



INLAND STREAM

Spring 2024

Volume 20, Number 1

GROUNDING: FINDING GOD IN THE WORLD, A SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

By John VanDerWalker, Inland West USA Mission Center President



This past winter Inland West staff after reflecting on the mission center conference of 2023 thought it would be a good idea to have a book club in preparation for the summer camps and mission center conference 2024. We talked about various titles and settled on *Grounded* by Diana Butler-Bass.

We began the book club on January 30 and convened two gatherings a week every other week to talk about a chapter. The gatherings started off with very good participation and continued good throughout the duration of the book club. Overall, I have been very pleased with the participation, the thoughtful responses to the questions and the insights that have been gained. We were blessed by the development of questions and a spiritually centering activity by Michelle.

At the upcoming World Conference 2025 the potential exists for several pieces of legislation to come before the body concerning climate and earth stewardship (I know of two pieces in formation as this is being written). As we have journeyed through *Grounded* my hope is that folks who participated in the book club have been able to either connect for the first time or to reconnect with the idea that God is evident in everything around us.

We are beginning to see in dramatic ways how climate change will alter our lives if not completely disrupt them. We see in the news daily the effects of climate change on vulnerable communities, especially in the developing parts of the world. Entire communities in Alaska, the Pacific Islands, and coastal plains are being displaced. Tidal flooding which was a common occurrence on Samish Island, for instance, is now becoming an annual thing and the likelihood is high that the lower property around Free-stad lake will be covered in water in the future and all of



“The grounded God is a God in relationship with space and time as the love that connects and creates all things, known in and with the world. This god is not above or beyond, but integral to the whole of creation.”

- Diana Butler Bass, *Grounded*, pg 25

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INLAND WEST MISSION CENTER
REUNIONS 2024

Heal the Earth

a restoration imperative



Join us for classes, crafts, campfire songs, kid's activities, worship, and more!

Camp Red Cliffe

Near Huntsville, UT

JUNE 27 - JULY 1
2024

Guest Ministry

Willem F. van Klinken
Presiding Bishopric

Co-directors

Brittany Mangelson
bmangelson@cofchrist.org

Michelle Phillips
mphillips@cofchrist-iwest.org

Samish Island Campground

Near Bow, WA

JULY 20 - JULY 27
2024

Guest Ministry

Robin Linkhart, Apostle
Ron Harmon, Presiding Bishop

Co-directors

Lisa Stecher
Inland West Mission Center

Chris Phelps
Canada West Mission Center

Red Cliffe



Registration



Details available at
www.cofchrist-iwest.org

Samish



REUNION 2024

"Heal the Earth: A Restoration Imperative."

In response to World Conference Resolution 1325 Climate Emergency adopted April 25, 2023, Community of Christ declared a climate emergency. Reunion 2024 is an opportunity for education, formation, and a call to action based on this World Conference Resolution. Through classes, worships, and additional invitations for reunion directors and planning teams, communities will be invited to explore the many intersecting issues of justice and peace that find root in the climate crisis. Learn more at <https://cofchrist.org/news/reunion-2024-theme/>.

Reunion materials are now available.

This adult-study text explores the intersections of climate change, racism, and justice challenges, emphasizing sensitivity and unity in diverse perspectives.

2023 World Conference adopted Resolution 1325, declaring a climate emergency to address urgent environmental issues through concrete actions and global unity. The 2024 reunion text focuses on climate change to support this World Conference Resolution.



SUMMER 2024 CLASSES WITH CIMM

The Center for Innovation in Ministry and Mission (CIMM) through Graceland University Community of Christ Seminary has opened the following classes for enrollment:

Summer B Session (July 1 - August 25):

- Ministry of the High Priest: \$25
- Ministry of the Evangelist: \$25
- Children and Youth Worker Core Training: \$25 (2-weeks no CEU credit)

Most classes include non-degreed continuing credits. To enroll or for more information on these classes and the certificate programs, please visit their website at: www.graceland.edu/CIMM

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

June 6 - 8 | Kid's Camp | K - 5th grade | Salt Lake City, UT

June 9-15 | Big Spruce Jr/Sr High Camp | 12 yrs - 18 yrs | Cedaredge, CO

June 27 - July 1 | Red Cliffe Reunion | Intergenerational | UT

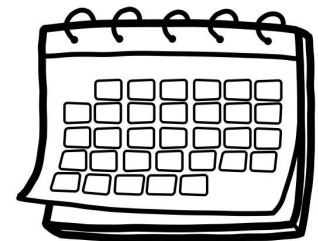
July 11-20 Spectacular | 10th grade - 12th grade | Lamoni, IA

July 20 – July 27 | Samish Island Reunion | Intergenerational | WA

September 28 – 29 | Mission Center Conference | Intergenerational | Whitehall, MT

October 11 -13 | Women's Seeker Retreat | Cedar Canyon, UT

Watch the Mission Center events page for more information on these events when it's available and sign up for the weekly Email NewsBrief to stay in the loop!



