



e-Bulletin

Providing bi-weekly communication for PNMC

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Theotokoi*: "God Bearers"

Eric Massanari, Executive Conference Minister

I look forward to October here in Bellingham, WA not only because it is a uniquely beautiful season but also because it is "Doctober" at our local independent theater, The Pickford Film Center. Each October, The Pickford brings in dozens of documentary films from around the world, and I try to take in at least a few of them.

Last weekend I saw two films that couldn't have been more different. On Friday evening I watched [*The Oldest Person in the World \(2026\)*](#), a film in which documentarian Sam Green interviews the oldest living people in the world (according to the *Guinness Book of World Records*) over the course of 25 years. During this span of time, Green experiences the birth of his first child as well as a cancer diagnosis and treatment. It is a beautiful reflection on what gives life value and meaning. Then, on Sunday, I went to a screening of [*NAZA \(2026\)*](#), a film made by the same documentarians who created [*No Other Land \(2024\)*](#). NAZA is comprised of interviews with Israeli intelligence and military officers (their anonymity is protected by the filmmakers) who have been responsible for the human genocide and calculated destruction of homes and infrastructure in Gaza over the last three years. It is a true horror film; it is deeply disturbing and profoundly important.

The disparate nature of these two films left me emotionally and spiritually unsteady (NAZA, in fact, left me feeling physically sick for hours). I wondered at the spectrum of humanity that they reflect back to us; realities we bear witness to every day if our eyes, minds and hearts are open to our own inner-landscape and to the world around us.



Photo by Sara Gibson, Yachats, OR

Prayers for our Bend Neighbors:

News headlines once again carry reports of horrific violence in the form of a school shooting, this time in Bend, OR. And once again, it appears that the violence was perpetrated by a very young man--a teenage boy.

Pastor Sam Adams (Bend Mennonite Church) reports that while members of the congregation are all safe, they have close connections with the school community where the shooting took place. Members of Bend Mennonite teach in and attend that school.

Please be praying for the Bend community and for the Bend Mennonite congregation as they grieve and seek healing and peace in their lives and their community.

Lord have mercy . . . on all who are swept up in a raging whirlwind of trauma and grief.

Christ have mercy . . . on lives lost in the wake of senseless violence.

Lord have mercy . . . on a society in which this has become commonplace.

May our broken hearts become expanded vessels for your Love.

In Christ's Hope and Peace,
Eric

As I went for a walk yesterday, the images and stories from the films lingered, and a question emerged: *Who is the church in the midst of this continuum of horror and beauty, destruction and creativity that humans are capable of?* Here is the answer that emerged for me:

We, the church, are a caravan of the beautiful and the fallible, the wounded and wonderful, the mean-spirited and the open-hearted, the hell-bent and the heaven-bound. We are pilgrims, all. We are wholly blessed and fully capable of desecrating that blessing. When we gather, we acknowledge not only our need for God, but also that we need each other. We need everyone who wants to join us on this caravan journey. We help each other see with the eyes of the heart, and discover the One we already bear at our center, and the Holy Ground we are traveling each step of the way.

* In the Eastern Orthodox traditions of Christianity, Mary the mother of Jesus is referred to as the Theotokos, or "God Bearer." In truth, as beings created in the Divine image, we are all God bearers—each and every one of us—whether we recognize this in ourselves, or in each other, or not.

PNMC CONGREGATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & MINISTRIES

SAVE THE DATE!

PNMC's Conference Communications Council will be on Zoom the morning of Saturday, February 6, 2027. Iris de León Hartshorn will be our guest speaker.

Albany Mennonite Church

All are invited to gather at 2:30pm (PST), **November 1st** at **Albany Mennonite** for the "Fall Valley Hymn Sing." We will mostly be singing from *Hymnal, a Worship Book*. We will be selecting songs prior to starting, so please arrive a few minutes early if you would like to submit requests or send an email to **Tace Martin** (tacemartin02@gmail.com). Please include the title or first line.

Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society

Save the date for the **Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society Annual Meeting**. Please mark your calendars for the PNMHS Annual Meeting on **February 20, 2027**. The gathering will take place at **Albany Mennonite Church**. The keynote speaker will be **Jonathon Kropf** speaking on the history of the Harrisburg Mennonite Church.

Salem Mennonite Church — contributed by Brent Mobley

Off the grid, surrounded by old-growth forest and the gentle waters of the creek, Drift Creek Camp is a treasure for the PNMC and the many groups that use it. On the weekend of October 2, more than 50 folks from Salem Mennonite Church gathered for a retreat at DCC. Being out in that setting offered us a glimpse of God's majesty, vastness, and subtlety strengthening our bonds with God and each other through shared meals, activities, conversation, worship, and the hospitality of staff and volunteers.

Gathering around tables for meals during the weekend felt almost sacred. There was something life-giving about sharing good food and unhurried conversation while someone else prepared the meals and handled the cleanup. The kitchen crew provided an outstanding variety of delicious, nourishing meals, allowing us to simply enjoy one another's company.

The retreat also offered opportunities for hikes, games, organized activities, personal study, and quiet reflection. For the children in our congregation, returning to camp was especially meaningful. Many were able to revisit favorite places, rekindle memories of summer, and enjoy the freedom of exploring, playing, and laughing together in a setting they have come to love.

Some of the most meaningful moments came through spontaneous conversations around the fire pit, beside the lodge's crackling hearth, over jigsaw puzzles and children's crafts, along hiking trails, and in other gathering spaces throughout the weekend. Such conversations helped us establish deeper, more authentic ties.

Worship and singing were central to our time together. Led by our beloved newish pastor and other worship leaders, our chapel service, framed by a backdrop of towering trees, was especially meaningful. Singing hymns during worship and again during a Saturday evening sing-along brought joy, encouragement, and a deep sense of community.

We are grateful for the camp staff's hospitality. Their dedication, hard work, and gracious service helped create an environment where our church family could **rest, reconnect, and flourish**. We are also appreciative to the many Salem Mennonite volunteers who helped plan the gathering. More than a weekend away, the retreat was a gift to our congregation - renewing spirits, deepening relationships, and reminding us that life together as a Jesus-centered community creates the kinds of memories and connections that endure long after we return home.



Upcoming e-Bulletins

Nov 2 (submissions by 10/26)

Nov 16 (submissions by 11/9)

Dec 7 (submissions by 11/30)

Dec 21 (submissions by 12/14)

If you would like to contribute, please send a brief announcement in Spanish & English with website links to brenda@pnmc.org. Our goal is to provide a valuable resource, not an In-Box jammer. If space is tight, we may omit announcements that are not as pertinent to PNMC. Announcements will run ONE time only, unless specified otherwise. We welcome your feedback!

For more PNMC updates: <http://pnmc.org> e-Bulletin Archives: <http://pnmc.org/Resources/eBulletin>