Late Summer August 2021 eNews

Be Still and Know

Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel

Ginny's Gems

Be Still and Know that I Am God
Be Still and Know that I Am
Be Still and Know
Be Still
Be

When I was a local church pastor, I would include this meditation from Psalm 46 in our worship as a spiritual practice to quiet our minds. We would close our eyes, breathe in the first line and exhale, then breathe in the second line and exhale. We continued until we ended with the word, “Be.” We repeated this 4 times which allowed for our collective breath, minds, and spirits to slow down, empty of our busy-ness, and simply Be. For many, it was the only time during the week where they weren’t rushing to do something. This meditation gave them permission to simply Be.

This verse is so beautiful, it would be tempting to assume it was written during a time of tranquility and peace. But it wasn’t. Psalm 46 was written during a time of turmoil and war. The psalmist imagines God’s presence in the midst of human and cosmic chaos. And that is the critical element of this psalm – imagination, creativity, a new way of being! We see this in the creation stories as well as the parables Jesus told. When the challenges and sufferings of life become overwhelming and chaotic, God calls us to pause, imagine another way, and breathe into that possibility.

In many ways, this is what our Conference Minister, Marc Stewart, is doing for the next three months. Turning off his work email to breathe in and out, sleeping late without the worry of meetings and deadlines, reading a book for leisure, and hiking with his beloved in Spain. With each breath, he will still himself in the awareness that he is in God’s presence. And God will renew his body, mind, and soul for his ministry with you in the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference.

As we hold Marc and Cheryl in our prayers, I wonder if this is our spiritual practice in these next three months as well. For the past 17 months we have been the hands, heart, and mask of Christ throughout this covid pandemic.
You have shifted to online worship and church; you have held the safety of your church and entire community as you returned back to in-person gatherings; and even now, you continue to make decisions that may be different than those in your town in order to protect the most vulnerable from this deadly disease.

You also deserve to rest in the midst of this pandemic – to breathe in the goodness of God’s presence and breathe out the goodness of who God created you to be for all of creation. To let go of words, plans, meetings, and simply Be in the midst of God’s presence. I encourage you to try this practice at home and in your own church’s worship. I look forward to being still with Divine Imagination with you these next few months! Blessings, Ginny

Our own Supply Conference Minister, Rev. Ginny Brown Daniel was able to participate in the Poor People’s Campaign demonstration before beginning her position with the MNWC.

Hundreds arrested in DC as Poor People's Campaign presses for voting rights, $15 minimum wage

With that message, the Poor People’s Campaign brought public pressure for change to Washington, D.C., on Monday. A webstream from the nation’s capital shows the Poor People’s Campaign demonstration on Aug. 2, 2021. The peaceful protest for voting rights and a living wage resulted in scores of arrests.

More than 200 people – low-wage workers and faith leaders who walked with them – were charged with civil disobedience for blocking a street. Sandy Sorensen, director of the United Church of Christ D.C. office, and the Rev. Jim Winkler, president of the National Council of Churches, joined the Rev. Jesse Jackson in police custody.

“I walked alongside a member of UniteHere, a union representing hospitality workers, who have been hit hard by the impact of COVID,” Sorensen said. “The march stretched for blocks and blocks and the visual was powerful and empowering.”

Communication Procedures During Sabbatical

1. Call or email the conference office as needed (2-3 day response time) to 406.656.8688 or email jpenfield@mnwcucc.org.
Local church’s plan and UCC grant help Montana town respond to wildfire

The Rev. Pam Peterson walked out of her church this summer and saw a mountain on fire. She had a plan for that.

It’s something all congregations should have, UCC officials say. Whether the disaster involves fire, flood, ice, wind, earthquake or something else, preparation matters.

“If COVID-19 has taught us all individually and collectively anything it is that we must be ready for all hazards and emergencies,” said Lesli Remaly. As the disaster specialist on UCC included in $5M study of COVID and the church

The United Church of Christ and its local churches will play a role in a major study of the impact of COVID-19.

“Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations” will last five years. It will research “how congregations are changing, innovating, and establishing new ministry practices” in response to COVID-19.

Ten denominations will collaborate in the five-year study, which now has its own website.

The Hartford Institute for Religion Research announced the project July 2.
by Hans Holznagel | Aug 9, 2021

‘How can you tell a church is UCC?’ New web page has 8 ways

“How can you tell a church is UCC? There are many ways. One of them is by the commitments it makes.”

