

Epiphany 2022 eNews

A New Era



Rev. Dr. Marc Ian Stewart

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Psalm 90:2

How long is an era? It depends what is being measured. A geological era can be hundreds of millions of years long. An era in pop culture might be better called a fad for how fast fame sparkles and dwindles for iconic pop stars,

though rock-n-roll has been around enough to become a cultural era. I think that if our children's and grand-children's generations are latching onto the same things we latched onto when we were their age, that it might be getting into the realm of an era.

Perhaps an era could also be defined by how world-wide something has become, and so it could be said that we are in a "Covid" era. It has been two years since we began changing how we meet and greet, travel and visit. Sometimes, I have the letters "PC" used something like "BC" to mean "pre-covid" and "before covid." This CoVid era warps so much of our sense about time. There were days when I had go look, and look again in disbelief, at the day of week indicated on my computer.

I suppose that this CoVid era could be part of broader era that may come to define these times: such as, the era when people argued over what science meant, or the era when no one agreed on what facts meant, or the era when the Supreme Court admitted that money matters most (Citizens United ruling), or the era of “we’re heading on but we’re just not sure where to.”

The anthropological museum in Almeria Spain has an amazing 42-foot tall exhibit along its inside staircase. This “stratigraphic column” exhibit illustrates various eras of human civilization artifacts piled on top of each other in the earth’s sedentary layer. It’s amazing to consider that the dust, debris, and plant decay created 42 feet of strata over 40,000 years. (This is about 1/80 inch per year.) One of the Iberian Neolithic eras particularly caught my attention. For hundreds of years during the 3rd/2nd millennium BC, the population suffering malnutrition. The main food source was only barley, with the best food and goods being taken to Egypt.



A way of marking an era may be by what people have survived and for how long. A change in eras might be marked by the new ways that people and civilizations find to survive. My grandparents survived the depression era. We are somehow surviving the atomic era. The computer era continues to be confusing for many of us with each new smart phone operating system upgrade, and who dares contemplate what change would be wrought if wireless systems crashed for more than half a day? Still, the CoVid era hits home like no other.



In times of things being unknown I have found solace in a passage from James:

Every good action and every perfect gift is from God. These good gifts come down from the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars, who does not change like their shifting shadows. New Century Version, James 1:17

What do you know of God that does not change? Name them, claim them, live them. These are the qualities through which civilization will survive.

God-speed,
Marc Stewart



Conference News

Send church news items to ucc@mnwcucc.org before the 10th of each month.



First UCC Billings support for an Afghan family and for an asylum applicant from Venezuela

Welcoming refugees

In its partnership with Billings 'Nations to Neighbors' Sponsor Circle, First UCC

Billings is helping settle a recently evacuated/displaced Afghan family into Billings. A circle of 15 individual sponsors can make resettlement work.

Angel Jose Guerra Ferrer, a South American asylee living here with a church family and supported within Billings will soon continue his asylum process in Salt Lake City. First Church Youth Ministry recently sponsored a dance party which included Jose as the dance instructor.

Fist Church became an evening home for a roomful of homeless people during the bitter cold of early January when the community shelter was temporarily closed.

First Congregational UCC Sheridan unanimously voted to join efforts to settle an Afghan refugee family

Wyoming seeks to settle its first Refugee Family

The Church Council voted unanimously to work with the Wyoming Episcopal Diocese, other denominations, and the Wyoming Migration Ministry, to move forward the support of Afghanistan refugee resettlement in Wyoming. While Laramie has been selected as the first city where refugee resettlement will take place, Sheridan has also been selected for future refugee resettlement. As Wyoming is the only state never to accept refugees, this is a big task. These refugees have a whole lot of support from U.S. veterans, former soldiers and Marines, as these Afghans fought side by side with Americans who depended on them in Afghanistan. Their Christmas wish is the gift of kindness when they get here. We will keep you up to date on their progress. What you can do in the meantime, is pray that Wyoming will find "room at the inn" for them. ----[read more in *The Tower*](#)



Great Falls FUCC sponsors child

Letters from Sunday School

The children's Sunday School class recently focused on our sponsor child VJ Antonette Benarao who lives in the Philippines. Children will read her most recent letter and then write letters to her. This Sunday school offering helps pay the \$25.00/month we give to sponsor VJ. [read more in GF Fucc News](#)

Buffalo Union UCC, Wyoming, arranged a Christmas gift to all meal-on-wheels



Free Meal as Christmas Gift

Local Meals-On-Wheels recipients received a free meal gift on Christmas Day this year, thanks to the efforts of Buffalo Union UCC.

