, and the lives of other martyrs who inspire Matt’s justice ministry.

When asked if he had a favorite quote or verse, Matt recited a bumper sticker—“War is not the Answer”—that says it all. Positive, respectful relationship is the answer. Seeing the Divine—the God—in everyone—that is the answer.

*Interviewed by Naomi Christensen
June 2015*

Martha Minchak: Loving the Environment, Acting for Justice



Martha Minchak's love for the environment has been a driving force since her early days growing up in rural Rhode Island, and continues in northern Minnesota where she has lived for over 30 years. Whether she is in the woods, on the St. Louis River, in her gardens at home, or at Peace Church, Martha sees the environment through the lens of justice. She is concerned that corporate greed, industrial agriculture, and economic policies are causing food insecurity and environmental damage both locally and globally; that our water has been polluted with PCBs, lead, mercury, arsenic, and heavy metals; that public policies have turned working class neighborhoods and Native lands into dumping grounds for toxic chemicals and sites for environmentally damaging industries.

Martha works for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and she is currently involved with the restoration of habitats in the St. Louis River Estuary after the remediation of contaminated sediments and superfund sites in West Duluth. To bring about environmental justice, Martha believes that all resources – land, water, and air – must be equitably accessible to “the commons” and not for the benefit of the few. This can only be achieved by changing public attitudes through education on the grassroots level, and advocating for enlightened actions by the governmental and private sectors.

Martha lives out her values both in her work life and in her many connections with community organizations and advocates for justice. Her list is long: the Izaak Walton League of America, St. Louis River Alliance, Southern Poverty Law Center, Amnesty International, Koinonia Farms, Habitat for Humanity, and Witness for Peace, to name a few!

Martha has been on a path of faith development that includes Native American practices, Buddhism, and teachings of the ascended masters – Jesus, Buddha, Black Elk, Seatl, Quan Yin, Mohammed, Krishna – of faith traditions that believe in justice, peace and equality. She found Peace Church through several friends who were members, and realized that she had already been in the building a number of times before while attending other community meetings there. For Martha, there is no separation between faith and daily life, and Peace Church has helped her connect her faith to justice work more deeply.

When asked about her sources of inspiration and guidance, Martha quickly named her mother Ruby as her greatest inspiration, and then recited these quotes by world leaders who have been courageous and renowned movers for justice:

“When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.” Jimi Hendrix

“Be the change you want to see in the world.” “An eye for an eye ... leaves the whole world blind.” Mahatma Gandhi

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead

“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.” Marie Curie

“Life is like a wisp of smoke that dances across the wind of time. How long it lingers it does not know. No more than a leaf knows when it will fall. No more than a rain drop knows when and where it will fall. Remember that this day, this moment, this second, is all that truly matters so be grateful for this time.” Larry K Fiddler

On a more local level, Martha added that she is also inspired by Peace church members. In particular, she mentioned people she met while on a Witness for Peace delegation to Colombia and Venezuela in 2007 – Bill Hardesty, Joel Kilgour, Linda & Tom Curran, and John & Lyn Pegg— as well as Pastor Kathy and many others.

Whether working for two days each year at the Peace Church rummage sale, participating in the Peace Church Prayer Chain, restoring habitat in the Western Corridor, or presenting environmental education programs and citizen advocacy workshops for the Izaak Walton League, Martha is putting her faith into action.

*Interviewed by Lyn Clark Pegg
July 2015*

Nathan Holst: Called to Justice

Nathan Holst is passionate about working towards a world in which everyone can live into their call: “that small voice leading us to the work we are to be about” that, when we pay attention, strengthens and clarifies our outer work. Nathan’s call is to work for justice: environmental/climate justice, racial justice, and local/global economic justice. What matters most to Nathan is sparking that sense of call in the world, and then finding our place, our piece. He believes that Christianity is a clear call for justice. Everyone deserves human rights. Anything that calls for love and compassion draws him.

Nathan’s experiences with Ecofaith Recovery in Portland, Oregon helped him to understand the issues of justice, and also helped him learn how to respond, how to act for change. Ecofaith Recovery is a network of Christian leaders working to recover from consumerism, which is a driving force behind ecological destruction. Through that community, he learned to see the connections between capitalism and environmental destruction. He believed that this understanding was essential for youth, and through an internship program created Ecofaith Youth Camp, a weeklong experience for senior high youth where they explored the connections between economic, environmental, and racial justice. They hiked, visited an organic farm run by a Native American couple, learned about the lives of migrant workers, and saw firsthand the impact of climate change on strawberry production.



Nathan at Work Camp

Among those who have strongly influenced Nathan have been ecological theologian Ched Myers and his wife Elaine Enns, who connected him to a large group of radical Christians throughout the country. He has also been influenced by the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C., which modeled for him what a church can be and can do. Ella Baker, with her work on racial justice and civil rights, with a particular emphasis on youth, has been another strong influence, as well as authors bell hooks and Andrea Smith, the author of *Three Pillars of White Supremacy*.

Nathan, originally from Duluth, graduated from East High School, and attended Concordia College in Moorhead. After graduation, he went to D.C., where he became involved with the 8th Day Community. He returned to Duluth for a year, during which he worked with a foster agency, and then moved to Portland where he completed his Masters in Social Work. While in Oregon, he worked at the Sisters of the Road Café, a community of houseless and formerly houseless people with an atmosphere of nonviolence. It is also an organizing space and a place to get a great meal with dignity. He also served as part time youth director at a Lutheran Church.

Nathan returned to Duluth because he missed his family, loves Duluth, and because he feels Duluth is “that sweet spot of [being]big enough to have some of the benefits of the big city, but small enough to feel small town.” He was drawn to Peace Church because it is a community of active people who want to live out their faith in justice work.

Nathan has many thoughts about what he would like to see happen through his work at Peace. He would love to bring what he learned from the Ecofaith Youth Camp to the youth here, focusing on individual/communal call, environmental and racial justice. He would like to co-create a program that helps us all get in touch with what is happening in the world with climate change— to find ways of addressing questions about what climate change means for people of color and people living in poverty, what it means to us as Christians in a first world country, what it means in terms of how we live our lives.

Music is at the heart of Nathan’s work in the world. “My most connecting image of God is Spirit of Song, and that often overlaps with my organizing/justice work.” Nathan has written (he prefers Bobby McFarren’s phrase “caught songs”) a number of songs that capture the moment of whatever was happening in the community. “I hope that music inspires justice work and expresses what we do in community together.”

Nathan brings his call, his music, his passion, and vision to Peace Church. We welcome him, and look forward to joining him in the questions, the actions, and the songs.

*Interviewed by Penny Cragun
September 2015*

Penny Cragun—Saying No! to Injustice

Penny Cragun champions the cause of peace and nonviolence. Being involved in anti-violence protests and actions has led her life, shaped her life, and been the largest part of her life.

Penny was born in Kansas and grew up in Arkansas in a Lutheran faith-based home. She attended a (Missouri Synod) Lutheran college in Illinois. While in college she was fortunate to have some very good theology professors who challenged her to actively grow in her faith. This was during the height of the Civil Rights movement. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed while Penny was working at her first teaching job in a Pittsburg inner-city school. Feeling the intolerable tension, fear and injustice around her spurred her into passionate action. She hasn't ever stopped.

Marrying Rodger just doubled both their efforts. They changed church affiliation a few times, as well as moving their household to a variety of states. Penny has worked with domestic abuse victims and held a variety of teaching positions. She worked at the University of Minnesota Duluth in the long-standing center for students with disabilities from 1985 until her retirement in 2014. As the long-time director of the Center, Penny worked to expand the understanding of disability and to support students' rights.

Her first political action was a march in Washington D.C. protesting the Vietnam War. There have been many since, including protests at the School of the Americas, Program Minnesota/Leon (in Nicaragua, Minnesota's sister state), and participation in Witness for Peace delegations. Some of these actions have resulted in Penny's being arrested. Though it is often difficult to be out in public as a non-violent peacemaker, she believes that being arrested for her faith is an empowering event.

She was committed to working with the Underground Railroad Network. This network assisted Central American refugees to safety in Canada during the Reagan era contra war. She and Rodger harbored some of the first refugees to pass through Two Harbors on their way to Thunder Bay. At times, they even drove the refugees to Canada and sat with them during their court hearings. Penny also helped organize Women in Black and Grandmothers Against War, both groups protesting the Gulf Wars.

Since all issues of violence are interconnected, Penny states that whatever issue presents itself is the issue she feels compelled to work on. She quotes a line from a song sung by the Echoes of Peace choir: "none of us is free as long as one of us is chained..." stating that those chains are poverty, racism, sexism, lack of respect for humanity, and violence.

Penny is motivated by the things she feels she needs to say **No** to. **No** to domestic abuse. **No** to the abuse of Native American treaty rights. **No** to gun violence. **No** to wars. **No** to Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Connecting her faith with her actions often causes non-faith-based people to distrust her as there is a common assumption that Christians and Christianity are part of the problem to start with. In spite of this, Penny has "stuck with it" and stayed true to her passion. War is NOT the answer. She and Rodger strive to live simply so others may simply live.

*Interviewed by Tim Peters
October 2015*



Penny at the Hiroshima-Nagasaki commemoration on August 9th at the Peace bell in Enger Park, with Jan Provost and Donna Howard, two other Grandmothers for Peace.

Dan Green—Building Justice

Poverty and homelessness are Dan Green's most important social concerns. His passion for these issues comes directly from his life. He has been homeless, as a youth and as an adult. He has been broke many times. He remembers having pancakes for every meal when he was a child.

Dan was raised in the slums of Minneapolis. His father was physically and emotionally abusive. When Dan was eight years old, his mother left his father and took her four kids on a Greyhound bus to Duluth. By the time he was seventeen, he was a troublemaker, and had already been in jail for grand theft auto. He signed up for the Navy, and by the time he was eighteen, he had finished basic training. He was immediately shipped to Vietnam on a US Navy destroyer. He saw much of the world while on the ship, including the Philippines, Japan, Singapore, Australia and many other countries in southeast Asia.

By the time he returned, Dan was a full-fledged alcoholic. He got into bar fights for fun, and never backed down from a fight. He was in many car accidents and had many run-ins with the law. He drank for about fifteen years, and has now been sober for 34 years.

Dan currently works for Center City Housing, which builds housing for the "hardest to house" including chronic alcoholics, homeless and transitional housing for women. He is also committed to working with youth, because he knows what happens to youth without direction. He has led a few mission trips with Peace Church and volunteers with Habitat for Humanity when he has time.

Dan also worked in construction for a number of years before working for the City of Duluth. He worked there for 23 years.

He likes to see things happen on a personal level, as opposed to donating to large organizations. For example, the other day he saw a homeless family at Miller Hill Mall, and he gave them \$20. He likes to help people, and believes in being kind to everyone.

Dan considers himself to be more of a spiritual person than a religious one. He always tries to do the right thing, believing that things will work out if you do the right thing. His past has given him a different perspective on life and religion. He likes to say that "a person of religion goes to church because they're afraid to go to hell. Spiritual people go to church because they've already been there."

Dan has always been very independent. Most of what he has learned about life he learned on his own or by experience. However, he looks up to people like Pastor Kathy. He respects how open she is, and "doesn't know how she does half of what she does." We could say the same about Dan, who dedicates his talent and time to building justice—creating shelter and connections, sharing the kindness of his heart.



Dan at last summer's work camp in West Virginia

*Interviewed by Hannah Feyen and Katherine Skwira-Brown (pictured above with Dan)
November 2015*

Sarah Holst: Living a Just Life



It takes an encyclopedia to capture the range of Sarah's passions and commitments: Art. Composting. Gender Identity. Inter-Connectedness. Justice Ministry. Poverty. Queer Ecology. Restorative Justice. Sustainability. Theology. Watershed Discipleship.

Sarah's commitment to justice is solidly rooted in her Catholic tradition and her family, which gave her a safe place to question religious beliefs without fear. She grew up in a small Nebraska town, and says she has been a theological thinker from a very young age. Her mother demonstrated the kind of faith that Sarah built on. For Sarah, God is in the questions.

Her family also encouraged her artistic gifts. Sarah's father is a watercolor artist, and he encouraged her to explore her own artistic sense by covering the walls with paper for her to fill with her art. She is now comfortable painting wall murals. She is a gifted artist, currently busy with commissions for art projects in her new studio.

Sarah attended St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa, where she triple majored in Fine Art, English, and Theology. After college, she joined the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Her first year was spent in Montana, teaching and coaching on the Crow Indian Reservation. She then moved to Portland, Oregon, where she worked with people living on the street—and also met Nathan. Sarah then worked on a faith-based organic farm where she led a small restorative justice program. When she and Nathan felt it was time to commit to a community, they decided that Duluth was a better size fit than Portland.

Throughout her journey, Sarah has always been reading, reading, reading. She has learned from people in circles of inquiry, trust and sharing, seeking mentors who are pioneers in faith and justice ministry.

Sarah loves her Roman Catholic tradition, but not the barriers to women in leadership. Sarah has been fed by ecumenical circles, and sees the need for dialogue between all faith traditions. She is currently attending United Theological Seminary in New Brighton. Her hope is to be ordained a Roman Catholic Woman Priest—an international movement within the Catholic Church to make ordination possible for people of all genders. She does not believe that people can or should be defined by gender roles or identity. "God makes no mistakes, and we need to have imagination big enough to let people define themselves outside of boxes."



Sarah sees her call to justice as being "rooted in my faith and being a blend between art, organizing and farming." Reframing the question, "How do I work for environmental and racial justice?" to "How am I living an environmentally and racially just life?" has been very important to her. "I try to live out a call to 'Watershed Discipleship' every day, learning from our Christian stories, the land herself, and from the indigenous caretakers of that land."

She is currently working on several projects, including a Study Guide for how to "Localize the Liturgy" and the "Confronting Historical Injustice: Moving Beyond Forgiveness" series here at Peace Church.

If Sarah could change two things about the world, "it would be that all churches would utilize their space to grow food for people experiencing food insecurity in their communities (what does the Eucharist call us to if not to feed one another?) and that all people would have Self Love."

Currently, Sarah is reading a book called *Queer Ecology*, which talks about the myriad beautiful ways the natural world does not fit into boxes of dualistic gender identity and heteronormativity. "I am passionate about telling those hidden stories in my art and poetry." That passion and commitment are at the heart of all that Sarah brings to Peace Church—and to the world.

*Interviewed by Gail Blum
December 2015*

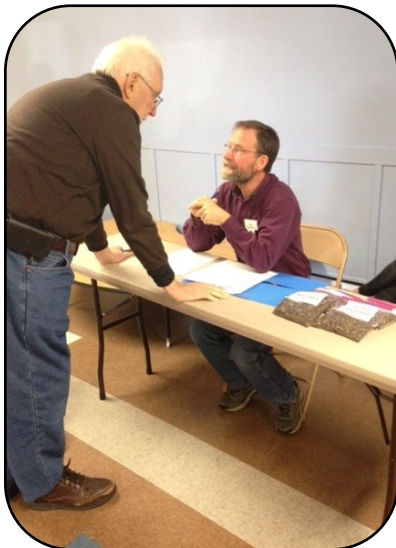
Kevin Skwira-Brown—Working for Equity

Among the myriad real and important issues, Kevin chooses to focus on privilege, especially white privilege. This is the issue that is most present and relevant in his daily life. Kevin’s awareness of white privilege comes in part from his experiences at Peace Church. Anti-racism dialogue circles changed the way he thought about working for justice. Through ASDIC, he learned about whiteness and how the system of white privilege creates racism. He found that his work, done from his place of privilege, is to dismantle that system in the environment and in himself. Kevin would most like to change the notion of identity-based superiority: the often unconscious but powerful belief that being white, straight, English speaking, able-bodied, or male means one is inherently better, more valuable, and more deserving.

For the last eight years Kevin has developed and facilitated educational opportunities around race and white privilege. His goal is to help white people see the system of privilege and understand how to resist this system in their own lives and in the institutions in which they are involved.

At the College of Saint Scholastica, Kevin provides staff training in diversity development. He also teaches Social Work at UMD and UWS. He is involved in community training on inclusivity and equity. At the heart of his work is the goal of becoming aware of how each of us embodies the dynamics of privilege.

If we were we able to work past these dynamics and if these systems were transformed—within ourselves, interpersonally, and internationally— Kevin believes the world would see the elimination of those unconscious biases that drive fear. We would be able to form authentic and mutual community.



Kevin with Bill Hardesty at the recent Native American Religious Freedom and Justice Wild Rice fundraiser at Peace Church.

Institutionally we would see all people excelling and their contributions being appreciated.

Kevin believes that we are faced with incredibly overt signs of how far we are from where we need to be. And yet he has to believe that we are somehow moving forward. Perhaps one sign of progress is the increased awareness of the consequences of the system of privilege. Another source of hope is working with young people. Kevin sees how young people consciously engage in equity. The fact that young people across the political spectrum support gay marriage gives him hope.

Kevin is humbled by the lives of people who don’t have his ability to choose when and where to engage in justice work: people who stand for justice, when doing so endangers their already precarious security, people who work nonviolently to transform a system so resistant to their demands.

Kevin believes conscious endorsement of fairness alone isn’t enough. He believes we still have to transform oppressive systems and negate unconscious bias. This is what drives Kevin’s commitment to working for justice.

*Interviewed by Susan Mullenix
January 2016*



Kevin volunteering at the Twin Ports area Annual Community Thanksgiving Buffet prep at the DECC.

Tom Westrum—The Power of Shared Stories

Tom does not see himself as an activist. He has chosen to engage in social justice through his work with youth, in his family life, and his own learning. To him, part of social justice is taking care of those in need. This has been apparent since early in his life, when he worked as a lifeguard and counselor at an amazing summer camp in New York, where kids from inner city Bronx, Mormon kids from Salt Lake City, and kids from Turkey who lived in poverty spent an incredible six weeks, sharing outdoor wilderness trips and sharing each other's stories.

The power of shared stories remains a theme in Tom's life. His initial experience of the power of circle talk, this story sharing, led to starting the NW Youth Corps in Eugene, Oregon. The Youth Corps served youth through job training, collaborative outdoor projects, and dialogue. It drew kids from a wide range of perspectives—from environmentalists to loggers—who learned to work across differences and find common ground. His goal was to teach how to include those who feel excluded, and also how to disagree while remaining at the table together. A wonderful, creative group of people made the NW Youth Corps happen, and they eventually were working with at-risk youth in fifteen counties to try to help break the cycle of poverty that affected so many kids' lives.



After leaving the NW Youth Corps, Tom taught for seven years, working with at-risk youth who had been kicked out of school for behavior issues, some who had come directly from residential treatment. Tom believed that in order to really change kids' lives, he would have to work with all the different people in their lives—from mental health workers to the justice department. Social justice includes going into homes, trying to reach parents and guardians on a deep level.

Another important aspect of Tom's relationship with social justice is tied to a decision to adopt. He saw it as a way to reach out to someone in need.

The final aspect of justice work that Tom talked about was his grief work. He is connected to an organization called the Willow Center, a place for kids who have experienced the death of a loved one. As part of this, Tom has worked with kids from the Nez Perce Tribe. While attending a Native American funeral, he saw how two worlds can exist, side by side, and wanted to be a part of trying to make a change for the better—listening to stories, remembering and celebrating, and having questions answered.

For Tom, this is the work that Jesus taught—reaching out to others. Jesus was on the front lines. It can be hard to follow, but so rewarding when you see what taking those risks brings. That's what Tom loves about Peace Church, that there are many who are trying to do that work. He often asks, "What would Jesus have done? How would you want to be treated?" He finds inspiration in the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. The disciples struggled, too—finding their faith, just like us. He also draws inspiration from the vastness of the universe or the beauty of a rainbow. For him, it strengthens his faith and inspires him to want to learn more, and reflect on his life. When he sees others doing good works, he remembers the lessons of Jesus to help those who are down-trodden and work to raise everyone up.

Tom's biggest mentor in his life is his dad. He has been a teacher for fifty years, and an environmentalist, a land steward, who is very involved in his community. He spends time reading with Latino kids. Tom also loves that his dad has conversations around struggling with his faith. Most of all, Tom is inspired by his dad's facilitation. He is the one who organizes men's groups or gathers rich and poor folks together to talk about wealth inequality. For Tom, it's not necessarily about what you believe, but about bringing people together to listen, connect, and move forward. His favorite bumper stickers reflect his approach to justice: "Keep on trucking", and "Every once in a while, you see the light in the strangest places if you look at it right."

*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
March 2016*



Gail Blum—Seeking Justice in Balance and Beauty

Gail believes that justice exists when everything is in balance—and it never is. She feels this imbalance is most blatant in terms of economics and housing. So many people work hard—often at jobs that do not bring joy or satisfaction—and still struggle to maintain a roof over their heads, feed their families, stay afloat. Gail maintains that no one should work full time and not be able to live sustainably on that income.

Instead of struggling to make ends meet, Gail believes in rethinking those “ends,” and realizing how much more simply and affordably we all could live.

One source of this economic stress is our insistence on maintaining houses that too often are far larger than we need. Gail is fascinated by the Tiny House movement—a powerful melding of her training as an architect and her desire to see justice embodied in terms of truly affordable and livable housing for everyone.

She built her first tiny house after completing her architectural degree. She and John celebrated their honeymoon in that tiny house, building an outhouse. Their first home was 450 square feet. It was “freakishly freeing,” she recalls, to have a \$250 mortgage, and a compact home that truly fit them.

She believes passionately that meeting the housing needs of those struggling economically is essential. “Housing First” works. “A house is an anchor and an investment in the community.” Tiny houses offer stability, privacy, dignity, an address, and a place in the social structure. “They allow people traction in their struggle to create a healthy, sustainable life. The tiny house approach is truly affordable housing.” Gail has a vision of creating a village of tiny houses in Duluth as a way for the community to address the ongoing injustice of homelessness.

Gail first came to Peace Church in search of the happiness that Christians seemed to have. She concluded that the source of that happiness might be God. She ventured into Peace when Pastor Kathy had just begun her ministry. Gail left knowing she had found a place where she fit.

Pastor Kathy has been a strong influence in Gail’s life. “She has made scripture real for me.” She has challenged Gail to explore her own creativity as a form of ministry. Gail particularly loves interpreting liturgical concepts into visible symbols. Creating banners has been a gift for Gail. “It has allowed me to interpret from my heathen perspective and convey hope to the community.”

Gail’s approach to spirituality is universal. Her focus is on what is common to all religions, not what separates them. She is drawn to those symbols that have meaning in all traditions. She is particularly drawn to the dove—a universal symbol for love and hope— as a Peace Church symbol. “The Peace Church dove embodies the pioneering spirit of this community—urging us to get out there on strong wings. It’s not a placid, falling-from-the-sky dove, but more a dove-meets-hawk image. It is vigorous.”

Gail also creates jewelry from Lake Superior rocks—jewelry that means much to many people. She meditates on the rocks before she works with them. She needs time alone to allow her creative energy to surface. She is nocturnal, and treasures those hours of silence and darkness. “I absorb a different bandwidth.”

Gail reflects on how she creates meaning, hope, and beauty, calling the process “divining”: moving from words and ideas, and transforming a “chorus of meaning” into visual expression. It is a form of worship and of service for Gail. But she does not want kudos or praise. She appreciates the gift of being able to explore this aspect of her creativity. It is about the meaning and power implicit in the work she creates.

Gail is reluctant to call herself an artist. She believes that artists are people who work to convey an idea, to say something. She identifies herself as a craftsman—she loves the logistics of creating: the planning, the problem solving, the grinding, the building. She loves the intersection of hands and tools, loves using her creative juices to puzzle and ponder, figure something out.

Gail does not believe there is some great Second Coming in the wings. “We have what we need right now for harmony and peace. It is a matter of choice and commitment. There is a Rightness in the world that will be actualized.” Peace and justice are not abstract dreams. And artist or craftsman, Gail helps us visualize the power of that vision.

