February 2020 eNews Abundance

Wider Church Resources

Click on these links for unique faith resource information.

- Black History Month
  Weekly resources about restorative justice

- Joint Statement
  UCC and CC(DOC)
  response to "Peace to Prosperity" proposal

- Creation Justice

- World Water Day
Conference Church Highlights

Click these links to read about the faith work of other conference churches. Send your church news items, newsletters and photos to ucc@mnwcucc.org

Mayflower UCC Billings
Green Team initiates creation justice forums: Power Grid 101

Red Lodge UCC
10th conference church to become Open and Affirming

First Billings
Healing Ministries: reiki, yoga, White Eagle Talking Circle, healing group

Pilgrim UCC Bozeman
Rev. Glover Wagner and admin. Mary Wagner retiring this summer

University UCC
Rev. Dr. Jennifer Yocum creates video to share an invitational message

Plymouth UCC Helena
"Who is my Neighbor?" conference with Rev. Randy Mayer, Apr. 30 - May 3

Sidney/Savage UCCs
Rev. Neil Lindorff retiring in May 2020

Buffalo Union UCC WY
Joint search committee with St. Luke's ELCA seeks pastor for shared ministry
Conference Prayer
A daily calendar of prayer highlighting Conference churches and ministries

Church Reports
Annual Data Hub information is due by March 6. Call Patti Martinson for assistance as needed 406.656.8688

Save the date and save your cash for NYE
Youth! July 22-25, 2020 at Purdue University, Indiana. A number of youth from our conference are already planning to attend. The estimated cost of the trip is $1,000-$1,200. We look to share some fundraising efforts, so no one is left out. A coordinator will soon be hired (see staff article below). If you would like to attend NYE or know youth who would, contact one of the Conference Faith Formation Team Co-Chairs, Rev. Pam Peterson, Red Lodge or Rev. Laura Folkwein, Missoula (pastorpampeterson@gmail.com, 406-446-1444) (laura@uccofmissoula.org, 406-543-6952).

April 27 - May 1

Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Alabama
Marc Stewart plans to lead a trip to Birmingham, Selma and Montgomery after Easter if there are at least six people interested. (cost will be approximately $850 - $1350 for flights, lodging, and local transportation, April 27 – May 1). Click for more information.

Conference News on Mission Renewal
See full articles below

God-seeds
With God, scarcity is not a thing.

Mission Priorities
Church Vitality
Just Compensation
Transformation
I recently was asked to preach about abundance using the “feeding the multitude” Gospel story. The miracle is told six times in the Gospels, as if it is a story people were not supposed to forget. In the past, when the “feeding miracle” showed up in the lectionary I avoided preaching about this story; I instead preached from the prophet, the epistle, or even the psalm for the week. I realize I have been spiritual uncomfortable with “abundance” as a person somewhere between living in extravagant consumerism and foraging to get by. Many of us seeking to live within the means of our household needs and church budgets juggle various level of scarcity, shorting one account to meet an immediate need in another account. If only we won basket-fulls of money in a lottery.

As much as the twelve basket-fulls of leftover fish and bread in the feeding of the multitude is about abundance, I don't believe it is about ending scarcity. Abundance in the Gospels is about bring people together, about organizing to share, about overcoming isolation. The opposite of abundance is not scarcity. The opposite of abundance is separation, isolation, loneliness. A young boy's ration in the feeding of the multitude was for everyone, and everyone took part in the sharing.

I married into a family that believed in abundant living, literally. My wife, Cheryl, continues a spiritual discipline, like her father before her, reading the daily meditation every night in the 1942 book, “Abundant Living” by E. Stanley Jones. Jones writes in his preface to “Abundant Living” that “Christianity that doesn’t begin with the individual doesn’t begin; Christianity that ends with the individual, ends.”

I am thinking this very thing can be said about abundance: “Abundance that doesn’t begin with me doesn’t begin; abundance that ends with me, ends.” This is the abundance found in “the feeding of the multitude” where self is cared for, and the community is blessed for all that is shared.
Three groups of leaders with whom I have recently gathered (the Conference, the Montana Association of Christians, and the Three-Conference Wholiness Team have all talked of the loneliness and isolation in our territory and culture as one of the significant challenges for us to meet. We have the care, purpose, and drive to go at it for the sake of the Gospel. Let's go do it together.