Those words kicked off a recent video introducing a United Church of Christ “Just World Covenants” web page. The new “online hub of justice resources” is a collection of all the special “covenant” programs that local churches can belong to.

It’s the first time these programs — some of them in existence for decades — have all been listed, with links, in one place.

Committing to even just one of the eight programs can transform a church’s life, according to pastors who spoke in the video. The two-minute spot appeared multiple times during the UCC’s online General Synod in July.
A UCC Haiti Appeal seeks to raise $100,000 for immediate relief and longer-term recovery for the thousands of people in Haiti who are reeling from sequential disasters.

These include the deadly, destructive 7.2 earthquake August 14 in western Haiti, and Tropical Depression Grace, expected to make landfall in the same region August 16–17. The resulting flooding and mudslides are likely to add misery to the earthquake zone and to hinder the search and rescue of survivors.

Hundreds (nearly 1,400 as of August 16) are confirmed dead and additional thousands injured due to the earthquake.

UCC Officers: We must not turn our back on Afghanistan

“As he came near and saw the city, Jesus wept over it, saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.” (Luke 19:41-2)

We write with profound grief at the news of the Taliban takeover of Kabul and fall of the Afghan government. Images like those of people clinging to U.S. planes are haunting, and they point to the desperation and fear of our Afghan siblings. After 20 years of military intervention, it is clear that U.S. and international approaches have not brought about a Just Peace for the people of Afghanistan. Twenty more years of the same approach would not have done more. The cycle of violence and endless war had to end. As we have said for years in the United Church of Christ, peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of justice. We need new approaches to address the root causes of unrest that lead to radicalization, and to break the cycle of violence.
The Montana Northern Wyoming Conference UCC is again partnering with Christikon to provide adult camping experience for Conference members. Three wonderful camps will take place August 25-29, at the beautiful retreat center at Christikon.

There are still a limited number of slots available. Registration forms, health forms and other information are available on the Conference website www.mnwcucc.org under the Camp menu.

We have set a registration limit on each camp, but if an interested camper gets a message that the camp in which he/she is interested is full, please call Trudi Downer (406-669-3114) or the Conference Office to see if a slot is available to be moved from one of the other camps. Payment in full for registration is required in advance of arrival at Camp. Below is a summary of the Camps available. Come join in the fun!

### Yoga for the Body & Soul

Join us August 25-28 for a 3-night yoga retreat at Camp Christikon, a sacred wilderness sanctuary where we engage with spirit, community, and creation. This relaxing, healing, rustic retreat offers a nurturing, playful environment allowing you to cleanse body, mind, and spirit. Reconnect to the beauty of your true self by exploring transformational practices like yoga, meditation, chant, journaling, hiking and more. Please bring yoga mat, yoga blocks, and blanket or beach towel. I will have extras with me in case you need. Additionally, please bring your favorite colored pencils, pens, markers, journal.

Lisa K. Harmon believes that body, mind, and spirit are inextricably linked. A UCC Minister and certified yoga instructor, Lisa teaches trauma-informed yoga to incarcerated women and teaches community classes at Billings First Congregational Church, where she is Senior Pastor. Lisa is passionate about wellness, personal and social transformation, and her walk with Creator. A hiker, writer, and animal-lover, she is blessed to live this life with her son William, daughter-in-law, Amanda, daughter Bronte Michele, husband, Mike, and their incredible grandchildren.

### Creative Hearts Camp

The Camp for those who love to create! Choose your duration at camp – come Thursday, August 26 or Friday August 27 and we will all leave on Sunday August 29. During the sessions of the Camp, Trudi and Marcia will
share project ideas and will have kits to try some fun projects. We will create a nature frame for our Camp photograph as one project. The Camp leaders encourage each camper to bring projects and ideas to share with others. If you love photography, bring your camera; the view is breathtaking. If you love to paint or draw, there will be time to go out with your easel to capture the beauty of nature in the area around the camp. You may even enjoy hikes or fishing. The options are endless and sharing with others is such fun. We will enjoy nature and our fellow creative campers. Most of all, we will have fun!

Ideas of what to bring:

✓ Camera
✓ Binoculars
✓ Easel/art supplies
✓ Your favorite art or craft to share
✓ Fishing rod
✓ Your inner child who loves to create

If you have ideas for arts or activities you would like us to include, let us know. This is your Camp to make into what you want it to be.

