March 2020 eNews

...Prepared

Wider Church Resources

Click on these links for unique faith resource information.

- One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)
  Invest in Futures

- Creation Justice
  Earth Day resources

- World Council of Churches
  Pilgrimage resources

- Faith Leaders Guide
  2020 Census

- Breath to the People
  UCC Report: Sacred Air and Toxic Pollution

- Coronavirus information
  UCC and CDC resources
Conference Church Highlights

These are our 8 churches with the most part-time pastors, less than 1/2 time or supply pastors. Send your church news items, newsletters and photos to ucc@mnwcucc.org

- **Molt UCC**
  - 100th Anniversary celebration

- **Baker UCC**
  - Pat Hanley retires from 38 years as moderator

- **Butte UCC**
  - Love the invite: worship @ 10:30ish

- **Custer UCC**
  - Nearly half the school attends summer VBS

- **Ballantine UCC**
  - Assuring drinking water for the community

- **Hardin UCC**
  - Considering new yoke with Methodists

- **Savage UCC**
  - Rev. Neil Lindorff retiring in May 2020

- **Miles City United**
  - Book dragons welcome to browse church bookstore

Conference News on Mission Renewal

Index of full articles below

- **God-seeds**
  - Prepare for disruptions and threats

- **Updates and News**
  - Board of Directors
  - Ecclesiastical Council
  - Stewardship Workshop
  - Who Is My Neighbor?
  - Carbon Fast for Lent
  - NYE Scholarships
  - Clergy Retreat
  - Outdoor Ministries
Here’s hoping that March will come in like a lion and go out like lamb. On March 1, a person with a rifle partially wrapped under a jacket came into Billings First Congregational Church. When asked to leave, he darted out a side door and apparently stashed the rifle in the hallway. During worship, he returned for the rifle. Meanwhile, a woman who seemed to be with him created a commotion in the back of the sanctuary, yelling and screaming. There was an immediate response from 5-6 trained parishioners and co-pastors. The children were removed to a lockdown area. The two individuals were escorted from the sanctuary, the doors locked, and the police were called. The person with the rifle disappeared, though a search of the building and surrounding block came up clear. Worship continued, and police were on hand for security as people walked to their cars.

Even after the lockdown and security search, the hairs on my neck bristled, not knowing what next might happen behind me. Later in the service, I helped serve communion and took the elements out to the people standing watch in the narthex. I could see the tension in the bodies of these parishioners on the frontline of intervention.

“This is the bread of life...this is the cup of blessing." I believe these faithful folk in the narthex knew the gifts of this grace already, as they were those among the congregation who had prepared, trained, and responded on other occasions with interventions as needed. Their faithful responses for the safety of the congregation, for the care of troubled people, and for the de-escalation of threatening behavior showed the best of what we believe.

I am thankful that Billings First Congregational has protocols in place for parishioners’ safety and for crisis ministry. Billings First Congregational is also working towards becoming a W.I.S.E. (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) congregation in its approach with people and issues of mental health, so that we can be all the more supportive in and out of crisis situations. First Church has people prepared to respond, and continues building on its capacity to be a safe and welcoming community.
Please look at your church protocols and consider who can be trained and how your church will respond when interventions are needed: threats of violence, presence of guns, mental health situations, medical emergencies, neighborhood closures due to natural disaster or other events. Preparedness is a very real way of practicing how “this is the bread of life...this is the cup of blessing” sustains the community of faith. Thanks be to God for all life and every blessing, especially when such grace is known through those who are prepared to watch over the cares of others in the midst of crisis.

Conference Moderator

Grace and peace to you as we take our first steps into Lent and Spring. May the journey be richly blessed.

Mimanagish update:
Our real estate agent for Mimanagish (Mary Lair with ML Properties in Big Timber) shares with us that the listing for Mimanagish is quite active. Besides being listed with the standard multiple listing sites, it is also listed with a variety of camp and outdoor ministry related sites. She reports that the listings have been encouraging activity. Our agent has been in direct communication with a small number of people but we have not received an offer from anyone at this time. Mimanagish is also featured in the current edition of the print advertiser Montana Farms and Ranches.

