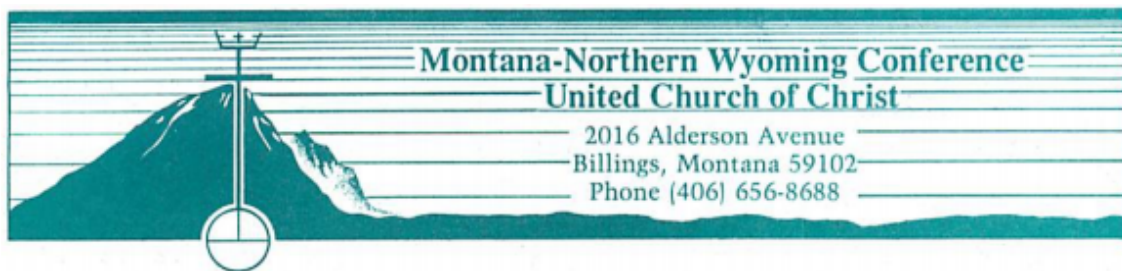

December eNews

M-NW UCC Conference <ucc@mnwcucc.org>

Wed, Dec 4, 2019

The latest news from the Montana-Northern Wyoming UCC Conference of the UCC



December 2019 Preparation Needs



U.N. International Decade focus
[video on People of African Descent](#)
[WEB site resources](#)

Rocky Mountain Conference UCC
[Church land for low income housing](#)

UCC Report
[O&A Churches have vitality](#)

UCC Council of Conference Ministers
[Visiting Alabama Justice sites](#)



- God-seeds: Preparations
- Mission Priorities
 - Faith Formation Com.
 - Staff Greeting
 - Outdoor Ministries
- Women's Retreat and Spa
- Church Celebration pics
- Miles City United now O&A

UCC Theological Summit 2.0
[save the date Aug 31-Sept 1](#)

- [Prayer Concerns](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Social Media links](#)

MAC scholarship for young adults
[attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#)



God-seeds,
reflections
from Marc Stewart

For the hanged and beaten.
For the shot, drowned, and burned.
For the tortured, tormented, and terrorized.
For those abandoned by the rule of law.
We will remember.
With hope because hopelessness is the enemy of justice.
With courage because peace requires bravery.
With persistence because justice is a constant struggle.
With faith because we shall over come.

National Memorial for Peace and Justice
Montgomery, Alabama

December may not be the type of month you thought it was. Most of December is still the season of fall (until the 21st). It is not even primarily Christmas time, since we are in Advent (through the 24th). In our local churches, to say nothing of stores, the desire is to make the whole month be about Christmas and so start hanging greens and singing carols and doing gifts. I am glad the festivities are supposed to happen so late in the month. I need Advent to prepare for the change of season and the extravagances of Christmas.

Right now, I am not prepared for celebration. I am anticipating Advent as I return from a Council of Conference Ministers visit to Alabama civil rights and justice sites in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Selma. The Legacy Museum in Montgomery

clearly articulated the connection between enslavement, lynching, segregation, and our current prison incarceration rates. The National Memorial for Peace and Justice named over 4,000 lynching victims from hundreds of counties across the south, with some "up north" including two lynchings in Montana. The 16th Street Baptist Church exhibit told of the 1963 bombing that killed four African American young girls and of the hundreds of bombings by white supremacists. This caused people to refer to Birmingham as "Bombing-ham."

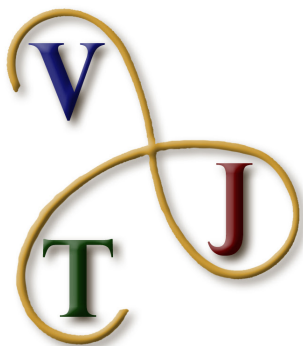
So many stories in the exhibits told how people would persevere in anticipation of a better day. Enslaved mothers would not let their children get too close, so that the separation of being sold off would not hurt so much. Heroic leaders would dare speak against the presumptions of guilt exercised against Blacks that were used to justify lynching and life-long prison sentences. Children and youth marching into water canons, wooden batons, and police dogs believed what the generations of ancestors before them proclaimed, that a better day was coming. This was not an excuse to wait but a call to courage and engagement.

And I wonder what I can know of the better day God's oppressed people imagined? From my privileged place, I can hardly know anything of such a day. Yet, our culture would have me celebrate now, as if that day were already happening. I hope I am not so blinded this year to the Advent preparations a life of faith requires of me. God must groan with the injustice and oppression of so many of God's people and clap with their songs of the promised day to come.