Two Nights - $200 / August 27 - 29

Fly Fishing Camp

What better way to “Renew, Refresh, Reclaim and Reconnect” than by gathering at Christikon on the Boulder River August 27-29, to fellowship with other campers, to learn fishing techniques from Doug McClelland, and to experience God in nature.

Topics covered:

✓ Rods, reels, fly line, vest, or fanny pack
✓ Waders and wading boots, safe wading
✓ Flies – dry, nymphs, streamers
✓ Trout species – cutthroat, rainbows, browns, brook
✓ Trout waters – rivers, spring creeks, tail waters, lakes
✓ Stream access laws
✓ Wade and float fishing
✓ Hiring a guide
✓ Catch limits, catch and release, wild trout
✓ Trout Foods – mayflies, caddis, stoneflies, terrestrials
✓ Hatches and spinner falls, matching the hatch
✓ Reading the water
✓ Casting Clinic – fly rod actions, demo technique, student practice

Campers need to bring a rod and reel with them and must have a current Montana Fishing license.
The Montana - N. Wyoming Conference UCC was represented at each of the levels of Youth Camps in 2021. The Conference partnered with Christikon to provide the camping experience for our youth.

The campers gave rave reviews of their experiences. They enjoyed meeting new friends during camp. They enjoyed the programming and were very excited about the opportunity of an overnight experience on the trails. We received many accolades but few pictures. Trudi Downer, Chair of COM, shared pictures of the Grade 9–12 campers as they departed on the Christikon bus at Columbus. Axel Blodgett, COM member, shared a picture from his trail campsite and joyful pictures with his cabin mates.

Grade 9–12 Campers were: James Jackson, Great Falls; Blade Blodgett, Axel Blodgett, Jason Shane, and Alex Shane, Molt. Grade 6–8 Camper was Ashton Turton, Great Falls. Grade 4–6 Camper was from Great Falls. The youth had a great camp experience and would love to have all their Conference friends join them next year!

Youth Camp Photos 2021

Read along with the Board of Directors

Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel will be facilitating a read through with the Board of Directors of Another Way: Living and Leading Change on Purpose by Lewis, Williams and Baker. You are invited to buy the book for your own reading.
Festival of Cultures
Aug 29th
10-4 Veterans Park

Visit the Interfaith Table to learn about religious communities and their work in the Billings Community.

Free to the Public

2021 Annual Fundraiser Dinner

September 28, 2021
5:30 PM
Glacier Room MSUB SUB

The Rt. Rev. Marty Stebbins, the Episcopal bishop of MT, is our keynote speaker.

This event includes a full dinner, a chance to hear the stories of students and meet them, and a silent and live auction to support UCM's ministry.

Tickets are $50. Churches can purchase a table for $400 for up to six people, $500 for 8 people, $600-1000 to secure an extra table to share information about your church or organization.
One Community, Many Long Roads

The Board of Directors has produced a video where church members throughout the Conference tell why our ministry is important to them.

Watch Video Here

Prayer and Calendar

O God of the most vulnerable,

We pray for the most vulnerable in Haiti as they recover from another earthquake in the beloved homeland. We pray for the most vulnerable Afghan children, women, and men as they face the danger of the Taliban. We pray for the most vulnerable in every town in Montana and northern Wyoming as we seek health and healing through this pandemic. We pray for the most vulnerable among us for you are always with us. Amen.

Prayer by Rev. Ginny Brown Daniel
Aug 11 - Nov 8  Weekly Wednesdays - Board Book Study 1 pm
August 19  Conference Board of Directors 10 am - noon
August 25 - 28  Yoga for Body and Soul Camp
August 26/27 - 29  Creative Hearts Camp
August 27 - 29  Fly Fishing Camp
August 29  Festival of Cultures, Veteran's Park, Billings 10 am - 4 pm
September 8  Committee for Outdoor Ministries
September 14  Green Team. 2 pm
September 16  Conference Board of Directors. 10 am - noon
September 28  MSUB Fundraising Dinner, 5:30 pm
October 7  Church and Ministry Commission 3 - 5 pm
October 21  Executive Committee meeting 10 am - noon
November 8  Marc Stewart returns from sabbatical
November 18  Conference Annual Meeting Business Meeting 7 - 9 pm