

Montana - N. Wyoming Conference
United Church of Christ

CONFERENCE NEWS

Together in Spirit - September 17, 2026



God's Horizon

By Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Tony Clark

Dear Folks:

The 141st Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference Annual Meeting is occurring September 24-27 in Helena. I'm looking forward to the discussions and dialogue, the words and wisdom, the Spirit soaring through our sessions. This year we release two churches, Colstrip Community and Sheridan First Congregational, from our denominational covenant, and we decommission the Committee on Outdoor Ministries. We will also hear and

see how the Conference's priorities are coming to fruition, as congregations and Conference leaders reach out to each other. The Church and Ministry Commission and the Green Team are doing great things. Even amidst sorrow there is joy.

When we gather, we celebrate the covenant that holds us across the miles and over time. We also hold deeply the value of autonomy, recognizing that congregations can discern their own destinies. Sometimes the dance between autonomy and covenant becomes unbalanced and the choreography feels rough and unpracticed. With fits and starts we try to hear each other; yet we are not always attuned to listening. When one side is not getting their needs met through the covenant, the desire for autonomy becomes greater, and the covenant is dissolved. I bless these two congregations and hope that, without the burden of the covenant, their autonomy to discern new paths in their ministries will be fruitful.

The decommissioning of Outdoor Ministries is a reminder of the work that had been done over the last 95+ years to bring people to our lovely slice of God's Creation. It took many callous-hardened hands and warm welcoming hearts to host camps, retreats, and other programs through Outdoor Ministries. I would guess that at one point almost everyone in the Conference was affected by Outdoor Ministries. As members aged, as churches closed or left the denomination, as kids and families prioritized attending sports or music camps, it became increasingly difficult to staff our events and have enough attendees to mount a summer season. As meaningful as the Outdoor Ministries programs were, our values have changed, our time has constricted around different events, and our ministry must take a new direction.

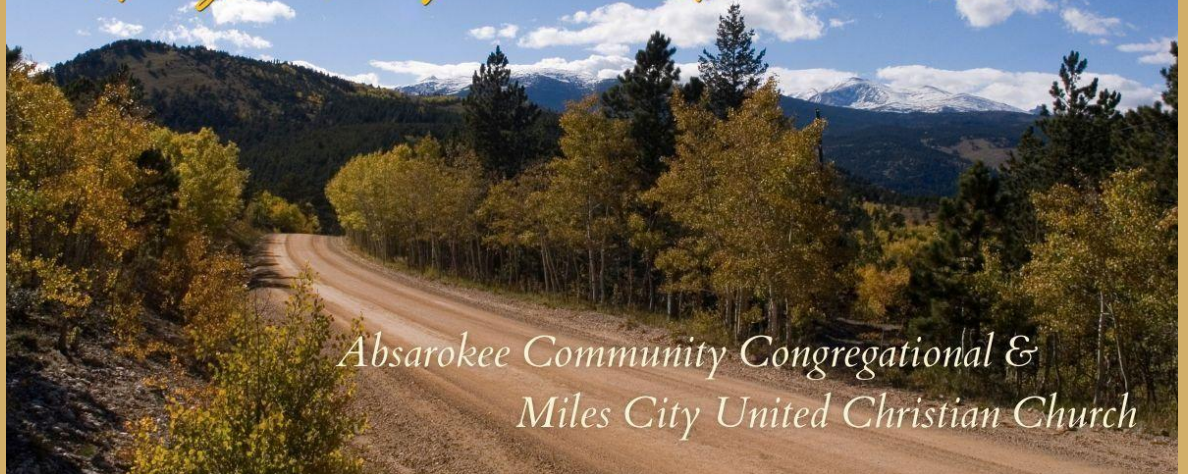
It may feel like a storm is raging around us. And, at this Annual Meeting, we "Lean into the Storm". We hold fast to the Holy Spirit, our rudder, and we watch the sky for Jesus Christ, our bright star, to guide us. After the storm, as we tote up our losses, we see with clarity that God's horizon is still there, and as we sail toward it, we can see that God waits there for us, welcoming us to a future that God only knows.

May it be so.

In peace and prayer,

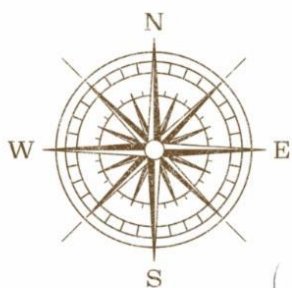
Pastor Tony

Keeping in Prayer this September...