*Interviewed by Pamela Mittlefehldt
April 2016*

Jon Barry—Healing Violence with Compassion and Commitment

Jonathan Barry's life journey has been one of compassion and leadership. He was raised in St. Paul where, as a student, he was identified as a learner with dyslexia. As a boy, Jon struggled with labels and learning. But with passionate support from his mother and a number of talented teachers, Jon learned that while we sometimes suffer from the labels our community applies to us, we all have gifts that may be trapped in roles or undeveloped by low expectations.

One of Jon's gifts is his capacity for compassion. Early in his teens, Jon felt the pain felt by others. At Grand Rapids High School, he began reaching out to other students who were suffering, recognizing that some students had no one to speak for them. He started a student group to support GLBT kids in his high school. His compassion grew with leadership and actions that helped heal the hearts of others. He recognized that we don't all start with the same opportunities. That insight has made him sensitive to injustice.



As a result, Jon took his compassion and leadership skills to the College of St. Scholastica to earn a degree in Social Work. While engaged with a Kiwanis leadership group, he met another student interested in justice and equity, Sarah, who became his wife. His CSS education honed his gifts, and he went on to earn a Masters Degree in Social Work from UMD. After exploring the relationship between our socially defined roles and the behaviors they generate, he was fortunate to work for the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project. He served with DAIP for eight years, learning more about how communities use shame to control and direct behavior—especially in guys. Due to his years of service there, Jon developed special skills working with violent men who were underperforming. This meaningful work added focus and power to Jon's skill set.

In his work with DAIP and St. Louis County Public Health clients, Jon learned more about how to help people with healing relationships. Violent men tend to suffer from early roles which left them feeling shame. This simmering shame often made them prone to violence. Jon developed the capacity to sense their shame and help them see another response. This helped them heal their hearts and open a door to more vulnerable relationships and resilient living. Jon understands that lots of American men accept masculinity as defined by anger, hostility and threats. This is why guys often do not hang out with other guys. But one can feel isolated and alone in that box of hostility.

Jon has been working in Health Services at UMD as a therapist for five years. His training and work experience have helped students increase their capacity for healthy relationships. His learning journey has harnessed his gifts of healing, compassion, dedication and leadership. He uses all these tools to address mental health and healing energy in the lives of students. Our false beliefs can define roles and behaviors for us. Unfortunately, the shame in some of these roles pushes us towards violent and dysfunctional relationships. Jon's gift is the ability to help others see this is unjust to oneself and others.

When asked about sources of inspiration, Jon identified a recently deceased colleague, Jennifer Wright, and Steve O'Neil. Jennifer offered years of insightful guidance at DAIP that helped Jon see the core of healing relationships. And Steve was a compassionate and strong male who was an active and attentive leader for those without a voice in our community. One quickly senses that Jennifer and Steve are very proud of Jon's committed service to our community.

Jon currently works with the Peace Church Men's Group, Health Services at UMD, and is working with UMD leaders to improve the relationships and teamwork of student athletes. Jon is committed to working for justice through healthy relationships and resilient living.

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
May 2016*

Sylvie Bowen-Bailey—Making Choices for Change

Some of the issues that matter most to Sylvie are climate change and environmental concerns. She started working for change when she was young, organizing a group of neighborhood kids to pick up trash. In 7th and 8th grades, Sylvie did a science project on composting and food waste in her school cafeteria. She learned how wasteful the school was (six tons of food and compostable trays), and how we all contribute to it.

She also organized a group of middle school students to develop a better recycling program. It was a good effort, but ultimately it failed to change the culture—kids just didn't change their habits. Reflecting back, Sylvie is glad she tried, but learned how difficult it is to make change happen.

One thing Sylvie would change in her high school would be to get the school to compost and recycle. She would love to see people really take advantage of the opportunity to be sustainable. She is also concerned about food justice. Through writing a research paper on food security in Ethiopia, she learned how possible it is to feed people if the right systems are put in place.



When thinking about the source of her passion, she shared how her parents have instilled a high value on sustainability. Sylvie also named her Gramp's work of restoring prairies as a primary motivation for what she does.

Sylvie also talked about the importance of race and class in thinking about social justice, acknowledging her own privilege. She is a member of Students for the Future, which recently created a survey about classroom climates at East. The goal was to inform teachers about how students are feeling about the culture of the school and to improve places where students don't feel welcome. As a part of that project, Sylvie wrote an article for the school paper noting that it's important to acknowledge that there are differences among students, and not to assume all students have the same experiences — not all students fit the East High upper middle class stereotype.

Sylvie believes that one of the most important starting places in this work is simply noticing differences and talking about them. She reflects on the sadness of seeing the divisions around race, and wishes that differences were acknowledged more and talked about in school. "We aren't comfortable talking about it, so we don't know how to change it."

Last year, Sylvie participated in the Conservation Corps, maintaining trails and removing invasive species. At first, as she was helping clear ATV trails and cutting down trees, it seemed counter to what she wanted to do, but then she realized the importance of getting people outside. "People can't appreciate the earth without being outside." The month in the CC helped Sylvie feel more grounded. It was a month without cell phones and there were few distractions, so she could reflect on the things that are most important. During that time, Sylvie thought about how long Minnesota has been the home of native people, and how much white settlers have changed it.

For Sylvie, faith comes down to belief, when people have a higher goal and find support in each other, or the world, or God. "It's powerful when you have a feeling that things have a point, when you have a motivation to make changes." Perhaps most important for Sylvie is that we have faith that things can be changed, that there is good in the world. "It would be easy just to focus on yourself and self-happiness if we didn't have a community like Peace where people want to work together to help each other and the rest of our community."

One of Sylvie's inspirations is John Green, an online blogger and author of *The Fault in Our Stars*. He created a video, *Deserving*, that helped Sylvie get perspective on her life. In response to those who say he "deserves" success, John replied: "I don't deserve this—I don't deserve anything. I have received this success largely because of my privilege. And when you start to think you deserve the good things, you can believe that some people deserve the bad things." Another quote that inspires Sylvie is from Dumbledore in Harry Potter: "It is our choices that show who we truly are far more than our abilities." As Sylvie graduates from high school, she will continue to make choices that work towards creating a more just and sustainable world.

*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
June 2016*

Patrick Boyle—Working for Justice, Working for Change

Patrick Boyle is deeply committed to providing services and support for people with mental illness. “One person with mental illness who is unsupported can take a whole family down. There is almost no family who doesn’t deal with mental illness no matter what their economic background.”

Since the 1980s, instead of institutionalizing people who have been diagnosed with mental illness, they have been put on the streets with little or no support services and no place to get the help they need. “They end up in the ER or in county jails, neither of which is the right place.”

Changes are being made. St. Louis County is creating pilot programs. There is now a dedicated mental health social worker with the Duluth Police Department. Patrick believes that the ideal solution is to provide regular medical help and reliable supportive housing for these vulnerable people. A specific goal that Patrick is working towards is creating a 24/7 clinic so the mentally ill are not placed in the ER. He is currently working with Essentia and St. Lukes to strategize care for the chronically homeless. The fact that Patrick continues to see these needs in his own practice keeps him grounded as he works toward program and policy changes.

Patrick grew up near Superior, Wisconsin, “in a family in which public service was a way of life.” He struggled to choose between a career in medicine or one in politics, both areas he loves. His father, Frank Boyle, was a politician and Patrick saw how much politics could take time away from family. He decided to go into medicine, which led him to working as a nurse in inner-city Milwaukee where he met Jennifer, then a resident. They married and moved to Duluth, where Patrick is currently employed as a Nurse Practitioner by the Fond du Lac band of Ojibwa.



When Patrick saw Duluth facing tough times—closing libraries and selling park land—he decided to step into politics, to help pursue structures and strategies of “bend but not break.” He is now serving on the St. Louis County Board, where he chairs the Health and Human Services Committee. Thanks to his employer, Patrick is able to work a twelve-hour week, so that he can be active in both worlds: medicine and politics.

Patrick feels he can help lead communities into needed changes for the future. He sees building cooperative partnerships among government entities and with private enterprise as the critical response that is different from the past and will create positive changes. Sharing information, needs, and goals makes cooperative solutions possible—like the Duluth Police Department social worker.

For Patrick, his faith, family and professional life need to go hand in hand. “If one’s faith values and life activities are not aligned properly, all of life goes ‘off track’.” Patrick believes that “a life in medicine or politics requires working with the general public that needs the support of the generosity of spirit that can come from one’s faith values.”

Patrick names two individuals who have been personal sources of courage and action: Paul Wellstone and Steve O’Neil. Paul Wellstone “walked the talk.” He “didn’t care who you were or what you are, Paul Wellstone met you as a human being of value.” Wellstone showed that one could “make the tough decisions and tough votes to make a better future.” From Steve O’Neil, Patrick learned to pay attention to those who don’t have a voice or power and then act to give them the means to voice and power.

Both Paul Wellstone and Steve O’Neil demonstrated a consistency in their values and characters—both in their private lives and in their public lives. They must be the same. This is a commitment that Patrick Boyle shares as he continues his work for change, compassion, and justice.

*Interviewed by Jackie Falk
July 2016*

Rebecca de Souza—Experiencing Difference, Working for Change

Rebecca de Souza is most interested in inequities: class, race, and gender, and how they intersect, causing people to be marginalized or disenfranchised—something she has experienced since coming to the USA from India in 2001.

Coming from an upper-middle-class background in India, she was aware of wealth disparity, but it was relevant to her only from a distance. Since coming to the US, she has experienced marginalization in terms of race and ethnicity here, which has helped her understand social structures in India as well.

Rebecca did not expect to experience marginalization when she came to the US. She remembers, in 2003, one of her friends in graduate school telling her that she walked around acting as though she did not know that she was different. She didn't realize she was different or that people saw her as different. That was a big revelation for her, and helped her understand what it means to be perceived as different.

Although she is middle class, it's not unusual while working at the food shelves for her to be thought of as a client and not a resource. People often believe she comes from a different class background because of her race. Trying to figure out what to do with this and how to use it has been an ongoing struggle. Yet she realizes that each of us has spheres of influence and can hopefully bring about change.

As a professor of courses in health communication and campaigns, community empowerment, and community engagement, she has a lot of opportunity to make a difference, and Rebecca believes that it is her job to help shape the ways people think. She does that unapologetically. It is necessary for her to talk about social issues, health disparities and how different people are affected. She asks the big question: Why do they exist? Her lens affects what she does to raise critical awareness and a critical consciousness about the effects of racial stigma and our racialized medical system, which is biased against anybody different from the mainstream.

Rebecca's research focuses on these issues. In graduate school she studied HIV and AIDS and age-related issues in India, examining how communities are stigmatized and marginalized, and how to build power within those communities. Currently her interest is hunger and food insecurity in Duluth. She looks at how stigma impacts the system in which people are hungry and need to ask for food or food stamps, or go to the food bank.

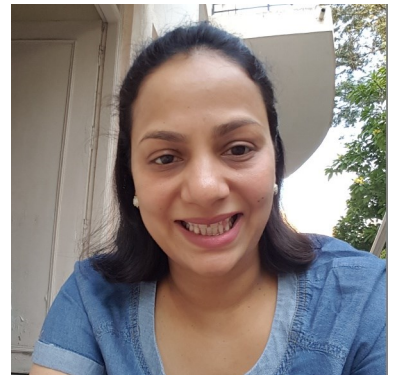
For Rebecca, the connection between faith and action is real. Raised Catholic, she went to church, did what was expected, but never had a clear connection with her faith. That changed when she came to the US. Alone and isolated, an immigrant, without family around, she found her faith strengthened, her faith journey actually begun. She had a literal "road to Damascus" experience, when suddenly everything made sense and was clear. She understood Jesus in a very real way, not as an external character, but somebody who is helping her. She finds the promise of Timothy 1:7, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind," dear because at times she feels none of those. With this gift from God, she is more fearless in her writing and teaching.

The Bible is liberating for her. Jesus interacted with multiple kinds of people. She sees herself in every one of them: the two prisoners on the cross next to Jesus, Mary and Martha, the woman at the well, the woman touching Jesus' cloak, the Centurion. Within us are all these parts.

Her faith and very long journey have been a struggle and perhaps will continue to be. It has inspired in her action that is rooted in humility but is also confident. It seems paradoxical, yet she thinks to ground ourselves we have to come to that point. Otherwise life becomes too difficult and impossible to navigate.

Rebecca is not drawn to celebrities, but to everyday people, heroes and heroines of everyday life. People like her mother and sister who, within the constraints of their lives, are able to do their jobs, touch her heart and inspire her.

A quotation from Martin Luther King in the Birmingham jail reminds her of what she has to do and the focus she needs to keep: "Your self-sacrificing devotion to your purpose in life and your unwavering faith will carry you through times of difficulty."



*Interviewed by Susan Mullenix
September 2016*

Rick and Karola Dalen—Growing Justice, Nurturing Community

Rick and Karola got into farming because of their concern about social, environmental, and political problems, and the ways they are very much interconnected. Farming offers a way of responding to many issues, especially environmental concerns.

In college, Rick majored in Environmental Studies and learned a lot about political, social and environmental issues and the connections between them. He basically got a very good education concerning the problems of the world. There weren't a lot of solutions offered. It became obvious that our system is unsustainable. Big industrial farming uses mega energy and chemicals, and causes pollution, loss of topsoil, and a lot of health issues. Local, small-scale farming seemed like one way that Rick and Karola could make a change—by growing food and taking care of the land. And it also offered a job. Coming out of college they needed to make a living. Farming was work that they could do that was in alignment with their values.

Environmental issues on a global level are the biggest issues for them. “We need the environment to support us as a species, and not only us but all of the other species on the earth—as well as future generations.” In order to try to make a change, they are making a change themselves. Their avenue is to sustainably produce locally grown foods for themselves and for their community. Rick thinks it's a mistake to underestimate the power of one's seemingly small contributions and changes in the face of such complicated and challenging problems. Each of us can do what we can in our own small way, making our own small contributions in the face of such huge problems. To make positive changes, we can each do the little part that we are able to do. Collectively this can have major ripple effects.

Karola and Rick are supplying people with healthy, nutritious food and, at the same time, contributing to building a more local and regional food system. This they believe will help make our community more resilient and sustainable in the long run.

Karola has a local job in county government, doing environmental permitting for wetlands, shore-lands, water, and recycling. That helps stabilize their family's financial situation because, although the farm does provide a substantial part of their family's income, it's difficult to make a living farming.

Rick and Karola believe it's an ethical and moral imperative that we take care of the earth, which is our home. They value compassion very highly and wish for everyone the ability to live in a safe environment and have healthy food. They are trying to live in line with what they believe. They think it's very important to live in a way that's not harmful to others to the best of their ability. And if it's possible to help, they believe it is imperative to do what they can to help, recognizing the interconnectedness of all living things and our responsibility to future generations.

Their farming mentors John and Jane Fisher-Merritt, who gave Rick and Karola a wonderful opportunity to farm with them and basically taught them how to farm, are a source of great inspiration. They have also been great sources of information. The Dalens have been inspired by John and Jane's lifestyle and values and farming—the way they've connected their values with what they do.

John and Jane introduced them to the writings of Wendell Berry, which have also been a source of inspiration. Other sources of inspiration include Vandana Shiva, a physicist and activist in India, whom they heard speak, as well as Martin and Atina Duffley and so many other great farmers. Jesus, Buddha, Thich Nhat Hanh, the Dalai Lama, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, and many others have also inspired their work and lives.

Rick and Karola have been greatly supported by their parents. Sure, their parents have questioned their choices and lifestyle, and yet they have always been supportive. This support has been so foundational that it is almost easy to forget and take for granted.

As Karola and Rick have been inspired and nourished by so many others, they are committed to feeding and nourishing our local community, planting seeds and growing crops of food and justice.



*Interviewed by Susan Mullenix
October 2016*

Doug Bowen-Bailey—Showing Up for Justice

As a sign language interpreter Doug Bowen-Bailey builds bridges of communication between hearing and deaf people. This vocational commitment to building bridges grows from a lifelong passion for social justice.

Doug's parents' openness to people from around the world was critical in shaping his sense of justice. His father was a Lutheran pastor and seminary professor in Ohio. The family planned to go to Nigeria to teach, so Doug learned some Hausa and spent a lot of time around people from West Africa. Although their visa did not go through and they ended up in Moorhead, Minnesota, his interest in Africa took root.



At the end of high school, Doug attended a workshop led by C.T. Vivian, a leader with Dr. King in the Southern Christian Leadership Council, where he first began questioning what it meant to be a white person living his life. While at Macalester College, he became involved in anti-apartheid work and went to Zimbabwe. He returned committed to thinking about his place in the world, and the work that would make the most sense for him to do.

Another key event in Doug's life was working at the Minnesota Conservation Corps, where he met deaf people, learned sign language, lived with youth from many backgrounds, and met Holly.

Doug notes that "as an interpreter, you need to deal with power dynamics. Community work is similar in scope and the two inform each other." In his role as an interpreter, Doug has worked in many venues and made many connections. This has enriched his involvement in racial justice issues. He often works with white people to help unpack their own racial identity. In this work, Doug has learned many lessons:

- Changing systems requires a generational commitment, not just seeing it as an issue to address in the short-term;
- It is important to continue to show up for racial justice;
- As a white person, it is sometimes important for me to take a step back and be a follower.

As an example, Doug spent five years on the task force that led to the creation of the Duluth Citizen Review Board. Tony Ladeaux, a leader in the Native community (and a member of Peace Church) who had the idea and initial energy to start the CRB asked Doug to be a part of this effort. At the time, Doug didn't feel called to work on issues related to policing, but he respected the request and got involved. Because of this, he has been fortunate to participate in many important conversations about how the community and police interact, which has been a tremendous opportunity for him to learn and grow.

Doug has also been involved with many other local organizations and initiatives. He joined the Arrowhead Interfaith Council right before 9/11, a significant time to help promote interfaith dialogue and understanding. He has been involved with the NAACP and the organizing of MLK events for over fifteen years. He currently serves on the board of the Cross-Cultural Alliance of Duluth. He has been working with Xavier Bell at Community Action Duluth delivering Race Awareness Workshops (RAW) throughout the community.

Doug has learned a lot from others in this journey. "Being involved in the work of social justice brings you to more humility and understanding of people."

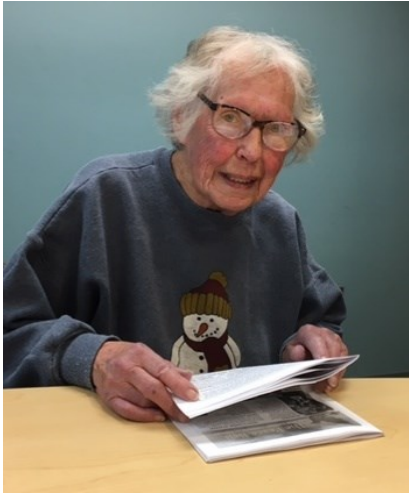
Social justice at this point in Doug's life has become part of the fabric of his existence. The following is a not untypical day: Holly, Sylvie and Doug ran the Ode'min (Heart Berry) 5 K walk/run at Fond du Lac reservation. Then he went to St. Mark AME church for a ceremony honoring the winners of the Arthur Foy educational scholarship. And finally Doug worked with a deaf couple coming from diverse backgrounds.

When asked what keeps him going, Doug replied: "Ice cream. (And connections with the cool people I get to work with.)" He added that "being part of the long-term Christian tradition working toward justice—knowing that I am one among many doing this work—helps me to keep going on."

As Doug sees it, the rich variety in his work is a gift of this community that he and his family are part of. He feels blessed by the opportunities. He recognizes that doing social justice work is a lifetime endeavor. "In this work, there are not always real clear victories: you win some, you lose some. And sometimes the most important thing is to just continue to show up."

*Interviewed by Lisa Fitzpatrick
November 2016*

Elaine Augustad—Caring With All Her Heart



Elaine has been a faithful member of the Peace Bell Folding Team for many, many years!

Elaine has been an active member of Peace Church since 1969. Her very first Sunday, Peggy Maske told her she had to help with coffee since they were short-handed, and so she did. She's been caring for our people ever since. As she wrote recently, "When I go to church I feel love and people that care about one another. It feels like arms holding you close. We certainly need love and caring at this time"

Elaine has always cared about kids and especially those who are outsiders. Growing up in Young America, she was the Swedish girl in an all-German community. She graduated from high school in 1945 during WWII. During high school she worked in a box factory as part of a government contract.

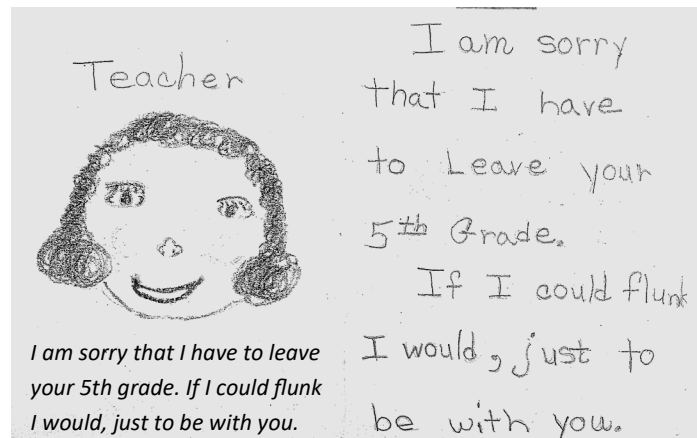
After graduating, Elaine worked as a nanny in Minneapolis and saved her money to go to school. She went to St. Cloud Teacher's College and graduated in 1949. She taught fifth and sixth graders in Hopkins, Minnesota for four years and then taught in Steward, Minnesota. Elaine loved teaching, and her students loved her. She received several letters from students saying they wished they could stay in elementary school so she could still be their teacher. And a parent wrote: "This was the first year my daughter didn't want school to end."

Elaine married Len Augustad in 1957 and moved to Duluth. She worked as a bookkeeper for JC Penney for about five years. She had always wanted to be an accountant growing up. But the call to kids kept coming back. As she was raising her son, Alan, she helped in the school library and as a room mother. And then a job opened at Jefferson Elementary to work with kids having trouble with reading or math. Elaine was back in the classroom. She loved it. Those were always "my kids and I put all my energy into them," Elaine stated. She worked as a teacher's aide at Chester Park, Lowell, and Birchwood elementary schools before retiring.

This past summer, one of the first classes Elaine ever taught had a 60th reunion. They asked Elaine to come. Her love had touched them all. As Elaine said, "When you have lots of kids, sometimes you have a child that is hard to get through to, then I always remembered that everyone has something good and wonderful in them. Sometimes you have to look a little harder to find it."

Elaine's goal in high school was to be a bookkeeper. But, as she said, "God had other plans and so I taught with all my heart." That's how Elaine does everything: with all her heart. Even in retirement she has been active working as an election judge, president of the Lakewood Senior group, president of the American Legion Auxiliary, and helping out at the Veterans' Home in Silver Bay.

Thank you Elaine for all your caring—especially for our kids. We feel your love.



*Interviewed by Kathy Nelson
December 2016*

Ian Connell—Honoring Life and Death through Song

For Ian Connell, both life and death deserve a soundtrack. On Sundays, you might recognize him as the drummer in the Peace Band, or as partner to Hope and father to their two young children, Saul (5) and Thea (4). Professionally, he shares his musical skills as part of his work through St. Croix Hospice. In his role of board certified musical therapist, Ian spends time with people who are in the process of dying and engages them in remembering their lives as he shares with them their favorite music.



Ian grew up surrounded by music in Huntsville, Alabama. His mother was a music director at church for 22 years, and his father has been a band director since 1978. This led Ian to get a degree in Jazz Studies at the University of Alabama. This didn't lead to any clear career path, so he found work not affecting people's ears, but focusing on people's eyes—crafting eyeglass lenses for the better part of a decade in optometry labs. Eventually, he decided that working with whirring machinery was too risky for his hands and his health.

