



June 2021 eNews

Keeping Faith



Rev. Dr. Marc Ian Stewart

Faith Amidst Disaster

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

Five natural disasters struck within our Conference area this week. Tornadoes and wind shear hit NE Montana on June 10. Rev. Guy Pontoriero reported damage at his ranch in Fairview, including a 300-gallon water tank, which left the property and is yet to be found. The Robertson Draw fire south of Red Lodge threatened homes, including the home of Rev. Jim and Val Smith. Rev. Pam Peterson and Red Lodge Community UCC opened the church to be an evacuation site. The Buffalo Pasture Fire on the Crow Reservation and Wyoming border is threatening to advance into an area with homes. The Deep Creek Canyon fire is close to Townsend and has caused some evacuations of residents between Townsend and White Sulphur Springs. A new fire, the Crooked Creek fire is reported today in the Pryor Mountains on Big Pryor Mountain (where Cheryl and I hiked on Memorial Day). The extreme heat, such as 7 degrees above record in Billings, is exacerbating these situations.

The shock of such extreme conditions is real, though we may not be surprised that it is happening. We know from the dry winter and the hot weather that it is going to be a strenuous summer season on our ranches, crop lands, rivers, and forests. The earth will hurt. Life and people will suffer.

What do we know of living through times and events such as these? The record-breaking effects of climate change may cause people to despair because "it" has never happened before. The stressor might be a new one for the record books, but our ability to respond is the same as ever it was.

Remember how our spiritual forbearers survived drought, pestilence and plague along with invading armies? (recall the history of your ancestors, and if you have lost their stories, perhaps find your way back to what was happening in the times of the Biblical prophets). Remember how you were born into kinship with all people of God.

Remember how you were adopted into beloved community when it seemed you were estranged from such goodness.

Remember when the utter forsakenness imagined by those who heard the words "it is finished" was redeemed on the road to Emmaus when their "eyes were opened."

Remember that, whether it be on account of all life and creation striving or on account of the God's ultimate desire, there will be a city of God with a river running through it on the banks of which will be trees with leaves for the healing for people of all nations.

What we know about living through times and events such as these is that faith works.

In faith we find a way forward that is beyond all understanding, perhaps even beyond all our incredulity of the unimaginable happening. Perhaps we share our moments of despair.

In faith we recognize an inherent strength of being offspring of people who survived everything. Perhaps we look to our forbearers in humility to seek their wisdom.

In faith we accept that there is a "tie that binds our hearts." Perhaps we share our need for help.

In faith we keep open to the possibility that God is not finished with us. Perhaps we still "walk the walk" even when it feels like our world is falling apart.

In faith we know it is not just about "us" and "our world" but a world far more inclusive than anything we have ever seen. Perhaps we realize how glorious this might be as we expand the networks we are in.

The natural disasters of this week cause us to pay attention to the present dangers, but most noteworthy is the faith shown/shone among us: prayer concerns from all these events engaged by people from throughout Montana and Wyoming and beyond, even to other Conferences, to the UCC National Disaster Ministries, to the president of the United Church of Christ. It truly means something to be connected in faith. When I take it all to soul and heart, I realize it means everything.



General Synod Previews

UCC General Synod, our biennial national gathering for fellowship, worship, teaching, and business is meeting virtually July 11-18. The good news is that access to Synod is more affordable than ever at \$100. While a person does not need to pay registration to attend the virtual worship services, [registration opens](#) visitors up to over 50 workshops as well as keynote speakers and business sessions, and a virtual display area. Registrants will also have later access to videos of all the Synod workshops and events. Among the workshops, Rev. Marc Stewart will be co-leading a workshop on Developing a Rural Church Coalition along with Rev. Bonnie Bates (CM for Penn NE Conference) and Rev. Roberto Ochoa (UCC National Program Associate for Congregations). To join our Conference delegates, Marci McLean Pollock, Rev. Danielle Rogers, Rev. Laura Folkwein and Associate delegates Rev. Lynne Spencer Smith and Rev. Marc Stewart in attending this virtual synod, register.



Worship Invitation

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson shares [details](#) about worship and invites you to attend.



Children's Resources

Videos, stories, and coloring pages for children.



Young Adult Events

Special events and program suggestions for young adults



Youth Events

Youth activities to be coordinated by UCC Youth Minister Trayce Potter



Rural Church Workshop

co-led by Rev. Marc Stewart, live on Saturday July 9, 4 - 5 pm, available for "on-demand" viewing during week of Synod



Gen Synod Issues

"Becoming a Church of [Contemplatives in Action](#)" invites commitment to spiritual practices.



Conference News

To include your church news, email items to ucc@mnwcucc.org before the 10th of each month.

Faith Connections within the Conference

Our faith connections as church and members in the Montana – N.Wyoming Association and Conference mean more than we often talk about amongst ourselves. [Watch this short video](#) produced by the Conference Board of Directors for some stories of connections from church leaders of what it means to be together in faith. Also [read the message from Rev. Amy Carter](#), Billings Mayflower UCC, and chairperson of our Human Resources Committee for an inspiring testimonial of why it is worth supporting the ministries that happen through the MT-NWy Conference UCC.



Registration Extended for Retreats

The Committee for Outdoor Ministries has organized a variety of intergenerational retreats and youth camps for the 2021 summer camp season at Christikon in the Boulder River valley. Registration due dates have passed for intergenerational camps, but Christikon has graciously extended our commitment time to them. Let us know of your commitment to attend the You and Me Retreat, the Yoga and Wellness Retreat, or the Fishing Camp Retreat ASAP by registering. More information is available on our Conference Web site or from COM chairperson, Trudi Downer.

