



INLAND STREAM

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May this Weary World Rejoice with Joy, Hope, Love, and Peace.



By Brittany Mangelson

Earlier this fall, I was chatting with a seeker who had stepped away from Community of Christ last year. We are still friends and keep up to date on what's going on in our lives. My friend shared how they had recently been with family and typically the political and religious divides between them are far too great for them to talk about anything outside of small talk. However, my friend recognized that because of their time spent with Community of Christ, they had been given language and skills that could help find common ground and facilitate deeper relationships. Things like our Enduring Principles, Mission Initiatives, and our Faithful Disagreement document allowed my friend to talk about shared values and frame their worldview in a non-threatening way that brought mutual understanding and peace to important conversations. Although my friend is no longer regularly

attending our congregation, Community of Christ helped heal and shape their discipleship. In a very real way, my friend was transformed by a surprise encounter with Jesus.

Over the last few weeks I have personally been preparing for Advent, I have continued to think about my friend and their experience with Jesus through Community of Christ. I suspect those first encounters with the Christ child were similar. Folks involved in the earliest years of Jesus' life would not have been considered disciples at that point. They were just regular people trying to find hope in a deary world. Hope placed in a baby that, as the hymn suggests was, "born to set thy people free..." (CCS 400) Jesus did not come into the world under easy circumstances and yet through his birth, ordinary people who were given an unexpected framework and language for peace. A message that built bridges, provided a way for mutual understanding, and brought peace into a divided world. I can't think of many things we need more of today. I love the idea of God being born to a young, unwed woman in a lowly manger, in the stillness of the night. Everything about his birth, ministry, death, and resurrection was a surprise. All of it pointed unexpectedly to joy, hope, love, and peace.

That message resonates with humanity today, just like it did over 2,000 years ago.

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As a minister in Salt Lake, I have seen dozens, if not hundreds of seekers walk in and out of our doors over the years. What I've realized is that what matters most is how people are transformed while they're with us, not whether they stay forever. Our congregation works hard to bridge the gap from what has been to what can be. A new vision of lasting peace where all can find belonging. I know this same work of encounter and transformation is happening across our mission center, and it can happen in the most ordinary ways. It happens in our homes, during potlucks, in ministries outside of our congregational walls, and within our sanctuaries on a Sunday morning. We become the Living Christ that was first modeled in that lowly manger. My prayer for us as we head into a new year is that our discipleship continues to reflect that first thrill of hope that caused a weary world to rejoice.

Supporting Our Children and Youth through the 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. YES Funds help by sharing the cost of a child's or youth's registration fees and travel expenses.

In 2025, we had a generous donor who offered to match funds up to \$1,500. We were able to reach that match and more. We again had a large number of SPEC attendees (yea!!). The YES fund along with money from the Camping Fund was able to cover those costs. The balance in the YES Fund as of November, 2025 is **\$5,211.80**.

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

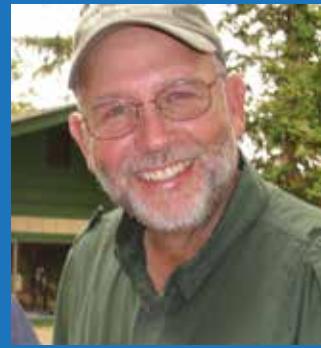
- 1 Through your congregation - mark your checks for "YES Fund" and your Congregational Financial Officer (CFO) will forward the money to the Mission Center Office
- 2 Through E-Tithing, select the Inland West Mission Center - YES Fund

Thank you for your help in supporting our youth and children.

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

Zion the Beautiful Beckons

By John VanDerWalker



For nearly 200 years Community of Christ has been exploring the meaning and incarnation of the concept of Zion. From the earliest days of the Restoration Movement there has been the vision of a better world where righteousness and justice is meted to everyone. There has been a holy imagination at work in the minds and actions of members from the very start. The thought, "We can do better" has motivated the church over the centuries to offer ministries of peace and reconciliation, lifting up the "least of these" by engaging them in community.

The other day I was talking with a retired pastor who shared a story with me that he was so excited about. It seems a young man had been moved by one of the current events that happened recently in Utah. The young man was so moved that he "prayed and took Jesus as his personal savior." My response was probably not what the pastor was looking for, it was in the attitude of: huh. Not a question of misunderstanding or puzzlement but more of a, "So what?" In Community of Christ we do not use the language nor do we adhere to the thinking that Jesus is my personal savior. God cares about me personally, but he cares about every person personally and actually has a preference for the poor and marginalized.

