



GREAT SPIRIT

www.greatspiritpdx.com

Great Spirit Newsletter December-January 2026

Issue 40

Knowing your Great Spirit Community – Robert & Quacinda Kolln

By Maryl Smith

Robert and Quacinda Kolln are familiar faces at Great Spirit. You will usually find Robert singing around the Big Drum during services, and assisting whenever there is a need, from helping with the smudging ceremony, or serving as a friendly voice from the pulpit. You can't be at Great Spirit for long without finding yourself in conversation with him and laughing together over a cup of coffee.

Quacinda has facilitated the weekly Talking Circle.

I met with Robert recently to hear his story and our coffee ran dry long before we were done sharing.

Robert was born right here in Portland, at Emanuel Hospital. His mother is an enrolled Chipewwa-Anishinaabeni and also Assiniboine-Nakota. On his father's side, Robert comes from the Penobscot People. He grew up in Northeast Portland and has lived here most of his life, with the exception of a two-year stint in the San Francisco Bay area. Raised in the Catholic Faith, Robert attended Central Catholic School, and his favorite

memories are attending the folk mass with contemporary music.

He tells a story that demonstrates his eagerness as a kid to do things in a good way. At school, he asked Sister Loraine a question that was puzzling him in the first grade. "We believe in keeping the Ten Commandments, right?" he asked. "Yes, they are an important part of obeying God," she replied. "Then why don't we worship on Saturday, the Sabbath?" Sister Loraine's eyebrows rose into a

surprised arch. "Well, the Pope changed it to Sunday, the day of the resurrection." Robert wasn't satisfied that resolved the issue. When he went home that day and told his mother what Sister Loraine said and relentlessly began to pepper his mother with more questions. "If God commands it, then why don't we worship God on Saturday? Isn't that the day when God rested? How can a man change what God has told us to do? Aren't we breaking the fourth

(Continued on page 3)

WORSHIP WITH US

Worship services are held each Sunday at 11:00 am at 3917 NE Shaver ST 97212. Masks are optional. Worship includes smudging, drumming, and Native American prayer.

Services can be viewed on Facebook or on our website

www.greatspiritpdx.com

There is a prayer request form on the front page of the website.



Opportunities for Connection

- Volunteers Needed for Sunday Potluck, Hospitality, Children and Youth Ministry
- Talking Circle, 7PN Monday evenings with Quacinda. Contact Jody for confirmation.
- Thursday nights – PDX Drum Fam and Beading with Tootsie 6-8pm (Join PDX Drum Fam facebook group {private} to confirm meeting.)
- Pi Nee Waus Elders meetings held on Tuesday 5-7PM. 4610 SE Belmont. Park on nearby streets.
- Portland American Indian Elders meeting at NAYA Elder's Room, first Sunday of the month at 1pm.
- NARA Northwest Elders Lunch meets Mondays at Noon-1:30pm at NARA NW RiverHouse, Clackamas River Rm
- Portland Indigenous Marketplace for schedule of events, see their website www.indigenousmarketplace.org
- December 23rd Christmas Eve Service, 7pm Traditional Candlelight Service with Songs and Snacks
- December 31st – January 1st, NARA, at the Convention Center, Grand Entry to be determined

FROM THE SINGLE BOARD

Sunday, November 30th begins the Season of Advent, a time of anticipation for Christmas. Advent is a time to focus on hope, peace, joy and love. Advent is a time for sharing all our blessings with friends and family and those in need.

The 2025 Charge Conference will be held on November 30th at 9:45 am with Rev. Tim Overton-Harris presiding. The Single Board will provide the necessary documentation regarding the activities and progress of Great Spirit UMC. Loretta Milton has been working on the document labeled M.I.L.E. It is an acronym for Ministry (community partnerships), Itineracy (Pastoral leadership), Lay Ministry, and the Elimination of Racism. Basically, it asks how Great Spirit responds to each of these areas of the church policy. Anyone interested in serving on the Single Board is requested to speak to Pastor Allen.

At the October 5th meeting the Single Board unanimously approved a "No Guns" Policy for Great Spirit UMC, or more broadly a "No Weapons" Policy. Signs will be posted. The Board approved the installation of a bicycle rack by PBOT. The Board, along with Wisdom of the Elders and Mt. Hood Cherokees, will be working with a member of Boy Scout Troop 107 on an Eagle Scout Project to beautify our facility.

Great Spirit UMC continues to schedule multiple groups each month for meetings and events. Check out the calendar posted at the main entrance. Also, check out the Opportunities for Connection listed below. Visit the website www.greatspiritpdx.com for Past Sunday Services, Make a Donation, Calendar events and Resources.

Submitted, Helen Stewart

MISSION

Great Spirit is collecting weather appropriate outer wear to take to MainSpring. Place your gently used clothing and personal care items in the bin at the entry to the Fellowship Hall. MainSpring also accepts non-perishable in-date food.

TALKING CIRCLE WITH QUACINDA

Quacinda (Jodyne) Kolln would like to facilitate a traditional style Talking Circle. If you are interested in participating in a small group at the church, please get in touch with her at 707-815-6064 or qjt283@gmail.com. Jody usually has hot soup along with conversation planned for 7PM on Monday evenings at the church.