Mission Priorities

Church Vitality

It is called the "Wholiness Team" and is comprised of six people from each of the northwestern USA Conferences (Pacific NW, Central Pacific, and Montana-N.Wyoming). Our three conferences received a $15,000 grant from the Council of Conference Ministers Essential Conference Ministry Fund last year to be used for us to consider shared ministries. The first gathering of the Wholiness Team was in Oregon last March, and the team met again a few weeks ago in Seattle.

Some ideas generated for consideration within each conference:

Holding joint 2021 Conference Annual Meetings in Boise, ID.

Piloting some shared programs as three conferences, such as forming creation justice task force, inviting each others members into common advocacy and work events.

Inviting local churches to share resources and common concerns between conferences.

Dive deeper into understanding each conferences needs and strengths.

The three Conference Boards will be exploring their interests in shared ministry possibilities before the Wholiness Team reconvenes to consider next steps.

Just Compensation and Appropriately Staffed

Clergy and Spouse Retreat for Rest and Refreshment...

Where? Chico Hot Springs....

When? April 20 to 22, 2020....
Why? We will gather to worship, fellowship, enjoy nature, share spiritual disciplines, eat, and, of course, soak!!! Please reserve your room for two nights, April 20 and 21 now, before the end of February.

There are lodging options for every budget. We will have more details about the program soon. Churches, we would like to challenge you to consider helping your clergy with expenses so they can attend....

For more information, email Mike Mulberry or Cheryl Stewart

Transformation, Particularly in Places Where We Are Not Present

In January, eight UCC members from two different churches in the MT-NWY Conference traveled to Green Valley and Sahuarita, Arizona, to participate in Common Ground on the Border and the Santa Cruz Valley Border Issues Fair, hosted by the Good Shepherd UCC in Sahuarita, Arizona. Rev. Randy Mayer is the pastor at The Good Shepherd, and he was raised in Helena at Plymouth UCC. It was a joy to connect with Randy, Common Ground leaders, and new friends from around the country (Wisconsin, Oregon, the Indiana-Kentucky Conference, Tennessee, Washington, DC, and other regions). We wanted to share some highlights of our trip.

From Lisa: I am so grateful for the trip that Amy Aguirre and I were able to take to The 17th Annual Santa Cruz Valley Border Issues Fair and Common Ground on the Border, a trip to the borderlands, made possible through the generous grant of the Margaret V. Ping Foundation, Billings First Congregational Church and the United Church of Christ.

I can safely say that Amy and I were not sure of what to expect in anticipation of the trip – and any and all expectations that we may have had - were abundantly met. In fact, it was a trip of such highs and lows that it has taken me a bit of time to process to even begin to enunciate the beauty and depth of the people, the rich content and incredible experiential component to the classes, to the excursions, and to the fair.

I was deeply moved by our first visit to Nogales, the first day, to see the wall and its impact on the cities of Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, and Nogales, Arizona, - and her people. What was once a free exchange of culture, of commerce, of language, of traditions, of fertile soil and ecosystem is now a concrete and metal manifestation of disruption, separation and violence. No symbol or sign of welcome in sight, the wall on the US side is threaded with razor wire and riveted with reinforced grates. On the Sonora, Mexico side, you’ll find murals and memorials to those who have been killed along the borderlands. Amy and I were able to make three trips to the wall, once with Ana Maria Vasquez, our panpipe teacher, and we played a beautiful song of peace and unity through the wall, with our instructor on one side and students on the other side. We played at dawn with a wish for a
new day where violence is no longer a part of the American ethos, where safe, humane immigration policies are established and held by the US government.

On the way back from our panpipe exchange at the wall, Amy and I were able to meet and have coffee with Taide Elena, the grandmother of Jose Antonio Elena Rodriguez, the 16 year-old boy who was shot and killed with 10 bullets, struck from behind, on October 12, 2012 by a U.S. Border Patrol agent, who shot Jose Antonio from the US side of Nogales, through the fence. Lonnie Swartz, the patrol agent, was charged with second-degree murder, and was acquitted on the charge, with the jury failing to reach a verdict on a lesser charge. Taide made us coffee in her home and spoke of her fight for justice. We vowed to support her efforts and her good work, taking her message to our community. Taide continues the fight for justice for her grandson, whom she helped raise. She continues the fight for the more than 100 people that have been killed by U.S. Border Patrol agents.

