As we face this particular Kairos time, the church must make itself known by refusing to sit quietly by, allowing those who have long since been neglected to become expendable.

Sojourners, March 26, 2020

Wider Church and Community Resources

Click on these logo links for resource information

UCC Civic Action

Global Partners
"Our Faith, Our Vote" goes digital

Messages of solidarity for Racial Justice

WY Interfaith Network
2020 Census guide for Faith Communities

UCC Stewardship
Virtual Fundraiser Dinner sample promotion video

People's Campaign
Call for Moral Revival June 20 event recording

National Council of Churches
Anti-Racism Resources

World Council of Churches
Climate Change and Human Rights

Convergence
Your Congregation as a "School of Love"

NYE 2020 Virtuality
Music Playlist for resilience, courage, faith

NYE 2020 Virtuality
Loving your neighbor in quarantine (FB video)

NYE 2020 Virtuality
NYE 2020 will hold virtual gatherings, July 25-26

Saying No to Yes
MESA bookstudy for clergy, PPR issues

Conference Highlights

Local Church Worship Plans

14 now regathering
5 "phasing in" this summer
6 virtual

Shared Summer Worship

Buffalo Union UCC share a pastor and some worship with St. Luke's ELCA

Glendive UCC shares summer worship with Glendive UMC

Great Falls Congregational UCC shares summer worship with Christ UMC

University UCC Missoula recently shared its worship with Pilgrim UCC Bozeman
... consider how your church can share worship with another congregation, 
and so not only give your pastor a well-deserved and needed break from the 
intensity of producing virtual worship, to see how others do it, and to be in 
fellowship with others.

CoVid Grants Received

First Church Billings: SBA Payroll Protection Program grant/loan
Mayflower UCC Billings: UCC Community Garden micro-grant ($1000)

UCC Grant Funding: apply online through this [ucc.org link]

OCWM Support for 2019

Percent of Current Expenses 3.7% - average 0% to 12% - range 5% - median
7 churches no OCWM

Per Member Dues Support for 2019

$10.87 - average 0 to $21.82 - range $5.71 - median 9 churches no dues

Recommended dues - $20 per church member

Clergy serving in Conference

8 Full Time 11 Part Time 7 Supply ministers

14 UCC Ordained 2 Lay Ministers

4 Disciples 2 Lutheran 1 Methodist 1 Presbyterian 3 non-denominational

2 Campus Ministers 5 Hospital Chaplains

28 other and retired ministers

Clergy Transitions

Congratulations to the new senior minister at First UCC Billings, Lisa Harmon, who was 
called by unanimous vote of the congregation on June 28. Lisa's ordination and instalation 
will take place at a time yet to be determined.

Church searches: Bozeman Pilgrim UCC seeks an interim minister, Buffalo Union UCC 
and St. Luke's ELCA seek a settled minister, Sidney UCC and Savage UCC seek a settled 
minister.
Sabbatical blessings to University UCC Associate Minister, Laura Folkwein, who will be on sabbatical through September.

Retirement blessings as Glover and Mary Wagner prepare to retire from Bozeman Pilgrim UCC at the end of August.

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God-seeds

Rev. Dr. Marc Ian Stewart

Finding New Time

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 — Kairos is not just crisis but opportunity and favour. God assists us in discerning the kairos—a moment of grace.

KairosCanada Justice Initiatives

Living in a time of world pandemic has shifted the way we live in faith. I noticed a personal shift as I soon started to lose perspective on time, as in seriously not knowing what day it was and then being incredulous at the day and date indicated on my computer’s status bar, i.e. “is it really Wednesday?” Of course, this could have played havoc with keeping attuned to the proliferation of zoom meetings that came with our response to CoVid. I have noticed that my way of living in faith has shifted from a “Chronos” orientation to a clock and calendar to a “Kairos” perspective of following the energy.

During the initial roll out of the Small Business Administration’s Payroll Protection Program in April, as updates were happening by the hour, I realized I had enough of waiting on the clock. Even Conference “all-church” and “all-leader” list-serve recipients were getting overwhelmed by our latest “vital information” email update. Our faithful response to CoVid called us to slow down and consider more soulful impacts of CoVid in our lives.

Anxieties have been expressed by church leaders at the beginning of CoVid, and now in our national phasing back into public activities. These anxieties are sometimes communicated as timing issues, “is this an okay time to be gather in person?” In some of our counties where there have been no recorded incidences of CoVid, there was anger and confusion about “stay-in-place” protocols. Some of these churches have now made a quick return to sanctuaries. A few churches no longer try to figure out the tea-leaves of “phasing in” protocols, and so will wait to reconsider regathering some months from now. Behind the report of where congregations are in their regathering (14 regathering, 5 phasing in regathering, 6 continuing with virtual worship), there are evident demographic
differences and faith response differences. Some congregations waited out for any possible CoVid impacts in their communities, while others adapted and worked into new ways of connecting. All our church leaders have had to wrestle with both the “Chronos” and “Kairos” influences on their decision-making.