There are plenty of people who have taken Jesus as their personal savior and then go on their merry way to abuse the very ones that Jesus walked with and offered ministry to: women, the sinners, the diseased, the poor, homeless and immigrants. Some of

these "saved" individuals go on to bully those who do not think or act the way they do. These "saved" ones end up wounding people with words and actions. These actions cast the very ones Jesus called us to bring the good news to, off to the margins. Some of these "saved" people advocate and perpetuate violence as a tool for social change. Today there is a movement in our nation and neighborhoods that is perpetuating injustice in the form of White Christian Nationalism. A movement that is anything but Christian and is an affront the principles we hold as a people. This thinking is seriously flawed.

I have dedicated much of my working life to the perpetuation of Community of Christ. In this community we understand that our work as a body of active followers of Jesus will never be completed as long as there is one person who is struggling with physical or spiritual oppression, deprivation or abuse. For us the meaning of the life, death, resurrection and continuing presence of Christ, is the formation of community in His name that fulfills the incarnation of the ministries he offered as an example for us to follow. We have never believed that our mission is to get to heaven, but rather to bring the conditions that we imagine reign in heaven to the lives of those we encounter. Our name for that condition is Zion, God's peaceable kingdom on Earth.

I can think of no better effort to dedicate ones life to.

SPECTACULAR Registration is Coming Soon!

Spectacular (SPEC) is the largest annual gathering of youth in Community of Christ, bringing together hundreds of high school students and adult leaders from across North America and beyond. Held at Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa, SPEC is a weeklong experience filled with sports, arts, worship, leadership development, and community building. It's a safe, Christ-centered space where youth can explore their faith, build lasting friendships, discover their unique giftedness, and engage in meaningful conversations about life and

discipleship. Whether you're passionate about music, sports, creative arts, or simply connecting with others, SPEC has something for everyone!

At SPEC, youth experience the freedom to explore, grow, and choose how they engage in a supportive, Christ-centered environment. Our focus on inclusion and positive encouragement ensures that every camper feels seen, valued, and respected. The Northwest Delegation's leadership team are all Registered Child and Youth Workers

(RCYW) who are deeply committed to the safety and well-being of each participant. They help create a space where youth can try new activities, express themselves authentically, and build lasting friendships, all while knowing they are supported by caring adults dedicated to their growth and joy.



"SPEC is unlike anything I've ever experienced. The sense of community and belonging is wholly unique. Every night at devotionals in the dorms, I had this feeling of connectedness that I haven't felt in a long time. SPEC played a huge part in helping me with my mental health and social skills."

- Ethan Wilde

START TALKING WITH YOUR TEENS TO SEE IF THEY WANT TO GO TO SPEC THIS YEAR. REGISTRATION WILL BE COMING SOON!



To My Friends in the Inland West Mission Center

As I prepare to enter retirement early next year, I wish to pause and reflect upon the blessings of my years of service with the Inland West Mission Center. When I began this role in March of 2013, I quickly discovered that it was far more than a position with duties to fulfill. While responsibilities have always been present, the true richness of this journey has been found in the relationships formed and the fellowship shared with each of you.

Over the course of these years, I have been privileged to visit every congregation –some on many occasions, others only a few. In each setting, whether during congregational visits or mission center gatherings, I have been

received with kindness, generosity, and friendship. These bonds of community are what make this transition to retirement so deeply poignant, for I will miss the interactions that have brought meaning and joy to this work and to my life.

During my time with the mission center, I have had the honor of serving alongside three mission center presidents; assisting in the stewardship of congregational properties and campgrounds; witnessing the resilience of congregations during the global pandemic; celebrating the joy of new members as they discovered our faith community; and joining many of you at

reunions, mission center conferences, and world conferences. There have been moments of sorrow, such as the closing of congregations, yet far more were rich, fulfilling, and deeply rewarding moments of shared purpose.

Though I will retire from my formal responsibilities, this is not a farewell. I intend to remain present at mission center events and to visit congregations whenever possible. My life has been immeasurably enriched by the fellowship we have shared, and I will carry that blessing with me always.

