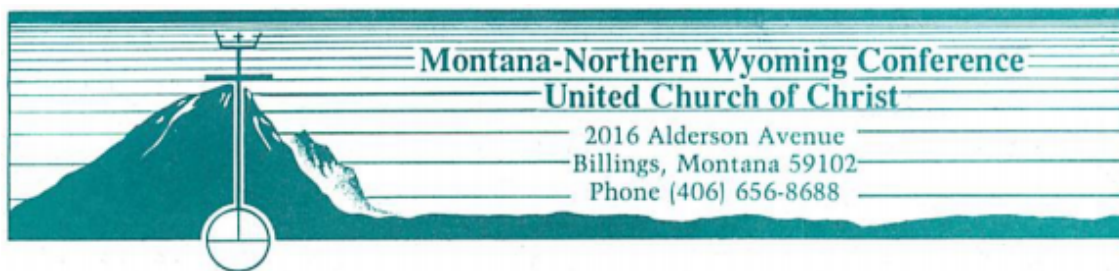




MT-NWy UCC November 2019

Mon, Nov 4, 2019

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



November 2019

Thanks is about Relationship



A.C.T. to Stop Racism
[Doctrine of Discovery Video](#)

UCC Disaster Ministries
[\\$240K to rebuild homes in Nepal](#)
[\\$15K Resiliency Grant to Indonesia](#)
[UCC Disaster Information Page](#)

United Theo. Seminary Survey
[Women, Spirituality, and Cancer](#)

National Religious Campaign
[Against Torture toolkit](#)



- God-seeds: Congregate Thanks
- Mission Priorities
 - Insurance Board
 - Finding Ministers
 - Stewardship Season
- Mimanagish Divestment Update
- Prayer Concerns
- Calendar Items

- [Social Media links](#)

[UCC Global Ministries](#)

[Child and Elder Sponsorship](#)

[Alternative Christmas Gifts](#)

[Rocky Mountain College](#)

[Ranked best college in Montana](#)

[Nov. 14 Evening with Lara Logan](#)

[UCC Pays Debts](#)

[Columbus covers school lunch debts](#)

[Chicago covers medical debts](#)



**God-seeds,
reflections
from Marc Stewart**

It is the month of Thanksgiving in United States, and my thoughts go back to the Pilgrim settlers in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The Pilgrim stories I heard as child growing up in Maine were about how Thanksgiving was about relationships. That is, giving thanks is about being with others. It was not just that the Pilgrims survived a harsh journey and winter, but that they were offered care by the people, native peoples, already there.

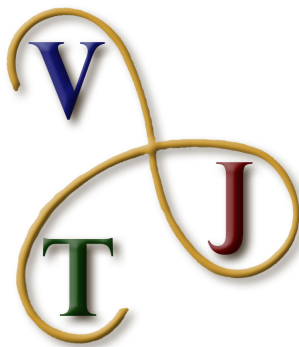
Recognizing thanks and gratitude in our being together is especially real in our faith tradition. Congregationalism is how the Pilgrim people organized their church. This was about people "congregating" for the mutual good of their faith. They did not have bishops or church law to dictate their beliefs and practices, but rather the collective wisdom of the congregation. This even impacted how they chose their ministers.

When the first congregational churches organized themselves in the 1600's Massachusetts Bay Colony, they had pastors with them who had been authorized in England or Holland. When the congregations needed to replace these pastors, they realized that they could not adequately find a new pastor on their own. These congregations were self-aware that they could quickly go astray without the guidance, counsel, and discernment of a wider body of faithful people. Thus, these

early congregations choose to "associate" with other congregations for the purpose of widening the congregational input into discerning whether a pastor was appropriate for their congregation, lest they stray from good church faith and practices. They even founded a college in 1636 to train ministers, Harvard.