There is so much more to share, which I covenant to do going forward. For now, Amy and I will play our panpipes for peace and justice Wednesday, January 29 at the Asylum Seeker Vigil at Billings First Congregational Church in our show of solidarity. Stay tuned!

From Laura: I was excited to travel with five other UCC-Missoula members down to the border and to The Good Shepherd, which is the church where I was ordained! Support from the UCC-Missoula Vision fund subsidized our trip in exchange for our promise to share what we learned when we returned home. In Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, the desert was beautiful and the sun warmed our backs. We were welcomed with the hospitality and generosity of a place where cultures and communities have met and shared food, drink, and compassion with travelers and guests for generations.

One of the first speakers we heard was Nellie Jo David, a member of the Tohono O’Odham (TO) Nation, on whose traditional land we gathered. Nellie Jo talked about the border wall being built on TO land and border patrol agents harassing her and members of her community at check points, both part of the militarization and violence US border security policy (and our tax dollars) now promotes. In other talks, we learned from journalist Todd Miller about the globalization of US “border building” strategies and technologies in Israel, South America, and the European Union.

Community organizer and artist, Francesco Piobbichi told a rapt audience about the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean Sea on the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa. Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa travel by boat to seek refuge on Italian land at Lampedusa. Many are traumatized and some die on that journey, in a haunting repeat of migrant deaths in the desert in the US southwest. An ecumenical group of European churches is providing humanitarian aid, documentation, and immigrant advocacy within the European Union through a group called Mediterranean Hope. Their work is challenging, inspiring, and straight out of our scriptures—providing help to strangers.
At Common Ground on the Border, we also heard beautiful music from blues musician Scott Ainslie and participated in creative workshops like collage, songwriting, lino print-making, and ‘Writing to Make a Difference.” Each evening, we ate together and enjoyed a concert. Our hearts were broken open by witnessing migrant struggles on the border. Music, art, and stories of resilience, deep faith, and creativity also lifted and soothed our souls.

People of faith and goodwill disagree what is needed to reform U.S. immigration policy. What we can surely agree on is that people who are hungry should be fed, people who are thirsty should receive a drink, and people who are sick should receive care. Jesus taught us this: For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. (Matthew 25: 35-36).

If you would like to learn more or plan to attend Common Ground on the Border next year, visit: https://www.commongroundonthehill.org/cgotb_home.html

Rev. Randy Mayer will be in Helena this spring to share more information about his work providing hospitality to strangers and friends in the southern borderlands

In community and solidarity,

Pastor Lisa K. Harmon and Rev. Laura Folkwein

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Outdoor Ministries

Welcome to Outdoor Ministry - MNWCUCC

It was a joyous 2019 and memorable celebration of close to 90 years of outdoor ministry at Camp Mimanagish.

With our divestiture of Camp Mimanagish, the Committee for Outdoor Ministry (COM) is tirelessly working to provide summer opportunities for our campers in new ways. Our first priority is to insure a wilderness experience for our youth. For 2020, we are in partnership with Christikon for our youth to participate in summer youth camps just a few miles further
south in the Boulder River valley. It is a beautiful well-established site where our youth can share in activities, programming and spiritual growth with old friends from the Conference and with new friends from Christikon.

Christikon invites our youth on a first-come-first-serve basis. They encourage early registration to ensure available spots. The cost is much the same as our past fees. There is bus transportation available from multiple pick up locations between Billings and Big Timber, at an additional cost. We will register through Christikon and use their system of accountability which will require an adjustment to what we are accustomed.

**Christikon - Camp Group Leaders (Promotion and Registration)**

A Camp Group Leader needs to be identified for each church congregation. Camp Group Leaders do not necessarily attend camp, but will be responsible for ensuring the Group Reservation form is returned to Christikon along with the payment and paperwork required for each camper. Camp Group Leaders are responsible for building excitement for the youth wanting to attend camp during summer 2020. The person who takes on this important role within your church will work closely with Outdoor Ministries and the Firestarters.

