Claire Hatch, who served on our Committee for Outdoor Ministries, is completing her final two years of high school at the United World College in Maastricht, The Netherlands. Claire will earn an International Baccalaureate diploma before returning to the US for college. Claire’s three roommates are from Mali, Turkey, and Sierra Leone.

On International Women’s Day, 30 UWCM students participated in “Bald for a Cause” by donating their hair and raising money to support GIRE, which is an NGO that promotes cultural change on behalf of women in Mexico by supporting women’s health concerns and human rights.

Claire, on left in pic, is the daughter of Rev. Meg and Dox Hatch (Absarokee UCC).
Wider Church News

Click on these logo links for news and information about women leaders

**Revolutionary Love**
Valerie Kaur to keynote UCC Gen Synod, July 12. Author of *See No Stranger*

**Czech Goodwill Amb.**
Year of reconciliation from Thirty Years' War battle in Prague (1620)

**Global Week of Prayer**
March 22-27, prayer event through World Council of Churches, one year into CoVid-19

**Women Peacemakers**
*Justapaz*, our Global Ministry partner group, active in Columbia

Local Church News

Click on these logo links for more information. To include your church news, email items to ucc@mnwcucc.org before the 10th of each month.
Soup for the Soul
Women of Mayflower, Billings, make soup to support local missions

CEDAW Task Force
Rev. Danielle Rogers on Bozeman task force with Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Holy Week in a Box
University UCC puts together Holy Week items for at-home devotionals

Girl Scout Sunday
Red Lodge UCC honors its Daisy Girl Scout troop during March 14 worship

Women Serving Conference Churches
Rev. Amy Carter, Mayflower UCC, Billings, Sr. Pastor
Rev. Amber Dixon, Miles City United Church, Co-Pastor
Rev. Laura Folkwein, University UCC, Associate Pastor
Barbara Gulick, Commissioned Minister, Spiritual Direction, Billings
Pastor Lisa Harmon, First Congr. UCC, Billings, Sr. Pastor
Rev. Meg Hatch, Absarokee Community UCC, Pastor

Women serving as Chaplains
Sara McGalva Branom, Hospice Chaplain, Benefis, Great Falls
Rev. Wendy Brown, Deaconess Hospital Bozeman

Women Church Members in Discernment of Ordination
Sara McGalva Branom, First Congr. UCC in Great Falls
Barbara Gulick, First Congr. UCC in Billings

Rev. Sheila Naismith, Sheridan Congregational UCC, Pastor
Rev. Pamela Peterson, Red Lodge Community UCC, Sr. Pastor
Rev. Lynne Spencer Smith, Great Fall Congregational UCC, Sr. Pastor
Rev. Janice Springer, University UCC, Spiritual Direction
Rev. Cheryl Stewart, Sidney Peoples and Savage UCCs, Supply Pastor
Rev. Jennifer Yocum, University UCC, Sr. Pastor

Rev. Gail Greener, Hospice Chaplain, Missoula
Rev. Judith Hollaway, Hospice Chaplain, Missoula
Cathy Scribner, Chaplain, Missoula
Laura Keating, First Congr. UCC in Billings
THE MONTANA-NWY CONFERENCE OF THE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND
BILLINGS FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Cordially invite you to
the ordination and
installation of
Elizabeth Kopanski
Harmon

Sunday, March 21, 4pm
Limited In-Person Attendance
Live Stream
with Rev. Dr. Marc Stewart
Message:
Rev. Cameron Trimble

Isaiah 43:19
I am about to do a new thing: now it springs
forth. do you not perceive it? I will make a way
in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
March began with International Women’s Day on the 8th. Our United States Women’s History Month started in 1980 by presidential decree and was later established as an annual occurrence by Congress.

Of course, Women’s History Month is not just about the past, as history is being made in our days, such as the election of Vice President Kamala Harris in January. The truth is, though, that there is still a lot of history yet to be made for the good:

We need equal pay for equal work: wage inequality averages 82 cents per dollar of men’s wages, and affects all types of employment including local church pastor compensation.

We need legislation that protects women’s agency in managing her family: there is a retrenchment evident in proposed legislation, even in Montana, aimed at forcing women to seek various types of caregiving permission from absent and perhaps abusive fathers of their children.

We need reproductive rights and health care protection of women’s agency over their own bodies.

Most significantly, we need accountability in our cultural mores, religious teachings, family norms, work place environments, and political machines that call out and isolate misogyny.

I know myself to be “a recovery misogynist.” There is a lot of cultural assimilation, a fair amount of “mother issues” and “father issues,” and an overabundance of experience of being a privileged white male that has stoked the sin of misogyny. The work of change I need is mine to do, and it is constant. And, men, I am not the only one doing this. I call us to be vigilant in rooting out misogyny wherever we see it.