HALLOWEEN HOSPITALITY October 31st

On a cold and stormy night (well we did have light rain) 85 costumed children and adults picked up bags of candy. We saw jelly fish, princesses, superheroes, dinosaurs, and ballerinas! Thanks to Helen Iles for setting up the tables on the front porch. It is always a neighborhood highlight! Especially the Hot Cider to warm chilled hands.

BOTTLES AND CANS LADY (Helen Iles)

Helen Iles returned \$450 worth of Bottles and Cans in October. Thanks to everyone that brought containers to church. The total collected for 2025 at the end of October, \$3,700.

Helen will also pick up bottles and cans at your home or business. Give her a call at 503-252-0026.

HISTORIAN NEWS

Helen Iles displayed the year 2015 during the month of November. If you would like to view any previous year of celebration at Great Spirit UMC, place the date on a slip of paper and place it in the box on the table. Helen gathers souvenirs, pictures, and Sunday bulletins to archive into the scrapbooks.

ROBERT AND QUACINDA KOLLN continued

(Robert and Quacinda pictured at right.)

(Continued from Page 1.) commandment when we have church on Sunday? Why aren't we keeping the

Happy Birthday!

DECEMBER birthdays

- December 4 Claudia Long
- December 7 Thor Griffin
- December 11 Nicholas Wickliff
- December 13 LeeAnn Wermey
- December 13 Mandy Marple
- December 15 Ed Wermey
- December 16 Laura Campos
- December 19 Ricky Casias
- December 20 Robert Trimble
- December 21 Le Ann Wermey, Jr.
- December 25 Carol Edmo
- December 30 Hasani Milton
- December 30 Leann Abraham

JANUARY birthdays

- January 18 Sonya Owens
- January 25 Darlene Fields

To add your name to the Birthday list, please let Helen Stewart know the important date. Anniversaries are important too!



Sabbath?" His mom smiled and said, "Well, Robert, if you are that concerned about it, why don't you attend mass on Saturday night instead of on Sunday? Then you will be worshipping on the Sabbath." So, from that day on he attended Saturday Mass.

Later, he began to attend the Seventh Day Adventist Church. As time went on, he discovered that he loved different things about different churches. He loved the Nazarene and Methodist churches too, because of their teachings on holy living and sanctification.

In the eighth grade, Robert began to party with the same seriousness that he had invested in his childhood faith, and he partied hard throughout his years at Madison High School. "I got in an accident and broke my leg, so I used to babysit the keg at High School parties. I realized that if I kept going at this rate, I would probably get committed. Thankfully, I knew I could talk to God. So, I started talking to God about everything and anything again. I talked to Him about what I thought about things when I messed up. It was a spiritual awakening. Eventually, my conscience became connected to God. Later, looking back, I realized he had actually taken me through the Twelve Steps, and I gradually became more whole and healthy through him. "

After this, Robert attended college for a short time until he found a job working construction and as a janitor for Red Lion hotel. "After a while, I stopped maintaining my spirituality. When I turned 21, I hit the bar scene and didn't stop drinking for 7 years. When you have had an experience with God, you know what you're doing is wrong. I knew that I wasn't walking with God the way I wanted to be. I eventually got in a car wreck and got busted with a DWI. That's when I realized that if I didn't stop, I would kill someone. It's what finally got me into treatment, and I started going to AA meetings. At the beginning of treatment, one counselor asked me, 'How did your week go?' I replied, 'Pretty good! My friend and I were so happy that we didn't go drinking Friday or Saturday; so on Sunday night we celebrated by getting wasted.' I had to sign an agreement that I wouldn't drink while in diversion.

After diversion, I had a long season of sobriety, and during that time I got married. But eventually, I began to drink again in secret. When I had another wreck, my wife kicked me out and we divorced. My third and last cycle of drinking lasted for four years."

Robert went back to college during this time and completed a degree in accounting, and he re-connected to his trade of construction and remodeling. After suffering a hurt knee, he returned to college and completed a BA in business.

"When I was in college, I took a college class studying early Christians in Asia and was intrigued by how the Japanese and Chinese early Christians had created ceremonies of faith that were firmly grounded in their own cultural practices but were also beautiful expressions of following Jesus." By the end of the class, it dawned on him that God loved all of these cultural practices because they were all meant to preserve the heart. It spurred something in him to get more involved with the Indigenous Community and his cultural roots. He wanted to explore how Indigenous Ceremony might strengthen his Christian faith. Robert marveled that the connections between the two showed up right away.

In a throwback to his childhood inquiry about the Sabbath, he was taken by the realization that the seven sacred stones in the lodge referenced the Sabbath. He had come full circle. As Robert tells it, "The more time I spent with native relatives and AA people, and the more ceremony I shared, I found that everyone was having significant experiences with the God of their understanding. Gradually, God opened my mind up. I accept other people's walk toward Creator."

