

Church and Ministry Commission Report September 2020

Commission members: Pat Christian (Helena), Rev. Ken Crouch (Billings), Rev. Meg Hatch (Absarokee), Ann Hanson (Billings), Don Kinney (Red Lodge), Rev. Nicholas Knoblauch (Broadus), Tom Sheetz (Sidney), Carol Sparks (Baker), Illa Dee Talcott (Broadus), Rev. Dick Weaver (Helena), Rev. Dwight Welch (Billings), Trudy Whitmore (Fairfield).

According to the Conference Bylaws, the Church and Ministry Commission assists the Conference Minister in the work of pastoral placement, pastoral crisis, and church and ministry matters. The Commission has the responsibility related to authorized ministers and oversees all matters relating to standing and authorization for ministry. All questions of discipline of ministers shall be addressed by the Commission. All actions on congregational standing shall first be considered by the Commission and recommendations for changes in standing be confirmed by the Montana-Northern Wyoming Association and Conference. (*abbreviated list of responsibilities*)

As Chairperson of the Commission, I am grateful for its members for their active participation in our work. We've formed a trusting relationship with each other and our Conference Minister, Rev. Marc Stewart, to do the work of our Commission. And special thanks go to Jennifer Penfield and Patty Martinson for their able and willing assistance to make our work easier. Although members enjoy face-to-face meetings, our use of Zoom has been essential in facilitating a timely response to situations that arise as well as our regular meetings.

Members in Discernment

Sara MacGilvra Brannon of Great Falls is taking required courses through Chicago Theological Seminary. Working with Clinical Pastoral Training educators in the area, a path has been forged to enable Sara to begin her CPE journey this year.

Laura Keating will be completing her degree from Pacific School of Religion in 2021. She is currently living in Montana and celebrated her wedding on August 22.

Support for Local Pastors and Transitions

The Commission provides vocational support meetings with pastors on a three-year cycle or on a 'need' basis. Boundary training is available online through the Center for Progressive Renewal.

Rev. Glover Wagner - retired from Pilgrim Congregational UCC in Bozeman
Rev. Tracy Heilman - resigned as pastor Columbus Community Congregational UCC
Rev. Michael Mulberry – resigned as co-pastor of First Congregational UCC in Billings
Rev. Neil Lindorff – retired from Peoples Congregational UCC, Sidney, and First Cong. UCC, Savage

Rev. Pam Peterson – installed as pastor of Red Lodge Community Church, October 19, 2019
Rev. Amy Carter – installed as pastor of Mayflower Congregational UCC, Billings, November 10, 2019
Rev. Laura Folkwein – installed as Associate Pastor, University UCC, Missoula, November 10, 2019

Ecclesiastical Councils

Pastor Lisa Kopanski Harmon – approved for ordination on April 25, 2020. (As far as we know, this was the first Ecclesiastical Council conducted via Zoom in the UCC. Special thank you to Jennifer Penfield and Rev. Lynn Spencer Smith, Moderator.)

Rev. Tom King – ordination by the Evangelical Covenant Church was affirmed, May 2, 2020.

Search and Call

The Commission has worked closely with Rev. Marc Stewart as he journeys with churches in discernment processes.

The Commission sadly loses two valued members as their terms expire. Thank you, Rev. Dick Weaver and Don Kinney. You will be missed.

Respectfully submitted by Ann L. Hanson, Chair