In post-graduate seminars I did with the family systems expert, Rabbi Edwin Friedman, I was taught that the primary factor in the health of an organization had to do with leaders’ own roles in their families of origin and not their gender, race or job description. Rabbi Friedman did account for how external pressures in culture, politics, and media can push people and systems into disfunction. My experience is that these pressures can also shape and define us as well as perpetuate institutional dysfunction.
The evil of misogyny is not only “out there" but also “in here" for many of us. I have been following the recent callout for accountability of NY Governor Andrew Cuomo. Again, there are multiple women whose personal space was violated by a man who does not recognize the legitimacy of women setting their own boundaries. This is all too common in our society, and not just around physical boundaries, but also around emotional and relationship and spiritual and healthcare and employment boundaries. (See this article on spotting a misogynist for a fuller understanding.)

Women, continue to make history, for there is so much yet to happen. Men, Women’s History month is an occasion to commit and recommit to facing, naming and repenting of our misogyny.

Extra Covid Relief grant supplement from UCC will be used to assist local church insurance costs

Last fall, our Conference received a $10,000 grant to support our mission during the pandemic. This grant was used to fund our virtual Conference Annual Meeting leadership, provide consultation to the Board of Directors, and offer grants to help rural churches purchase equipment to do virtual worship. Our national setting of the UCC had extra grant funds remaining at the end of 2020 and so gave the MT-NWy Conference an additional $5000. The Board of Directors is offering to supplement local church property and liability insurance on an "as-needed" basis. If your church has an urgent budget need for assistance with insurance costs, you may send a letter or email of request to the Conference office. Include your 2021 budget, a copy of your church insurance policy, the cost of your insurance, and the amount requested. Requests are due by March 31. Distributions will be made by April 30.

Camp Season 2021 IS Happening

Youth Camps will be partnered with Christikon who successfully offered Camps in 2020 with solid COVID protocols. Our Conference youth who attended enjoyed their experience
very much and want to go back. This time, they want to take all of their camp friends with them. The registration for youth camps will be handled by Christikon through a Church Camp Leader from each Church. The cost will be the same as 2020. This rate will be guaranteed through May 15. After May 15, the rate will raise $15 per camp. A $50 nonrefundable deposit is required at the time of registration. The deadline for drops is June 1. After June 1, the full registration is due. A registration packet will be out to Churches and Church Camp Leaders after March 24. Conference Church Group Leader is Trudi Downer. She will be available for training on the registration process and will be in contact with each Church. Any Conference youth who would like to attend camp, but does not have a Church affiliation may contact Trudi for assistance. A bus is available for $60.00 with pick up in Billings, Park City, Laurel, Columbus and Big Timber.

We are also planning Adult Camps this summer. Leadership has been confirmed for You & Me Camp (a combination of our Grandparents & Me, Mini & Me, Mom & Me and Family Camp); Yoga Wellness, Fishing and Creative Arts Camps. We are hoping to offer Pride Camp but have not been able to confirm leadership. Details for these Camps will be out soon. The Conference will handle registration for adult camps using the Christikon model. We are in the process of determining number of days for each Camp, cost of each Camp, etc. These details will be released soon. We will need to provide the cook and coordinate food and ordering for these Camps. We will be talking to Churches about support for the Camp program – scholarships, in-kind help, sponsorships and most important sending Campers. Be assured that COVID protocols will be in place for all Camps. It is important to provide this valuable ministry opportunity for our Conference. Our theme will be “Renew, Refresh, Reclaim and Reconnect!” with God, ourselves, each other and with nature. Join us along the Boulder valley in 2021.

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Team Ministries

Healing the Earth

Our Conference Green Team meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month on zoom at 2 pm. Our three goals are:

1. Share information with Conference churches about becoming a Creation Justice Church.
2. Engage in political advocacy around clean energy solutions to heal the earth.
3. Identify someone at each Conference church to be a Green Members

We are looking for a member from each Conference church. We are excited that we have three new members: Graham, Marynell, and Joan. Yay!! Consider joining us. We meet on the third Tuesday of each month. Let us know, and we will send you the link. Each church that has a person joining us will receive a tree sent to them this spring.

Earth Month
The Green Team will meet again Tuesday, April 20, 2 pm. Register in advance for this meeting: [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting...](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting...).

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

We know that Earth Day is April 22, but we have decided to celebrate Earth Month, from April 5-30. Please encourage your pastors to celebrate with us. Go to the conference website to find Earth Month resources. The most exciting resource is a song written by Rev. Bob Miller, just for our Conference for Earth Month 2021. You will find a video of Bob singing the song and words and music for you to share it in your church.

Creation Justice Church
University UCC in Missoula is already a Creation Justice church; Mayflower UCC in Billings is in process. At our April 20 meeting, we will be walking together through the steps to become a Creation Justice Church.

Culture of Wellness/
Surviving the Pandemic

Zoom gatherings for clergy serving local congregations, to share strategies, support, and find "worship buddies" for shared worship planning.