Congregationalism means that the common good is best achieved when the circle of discernment is widened. The United Church of Christ practices this form of congregationalism through its [search and call process](#) and especially through the Church and Ministry Commission. At the heart of our congregational system is fidelity to the covenant UCC churches have made to participate in this process. Alternate processes include the appointment of pastors by a bishop, which we have obviously rejected in our congregational heritage; or, the selection of a pastor by a few powerful people in the congregation as is done in independent Baptist churches, which our covenants and bylaws protect against.

It may be more than anyone wants to read, but you are welcome to read the [2018 Manual on Ministry](#) that our Conference uses to guide our process, as stipulated by our Constitution and Bylaws. Section one of the 2018 MOM is especially relevant. The MT-NWy Association and Conference UCC currently has 10 of our 26 churches at some stage of the search and call process (pre-search, mid-search, post-search). Our congregational strength is that we can be there for each other. We are there through the work of the Conference Minister, [National UCC MESA Team](#), and [Church and Ministry Commission](#). May we also be there with our prayers of gratitude and our gifts of support that help churches find the ministers they need.



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]



We have a church insurance program especially designed to keep churches vital and viable. Did you know that the Council of Conference Ministers put together a non-profit insurance corporation for churches and church related institutions in 2002? Our Insurance Board now provides coverage to more than 4400 churches, including churches of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Evangelical Lutheran Churches of America, and United Presbyterian Churches, and Alliance of Baptist Churches. Our [Insurance Board](#) provides various insurance products tailored to the needs of churches. It also provides pages of [support resources](#) for congregations on topics such as property, church management, youth activities, safe-conduct, transportation, and an online video learning portal. As your church considers its insurance renewal, check with our insurance agent, [Dan Antonietti](#), for more information or a quote. There are 14 of our conference churches in the program, as well as 3 Montana Disciples of Christ churches.

Our Values

Choosing to be bound together in mutual care and concern we will maintain:
Integrity, Excellence, Exceptional Customer Service, Open Communication and
Inclusiveness.

Our Mission, Church Insurance

To support and protect churches and church ministries by offering superior
property and casualty risk and insurance management services.

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

Part two of the God-seeds message above:

Our congregational forbearers "associated" together, especially so that they could call people who would make appropriate ministers. In the United Church of Christ, reviews are primarily accomplished through our Association Church and Ministry Commission, chaired by Ann Hanson. The Church and Ministry Commission is a group of 12 people elected from throughout our MT-NWy Association and Conference UCC (4 from each area) to serve in discernment and support of minister's authorization. Our new 2018 Manual on Ministry lists 48 Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministry that the Church and Ministry Commission uses to assess ministry. The work of this Commission requires about ten days a year

- * to support the discernment of those considering ministry (3 Members in Discernment),
- * to process the transfer of standing of ministers coming into conference church or leaving conference churches,
- * to refer candidates for ordination to a Conference business meeting, called an ecclesiastical council, for a vote to ordain on behalf of the whole UCC,
- * to offer boundary training, annual reviews, and three year reviews required by all clergy (48 authorized ministers within the conference).
- * conduct fitness reviews when a minister's fitness to serve has been called into question (1 fitness review conducted this year for another conference),
- * develop and maintain Conference [Clergy Compensation Guidelines](#) appropriate to Montana and Wyoming (last voted for approval at the 2018 CAM).

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



Many of our churches are deep in Stewardship Season. The Conference Stewardship Task Force has recently held Stewardship Support zoom meetings to provide a platform for folks to share with and support one another in their stewardship efforts. We are looking forward to another Conference-wide Stewardship event in the spring (around March 22) and will be drawing from the stewardship wisdom and passion of Andrew Warner, UCC Generosity Outreach Officer.

We are hoping to expand the membership of the Task Force! Anyone interested in joining a group of people who are passionate about stewardship, [let us know!](#)

From the Conference Board of Directors – a Mimanagish update:

It was just a little over a year ago that we met as a conference to determine the future of Outdoor Ministries in the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference. The

decision, although not unanimous, was significant and the Board heard loud and clear that it is the wish of the Conference to divest from Camp Mimanagish while continuing to support Outdoor Ministry (OM) and, if possible, house some of our OM programs at Mimanagish.