Wholiness Project:
I had the joy to accompany Jennifer Yocum, Peter Shober, Susan Watterson, Gus Byrom, and Marc Stewart for a second gathering of representatives from Pacific Northwest and Central Pacific Conferences as we continue to get to know one another and explore what ministry we might be able to together. We started the time together all wanting to come away with some tangibles, which we did. The groundwork is being laid for a tri-conference climate change event and exploring coming together for a shared annual meeting. We are blessed to have drawn from the gifts of Rev. Erin Gilmore, Associate Conference Minister in the Rocky Mountain Conference as well as the enthusiasm of all the representatives.
from each conference.

Our next Board meeting will be taking place on March 21 in Bozeman. A good portion of our meeting will be facilitated by Rev. Andrew Warner, Generosity Outreach Officer for the UCC.

Be sure to save September 18 – 20 for our 2020 Conference Annual Meeting in Red Lodge. We’ve received confirmation that Traci Blackmon, UCC Associate General Minister of Justice and Local Church Ministries will be present for our meeting. Watch for more information about programing and additional guests.

**Vice Moderator needed.** Due to an unexpected leadership transition which placed me in the moderator seat a year sooner than expected, we are in need of a vice moderator. This is a two-year term with the expectation that the individual will assume the moderator’s position for an additional two years. If you would be interested in talking about this position or know someone who would be a potential candidate, let me know! You can reach me at pastor@greatfallsucc.org or 406-770-9157.

It is an honor to serve as your moderator and work with your amazing Board of Directors.

Blessings,
Lynne Spencer-Smith

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**Call to Ecclesiastical Council**

**Chairperson, Ann Hanson**

In the UCC, the authority to ordain ministers and to grant ministerial standing is given to Associations. In our case, the Montana–Northern Wyoming Conference has one association. Our Church and Ministry Commission meets with candidates (Members in Discernment) and once we assess a person has completed their required preparation, we ask the candidate to prepare a ordination paper (or portfolio) for presentation. The Commission then meets with the candidate for an ordination interview. Both Lisa Harmon and Tom King are recommended as candidates for an Ecclesiastical Council. Delegates from local churches are invited to this gathering to examine these Members in Discernment. Delegates will be sent a copy of their ordination paper or portfolio.
presentation by email, or please call (406.656.8688) the office for printed copies. These delegates will approve or disapprove Members in Discernment for ordination.

Registration for Ecclesiastical Council

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**Stewardship Workshops for all churches**

There are 2 stewardship training events being offered in March by our UCC Generosity Outreach Officer, Rev. Andrew Warner:

**March 19, Red Lodge Community Church, 4 – 5:30 pm “Planned Giving for Local Churches”**

**March 21, Pilgrim UCC in Bozeman, 10 – 3 pm “From Good to Great 12-month Stewardship Programs”**

Cost: $25 for a church group, $10 for individual on their own, includes lunch, registration is needed

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**“Who Is My Neighbor?” Let’s Talk About It**

Plymouth Church – United Church of Christ
400 S. Oakes
Helena, MT 59601
Invites you to participate in
A series of events and conversations
April 30 through May 3, 2020

Featuring and Honoring the work of
Rev. Randy Mayer
Senior Pastor – Good Shepherd Church – UCC – Sahuarita, AZ
And Pablo Peregrina, Worship Musician also from Good Shepherd

**Events planned include:**

Thursday, April 30
7:00 PM Rev. Randy Mayer with Pablo Peregrina, musician, describing the faces and families of asylum seekers; extraordinary dessert buffet following. *
Friday, May 1
9:00 AM Breakfast buffet with Randy; informal gathering, sharing a meal, open to any one hoping to meet and greet Randy.

4:30 to 6:00 PM Panel Discussion, featuring three local service providers joining Randy, discussing and identifying the “neighbor” they serve; beverages, wine and cheese provided.

Saturday, May 2
1:00 to 3:00 PM Three open houses offered at local service agencies who provide exemplary care for our “neighbors”; map provided, transportation on your own.

Sunday, May 3
10 to 11:00 AM worship and communion in the sanctuary featuring Rev. Randy Mayer with Pablo Peregrina, musician.

*$15 donation is requested; reservations should be received by April 22; registration materials distributed to all denomination churches by the end of March; until then please contact Plymouth if you have questions or require clarification.

Faith Formation Committee

Carbon Fast Lenten Resource created by University UCC

A Lenten resource from UCC Missoula:
Our theme for lent this year is Viriditas: The Greening Power of God. We will feature a Lenten Carbon Fast with small groups, talks, and methods to reduce our carbon consumption as a way to address climate change.

