May 2020 eNews

By Streams of Living Water

Biblische Ausbildung: Blog

Kate Niewenhous, Interpretation of Ps 42-43

Wider Church and Community Resources

Click on these links for resource information.
Conference Highlights

Click on these links for more information.
Church newsletters and worship links are also found at mnwcucc.org.

Molt UCC
HS Graduate, Carlee Downer, Wins MT Teen Entrepreneur Prize

Pilgrim UCC
Comfort from the Couch Video Messages from Church Members

First Billings UCC
Pastor Lisa Harmon Affirmed for UCC Ordination

Mayflower UCC
Youth Are Asked to Make Short Videos Depicting How to Go "Green"

Great Fall Congre UCC
YouTube Channel for Worship and Sunday School

Plymouth UCC
Mask Makers Prepare for Eventual Return to Sanctuary for Worship

University UCC
Rev. Tom King Affirmed for

Bethlehem UCC
May Day Baskets to Sunday
God-seeds

Rev. Dr. Marc Ian Stewart

God Forever Graceful and Loving

As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.
When shall I come and behold
the face of God...

Psalm 42,

or what about a moose?

NRSV

How is it with your soul? This is the question I first asked back in mid-March when we started CoVid 19 check-in meetings by Zoom. It seems like forever ago, and now these Zoom check-ins have mostly wound down. I am wondering how we have been managing.

Pastors and churches seem to have found their ways to manage. The emergency mode of suddenly being in crisis has given way to a “new normal.” There have been varieties of creative worship and community offerings:

Some churches among us have focused on resourcing the community with spiritual care, such as University UCC Missoula which offers three prayer and meditation services a day. First Church Billings has adapted from its extensive downtown community presence to fostering Mutual Aid Networks of small groups providing ministry and service that would otherwise be lacking.

Hardin UCC is on AM radio,

Sidney and Savage churches off a sermon manuscript that makes it around town and into the assisted living centers,
Plymouth UCC Helena produces its worship on a closed Zoom session and streams it live through YouTube,

Mayflower UCC Billings prerecords each component of worship onto YouTube where participants can view each piece as they choose,

Many of our churches host a Zoom fellowship time before or after worship where people can "see and chat" with each other,

Most of our churches have introduced on-line giving enabling them to maintain their income.

The Biblical image from Psalm 42 comes to my mind for these times: “as a deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.” It is like we have been sprinting to the "streams of water" that refresh our lives. The wonderful truth is that we have known where to go with each other to be sustained in these times. The spirit that connects people of faith together for the sake of the Gospel has not failed us, and we in our churches have not failed to faithfully respond with courage and with fidelity. We have been finding ways to be there for each other and the wider community. We are seeing that we can be as nimble as deer in our faith responses.

One characteristic about deer that might adequately serve in this Biblical metaphor for us, is that deer are easily spooked and will sprint away to another safe refuge, even away from the refreshing streams, at the first sense of danger. I hope that we can stay nimble in our faith responses to these times, while also preparing ourselves for the "marathon" of living in a time of pandemic. We have rushed to faithfully respond to the emergency of CoVid 19 among us. Now is a time to pace ourselves to live into new ways of being faithful and responding to the Spirit's call to be connected.

Some thoughts of what it might look like as we realize this is a time of “marathon”...........

Continue to hone your online worship.

Offer additional gathering times during the week, such as the commi-tea that First Church Billings provides each week.

Connect with others in your community who are also doing CoVid 19 responses.

Continue your church’s social justice interest by providing the latest resources for online discussions.

Take time off. This is my most crucial recommendation, especially to pastors. You have been in a stressful time of emergency response to CoVid 19. When can you make your weekly Sabbath time? When will you be doing spiritual retreat? How will you connect with your loved ones around this pandemic when so much energy has been poured into your church and chaplaincy ministries? I suggest a minimum of a 3-day comp time off sometime in May, and a week of personal retreat by the end of June.
As we move from a "sprint" to a "marathon" and so look and plan ahead, it may be good to check in again, "how is it with your soul?"

MNWCUCC Outdoor Ministry Committee News

In 2019, COM enthusiastically embraced the theme, “Breaking Down Walls” as the theme for the Camp Season. Little did we know that this theme would become the theme for life during the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020. As COM began its work on how to do Outdoor Ministry following the divestiture of Camp Mimanagish, we thought our main goal was to find a place to host our Camps as we transition to the future. Little did we know that a venue was the least of the walls we would have to bring down to have Outdoor Ministry happen in 2020. Because of the late date of the divestiture vote, we faced the challenge of finding a venue that could host our campers. God provided us a partnership with Christikon located just down the valley from Mimanagish and Christikon welcomed our youth campers with open arms. Our sister Conferences invited MNWCUCC Campers to be part of N-Sid-Sen in Idaho and Placerville in South Dakota.

We had a transition for our youth in 2020 and we were focused on the possibility of offering some of our adult camps as well. Then March came and COVID-19 turned us upside down. As life became social-distanced and sheltered at home, we began to face a new normal and the idea that Camp may not happen in 2020. COM refused to quit. We made the tough decision to promote the youth camps we hope will happen in 2020 and to switch our focus to 2021 and beyond. We will work on our future vision.

At our March 30, meeting, we decided to cancel adult and & Me Camps for 2020 and to move forward with planning for 2021. On April 20, COM began this process by brainstorming what Outdoor Ministry should be in the MNWCUCC. The consensus was that we want to find a place which provides sacred wilderness which will take campers away from the busyness of everyday life. It should be a place where we can provide our own programming and foster a calm energy within the Conference which will provide new
energy for Outdoor Ministry. The vision should include outdoor opportunities outside of the summer camp season and should be able to be offered at locations throughout the Conference. And it should foster partnerships and relationships with those who have space to offer. The new vision has begun.