He returned to Alabama with his young family and did an informal internship with his dad to consider the possibility of being a band director. While that wasn't a good fit, Hope saw a video that explained how Gabby Giffords, the Arizona congresswoman who lost her speech and ability to walk because of a bullet to her brain, regained these skills through music therapy. Wondering why he had not heard of this before, Ian returned to his *alma mater* to become a board certified music therapist.

Ian discovered that using music to support people in maintaining comfort and dignity in the process of dying was both fulfilling and an opportunity to express his values. He is grateful to work for a company that has the resources to provide support and the opportunity for dying with dignity to people regardless of their socioeconomic status.

Ian's faith sustains his ability to be with people during the dying process. "I have to be able to sometimes really get close to people and the end goal is for them to die well. But they still die." In the face of that, he commented: "I don't have to be devastated when my patients die because I have faith that they are going to a better reality. So, even if I don't understand it, I trust that God takes care of us in this life and in whatever comes next."

Ian also is inspired by the transformative nature of music in his work. "The power of music to touch people and really evoke emotions that nothing else can always strikes me...I'll go see someone who doesn't get along with anybody, who doesn't want to talk to anybody, but will light up when I sing their favorite song and they are willing to sing along with me. And people can't believe that people are transformed like that. It's the power of the music that does it...and there is something neurological and spiritual going on there that we don't understand."

While Ian is able to be part of this transformation at work, he is also working on doing this in other aspects of the world. He is grateful for SURJ Northland for helping him learn to "stand up for racial justice."

Like his patients, Ian finds inspiration in music. One song that is particularly meaningful to him is "We Are Winning," by the Denver band, Flobots. Its message is "that no matter how bad things look, keep doing what you're doing because 'we are winning.'" The song ends with the lyrics:

*If you are thinking,
you are winning.
Resistance is victory
Defeat is impossible
Your weapons are already in hand
Reach within you and find the means by which to gain your freedom*

Ultimately, Ian's days are filled with hope. Through music, through his family, and through his faith, the beat goes on in a song that takes him through life and death and back to life again. Here at Peace Church, we are grateful that Ian and his family have found their way to share their rhythms with us.

*Interviewed by Doug Bowen-Bailey
January 2017*

Pam Kramer—Early Questions Beget Answers

From the time she was a child, Pam Kramer has been sensitive to injustice. Her father was the pastor of Grace United Methodist Church in Lima, Ohio. She lived by the church on the poor side of town, where a majority of her neighbors were African-American. Her mother tutored kids caught in the “Opportunity Gap” and her father helped form a housing rehabilitation program. In middle school, she noticed how poverty affected kids in her school and community. As a teen in the late 1960s, she took note of the associated troubles tied to poverty: housing, health, transportation, employment and education. Her many questions led to family discussions about justice, inequity and opportunity.

Pam’s concern with the costs of inequity led her to study at American University in Washington DC. That study led to a year with VISTA, where she served communities suffering from poverty. This service brought her to Lake Benton, Minnesota, where she helped build a Housing Authority, which is still serving the public’s need for housing there. She earned a Masters in Community and Regional Planning from NDSU. Clearly, her early interest in injustice grew into a core passion in her life.

Pam is currently Director of Duluth’s Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). Through her work with LISC, she has learned how to collaborate with a wide variety of non-profits and community leaders. Her efforts have helped guide the investment of over 89 million dollars in our community. Much of that has been directed toward improving community systems and providing more equitable opportunities. Pam has enjoyed building teamwork and extending their shared vision for 19 years. She believes that Duluth is a city with a positive attitude. Citizens are eager to work together in ways that add value to our neighborhoods and social system. Her skills and team building have added to the sense that Duluth is a Port of Possibilities, where people share responsibilities and take initiatives to improve their community.

Working with a wide variety of community and local leaders can be stressful. Over the years, she has developed antidotes to the effects of stress. One is exercise. Pam enjoys being active. Each weekday she exercises at the YMCA before going to work. After working up a sweat, she enjoys settling down to work at LISC.

Pam strongly values collaboration and working with others. She works with many small groups of Duluth citizens. She has grown to appreciate the insight of Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

In reflecting on the value of faith in action, Pam explained that Peace Church adds renewal to her being. “There is something unique going on though the music, ritual and worship.” Both she and daughter Mari have noted that sharing in the presence at Peace renews hope. Throughout family and work stresses, this access to renewable hope is a vital element in her life, which can be “crazy busy.” Her ready smile and positive attitude reflect her connection with a deeper power. Pam’s early and ongoing concern with justice has added hope and courage to our community.



*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
February 2017*

Marc Fink—Justice for the Endangered Species of Creation

Marc Fink is an environmental lawyer. As I prepared for this interview with Marc, I wondered what an environmental lawyer does. Then I read the *Duluth News Tribune* article (2/2/17) about copper mining research in northeastern Minnesota. Marc is the lawyer who will use federal law to challenge Poly Met and the federal government on copper mining. This is what an environmental lawyer does: defends the right to life of all species.

Marc has a lifelong passion for justice and the value of nature's gifts. After completing his undergraduate degree in political science at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Marc decided he wanted to use the legal system to protect the earth and its diverse species. He wanted to find the best law school for this goal. He and a friend drove from Florida, to southern California, to Oregon, to Minnesota, to Virginia and back to Florida, examining law schools around the country. On this trip, he witnessed a number of dramatic industrial impacts on the environment. He decided that the Environmental Law program at Lewis and Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon, would provide the best training for protecting the living beings threatened by these impacts. That was a critical choice in his career development, and gave him an excellent education in using legal tools to protect the land and its creatures.

Marc has worked as an environmental lawyer for twenty-one years. He currently works from home for the Center for Biological Diversity, a non-profit organization founded in 1989, based in Arizona. (www.biologicaldiversity.org. Also on Facebook.) Whether protecting wolves and lynx who wander into Arizona from Mexico, or a lone jaguar threatened by the opening of a new mine in the wilderness, Marc uses his legal skills and tools to enforce the federal conditions outlined in the Endangered Species statute.

Marc's professional focus is on restoring wildlife and protecting species identified as threatened more than on clean air and hazardous waste. He notes that of the 8.7 million species in existence, we lose close to a dozen species every day. Marc has a deep concern with this rate of extinction, which is called the 6th extinction. There have been five periods of mass extinction on earth over the past 600 million years. The sixth extinction—which is happening now—is the only one that is directly related to human actions. Marc litigates issues from the public's interest in protecting nature's diversity. Most of his cases are legal challenges to actions taken by the federal government.

With his quiet intensity and his passionate commitment to saving the diversity of life on earth, Marc often speaks to graduating law students, inspiring them with the vision and hope needed to become protectors of nature. "Fish and wildlife are affected by the whims of humans and they need lawyers, too." Marc takes the right to life very seriously.

Arriving from Boise, Idaho, twelve years ago, Marc and Maggie found Peace Church and were attracted to the open-minded approach to Jesus' teachings. Maggie shares Marc's commitment to working for justice. They both advocate for the deaf culture and believe Black Lives Matter. Sophie and Isaac are active in the Peace youth program and share their parent's commitment to justice.

Marc's approach to justice is embodied in a quote he admires from Winona LaDuke: "Let us be the ancestors our descendants will thank." Marc and the species he protects will need our prayers as he responds to challenges presented by the new federal administration. Every species has a voice with Marc Fink.



*Interviewed by Steve Coll
March 2017*

Charlotte Frantz—Loving God’s World



Charlotte Frantz’s life journey and her commitment to justice emerged from a crisis of faith. She was raised in a very conservative Lutheran family. After completing an undergraduate degree in theology, she entered Eden Theological Seminary, a UCC seminary in St Louis, Missouri—not with the intention of becoming a minister, but to try to resolve her own crisis. At the heart of that moral crisis was a question about faith, justice, and action. Civil Rights and the Vietnam War were both burning issues at the time. Charlotte was very aware of what was going on in this country, but she could not understand why there was no moral leadership around those issues coming from the denomination in which she’d grown up. One day, she was reflecting on John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son...” She realized that her church was not acting as if it loved God’s world. The denomination of which she was a part seemed more worried about salvation and the afterlife than it did about the present world. “I was in agony being in a church that didn’t act as if God loved the world.”

Once she recognized the source of her spiritual crisis, she was ready to drop out of seminary, but she found herself questioning what she should do with her life. At the time, she was doing fieldwork with an urban United Church of Christ congregation. When they heard her question about her future, they responded clearly: “We know.” She was called into ministry—by those she was serving. She completed her seminary degree and became one of only 40 UCC women ministers serving as solo congregational leaders. Over the years, she served congregations in Indiana, Montana, Iowa, and Minnesota. She retired in 2015, after serving Pilgrim Congregational Church in Duluth. She now is a welcome member of Peace Church.

Charlotte’s commitment to justice focuses on many issues: racial justice, the global community, particularly Latin America, our relationships with Native Americans, growing economic disparity. At the heart of her commitment is that core question: How do we act on the moral imperative that emerges from the belief that God truly loves the world? The specific focus of Charlotte’s commitment at any one time emerged from the context within which she was working. In Indiana, she served a congregation of truck-drivers struggling with the impact of the oil embargo. In Montana, she saw first-hand the impact of the oil boom on the economic and social fabric of the communities she served. In southern Iowa, her congregations were deeply hurt by the farm crisis, foreclosures, and the massive exodus of family farmers.

She credits two people for having a significant impact on her life. One is an aunt who graduated from Yale Divinity School when Charlotte was born and was ordained twenty-seven years later, six months after Charlotte’s ordination. This aunt was a ground-breaker, a subversive—a woman actively involved with ministry at a time when women were supposed to be home raising families. She wrote curriculum for Sunday school that went beyond Bible lessons and addressed issues like world hunger and racism. She tested lesson plans on Charlotte and her siblings. Charlotte has a vivid memory of her aunt gathering the oldest cousins to listen to Martin Luther King’s “I have a Dream” speech on the radio. From her Aunt Marjorie, Charlotte gained an early awareness of the world and a desire to care for it.

Charlotte’s father also shaped her life in significant ways. He was deeply conservative, but he was also a scientist who believed in evidence. He was firmly opposed to Charlotte’s going to seminary and told friends that she was in graduate school rather than acknowledging her decision to attend seminary. But then he drove from Pittsburgh to St. Louis, sat in on her classes, read some of her books, talked to her professors, and concluded that there was “no heresy” in what she was studying. He was willing to engage even when he was opposed to what she was doing. One of her moving memories is serving her first communion as an ordained minister, with her father assisting her. It was a moment of profound reconciliation.

For Charlotte, it has been the deep connection between faith and action that has shaped her life. “Faith is the root out of which I draw courage—courage to try new things, courage to face adversity, courage to fail. That is where forgiveness and grace are. If we always need to be right, we have no courage to change anything.”

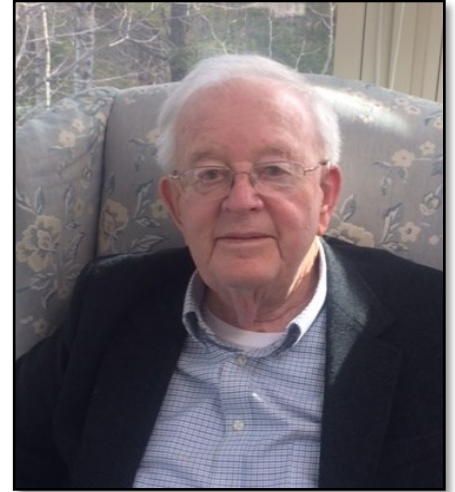
Now that Charlotte has “retired,” she is “reinventing” her role here in Duluth. That process remains guided by her belief that God truly loves this world. Her household includes 18-year-old Alex, a senior at East High school, and a cat named Rosa.

*Interviewed by Pamela Mittlefehldt
April 2017*

Glenn Maxham—Sharing Life Stories

Glenn Maxham has spent his life listening to and reporting on people's life stories. As a radio announcer, reporter, and writer of histories, he knows the importance of stories. Even now he continues to write, working on revising his book *The Fires of 1918*, in time for the centennial of the Cloquet-Duluth-Moose Lake fires.

Glenn was born in Rockford, Illinois, but early in his life his family moved to Minnesota City, near Winona. He graduated from Winona High School in 1948. He had always wanted to get into radio, and so shortly after graduating he went to a radio announcing school in Minneapolis. He remembers he paid his tuition weekly. The Browns, who ran the school, found Glenn a job even before he graduated. He went to work at a radio station in Houghton, Michigan, where he was a staff announcer doing the news and a general reporter. He loved the Copper Country.



He was drafted during the Korean War and was scheduled to go with a combat unit to the front lines. He was blessed with an opportunity to work as a radio announcer serving in Japan. He remembers his interview with a Navy captain, who ripped the news feed off and said: “read.” Glenn thankfully did well. He was an announcer over all of East Asia for two years and served as a disc jockey to the troops from 8pm to midnight. He would play tunes from the big band era and helped the troops through the sharing of music and stories. He remembers guys telling him how they would listen to the tunes while they were dug in.

In 1953, Glenn returned to the States and was hired by WEBC radio in Duluth. He worked for them for three years and then got hired by Channel 6. This was the beginning of his work in television. He was the news director for four years at Channel 6 and then went to Channel 3 to work as news director, then as an anchor man.

Glenn then created his own production company, Maxham Films. He produced videos on mining and lots of educational pieces for the public schools—history and natural history videos that were used in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan school districts. He also produced a written weekly reader called the *Gopher Gazette* for Minnesota sixth graders.

Glenn also worked for Channel 8 (PBS), hosting *Venture North*. He loves hearing the stories of others and sharing them with the world. “Remembering our histories is so important.” One of his favorite interviews was with Albert Wilson, the last survivor of the Civil War. Albert, who died at age 109, had served as a drummer in the Civil War. He lived here in Duluth. Glenn said it felt like shaking hands with history to meet with him. He also had the opportunity to interview John Kennedy when he was campaigning here. That also was a very moving experience.

Glenn says he always looked out for the underdog. His job was to make sure that people's stories got told. The world is full of interesting people, and Glenn still has much more to learn and write about them.

*Interviewed by Kathy Nelson
May 2017*

Kirstin Gonzalez—Listening, Connection, and Justice



Justice has so much to do with where we come from, our culture, our parents' values, our money, our advantages and disadvantages. When Kirstin Gonzalez was 15, her sense of justice led to a decision to become vegetarian. She believes that any being should have a good life and choices in that life. That commitment to justice has been central in Kirstin's life ever since.

Kirstin was very shy growing up. When she was a senior in high school, the Gulf War started and was discussed in her social studies class. Kirstin was one of the only students to advocate for peace, and she remembers the challenge of being shy but feeling the need to speak up. Ten years later, at a high school reunion, a classmate came up to her and said, "It was really meaningful to me that you stood up for peace in our world problems class. I wish I would have stood up with you." This is one example of the ways Kirstin has lived out justice since her childhood: stubbornly committed to standing up for what is right and engaging in conversations about it.

When asked where this commitment to justice comes from, she responded, "half from me and half from my parents." Kirstin added that though she didn't watch much TV in junior high, she did watch "Star Trek: The Next Generation," which was all about living by a directive, a value and code that you always follow, even when you don't know what to do. And she did the same thing—went out into the world and tried to do what was right.

She has had a lot of difficult experiences and has grown hugely from them. She has waited tables, talked to all kinds of people (sometimes totally unprepared about what to say), and has worked as a teacher. She hopes that the things she has done that have been difficult have helped her be the person she needs to be to do something for the world.

Another focus of justice for Kirstin is her role as a mother. She has learned more than ever about how to relate to people as a mom, and it's all about connection and listening. To her, there really isn't any justice except for listening, empathy, and connection—no matter where we come from. All we have is this connection and listening. "With kids, it's about letting someone take the steering wheel and being there with them—not trying to control them but letting them direct how they want to play."

Another example of how justice is connected to listening comes from Kirstin's experiences as a teacher. She remembers a conference with a mother who yelled at her as if she was the school system that was failing the student. Kirstin just listened because she knew the mom needed someone to hear how she experienced the injustices for her daughter in the school system.

Kirstin hopes that all parents can be listeners and model connection. "When we listen to people, especially kids, we give them their ability to change their lives. When we're listening in our families, we all have what we need. It's about learning the ways we get frustrated and how we deal with that. If parents really listen, it gives kids a way to get out of those cycles of disconnection, out of the usual boxes. We're changing the world by listening. If our kids are our future leaders, listening to them does change the world."

When asked about the connection between faith and action, Kirstin talked again about listening. For her, spirituality is about connecting with God, being good, being human, and doing what's right. Peace Church is a community that listens and connects, but does more than that. It's also about helping others and trying to make the world a better place, connecting with other people who are peace-loving people. In the past, connecting to a community wasn't as important as it is to Kirstin now. It's that connection that feeds the spirit that draws her to community.

When asked who has inspired her sense of justice, Kirstin spoke of her dad. He has always done what's important to him. Some people pushed him to have a very profitable business early on, but he wanted to have a small business making organs. She saw the courage it took to live by his own directive, doing the right thing the way he saw it. She's also inspired by Bernie Sanders. He is pushed by so many forces in politics, yet he manages to still do what he thinks is the right thing. Kirstin, too, continues to seek to do the right thing, and reminds us that "we are changing the world by listening."

*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
June 2017*

Warren Post—Honoring Angels Unaware

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Hebrews 13: 2

Peace Church's inclusive invitation to all and its many opportunities for service are what attracted Warren Post to this community. Warren and his wife Beth joined Peace in 1995.



Warren was raised in Zumbrota, Minnesota, in a Wisconsin Synod Lutheran Church. In retrospect, he found that his childhood church was insulated, but it gave him a comforting, traditional lectionary and liturgy. The church contributed well to its Lake Wobegon setting, and birthed Warren's belief that "Faith is what you have, and religion is how you express your faith." At Peace, he is exhilarated by the many ways we have to express our faith. Our challenge is to find a way to communally honor our many choices.

Warren's dad is his hero. "He never made a bad decision." His dad loves his home in Zumbrota as much as Warren enjoys our Duluth hillside. His father advocates the "broken window" syndrome: "if we as neighbors keep fixing the little things together, our whole community can improve immeasurably."

Warren came to UMD to study anthropology and stayed to settle in Duluth permanently. After graduation, he worked in a gift shop emphasizing Scandinavian design, which led to an apprenticeship helping to build the Jaeckel organ at Pilgrim Congregational UCC. For a while, Pilgrim was both his workplace and his place of worship. He admired the openness of the UCC tradition when Jack Kemp was the minister.

His next two jobs, Lutheran Social Service and Northland Children's Home, honed Warren's social work skills. At LSS, he was an employment specialist for a diverse group: Hmong, Laotian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, as well as Polish Great Lakes sailors asking for asylum.

His work at Northland Children's Home groomed him for the able chaperoning and leadership he has provided for Peace trips. These have included two trips to Eagle Butte in South Dakota; a St. Louis, Missouri, inner city day camp in 2000; and a 2015 trip to West Virginia. Warren's eyes light up when he talks about the work experiences he has had with Peace youth.

In 1989, he started working at the federal prison. He became known among inmates for his willingness to converse fairly while offering assertive advice about finding a goal to work toward on the "outside." He wanted the prison system to return someone who could function in society rather than a "wolf." His minimum security population could not serve more than 10 years in prison, so Warren treated them as prospective neighbors whose children would go to school with his children. He tried to help all, especially minorities, to develop self-esteem and to have hope.

Warren credits his favorite Bible verse from Hebrews as a mantra he used in his approach to working with inmates—always trying to find the good connections that could be made. Whether wearing a prison security uniform, driving a van to South Dakota, or talking to us at coffee hour, Warren is a caring, personable member of our beloved community.

Warren assigns his constant attempts to be fair to his German stubbornness. Beth labels it "Teutonic tenacity." He retired last year and spends his inexhaustible energy on vegetable gardening and taking care of his 18-foot sailboat. And, of course, attending Peace Church.

Warren's love—for his biological family, his church family, and the inmates at St. Louis County's minimum security prison—made our interview a heartwarming experience.



Warren working with youth at a Work Camp

*Interviewed by Steve Coll
July 2017*

Hope Connell—Keeping a Foot in the Door for Justice

Hope Connell, wife of Ian, mother of Saul and Thea, is a deep and complex young woman. She grew up as a preacher's kid in an evangelical church, where there was far more emphasis on individual spirituality and morality than there was on a wider social spirituality and justice issues. Hope has become acutely aware of "societal individualism" as a prevalent ideation in this modern world. Everyone is pursuing their own interests vs. the interests and concerns of others.

Having children initiated a metamorphosis in Hope, causing her to look at life and her beliefs differently. Through the process of reading and conversing with close friends in faith, Hope arrived at the realization that she wanted a faith community that shared a collective awareness of social issues, sin, and a sense of responsibility for acting on those concerns. Happily, Hope and Ian found that in Peace Church, which they find is affirming of everyone's humanity, is working towards justice, and keeps Jesus in the forefront. To her, faith is a full body and a full life commitment. "Church happens outside of the building and Sunday worship service."

The issues Hope cares about most deeply are racial issues, inequality, white supremacy, and all the systemic inequalities that arise from oppression's dark work. If she could have a different world, it would include people who were much more conversant regarding the systems of oppression. Everyone would be more compassionate in their awareness and realize that each one of us is complicit. People would also be totally aware that their actions or inactions affect others, because there is no such thing as a neutral effect. This would cause everyone to be more mindful of their decisions.



Hope working on the recent Sanctuary dinner.

Hope is into punk music. One of the lines of a punker that encourages her is "faith isn't magic, but it is keeping my foot in the door." Faith is grappling. It is acting. It is work. She has been inspired by a few activist bands, including Fugazi and The Flobots. Their music helps increase her awareness of issues and encourages her to act.

Hope brings her thoughtfulness and wisdom to many teams and committees at Peace Church. Most central to her commitment now is her work with the Sanctuary Congregation Team. She is also involved in the wider community. She is active in SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice), a community group actively addressing racial issues. She is also serving as campaign manager for Janet Kennedy's Duluth City Council run. Hope believes it is important to have representation for racial equity. She looks at all she does through the lens of affecting racial justice.

*Interviewed by Tim Peters
September 2017*

Gudrun Witrak: “Soul Work” in Song and Action

You most likely recognize Gudrun as the tall woman with the beautiful soprano voice who often sings solos in the Peace Choir. Both at Peace Church and the broader community, she is immersed in “soul work” in so many ways.

In this photograph, Gudrun is wearing a shirt announcing that her story began in Cottonwood—a small southwestern Minnesota town. Her love of music came from her mother, who taught voice and piano lessons. Gudrun remembers her home filled with music and joy. Her mother also nurtured a commitment to caring for others, starting with taking Gudrun to visit a local nursing home when she was a young child. Growing up in a faith-filled Lutheran family taught Gudrun how to live her adult life.

Social issues are important to Gudrun. She is concerned about DACA, immigration, and GLBTQ issues, as well as our response to our most vulnerable citizens. Gudrun believes that “how we treat our most vulnerable citizens is how we will be judged as a civilization.” She would also like to change our approach to consumerism: “There is enough for our needs but not enough for our greed.”

Her response to her concerns has been to give generously of her time, talent, and financial resources to various Duluth organizations serving the homeless, children, youth, women, and other vulnerable people. She volunteers at CHUM, serving breakfast every two weeks, and has served on area boards.

Gudrun also uses her musical talent to enrich our community in many ways. She has sung with the Arrowhead Chorale and now with the Twin Ports Choral Project. She also sings in the Echoes of Peace Choir, and traveled to northern Iraq with the choir several years ago. Her beautiful voice has been heard at many weddings, funerals, and local musical events.

After teaching music in the schools, Gudrun pursued a CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) program and worked at Essentia Health and Miller Dwan as a chaplain. The last seven years of her career were spent in the pain clinic and using Healing Touch. She has touched many with her outgoing, exuberant willingness to help others. She has also officiated at wedding services in the area.