This return to his roots and involvement with Native culture was good medicine. He began to engage with the Native American Recovery Association Sweat Lodge. He also began to be active as a traditional dancer. All of Robert's new friends were clean and sober in that circle. "Now, without really trying, my life is very spiritual. I have my sweat family, and church family, and my powwow family. My wife and I are spiritual. Our

whole life, without really trying, is spiritual even though I don't consider myself all that spiritual.

"At end of day," Robert reflects, "I believe that if you come to receive Jesus as your savior, everything should fall in line with the word of God. When the word is expressed through our culture, it is always good. I went to a Bear ceremony after my motorcycle accident. I was suffering from a broken collar bone, broken ribs and a punctured lung. The medicine man rubbed the claw on my broken shoulder and there was no pain. His prayers were strong."

Robert sees no contradiction with walking with Jesus and being healed by traditional prayers. Jesus was incredulous when he was told he was healing people and casting out bad spirits by the power of the devil. He responded that evil cannot cast out evil, stating, "How can a house that is divided against itself even stand?"

"Great Spirit is a good place for me to be," reflects Robert. "I like what Pastor Buck teaches, and the contributions of 'all my relations' at church. When God comes into our hearts and makes us new, He heals us emotionally, mentally and relationally. I recognize my connection to you, to pastor, and to all the people in our community... and my dog, Zoe! It dawned on me one day that she was totally connected to me. So why can't I be totally connected to her? I try to be connected to her, the birds outside, and to nature. I like that we use the First Nations Bible at Great Spirit. I read all sorts of versions, but the Native version throws in a fresh twist, when the Bible is viewed through Native eyes. I believe in obeying god and in Sanctification, which the Methodist Church teaches."

Over the years, Robert has worked for a credit union, while holding a side job as an accountant at the BIA. He eventually applied for a full-time job there as a contract specialist, later becoming a Contracting Officer. He carried his experience as a CO into a job at the Veterans Association.

Robert met Quacinda (Jodyne) 15 years ago on an online Christian dating App. They were married eight years ago, on December 28th, in Napa California. Quacinda is Inuit and was born in Oregon. They share five children between them

from previous marriages, three girls and two boys, and adore their two grandkids (ask for pictures!). She works for an auto auction and keeps busy between work and her family.

Quacinda was raised Quaker. Her mother was Seventh Day Adventist, and didn't want her daughter to learn Native ways, because the church had taught her that the culture was evil. So Quacinda read everything that she could find and felt connected to her Indigenous roots. She believes in the Lord, and also genuinely loves the liberation that Native American People express in their faith.

When Quacinda lived in the Bay Area, she attended talking circles that were facilitated by Lakota Christians. The Talking Circles were meaningful to her. They gave her a place where her voice could be heard, and where it was safe to work on the things she needed to work on. She made deep connections with Indigenous People and with God. Quacinda is especially passionate that women in the community should have a talking circle. She facilitates a talking circle on Monday nights at Great Spirit, bringing hot soup and opportunities to connect. Anyone who is interested in joining a talking circle is invited to contact Quacinda.

Keep an eye open for a notice in the church bulletin about when the Talking Circle at Great Spirit will resume on a regular basis again.

Robert ended our conversation with this observation, "When I'm around dominant culture Christians, they often have their Christian belief, and all these religious things that they do which are connected with it; but they frequently don't have a living connection with Creator. Then I have Indigenous Relatives that have a connection with Spirit but aren't really very religious. It is just the way they walk. If settlers would have lived more this way, a lot more Indigenous People would be Christian today.

Settlers believe they are correct when they exercise faith out of their own cultural context. They don't worry if they are practicing spiritualism. But they freak out and think we are practicing spiritualism when we walk out our Christian faith within our Native cultural context. We all have to be aware there is a spiritualism out there motivated by

OUR CORE VALUES

LOVE – Love is the way.

CONNECTION – All of creation is connected by Spirit. That spark of the Divine connects with all humanity and the rest of creation.

SPIRITUALITY – Without cultivation of the spiritual life, we become unbalanced. Active participation in the development of one's spirituality is critical for a whole life. We believe this happens best in community.

TRADITION – Those who have gone on before us leave legacies of the old ways and wisdom with those who become elders. We encourage, value, and listen to them, so our tradition(s) may continue to help shape and guide us, informing who we are and what we will become.

We seek to become and embody these values every single day.

evil entities, and make sure we are connected to the Great Spirit, no matter from what culture we exercise our faith." Faith is meant to be experienced by every tribe and nation and expressed through every cultural context.

Robert and Quacinda love Great Spirit, "because it's safe. We are a real community of people from all spiritual walks and denominations who are interested in each other's well-being. We share being native, we share with our non-native allies,

we have the big drum, a great pastor and great people." Robert closed by relating an incident that happened when he was at Indigenous Ceremony. He helped erect the Pole, and while he was praying, he envisioned what it would have been like to be at the foot of the cross. "I realized what Jesus was doing on the cross in a real way. I was there and experienced Jesus on the cross dying for my sins. I said a prayer and told Creator I was sorry. It was such an amazing experience."

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