A Mimanagish Divestment Task Force (MDTF) has been appointed consisting of Lynne Spencer-Smith (Conference Moderator); Pam Peterson (Board Secretary and Co-Chair of the Conference Faith Formation Committee; Aaron Blakeslee (Member of the Conference Committee on Outdoor Ministries); Doug McClelland (former Board member); Marc Stewart, ex-officio (Conference Minister); and Terri Goodsell, ex-officio (Conference Treasurer).

The Board charged the task force with several items. They are summarized below, along with the current progress of each.

Observe US Forest Service (USFS) requirements:

Sold to a non-profit

Meet USFS requirements for permits (both land and wilderness usage)

Maintain inclusive nature that has been part of Mimanagish legacy

Sell to an LGBTQ+ friendly and affirming entity

If possible, contract with buyer use of Mimanagish for some of our ongoing Outdoor Ministry opportunities

Obtain an appraisal to determine the asking price for the camp.

This has proved to be most challenging since Mimanagish has several unique qualities: Forest Service property, requirement to be sold to non-profit, not year round. Some of the very things that make Mimanagish special make it difficult to get an informed appraisal. Potential appraisers inform us that doing the research to obtain comparables (a major element of an appraisal) will be challenging, time consuming, and costly. We are in the process of working with a realtor and insurance information to obtain the most realistic appraisal as possible.

Set a budget for the work of the task force.

Costs of selling to be recouped in the sale. At this point, our largest financial outlay will most likely be the appraisal which could run several thousand dollars. We are working on getting good information at the most reasonable cost.

Conditions of the sell will ensure that the conference is not the financial fall-back if the buyer defaults. Sell will not be done on contract. The Board had originally considered the option to rent the camp until transfer of title is complete but felt that doing so left the Conference open to additional costs should significant maintenance issues were to surface. The Board is currently not in favor of renting the camp. At an October 16 Board meeting, the Board moved "to ascertain a reasonable asking price for the improvements on the property of Camp Mimanagish and to offer those improvements for sale, requiring full purchase price paid at

closing.” The MDTF is in conversation with individuals who are capable of providing information we will need to ascertain a reasonable asking price. A property prospectus is currently being drafted in order to adequately market the property.

Observe a November 1 deadline for timeline to sell to allow the Committee on Outdoor Ministry time to set 2020 program. Based on recent consultation with a realtor, we have been informed that it could sell as soon as 3 months but more likely to take 6 - 18 months. Therefore, we recommend to the [Committee on Outdoor Ministry](#) that they move forward with securing alternative locations for the 2020 camp season

We (the [Board of Directors](#) and the MDTF) appreciate your patience, understanding, and support as we move forward to serve in the best interests of the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference and our churches.

Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith, Moderator



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 Jerry and Elizabeth Franks in his recovery from a recent stroke. Jerry served Molt UCC until his retirement in June.



November 3 Daylight Saving Time ends

November 3 Marc preaches at [Sidney](#) and Savage UCCs

November 3 Harvest Meal, [Red Lodge UCC](#)

November 10 (Date Change) Installation at [Mayflower UCC](#), Rev. Amy Carter, 3 pm

November 11-16 Marc Stewart on vacation

November 12 Frontier, Inc. Board Meeting, Hardin

November 12 Central Area clergy gathering, Billings office 10 am

November 17-22 Marc Stewart with [Council of Conference Ministers](#), Alabama

November 24 [Columbus Community UCC](#) Rev. Tracy Heilman's service of leave-taking

November 24 Installation at [University UCC Missoula](#), Rev. Laura Folkwein, 10 am

December 6 [Rocky Mountain College](#) Board of Trustees

December 6-7 Church and Ministry Commission, 2:30 pm - noon, 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

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!](#)