[Youth Camp Information](#)

[Adult and Me Camp Information](#)



Singing Waters Montana purchases Mimanagish

The MT-NWy Conference UCC divestment of Camp Mimanagish has been fulfilled in the sale of Camp Mimanagish to Singing Waters Montana on June 15, 2021. The proceeds from the sale of camp after expenses, approximately \$325,000, will be placed in a bank account by Conference treasurer, Rhonda Peterson, and not used until its purpose has been established by the Board of Directors in consultation with Conference delegates.

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A Lite Read in the midst it All

The June 15 Billings Gazette has a feature article about Rev. Bob and Marilyn Thaden and their Tongue River Winery in Miles City. Rev. Bob has been around the MT-NWy Conference in a variety of churches and leadership positions. Currently he serves Miles City United Church along with Rev. Amber Dixon. See what if there is something new here about him. <https://billingsgazette.com/li..>

Conference Minister Sabbatical

Rev. Marc Stewart will be on sabbatical plus one week of vacation, August 1 – November 8. The Board of Directors is working with staff and committees to assure that the most essential conference minister functions will be met. Marc and Cheryl will be in Maine during August visiting family and friends, in England during the first week of September visiting Marc's extended family, and in Spain for the remainder of the sabbatical walking the 425-mile Madrid/Francés El Camino de Santiago from Madrid to Santiago de Compostela.

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Green Team Growing

Why We Joined The Green Team

- I appreciated the vision of helping heal the earth and wanted to help out
- I have always felt that this was my "cause," the mission that God was laying on their heart, and was hoping to be able to do more
- I believe, "think globally; act locally;" I thought that joining this Green Team would be a way to make a difference
- I decided that because our church was making creation justice a priority, it would be good to "dovetail". . . and my father was an environmentalist.
- I hope to encourage my church; I wanted to learn more about creation justice and take my learnings back to my church

Martha's Article

Martha Wright, Sheridan Congregational UCC wrote an article in their [June Tower Newsletter](#) that shows what a rep from your church could "bring on home" bring from the Green Team.

Join the Next Meeting

The Green Team will begin meeting on the second Tuesday of the month so that they will more easily be able to get a monthly article in the Conference e-

News. . . So, their next meeting will be July 13 at 2 p.m. Please register with zoom at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/zoommeeting-123456789>

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

Plastic

- We discussed of use of plastic bags.
- One of our members uses no bags. She puts items directly from the shopping cart onto the conveyer belt and back into her shopping cart. Then, at home, she packs her food in a crate and carries it into the house.
- One member uses cloth gift bags instead of wrapping paper.
- One member is considering alternative packaging for her business, away from zip-locked bags. . . perhaps to cardboard boxes. . .

Worm Compost

Barbara Miner gave us detailed instructions for how to make a worm compost bin. It was amazing. Barbara will write this up for July's E-news. For now, you can save your vegetable scraps. . . (no meat, no onions or garlic, no avocado seeds or skins). . . so you'll be ready!



Happy
Father's
Day



The Legacy of a Loving Father

**Gifting our Conference Mission Partner, the Intermountain Children's Home,
for Father's Day**

Jesus taught them saying, "This, then, is how you should pray. Our Father..."

Parental relationships are profoundly important to the children they raise. When at their best, parental relationships ground children in the safety and security children need to explore their world, take risks, and know that they will always be loved and accepted.

The Bible uses the imagery of parent and child to explain our relationship to God through faith in Jesus:

“To all who believed Jesus and accepted him, Jesus gave the right to become children of God” reads John 1:12.

And, later in 1st John, he expands upon this theme, writing:

“See how very much God loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!” in chapter 3, verse 1.

As Father’s Day nears, one of the best ways we can honor our earthly fathers is to bless the often-overlooked children of our Heavenly Father: children, youth, and families struggling with relational problems and mental health.

The tribute, honor, or memorial gifts given during this season help Intermountain bring healing and hope into strained family relationships. By honoring fathers by [giving to Intermountain](#), members of your congregation can expand the reach of their family legacy to many children that will be blessed by their generosity.

Read more



Calendar

All meetings other than outdoor camps and retreats are happening virtually

June 17 Executive Committee 10 am

June 27 Rev. Roger Lynn's retirement Sunday, Helena Plymouth UCC

June 30 – July 3 [You and Me Camp](#), multi-generational

July 5 –8 [Pathfinders Camp](#), completing grades 4 – 6

July 10 – 16 [Prospectors Camp](#), completing grades 6 – 8

July 11–18, 2021 [General Synod 33](#), *Rooted in Love*, will be held using virtual technology, such as Zoom

July 13 Green Team 2 pm [register on zoom](#)

July 14 Committee for Outdoor Ministries 7 pm

July 15 Board of Directors 10 am

July 18 - 24 [Trailblazers Camp](#), completing grades 9 - 12

July 18 Marc Stewart preaching at Bozeman Pilgrim UCC

July 30 [August camps/retreats](#) full registration deadline

August 1 - November 8 Marc Stewart on sabbatical and vacation

August 11 Committee for Outdoor Ministries 7 pm

August 25 - 28 [Yoga for Body and Soul retreat](#)

August 26 - 29, or a 27 - 29 option, [Creative Hearts Camp](#)

August 27 - 29 [Fly Fishing Camp](#)

November 18 Conference Annual Meeting Business Meeting 7 - 9 pm



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