With gratitude and love,
Sandy Decker



Congratulations to the new and growing Provo Congregation!

On Sunday, November 30, members of our IWMC staff, friends from the Salt Lake Congregation, and others joined with the newly organized Provo, UT Emerging Congregation for their first business meeting. Heather Holland was appointed as pastor and Alyssa Weyland was appointed as CFO.

This was a celebration filled with joy and deep gratitude, formalizing what we already know in our hearts: the Divine Spirit is moving in this place and among these people. Provo is already modeling what shared leadership looks like with mutual discernment, active and compassionate listening, collective decision-making, and genuine community care.



We rejoice with Provo and look forward to all that God will continue to do through them!

Opportunities for Priesthood Learning and Leadership Development

Aaronic Priesthood Chats

We're excited to launch bi-monthly Aaronic Priesthood Chats next year, a space for deacons, teachers, and priests from across the Mission Center to connect, learn, and support one another in ministry.

These gatherings will focus on how the Aaronic priesthood offices help create healthy, vibrant congregational communities through their specific ministries, and how these offices work together to nurture a culture of welcome, peace, and care. Each session will include a conversation topic, practical ideas you can take back to your congregation, and resources to deepen your ministry. It's also simply a place to find encouragement, share what's working and ask questions.

Pastors are warmly invited, too; your presence strengthens and supports your Aaronic ministers.

Ministry of the Elder Class

We're delighted to offer an 8-week Ministry of the Elder class beginning this February. Together, we'll work through the Temple School course, explore the call and purpose of this priesthood office, and reflect on how Elders serve as ministers of congregational community-building, leading others in pursuing the Mission Initiatives.

This class is for:

- Current Elders wanting a refresher or renewed perspective
- Prospective Elders preparing for ordination
- Anyone curious about the ministry, responsibilities, and spiritual grounding of the office of Elder

Each week will include learning, conversation, practical tools for ministry, and space for personal reflection. Whether you're discerning a call, strengthening your current ministry, or simply deepening your understanding, you are welcome.

More details, dates, and registration information coming soon in the weekly NewsBrief email. If you want to be notified when registration is open, please let Sherie know so we can add you to the list.

Sign up to get our WEEKLY email Newsbrief

Want to stay up to date with events, opportunities and stories from around the Inland West Mission Center? Sign up today using the QR code or visit www.cofchrist-iwest.org and click on Events & News.



Life Events 2025

BLESSINGS:

Beau Clifford, Hagerman

BAPTISM/CONFIRMATIONS:

Lexi Clement, Salt Lake City, UT
Ashley Dillon, Salt Lake City, UT
James Jackson, Spokane Valley, WA
Jay Leonard, Utah Mission Ministries
Matt Robertson, Salt Lake City, UT

ORDINATIONS:

Jolene Barnett-Stephens, Elder, Pocatello
Brenda Volz, Elder, Whitehall, MT

DEATHS:

Elsie Aston, Orem, UT
Rose Barckley, Spokane Valley, WA
Audrey Butler, Pocatello, ID (Dec 2024)
Sylvia Dennis, Boise, ID (Dec 2024)
Joanne Dobson, Spokane Valley, WA (2024)
Dale Fishwild, Boise, ID
Harold Jenkins, Billings, MT
Althea Kendall, Lewis-Clark, WA
Ray McBride, Billings, MT
Richard McKee, Boise, ID (Dec 2024)
JoEne Renfro, Lewis-Clark, WA
Mario Renfro, Lewis-Clark, WA (Dec 2024)
Roy Schmidt, Boise, ID (Dec 2024)
Steven Scott, Salt Lake City, UT
Danny Skeen, New Plymouth, ID
Delmar Skeen, New Plymouth, ID
Ed Wood, Boise, ID

If there are life events or transitions happening in your congregation, please send them to Sandy Decker at sdecker@cofchrist-iwest.org.

2025 Mission Center Conference Recap



This year's Mission Center Conference theme was "Journey of Hope." Mission Center Conference brings together people, worship, administration, fellowship, and more to create a communal experience that

reminds us that we are the body of Christ. We started out with a worship service by the Salt lake congregation to welcome us in, a morning class on antiracism in the Christian context, legislative session, panel

discussion on prophetic imagination by the Salt Lake congregation, hymn service from our Provo congregation, and a reception for John VanDerWalker. And in between there was lots of conversations, meals, laughter, and creating community.

