October 2019
Faithful Differences

UCC Climate Justice Ministry
2019 Climate Change Survey

Neighbors in Need video clip

National Religious Campaign Against Torture film for church use

Film available from Rev. Robin Meyers American Heretics

UCC National Information
Vital Signs and Statistics blog
UCC 2019 Statistical Profile

UNITE! at Purdue U. next summer
2020 National Youth Event

God-seeds: Moral Story
Mission Priorities
  - Mimanagish Evaluation
  - Members in Discernment
  - OWL Sexuality Curriculum

Prayer Concerns
Calendar Items
Social Media links
Members of the Council of Conference Ministers were moved to action in response to the news of family separations and horrendous imprisonments of refugee children along the southern border. Our impulse was to travel to a detention center to bring supplies, care and protest. Leaders involved in these issues suggested that we could have a more significant impact by going to congressional offices in Washington DC to talk with Senators and Representatives and their staff people. We delivered messages and letters from our churches during Sept 25-26 visits to over 40 congressional offices. My 6-member Conference Minister team received an impromptu greeting from Sen. Jon Tester, and later, Rep. Ilhan Omar (MN) pulled us in from the hallway for a half-hour sit down conversation.

I do not often wear my religious symbols, such as cross and clergy stole, even when preaching. We were asked to vest up for our visits to congress, though, so I borrowed a stole and wore my conference minister medallion. We were advised to not get into the political weeds of immigration bills and executive overreach, but to speak from our moral and ethical heart. Our story is that we are immigrant people who can claim a God who accompanies immigrants. The most ancient of our faith traditions are steeped in welcome and loving care. My tinge of self-consciousness at wearing religious symbols as I visited congressional office very quickly gave way to a sense of assurance that our obvious faith presence offered a necessary and welcome reminder of foundational values.

The values we sought to evidence may be different than the values of the those who wear multi-thousand dollar suits and who seem to get instant access to congressional offices. Certainly, so many values promulgated in the halls of congress and the administration do not build up the common good nor seek the best for others. There is a moral crisis in our government, where congress is not even willing to maintain control of its budget even for the good things it advocates. At the invitation of Bread for the World, I visited congressional offices in April to advocate for the continuation of US Aid, especially to places like Guatemala. I was distressed to learn that US Aid that helps subsistence farmers in Guatemala has been cut by
My "take-home" from three visits to Washington DC this year is that leadership in this country is starved for the moral high ground. I see this, too, as I look at the most vital and effective ministries happening in our churches. Significant community leadership is happening through our churches' support of LGBTQ+ initiatives and organizations in our communities and statewide and through engagement with Climate Change education and advocacy. Leadership is happening through immigration and refugee advocacy and sanctuary movements and through Our Whole Lives (OWL) sexuality curriculum classes. Leadership is happening through poverty mitigation efforts and local food cupboards. The United Church of Christ has a moral ground that is solid. While the religious symbols we sometimes wear do not prove anything, they can remind us and others that there is something that we can offer to deepen the conversation. In times like these, I will be glad to show it.

The Three Mission Priorities of the MT-NWy Conference UCC:

1. All congregations will be vital and viable

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”
--Micah 6: 8 [NRSV]
Our 2019 camping season has come to a close. It is time to look forward to our next season. COM is excited to find out what the future holds, and we can only do that planning with your help. We need to know what you found exciting and fun this year as well as what you would like to see changed in the future.

Please take a few minutes of your time to complete an evaluation of 2019 and tell us what you would like to see in 2020 and beyond.

Mimanagish Evaluation 2019
https://www.mimanagish.org/evaluation

If you desire to be part of the changes coming in the future, please consider being a part of the Committee for Outdoor Ministries and contact Trudi Downer directly at kdtd48@itstriangle.com. We are enlisting your help to get ideas about the future of Outdoor Ministries. Please have all those interested at your church fill out this evaluation form to help us plan for the future.