For Gudrun, the Golden Rule informs her faith and her actions. She believes that all faith traditions ask us to do for others what we would do for ourselves. Gudrun’s singing in the Peace Church choir not only inspires us but it inspires her. She said that she loves singing with others because it is like magic that ancient people called “soul work.” Gudrun is also inspired by Jim Pospisil, who she says has a great heart and inclusive leadership as he encourages people to use their gifts, no matter what those may be.

Gudrun’s mother and family have been a source of her courage and action. She admires Eleanor Roosevelt for her work on human rights, and her encouragement of FDR to act on social and humanitarian issues during his presidency. A favorite quote from Eleanor Roosevelt has inspired Gudrun: “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

She also has great respect for her cousin, Brooks Anderson, a Duluth peace activist. Gudrun admires the courage that led him to take a bus to southern states to help register voters and his courageous stands on social justice issues. Gudrun also admires Sara Thomsen, a local singer, song writer, and director of Echoes of Peace choir. Gudrun says she is also humbled by all the people at Peace Church who are so dedicated to peace and justice issues.

And, of course, Jesus’ teachings—that Gudrun believes we make too complicated. Luke 10:27 is the verse that informs how Gudrun leads her life: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” and “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Gudrun, displaying her sense of humor, admits that she likes the bumper sticker that has a picture of the globe saying “Love your Mother.” And, as a dog owner and dog lover, she loves the saying: “If dogs don’t go to heaven when they die, I want to go where they went.”

Gudrun is married to Geoff. They have three adult children—Laura, Andy, and Peter—two grandchildren, and a Golden Doodle named Molly.



*Interviewed by Joan Peterson
October 2017*

Tim Peters: Doing Justice, Sharing God's Love

When considering which social issues matter most deeply to him, Tim said, "All of them." He added, "I don't work for justice. I just **do** justice." He prefers to hang out behind the scenes, helping out however he can. His passion: "Helping people to understand that God loves us more than we can imagine. He is not a punishing God. He just loves us." That love is at the heart of Tim's living and ministry.

Tim was born and raised in Cloquet and grew up in a Pentecostal church. By the time he was five or six, he knew he would be a missionary. By the time he was seven, he also knew he wanted to be a nurse. When he was ten, he gave his heart to Jesus, but struggled to believe that Jesus could actually love him. Because of sexual abuse, he was convinced he was a sinner and not worthy of God's love. He finally accepted his minister's insistence that Jesus loves us all no matter what. That has been the touchstone of Tim's life ever since.

After graduating from nursing school, Tim went to Liberia, where he worked in a leper colony. After two years, he was forced to return to the United States because of illness, and found himself wrestling with God, wondering what God wanted him to do. It took a long time for Tim to realize that doing what **he** wanted to do was what God wanted from him. Using the powers and gifts he had been given was serving God.

Tim married and had two daughters. He worked as a nurse. But the life he had constructed fell apart. He lost his job, got divorced, and sank into a period of questioning and despair. He moved to St. Louis where he worked as a truck driver and was homeless for 2 ½ years—living in his truck, and later in an abandoned house.

He reluctantly came back to Duluth to see his dying brother, but intended to return to St. Louis and end his life. However, before he left, he stopped by Peace Church. Janell exclaimed how happy she was that he was back, and asked if he could paint her house. "She made me feel welcome and wanted," Tim recalled. "Janell saved my life." Tim moved back to Duluth. And over and over, he continues to experience daily miracles that convince him that God cares for him, forgives him, and loves him.

Many people have had a profound influence on Tim's life. His mother was a passionate Pentecostal. His father helped Tim grow up believing that there was nothing he couldn't do as a girl. He told Tim, "There are only two things a guy can do that a girl can't, and they aren't worth talking about." He also had a cousin who could literally see Jesus—and convinced Tim that God was everywhere. "That was a good start," he commented.

At Peace Church, it seems as if Tim himself is everywhere: on the Church Council; on the Property, Stewardship, and Acting for Justice teams; head usher; accompanying Pastor Kathy to the jail for weekly worship.

From the time he was born until he was sixteen, Tim, who was named Naomi at birth, was called "Butch" by his father. "I tried being straight. I knew I wanted kids...but I am 80% male." He refers to himself as **pangender**, knowing that while he identifies most strongly as male, he is also female. He has borne two children, lost a child, lived as a woman. He celebrates the ability to flow between cultural gender identities and believes that this makes him better at listening and at understanding others.



Tim training our new third grade acolytes

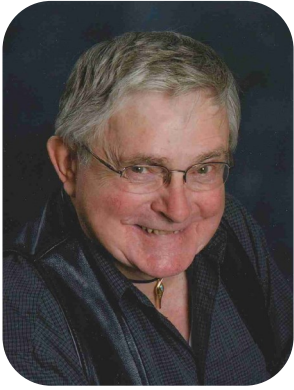
*Interviewed by Pamela Mittlefehldt
November 2017*



When reflecting on the connection between his faith and action, Tim replied: "I am a healer." He was a nurse for 37 years and continues to explore healing on many levels. But ultimately, Tim believes that "faith is what you are. I don't do anything outside my faith."

One of Tim's favorite Bible verses is "Pray without ceasing." "I'm always talking to God," Tim says. And God has always provided—whether it is in the form of a set of chisels, a twenty dollar bill drifting across his shoe—or the constant reassurance that we are all loved by God. He has learned that ultimately his ministry—his way of doing justice—is to be who and what he is, created and loved by God. His passion is to help everyone know that blessing.

Bill DeRoche – A Poet's Journey to Love and Justice



The Sum

*"The sum of who I am
Is also
the sum of whom
I chose
not to be"*

Bill's creative spirit and love for his surroundings were evident from the moment he welcomed me into his cozy and carefully crafted home. After he set out a cup of coffee and cookies, Bill spoke about his journey "into himself."

Bill grew up in Duluth within the constraints of his father's rigid expectations and his Catholic schooling. Fortunately there also were seeds of inspiration and hope. Bill's 3rd grade teacher arranged for Bill to attend a summer writing course at The College of St. Scholastica, and a whole new world of creativity opened up to him. Since his father didn't approve of anything artistic, Bill began writing secretly, and he's been writing poetry ever since. While in high school, Bill was involved in theater, where he learned carpentry skills doing set construction. His building skills have served him well throughout his life.

After going to trade school and working at Sears for a short while, Bill left home to "see the world". Along the way he experienced opportunities, challenges, and a search for wholeness. He lived in San Francisco, Boy's Town in Nebraska, and then New York City,

where he was an occupational therapist and an electrician for Grumman Aircraft. He suffered a deep loss with the death of his wife and child during childbirth.

Bill had the good fortune of hearing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak at the March on Washington, DC, in 1964. He now realizes that King was able to "accept us long before we accepted him." Bill returned to Duluth over forty years ago and operated his own construction company, doing electrical work for area businesses. After a job-related accident, he received disability benefits. He purchased his current home on the North Shore when he returned to Duluth and began rebuilding it from the bottom up. It has been a labor of love and an expression of his creativity, talents, and connection to the earth. Bill's compassion and commitment to justice are evident in the 52 years of volunteer work that he has done, including work at the St. Louis County jail and the Lake Superior Railroad Museum

During a hiking trip in Yosemite in the 90s, Bill came out to himself. Unfortunately his awakening was met with rejection by his family and the Catholic church. He stayed in the closet, until he attended a friend's funeral at Peace Church seven years ago. Sensing the possibility of acceptance, Bill was able to open up to the church community.

Bill has found the acceptance and love that he had always longed for, and he has been able to rebuild his life into an authentic expression of who he knows himself to be. He said, "My journey into myself wasn't complete until after I turned 65." And then he reflected, "Because the people I've met accepted who I am, that is how I found my faith."

For Bill, "peace and justice is in doing the little things. When a child cries, hold them. When someone is lost, walk with them. When an older person needs a helping hand, slow down and help."

Madeleine L'Engle is one of Bill's favorite authors. In response to her book, *Walking on Water*, he wrote:

*"Love is never a fait accompli
It is always a becoming."*

*Interviewed by Lyn Clark Pegg
December 2017*

A Statement

Oh for the unshed
tears
of years of instilled
hate
for the condemna-
tion
of being me

A brain full of
ideas
a heart full of
love

But told they
were useless
because of who
I am

Such a mountain
I was given
to climb
that a life time
it would take

To see the sunrise
of the glories
within me

In the sunset
of my years
I still yearn to give
of the talents
within me

I set aside the god
that was dictated
to me

To find the Abba
who truly
lives for me

On I walk in the
hope
that someday some-
one
will say
"rest with me."

by Bill DeRoche

Mary Adams: The Power of Respectful Listening and Collaboration

Mary Adams's concern for social justice is focused on equal opportunity and environmental stewardship. She is most passionate about racial justice, prison reform, the achievement gap, immigration reform, climate change, and water pollution. She tries to devote time to each of these concerns. However, what she would most like to change in our world now is the public discourse. At present, to her it feels and sounds like a bar room brawl with people on opposite sides of issues unable to listen, discuss, and collaborate, and the media more often than not shouting dramatic sound bites that stir aggressive feelings rather than creating space for respectful listening and collaboration.

Mary sees Jesus as her inspiration in how to respond to the social justice and environmental issues that concern her. She reflects on Jesus's life when considering how to make a response to her concerns. In general, Jesus's life example has led her to go beyond voting, contacting her legislators, and donating money to causes. It has led her to get out of her comfort zone and be more visible. She has written a couple of letters to the editor and has participated in marches, calling campaigns, and door knocking efforts to lend visibility to issues. On the issue of public discourse her response is to look for, listen to, and read news that has a chance of creating space for thoughtful and respectful discussion on issues.

Mary grounds her actions in love and humility. Her faith calls her to listen with a loving heart to people with views that oppose her own, and to steer clear of actions that define those with opposing views as "less than" those who share her view.

Mary sees her parents as her first models for engaging on issues. They were active in the anti-war movement during the Vietnam War. Mary was raised with the idea that she should worry less about other people's actions and focus most on what she can do to make the world a better place. Mary and her husband engaged in volunteer service in India and Nepal. This gave her a sense of being a part of a larger human family. It also made her aware of the consumerism in this country and the need for stewardship of the environment, to care for all creation, and to live more simply. Mary likes being a part of the Peace Church community, where opportunities for action on social issues abound, and she is grateful for the people at Peace Church who use their gifts for leadership to create these opportunities for action.

Mary has been inspired by her grandmother's sister, Keckie, who shared poetry, bible verses, and sayings that she had committed to memory. She wrote many of them in a little book that she gave Mary when she was married. While they all are meaningful to her, two stand out:

The Mountain and the Squirrel by Ralph Waldo Emerson

The mountain and the squirrel had a quarrel and the former called the latter, "Little Prig". Bun replied, "You are doubtless very big, but all sorts of things and weather must be taken in together to make up a year and a sphere. And I think it no disgrace to occupy my place. If I'm not so large as you, you are not so small as I, and not half so spry. I'll not deny you make a very pretty squirrel track. Talents differ. All is well and wisely put. If I cannot carry forests on my back, neither can you crack a nut.

He drew a circle that shut me out-
Heretic rebel a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win.
We drew a circle that took him in.

Edwin Markham

*Interviewed by Penny Cragun
January 2018*



John Doberstein: Eco-Broker for Justice and Creation

Peace Church has an early connection with American pilgrims, who came seeking a safe and fresh start for their spiritual beliefs. Sharing individual stories of our pilgrimage towards justice increases hope and nurtures community. John Doberstein's life journey illustrates his quest for justice.



John was raised as a Roman Catholic at Holy Trinity in Two Harbors. From an early age, he demonstrated that he was an independent thinker who asked good questions. Several women helped nurture his faith and focus. His mother Ann helped him understand the importance that church life adds to hope and spirit. Ms. Van Den Heuvel, the Holy Trinity youth group leader, helped shape the lively group's development for three years during high school. John's Aunt Kathy and grandmother Kay Furey appreciated John's questions and intelligent concerns with life's imperfections. Grandma Kay sent young John a number of writings and videos about the passion and commitment of St. Francis, whose life served the Creation's natural systems.

As a young man, John moved to Florida where he developed his questioning, communication, and leadership skills in the business world. He is a gifted communicator and quickly became involved with management and problem-solving. But after extensive travel around the country, John felt something was missing in his life. He chose to return to Duluth, Lake Superior, and the Northshore in 2006. John soon began to volunteer for a variety of environmental and social justice groups in Duluth, including the Sierra Club, EAGLE, and Community Action Duluth. He had grown frustrated with the growing threats to our natural system, which is the foundation of our economic systems. He understood that growing climate and mining risks threaten the area's water resources – both the Great Lakes and the BWCA. He shared his time and talent with area partners who were committed to healing our broken natural and social systems.

By volunteering and working for a variety of non-profits, John became recognized as a spokesperson for protecting the integrity of our Creation. His extensive service helped him realize that he could serve as a real estate broker while protecting the value of Duluth's properties, homes and communities. Now John serves at Remax as their Eco-Broker, someone who is certified in understanding the value of the home's energy and environmental impacts. More real estate buyers are asking good questions about the impacts of homes on energy and environment, and John is certified to answer these questions.

John met Jill when they were both presenting at the Harvest Fest by the Great Lake. They soon recognized a deep synergy and were married in 2009. With their daughters Autumn and Elloise, they joined Peace Church to share in the annual cycle of worship, celebration, and prayer that adds power, depth, and direction to their family team. John recognized early that if you feel helpless in light of the scale of our environmental challenges, it helps to take action with local partners. This invested service helps incubate hope and increases a collective vision and energy. There may be many reasons to focus on the negative threats to our Creation from political and economic influences, but hope is our most renewable resource. John commented, "We have been delighted with the openness, celebration, and reflection that we have found at Peace." John and Jill are adding power, direction, and dedication to our focus on justice. We lift up the hope and invested energy of these 21st century pilgrims.

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
February 2018*

Hannah Feyen: Sharing the Blankets for Justice

When it comes to social concerns, racial justice is at the top of Hannah Feyen’s list, especially the intersection of racial justice with economic class. Through her experiences growing up in this community, she sees a deep class split down the middle of Duluth. She credits her interest in and knowledge of racial justice to her AP US History class, as well as to discussions with people at church, parents, friends, and reading articles online.



Hannah attended Nettleton Elementary School and Lincoln Middle School and is now in 11th grade at Denfeld High School. Though she still has much to learn about racial justice work—as she said, “I don’t fully know the big words yet, like systemic oppression”—watching documentaries, participating in the Peace-sponsored course Cracking the Shell of Whiteness, and attending meetings of the local Showing Up for Racial Justice group have helped her to become increasingly aware. “For example, I know that the war on drugs is about race, and I learned about that from the documentary *The 13th*. And I learned about the ways the GI Bill gave preferential treatment to white families buying homes, while excluding families of color”, she said. She noted how it’s helpful to know the facts, but it’s difficult to remember when you’re in a situation where it might be useful in a conversation. She wants more opportunities to practice sharing and making a difference.

Reflecting on what got her interested in justice work, Hannah said that she became aware at an early age that people who live in poverty are often there for reasons that are not their fault. Because she has time and energy and her needs are met, she wants to do her best to fix some of the constructs that keep people down. Even just being aware that living in the United States is a privilege can be a step. Hannah recently read a book on modern day slavery, and she stated how crazy it is to hear those stories, or to learn that about half the world lives on less than \$2 a day. She expressed her disbelief, both that these things happen and that she didn’t know about them, or the fact that people do know about them and don’t do something. As she talked about solutions, she mentioned the importance of having lawyers to help change the laws, and law enforcement to make sure the just laws are kept. “There’s a place for everyone in the fight. We need people with two blankets to give one. There are so many people with two blankets.” **

When diving deeper into the challenges of changing systems, Hannah talked about how we are bombarded with information, and about her frustration at seeing splits in social justice movements. Everyone is going their own way. And that’s why she hopes college will help her gain a sense of her own place in all of this. She knows she has not yet had a larger impact, but her engagement has helped shift her lens. It’s always in the back of her mind when she goes to events or a new city. Recently, she went to the Banff Film Festival and a friend of hers said, “Everyone in Duluth is here!” And she replied, “Only a certain demographic of Duluth is here—white and middle class.” She acknowledged that being white and middle class isn’t necessarily a bad thing, but it’s important to pay attention.

When asked about how her faith fit into her justice focus, she replied that she is still figuring that out. For Hannah, faith is about connecting with others and respecting each other as people. It’s about treating someone with kindness and respect, even if you’re talking to someone you don’t like. When she thinks of faith, she thinks of the great commandment to love, as well as Micah 6:8—doing justice and loving kindness. “As you do any action, do it with kindness.”

When asked about where she finds her inspiration around justice work, Hannah talked about her friend Abbie Amundsen. “Abbie is a person I can talk to, but she also pushed me to go to things even when I didn’t feel like I was ready.” She especially noted how Abbie works hard to impact what she can. “It’s admirable to hear her stories.”

Hannah summed up her feelings about justice work by sharing this quote: “Integrity is what you do when no one is watching.”

** The “two blankets” reference is from *Not for Sale*, by David Batstone.

*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
March 2018*

Carl Huber: A Life Defined by Justice

What does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

Carl Huber's stories always seem to include family and spiritual journey. Together they form the common thread woven to connect all aspects of his life. Carl is comfortable talking about his spiritual journey, which is often not the case for men socialized in our society. For Carl, the sacred space inside of himself and others is where he finds God. That voice of truth inside him will never allow him to give up until he acts for and finds justice.

Carl and Catherine have been married for 20 years and have lived in Duluth for 15 years. Their two daughters, Eva (18) and Anna (16), brought them to Peace Church in January 2017. These two amazing young women were searching for something that was missing in their own lives and were attracted by the Peace Church youth program, particularly the work camp trips where they have learned "how to change the world." The whole family has now become deeply involved in the life of Peace Church.



Carl was born into a Catholic family and educated in Catholic schools through college. Until recently, the family worshiped at a Lutheran church. Although church attendance has been important, Carl clearly is a person searching for his own truth and looking for his sacred voice. This journey led him to two years of Catholic seminary, where he found great inspiration in Catholic social teachings, retreats, and participation in spiritual direction. It was through women in the Catholic church that he became "a friend of Jesus."

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, and having lived all over the US, North and South, Carl has grown from his various cultural experiences. While he was employed as a financial aid officer in a black college in New Orleans, he worked hard to learn about the connection between racial justice and poverty, which led him to become an Ally in racial justice work.

Searching for justice led Carl to employment that focuses on the enrichment of others. After attending Loyola University for one year in the graduate school of social work, he served as a child welfare social worker in Chicago. He also served students and their families in financial aid and alumni affairs in several colleges. At the University of Wisconsin, Superior, Carl developed a program to assist veterans and other nontraditional students returning to college. Currently, he is serving in the financial aid office at UMD, where he is finding creative pathways through the maze of bureaucracy to help lead students and families to a life free from abusive debt.

Carl is also working on a clean-up of the Clayton Jackson McGhee Memorial site. His goal is to complete the work by mid-April, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. His hope is to engage men in Duluth to work together and encourage discourse that will build bridges rather than create barriers. Carl believes that we are "called to welcome strangers as our friends." With this project, as well as Carl's other commitments, he works to motivate people to join in justice work across the many social issues challenging us.

Carl has a passion for storytelling. Through volunteering at the St. Louis County Historical Society, as a listener and transcriber of veterans' stories, he has found great power in stories. He values the insights stories reveal about overcoming life's barriers and the power of building bridges through stories. Desiring to use stories more fully in his life, Carl has enrolled in the masters program in Liberal Studies at UMD, concentrating on storytelling.

A recent report from the Peace Church Sanctuary team affirms Carl's continuing passion for justice through his participation in making Peace Church ready to offer sanctuary. One team member praised Carl's thoughtfulness and commitment, noting that when he finished one assignment, Carl asked "what more could I do that would be helpful?" Carl knows social justice work often doesn't bear fruit for years, but he will never give up until we all experience the Beloved Community visualized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Interviewed by Bill Hardesty
April 2018*

Maggie Fink: Part of the Mosaic of Change

Maggie Fink was born and raised in Boise, Idaho, and grew up with “dual citizenship.” Her parents are Deaf while she, herself, is “Hearing” (as it is termed in the Deaf community). Growing up, she lived in two different worlds with different rules. Because of this dual citizenship, Maggie quickly learned about parallel realities and how barriers, which are non-existent in one reality, are clearly evident in the other. She saw first-hand the prejudices and discrimination her parents faced because those in the dominant culture had misconceptions or a lack of awareness about Deaf people. As Maggie interpreted between her parents and the Hearing world, she learned to ask the question, “what are the barriers in this situation and how can we address them?”

Maggie attended Colorado College in Colorado Springs where she majored in Sociology and minored in Thematic Arts. She wrote her thesis on American Sign Language as a source of empowerment for the Deaf community. She furthered her education at Western Oregon University, studying Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling with an emphasis on the Deaf community. She currently works as an ASL interpreter for the Duluth Public Schools.

Maggie moved with her husband, Marc, and their two kids, Sophie and Isaac, to Duluth in 2005. They were introduced to Peace Church by the Bowen-Baileys. Besides feeling a connection to the church by seeing the church service interpreted in ASL, Maggie appreciated seeing the integration of social justice work within multiple areas of the church—in the sermons, the Adult Forums, the community partnerships, and all the various projects led by the different committees. There wasn’t just talk—there was action. She joined the Dismantling Racism team and was chairperson for 2 years. Participating in ASDIC (Anti-Racism Study Dialogue Circle) and “Cracking the Shell of Whiteness” helped further her understanding of the various barriers created by the ignorance and prejudice embedded in racism.



Part of Maggie’s belief system is based on her conviction that “what we believe translates into action” and that many injustices are related. In her interpreting profession, the underlying principle within the ethical code is to “do no harm.” She tries to apply this principle to many areas of her life, recognizing the fact that in the area of social justice, “doing nothing DOES cause harm.” She also recognizes that there are many ways to do “something.” “Something” can mean reading a mind-broadening book, attending a rally, or working with others to meet an end goal such as securing funding for the Indigenous-led local Sobriety Feast, which Maggie had a hand in accomplishing recently. It can also be as simple as being aware of the “isms” in our thinking. “Sometimes I’m just walking down the street and a negative judgment pops into my head, and I realize—whoa, that was racist, or sexist, or whatever ‘it’ is. And it’s a reminder that ‘isms’ are still embedded in me, and that it takes active work to keep rooting them out.”

Right now, in addition to other endeavors, Maggie is working with a team of people to help share wellness products that protect the health of the earth and the health of individuals. The wellness company is focused on the environment and enhancing the lives of others. It makes her happy to be part of a solution, part of the mosaic where we all have a part to play.

*Interviewed by Nettie Bothwell
May 2018*

Jack O'Connell: Finding A Voice through Leadership

Jack O'Connell's current justice work is focused on mental illness in high school. In response to a number of recent suicides, he has been reflecting and taking action to help ensure that his classmates have the support they need. "Being a leader in school means you can address things like this," says Jack. As a junior, he is on the Executive Committee at East High School, and he understands that as a leader, he has a responsibility to do something. Because the school has certain rules pertaining to privacy that keep some larger conversations from happening, Jack wants to create alternative ways for students to talk about mental health.



When Jack saw one of his peers start a twitter campaign (#EHSendthestigma and #EHSitgetsbetter), he recognized the importance of talking about mental illness. He decided to organize a poetry slam around mental illness month (the month of May). He knows it might not reach everyone, but he wanted to provide another platform for talking about mental illness. He notes that one of the most common struggles for his peers is depression. "People think it's their own fault," says Jack. He wants to change that, and help take the stigma away. He especially wants to create conversations at times of the year that are most difficult, like winter and holidays, and to normalize things like seasonal depression.

When asked about how he got involved in this particular justice issue, Jack said that being on the Executive Committee made a big difference for him. "In Exec, I realized I have a voice, and other people might not think they have one. Being given a leadership role helped me find my voice," says Jack. In the future, he is open to working on other issues, but wants to focus on mental illness because of how much it has affected the school this year.