I can not live into a Christmas that is other than a day of hope for something better and for which I have faithfully prepared. My preparations will focus on believing in this better day when my faith needs courage, working for this better day as oppression and injustice swirl around our border lands, and calling out our complicity in institutional racism and sexism within our churches and country.

If you would be interested in participating in a four-day spring-time "pilgrimage" to the civil rights centers in Alabama, let me know. I plan to lead a trip to Birmingham, Selma and Montgomery after Easter if there are at least six people interested. (cost will be approximately \$850 - \$1350 for flights, lodging, and local transportation, April 27 – May 1). [Click for more information.](#)

**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]



The Faith Formation Committee is up and running with Laura Folkwein and Pam Peterson as co-chairs. Trudi Downer (COM), Barbara Gulick, Roger Lynn, Mike Mulberry, and Dwight Welch round out the committee roster. At its Nov. 12 meeting FFC discussed the possibility of holding an OWL training event for teachers/trainers the day before CAM (Mike), developing a Youth Advisory Council to advise on conference projects that involve youth and young adults (Trudi, Pam, Laura), sending a young adult to Ecumenical Advocacy Days [https://advocacydays.org/2020-imagine-gods-earth-people-restored/\(Mike\)](https://advocacydays.org/2020-imagine-gods-earth-people-restored/(Mike)). and starting a Curriculum Resource locker on the conference website (Roger).

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

Our Advent and Christmas hopes and love are with the churches, leaders, and members, and friends of the Montana - N.Wyoming Association and Conference UCC.



3. The Conference will offer transformative experiences and have an active presence in places where we are not now present.

Our Conference Committee for Outdoor Ministries has received a grant from the Margaret Ping Foundation to continue our ministry offering outdoor ministry to children and families impacted by poverty.

Margaret V. Ping Foundation

P.O. Box 20216

Billings, MT 59104



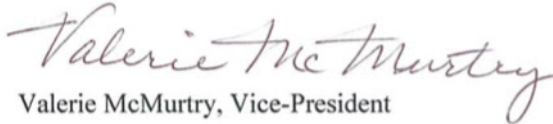
November 23, 2019

Montana-N. Wyoming Conference United Church of Christ
Reverend Marc I. Stewart, Conference Minister
2016 Alderson Avenue
Billings, MT 59102

Dear Reverend Stewart,

On behalf of the Margaret V. Ping Foundation, I am pleased to notify you that the Montana-N. Wyoming Conference UCC has been awarded a grant of \$4000. The work that you do to enrich the lives of families and children living in poverty is very important. By giving them a camp experience you are making memories to treasure and possibly changing the direction of their futures. Thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely,



Valerie McMurtry, Vice-President

MNWCUCC Outdoor Ministries

What a wonderful season we had at Camp Mimanagish during the summer of 2019! We truly did “break down walls” as we participated in programming, meals, chores, activities and fellowship at Camp Mimanagish. As I travelled down the mountain for the last time in September, I reflected on the wide variety of camps and intergenerational campers who attended, and I wrapped up a treasure chest of memories in my heart of the season I volunteered as Camp Program Director (a longtime dream). Magic happened through the Outdoor Ministry experiences of 2019!

As Committee for Outdoor Ministry begins its work for 2020 and beyond, we hope to build new adventures and new magic that can only happen when we join friends, new and old, for fellowship away from electronics and the hectic pace that is everyday life. Outdoor Ministry will have a new look, a more focused vision and more magic as we move forward. COM wants everyone in the Conference to be part of building the mission which is Outdoor Ministries. We will have a copy of the “New Focus on Outdoor Ministries” on the website. This shows how Outdoor Ministry will happen in light of the divestiture of Camp Mimanagish. At our October meeting of COM, each member was asked, “What is your dream for Outdoor Ministries for 2020 and beyond?” While it is hard to say goodbye to the place, the united dream expressed was that Outdoor Ministries is the people and the renewing experience of camp and all want that experience to happen each and every year not matter the

place. At our November COM meeting, each member present was asked, “What is the meaning of Outdoor Ministry in Conference Work?” Again, the united purpose expressed was that providing and opportunity to experience intentional community away from the electronics and busyness of everyday life where folks can get in touch with self, build faith connections with others, experience God’s creation up close, and return to life renewed and better is the purpose of outdoor ministries. These answers express our goal for 2020 and beyond!

