



GREAT SPIRIT

www.greatspiritpdx.com

Great Spirit Newsletter April-May 2026

Issue 42

Transition in April at Great Spirit Church

By Pastor Allen Buck

March 30, 2026 - Dearest Great Spirit Relatives

Greetings,

You probably know me as the pastor of Great Spirit Native American UMC. Erin and I, along with our children—Livi, Sophi, Gus, and Xander—have been honored to serve Creator alongside you for nearly nine years (nine this coming June 10). This has never been just something we do; it is who we have become—shaped, grounded, and held in relationship with you.

There are no words large enough to fully express what Creator has done among us. If you are reading this, I trust you already carry that story in your own heart—you are part of it. Sundays with you have been the rhythm of our lives. When I think of this community—of the GS Drum, the singers, the laughter, the prayers—my spirit overflows with gratitude. Truly, you are a beautiful community. *Wado* (thank you).

Since 2021, I have also served half-time as Director of The Circle of Indigenous Ministries for the

Greater Northwest Area of the United Methodist Church. That calling has taken me across the Western United States—especially in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington—where I have witnessed powerful movements of Indigenous leadership, healing, and decolonization. I have seen sacred partnerships grow, land returned, and communities reclaim identity and voice. Again and again, I am reminded that Creator is still moving—restoring, reconnecting, and renewing.

With that in mind, I share an important next step—one that touches us all.

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.

Beginning July 1, 2026, Bishop Cedrick Bridgeforth has appointed me to serve as the **full-time Director of The Circle of Indigenous Ministries** for the Greater Northwest Area.

I receive this appointment with both gratitude and heaviness.

It is not easy to step away from this role, because Great Spirit is not simply a place I have served—it is a

community that has shaped me, loved me, and taught me. Together we have prayed, sung, mourned, celebrated, and listened deeply for Creator's voice. We have walked a path rooted in Indigenous ways of being—honoring relationship, respect, and resilience.

And that path does not end. It lives on—in you, in the GS Drum, in the medicine, in the water, and in the Spirit that continues to guide this community forward.

At the same time, I receive this new role as an extension of our shared ministry. The work of the Circle is the work we have already been doing together: uplifting Indigenous voices, nurturing sacred relationships, and participating in healing and restoration—within the Church and beyond it. Great Spirit remains an essential part of that work, and of my life. I will still be connected—just in a different way. As the Bishop shared with me, I will “still be a pastor—just over a much larger area now.”

I am also glad to share that **Maryl Smith** will be appointed as the next pastor of Great Spirit Native American UMC beginning July 1, 2026. Many of you already know her and have witnessed her leadership among us. She has been growing into her calling within this community, and I trust that, with your support, Spirit will work through her to guide Great Spirit into its next steps and new paths.

Great Spirit Church—you have an identity. Your community carries integrity within the Native, Indigenous, and ally community. That is sacred. Care for it. Hold onto it. Grow in it.

So I ask a few simple and important things:

- Pray. Stay grounded in Creator.
- Show up. Keep gathering, singing, and walking together.
- Support your new pastor. Welcome Maryl with the same love you have shown me and walk with her - share the journey with her. Embrace her as your new pastor.

You are entering a new season—a kind of new birth. Continue to care for one another, for the land and water, and for those who come after. Stay connected. Stay rooted. Stay true to who you are.

In the coming weeks, we will have time to

reflect, to share stories, and to honor this transition in a good way. For now, I simply want to say thank you.

Thank you for your trust. Thank you for your love and humor. Thank you for your songs and your prayers. Thank you for being family.

Important Dates to note:

- **Easter — next Sunday, April 5, 2026**
- **April 26, 2026** – My final Sunday in the Great Spirit pastoral role. (I will be on vacation and transition leave during May and June.) Please come celebrate with me, Erin, and the family—we'll gather and feast during potluck. Pass it on.
- **July 5, 2026** – Please welcome Maryl Smith on her first Sunday as pastor. Be there. Invite others.

With deep gratitude and love,

Allen

Rev. Dr. Allen Buck
Founding Pastor, Great Spirit Native American
UMC

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 Jodyne at qjt283@gmail.com or 707-815-6064. Jody usually has hot soup along with conversation planned for 7PM on Monday evenings at the church.

SUMMARY OF LETTER TO GREAT SPIRIT CHURCH FAMILY

As July 1, 2026, Pastor Allen Buck will be working as the full-time Director of the Circle of Indigenous Ministries for the Greater Pacific Northwest Conference. This appointment reflects Bishop

Bridgeforth's stated priorities for the connectional United Methodist Church moving forward – envisioning a strengthened support for Native focused ministries as well as listening to Native spiritual wisdom – throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho & Alaska.

