

Montana - N. Wyoming Conference
United Church of Christ

CONFERENCE NEWS

Together in Spirit - September 3, 2026



Music, Road Travels and Connections

By Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Tony Clark

Dear Folks:

Last week I was on a ten-day tour of Northwestern Montana; I clocked 1100

miles driving through this little slice of God's creation. First I was at Fairfield UCC for the retirement of Pastor Phil Maxwell. It was a beautiful service with lots of tears and lots of laughter. Congratulations to Phil and Jody who will be radically turned around in this shift from working to being retired. A nice article was written about them in [The Fairfield Sun Times](#). While I was there I took some time to hike in the National Forest.

After an overnight at the Swiftcurrent Inn, I travelled through Glacier National Park to the Flathead Lake. I had not been through Glacier before, and I was amazed at the beauty along the Going-to-the-Sun Road. A few times, particularly driving along "The Loop", I was a little freaked out by the narrow road that lays between the cliff edge and the giant rock wall that hugs the road. On the Flathead, I attended Pride Camp, an ecumenical ministry that has many annual returnees. Attendees came from Colorado, Maryland, Wyoming, and Montana. My friend Marc came for the second year from Minnesota. Our last night there gave us a glorious view of the lunar eclipse over the lake. As the earth's shadow overtook the full moon turning it red-ish, we could see the Milky Way above us. Unfortunately, we could not see the aurora that was promised, because of light pollution and the brightness of the moon.

Then I headed down to Missoula. Last Friday, Peter Shober and his wife Barb and I attended the Missoula Symphony at the Kettlehouse Amphitheater, a remarkable venue set on the property of the Kettlehouse Brewery in the hills of Bonner. It was a pleasant evening with a gorgeous sunset, and we sat on blankets on the sloping lawn behind the fixed seats. The symphony accompanied a jazz band that fused RnB and funk with sounds seeming to come from Bollywood and rhythmic pulses like Ravel's Bolero.

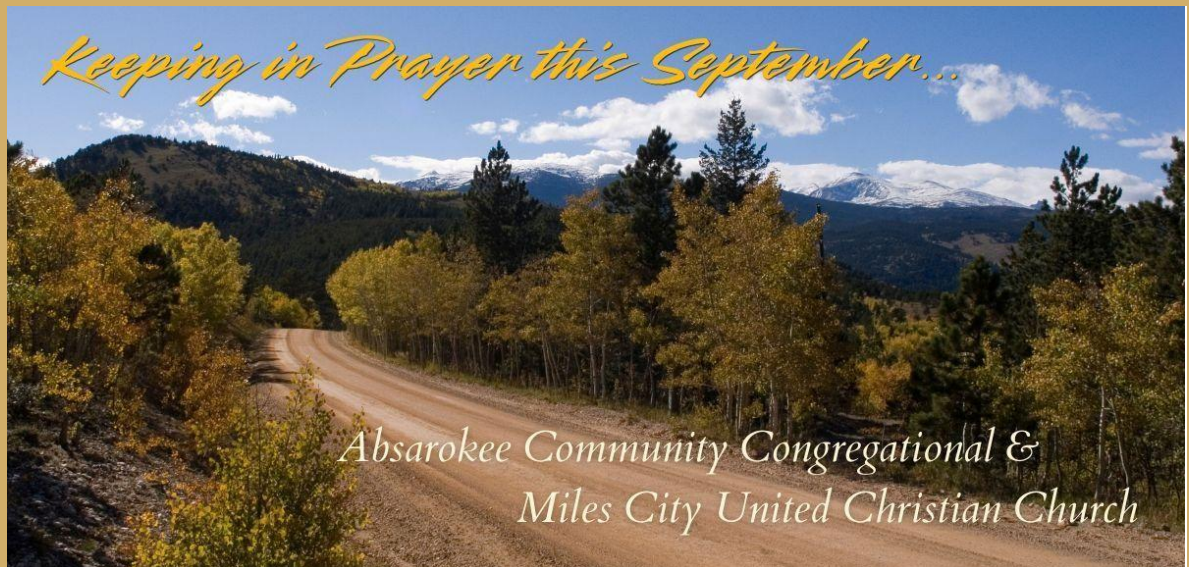
On Sunday, Peter and I preached on evil and good from [Romans 12:9-21](#): Did you know that heaping coals on the head of an enemy is actually subversive kindness? When your home fire died out and the embers became ash, you needed to get embers from a neighbor. Withholding the embers was cruel because without the coals they couldn't cook or heat the house. They would

heap coals into a vessel that was carried on the head, offering kindness when animosity colored the relationship.