Lynne Spencer Smith will host a Virtual Happy Hour for clergy serving congregations, April 8, 6 - 7:30 pm

[Email Lynne for zoom information](mailto:Email Lynne for zoom information)

Connecting Our Justice Work

"Just Connections" grew out of this past year’s Conference Annual Meeting as we

If you or folks in your church would like to learn more about what justice work you could be engaging, you are invited to be part of Just Connections to be inspired.
entered into conversation and realized that there’s a whole lot of justice work going on in our churches. There was a passion to share what's happening and celebrate it. There was also a desire to connect with one another more deeply to share resources and bring our voices together.

If you just like connecting with people who are passionate about justice, you are invited to join in.

Questions? Contact Lynne Spencer-Smith 406-770-9157 or pastor@greatfallsucc.org

WEBS, Women’s Ecumenical Bible Study

Our WEBS Spring 2021 Book Study with Spiritual Practices via zoom is open to women across territory.

WEBS seeks to build connections; as we explore God’s story, we share our stories.

WEBS offers spiritual seekers and Christians, who enjoy the perspectives of other women, a respectful, engaging environment to nurture their faith through Bible/book Study in community.

If you are interested in joining our study of Christian contemplative, Cynthia Bourgeault’s The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart

Monday mornings, April 5 – May 24, 2021, email clergy facilitator, Rev. Valerie Webster, vwebster587@gmail.com for Zoom link and information.

Circles of Trust and Soul of Aging - on Zoom!

When was the last time someone really listened deeply to you? Are you in a season of discernment? What is your soul longing for?

When we are faced with discernment or decisions, or simply want to reflect on our growing edges, our inner teacher can provide the wisdom we need. However, most of us are not well-practiced in accessing this important resource. In a Circle of Trust, using poetry and essays, journaling and silence, and a technique called “honest and open questions”, a small group can help a person go deeper and gain insights.

The 10-session experiences called “A Geography of Grace” and “The Soul of Aging” will be offered via Zoom starting the fourth week in March. Geography of Grace will be Thursdays 1:30-4:00 Mountain Daylight Time, the other is yet to be scheduled. Cathy Barker will lead the Circle of Trust journey, using skills from her experience and training by the Center for Courage and Renewal, founded on Parker Palmer’s work. She has taught these courses over twenty times, including adapting both experiences to Zoom in 2020-21.

Based on metaphors from the geography of the land and sky, Geography of Grace invites an exploration of the inner self. The themes include Forest Community, Mountain Edges,
Canyon Deeps, Water and Release, and many others. Held in a safe and welcoming Circle of Trust, these experiences are designed to help a person consider, in community, this inner and outer geography. The theme of grace also weaves throughout the sessions. The emphasis is on spiritual growth, rather than on any particular faith. Discernment and transformation may result.

The Soul of Aging is a similar 10-session course with essays and poems, journaling and silence, listening and sharing. It gives us an opportunity to create a safe Circle of Trust in which we can wrestle with some of the topics of the last third of life, such as Grief, Forgiveness, Mortality, our Shadow Side, and Legacy. A recent participant said this: “Geography of Grace was not churchy, preachy, religious, biased, or directed. It is an open question to your soul. It starts as a random group of people and quickly becomes open and cohesive. They are willing to listen, support, and uplift you on your personal journey. If you are open to the experience you will explore the deep regions of your own soul. The discoveries can be life changing.”

This experience is offered to anyone who values their inner journey and is willing to accompany others on theirs. All are welcome. Suggested donation is $65 for the course. Scholarships are available, just ask. The amount over expenses will be donated to Singing Waters Montana.

To register or to ask questions, contact:
Cathy Barker
Heronsbalance@mindspring.com

Calendar

All meetings are happening virtually and require registration

March 18 Conference Board of Directors 10 am - noon
March 20 Wholeness Team zoom gathering
March 21 Ordination and Installation of Pastor Lisa Harmon 4 pm virtual on Facebook or pre-reservation for in-person
March 23 Lenten Meditation Time led by Faith Formation Comm, 7 pm
March 25 Clergy Gathering, Dwight Welch on Ethics, 10 am - noon
March 25  Geography of Grace begins 1:30 - 4 pm  info from Cathy Barker

March 28 Palm Sunday and beginning of Holy Week

April 4 Easter Sunday

April 5 WEBS Women's Ecumenical Bible Study 9:30 - 10:45 am,
    Mondays through May 24, zoom info from Valerie Webster

April 8 Virtual Happy Hour for clergy serving congregations, 6 - 7:30 pm

April 17 Rural Ministry Workshop, 8:30 - 10 am

April 20  Green Team 2 pm

April 21 Building Hybrid Worship Webinar "Time and Talent", 4 pm

April 22 Clergy Gathering 10 - noon

April 29 Building Hybrid Worship Webinar "Tools and Tech", 4 pm

July 11-18, 2021  General Synod 33, Rooted in Love, will be held using virtual
technology, such as Zoom