The Great Spirit Community in Portland has welcomed Maryl Smith for years as a gifted speaker, musician, and listener. She has the academic credentials as well as real-life experience to navigate her call to ministry as our new Pastor. We have experienced Maryl's gifts and service to our church community and will be joyously welcoming her as Pastor Maryl after July 1.

Great Spirit Church can "take heart" in this transition, because we will continue to receive support from Conference leadership. Our experience as a Native-focused worship community can provide counsel to other congregations in this renewed emphasis on 1st Nations ministries. We will be celebrating Pastor Allen's nine years of tireless service and dedication to the Great Spirit family with gratitude and abundant prayer.

~ Submitted, Loretta Milton

SPEAKING EVENT AND BOOK SIGNING

Frequent visitor to Great Spirit UMC, Aaron Jones, will be giving a presentation of his book "Fighting for Albina" on April 11, 2026 from 1pm-2pm at the Fort Vancouver Visitors Center in Vancouver. The book includes stories about two Paiute boys who were members of the only boxing team from the west coast to win the National Championship, the Knott Street Boxing Club. Aaron has also written "The Great Task of Oliver Otis Howard" that involves the history between Chief Joseph and General Howard. Book signing will be available. There is no charge for the event.

MISSION

In February, 250 pounds of clothing and miscellaneous was delivered to MainSpring. In March, Helen Iles delivered two cases of clothing to the non-profit for distribution to those in need of



Opportunities for Connection

- April 12, 2026 – Charge Conference, Rev. Tim Overton-Harris presiding
- April 26, 2026 - Celebration of Leadership – Rev. Dr. Allen Buck
- Volunteers Needed for Sunday Potluck, Hospitality, Children and Youth Ministry
- 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.
- Talking Circle, 7pm Monday evenings with Quacinda. Contact Jody for confirmation.
- 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

the items. Place your gently used clothing and personal care items in the bin at the entry to the Fellowship Hall.

BOTTLES AND CANS LADY (Helen Iles)

Since the beginning of the year Helen Iles has turned in \$550. From bottles and cans. She will be turning in another \$450 plus at the end of March. Thanks to everyone bringing containers to church. This amount goes along way to keep the mission of Great Spirit UMC going. A portion of the funds go to our General Fund to help with expenses of heating, etc. and a portion is sent to the Conference to assist with projects like funding disaster recovery.

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

FROM THE SINGLE BOARD

What a Happy Day! On February 8, 2026 seven persons joined the congregation. We welcomed Sarah Augustine, Rose Merri Crystal Starr, Shanti Cain, Heidi Plumhoff, Terri Karkau, Jasmine Long, and Lakota Sully.

The Single Board held its first meeting of 2026 on February 15th. The work of the church needs to be reviewed, from making sure finances are in order to making sure that the church is ready for Sunday! Notice was presented of a grant workshop to be held via zoom in March. Items were added to the maintenance/repair list. Robert Trimble, Joseph Bull and Helen Stewart will be making an inspection of the Parsonage.

In April, Zach Moser will meet again with members of the Board, Wisdom of the Elders and Mt. Hood Cherokees. He will be presenting his Eagle Scout Project for approval. Once Great Spirit approves the project it will be sent to the Boy Scout Council for their approval and then Zach will be fund-raising to get it started.

Since 2017 when Pastor Allen began his appointment at Wilshire United Methodist Native American Fellowship, Great Spirit UMC has evolved

Happy Birthday!

APRIL birthdays

- April 4 Ramzee Gallegos
- April 6 Gloria Marple
- April 7 Laurie Leong
- April 16 Maddy TwoTwo
- April 17 AnnaBelle Scott
- April 21 Helen Iles
- April 26 Birdie Wermey
- April 28 Maryl Smith

MAY birthdays

- May 5 David Collier
- May 12 Kathy Lesley
- May 16 Shadow Rose
- May 17 Rebecca Satter

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

through development, decolonization, values, mission statement, name change, removing pews, moved with flexibility through Covid, launched Stronghold, maintained integrity with tribes, assisted in land back, established identity, and served as fiscal agent.

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.

Next meeting: April 12th, 2026.

Submitted, Helen Stewart

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.

HISTORIAN NEWS

The "Early Years" of Wilshire United Methodist Church have been on view this month. Predates Helen Iles joining Wilshire UMC and being Church Historian. If you would like to visit the scrapbook greatspiritpdx@gmail.com

from any particular year, 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.

greatspiritpdx.com

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