[read more](#)



Summer 2022 Outdoor Ministries

In 2021, COM enthusiastically embraced, “Reconnect, Reclaim, Refresh, Renew (with God, with self, with others, and with nature)” as the theme for the 2021 Season. Despite pandemic reticence to gather outside of family, and reticence to try a new place, we were able to successfully implement a wonderful Outdoor Ministry schedule during the summer on which we can build in 2022.

As this work team moves to embrace a new theme, a new season, and a new set of challenges, the first work to be done within the Conference will be to define Outdoor Ministry, to educate about its importance, and to earn church support and buy-in to our future vision for this mission.



What is Outdoor Ministry?

Outdoor Ministry is a mission, an experience, a relationship rather than a place. Following the divestiture of the facility, outdoor ministry is program and people rather than venue.



Why is Outdoor Ministry Important?

Over and over, we hear throughout the Conference how many of our Church leaders and pastors recognized their calls as they experienced outdoor ministry opportunities.



What do we need to realize to make Outdoor Ministry happen?



What is needed from Churches and members around the Conference?

Commitment and Support

Promotion, Scholarships,
Sponsorships, Prayer

Preliminary 2022 Season:

DD Camp June 14-17 at Christikon

Camp for mobile and continent disabled adults 18 and older. Christikon welcomes Conference participation in this Camp.

You & Me Camp July 5-8 at Camp Mimanagish

Intergenerational event combining Grandparents & Me, Mini & Me, Mom & Me, Family Camps of the past.

MNWCUCC Youth Camps July 10-16 at Camp Mimanagish

Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, Grades 9-12 Camps will share the week. Each camp will have its own leaders, counselors, etc. and its own activities.

Youth Campers who wish to attend at Christikon, N Sid Sen, or Placerville because the camp is closer or is one attended in the past are welcome to do so. Those registrations will be coordinated with those camps.

MNWCUCC Adult Offerings August 21-27 at Christikon

Adult retreats aimed at self-improvement and a place to experience a variety of experiences in an adult-friendly facility.

Bob and Nancy Staigmiller Memorial Family Retreat Sept. 2-5 at Mimanagish

COM and the Conference offer this event in memory of Bob and Nancy Staigmiller, longtime supporters of the Conference and Outdoor Ministry. Family activities will highlight one final nature outing for the season among new and old friends.)

As COM moves forward to , "Reconnect, Reclaim, Refresh, Renew," we urge everyone to support the events which happen in 2022 and to join in the vision, planning, and implementation of what Outdoor Ministry will become as the Conference moves forward.

[Click for More Information](#)



Book Studies that Speak to the Soul

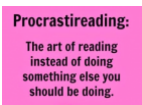
Order a book, grab a tea, wrap in a blanket and be part of what is moving in the minds and souls of our church folk around the Conference. Amazon links are provided for your

reference by clicking on the book image, but perhaps you have a local bookstore you could support by ordering with them.



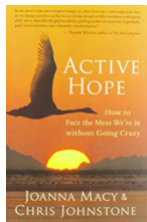
God Got a Dog Cynthia Rylant

Mayflower UCC highly acclaims this poetry book



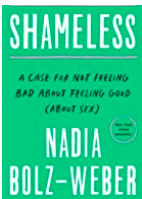
Need a Book

If you can not decide on a good book, send \$15 to [Rev. Amber Dixon](#) and get one chosen for you and sent from the the Miles City UCC/DOC church book store



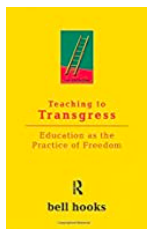
Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy

University UCC green team recommendation



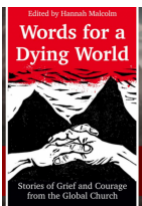
Shameless: A Sexual Revolution

Billings FUCC is studying Nadia Bolz-Weber's book in anticipto of her visit to MSUB and RMC this coming April



Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom

Rev. Laura Folkwein brings up an old gem in memory of Bell Brooks who recently died



Words for a Dying World

[Bangor Theological Seminary](#) Center offers a book study

Pastoral Ministry

Installation of Rev. Kate Stulce in Columbus January 23 2 pm. Columbus Community UCC cordially invites clergy, members, and friends of the Montana - N.Wyoming Conference UCC to attend the instalation of Rev. Kate Stulce. Guest preacher is Rev. Meg Hatch. Clergy are invited to wear red stoles.