RECLAIMING FAITH: A JOURNEY OF HEALING

By Andrew Markle, Salt Lake City Congregation



My journey of faith and self-discovery has been anything but straightforward. As someone who was excommunicated from the Mormon Church due to my sexuality and questioning of official doctrine, I faced a period of profound isolation and confusion. The church had been my community, my identity, and the lens through which I viewed the world. Losing that was akin to losing a part of myself. Yet, this loss also marked the beginning of a transformative journey. This excommunication was one of the greatest blessings I would ever receive.

I will never forget reading the first words from Emma Smith, after the schism: “I have been called apostate; but I have never apostatized, nor forsaken the faith I at first accepted; but was called so because I would not accept their new fangled notion.” These words brought me great comfort.

It was painful to walk through those doors for the first time. I remember sitting in my car with tears running down my face from pure terror. I came in. I sat down in the furthest corner, back in a pew. I sat through the service, then left quietly out of the back door. I wasn’t sure what this place was or how I would interact with it. I had no idea if I would even go back. But then I reached out via Facebook, and Jason invited me to Seekers class.

In the moments of overcoming my initial fear, I learned the value of approaching others with open arms, free from the shadows of my past. This approach not only has facilitated my healing but also has allowed me to forge deep, meaningful connections based on present realities rather than past grievances.

Embracing others with an open heart and mind, without the baggage of previous hurts, opens the door to genuine relationships and a supportive community that can truly enrich your life. It’s about giving yourself and those around you the chance to write a new story; one where trust, understanding, and mutual respect are the foundation.

I discovered a community that fosters love, compassion, and inclusivity. This community, unlike any I had been a part of before, was built on the principles of acceptance, love, and mutual respect.

“Through the sacraments, we discover the presence of God everywhere and realize that all life is sacred. These encounters point to God’s loving desire to bring all people to peace, wholeness, and right relationships with one another and the Divine, which is the meaning of salvation.

— <https://cofchrist.org/our-beliefs>

“GROUNDED ...” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the homes in that area will be flooded out.

Inland West Mission Center encompasses a geographic and climatic region that is very desirable for people wishing to escape the wildfires and heat of the southwestern USA. We are seeing climate migration happening in our neighborhoods as folks from other places become our new neighbors. Much of the crisis of immigration around the world can be directly tied to climate change that has brought on famine, war, and destruction of environments which becomes “unfit for (hu)man or beast.”

It is undeniable that God loves all of creation—“God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31)—and that humanity has a place in that loving relationship. At one time I believed that humanity was special in our place on Earth. I still believe that, only differently than before. My previous thinking that we were special because of the story in Genesis two that grants to humanity dominion over the planet. Our ability to bend nature to our will because of our large brains and communication skills has had incredible results, good and bad. Our lives in the western world are more comfortable and longer than possibly ever before in history. The problem is that we have become addicted to comfort and much of that comfort comes from destructive behavior, something I participate in every morning during the winter when I set the thermostat on the furnace to 68 degrees and in the summer when I set the air conditioner to 77 degrees. This convenience comes as a result of fossil fuels. As does the comfort and convenience of digging a hole with a motorized auger instead of a shovel. My point in all of this is that we, as disciples of Jesus should be engaged in a regular practice of repentance. The continual process of self-examination and turning away from those behaviors that do damage to ourselves and others. The purpose of our book club was to get people to think and reflect, or in other words open the door for repentance. To make a better world we first have to make communities and better communities start with better people who are aware of what is happening around them and their part in the problems and the solutions. I think that Diana Butler-Bass has led us in the right direction.

Currently we are talking about our next book club for winter 2024-25. If you have an idea for a good book please drop a note to me at my church email address. jvanderwalker@cofchrist.org

“RECLAIMING FAITH ...” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Here, I was welcomed for who I am. This environment fostered a sense of belonging that I had longed for, without the conditions and expectations that previously governed my spiritual life.

In this new community, I have learned the importance of self-compassion and the strength that comes from vulnerability. I am encouraged to explore my beliefs, ask questions, and express doubts without fear of judgment. This freedom is liberating. This journey taught me that while we cannot change the past, we have the power to shape our future.

