LEADERSHIP NOTES: PROGRAMS

Maybe you—like me—have been curious about what’s been happening in the lives of our 2017-2018 Alliance speakers. Here’s an update: Kim Stafford became Oregon’s 9th Poet Laureate for 2018-20; Darrell Grant was named 2019 Portland Jazz Master and was awarded a $90,000 grant for composing during his sabbatical this year; Grace Kook-Anderson gave opening remarks for the Portland Art Museum’s current exhibit entitled the map is not the territory; Dr. Patricia Kullberg finished her book on Vanport, but hasn’t found a publisher yet; seventh grader Noah Carr, our December 2017 violinist (with Signe Lusk), will be going on tour in Italy this summer with the Metropolitan Youth Symphony. His recent National History Day project focuses on composer William Grant Still and the effects of racism in classical music. Here’s the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vx_rsg8AXmA&feature=youtu.be

In the years ahead, might we consider ways to present even more variety? Programs to showcase groups Alliance has donated to? More programs featuring our own very talented Alliance members? Programs planned specifically for Alliance by our twenty church staff members?

We have done some of this, of course: programs with organist Joe O’Donnell and Social Justice Director Dana Buhl. And we did invite BRAVO—an Alliance grant recipient—to entertain us in December. But mostly we’ve asked “outside experts” to present our monthly programs. If not kept in check by my wiser co-chairs Eric Terrell and Carolyn Buhl, I would have been perfectly happy to invite only poets and authors to entertain and educate us each month. But I was persuaded that—of course—a variety of programs from a wide range of interests was a better plan.

Now that my term as Program VP is nearly over, I’ve been looking back on the last two years of Alliance speakers. If not kept in check by my wiser co-chairs Eric Terrell and Carolyn Buhl, I would have been perfectly happy to invite only poets and authors to entertain and educate us each month. But I was persuaded that—of course—a variety of programs from a wide range of interests was a better plan.

MEMBER IN PROFILE: Linda Johnston

Imagine a classroom filled with young professional women in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. The students’ home countries ranged all over the world. They devoted 2-4 months researching and analyzing conflict with the ultimate goal of building peace in their divided societies. Their professor was Dr. Linda Johnston, new member of First Unitarian Church and The Alliance.

Such was the stimulating and significant international, as well as domestic, work to which Linda devoted her career. A graduate of George Mason University and Professor Emeritus of Conflict Management from Kennesaw State University in Georgia, Linda is a trained mediator, negotiator and facilitator. She taught in far-flung countries, including Vietnam, Nigeria, and Ukraine.

For seven years leading up to the Arab Spring, she worked on and off for an NGO in Egypt. She served on the Nobel Peace Prize committee for the American Friends Service Committee, taught at the UN School of Peace in Costa Rica and at a peace institute in Zambia. She served for nine years as President of the International Peace Research...
Linda Johnston, continued

Association Foundation. Linda worked in the United States, as well, receiving grants from the Southern Poverty Law Center and the National Endowment for the Arts. “I loved my students,” Linda remembers. Mostly retired after her peripatetic career, Linda arrived last September from Atlanta, and settled in Portland to be near one of her two sons. She immediately joined First Church, her ninth Unitarian Universalist church. She chose her residence because “it was within walking distance of First Church. I’m really a walker.” Having permanently parked her car, she’s on foot now, walking three to five miles a day all over the city. “I love the outdoors! I love this city!” Linda’s enthusiasm has few boundaries. She enjoys dining with the Good Times Friday dinner group, knitted twelve hats for our Mitten Tree at Christmas with the UU Knitting Group, and is reading Americanah, Multnomah County Library’s Everybody Reads selection for 2019. She bakes her own bread and weaves on her home loom. She has woven material for a Scottish plaid tartan and bought yak wool in Mongolia “by the touch.”

Today, after 41 moves, Linda is comfortably ensconced in a small, cozy condominium in Goose Hollow. “I am never moving again!” she announces. “You are stuck with me.” Lucky for us! If you can catch her, give a big welcome to Linda Johnston.

MEMBER IN PROFILE: Peggy Snyder

Newly settled in a comfortable condominium at Terwilliger Plaza—with a Mt. Hood view—Peggy admits, “It was a stressful move.” But, the Peggy we know is not likely to sit still for long! As we spoke, her husband Stephen delivered two, long boxes. Each one revealed a pair of trekking poles, prompting Peggy to reveal, “I love cold weather. I’ve always wanted to go to Alaska!” The new trekking poles will accompany Peggy and her college roommate from Alabama on an eco tour from Fairbanks at the end of February. Poles will come in handy when they trek across snowy fields on dark but cloudless winter nights to glimpse the colorful sky extravaganza called the Northern Lights. She’ll also rely on a tight grip to the sleds pulled by barking huskies.

Peggy was born in Buffalo and spent many idyllic summers and years living beside lovely Lake Chautauqua in western New York state. After two years at Duke and a transfer to nursing school, Peggy met Stephen and finished at University of Cincinnati. They settled in Cincinnati where they raised two sons and Peggy found many opportunities for her volunteer services. She combined nursing with teaching for ten years while directing more than 500 volunteers at the Cincinnati Medical Center. She studied arts administration and started a chamber music series now in its 40th year. She coordinated special events at the local classical music station and later guided tourists for the Visitor’s Bureau.

When they moved to Portland in 2007 to be near one son, the Snyders joined First Unitarian Church. Peggy joined The Alliance, where her congeniality and love of “schmoozing” suited her long run as VP of Programs. “I loved schmoozing with our guests,” former Governor Barbara Roberts and Mayor Vera Katz, for example. Peggy made valuable contributions to The Alliance during one of our growth periods. She also loves singing with the Unitarian Choir.

Peggy will continue to travel, often in summers to her beloved Lake Chautauqua. She openly expresses her enthusiasm for Terwilliger Plaza, “for the lovely people here. I love hearing their stories and the sense of community. I was put on this earth to be with people and to spread happiness.” May her presence among us be contagious.