Conference Camp Coordinator Trudi Downer will host a zoom training meeting for all Camp Group Leaders in early March. It is essential that the name, address, phone number and email of your Camp Group Leader be submitted to Trudi Downer at kdtd48@itstriangle.com and the Conference office at jpenfield@mnwcucc.org by February 21, 2020. As Chair of COM, Trudi Downer will be the Camp Group Leader for any unaffiliated youth, the contact for all Camp Group Leaders, and will attend the youth camps at Christikon as advisor to our UCC youth campers.

**Christikon - Registration Packet**

Camp Group Leaders will submit all paperwork and payments to Christikon for each camper.

Group Reservation forms are required to Christikon for each session of participation:

- **Pathfinders / July 5 - 8, 2020 / Completing Grades 4, 5, 6 - $220**
- **Prospectors / July 11 - 15, 2020 / Completing Grades 6, 7, 8 - $420**
- **Trailblazers / July 19 - 25, 2020 / Completing Grades 9, 10, 11, 12 - $420**

**Sister Camp Partnerships**

Along with the partnership with Christikon, two of our sister Conferences have invited our youth and adult campers to participate in their 2020 programming. Registration for these camps can be done online at their camp websites.
N-Sid-Sen Camp - Idaho
http://www.n-sid-sen.org/

Placerville Camp - South Dakota
http://placervillecamp.net/

Campers, both youth and adults, are welcome to register for regular programs this summer at N-Sid-Sen on Lake Coeur d'Alene in Idaho and at Placerville Camp in Rapid City, South Dakota in the Black Hills. Camp Group Leaders will be responsible for assisting any campers wishing to participate at our sister camps and will notify Truth Downer and the Conference office of who will be attending these camps.

Camp Deadlines

- Christikon / April 25, 2020 - No Refund Cancellation
- N-Sid-Sen / Early Discount and No Refund Dates vary by Camp
- Placerville / Early Discount and No Refund Dates vary by Camp

Conference Scholarships

Conference Scholarships are available for the 2020 season to any of the three partnership camps - Christikon, N-Sid-Sen or Placerville. Conference scholarships granted will be sent directly to the camp of your choice. Applications are available online at www.mnwcucc.org/scholarship.

Through the generous financial contributions of friends like you, the partnership is able to support salaries and programs that provide communities on La Gonave with:

- 10 primary schools, a middle school & high school
- a fully staffed community health clinic
- mobile clinics & prenatal care
- an adult literacy program
- agriculture programs & a goat project
• access to clean water, sanitation & safe buildings
• a microcredit program.

-- J. Miles Barkley

The UCC Church Building & Loan Fund has been helping churches transform their communities for over 160 years.

Working through our Regional Mission Interpreters (who cover different parts of the country) we can help your congregation:

- Dream and explore your future through a guided Visioning & Strategic Planning Process
- Fulfill your mission and raise funds with a guided Capital Campaign for new construction, remodeling, and accessibility
- Grow generous givers with a guided Stewardship Campaign
- Help ensure your resources match your mission with a Repurposing Consultation
- Provide loans for purchasing land and/or structure, construction, and other capital projects

To learn more about these services, contact your Regional Mission Interpreter, Chuck Blaisdell via email at blaisdellc@ucc.org

Or via phone 216-736-3853. And check out Church Building and Loan Fund’s NEW website! www.cblfund.org
Prayers and Calendar

With Rev. Sheila Naismith (Sheridan First UCC) and her son, as her son recovers from surgery to remove a brain tumor.

Calendar  (also see the new 2020 Conference Prayer Calendar)

February 16 Marc preaches at Glendive UCC

February 17 Committee for Outdoor Ministries, Billings, 7 pm

February 20-21 Marc attends Retirement Housing Foundation, Long Beach CA

February 23 Molt UCC 100th Anniversary worship 10 am

February 27 March eNews submission deadline

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 24-27 Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Washington DC
April 27-May 1 Alabama Civil Rights Exposure Tour

April 30-May 3 Immigration Weekend, Plymouth UCC Helena

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

Montana - N.Wyoming Conference United Church of Christ

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