By taking responsibility for our healing and refusing to let past hurts define our relationships and beliefs, we can find peace and purpose. My experience has shown me that there is a place for everyone, regardless of where they come from or what they have been through. Finding that place starts with the courage to seek it out and the willingness to embrace a new narrative for our lives.

With this confirmation, I am reclaiming the narrative that I am not lesser than. I am reclaiming the church I always hoped I could have. I am reclaiming my faith and believing in the community that has helped make me whole once again. I can choose to suffer, or choose to have peace.

And I have chosen peace.

CONGREGATION SPOTLIGHT: HAGERMAN, ID

By Pat Windes, Pastor Hagerman Community of Christ



The church (Community of Christ) has always been, from my very youngest years, a mainstay in my life. Here I have found friends, companions, and most of all, a path toward “the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” My spiritual needs have been met and surpassed as I have been able to interact with the saints as they have been led by God’s spirit. A myriad of experiences have led me down life’s pathways and show me that the love of God is real, ready, and present ... always.

My hope as a pastor is to be able to impart to my congregation that inspiration that has changed my life and that can change theirs. Most recently, our congregation has accepted the opportunity of service to our local communities, and as a result, through the witness of those of us who are involved in it, we have been blessed to have new friends join us in worship. Spiritual needs have been met and physical needs have been supplied.

Acceptance of others simply because they are God’s children has been key to how people respond to the calling of God in their lives. Jesus’ example leads the way. He responded to the needs of both rich and poor, good and bad. He embodied the meaning of compassion, love, charity, goodness, humility, patience, when he showed that against these things there is no law. My goal would be to instill this understanding among those whose spiritual welfare is my business.

Through weekly scripture study a few of us have come to a better and fuller understanding of the true nature and meaning of scripture and how it ought to be used as a guide for us. I think that accepting scripture as being inspired, even divine, is key. Faith plays a key role in the study of scripture and can lead to personal experiences that shape us and melt us and mold us into the people we are called to be.

YES FUND!

Thank you for your generous contributions to the mission center’s Youth Empowerment Support Fund (YES Fund). The YES Fund was established to help youth and children throughout the mission center to be able to attend camps, reunions, retreats, Spectacular, and other approved activities.

Contributions to the YES Fund can be made in 2 ways:

- ⇒ Through your congregation - mark your checks for “YES Fund” and your Congregational Financial Officer (CFO) will forward the money to the Mission Center Office
- ⇒ Through E-Tithing, select the Inland West Mission Center – YES Fund

Any questions please contact Sandy Decker at sdecker@cofchrist-iwest.org.



WELCOMING LAURA TO OUR MISSION CENTER STAFF!



We are thrilled to welcome Laura Pennock as the new Utah Expansion Minister, joining our team to further our mission and ministry in our vibrant communities. Laura brings a wealth of experience, a deep commitment to spiritual leadership, and a passion for creating inclusive and welcoming spaces for all seekers.

As our Utah Expansion Minister, Laura will play a crucial role in supporting existing congregations, small groups, emerging congregations, and new seekers. Her focus will be on cultivating a culture of radical hospitality, creating safe spaces for spiritual exploration, and journeying alongside seekers, new disciples, and leaders alike. We are especially excited about Laura's dedication to establishing and supporting child and youth ministries, including supporting events with congregations and youth camping programs.

As a member of the pastor leadership team in Salt Lake City and a priest within that congregation, Laura has demonstrated her commitment to servant leadership and fostering relationships built on inclusivity and understanding.

We are deeply grateful for the groundwork laid by Tyler Marz and his dedication to fostering growth and cooperation between our congregations. As we welcome Laura into this new role, we look forward to the continued expansion of our ministry and the transformation of lives through the power of community, faith, and love.

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Laura Pennock as our Utah Expansion Minister, and let us journey together as we embrace the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

MINISTRY REFLECTION



My time in the Inland-West Mission Center is full of fond memories. My first memories with the church and some of its fine and outstanding members were here. Since then, my life has taken me away and back again. There is a special spirit and unique witness in this Mission Center, and I am forever grateful to have been a part of it. My ministry has taken me to several congregations, and while my time didn't allow for me to get everywhere, I have gotten to know people from every congregation and corner. I have learned so much from each of you! My hope is that you will continue loving and being the church, you all have taught me so much about. Keep loving and living the radically hospitable message of Jesus, who taught us how to care for each other and the world. So, see you later Inland-West, because it's never goodbye. We are bound to run into each other again. In Christ, Tyler Marz





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WEEKLY NEWS BRIEF

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You can easily subscribe to the NewsBrief by going to www.cofchrist-iwest.org and go to the Events News tab then click on the “Sign-up” button.

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