For Jack, faith is about doing the right thing—faith and action are tied together. He heard that consistently in confirmation, and he experienced that on things like the work trip to Atlanta, Georgia, last year, and the Ecofaith Youth Camp two years ago here at Peace. For him, doing the right thing means helping people in need and doing something for them. Maybe that's helping a homeless man on the street. But Jack believes it's also about integrity and doing things for the right reasons—citing how sometimes big companies do good things just to look good. It's important to Jack to know what the motivation is.

When asked about what has inspired him, Jack mentioned Peace Church—which gives opportunities for service; Emily Larson—who does a lot for people in this community; the ARE poetry group—which gives people the space to express themselves through their words to inspire others in the community; and Nathan Holst—who helps people see what they can do and knows when people need to be pushed in the process.

Interviewed by Nathan Holst

June 2018

Anna Huber: Witnessing God in the Goodness of Others

Anna Huber is passionate about making connections in justice work. On a recent trip to Montgomery, Alabama, where she traveled with 34 other people from Duluth for the unveiling of the national memorial for victims of lynching, Anna deepened her learning about how issues relate to each other—issues like feminism, environmental awareness, racism, children’s rights, and prison systems. As she put it, “you can’t advocate for any single one without advocating for all of them.”

When asked about issues that matter most to her, Anna started with mental health, but quickly connected that with the prison system. She quoted William Barber, who spoke at the Montgomery gathering: “Mass



incarceration is the modern day political lynching.” One in three African-American males will be incarcerated in their life. She went on to talk about how in addition to racism, the major problem with our prison system is that it is a for-profit system. The more people we have in jail, the more money people who own the prison systems make. Anna is frank about how she wants that system to change, how the goal of our prison systems should be to help rehabilitate people, not to keep them cycling in and out. “What it does now is give people a lack of resources so they go back to prison.”

When asked about what she wants to work on, Anna immediately spoke about the importance of education. “If people knew how deep these issues of race relations were, how deep they go, they would do something.” She also mentioned her own generation and the youth movements around gun violence. “My generation is so fed up with not moving, and things are going to get done.” Articulating her approach to the work, she quoted Anne Frank: “In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart.” Anna continued by saying that people are going to disappoint you, but you have to give second and third chances. Anna wants to be an educator—perhaps not in the traditional sense of the word, but she wants to educate everyone she meets, sharing experiences and learning together, even if it’s hard or embarrassing.

Speaking about the connection between action and faith, Anna shared that she sees God in people every day, in their goodness. As she put it, “There is an energy that you see around people every day—that’s God.” For her, Jesus lived out that same way of seeing people, calling all to truly love our neighbors as ourselves, and to do that we have to know our neighbors. Anna feels most connected to God when she’s helping others, and she feels a deep sense of peace, which she also names as God.

Anna’s primary inspiration comes from her parents. Anna often talks about her dad as the most Catholic non-Catholic she knows—he has an icon in every room, and God is central to his life. Anna says that her mom has always said, “Just give it to God,” and Anna admires her unwavering faith.

As a final comment, Anna spoke passionately about our work as a country now. “We built this country on the backs of others and it’s time we recognize how broken that is, and we’re not going to be able to change that if we don’t acknowledge it. The worst thing that could happen is to know about these things and stay silent. We have to be having deep conversations.”

*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
July 2018*

Gary John Boelhower: A Lifelong Journey for Justice

Gary John Boelhower is a recently retired Professor of Theology and Ethics at The College of St. Scholastica, a lifelong justice and peace activist, and the current Moderator of Peace Church. Gary grew up in a rural community in south central Wisconsin, where his father worked at a paper mill and his mother did housecleaning. Gary was one of four siblings. He remembers money always being in short supply, but community service was an integral part of his family's ethos, particularly exemplified by his mother. He remembers his deep roots on his grandfather's farm outside of town, which is where Gary developed his strong and mystical connection to the land and the water, and a commitment to environmental justice. His family was of Dutch heritage, where the value of hard work was emphasized in his home and extended family (grandparents) as well as a strong faith commitment, in the Catholic social justice tradition.

Gary entered the "minor seminary" for his high school and went on to graduate from college at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. While there, during the thick of the Vietnam War, Gary wrote a paper on why he was committed to being a conscientious objector, which he presented to his local draft board, and he was granted CO status. That experience, along with participation in numerous anti-war demonstrations, clarified his long-term commitment to non-violent resistance and activism.

Gary also has had a lifelong commitment as an educator, with an emphasis on social justice and ethical decision-making. He began as a religious educator in Catholic parishes and, following graduate studies where he earned an M.A. and Ph.D., Gary went on to teach at Marian University in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and then at The College of St. Scholastica. Gary is proud of starting two nonprofit organizations while in Wisconsin, one which practices "radical hospitality" in providing food for the hungry, and one which provides literacy training for adults. Both are still going strong.

Asked about his evolution in the social justice movement, Gary said that there are three foundations for his activism. They are: 1) growth in knowledge of oneself; 2) finding ways to help meet the immediate and critical needs of others; 3) working to change unjust systems in our society.

Gary previously was married for 23 years and fathered 3 children. He now is joyfully married to his spouse, Gary Anderson. Gary John is a prolific writer and has published books of both non-fiction and poetry, and he is on the verge of publishing children's books as well.



*Interviewed by John Clark Pegg
August 2018*

Lyn Clark Pegg: Seeking Balance and Justice for All Creation

One topic that Lyn Clark Pegg cannot remain silent about is unfairness and inequity. “I cannot tolerate intentional human-inflicted suffering—on the earth, on people, on all of creation.” She believes that equity, fairness, balance, and justice are interwoven throughout all creation. “Our ecosystem is designed for balance. Balance is intrinsically embedded in Earth, yet humans have created imbalances everywhere. Our attitudes of dominance, superiority, exploitation for personal gain undermine the possibility of a common good.” Lyn is seeking a code of ethics that honors balance for ALL beings—“two-legged, four-legged, winged, finned, and non-living.” She is committed to joining “efforts that disrupt the status quo, organize solidarity and build resistance to systems that oppress and exploit.”



Lyn’s formative years were grounded in two polarities. She grew up in Pittsburgh, in the midst of a family and urban society that valued “hierarchy, WASP supremacy, material success, and capitalism.” Her father was the vice president of a small coal mining company. Yet, from pre-kindergarten through high school, Lyn was educated at Winchester-Thurston, an all-girls’ school that was grounded in this core principle:

“Think also of the comfort and the rights of others.” Miss Mitchell). Academics, critical thinking, and social justice permeated the environment. Lyn is grateful for these polarities. She lived in the midst of white privilege, but at the same time she was educated to be aware of gender equality and social responsibility.

Those oppositional dynamics were tested and transformed by the movements of the 1960s and 1970s: civil rights, women’s rights, peace and justice, the environment. She met Rev. Adolphus Cartier, the pastor of an A.M.E. church in North Carolina, who opened her eyes to racism. While living in Hartford, Connecticut, Lyn and her husband John became involved in organizing around issues of discrimination in housing, employment and education. Then their family embarked on a back-to-the-earth experience for five years while living on thirteen acres in upstate New York, where they raised goats, chickens and pigs, and heated with wood.

In 1986, the family moved to Duluth, where John became the pastor of Peace United Church of Christ, and Lyn worked for Lutheran Social Service as a therapist and office manager. Lyn became committed to promoting diversity in the workplace; she returned to graduate school and wrote her dissertation on women of color in U. S. corporations. Lyn’s final place of employment was in the Psychology and Education departments at UMD, where she taught and was a supervisor for student teachers placed in racially diverse schools in the Twin Cities.

Lyn continues to work for balance and equality through a range of organizations and commitments. She is involved with Witness for Peace—leading delegations to Central America, supporting speaker tours, and doing advocacy work. She also participates in local community efforts to support inclusivity and social justice, such as the Dismantling Racism team at Peace Church, NAACP Duluth, and Grandmothers for Peace. She was one of the initial organizers of Understanding and Dismantling Racism: An Interfaith Project, ASDIC (Anti-Racism Dialogue Circles), the Un-Fair campaign, and Cracking the Shell of Whiteness. Lyn is now becoming active in social justice work in Fort Myers, Florida, where she spends the winter.

As Lyn summarizes her commitment to social justice, she commented: “I like being involved in justice-making from the grassroots to the global level—it gives me inspiration, energy, and temporary relief from frustrations at any level! Doing what I can, when and where I can.”

Attempting to share her concept of the divine, Lyn reflected that “God is Mother Earth to me... God has created a complex and interconnected world. We are here to be protectors of creation.”

As she thought about the connection between her faith and action, Lyn said “God is a God of justice and love. No justice, no God. We have the capacity for good. We must use it. Don’t just do good. Stop evil.” She believes her role is to find “where I can fit and be an instrument of constructing good. My faith is to be true to these principles, to stay on this pathway. For me, this is faith.”

*Interviewed by Pamela Mittlefehldt
September 2018*

Betty Greene: Focusing on Fairness and Equity

Betty Greene was raised in Robbinsdale, in a family where both her mother and father emphasized that fairness was a core family value. As Betty moved from the Twin Cities to Carbondale, Illinois, and then to Duluth, each new context added focus to her understanding of the challenges and nuances associated with justice.

Although Betty was young when she began learning the value of fairness, she had not encountered much inequity in her family, school or community. When she was sixteen, she was invited by her friend Naomi to her birthday party. All the other guests were Jewish friends from Naomi's Temple, who began asking Betty about her beliefs and faith. Their friendly and earnest curiosity generated a new sensation for Betty as she regarded herself for the first time as a member of a minority. This new feeling generated new thoughts and insights about how others might feel as members of America's racial and ethnic minorities.

When Betty attended the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities, where she got a degree in Child Psychology, she worked in the Orientation Office, which ran orientation sessions for new students. She saw that the orientations were most effective when they were led by someone who resembled the students, who shared a similar background. This deepened her appreciation for greater diversity and equity in large institutions, businesses, and organizations. It seemed fair that institutions should respect the diversity of the citizens they serve.



Betty and her husband John moved to Carbondale, Illinois, after John finished his Ph.D. in mathematics. Living in southern Illinois deepened Betty's understanding of the economics of inequity, as she became aware of the role of state taxes and the value of equity in educational services for citizens and workers. Illinois has consistently low state tax support for its educational institutions, and Betty soon noticed that students from poorer communities did not fare as well. This was not due to lack of ability, but rather due to lack of public investment. This type of public inequity violated Betty's concept of fairness.

Betty and John were delighted to move to Duluth, where John was hired by the math department at UMD. Betty worked as a school psychologist in the Duluth and Proctor school districts, doing assessments for Special Education, with defined criteria for securing services. After ten years of this challenging work, Betty moved to an administrative office position at UMD. It was at this time she met Sue Sojourner and learned more about her experiences living for four years in Mississippi in the 1960s, working toward justice with people of color. Betty was moved by Sojourner's story and signed up to join UMD's civil rights spring break trip in 2014 and again in 2017, touring places in Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee.

Seeing a number of the historic civil rights sites of confrontation and hope, and hearing the stories of civil rights veterans, Betty was moved to act on her sense of fairness and the challenges of inequity in Duluth. These powerful experiences led Betty to participate in the "Cracking the Shell of Whiteness" series, offered through Peace Church. Through this training and interaction, Betty realized that equity and fairness are not the same. Betty's retirement from UMD in the summer of 2018 allows her to invest more time in working on some of these issues in Duluth, her beloved community, through groups including Peace Church's Dismantling Racism team, SURJ Northland (Showing up for Racial Justice), NAACP, Education Equity Alliance, and the 2020 CJMM Planning Committee.

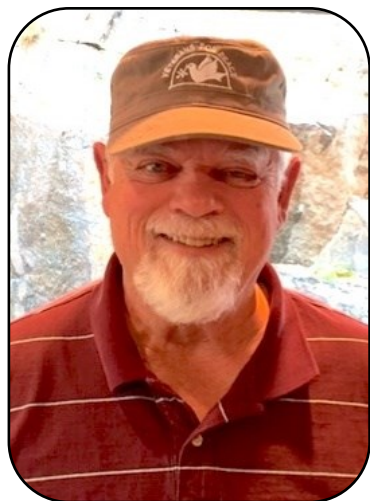
Betty is concerned about the erosion of public trust. "We are losing sight of the public good." From the perspective of Peace Church's tradition, Betty believes we are called to welcome the stranger with mercy and kindness. Micah 6:8 captures that calling to "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God." Betty is deeply grateful for the congruence and centering she has found with partners at Peace Church and in Duluth. Her retirement has been enriched as she chooses to give back to her beloved community.

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
October 2018*

John Clark Pegg: Honoring Interdependence/Seeking Justice

John Pegg grew up in a suburban New York City family, where his parents emphasized the value of education, equity, work, and service. These values provided critical guidance during the deepening of John's spiritual life. He was raised in Long Island, and his father commuted to Manhattan as a young Vice President for Shell Oil in the early 1950s. When John was thirteen, his father died of a heart attack on a plane returning from a business trip to Europe. The peaceful progress of their family life was shattered, and John had to go to work.

He graduated from high school and attended Colgate University in Hamilton, New York. After two years as an English major, John realized that he lacked a sense of direction and motivation, so he decided to take a break from school to reflect on how he could realize his core values. He met with a family friend who served on the local Selective Service draft board, and he was told



that he had the qualifications to make a good Marine. John enlisted in February, 1962, for three years, and ultimately was given responsibility for managing intelligence reports. He soon noticed the discrepancies between the classified information and the media reports about the U.S. effort in Vietnam. As the misrepresentation grew more outrageous, John realized that this was not the job he had signed up for. This was late in 1963, when John F. Kennedy was assassinated. This was a time of significant turmoil for John. Fortunately, he met Lyn Clark, who shared many of his progressive values. They struck a deep chord and were soon engaged and married.

While in the service in North Carolina, John was aware of the racism that permeated the culture. He saw segregation in housing and education. He observed the direct impact of workforce segregation and the discriminatory effects of poverty. He and Lyn began working with youth through a church, and John recognized that he was good with youth and he enjoyed it more than managing classified information. This led John to alter his path. After completing college, he and Lyn moved to Long Island, where John worked for Chase Manhattan bank, managing customers' portfolios. Sarah and David were born in Long Island. But between the long commute and the pressures of corporate diligence, John grew tired of managing capital assets for others.

After working as a pension fund investment manager for five years, John decided to study theology at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. He loved the seminary curriculum, and he quickly earned an MA in Religious Studies and then a Master of Divinity for ordination. After serving churches in Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts, John and Lyn decided to seek a church further west. Their quest for progressive values and meaningful work was met by the invitation to serve Peace UCC in Duluth, where John's skills as a pastor and his commitment to justice and peacemaking were welcomed.

Since his retirement from pastoral and service ministries, John has committed his energy and focus in many ways. He enjoys working with Veterans for Peace because, as he states, "war doesn't work!" And veterans are often left broken due to the increasing needs of the global super powers. John feels a commitment to working with other veterans and raising their voices for justice and peace between people and between nations. He also has worked with Witness for Peace since 2001, when he was the founding organizer for the Midwest Region. He has led Witness for Peace delegations to Colombia and Cuba. He also served on both the national and regional Board of Directors.

Reflecting on the values that shape his life and work, John referred to a statement by Gandhi: "Our earth provides enough for every [one's] need but not for every [one's] greed." John believes that "we have enough to meet our needs, but if some want more than others, the greed may undo our body politic." John finds fulfillment working with others on cultivating our interdependence. "Justice requires that we welcome the stranger, understand our mutual interdependence, and live with compassion—as we walk humbly together with our God (Micah 6:8)."

"There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed."

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
November 2018*

Andy Fena – “Faith is what you do!”



Andy Fena is a “true blue” Northern Minnesotan. True, because he is a native son, born and raised in Hibbing, Minnesota, in a family with nine other siblings, with Andy as the youngest and the oldest being his sister Lynn, 18 years his senior. Blue, because of the loyal DFL activism modeled by his father, Jack, a successful personal injury attorney and multiple-term elected Representative to the Minnesota State Legislature representing the Iron Range.

Andy grew up in a practicing Roman Catholic family, and when he graduated from Hibbing High School he went to college at Notre Dame, where he pursued his B.A. in Liberal Arts. While there, he was influenced by his participation in student service projects where he worked on housing issues with low income people. He was also positively influenced by some courses in theology, which caused him to raise questions about how God intersects with human lives.

Following graduation, Andy joined a Catholic volunteer service corps, called Holy Cross Associates, run by the order of Catholic brothers from Notre Dame.

Their group had four guiding principles: simple living, service to others, spiritual practice, and building community. Andy moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he lived in community with six others and worked as a volunteer in a shelter for homeless youth. After a year there, Andy continued his service work by moving to Oakland, California, where he joined a Catholic Worker community which provided a home for homeless men.

After two years in Oakland, Andy decided to return to his roots in Minnesota and went to work for Outward Bound, working with youth through facing challenges in the wilderness. Andy spent about five years with Outward Bound –which is where he met his partner, Libby. Andy continued to work with youth. He was the first staff employed by Men as Peacemakers, and he also worked briefly for the state DFL during the 1996 elections. Following this, Andy returned to graduate school at UMD, where he earned a Master’s degree in Social Work (MSW) degree.

For the past eighteen years, Andy has worked for County Social Services, the majority of time in Child Protective Services. For the past six years, he has dealt with chemical dependency as a case manager for those who have been committed by the State of Minnesota to engage in treatment and sober living.

In addition to being a husband and father, Andy still enjoys the outdoors, where he hunts, fishes, and regularly takes trips to the Boundary Waters. He and his family live on ten acres on the outskirts of the City of Duluth, where they have a large garden and raise some animals. Andy summed up one of his life’s guiding principles when he said, “the evidence of your faith lies in what you do.” Amen, Andy, and well lived!

*Interviewed by John Clark Pegg
December 2018*

Abbie Amundsen: Honoring the Who and the Why—Politics, Justice, and Hope

Elections and politics are important to Abbie Amundsen. Maybe it's partly because it's been in the news a lot lately, but she wants to see a government where our leadership is reflective of who we are as a people. Sometimes it feels like decisions are made for us, and the people don't have the voice they deserve.

Being in law class this semester during her senior year of high school has opened Abbie's eyes to the flaws in our systems—for example how policing or the criminal justice system generally tie into our elections. "When we know that one in three black men are incarcerated, you start seeing how that has broad effects on communities and families. When we talk about elections, we can get caught up with the individual politicians, when we should focus on the effects of what they do on people."

Abbie also thinks about systems and connects the dots. "Immigration is an issue that gets politicized. That's when misinformation and fear come into play. And then you can tie things together and look at how high incarceration rates are related. We turn prison issues into political talking points, but then the actual people get lost." For her, that's where social justice comes in. Social justice is about connecting with the people affected by policies and going back to the Who and the Why, instead of the What. "It's easy to say you're for or against a broad topic, but harder to look at who is involved and affected."

Abbie sees politics as a place where problems can sometimes become worse, but also a place where they can be fixed. She wants to help get people involved, to feel they can do something together. Though she acknowledges the many problems facing us now, she's inspired by the recent election of Ilhan Omar and the record number of women in public office. She feels a sense of hope that people are getting more informed about issues, and is especially grateful for the Peace community, where we have a lot of people who care about the issues and people's lives, rather than just party lines.



Abbie at Work Camp

Grateful for her own experiences and education, Abbie would like to work to make sure people have similar opportunities for education, and a chance to really be informed. She especially noted the importance of books and documentaries in her understanding of many different issues.



Abbie at Work Camp

For Abbie, faith is connected to hope. "Faith is a hopefulness and willingness to believe that things can work out." She has seen faith and justice connected particularly in the community here at Peace—especially in conversations on work camp trips in the summer, "talking to the Warren's and the Patty's and seeing all the good people do that is centered in this community."

Abbie's inspiration comes from her family and friends. She especially mentioned how inspired she is that her dad stepped out of a safer job track to do what he wanted to do, something he cares about. Abbie said that through her parents' example, she could take a different approach. She's also inspired by her friends who are really kind or dedicated to putting in time to groups that benefit the broader community. One final quote Abbie shared came from a recent social media post by Sarah Holst (quoting Harriet Lerner): "If we only listened with the same passion that we feel about being heard."

*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
January 2019*

Diana Oestreich—Fighting for Peace With Love



“I don’t know what Saul heard on his road,” Diana Oestreich said, “but my conversion was in a tent in the desert during the Iraq war.” She was twenty-three years old, a combat medic with the Army National Guard. She slept at night with a 9mm beretta by her side. And the entire time she had been immersed in war, her gut was clenched in tension and anguish. Her military experience did not fit her faith. “Is this how I love my neighbor?”

One night, another soldier said that he would never take away someone’s chance to know God. He refused to put bullets in his weapon. That night, Diana realized that “I would give my life for another, but I will not take another life.” She woke up knowing what she would do, and removed the bullets from her own gun.

“I chose to love first, even if it meant losing my own life. I would fight for peace with sacrifice, not bullets.”

War was the most painful and yet the most transforming experience in her life.

“The war unmade me,” Diana said. And it made her into a Peacemaker. She is now on the staff of Preemptive Love Coalition (preemptivelove.org), an organization based in Iraq whose mission is to “unmake violence by confronting fear with acts of love.”

Its focus is showing up for refugees in Iraq and Syria with food, water, medical care—and empowerment, helping people start microbusinesses as a way to reclaim their future from violence. As a stateside representative of Preemptive Love Coalition, Diana works with groups of people across the country—churches, schools, book clubs, civic groups. Her goal is to help people learn peacemaking, which “challenges us to see how to cross boundaries. It is essential to confront the violence and the need for peacemaking in our own communities, to help people believe that change is doable and change is local.”

Diana first met Iraqi people in her role as a combat medic charged with treating everyone. As she was invited into homes, and got to know families, she felt that “I was part of a bigger family of God. One that cannot be separated by flags, countries, or citizenship, or different names or ways to worship god.”

“I grew up in a religious tradition that taught me to love God but not my neighbor,” Diana said. “I never heard a pastor talk about non-violence.” Preemptive Love put words and action to what God told her in the desert. “Violence is the opposite of love,” Diana believes. “Violence is the poison that is hurting us. Violence is breaking down the family of God.” Through Preemptive Love, I “found a way to put my hands on justice. I became part of remaking the world. My heart bounced back.”

Diana is a peacemaker. She is also a writer. “Writing helped me find my voice. Writing helps me have a voice. It helps me heal from violence. Writing gives me the courage to speak up—about racism, about injustice, about violence.”

As she reflected on the sources of courage and action in her life, she named her angel, that nameless soldier. The list quickly grew to include the person of Jesus, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, poets and writers (including Maya Angelou and Glennan Doyle), Father Gregory Boyle (an LA priest addressing gun violence and gangs). She also names her husband, Jake, who wrote to her throughout her deployment, making her believe that “out of all the violence and evil I had seen people do to each other in war, that there was also love.” And she names her two sons: Bridger, who “inspires me to be brave when I’m feeling hopeless” and Zelalem, who “teaches me to believe in myself when I’m scared. They are the best 10 and 11 year old coaches on how to show up and love.”

As Diana reflects on her position in the world, she writes: “I don’t lean left or right. I lean in. I lean forward, because that’s where love lives.”



Diana and her family were readers at the 2019 Inter-Faith MLK service.

*Interviewed by Pamela Mittlefehldt
February 2019*

John Wakefield: Advocating Equal Health Care for Everyone

A son of the Iron Range of Northern Minnesota, John grew up in Buhl, the fifth of six children, proud of his half-Finnish ancestry acquired through his mother. The family identified itself as Lutheran, but didn't attend services. John joined Peace Church three years ago, after searching for a worship community that accepted everyone. He confirms that Peace lives up to its ideal of "extravagant hospitality," and recounts how welcoming and non-judgmental people were during those first few visits. The diversity of the Peace Church family speaks to John's desire for equality everywhere, and the number of activities open to everyone impresses him. He joined the Health Team and responded to the need at Peace for help in completing Health Care Advanced Directives by volunteering as the instructor in a scheduled class. People are grateful to have a completed and legal health care directive in their hands after attending the class. John has become a caring member of the community, reaching out to people at Peace who he senses need a friend or have had many life challenges.