Shortly, you will find on the website and in a future e-news an introductions, biographies and photos of the entire Committee for Outdoor Ministries team including our new youth and young adult members. In brief, this is COM: Trudi is chair of COM and is volunteering as Program Director until a job description and duties are developed for a paid Program Director. Nick and Dylan coordinate finding sites for camps as the divestiture takes place. Nate and Axel coordinate activities which are available at camps. Leslie and Walt coordinate fundraising for scholarships and finding sources of funding for scholarships. Katie and Claire coordinate promotion for camps and are in the process of working with Jennifer Penfield to rename our Facebook page and update our website to reflect the new focus of Outdoor Ministries. Gus coordinates our network of Fire Starters and Pastors and is seeking those interested in Faith Formation to join our camp advocates as Fire Starters. Trudi and DeeDee coordinate recruitment of camp volunteer leadership, counselors and campers. They have worked first on thanking our wonderful leaders for 2019. Trudi serves as liaison to the Board, to Faith Formation and to the national Summer Communities program which provides for summer interns to serve as counselors and program help at camps. These folks attend the COM meetings but will need help from around the Conference to carry out the work of outdoor Ministries!

COM is only the peak of the mountain. The members of COM each coordinate a work team which does a portion of the mountain of work for Outdoor Ministries. In addition, we have a network of Fire Starters and the Pastors from each Church to assist with communication and promotion of Outdoor Ministry Activities. We are currently working with the Conference Faith Formation Committee to use our Fire Starter and Pastor network to communicate for both Committees. Again, this is the peak of the mountain of Conference work for faith formation and outdoor ministry work. The bulk of the mountain and the foundation of these missions is in the local church – members who support the missions by prayer, by work on individual tasks, by volunteering for camp and retreat leadership and counseling, by providing scholarship support for attending camps and retreats in our own churches and to the Carlee Downer Scholarship Fund to help others find the transformational experience of Outdoor Ministries, by being a Firestarter, by sponsoring events and opening them up to others in the Conference, by supporting the Conference Board and Committees and by including OCWM as a part of the Church Budget - members in local churches who never attend a COM meeting but provide manpower as needed

to help get the job done! Together, we are all the mountain of work in the Conference. What can you and your Church do to support the Outdoor Ministries and Faith Formation missions of the MNWCUCC?

The opportunities are endless. The benefits are far-reaching. The rewards are lasting. And the memories warm the heart forever. Just go to the photo galleries on the website to see the smiles and excitement – that is what outdoor ministries is about! Join us in 2020 as we learn to “Let our light shine!”

Trudi Downer, Chair
Committee for Outdoor Ministry



Women's Christmas Retreat and Spa for the Spirit Invitation **January 4, 2020 9:30 am - 3:30 pm at Billings First Church UCC**

There is a custom, rooted in Ireland, of celebrating Epiphany (January 6) as Women's Christmas. Women's Christmas originated as a day when the women, who often carried the domestic responsibilities all year, took Epiphany as an occasion to celebrate together at the end of the holidays. Whether your domestic commitments are many or few, Women's Christmas offers a timely opportunity to pause and step back from whatever has kept you busy and hurried in the past weeks or months. As

the Christmas season ends, this is an occasion both to celebrate with friends and also to spend time in reflection before diving into the responsibilities of this new year.

This year's theme is ***By Way of the Heart***, and we will be exploring this theme in several ways: Stretching the Heart in Body Prayer, Making the Broken Heart Resilient in Lament Psalm, Savoring the Heart in *lectio divina* and Art, and Making a Peaceful Heart with Meditative Chants and Prayers. A heart healthy lunch will be provided by Emily Powell. Leadership will be provided by Rev. Amy Carter, Karen Durfey, and Commissioned Minister of Spiritual Direction Barbara Gulick.

[Registration](#) is limited to 30, and payment must accompany registration. Get your registration in early. If you must cancel, do so as early as possible so that those on the waiting list will have the opportunity to participate. Scholarships are available. Questions? Contact Barbara Gulick at (406) 259-3622 or bjgulick@bresnan.net



Rev. Jennifer Yocum (Senior Pastor) leads children and family in the laying on of hands at Rev. Laura Folkwein's installation (Associate Pastor) on November 24 at [University UCC](#) Missoula.



Church members, friends and Conference members circle around Rev. Amy Carter for the laying on of hands at her installation on November 10 at Mayflower UCC Billings.



On the 135th Anniversary celebration of Buffalo Union UCC, Pastor Emeritus, Rev.