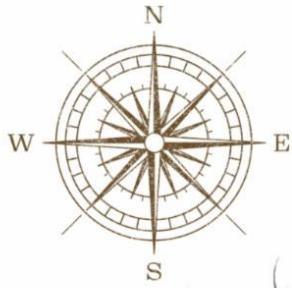
Late summer is a splendid season in Montana, still warm in the day and cooling off in the evenings. Smoke from fires west does affect being outside, and throughout my trip, I had difficulty seeing through the haze to the mountains nearby. Still, I am grateful for these public and private spaces that have been set aside for our use. I am always a big fan of unexpected blending of musical styles, believing that the creativity is a mark of the Holy Spirit. And I was blessed in visiting with the members of our churches in Fairfield, Great Falls (they drove up for Phil's retirement), and Missoula. My heart is full of joy for our Conference and the people connected to it.

In Peace and Prayer,

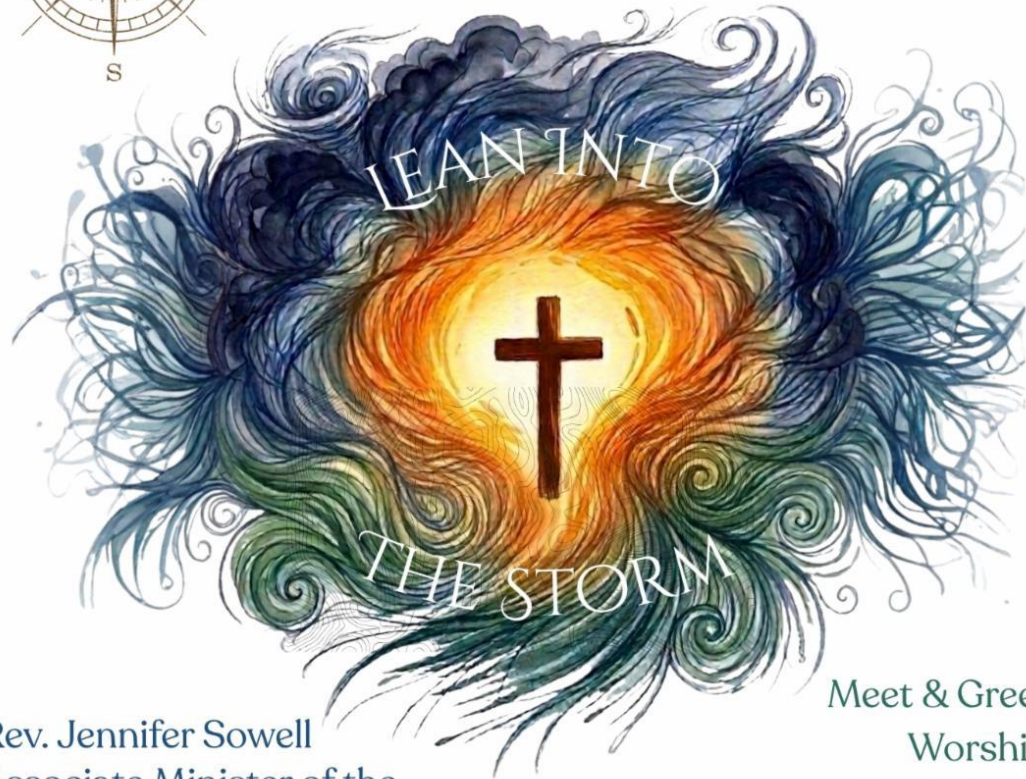
Pastor Tony



Register Today for CAM 2026 in Helena!



I41 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!

CONVERGENCE MUSIC PROJECT's

CONVERGING 2026

Sing through it!

7-10 October 2026

Middletown Christian Church
500 N Watterson Trail, Louisville, KY

GET TICKETS →

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](#) online <http://www.ucm-msub.org/annual-dinner>



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