Following high school, John completed a degree in Social Work at The College of St. Scholastica and began working as a social worker with older adults in a long-term care facility. His interest in the medical needs of older adults led him to enroll in the Nursing Associate degree program at Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College. He then completed a Bachelors degree in Nursing from The College of St. Scholastica. He is now licensed as a Registered Nurse as well as a Public Health Nurse. John also keeps his social work license active in Minnesota.

John's passion in life is to help people. His education, previous professional jobs, and practice as a Carlton County Public Health Nurse have enabled him to be a very competent nurse and social worker "all rolled up in one." John talks with deep commitment about serving the needs of older adults with dementia and their families. He is sensitive to the special needs of people with dementia. As he observes the challenges in their daily activities and family relationships, he works with families and other health care professionals to develop a care plan. Goals are doable and the emphasis is on keeping people in their own homes as long as they are safe. John talks slowly and softly, with authenticity and a matter of fact approach, and exudes warmth and kindness. He is non-judgmental and accepts people where they are in their lives.

Fellow nurses and social workers at Carlton County and in the community inspire John "as we are all trying to make people's lives better." Daily reading of *Days of Healing, Days of Joy: Daily Meditations* by Hazelden and *The Language of Letting Go: Meditations and Co-Dependency* by Melody Beattie inspire and give John perspective, focus and sometimes direct application to a problem he is facing during the day. I asked John how his faith impacts his work, and he replied, "faith matches who I am."

John explains that he is always trying to advocate health care for all, to make all lives better, to keep people as healthy as possible, both physically and mentally, and to ensure a safe environment. This can be very difficult, especially with inadequately housed, low income, non-insured people who face shortages of food and transportation. John states that we need to be very creative and resourceful in addressing the challenges these people face. We need to team up with other agencies and communities, and advocate for providing the services they need. Equality means that physical and mental health services be equally available to everyone, and that mental illness not be stigmatized, in contrast to physical illness that is not stigmatized. John advocates that Medicare for all would improve or solve many of the inequities in our present health care system. The words of Martin Luther King, Jr. are at the heart of John's work: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

*Interviewed by Bill Hardesty
March 2019*

Jim Pospisil: Creating Harmony

Jim Pospisil believes that the connection between his work and justice boils down to one simple idea: “If you have a gift, it must be shared. Who am I to deny the possibility of love and beauty in this world?” As the music director at Peace Church, Jim shares his gifts, bringing love, beauty, and harmony to our community.

At the heart of his commitment to social justice is Jim’s concern about division—in our country, in our city, in our families. “Our language has become heated and people aren’t as kind as I would like,” Jim says. “We marginalize people with anti-Muslim or anti-LGBTQ rhetoric.” Jim sees this divisiveness anytime someone critiques a person who is different from themselves, including those who have differing political views. “It’s easy to be angry at someone without understanding them, and I include myself.” Working to heal this divisiveness is also at the heart of Jim’s commitment to racial justice. “The message is so simple: what is most important is how we treat each other.”

Peace Church has been a source of support and inspiration for Jim in terms of responding to social justice. “I found that people in our church community were much more engaged than I have been. There’s always someone who has been engaging around justice, and I don’t need to reinvent the wheel.” Often this leads Jim to attend community events. “Someone else plans something—and I’ll show up to play music.”

Jim finds that Peace is a great source of information about justice events and issues. “I value announcements at church and the Peace Bell. They take what’s happening and add perspective that you might not get just through major news networks. Now I know how to dig deeper, put things in perspective. A lot of this is driven by wanting to teach his children about morality and current issues. “They ask questions about things, and I feel like I need to be pretty solid in understanding what’s happening and share what I know. Kids keep you honest—once they get to a certain age, you can’t just make stuff up.”

Reflecting on the connection between his faith and action, Jim commented that he is blessed with a life in which opportunities for action continuously present themselves. “Whether it’s an event downtown or a church event, there are always opportunities to talk with others, to be open to relationships and new experiences. When I pray, I usually start with ‘God I’m sorry’ and then move to ‘what should I do now?’ It’s usually fast and quick—when I’m running, there’s a lot of clarity. Runs are mini-vision quests. Sometimes I get an answer to a question I didn’t even know I had. That’s probably one of the few times in my life when I open myself and I’m in my best place. That’s when I have spiritual clarity.”

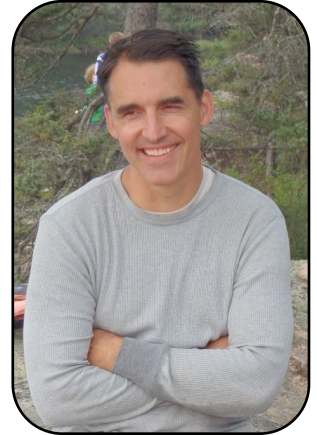
As he reflected on the connection between music and the sacred, Jim noted that “different musical styles and traditions all have the potential to be holy. It is important to start with reverence, humility, and wonder. The point is not to impress, but to serve, to offer up what we have, and experience something beyond ourselves.”



When asked about people who have been influential in his life, Jim responded by reflecting on those who have helped him become “a better me.” “I love talking with Nancy Nelson because she’s earnest and compassionate.” He also loves his daily interactions with Nathan Holst, which often challenge him to think about what is happening from a different perspective. Jerry Cleveland “inevitably thinks about something I haven’t thought about. He gives constructive criticism always under the umbrella of love and compassion.” Gudrun Witrak “understands my vision, and walks with me in frustrating moments, as well as moments of ecstasy.” Jim finds it humbling to realize how much of a family we are here at Peace. “It’s beautiful, and I guess we’re on this ride together.”

At the heart of Jim’s Christianity is that moment of need and affirmation when Jesus is on the cross between the two thieves. One says, “Get yourself off the cross,” and the other says, “Remember me.” Jesus responds: “You will be with me.” “My faith journey has said, you’ve given it a shot and you’ve failed, but you’re always held in love. I say I’m sorry, and the answer comes quickly and simply: God the coach slaps me on the butt and says ‘get back in there.’” Jim’s gifts and his music help us all get back in there, seeking harmony in beauty, love, and faith. “Start with faith, and justice shouldn’t be too far behind.”

*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
April 2019*



Robin Davidson: Support on a Healing Journey

“Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured” — B. K.S. Iyengar



If you are ever at Peace Church on a Monday morning, you may see many of our people gathering in the Fireside Room for Robin Davidson’s Soma Yoga class, and then perhaps staying to help volunteer at the adaptive Yoga class for people living with Multiple Sclerosis. Robin begins each class with a satsanga—an opportunity for people to share what is on their hearts, to talk about what is going on—a chance for like-minded people to be in community with one another.

Robin, a physical therapist and Yoga instructor, went to the University of North Dakota to get her physical therapy degree. It was there in clinicals that she realized she loved working in rehabilitation, especially neurological rehab. “In this work you are able to support the whole person and help to improve their quality of life.” After graduation, she traveled and worked in many places with her husband Lee, who was a professional hockey player. She has had the opportunity to work with and learn from people in Atlanta, Chicago, and Indiana. They also lived abroad in Canada and Germany.

Sixteen years ago they moved to Duluth to make a more permanent home for their family. Elena was nine months old at the time, and Simon was born a couple of years later. Robin was looking for a church home that had outreach into the wider community and found Peace. For Robin, Peace Church is her mountain pose. It provides a solid ground to stand on with a peak reaching up to heaven and God.

Robin is an active volunteer at Peace, and also with the Loaves and Fishes and Damiano communities. Six years ago she started the Chair Yoga class at Peace. Her first participants were Mary Martin, Barb Forrest, and Elaine Augustad. The class has grown to over 15 participants on most Mondays now. She ends each class with “I bow to the place in you that is of light, love and joy. When you and I bow to our true nature we are one.”

Robin co-created True North Adaptive Yoga, which provides adaptive yoga classes for people living with physical and cognitive challenges. These classes meet in four locations in the Duluth area, and Robin teaches two of those classes. She has also taught other teachers and trained many of volunteers over the past four years. She does this in partnership with the Miller Dwan Foundation, Courage Kenney Northland, the YMCA, The College of St. Scholastica, and UMD. She loves this work where she gets to combine yoga with her passion for supporting people who are marginalized by disability. Robin also works with people living with ALS. She is part of an ALS Clinic at Essentia Health that helps people live their best possible lives in a supportive, collaborative environment while their disease is progressing.

Robin’s caring heart can be seen in the ways she cares for people beyond the walls of the hospital or yoga class. Several years ago she had a patient who needed to move, but didn’t have the resources or physical ability to do so. With the help of Warren Post, Jim McLean, Scott and Phyllis Mead, and others, the patient was moved into a new and better apartment.

Robin defines her sankalpa, her life’s mission, as “I will support myself and others on a healing journey.” It is what she does. Thank you so much Robin!



*Interviewed by Kathy Nelson
May 2019*

Cindy Macaulay: Shining her Light

Cindy Macaulay’s warm presence and friendly smile make people feel welcome at Peace Church. She is a quietly active person around Peace—helping with coffee hour, serving as a lay reader, coordinating shared ministries, participating in spiritual journey groups, and volunteering weekly in the church office. As she says, “I do putzy little things around church that keep things humming along.”

After retiring from her work as a counselor at the Vet Center, Cindy began volunteering at the Lake Superior Zoo and at Essentia, where she acts as a helpful wayfinder in the Skywalk. She is concerned that people are drifting apart, that there is more socialized isolation. “We are in our corners looking at what divides us rather than unites us.” In her volunteer work, she makes eye contact and smiles and says “hi” to strangers. Most people brighten up, although some are too distracted by their “business” and phones. And those who are lost or confused about finding their way are relieved to find a helping hand and heart in Cindy. She intentionally makes a human connection with everyone.

This distraction with devices has affected society as a whole, taking us away from the world around us, Cindy thinks, herself included. For example, she recently was out walking her dog in a wetland and listening to her audiobook, when she realized the spring peepers were croaking in a happy chorus. She took off her headphones and enjoyed just walking along, listening to the frogs in the company of her dog.

Cindy believes that people and connections are the most important things in faith and spirituality. “I’m coming from a place of unconditional love and acceptance...I may disagree with a person but they are always held in a loving space, unconditionally. This way we can break the shell of isolation.”



Cindy with her Shared Ministry buddy, Molly Watson. Cindy has been the heart of that team for many years. It used to be called the Welcoming Team, and Cindy personifies the warm welcome we want for everyone coming to Peace Church.

When asked what guides her, Cindy says, “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.” She also referred to the words former local newscaster Dennis Anderson always ended his broadcast with: “Be Kind.”

*Interviewed by Lisa Fitzpatrick
June 2019*

Geof Witrak—Generosity and Justice

Geof Witrak's sense of social justice is grounded in his desire to "give until it feels good." His life is shaped by generosity, engagement, and hope—values that were nurtured by his family and their roots in faith.

Geof grew up around the shores of Lake Minnetonka, where he learned how to bale hay, spread manure, and maintain fairways, in addition to swimming and fishing. He grew up with a deep respect for his grandfather and father who both worked to find successful roles in their communities. His grandfather, Alex Witrak, emigrated from the Ukraine in 1912. However harrowing it must have been to plunge into all the risks and unknowns of immigration, it was the right decision. Had he remained, he would have had to face Stalin's terror and the Holdomor, the mass starvation which reportedly killed 7,000,000 Ukrainians for resisting collectivization of their farms under Communist doctrine. Alex landed on Ellis Island as a pilgrim seeking a new identity and a fresh start in the United States. This was a particularly difficult path during the Depression, as his grandfather was immersed in a new geography, language and culture.



After graduating from St. Olaf, Geof decided to attend medical school at Case Western Reserve in Cleveland. But after investing two years of time and effort, he decided that medical school was not for him. He approached his Dean about dropping out of med school. However, the Dean recognized Geof's gifts and capacity, and suggested that Geof take two years off to consider other opportunities. Geof saw the wisdom of the Dean's suggestion. After a year of reflection and exploring other options, he met Gudrun. With her help he reconsidered his career options, and his low draft number, and contacted his Dean again about returning to medical school. Geof mentioned that he had met a wonderful woman from Minnesota and asked if he could continue his medical degree at the University of Minnesota medical school. Dean Caughey was quick to encourage Geof's return, contacted a friend who was a Dean at the University of Minnesota, and the doors at the med school opened. Geof knew he was lucky to find Gudrun and enroll at the U of M.

This critical decision generated some deep harmonies in Geof's life. It helped him to build a successful 37-year medical practice as a pathologist—30 of those years with what is now Essentia Health. Geof retired recently from a rich career of serving with a talented team of medical professionals. Noting that service and gratitude were elements of his family's tradition, Geof has become active in a number of local groups, including AICHO, Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, and Lake Superior Solar Finance, LLC, which are working to improve justice and equality in Duluth's community and to create climate responses. He serves with groups that are committed to improving our community by speaking out, becoming actively engaged, and focusing on common cause solutions. As an active and informed citizen, he has served Duluth with pattern recognition skills he used at Essentia. Now he uses that skill and insight about interdependent systems to support local teams that address issues of inequity and neglect. His generosity and positive humor have provided more than financial support to a number of these local teams and their efforts to improve our teamwork and collaboration.

Geof's sense of humor is one aspect of his commitment to shared justice. As a doctor, he learned his way through suffering and death with patients. This journey has helped him realize that our life choices can leave us either more satisfied or more discontent. His work with people and groups in Duluth who are dedicated to improving our local systems has been deeply rewarding. The journeys of his grandfather, Alex, and his father, Bohdan, continue to inspire his gratitude for gifts received. His mother used to remind him that it was "better to be lucky than smart." And he soon learned that the best response to good fortune was gratitude. This has made him sensitive to the Angels among us, those individuals who lead efforts to make the world a better place. He shares their focus on justice for the entire community. One of the foundational principles of his faith is to "Love thy neighbor as thyself", with all that implies regionally, nationally, and internationally." Geof, who is both lucky and smart, works to share that love.

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
July 2019*

Beth Bartlett: Bending the Arc Toward Healing, Harmony, and Justice

“Finding meaning in life, creating a just and peaceful world, healing and wholeness, and connection with the natural world have been the continual themes throughout my life.” For Beth Bartlett, the most pressing issue at this time is “climate change and all of the social issues surrounding it.” The issues that matter most to her are all rooted in climate, environment, and environmental justice—and include Line 3 and Polymet; racial injustice; oppression on the basis of sex and gender; immigration; war and militarism; the economic divide. What Beth would most like to change is the patriarchal paradigm of dominance over “the earth, animals, women, and oppressed Others.” Her life work has focused on shifting to an ecofeminist paradigm of “equality, respect, and harmony.”

Beth has dedicated her life to helping create this change—as a teacher and scholar, an author, an activist, and a healer. She taught political science and women’s studies at UMD, and was a founding force for the Women’s Studies department. She also was an active force in the growing feminist movement in Duluth, working with ground-breaking feminist organizations. She found community in women’s music and continues to sing with Wild by Nature. Since she retired from UMD in 2017, she has continued her activism. She also has continued her development as a healer, establishing her spiritual direction practice as well as facilitating healing in those who have experienced trauma. “I do believe that in healing trauma we help to heal the world.”



“The call ‘to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God’ is rooted deeply in my faith tradition,” Beth states. But she also struggled with that faith tradition—“with its patriarchal and misogynist culture.” She has learned much from Buddhist, feminist, and creation spirituality, in addition to Christianity. “In order to walk humbly on this earth, I needed radically to change and expand my understanding of faith.”

Beth’s life has been shaped by the confluence of faith and action.

“I went to my first march for peace against the Vietnam War in 1971, and I have been marching and rallying ever since: for the ERA, Take Back the Night, marches protesting wars, marches for the climate, clean water, Black Lives Matter. “I’ve stood on street corners and spoken at rallies and been a peace marshal and held signs...I’ve spent a lot of time at public hearings.”

Behind the scenes, Beth has been cooking meals for Loaves and Fishes for over two decades. She helps grow the Peace Garden, delivers food to CHUM, supports water protectors with food and baked goods.

She feels a responsibility “as a settler on this land, to act in whatever ways I could that would be reparative and restorative to the indigenous community.” This has meant speaking at PUC meetings about the Sandpiper and Line 3 pipelines, baking bread for Standing Rock, participating in vigils. “Mostly it has meant befriending, and those friendships are the basis for everything.” Recently, she became certified in Indigenous Focusing-Oriented Therapy (IFOT) for complex trauma, which she hopes to offer in the indigenous community.

Beth sees her work at UMD as another way of putting her beliefs into action, as she helped students to think about justice, patriarchy, and oppression, encouraging them to “bend the universe toward justice.” “I hope that I helped generations of students find their authentic selves and voices.”

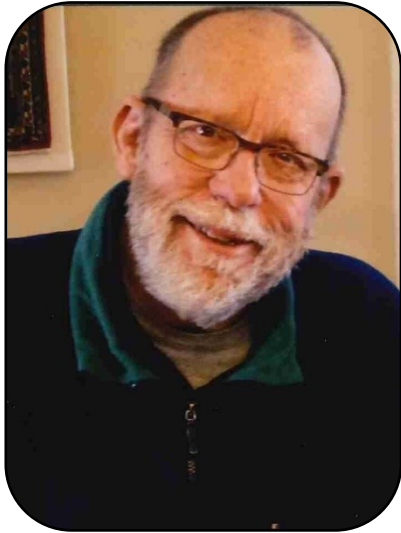
Beth is also an author who finds that writing is another way of acting on her beliefs. *Rebellious Feminism and Making Waves: Grassroots Feminism in Duluth and Superior* articulates her feminist beliefs, as well as records a significant history of feminist activism in Duluth. *Journey of the Heart*, a reflection on her heart transplant, is a powerful expression of her faith journey and her desire to help others in their own healing.

“Healing lies in...affirming dignity, fighting injustice, acting with compassion, honoring friendship, and sustaining a spirituality that integrates mind, body, spirit, and the earth.” (from *Rebellious Feminism*)

*Interviewed by Pamela Mittlefehldt
September 2019*

Jerry Cleveland: Justice Through Listening, Relationship and Bridge-Building

For Jerry Cleveland, the most pressing social justice issue right now is “the difficulty we have with communicating with each other. The polarization and pushing issues to opposite extremes. There’s little listening and a lot of talking and attacking going on. It’s coming from both sides.” For Jerry, “social justice is always a moving target—difficult to define.” He believes that the central issue should be that “people have room and opportunity to improve their lot in this world.” I’ve probably read too much history,” he adds. “It doesn’t take a blink of an eye for the oppressed to become the oppressors. Power is an intoxicating thing, and once folks have it, it’s hard to change. It can easily become a matter of good and bad.”



Racial issues have always been a concern for Jerry. He grew up in the Hillside neighborhood in Duluth and went to school with Black kids. His Peace Corps experience, friendships, and teaching experiences expanded his understanding. Native issues are also important to him because of his work with Native kids and the relationships that have developed. Jerry believes that it is essential to establish ongoing dialogue in any work toward justice, and he worries that the discussion of white privilege is in danger of “pushing the discussion to far extremes, making ongoing dialogue more difficult.”

Jerry has also had a lifelong commitment to labor issues. “Labor issues have been a part of my upbringing. People having a say in defining their work—that’s about justice.” As Jerry put it, “I became a teacher activist,” which led to becoming a representative of the teachers’ union and central labor body and serving as union secretary for many years. “Part of what we were trying to do was represent education in the labor body, and school wasn’t always viewed positively, so it was about relationship building and building bridges.”

When asked about the relationship between faith and action, Jerry replied that “for me, faith does not equal social justice. Social justice could be one of the outcomes, but faith involves wrestling with broader belief.” He referred to a book by David Brooks that he has just read, which raises the question of what it takes to develop a true working democracy. “He’s talking about moving to a broader consciousness. Part of that is about having a healthy and realistic expectation of what people can be, their limitations and their strengths.” Jerry referred to the story of King David. “He overcomes oppression and becomes king, but then creates a dynasty and plants the seeds for the destruction of what he created. Part of what faith does, or ought to do, is plant within us a prophetic element to accompany whatever it is that we do. King David should have kept the prophet Nathan close, to keep himself connected to criticism, to keep himself faithful.”

Jerry grew up in a Baptist church in the Heights. It was an important factor in his life, from late elementary age on. “The people there took an interest in working with kids. This went on while I went to the university—they were really important people to me.” He learned outdoor skills that stayed with him all his life. It also connected him to experiences of community. I got involved in Intersarsity in college, and I worked for them for three summers in Colorado. As he reflected on influences in his life, Jerry noted that “Wherever I’ve gotten involved, people have been with me that have been a lot of help. Pastors here at Peace. Some of my work colleagues, political heroes.” Reading Martin Luther King’s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* “opened me up to a lot.” The Bible has rich stories: the Joseph story, the Moses story. Wendell Berry is always good, and Raymond Carver.”

Wrestling with broad issues, building bridges, establishing relationships, and working to remain faithful embody Jerry’s approach to social justice. He believes that “faith is something that should always be growing, and actions kind of have a half life.”

*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
October 2019*

Lisa Fitzpatrick: Doing Something About Climate Justice

Lisa Fitzpatrick was raised in a rich tradition that wove together links to the American Revolution and a Finnish natural sensibility. She grew up immersed in the natural beauty of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, in a family committed to being stewards of the earth. When asked about some of her strong commitments, she quickly replied, “I volunteer in the Peace nursery.” When Lisa recognizes a need, she responds with commitment and action, whether it is harvesting the Peace garden or addressing the challenges of climate justice. She is particularly concerned about the impact of climate change on our natural systems.

When asked about her enjoyment of and commitment to our natural systems, Lisa quickly referred to her parents, Robert and Viola Brown**. Her father switched from a career as a chemical engineer working with oil drilling in Oklahoma to earning a Ph.D. in Forestry at UW Madison, where he studied with Aldo Leopold. The whole family enjoyed exploring the natural world, searching for the treasures of mushrooms and berries, agates and fossils. Both parents were environmental and peace activists.



Lisa left the UP to attend Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., where she earned her Bachelor’s degree in Russian and a minor in business. She became fluent in Russian, French, and Spanish and served for more than ten years as a translator at Beth Israel Hospital and other Harvard Medical School-associated hospitals, as well as with insurance companies in the Northeast.

While this work was rewarding, Lisa decided to go to graduate school at Michigan Tech, where she earned a Master of Science in Rhetoric and Communication Technology. She was hired to manage the Visualization Lab at UMD. This combination of her passion for our natural systems, her technical training, and her linguistic gifts gives Lisa the skills and commitment to help address this greatest challenge in human history.

Lisa’s sense of justice has moved her to action based on her faith. She is particularly committed to taking action to reduce climate risks and increase climate justice in our community. As she states, “We face an unprecedented number of challenges to our ecosystem, social system, and economic system from the warming climate.” She has worked with a variety of local and national partners, including the Lake Superior Network of Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, to prepare our communities for these unprecedented system challenges. She currently is involved with the Duluth Climate Mobilization, part of the national Climate Mobilization team that has developed a vision, a process and set of tools for partners to utilize while they build a local response to this global challenge. This is a huge commitment of spirit, energy, focus and teamwork.

When asked about the investment of her time and talent into this organizational response to an unparalleled crisis, Lisa reflected that she was enjoying the challenge and fresh teamwork because it was linked to things her mother and father had taught her to honor. Late in her mother Vi’s life, when she was living in the Benedictine Health Center and dealing with Alzheimer’s disease, Vi said to Lisa: “We have to do something about our climate crisis! I feel so powerless here!” This moment of heart-felt clarity and commitment moved Lisa deeply.