COM would like the Conference Churches and membership to know what is going on right now:
• COM is hoping that Youth Camps can happen in 2020 as our state opens up from the pandemic.
• We have heard from Christikon that they are hoping to be able to do as much of their season as possible. They are taking registrations for Camps and are working with registered campers to get in the necessary paperwork. They have waved their deadlines and are welcoming registration. They are updating the situation regularly.
• Camps in Idaho and South Dakota have not made final decisions, but are hoping to be able to offer camps.
• COM is preparing a proposal to send to possible future venues in May. We are asking for the opportunity to use facilities for a stated period of time (ie 1 week) where we can bring in our youth campers, program leaders, and counselors to offer our own programming while utilizing the host camp staff to provide the lodging and food part of the camp. We are preparing a similar proposal to find a place to allow our adult and & Me programming to happen. We will present this proposal to other camps and to the group that purchases Mimanagish as well. We are hoping to be able to establish a long-term relationship with a venue.
• In an effort to have Outdoor Ministry experiences happening outside of the traditional summer camp season, we have a team developing plans for a Fall Retreat and a winter season experience. It is the hope that the Fall Retreat may be in honor of Bob Staigmiller, a longtime Outdoor Ministry supporter.
• Our COM work teams would love input from folks throughout the Conference on what they would like Outdoor Ministry to include. The COM work teams will attend COM meetings and provide leadership but would like folks from the Conference to participate in the planning and implementation of Outdoor Ministry in the MNWCUCC.

As COM moves forward in “breaking down the walls,” we urge everyone to support the camps which may happen in 2020 and to join in the vision and implementation of what Outdoor Ministry will become as the Conference moves forward into a “new normal.”
Dear Friends,

It is out of deep care for the well-being of our staff, members and guests that the Board of Directors has decided that our 2020 Conference Annual Meeting will not be held in person in Red Lodge. We are grateful for the Red Lodge community who had started to gear up to welcome us from September 18-20. We will miss their hospitality but look forward to holding our Conference Annual Meeting in Red Lodge sometime in the future.

The Board is currently in the process of reconfiguring how we will do CAM. We will keep you informed as those plans start to take shape.

Grace and peace to all of you. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I hope you are well and safe.

Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith, Moderator.

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Calendar

Zoom Connection Information is available on a password protected WEBpage managed by the Conference email ucc@mnwcucc.org with your name and contact information to receive access.

**Mondays** Time of Healing and Centering, 11 am, Zoom meeting

**Tuesdays** Worship Planning for Pastors, 2 pm, Zoom meeting

**Wednesdays** Church leaders check-in, 3:30 - 5 pm, Zoom meeting
**Wednesdays** Faith in Times of Pandemic book study, 4 - 5 pm, Zoom meeting

**Thursdays** Local Church pastors and Chaplains social hour, Zoom meeting

**May 9** Rocky Mountain College commencement *(virtual platform planned)*

**May 17** Service of Departure, Rev. Michael Mulberry, First Church Billings, 11 am Virtual Worship

**May 18** Committee for Outdoor Ministries, 7 pm, Zoom

**May 31** Service of Departure, Rev. Neil Lindorff retiring from Sidney People’s UCC and Savage UCC

**June 22-23** MT-NWy UCC Board of Directors, Zoom

**July 22-25** National Youth Event  Postponed to 2022

**September 18-20** Conference Annual Meeting will be held using virtual technology, such as Zoom, instead of in person at Red Lodge

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Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel, Missouri MidSouth UCC Conference Minister, has charted out best practices and protocols for each phase of moving through the CoVid 19 pandemic, from various state and CDC protocols.
### Suggested In-Person Worship Phases

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Phase 1 Stay at Home Order</th>
<th>Phase 2 2 weeks declining COVID cases</th>
<th>Phase 3 4 weeks declining COVID cases</th>
<th>Phase 4 8 weeks declining COVID cases</th>
<th>Phase 5 Vaccine distributed to all population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Person Worship</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes 10 max</td>
<td>Yes 25 max</td>
<td>Yes 50 max</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Choir only</td>
<td>Yes with mask</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Peace of Christ</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time With Children</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>Offering</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Communion</td>
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<td>Hymnals/Pew Bibles</td>
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<td>Nursery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulletins</td>
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<td>Yes 1-time use</td>
<td>Yes 1-time use</td>
<td>Yes 1-time use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fellowship Before/After</td>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Person School/Confirmation/youth gathering event</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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### Suggested In-Person Church Events

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Phase 1 Stay at Home Order</th>
<th>Phase 2 2 weeks declining COVID cases</th>
<th>Phase 3 4 weeks declining COVID cases</th>
<th>Phase 4 8 weeks declining COVID cases</th>
<th>Phase 5 Vaccine distributed to all population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Person Worship</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes 10 max</td>
<td>Yes 25 max</td>
<td>Yes 50 max</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Distance</td>
<td>Yes 6 feet</td>
<td>6 feet</td>
<td>6 feet</td>
<td>3 feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Touch Rituals</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Events</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>In-Person Meetings</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office Opened to Public</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited</td>
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<td>Mission/Ministry Events</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church Rentals⁶</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes 25 max</td>
<td>Yes 50 max</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Montana - N.Wyoming Conference United Church of Christ**

editor, Marc Stewart  
2016 Alderson Ave., Billings  
MT 59102 United States

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