2. The Conference and Churches will be appropriately staffed and the staff will be justly compensated.

We have three women (Members in Discernment) among us formally considering authorized ministry: Lisa Harmon, who is already serving as Co-Minister at Billings First Church, Sara Branom, who has just started as an M.Div. distant student at Chicago Theological Seminary, and Laura Keating, who is in her second year at Boston University School of Theology. The Church and Ministry Commission meets regularly with our MID’s to support their discernment and preparations for ordained ministry on behalf of the whole United Church of Christ.

These three women are tremendously gifted leaders of faith. Even as each pursues their own journey to ordination, the Church is blessed by all they are already bringing to us. Sara Branom is a member of Great Falls Congregational UCC and brings her enthusiasm for fine Biblical study. Lisa Harmon, as a licensed minister with Billings First UCC, brings a tireless advocacy for people and organizations in downtown Billings. Laura Keating is a student minister for a new church start in Massachusetts and wants to come back to the Montana-N.Wyoming Conference after graduation in 2021 to do a new church start here.

In addition to these Members in Discernment, the Church and Ministry Commission is working with a couple people who are seeking UCC authorization after having served in other denominations. So, we are working with Tom King from University UCC Missoula and with Justin Dryden serving at Butte UCC to bring them into the United Church of Christ.
3. The Conference will offer transformative experiences and have an active presence in places where we are not now present.

During the last weekend of September, Billings First Congregational Church hosted UCC Minister for Sexuality Education, Amy Johnson. Joining a few other congregations that engage the Our Whole Lives (OWL) curriculum, First Church seeks to impact the wider community by offering training facilitators and classes. Sexuality education is a lifelong need for everyone, and OWL is the absolute best approach that exists. Amy Johnson has even been invited into Africa and southeast Asia to train OWL facilitators. (Prior to Amy, our own Ann Hanson was the UCC Minister for Sexuality Education.) Keep tuned to training opportunities happening in Billings next year. Perhaps we can have so many churches participating in OWL that we could model what it could mean to be an Our Whole Lives Conference.

Prayer Concerns

Prayers of love and care with Elaine Black, past Conference Secretary, in the midst of her recent cancer diagnosis.

Prayers of love and care with Jerry and Elizabeth Franks in his recovery from a recent stroke. Jerry served Molt UCC until his retirement in June.
October 3-5  Conference Board of Directors, Chico Hot Springs
October 8  All-Churches Stewardship Support meeting, 7 pm zoom
October 12  MAC Connect!, Hope Lutheran, Bozeman, 10 am - 3 pm
October 13  Buffalo Union UCC 135th Anniversary Celebration service
October 13  UCC Access and Disabilities Sunday
October 19  Installation at Red Lodge UCC, Rev. Pam Peterson, 1 pm Saturday
October 21  East Area clergy cluster, Miles City, 9:30 am
October 22  Central Area clergy cluster, Billings office, 10 am
November 3  Daylight Saving Time ends
November 10  (Date Change) Installation at Mayflower UCC, Rev. Amy Carter, 3 pm
November 11-17  Marc Stewart on vacation
November 18-22  Marc Stewart with Council of Conference Ministers, Alabama
November 24  Columbus Community UCC Rev. Tracy Heilman’s service of leave-taking
November 24  Installation at University UCC Missoula, Rev. Laura Folkwein, 10 am
December 6-7  Church and Ministry Commission, 2:30 pm - noon, Billings office
Mimanagish Matters is our new monthly eNews all about Mimanagish. Mimanagish Matters comes out during the third week of the month. Email the Conference office to subscribe.

Check out our CONFERENCE WEB SITE www.mnwcucc.org and our MIMANAGISH WEB SITE www.mimanagish.org

We are on Facebook. Stay in touch and get all of the latest news by liking our page. Click here!

And check out our Camp Mimanagish Facebook page. Click here!

"Another Voice" community television series features some of our Billings area clergy and Conference Minister Click here!