Going by the clock/calendar with a “Chronos” response to faithful living amidst CoVid has worked at times:

- Zoom informational meetings to brainstorm best practices (one per topic)
- Home office set-up has been productive for staff
- Emergency response has been focused
- Decrease in meeting travel has increased productivity and saved expenses
- Increased participation in decision-making, i.e. ecclesiastical councils

Where we have struggled amidst a “Chronos” response:

- Difficulty observing personal space protocols during church transitions
- Reticence to produce timely “all-clergy” and “all-church” response statements in crisis times
- Uncertainty about church income (giving, rentals, portfolio value)
- Exhaustion as we have tried to keep pace

When a “Kairos” response to faithful living amidst CoVid has worked among us:

- Opportunity to reconsider Conference vision and mission
- Refocus on relational connections
- Committees are considering new ways of doing ministry
- More deeply allied with other ministries and missions
- Develop new practices of resilience, spiritual discipline, and personal support
- Local church giving has been maintained or increased in many places

Where we have struggled amidst a “Kairos” response:

- Shy about naming our connectional needs and availability
- Difficulty articulating mission into grant proposals for funding
- Potential silo-ing of local church ministries as churches focus on their own context

We are learning how to keep faith in new these new times. It is no wonder we get tired, feel restless, want some semblance of control back in our lives. Aren’t these also times when the way of faithful living is clearer than ever, and when the essentials of spiritual care are most real, and shouts for justice may make a difference? It is an amazing time to be in ministry. Our Montana – N.Wyoming Association and Conference UCC is one of
these places of ministry where our adjustments in “Chronos” responses and our wondering into “Kairos” moments will make a difference for the sake of the Gospel.

Introducing Three Great Loves Stewardship Materials New for 2020

Three Great Loves expresses the core commitments of the United Church of Christ as we live out Jesus’ call to share God’s love. Across our Christian movement, we embody God’s love in three ways:

- Love of Children
- Love of Neighbor
- Love of Creation

The ways we share God’s love in any one congregation may not look the same as the ways another United Church of Christ congregation witnesses to God’s love. Our priorities may differ. But we’re united in a shared commitment to be God’s hands and feet in making a more just world for all.

The Three Great Loves Stewardship Materials help congregations tell their story of expressing God’s love while making a request for financial support.

Available from uccresources.com, these materials provide all that a pastor and leaders need to run an effective campaign:

- Bulletin inserts with compelling stories of how we love in the UCC and a worship folder for use each week.
- Pledge cards in a variety of formats (single commitment, double commitment, etc).
- Graphics for use on websites and to share via social media platforms plus letterhead and envelopes for mailings.
- Campaign resources such as a committee calendar, templates for letters, directions for testimonials, and worship resources all to help your campaign tell the story your congregation’s love.

Learn more about Three Great Loves Stewardship Materials or place an order at uccresources.com or store@ucc.org
Available after July 1, 2020
Prayers

Payers of Thanksgiving for Life be with Terri Godsell and her family, as they gathered in vigil and memorial for Terri's mother in Colorado. Terri is our conference treasurer.

Prayers of Celebration with First Church Billings and Lisa Harmon as she was called to the senior minister position on June 28.

Prayers of Gratitude for the extraordinary ministries of our local church pastors, campus ministers, and hospital chaplains during this strenuous times.

Prayers of Fortitude and Hopefulness for our churches and ministers in the midst of transition. (see names in "Conference Highlights" above).

Calendar

July 1 Innovative Ministries Webinar 1 - 2 pm Zoom
   "Phasing Forward" pre-registration required

July 1 Human Resource Committee 7 - 9 pm Zoom

July 2 Church and Ministry Commission, 3 - 5 pm Zoom

July 7 UCC General Counsel Heather Kimmel and Chris Davies UCC Faith INFO speak to legal issues facing local churches, 1:30 pm Zoom, pre-registration required

July 9 Innovative Ministries Webinar, 1 - 2 pm Zoom
   "Congregational Meetings Online" pre-registration required

July 14 MT-NWy UCC Board of Directors, Zoom 9 - 10:30 am

July 15 Innovative Ministries Webinar, 1 - 2 pm Zoom "Bridging the Cultural Divide" pre-registration required

July 16 MT-NWy UCC Board of Directors, Zoom 1 - 2:30 pm

July 20 Committee for Outdoor Ministries, Zoom 7 - 8:30 pm

July 22 Innovative Ministries Webinar, 1 - 2 pm Zoom
   "Racism and White Privilege" pre-registration required

July 22-25 In-Person National Youth Event Postponed to 2022

July 25-26 Virtual National Youth Event

July 29 eNews deadline for August
September 18-20 Conference Annual Meeting will be held using virtual technology, such as Zoom, instead of in person at Red Lodge

July 2021  General Synod 33 will be held using virtual technology, such as Zoom, instead of in-person in Kansas City

Gabriel Stewart, son of Marc Stewart, is a sound tech professional with a B.Music degree from Oberlin College. He has viewed 8 of our church virtual worship services and has some simple improvement suggestions, which are listed on a spec sheet he created. It is now on the Conference WEB site:  https://www.mnwcucc.org/covid-virtual.

Gabriel is also available for free consultation with church leaders about their sound and video set-up/needs.

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