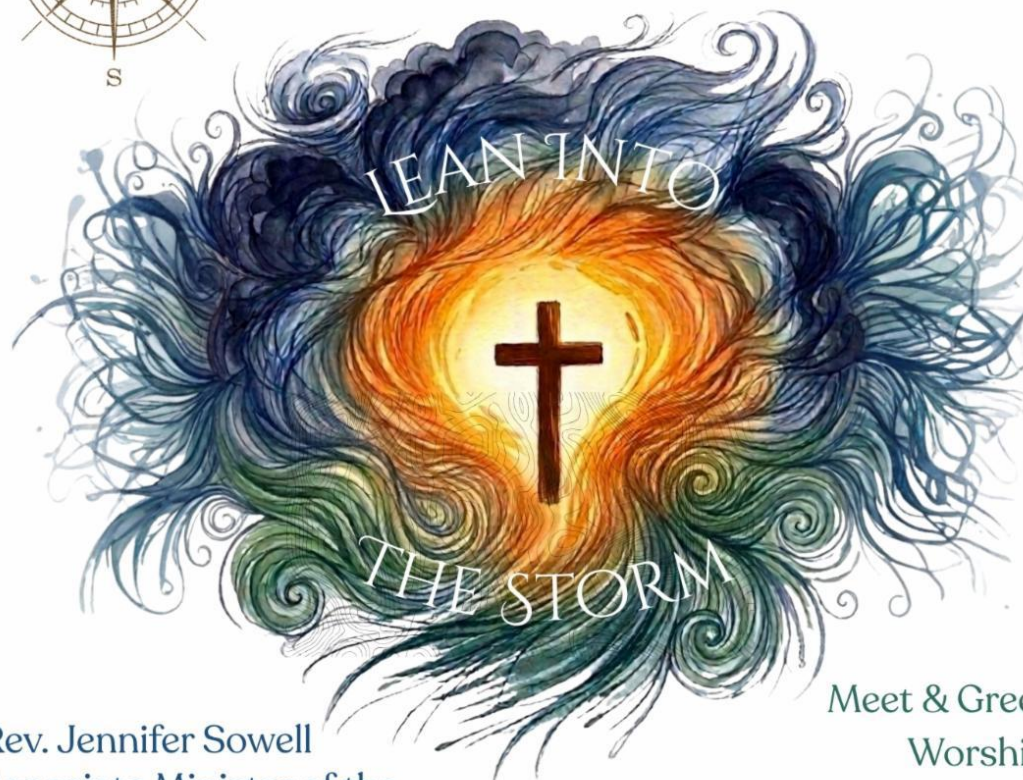


*Absarokee Community Congregational &
Miles City United Christian Church*

Register Today for CAM 2026 in Helena!



I4I CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING HELENA, MONTANA



Rev. Jennifer Sowell
Associate Minister of the
United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund,
Minister for Disabilities and
Mental Health Justice Education
for Faithful Action, UCC

Meet & Greet
Worship
Workshops
Community Project
Banquet
Business Meeting
Fellowship
Sunday Worship

SEPTEMBER 24 - 27, 2026

[▶ REGISTER NOW!](#)

Documents are posted as they become available
under the CAM menu on the website!

CLERGY RETREAT

October 12, 13 - 2026

Join us in Neihart, Montana

**All Clergy Welcome -
Active, Retired and MID**

**SIGN UP
NOW**

**Cabin sleeps eleven. Camping available on site. Cost is \$50.
Register Today! Click here to register.**

MUTUALLY ENCOURAGE - ROMANS 1:12

Placerville Camp located near Rapid City, South Dakota

**ECOT in the Plains - Conservative Congregations in the UCC: A chance to
meet and interact with other members from churches in the Great Plains.
Special Guest: Rev. Bob Thompson, retired UCC pastor, President of
Faithful and Welcoming churches in the UCC, radio commentator.**

November 6-8, 2026

Join the Conversation

Registration Coming Soon!

UCM



ANNUAL FUNDRAISER DINNER

OCTOBER 6

[59th Anniversary Fall Dinner](#)

[Bishop Ben Quanbeck ELCA Lutheran Synod of Montana](#)

[October 6th, 2026 at 5:30 pm](#)

[Glacier Room of the MSUB Student Union Building](#)

Bishop Ben Quanbeck began serving as the Bishop to the ELCA congregations of Montana and Northern Wyoming in September 2025. He passionately believes that God is at work through the Lutheran expression of the Gospel and our emphasis on the cross of Christ. One of his favorite questions is: Since you have been given the grace of God in Jesus Christ, what will you do, now that there is nothing you have to do?

Ben grew up in Shepherd, MT, on an irrigated farm and ranch. He earned his undergraduate degree in Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering from North Dakota State University. Ben worked for two summers at Christikon Bible Camp in the Absaroka-Beartooth Mountains of Montana. Ben's seminary training was at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, where he earned a Master of Divinity degree, with much of his coursework focused on Congregational Mission and Leadership. Ben was ordained in June of 2008. Before being elected bishop, he served congregations in Edgewood, WA (Mountain View Lutheran) and Billings, MT (King of Glory Lutheran) where he was known for his preaching, bible study leadership, pastoral care, collaborative leadership, and commitment to nurturing vibrant congregational life.

This event includes a dinner, a chance to hear the stories of students and meet with them, and a silent and live auction to support UCM's ministry. Tickets are \$50. Tickets purchased so students can attend the dinner is \$50. Churches can purchase a table for \$400 for up to six people, 500 for 8

people.. Contact dwight.welch@msubillings.edu for tickets or [register](https://www.ucm-msub.org/annual-dinner)
online <http://www.ucm-msub.org/annual-dinner>



FUTURE OF FAITH: *The Courage to Be Church*

Monday, September 21st | 3:30 PM Eastern



Delaney Beh

*MDiv graduate, University of
Chicago Divinity School, and
Member in Discernment in the
Indiana-Kentucky Conference*



BECAUSE OF MINISTRY... TOGETHER FOR TOMORROW

Understanding the *Power* of Planned Giving



Tuesday, September 22nd | 3:00 PM Eastern





Rev. Dr. Tony Clark - Conference Minister

Jennifer Penfield - Administrator & Registrar

Patty Martinson - Administrative Assistant

Address - 2016 Alderson Ave, Billings MT 59102

Website - www.mnwcucc.org

Contact Us! - ucc@mnwcucc.org