Bob Miller, presents a Bible to church moderator Ron McPhee (originally given to a student by the Buffalo Union minister in 1895).



At worship today, the members and friends in attendance at [United Christian Church](#) (UCC/DOC) in Miles City voted unanimously during worship to declare that we are an open and affirming congregation. What this means, among other things, is that we are a congregation that fully accepts and affirms LGBTQ+ people in our congregation, and that we will gladly welcome them for marriage, preaching or any other leadership or participatory role in the church. The faith statement we adopted was, in part, borrowed from those of [other churches](#) who are already ONA (Open and Affirming.) to wit:

Together, we the friends and members of the United Christian Church of Miles City Montana proclaim:

- * This church is now and into the future an Open and Affirming Church**
- * Each person is a unique creation in the image of God and, therefore, a valued member of the community in God's kingdom.**
- *We choose to act as a "Welcoming Congregation" in this community and in our personal daily interactions with others.**
- * We will not judge anyone by their sexual expression, economic status, ethnicity, different talents and abilities, or by their place in their faith journey, but by their innate worth as a child of God.**
- * We recognize our responsibility to promote the sustainable and equitable use of the earth's resources.**

In light of the Gospel, we will work to empower ourselves, our children, and one another to be fully present as citizens of the world living in Christ's image.

ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY on this first day of Advent, Dec 1, 2019.

For the past six months, a committee, including Rev. Bob Thaden and Rev. Amber Richardson, worked to provide a context for this vote through discussion, preaching

and written materials. Today we held our much anticipated vote. By this time next week, we will have a rainbow flag flying at our church.

The lgbtq+ members of the congregation were in tears, along with many others who have friends or family members who are lgbtq+. This is way late in coming, but we are so glad we have finally arrived!

Rev. Bob Thaden



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 Rev. Jim Peterson, retired Great Falls UCC minister, whose 97 year-old father passed away in Texas just before Thanksgiving.

Prayers of thanksgiving for the life of [Rev. Ken Mitchell](#) who passed on November 16 in Claremont, CA. Ken had been a previous Association Minister at Billings First UCC.

Prayers of care and love with Jack and Fanny Seville, as Jack just entered hospice care. Jack had been [Conference minister](#) in our neighboring Northern Plains Conference in the 1990's



December 6 [Rocky Mountain College](#) Board of Trustees
December 6-7 [Church and Ministry Commission](#), 2:00 pm - 9 pm, Billings office
December 7 [Installation of Episcopal Bishop](#) Rev. Marty Stebbins, Helena
December 8 Marc visiting [Plymouth UCC](#), Helena
December 8 [Rocky Mountain College Service](#) of Lessons and Carols 3 and 7 pm
December 10 Central Area Clergy gathering, [Last Chance Cider House](#), noon
December 11-25 Marc Stewart on vacation
January 8 [Women's Spa for the Spirit](#), Billings First UCC, 9:30 am - 3:30 pm
January 14 [Stewardship Conversation](#), all-church zoom and call
January 28 [MAC](#) Board gathering, Pilgrim UCC, Bozeman
January 29 Ecumenical Judicatory gathering, Pilgrim UCC
January 29 [Conference Board of Directors](#), Pilgrim UCC
January 30 Conference Board of Directors, Pilgrim UCC
Jan 31-Feb 1 Wholiness (Tri-Conference) Teams meet in Seattle
February 2 Marc Stewart preaches at [Mayflower UCC Billings](#)
February 9 Marc Stewart preaches at [Great Falls First Congregational UCC](#)
March 19 Workshop on Planned Giving with [national UCC Minister for Generosity](#),
[Rev. Andrew Warner](#), Red Lodge UCC

March 20 Board of Directors and Stewardship Team meet with Rev. Andrew Warner, Bozeman

March 21 All-Church Stewardship seminar with Rev. Andrew Warner in Bozeman

March 22 Rev. Andrew Warner preaches at [University UCC Missoula](#)

April 24-27 [Ecumenical Advocacy Days](#), Washington DC

April 27-May 1 Alabama [Civil Rights Exposure](#) Tour

July 22-25 2020 UCC [National Youth Event](#), Purdue University

August 31-September 1 UCC [Theological Summit](#) 2.0

September 18-20, 2020 Conference Annual Meeting, Red Lodge, MT



Did You Know...

Check out our CONFERENCE WEB SITE

www.mnwcucc.org

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

[Click here!](#)