Why A Carbon Fast?
The spiritual practice of fasting, accompanied by prayer and meditation, moves us to be more open to the will of God in our lives. Fasting helps us listen to what God wants us to be and to do. During Lent this year, UCC Missoula invites us to “fast from carbon”, responding to our climate crisis as an act of faith and love for God’s Earth.

Themes of Our Lenten Carbon Fast—Developed by the UCC Green Team
Food—Make food choices that create less carbon dioxide.
Transportation—Use transportation that reduces use of gasoline.
Consumption—Reduce your consumption of stuff.
Follow the link to our website to get a full schedule of the fast, actions you can take, and menus for our week featuring food. 
https://www.uccmissoula.org/ev...

**National Youth Event Scholarships**

The Faith Formation Committee will grant ten $200 scholarships to youth attending National Youth Event. Scholarship applications are due May 1 and recipients will be notified by May 15.

**Clergy Retreat for Rest and Restoration**

Clergy and partners, plan to join us at Chico Hot Springs from April 20-22 for a retreat. We hope to stretch, do art, hike, soak, eat, study, fellowship, etc. You can call Chico directly to reserve your rooms. Then, let us know you are coming. Registration will be $25/participant. We are hoping churches will help you with expenses so you can rest and restore after a busy church season.

--Mike Mulberry and Cheryl Stewart

**MNWCUCC Outdoor Ministries**

*What is Outdoor Ministry?*

This is the question that has been the focus of meetings and work for the Conference Committee for Outdoor Ministry since it started its work in developing a Camp Season for 2020. It is the task of this committee of committed members to define a direction for this mission of the Montana Northern Wyoming Conference UCC for 2021 and beyond. It is a task that asks us to look beyond a single place to the true meaning of this faith forming experience for campers of all ages.

When the Conference Board of Directors made the extremely difficult decision to recommend that the Conference divest itself of the Camp Mimangish property, members of the Board experienced the same pain and sadness that Conference folk felt at the loss of this special place where transformational
experiences have happened for close to 90 years. This financial decision does not end our mission to provide a camping experience; it means that we need to find a different way to provide this mission. COM is asking each Conference member to think about this task and join to find a way.

For two meetings, COM members started by answering a roll call question asking them to put into words what Outdoor Ministry is and what it provides to those who participate. Here is a summary of the insightful answers to those questions:

**What is the gift of Outdoor Ministry opportunities to campers of all ages?**
- Place of a different community away from everyday life
- Place to enjoy nature and be with God outdoors
- Chance for spiritual renewal in a new community away from regular life
- Necessary part of life of the Church which provides unique opportunities
- Another way to connect faith to life
- Intentional community – taking sabbath seriously – rejuvenating
- Way to develop a relationship outside of Church – everyone is equal working toward goals
- Context to engage with the world in the spirit of humility – be yourself
- A place where you can be yourself and be loved for yourself

**What is the meaning of Outdoor Ministry in Conference work?**
- Mission to expose other ways of worship – different way to worship God
- Expanded spirituality in a Camp environment – renewal of balance; natural way to bring us back to ourselves
- Connect to past – preserve love of camp – continue in new way
- Provide spiritual renewal; reconnect to nature, God’s handiwork
- Create in a short space of time a temporary intentional community which is truly authentic – practice vulnerability: – get to practice a prophetic idea of creation
- Process of separation – finding buildings, budget, registration not enough – getting real with each other
- Provide sacred space separate from everyday life – make new connections – return as better people
- A mission – providing opportunity for spiritual renewal

With these ideas in mind, COM worked to develop partnerships with other Camps to provide a transitional year between our time at Camp Mimanagish and our future direction for Outdoor Ministry.
- Our primary priority is to ensure uninterrupted Outdoor Ministry experiences to the youth of the Conference. Christikon, the Lutheran Camp just up the valley
from Mimanagish invited our youth to take part in their youth camps in a familiar locale. Two sister Conferences, Northern Pacific (N-Sid-Sen) and South Dakota (Placerville) offered their Camp experiences to our campers of all ages. COM opened our scholarship funds to youth who wish to attend any one of these Camps.