Churches and CoVid

Many of our church councils have been reassessing their CoVid management processes. Some are reenforcing the use of masks during this omicron spread of virus. Red Lodge Community UCC and University UCC are moving back to virtual-only worship for at least January 16 and 23,

Active Clergy Retreat for 2022

The resurgence of CoVid is a challenge to finding a place for clergy to meet for 2 - 3 days of retreat. We are looking to find a large home rental (airBnB or VRBO) along with nearby hotel options for Feb, 21 - 22. Cost management is extremely difficult, so if there are any benefactors who would like to talk about sponsoring a venue, please contact [Marc Stewart](#).

Church Vacancies

Broadus Powder River UCC, searching with ELCA to share a pastor

Baker UCC has a [new church profile](#) especially developed for rural churches

Sidney Peoples UCC and Savage UCC have also engaged a pastoral search company to supplement their [search with the UCC](#).

Big Timber UCC is completing its church profile and will soon be searching



Conference Green Team

Acts of Greening

If you are excited about Creation Justice and wonder what is happening in our Montana Northern Wyoming Churches, here is some of the action:

Folks in Columbus Community Congregational UCC have discerned that, if they need to use plastic communion cups in this time of Covid, they can make sure that these are recyclable. For more information, contact Joan Nye.

Rev. Charles Wei suspects that the people in Helena Pilgrim Congregational UCC care so much about Creation Justice that they hired him to be their new pastor. Charles has been in Helena now for two months. Already they have had a Creation Care series with three speakers. One speaker was a photographer whose photos show the evidence of the degradation of our environment.

Mayflower Congregational UCC has been working with landscape design students from MSU in Bozeman to discern land use for the five acres around Mayflower church. Mayflower Congregational Church Green Team has joined with Montana Interfaith Power and Light.

Billings is developing a Community Seed Library that will have free seeds for gardeners, seeds acclimated to the Billings climate. Contact Rev. Barbara Miner for more information.

Rev. Bob Miller's neighborhood in Buffalo is designated as an important bird area, thanks to Bob's wife, Diana. Diana has identified 98 species of birds on their property or above.

Our next Conference Green Team meeting will be February 15 at 2 p.m. on zoom. Contact Jennifer Pennfield if you would like to receive a zoom invitation.

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In Ministry Beyond

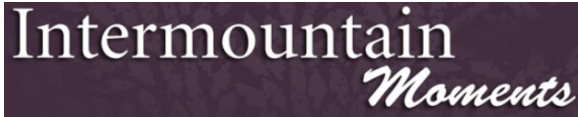


March 27, 2022 suggested offering

OGHS is where we catch up with where God Is



By the time we hear about a need somewhere in the world, we, in the United Church of Christ, are already present through our support of One Great Hour of Sharing. Our Global Ministries partners with Church World Service to coordinate and provide worldwide support. Our UCC Disaster Ministries is present even in our MT-NWy Conference by providing \$3000 to assist Red Lodge Community UCC respond to community needs following the Robertson Draw fire in June 2021.



Compassion is Alive and Well in Our World

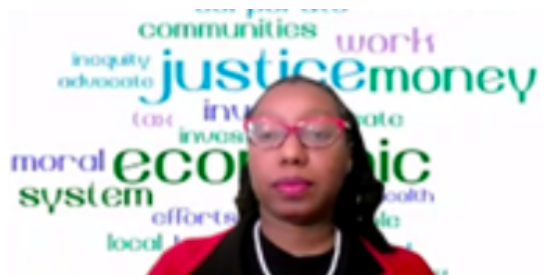


A while back I found myself in quite the situation at my job. I am the new residential chaplain at Intermountain in Helena. Intermountain's residential services care for severely emotionally disturbed children in need of hope and healing. I design weekly lessons for the residential children. Their support comes from a multitude of directions in residential care, and my chapel lessons are a small piece of the puzzle. As their chaplain, I strive to help them build resilience and see God at work in their lives.

On this day, the focuses of our lesson were courage and Queen Esther of the Hebrew Bible... [read more](#)

Take a closer look at this Conference Mission Partner

United Church of Christ News



[UCC Med Debt buyout tops \\$79 Million](#)

20 churches in the Missouri-MidSouth Conference abolish \$3.9 mil of medical debt

The United Church of Christ sent a present over the holidays to 2,950 families in Arkansas and Tennessee. People in those households have received letters, telling them their medical debt has been forgiven.

In the denomination's latest buy, 20 churches of the Missouri Mid-South Conference have abolished \$3.9 million in medical debt for families in 43 counties in Arkansas and 58 counties in Tennessee.