As a woman of many gifts, of much training, and of faith, Lisa is working to guide her community’s response to this rising crisis. She gathers strength and energy from others, and appreciates the teamwork evoked by the challenge. And she remains hopeful that we can pull together as more communities and nations work together to respond to a dangerous situation. Rather than turn toward despair when tired, Lisa says that she finds hope in the cornerstone of faith. “Many faith traditions ask us to love God above all and to love our neighbor as ourselves.” These elements of a powerful faith sustain her commitment. From the Peace nursery to Climate Mobilization, Lisa works with others to bring balance, healing, and hope to this planet.

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
November 2019*

***Lisa’s mother, Viola Brown, was the subject of our first Voices for Justice column in 2014!*

JT Haines: Truth-Telling for a Sustainable Future

What social concerns or issues matter most deeply to you? What would you most like to change in our world?

I think a lot about our economic system in general. I read a book last year called *A Different Mirror* by Ronald Takaki in connection with a class I taught at CSS. The book tells a history of our country from the experiences and viewpoints of people of color, including indigenous people. He describes a system founded on exploitation and a myth of endless expansion, which from the beginning has meant the abuse of land, water, people, and indigenous nations. It's important to continue to consider and account for the abuses of that history in their own right, including the impacts for people who have been marginalized by it. What struck me also reading the book, though, is the idea that many of the big problems everyone is facing today—problems that are



becoming increasingly unavoidable like water scarcity, resources pressures, and the climate emergency—have their roots in this history of exploitation as well. Because we are dealing with a finite Earth, an economy based on exploitation and a myth of endless growth logically can't work. The potential good news in this, I think, is that we may be forced to recognize that all of our futures are bound up in this problem together, and maybe recognizing that will be key to helping us transition to something better. As a friend often reminds me, some of the adjustments we could make—simplifying our existence, acting more locally, focusing on resiliency—would likely make us happier.

How did you figure out how to respond to this issue or concern? What did this lead you to do?

When I consider the sources of my commitment, I give my parents a lot of credit. I remember as a kid having a sense for injustices in the world and not feeling good about that, and that feeling had to come from somewhere. It's never really felt like a choice. Another thing I think about are the opportunities I've had to spend time in Honduras and Guatemala. It has been eye-opening to meet with community leaders and indigenous leaders, and I learned a lot about our role in the world, from the perspective of both oppressor and oppressed. Part of this was an observation of the difference between charity and mutual struggle. I think faith communities in general could do a better job of understanding the difference between those two things. I've certainly been in rooms where our better role is to sit quietly and listen. I am grateful for the people who have exposed me to those trips, many of them in our own UCC community. I think my part of the work we've been doing with Duluth for Clean Water and other environmental efforts is very much connected to these experiences, and also a love of the incredible wilderness in Northern Minnesota.

In terms of the work, we all bring different skill sets, and I deeply appreciate the people who are committed to the day-to-day fights for justice, which are required for too many just to get by. What seems to be in my "wheelhouse" is trying to be a part of telling the truth about corporate exploitative models—and current proposals for exploitation—and how that relates to our shared prospects. I recognize that that's just one part of the work.

What do you see as the connection between your faith and action?

I'll be honest, I don't spend a lot of time thinking about the word "faith" itself. But when I do think about it, for me, the connection between faith and action is all about community. It seems like I'm in good company on this at Peace. I love how active our community is. I was raised in the Lutheran tradition before my family started going to a UCC church. Some of the traditions from growing up are still with me, but at its core for me it's about community. I recently visited the church I grew up in for a memorial service, and I was struck by how at home I felt—a full 30 years later. There's something so meaningful about being a part of a community that welcomes and remembers you decades later. There's just something there for me. So I think faith is bound up in community. And I think action is bound up in community. And in that very basic sense, I think action is bound up in faith. I really appreciate the privilege of being a part of Peace Church.



*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
December 2019*

Angie Miller: Entertaining Angels

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*

Hebrews 13:2

Angie has lived this passage throughout her life, with a deep commitment to “feed, clothe and house people living on the margins of society.” Many strangers have entered her life, and she has responded with compassion, humility, and service. In return, her life has been touched by angels and inspired by the courage of others.

Angie grew up in a family that welcomed many foster children into their home, and the reality of “extravagant hospitality” was etched into her being. Angie’s family taught her how to live a just life on the personal level. She learned about systemic social justice as a graduate student in the School of Social Development at UMD in the late 1970s. That’s where Angie met Steve O’Neil, and thus began their life of putting their faith into action. Angie reflected that through the years the focus of her social concerns has been evolving to include homelessness, equity, poverty reduction, peacemaking, and protection of our environment.

In their early years together, Angie and Steve lived among the homeless in the Community for Creative Nonviolence in Washington, DC. In the 1980s, they settled into the Duluth community and actualized those practices by founding Loaves and Fishes, a Catholic Worker community of volunteers providing housing for people transitioning from homelessness to dignity and self-respect. While raising their two children, Brianna and Brendan, Angie and Steve also fostered over 30 children, providing them with a loving environment. Angie’s activism shifted from the grassroots to the organizational level when she became the Executive Director of Community Action Duluth and led their mission to mobilize people and the broader community in reducing poverty and removing barriers to self-sufficiency.

Angie has encountered so many angels while accompanying the marginalized—people experiencing long term homelessness and mental illness in Washington DC; Guatemalan refugees seeking refuge from violence on their way to seeking asylum in Canada; homeless men, women and children at Loaves and Fishes; small babies needing the warmth of love and care; families living in the midst of poverty in an unjust society.

Angie also has been inspired by the courage of others whose faith has propelled them to step out of the comfort of their daily lives and to take risks for justice. She names her husband, Steve O’Neil, her friend Donna Howard, the Plowshares activists, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Angie wonders how her faith calls her into action during this time of climate chaos and global insecurity. Over 30 years ago she put her secure life on the line when she spent 10 days in the Ashland jail for her direct action against the ELF (Extreme Low Frequency) installation and the threat of nuclear warfare. Over the past few years Angie has become an avid hiker and explorer of the natural world. In addition to spending a lot of time with her grandkids, perhaps her faith is calling her to take risks in order to protect God’s creation.

*"What does the Lord require of you?
To act justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."
Micah 6:8*



*Interviewed by Lyn Clark Pegg
January 2020*

Benjamin Fena: Becoming the Change He Hopes For

Benjamin Fena will be sixteen years old in early March, and he has been thinking a lot about his commitments and his capacity. After attending a public elementary school, Benjamin decided he preferred home schooling. His parents, Libby and Andy, had a sense of his gifts and encouraged this approach to learning. As an independent learner, Benjamin is taking more responsibility for his own learning experiences. This has made him curious, articulate, questioning, and full of hope.



Benjamin is the oldest of three siblings, and he seems to enjoy the responsibility that generates. Whether it is the teamwork of family camping trips to the BWCA or teamwork on a learning project with Ed Vision courses, he enjoys the social and emotional challenges of shared learning. This has grown from his background with home-schooling but it has been strengthened through interactions with a variety of learning partners. He has just completed work with the YMCA's Youth in Government program, modelling the legislative process in state government. His team invested a number of hours of research for their presentation, which was highly regarded by state mentors.

Benjamin has also worked with the Kids Plus program of the Northland Foundation to serve the community at St. Anne's. By providing a variety of services from cleaning, technology, and domestic services, youth leaders found gratification in the appreciation of their capacity for giving and helping others in need. By serving older members of his community, Benjamin recognized the values that youth can share with others.

One of the most meaningful groups that has helped Benjamin develop his leadership and commitment skills has been Kids for the Boundary Waters. He has been on many family trips to the BWCA, starting before his first birthday. His parents raised him with a deep appreciation for the natural systems we enjoy. His work on the Kids for the Boundary Waters team took him to Washington, DC to represent the non-market values of the BWCA as well as its economic value to the region. Seventy students went face-to-face with federal leaders in Congress and the departments of the Interior and Agriculture. The students were well prepared and informed, and felt that they made a difference, and that their message was heard by federal leaders. Experiences like this generate hope and build greater commitment.

In addition to his work with several organizations, Benjamin also has been on the East High School cross country ski team. He takes pride in his development over six years as a biathlete. His training in skiing and shooting has given him both drive and discipline, which work well with his growing curiosity and commitment. He is also a member of the choir at Peace Church.

As a result of this fertile mix of athletics, service, and academic teamwork, Benjamin has started to identify and focus his gifts, particularly in terms of environmental justice. He enjoys debate and dialogue. His research and presentation skills have been growing each year. The hours invested in collecting data and practicing the persuasive presentation of their logic have resulted in powerful experiences which have added clarity to his thoughts about the future.

Benjamin is realizing that he may have the skills and drive to become an environmental attorney. From his love for the BWCA and his enjoyment of skiing in the woods, he understands that preserving our natural resources for future generations is a high priority. He is currently working on the background issues associated with the Twin Metals mining proposal on Birch Lake, just outside of Ely and next to the BWCA. He has been learning about Antofagasta, the company that intends to mine hundreds of thousands of tons of ore to harvest nickel, copper, platinum and gold. He has begun to evaluate how the economic and non-market factors may affect the BWCA and the regional economy. He is excited by what he has been learning and is hopeful that there will be a sustainable outcome for the next generation.

When asked to identify some of his core hopes for our future, Benjamin responded, "We should be the change we hope to see in the future!" He takes his responsibility for justice very seriously. This biathlete has both the aim and resilience which are essential for working on issues of environmental justice.

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
February 2020*

Sara Carlson: A Guide for Love and Justice

When asked what she would most like to change in the world, Sara initially responded with a wry smile. “Everything!” She then focused on the issues that matter most deeply to her: the environment and immigration. She wishes our national parks were safe, that water was seen not as disposable but as the source of all life that it is. She has also been committed to working for marriage equality.

Sara grew up on a farm in Wisconsin. From the time she was a child, she had a deep connection with nature. She grew up in a conservative religious family. When she was 16, she went with Youth With a Mission (YWAM) to Mexico, where she worked at an orphanage and also helped build cinder block homes. That experience opened Sara’s heart and eyes to the inequality in the world, and also to the fact that she had so much and needed to give to others. After finishing high school, she worked with YWAM for the next nine years. During this time, she did youth outreach throughout the US and Canada; led service learning trips to Mexico; developed mission outreach for the Atlanta Olympics; and worked on community development in India.

While she was in India, she fell in love with a woman. As she wrestled with her heart and the dictates of her faith tradition, she received the message that “God doesn’t want you as you are,” and was sent to be “straightened out.” She was forced to leave the work she loved in India and returned to Wisconsin, where she earned a BA at the University in Madison. She later moved to Minnesota, where she earned a Masters in Social Work from UMD.

Sara’s commitment to giving to others, helping to promote healing and justice in this world, has been at the heart of her life. She has worked with youth in residential treatment centers, and at Soltreks, a wilderness therapy program. She worked with a community offender reentry program through SOAR Career Solutions; was a counselor at the Minnesota Sex Offender Program in Moose Lake; has worked in hospice; and is currently a therapist in the student health center at UMD. She also volunteers with the American Red Cross, providing mental health assistance to communities dealing with disasters, including hurricanes in Houston and the Virgin Islands, fires, and most recently to the Fond Du Lac reservation after the funeral shooting.

Reflecting on the connection between her faith and action remains a source of conflict for Sara. In her early years, she bought the message of her religious tradition “hook, line, and sinker.” She was an evangelist, but realized that while she loved the humanitarian service part, “I was terrible at proselytizing. Who was I to think my way was better?” Increasingly, the tension between her sexuality and her faith became a source of pain. “I dedicated nine years of my life to serving a God who supposedly hates me.” She found it impossible to reconcile her faith and her sexuality, which led to her walking away from her faith. It was a time of crisis, for her faith was a core part of her life.

Through the example and support of friends and her own spiritual quest, Sara found ways to claim her faith, her sexuality, and her compassion. She attended an “Opening Our Doors” conference, which led her to Peace Church. The first time she walked into Peace, she realized she had found spiritual welcome and the possibility of a spiritual home. For her, though, the wilderness remains a deeply spiritual place, a place where she can believe that “everything just might be OK.”

Sara loves to travel. She and her partner, Melissa Gerads, have spent months with Work Away, an international program providing opportunities to work in countries around the world. They lived and taught in a refugee camp in Thailand, where they experienced first hand the longing for home, and for asylum in places like the US. Sara was struck by the gratitude and hope of the refugees, even as the US closed its doors to them. It was “humbling and infuriating.”

Her commitment to working on immigrant issues led to her involvement with the Interfaith Committee for Migrant Justice. She helped with the remodeling of space in Peace church to house people in need of shelter. After viewing the movie *Harriet*, Sara has been inspired to think about the possibility of forming a new underground railroad for immigrants. She smiles as she considers being a new kind of wilderness guide. In reality, she already is: a guide who works to make love and justice tangible every day.



*Interviewed by Pamela Mittlefehldt
March 2020*

Alison Wood: “Don’t be afraid to talk to teenagers”

Working as a teacher wasn’t always Alison Wood’s vision. Although she had helped at day camps and in Sunday School in high school (and had a mother who worked in a school library), it wasn’t until college that she realized that teaching might be a good path for her.

Finding that path certainly has been a stroke of luck for Duluth Public Schools where Alison has worked with the Alternative Learning Center, teaching math and science (and doing a fair bit of social work) and then moving to Central and later Denfeld High School where she currently teaches.

Alison clearly sees her work as preparing students for much more than understanding science. She thinks it is critical for any adult to have enough knowledge about their own body to be able to make sense of the news. But her true goal is to have students develop critical thinking skills and be informed consumers of media. In the age of Covid-19, she wants students to be able to ask questions like, “What’s missing here?” and “What questions do you have about the information?” This push towards critical thinking is part of her involvement with the National Center for Science Education that is modeling ways for teachers to address the topics of evolution and climate change in the classroom.



Alison’s push for critical thinking extends beyond the classroom. She also supports students in being critical about school systems that are intended to serve students. As the advisor for the Gay-Straight Alliance, she supports students in going to conferences and learning how to make the school more welcoming for all students. One project she is particularly proud of came from her “Pathways to Teaching” class in which a student decided that the school needed to have a non-gendered option for a bathroom. The student did all the research about which bathroom could be used, doing a cost analysis, and putting in a work order request. While the bathroom was eventually transformed, it first had to wait for the School Board to pass a policy that applied to all schools. This led to some questions on the part of students, such as “Why did it have to take so long?” and “What’s wrong with adults?” But it also led to some important breakthroughs, like one student who shared that it was the first time they felt comfortable going to the bathroom in school.

Being a part of Peace Church is important for Alison and her family. She gets a lot of support from Peace, and it makes her realize that the level of support for young people at Peace is what she knows needs to happen in schools. So she encourages all of us to get involved in schools. Once schools are back in session, check into tutoring programs or join with students at lunch time in conversation. Those connections with adults really make a difference. As a final piece of advice, she urges, “Don’t be afraid to talk to teenagers. Let them know you care and hear how things are going for them.”

*Interviewed by Doug Bowen-Bailey
May 2020*

Danny and Matt Johnson-Schiff: Care and Compassion in a Time of Pandemic

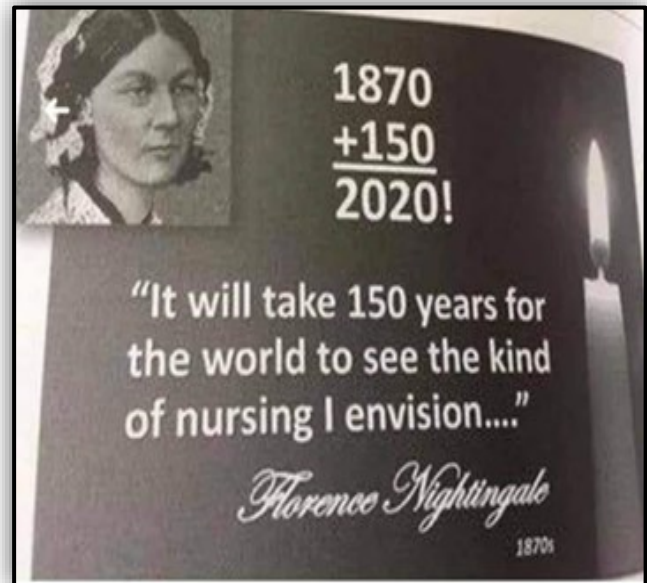


Danny and Matt are both members of Peace Church and nurses at Essentia. They met while working at a nursing home in Superior many years ago. Danny got his RN degree first and has been a nurse now for 9 years. He works on the Adult Mental Health Unit at Miller Dwan. He has a heart for working with this population. His compassion combined with his wonderful sense of humor help in his work of healing where it is so needed for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

Matt has been a nurse for 3 years. Danny's support and encouragement made all the difference in Matt believing that he could go from being an LPN to an RN with all the rigors of school. Matt especially loves working with older patients. He is currently assigned the Covid-19 unit at St. Mary's. Again his care and compassion come through even in this time of pandemic.

Their faith is a big part of why they are nurses. They look to the great commandment to love God and neighbor, all neighbors. They are grateful to have found a place of welcome at Peace Church. Danny said many years ago he was in the Twin Cities reading *Lavender Magazine* and saw an article about Pastor Kathy doing weddings for gay and lesbian couples, and wished there was a church like that in Duluth. It wasn't until he got to the end of the article that he realized Peace Church was in Duluth. Pastor Kathy officiated at Matt and Danny's wedding this past Halloween, their favorite holiday.

*Interviewed by Kathy Nelson
June 2020*



Matt and Danny find inspiration in this relevant quote from Florence Nightingale.

Crystal Kaczmarczyk: Activist for People and the Earth

Crystal Kaczmarczyk is a senior at Duluth East High School. She is also a passionate, thoughtful Peace Church Climate Justice team member. When asked what social concerns or issues mattered most to her, she wisely responded that it's hard to decide—they are all so intermingled. Crystal's top concerns are the environment and environmental justice, as well as mass incarceration and the death penalty in the USA. Crystal is also committed to gun control, equality for all people, LGBTQ rights, and equality for all races, and religions. Her passion for fighting against racism has been reignited by the recent protests.

If she could change anything in the world, Crystal would like to have an Earth for everyone to live on that is safe and equitable for everybody. This ideal world would depend upon changes in peoples' mindsets. "Racism is a concept that is not based on anything legitimate. Changing the world means eliminating problems that shouldn't be problems! Changing minds is most important."

Crystal has been very active with the Amnesty International club at East High School and has been instrumental in making it the vibrant club it is today. Amnesty International believes that environmental justice is a human right—having clean drinking water and clean air. This past year the club did a lot about clean water and anti-Polymet copper-nickel mining. Like everything else, the club has been on a pandemic break, but they have managed to stay in contact. Recently, in light of George Floyd's murder, they have had letter writing meetings/parties, sending letters to politicians.

Crystal has spent a lot of time reading and educating herself. "Books have been a very good tool for me. The authors of books I read are sources of action and courage in my life," she states. One book that Crystal recommends is a book on climate justice—*Generation Green* by Linda and Tosh Sivertsen. This is a manual for activism and living an eco-friendly life as a teenager. And the book *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson was a pivotal influence on Crystal's thinking about criminal justice reform.

Crystal grew up in Peace Church—a progressive, supportive place of social justice. She appreciates the support and the really good mentors at Peace. "Peace Church in general is a source of courage and action in my life, especially Nathan and Kathy—they are important and encouraging." Her mom also has been a great influence, teaching her about right and wrong. "Growing up in that context really helped," she says. Her family and friends, and peers in Amnesty International have been helpful too. Crystal also names two teachers who have been very influential in her life: Mrs. Nachbar, who teaches world history and Dr. Updegrove, the Amnesty International club advisor. "For History Day, Mrs. Nachbar suggested I do a project on the South Africa truth and reconciliation commission. I learned so much. Dr. Updegrove helped me find job-shadow at a legal aid firm. I am not sure if I would go into legal aid, but it really helps people, which is what I want to do with my career."

"I am still trying to figure out what I believe. Justice is so important. Peace Church promotes that. All the teams—climate justice, dismantling racism. Being a sanctuary church. I am glad I grew up in a church that could teach me all these things. It's not super-common that a church is so progressive and I love that about Peace. It's interesting to hear what friends' churches are like—very different! I would have a hard time being in a church that is preaching differently than what they do. I can stand behind Peace Church."

Crystal downplays her activism. She says, "I'm not super-impressive—there are so many young people even younger than me who are doing so much. It's not new for teens and young people to be acting and working for justice. I am really glad to be around people my age that care and make changes happen."

As she thinks about her future, Crystal is clear about one thing: "I want to have a career where I can help people or the environment. Hopefully both!"



*Interviewed by Lisa Fitzpatrick
July 2020*

Jesse Schomberg: Protecting What We Have Been Given

Jesse was raised outside of Fairmont, Minnesota, on a small farm built from the hope, passion and drive of his parents, Gary and Nancy Schomberg. Gary was an engineering tech for the city of Fairmont in addition to working the farm and livestock. Nancy worked at a food processing plant and ran the family garden and kitchen. Their passions and skills helped shape Jesse's life.

Since the family used everything they raised, Jesse learned to manage a variety of animals (including cattle, pigs, chickens, turkeys and ponies) and how to grow and harvest a variety of crops. He also learned cooking and preserving skills, as well as a sense of proportion and waste related to food. His dad was a member of the Martin County Conservation Club, and he taught Jesse how to work with natural systems to protect deer and fish.

Because of his interest in protecting and learning about natural systems, Jesse decided to attend UMD, where he majored in biology. He learned about the links between Duluth's community and the area's forests, fields, wetlands, streams, rivers, lakes, and animals. He became active with UMD's Outdoor Club, Wuda Wooch, where he met Spice—another focused and enthusiastic outdoor adventurer.

They married in December of 1992. A year later, after Spice finished her nursing degree, they moved to Idaho State University in Pocatello, where Jesse earned a Masters in Biology with a focus on aquatic ecology.

In January 1999, their family returned to Duluth, where Jesse was hired by the Natural Resources Research Institute to help manage the area's natural resources. After two years, he was hired by Minnesota Sea Grant to link the area's water resources with organizations and institutions using those resources to enhance the area's community and economy. He is currently Associate Director of Outreach for Minnesota Sea Grant.

During the 20 years that Jesse has been working to protect the area's aquatic and natural resources, he has recruited a variety of local, state, federal, and global partners and organizations to collaborate in protecting this watershed and its resources. Some of the Sea Grant efforts Jesse has been involved with include addressing the safety of our beaches, helping communities prepare for climate change impacts, monitoring water quality and watershed management, and helping with Duluth's Comprehensive Plan.

As the tourist industry has exploded, more people come to our beaches and bays. This has generated a variety of safety and health issues that Sea Grant helps manage. The Park Point beaches are one example of the growth in use and risks. After a rip current drowning in 2002, Sea Grant worked with local partners to build more awareness about risks and responses. The net result is still up and running (www.parkpointbeach.org). This site informs viewers of the possible risks, the degree of warning, and the variety of engaged partners. Projects like this are a tribute to Jesse's listening, collaboration and commitment. He helps partners focus on actions that make a difference by both preserving natural resources and expanding use—a delicate dance.

Jesse is an excellent listener. His collaborative leadership helps people work together to create the path to a more sustainable, safe and satisfying future. Jesse's commitment to environmental justice has been a shaping force in the protection of our natural resources.

As he reflected on the sources of his sense of justice, Jesse said that his focus on food was at the heart of his understanding of justice. All his life, he has been involved with growing, harvesting, and processing food. He has been an active steward of the land and water, from his own lush gardens, to our watershed, to the planet.

As Jesse reflected on his development from his youth to his work as a protector of creation, he mentioned that he was raised in a UCC Church, and that he had gone through confirmation as a young man. But he never recognized the power of hope until he understood the logic of shared stewardship. After a thoughtful pause, he said, "I never realized how spirituality brings people together until I came to Peace, where I could sense it working." That was said with a smile, recognizing that he was not alone and that there were others with a similar sensibility—who use hope to work together as stewards. As an active steward of what we have been given, Jesse has honored his parents, his community, his heritage and his hopes.