- Our second priority is to work forward to developing our Outdoor Ministry vision for 2021 and beyond now so that time to find homes for our camps is not limited to last-minute availability.
- Our final priority for 2020 is to provide as many of our popular adult camps as possible in 2020 as part of the Outdoor Ministry experience. This will mean finding sites, leadership and a way to fund this part of the Outdoor Ministry experience.

**What can folks in the Conference do to assist during this transition period?**

- Advocate for Outdoor Ministry in your Churches. We have a list of dedicated supporters called Fire Starters who are in place in our Churches along with Church Pastors to communicate Outdoor Ministry news to congregations. We will be sending Bulletin Inserts to help with promotion.
- Promote early registration to Camp. All of these Camp opportunities are on a first-come basis. Early registration is essential to ensure spots for our campers. COM is asking for a Camp Group Leader to be named in each Church to coordinate registration, payments, forms, etc. for Camps. We need this person’s name and contact information by the end of this week so that we can hold a training meeting to initiate this process.
- Assist in fundraising efforts for the Carlee Downer Scholarship Fund. We will again participate in MTGives through the Stillwater County program. Funds donated through MTGives can help to earn matching funds which will help to grow our Fund. Stay tuned for more information and a challenge for this effort.
- Help campers of all ages to learn about Outdoor Ministries and all it has to offer! Visit the Conference Website to learn about all Conference work. Visit the Committee for Outdoor Ministry page to meet the folks who are working on this Conference experience, a group which includes active youth and young adult members who are dedicated to seeing the camp experience continue. Last visit the Outdoor Ministry 2020 page to learn of the Camps and registration procedures for 2020.

COM has work teams carrying out the essential tasks of providing Outdoor Ministries in 2020 and in developing a vision and priorities for 2021 and beyond. COM and its work teams provide the leadership, but they need help from interested folks throughout the Conference to carry out the tasks.

**What can you do to help?**
We welcome anyone who wants to help with this mission for the Conference to step and become part of a work team. Contact Chair, Trudi Downer (kdtd48@itstriangle.com), with questions, suggestions and to volunteer to help. Together we can make a difference!

Trudi Downer
Chair Committee for Outdoor Ministry MNWCUCC

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**Prayers and Calendar**

*Calendar (also see the new 2020 Conference Prayer Calendar)*

**March 6** [Data Hub](#) local church annual information deadline

**March 16** Committee for Outdoor Ministries, Billings, 7 pm

**March 19** Workshop on Planned Giving with [national UCC Generosity Outreach Officer, Rev. Andrew Warner](#), Red Lodge UCC, 4 pm – 5:30 pm

**March 20** Board of Directors and Stewardship Team meet with Rev. Andrew Warner, Bozeman, 10 am – 3 pm

**March 21** All-Church “Good to Great Stewardship” seminar with Rev. Andrew Warner in Bozeman, 10 am – 3 pm

**March 22** Rev. Andrew Warner preaches at [University UCC Missoula](#), 10:00 am

**March 24–27** Council of Conference Ministers and Installation of Assoc. Gen. Minister Karen Georgia Thompson, Cleveland

**April 20–22** Clergy and Spouse Retreat for Rest and Refreshment, [Chico Hot Springs](#)

**April 25** [Ordination Ecclesiastical Councils](#) for Lisa Harmon and Tom King, Pilgrim UCC, Bozeman, 10 am – 3 pm (official call letter will be sent)

**April 23 – May 1** [Civil Rights Pilgrimage Trip to Alabama](#)

**April 24–27** [Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#), Washington DC

**April 30–May 3** [“Let’s Talk about It” Weekend](#), Plymouth UCC Helena

**May 2** Installation of [Central Pacific Conference](#) Minister, Rev. Tyler Connoley,
Marc attends

**May 3** Farewell Retirement Service for Rev. Neil Lindorff in Sidney, Marc attends

**May 11–13** West Region Conference Ministers Table gathering in N.Cal. Conf.

**May 12–14** [UCC Clergywomen's Leadership event](#), AZ

**July 22–25** 2020 UCC [National Youth Event](#), Purdue University

**August 31–September 1** UCC [Theological Summit](#) 2.0

**September 18–20, 2020** Conference Annual Meeting, Red Lodge, MT

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**Montana - N.Wyoming Conference United Church of Christ**

editor, Marc Stewart  
206 Alderson Ave., Billings  
MT 59102 United States

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