[read more](#)



[a 2022 shared ministry agenda](#)

UCC Work with Local Churches

As 2022 dawns, here are 10 prominent items on the year's horizon for the United

Hope for Healing (Future)

Reflection Questions:

What role will I play in tomorrow's response to the events of January 6?

What part am I called to play in fostering healing in my family, faith community, nation in 2022?

What do I need to do to help keep democracy vibrant in our country?

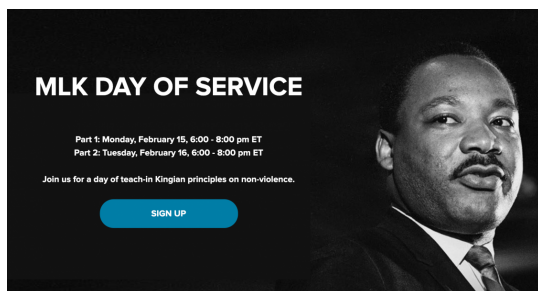
[January 6 is remembered among churches](#)

Nationwide Vigils for Democracy

As Americans mark the first anniversary of the insurrection at the United States Capitol, people of faith are holding vigils [around the country](#) to make sure such an assault on our democracy never happens again.

A number of organizations sponsored "Vigils for Democracy" in 300 communities on Thursday, Jan. 6.

The effort kicked off Wednesday evening, Jan. 5, with a national virtual interfaith service, calling people together... [read more](#)



[from frontline-faith.teachable.com](#)

MLK Day of Service

"By the time we reached the counter, we'd already won."

Church of Christ. They're examples of what the UCC's national ministries will focus on — in collaboration with Conferences and local churches — in the church's quest for "[a just world for all.](#)"

[read more](#)

Dr. James Lawson
Theologian & Tactician of Non-Violence within the Civil Rights Movement

Our UCC Frontline Faith online portal offers a 2-day teach-in of Kingian principles of non-violence, February 15-16, 2022 4 - 6 pm MT Time. [register here...](#)



6 evenings in February, 6 - 8 pm

People-to-People with the Philippines

Through live presentations, recorded sessions, and engaged discussion—and even a demonstration of Filipino cooking!—participants will learn about Filipino history and culture and how it shapes distinctive theology and mission.

[REGISTER HERE!](#)



Thursday at 1:30 pm

Current Church Issues

Thursdays for the Soul is a webinar series to care for the whole church. Topics are wide ranging, and are focused on the spirituality and care of people. Prayer, worship, music, psalm readings, or compassionate teaching are included.

[click here for topics and registration link...](#)

**Matters to You... Matters to Us...
Impacts the World...**



The Pension Boards
United Church of Christ, Inc.
WHERE FAITH AND FINANCE INTERSECT



SPECIAL EDITION
**ROOTED
IN LOVE**

A UCC Credit Union may be created in response to a 2017 UCC General Synod Resolution identifying non-profit, member owned credit unions as important contributors to community development and the quest for economic justice.

A team has been working toward obtaining a federal credit union charter to serve UCC members, church employees, the ministry, and their families. The federal chartering agency (NCUA) requires that potential credit union members be surveyed to determine the level of support. [go to survey](#)



UCC Grants available

The United Church of Christ has a variety of grants available for leadership development, community engagement, and education. Many deadlines are coming up in March.

Make A Difference genesis grant for ministry innovation

Neighbors In Need for justice witness projects

Various Scholarships for Ministry Education and Seminary

Various under-graduate scholarships





Calendar

Send calendar items to [Conference office](#) by the 10th of each month

- January 14 Last day for the Conference office to receive and credit local church offerings to 2021 fiscal reporting
- January 16 Marc Stewart pre-recorded at Red Community UCC
- January 23 Marc Stewart visits Timber UCC Search Committee 11:30 am
- January 23 Rev. Kate Stulce installation at Columbus Community UCC 2 pm
- January 27 [Clergy Cluster zoom 10 am](#)
- February 6 Marc Stewart Preaches at Great Falls First Congregational UCC
- February 8. Green Team 2 pm
- February 10 eNews article and pic submission deadline
- February 13 Marc Stewart preaches at Columbus Community UCC 10:30 am
- February 13 Marc and Cheryl Stewart give presentation on their summer 2021 El Camino trek at Columbus Community UCC 1:30 pm
- February 15-16 [UCC MLK Teach-in on Non-Violence](#) zoom 4-6 pm
- February 20 Marc Stewart preaches at Baker UCC
- March 13, 2022. [Last Service at Amistad Chapel](#) zoom 12:30 pm
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Montana - N.Wyoming Conference United Church of Christ

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