January 2021 eNews

Voices of Faith

Emmaus Window, Church of St. Margaret, Millington, Yorkshire, 2007

Wider Church Resources

Click on these logo links for resource information

Front Line Faith
New UCC "WEB portal" with online courses

UCC CoVid page
Compiled resources for churches and families.
**UCC Prayer Vigil**
Recording of January 6 prayer vigil

**MAC Advocacy**
Focusing on 2021 legislation affecting children and families

**International Prayer Cycle**
WCC prayer guide

**The Pollinator**
UCC Environmental Justice Blog

**Building Back Hope**
A UCC Service of Release and Renewal, January 19, 1:30 PM (Mountain)

**Global Mission Updates**
Receive weekly updates from mission partners

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**Conference resources**

*Click on these logo links for resource information. Many additional resources can be found on our WEBsite [www.mnwcucc.org](http://www.mnwcucc.org)*

**New Money for New Ministries**
Video of our seminar with Andrew Warner

**Gift Policy Info**
United Church Funds provides guide for accepting gifts.

**Local Church Info**
Addresses, social media links, and newsletters

**"5 for 5" explained**
OCWM, OGHS, NIN, STC, and Christmas Offering

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**Local Church News**

*Click on these logo links for more information. To include your church news, email items to ucc@mnwcucc.org before the 29th of each month.*

**Keeping Others**

**Ordination Sunday**
Pastor Lisa Harmon will be ordained on March 21 at First UCC Billings, details forthcoming.
Broadus Ministries
Best to Rev. Nicholas Knoblauch as he moves to a new call in Union MO after January 24.

"Flying" Signs
Bouncing donation signs on street corners, 14 members raised over $2200 for a warming shelter in 2 hours.

2nd Sunday Worship
Great Falls UCC and Helena Plymouth UCC will share virtual worship together on the second Sundays of each month, alternating hosting.

Ministry Positions Sought
University UCC, Missoula Youth Director of Youth, 15 hours
Pilgrim UCC, Bozeman, Interim Minister, full-time
Columbus Community UCC, Part-time settled minister
Peoples Sidney and Savage UCC's, Full-time designated pastor

God-seeds

Rev. Dr. Marc Ian Stewart

Voices of Faith

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
Against such there is no law.”

Galatians 5:23-24
What does it mean to be a voice of faith? An answer to this question for me comes from one of the most transformative times in my life.

First, a confessional context: As a seminary grad, newly into my first ministry call (co-pastor with Cheryl at Hope UCC, Alexandria, VA), the voice of faith I thought I had was all too sure of itself. I cringe at the memories of some sermons I once preached, full of “you oughts” and “we needs.” It was a humbling transition from the academic honing of seminary to the pastoral attention serving a congregation.

Now for what happened: something went wrong with Cheryl’s pregnancy during our first months in Alexandria. Our firstborn, a daughter, was delivered by Caesarean 6 weeks early. Rachel suffered an extreme genetic translocation and never left the hospital in the 4 weeks of her life. We decorated her neonatal isolette with a name card that we found at the gift shop. The name card for “Rachel” included a paraphrase of Galatians 5:24: “against love there is no law.”

With the politics of life/death issues in the mid 1980’s, the medical staff often felt forced into interventions with Rachel that they knew were not indicated by her condition. A few weeks into our daily visits, the neonatal nurse assigned to Rachel was concerned we were wearing ourselves out by visiting everyday. We recognized she was a beautiful soul, and told her that “there is no law against love” kept us coming back. I still picture her glistening eyes, “Bless you, and that’s why I keep coming back, too.”

I am struck by the voices of January 6 insurrectionists invoking Jesus outside the Capitol and praying their vengeance through barricaded doors on the inside (WP 1-10-2021). How can these be the voices of faith they claim to be? Who are we when self-proclaimed voices of faith sound like a cacophony of righteous differences? Is our voice merely a clanging cymbal?
My life experiences early in my ministry changed how I hear and how I share a voice of faith:

1. I have found that voices of faith are rooted in hope. Sacred hope shared in a voice of faith reveals that the faith articulated is indeed righteous.