Closing worship service was a powerful reminder of our place as Community of Christ in the current moment. We are called to be disciples Jesus, the peaceful one and to settle in to work for the long-term, but never to settle for the way things are. We were uplifted and equipped for the journey of hope ahead as we look to the place beyond the horizon to which we are sent.

Thank you everyone who came and made the weekend special. And our deep gratitude to the Salt Lake congregation and the work that they put in welcoming us and preparing a holy place.

Mission Center Camping Fund Update



In 2025 we have continued to use the Camping Fund to support events around the Mission Center. We are very grateful for this fund that was established when Camp Cascade was sold. At the beginning of the summer, we withdrew 3% of the funds currently in the Camping Fund investment account. This amount totaled \$23,085.00 which was added to \$1,832.92 left from 2024. There has been enough interest earned on this account to cover this year's withdrawal plus some so the principal has not been touched and has actually grown a bit. We were able to support several events through subsidies on a per camper basis or by covering cost of a portion of the event.

EVENTS SUPPORTED BY CAMPING FUND - 2025

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Winter Youth Retreat | \$98.80 |
| Red Cliffe Reunion - Cooks, Life guard salary and free camper days | \$1,959.42 |
| Samish Island Reunion - Reduced registration fee | \$1,927.00 |
| SPEC Subsidy - Money added to YES Fund (due to large attendance) | \$17,000.00 |
| Campership for Youth camp | \$375.00 |
| Whitehall Retreat - Reduced registration fee | \$1,000.00 |
| Total used from Camping Fund in 2025 | \$22,360.22 |

In 2026 several events are planned where camping funds will be used. As these events are being planned and budget established, we will determine the need of funds. It is anticipated that we will withdraw 4-5% from the investment account. This will be added to the funds leftover from 2025. We will continue to explore ways that events throughout the Mission Center can be supported through the camping fund.

Boise Congregation says Good-bye to their beloved building but opens their hearts to new possibilities



On November 16, members of our IWMC staff and friends from the Salt Lake Congregation traveled to Idaho to join in fellowship with the Boise congregation. They have made the courageous and visionary decision to sell their beloved building and move into a space that better fits their needs. Together, we celebrated the love and joy that have been shared in this building during a final farewell worship service. Thank you to all who made this weekend a special one, especially to the Boise Congregation leadership team. Please join us in thanking them for their courageous discipleship.



Buy Gum, You Got a Call

By Harry Dennis
Boise Congregation

You may not preach like Paul.
In fact, you may not preach at all.
But by gum, you've got a call.

You may not pray like Dale does.
Or be God's man, like Moses was.
But by gum, you've got a call

You may not sing like Dale Cusumano,
Or tickle keys like Billy Jo
But by gum, you've got a call.

You may not be a virgin like Mary,
Or run a baby shower like Sherie.
But by gum, you've got a call.

You may not suffer like Job of old,
Or like big Al, collect the gold.
But by gum, you've got a call.

You may not lead like Shirley and Ann
Or run the kitchen like Evelyn can.
But by gum, you've got a call.

You may not give a sermon on the Mount,
Or know what Erma's accounting is all about,
But by gum, you've got a call.

You may not have to carry a cross
Or experience, as some people have,
A very great loss,
But by gum, you've got a call.

You may not serve youth like Dick McKee,
Or be as good as you should be.
But by gum, you've got a call.

And if this poetry falls flat,
Blame old Harry for that.
He's not a poet,
And now you know it.
But by gum, I tried.

Boise congregation is now meeting at 1747 N Fairmeadow Drive, Boise, Idaho 83704. The phone number remains the same.



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Merry Christmas from Inland West Mission Center Staff

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Upcoming Events:

Feb 13-15: SPEC Rally/Teen Retreat
Samish Island Campground, Bow, WA

May 15-17: Leadership Retreat
Butte, MT

June 20-26: Harmony Reunion
Samish Island Campground, Bow, WA

June 25-30: Red Cliffe Reunion
Camp Red Cliffe, Huntsville, UT

July 11-18: Spectacular
Graceland University, Lamoni, IA

July 18-25: Samish Island Reunion
Samish Island Campground, Bow, WA

Sept 26-27: Inland West Mission Center Conference, location TBD

Mid Oct: Young Adult Retreat
TBD near Boise, ID