*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
August 2020*

René Montgomery: “Be change you wish to see in the world.”

This familiar quotation by Mahatma Gandhi is the guiding force in René Montgomery’s life. These words hang on the wall in her office at Cloquet High School, where she teaches English. As a teacher for over 30 years, René works to ensure that her students are given what they need “to learn and grow and make progress.” That is why equity in education, and bringing racial justice into the schools, is of primary importance to her. She wants to have equal opportunity and access available to all students in the schools.

René prefers to work behind the scenes to help solve problems, and she knows that the problems of today’s world are many. But what is of real importance to her is finding ways to equalize learning opportunities at an early age for all students. Being an English teacher, she especially hopes to find ways to overcome gaps in reading in early years, so that all students have the opportunities they deserve. She worries about homelessness and poverty, and the impact that these intertwining issues have on families.

René reports that Cloquet High School has participated in culturally responsive teacher training. She states that this instruction has opened her eyes to the fact that equity does not equal equality, that students must have their individual needs taken into account to help them develop their full potential.

René’s faith is a major background component to her work. She remarked, “You can’t be a teacher nowadays without an awful lot of prayer!” Her faith provides her with a personal connection to strength, and though her faith is strong, she considers it a quiet personal choice as to how people live out their faith. “My faith keeps me strong individually and I use that to help other people through my work.” That same quiet humility plays out in her political beliefs too. “I work behind the scenes mostly. I’m involved politically but not out front.”

René is a Duluth native, and attended Homecroft Elementary School, Washington Junior High, and Central High School. She and her husband Bob have been members of Peace Church for 16 years. Together, they have two children, Grant, 25 and Haley, 19.

Besides trying to do the best for each of her students, René thinks globally. When asked what she would most want to change in the world, she responded, “That’s a big question, isn’t it? I’m thinking [I would want to change it] in a million ways!” Homelessness, poverty, inequality and lack of social justice are just some of the things she would change.

René epitomizes what she hopes to see in others. Her motto is “If not you, then who?” By living out her ideals, being that quiet source of strength for others, and working to provide every opportunity for success for her students, she lives her life of faith daily and steadfastly.



*Interviewed by Terese Tomanek
September 2020*

Terese Tomanek: “Care More!”

Terese urges all of us, especially those of us who have comfortable lives, to care more. For her, the greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves, to treat others as we want to be treated. She urges us to live out of love instead of fear. When we live in fear we tend to pull in, but when we are hopeful we act in more caring, generous ways.

Education equity and homelessness are the issues that matter the most to Terese. Education has always been important to her, and she believes everyone should have a quality education, which is key to so much. Homelessness makes it very difficult to get an education, much less a quality education, or to live with dignity. She believes that both education equity and homelessness are solvable! In order to do so, she advocates changing the tax system so that funds are available and prioritized for the care and well-being of all citizens.

Terese’s concerns have led her to having a variety of vocations and avocations. She listed mail carrier, chiropractor, campus minister, and chaplain as past vocations that allowed her to serve others. She attended St. John’s Seminary and was ordained in 2015. Recently, Terese served as interim pastor for the Presbyterian Church in Chisholm. She has served on many boards and committees, and was selected to be one of the carriers of the Olympic torch for the Salt Lake City Olympics. Currently she is serving as a Duluth city councilor at large, which allows her to be of service in a new way to all Duluthians. Shortly after being appointed to the city council, she was instrumental in passing a resolution mandating face masks for all indoor public places in Duluth, which helps all be safer from the COVID-19 virus. In all her vocations and avocations, Terese has lived her faith and beliefs.

Terese’s concern for others began in elementary school, when the Catholic nuns taught her the importance of “doing” for others. In fifth grade, she was tasked with writing an essay. She chose to write about Albert Schweitzer, and found him to be insightful and inspiring. She still remembers this quote that taught her so much: “The only ones among you who will be really happy will be those who have sought and found how to serve.” She has found inspiration and truth in all faith traditions, and her family is truly multi-faith. Her husband, Steve, is Jewish as is their son Mark. Terese attends Torah study with them at Temple Israel. On Sundays, she worships with Peace Church, as does their daughter Hallie when she is home from university. Terese advocates that we not be caught up in “I’m right” thinking.

Terese believes that we have forgotten how to live a simple and grateful life. To help herself do so, she centers her life on daily prayer and acting on her faith.



*Interviewed by Penny Cragun
October 2020*

Bill Mittlefehldt: The Renewable Possibility of Hope

When he reflects on the issues that are most important to him, Bill Mittlefehldt focuses on inequality—the disproportionate opportunities that affect income and racial groups—and environmental justice. He became aware of the dynamics of inequality as a student during the time of Viet Nam, Kent State, and Rodney King.

Although he started college intending to be a medical doctor, a jolting encounter with calculus changed his direction. His commitment to healing focused instead on political science and education—healing our communities, our body politic.

After finishing a degree at Lawrence University, Bill decided to serve as a VISTA worker in Brooklyn. He lived with a Puerto Rican family in a mostly Black community. As a white guy who grew up in the Chicago suburbs, that was eye-opening, as he experienced the huge contrast between his privileged life and the daily struggle of Black kids to survive. He decided to go to seminary in order to get at the deeper issues around justice. He attended Chicago Theological Seminary, where he met his partner Pamela. He realized that his ministry would be through teaching, rather than preaching, and began a thirty-two year career as an educator, where a major focus was on helping high school kids strengthen their leadership skills and do healing work in their communities.

One aspect of his career in education that has been central to his sense of ministry has been service learning. Recognizing the brokenness in so many aspects of our lives, Bill is committed to working with youth, helping to connect them with community leaders to address problems, and suggest solutions. He cares deeply about youth and the power of their commitment, and has helped nurture remarkable collaborations between business leaders, environmental activists, and young people.

Environmental justice is another major focus for Bill. He grew up loving to be outdoors, developing a strong sense that the Creator is near. Bill believes that his responsibility is to be a steward of the natural world, a belief that permeated his teaching and the way he raised his two children, Noah and Sarah. One life-enhancing experience was canoeing from Duluth to New York City with his daughter, recording twenty-two stories of efforts for sustainability and preservation on the shores of all the Great Lakes.

Part of Bill's education and training focused on the psychology of development, and he is intrigued with the workings of the human brain. "The brain is our belief machine. The things you believe drive your behavior." He believes we have the ability to be connected to people all over the world as we address the tensions, dilemmas, and challenges of change. Bill believes that "belief is a key part of human development. We need mercy, forgiveness, and hope. Perhaps in understanding this, we can rejuvenate the capacity for doing things together that we can't do alone."

Bill believes one of our most powerful assets is the God gene. This physiological response to our environment gives us all the capacity for deeply moving emotional experiences. From these experiences, we build relationships with people, partners, and creation. He is intrigued by the universality of religion. This God gene drives our belief systems, from which we develop cultural vocabularies and traditions. It is the source of the renewable possibilities of healing and hope.

Bill is grounded in and nourished by his family heritage. A relative, Peter Brown, sailed on the Mayflower and signed the Mayflower Compact. Another fought in the American Revolution. His grandmother was a Suffragette in New York City, and his mother was a peace activist. His sister was a Freedom Rider in the 1960s and worked with SNCC. He grew up in an active and socially committed Congregational Church. He has found inspiration from myriad sources. The words of Jesus, "Love your neighbor as yourself" are the basis for Bill's commitment to working for equality and justice. He was moved by Martin Luther King, whose faith was the basis of his power. He works to honor the healing power of hope that brings us together, enriching our relationships and guiding our choices in challenging times.



*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
November 2020*

Kathy Nelson: Living Her Love

It all began with a canoe trip into the Boundary Waters with her church youth group when Kathy was 13 or 14, a trip she describes as, “one of the best experiences of my life.” Not long after, Kathy was the one taking church groups into the wilderness, and she’s been paddling her social justice canoe ever since.

Kathy grew up in the UCC at Union Church in St. Louis Park. After she completed her degree in journalism, she took a year-long position through the UCC Board of Homeland Ministries at a settlement house in St. Louis. Her experiences working with youth there cemented her calling to continue that work in youth ministry. She went on to attend Union Theological Seminary, and began her work as a youth pastor in New Brighton and St. Anthony Park. She had envisioned herself working only with youth for the rest of her life, but as time passed, she grew to love all aspects of ministry, which brought her to Peace Church.



At Peace, Kathy’s social justice ministry expanded in multiple directions, and Peace was ripe for that. She inspired and encouraged members of the congregation to extend Peace’s social justice mission into the community and the wider world. As she says, “a minister’s job is to help them remember their lines; whisper to them from the wings—‘to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8)—and to love your neighbor as yourself.’ Peace is a wonderful community—they show up.” Kathy says that the willingness of people to roll up their sleeves, dive in, and do the work is such a huge blessing. “I love this church.”

She has been inspired in her faith journey by Anne Lamott and Barbara Brown Taylor, as well as by Micah 6:8 and Romans 12:9-21. Kathy is a genuine lover of all humanity. She embodies the message in Romans 12: “Let love be genuine.” “Extend hospitality to strangers.” “Feed them...give them drink...overcome evil with good.” She has worked to overcome the evils of poverty, racism, homelessness, and the criminal justice system with her genuine and generous love and good works—and food.

For Kathy, faith and action are always interconnected. They can’t be separated. As she says, the “love” of “Love your neighbor” is a verb. Such love needs to be enacted. “I’m more a person of action,” Kathy says, “not a contemplative. I love people. I love serving breakfast at CHUM—talking with the people. I love the one-on-one ministry. I love to learn people’s stories.” The partnership with St. Mark’s AME Church has also been very important to Kathy. “It’s important to be present, to show up, to keep the Arthur Foy Scholarship going—he was a friend.” She continues to be a friend to his memory.

Kathy is emphatic about the inspiration she receives from the Peace Church community as a whole. She is humbled to work alongside so many inspiring people—in the Sanctuary movement, the Dismantling Racism team—all the people who do the work, who step up to act on their commitments to justice. “We are known,” she says. “We stand for something. People know they can come to us. There is so much quiet giving of time, of money, meals. The Gabriel Fund has given out over \$35,000 this year alone.”

“Rejoice with those who rejoice” (Romans 9:15). Kathy’s social justice ministry has extended to the nearly 300 weddings she has performed. Doing weddings for the LGBTQ community, long before the state recognized LGBTQ unions, has been especially important for her, and as she says, “requires a continual witness,” an affirmation of the loving and kind nature of all relationships. She especially loves that the kids of LGBTQ parents know that they come to church in a place where their parents are loved.



“Weep with those who weep” (Romans 9:15). Kathy has buried nearly 300 people during her years at Peace. The funerals of young people—and this year there have been so many—who died far too young of illness, or of the social ills which drove them to end their own lives—have been especially difficult, and her witness to the meanings and stories of their lives is a great blessing and honor to them and their loved ones.



It is hard for Kathy to name one or two social issues that are most important to her. As she says, there are so many. But what rose to the top were the women at the county jail and all the interconnected issues reflected in their lives and struggles—the structural racism, inequality, lack of access to services, mental health issues, criminal justice reform, the impact on families of moms being incarcerated. She is particularly concerned about this last issue. “We don’t care about children as a society. We need to do better.” Kathy began spending time with the women at the jail twenty-five years ago when the chaplain at the jail, Sue Maas, asked her to come preach. All the other preachers were male and conservative, and she hoped Kathy would bring a different message. When Sue saw how the women at the jail connected with Kathy, she asked her to do Bible study with them. “I love the women at the jail,” says Kathy. She gets to know people through their stories. It breaks down barriers, and is truly transformational.

The things that Kathy would most like to change are institutional racism—“all the interconnected inequalities, the criminal justice system—and women’s lives—how women have been silenced.” She would like for women to have a voice. As she acknowledges, she has been privileged in that regard. “I have literally had a pulpit for all these years.” She has used that pulpit to lift up the voices of women—the women at the jail, the many unnamed women in the Bible, the women who have been given voice in song in the *New Century Hymnal*—one of Kathy’s first initiatives for inclusion at Peace.

But the highlight of Kathy’s social justice ministry is in her first and last love—working with youth. “I love the youth—watching the youth grow up, continuing to be a part of their lives.” She has confirmed over 450 of them. She has especially loved the extended time she has had with them at the work camps, and of course, the canoe trips, where she can spend an entire week with them uninterrupted, “letting them know they are loved, and they should love others.” And so the dip of Kathy’s canoe paddle ripples far beyond herself, far into future generations. “The paddle guides liquid to our upturned mouths...We go on, and on, and on.” (Claudia Schmidt, “Replenish”).

*Interviewed by Beth Bartlett
December 2020*

Pastor Kathy Through The Years



Dave Courtright: Quietly Building a Vibrant Community

Dave Courtright is truly a silent runner, quietly but steadfastly doing what needs to be done. At Peace Church, he can be found hanging new gutters on the outside of the church, or crawling in ducts removing old and outdated metal from a former heating unit—and then taking that metal in for recycling. He is an active member of the church Property committee and the Coordinating Council. His wisdom is always greatly appreciated, and we know to listen when he speaks.

In his day job, Dave also quietly but consistently cares and provides for those in need. He works in public assistance, where he determines eligibility for SNAP, cash assistance, and healthcare. *“The work we do helps a significant portion of our community meet their most basic needs”,* Dave says. *“Applying laws and policies to people’s lives can sometimes be coldly impersonal, but seeing the number of people that can buy food or pay rent thanks to this work is a testament to the power of government to change peoples lives for the better. I have been able to see first-hand what a difference it makes to someone to hear that they will have money to buy groceries each month. As a trainer, I seldom work directly with the public, but I hope that my work helps our team to better serve their community with compassion and dignity.”*

One thing Dave really wishes he could change in the world is the misconception about poverty and welfare. *“Our society has the economic ability to provide food, shelter, and health care to all, but we have chosen not to. We often forget the human side—we are providing these things to our friends and neighbors, not to statistics.”*



As Dave reflected on what keeps him going, he said that *“It sometimes seems as if this world will never be just, but I try to remember that every one of our actions impacts someone. I will never be a community or political leader, but I feel privileged to be part of a faith community at Peace Church that includes many of our most compassionate local leaders, and directly impacts so many lives. I hope that by doing small things behind the scenes both at work and at Peace I’m helping to build a vibrant community that can shape the next generation of leaders.”*

When asked where he finds encouragement and inspiration, Dave replied, *“I am very inspired by Paul Wellstone, and admired his ability to blend the practical with inspiration and compassion. ‘We all do better when we all do better’ is one of the greatest political statements ever made.”*

Thank you Dave for all you do for the place and the people of Peace and our wider community.

*Interviewed by Pastor Kathy Nelson
January 2021*

Gayle Kelly: Equity for Kids

The social issue that is most important to Gayle Kelly is closing the achievement gap, the racial divide in our state that starts so early. “I think about it as equity for kids.” Gayle, who recently retired as Executive Director of Minnesota Head Start, stepped into that role twenty years ago with a commitment as a child advocate. She brought her experience working on policy issues and federal programs that were central to children. She also brought the conviction that we were not starting soon enough with children, and that the services provided were a patchwork. “One of the things I love about Head Start is that it’s a comprehensive service that looks at the whole family. I like that holistic approach.”

However, Gayle states that while twenty years later, we have a better understanding of the importance of early education and are providing more services, we still have not made a whole investment in the concept of equity. “Justice just isn’t happening fast enough for our kids. What we have learned over the last years about brain development and addressing trauma makes the most compelling argument to invest in our kids. If we really care about the disparities in the state, then someone has to say other kids matter as much to me as my kids, and that’s not currently a consensus that you can find at the capitol.”



Another issue that Gayle is passionate about is the effect of criminal records on families. “So many of our families are walking into parenting with criminal records that keep them from employment and being able to secure housing. There’s so much in our justice system that is holding down a whole generation of young families. You can never subtract a child from a family. It’s not just about kids, it’s about families.”

Gayle is a child of the 60’s. “Martin Luther King, JFK being shot, these were traumatic experiences for me as a 5 year old. So many social issues confronted us as elementary kids. Imagine being 60 and seeing all of these things crashing back at you.” George Floyd’s murder, the Black Lives Matter movement, the disparity in terms of the impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and indigenous communities all are evidence that there is still such bias, injustice, and inequity. As she watched the same issues confronting us again, Gayle realized “I wanted a different language—how could I see it differently, how could I be different?” The Thirty Days for Justice that Peace church offered helped her to once again uncover the privilege that she had started to take for granted. “I realized I have to own that privilege every single day.” And, referring to Plato’s notion of justice, Gayle believes that every person has to do their part with what they’ve been given. “We have a responsibility to all that we’ve been given. If everyone did that, maybe things would be different.”

Gayle was raised in a very active Lutheran church in the 70’s. She spent summers at the White Earth Reservation at a Native church there. She was very involved in all kinds of community service.

Her grandma was always her hero. “I think her soul was such that I never felt there was any bias at all—everyone was a neighbor and everyone was loved.” She reflected that she had a lot of that kind of love in her life. “My parents are beacons—community minded, spiritual people that really expect everyone to do what they can.” Her family, “all fierce advocates for justice,” has been a solid foundation for her work.

Another inspiration is Aubrey Puckett, the person who hired her for Head Start. “She was my guiding light about how to think about families.” Gayle noted that the Head Start community began in the South during the 60’s, and it is full of really thoughtful, deeply religious African-American women leaders.

As Gayle reflects on the connection between faith and action in her life, she says that “Jesus is the best guide to call out injustice—and live your lives trying to do something to make a difference. The faith is there with action. I don’t try to push my faith on anyone, but I let my actions speak for themselves.” As she continues to work on projects for Head Start, Gayle’s actions speak clearly for equity for all kids.

*Interviewed by Nathan Holst
February 2021*

Ezra Schomberg: Remembering to Turn on the Light

The major social concern that I have is the number of world governments that do not provide basic necessities to their citizens. Our planet produces more than enough food to provide nutritious sustenance for everyone, but, because the distribution system is so unfairly skewed, there are huge areas across the planet that struggle to have enough food to go around. I am also greatly concerned about the homeless pandemic. There are enough housing units in the U.S. to house everyone. We have more vacant houses than homeless people in our country. It is possible to provide housing for those unable to provide it for themselves, but the government chooses not to do so. This points to some of the other issues in our country: the minimum but not livable wage, as well as the incredibly high prices of housing, healthcare and education. If there was a way I could change the world, I would like to see the world's resources properly distributed and for housing to be made available to those unable to afford it, and to have the leaders of countries respond more effectively to those who are struggling, making sure that they provide for their own citizens.



In order to figure out how to respond to these issues, I first had to figure out where I stood financially and socially in the world. This allows me to make sure that I take my bias into account when I think about the lives of others and what it would be like to live the way they do. Secondly, I took what opportunities I could to learn about the lives of those living in crisis through volunteer groups as well as through my peers and teachers. This allows me to broaden and deepen my understanding of the challenges that people living in poverty or struggling with other crises face daily. Then I had to figure out how exactly I would respond to this information. The largest factor that helped me here was the community that I grew up and live in. This community pushed me to be empathetic, to help where I could, to lend a hand or a word of encouragement, to never turn someone away, and to always help. I embraced that philosophy and strive to do that daily. This has led to, I believe, making me a better person and has helped me to create a positive personality. In no way is this static. I am constantly changing and shifting, as are we all, but, at the time of writing this, these have been the largest factors in my life.

I do not believe in god or any all powerful being. I do however believe in the teachings set forth in the Christian faith, at least those that have been taught to me. While I do not worship god, I do have faith in the congregation of Peace church. The community, the love, the compassion, and the sharing of the congregation is what I believe in. To me, it is this group of people who push me to be my best self, to care for others, and to help whenever possible. So that is what I see as my link between my faith and action: having a group of people to push you to be the best you can, in a supportive and kind way.

The quote that stays with me is: "Light can be found even in the darkest of places if only one remembers to turn on the light," said by Albus Dumbledore in the Harry Potter series. To me it says that there are always some positive things that can be found, and that despite the darkness that you may be in, light will come through. It also says to me that if someone cannot find that light switch, guide them to it or, if they cannot even do that, be their light. Offer them kindness, shine through their darkness and into their life. This quote is the basis for what I currently want to do with my life. After graduating from high school, I am going into the Americorps to be that light in people's life. After that, I plan to pursue a career in paramedics to help those in need. While I believe that giving people in need monetary assistance is very important, actual human kindness and compassion are even more valuable. So that is what I want to do: lend people my kindness and help them when they are in need.

*Interviewed by Bill Mittlefehldt
March 2021*

Pamela Mittlefehldt: Giving Voice to Justice

“ . . . like amnesiacs/in a ward on fire, we must/find words/or burn.” -Olga Broumas

These watchwords inspire Pamela Mittlefehldt’s daily dedication to finding words—words that give voice to the urgent cry for justice in a world on fire.

It seems fitting that Pamela’s first awakening to those fires of injustice was in witnessing the silencing of a most celebrated voice—that of Paul Robeson. Robeson had been invited to sing at the college where her father taught, but every hotel in town refused to rent him a room because of his race. That childhood incident sparked Pamela’s lifelong pursuit to use her life and words to redress imbalances of power, wealth, and access skewed by race, ethnicity, age, sex, sexual orientation, ability. The change she desires most is that we as a society reshape our thinking about wealth and power. “It’s not about control. It’s about balance, and honor, and having the deepest respect for each other...it is the ongoing struggle to heal what’s broken and to create a world of justice and wholeness.”

Pamela began her quest for justice in the peace and civil rights protests of the 60s, and decided that the best way to make a difference was “to get people to use what they were given in terms of their creativity and voice and brain power,” and that the best ways she could do that were through writing and teaching. Pamela’s first teaching job was at an inner city school in Chicago—a class of African American, Asian, Latino, Dutch, Chicano, and Appalachian students. She had them write often, so they could learn “how to take a feeling and put it on paper, and how to listen to others.” Pamela later spent a year at the Center for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico, with Ivan Illich, who had a significant influence on her thoughts about education, as did a Cuban literacy worker there. After completing her MA in Library Science, she spent a few years as a public librarian. She went on to teach in an alternative community college program, Metro State, and the University of Minnesota, and after completing her PhD, taught American Studies, Community Studies, and Women’s Studies at St. Cloud State for many years.



Writing, story, poetry, finding words are at the heart of Pamela’s quest for justice. Audre Lorde’s “Poetry Is Not a Luxury,” captures Pamela’s belief that poetry “is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action” (Lorde). “That’s how I respond to my faith and cry for justice—by honoring the voice and story of every living being...Our stories are the one thing that provides a possibility for common ground.”

Pamela has pondered themes of silence and silencing over the years—a cruel irony now that a paralyzed vocal cord has effectively silenced her voice. Seeking to overcome silencing, she has encouraged voice in others—nurturing writers through editing, teaching, and writing workshops. Peace has been a place that has allowed her to do that. She came to Peace because of the social justice focus and because the people of Peace “embodied Micah 6:8—to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly together.” Here she met “people who made faith action,” and faith without action for her is “an empty cymbal.”

For Pamela, “the root of faith is the question, and questions are action...Faith is questing; it’s search; it’s the attempt to embrace the world while trying to change it for the better. Questions are grounded in wonder and wonder is the essence of faith...For me, faith is about seeking, the journey, the transformation.” Many have inspired her quest—Audre Lorde, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Terry Tempest Williams, Paul Wellstone, her friends. Two questions she has pondered lately—“Why is the world so beautiful?” and “Why is the world so ugly?”—drive her faith, her words, and her actions. The one fuels her rage at injustice, and the other grounds her in a deep sense of gratitude for the wonder and beauty of the world. So I end with the words of e.e. cummings, who, she says, “teaches me as much as anybody about gratitude”—words that were among the first she memorized, were at the heart of her and Bill’s wedding, and will one day be in her memorial service: “I thank You God for most this amazing/ day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees/and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything/which is natural which is infinite which is yes.”

*Interviewed by Beth Bartlett
April 2021*