2. Voices of faith are righteous in expressing the blessings of Spirit, such as named in Galatians as love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

3. We have assurance that voices of faith build up life.

There have been, and will continue to be, those who claim to be voices of faith, yet agitate against sacred hope and just relationships. They will stand against others and offend the most righteous people in history. I suggest that what we are hearing in our culture are not some alternative voices of faith. These are only noises, sounding off from those who are offending human decency and the common good. Words of hate betray a lack of sacred hope and righteous action.

The voices of faith we know to be hope-filled and life-giving are called forth in these times. These voices of faith are heard in our Sunday morning preaching, in our national prayer vigils, and in our prophetic engagement with the issues of our day.
Hello and Happy New Year! It’s that time of year we start rapping up the old year and start ringing in the new. I am sending the Church Yearbook instructions to everyone that may be involved with the compilation of information that is needed to complete the data entry task.

We can start inputting into the DataHub on Wednesday, January 6th. I’ve
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 Team liaison/member.

"Green Team" will meet again Tuesday, January 19, 2 pm.

Goal 1 & 2 Actions: We discussed what is going on in other creation justice groups around the state: Eco Angela, Northern Plains Resource Council, Citizens’ Climate Lobby.

We will ask Mayflower UCC to add our Conference churches to its Creation Justice newsletter recipient list.

Goal 3 Actions: A letter has been sent inviting moderators and pastors of each Conference church to name a person to be a Green Team member or liaison.

Those churches with Green Team representation will receive a tree in the spring. We decided to give folks a choice of three fast-growing shade trees. The trees will be sent to
Register in advance for this meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting... churches with bare roots.

Stay healthy; stay green!

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

Culture of Wellness/
 Surviving the Pandemic

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

Worship sharing between churches, such as University UCC Missoula and Red Lodge Community UCC, and Great Falls UCC with Plymouth UCC Helena.

Connecting Our Justice Work

There's a lot of justice work being done across the conference. From book studies to peaceful protests, our churches are doing the work of justice. So, let's get connected!

Anyone who is interested in justice work in your church and/or community is invited to explore more about working for justice within our own communities and across the M-NW Conference.

We'll meet again on Tuesday, January 19 at 7 pm.

What we consider together:

- A time of reflection/devotion
- What's happening now (what are the churches up to these days?)
- Connecting the dots (Ways we can connect for resources and encouragement)
- What can we do better together? (Combining efforts for greater impact)
- What other groups can we connect with and who will start that connection?
What’s next? (including setting date/time for next gathering)

Register in advance for this meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0lcuGupj8jHtLFBaxpQLG7eOlUFgPVqlp

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

Calendar

January 11-25  Marc Stewart participating in Theory of Change practicum with UCC, UCC-Canada, and Disciples leaders.

January 13  Committee for Outdoor Ministries Zoom 7 pm

January 19  Green Team 2 pm  Zoom, registration

January 19  Connecting Justice Team Zoom 7 pm  Zoom, registration

January 21  Clergy Gathering 10-noon  Zoom, registration

January 21  Conference Board of Directors 10-noon

January 21  Church and Ministry Commission Zoom 3:30 pm

January 24  Marc Stewart with Powder River UCC, Broadus, for Rev. Nicholas Knoblauch’s last Sunday

January 29  Article and News deadline for February eNews

January 31  Health and Human Services Sunday (CHHSM)

February 3-4  Marc Stewart attending online Kansas City Executive Leadership Seminar

February 28  Seminary Sunday

March 3  Deadline for filing church annual updates with national UCC

March 20  Wholiness Team zoom gathering

March 21  Ordination of Pastor Lisa Harmon, detail TBA

July 11-18, 2021  General Synod 33, Rooted in Love, will be held using virtual technology, such as Zoom
You received this email because you signed up on our website or have made a donation to the MT-NWy Conference UCC.