Montana - N. Wyoming Conference
United Church of Christ

CONFERENCE NEWS

Together in Spirit - October 29, 2026



Changed Humanity

By Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Tony Clark

Dear Folks:

This week, I heard an op-ed by Thomas Friedman, "The Second Big Bang Is Here," in the New York Times. While he is known primarily as an economist, Friedman's latest is more theological than financial. His thesis is that humans have acted with God-like power to change the world in radical ways that will create a future we cannot even predict. He names 7 things we have created in the last century that make us like God: 1. Artificial Brain (AI) that

disconnects intelligence from human action, 2. Planetary Nervous System (Internet) that keeps us all connected, 3. Human-made Climate Change, 4. A New Galaxy (Cyberspace), 5. Splitting the Atom (we can destroy the entire earth), 6. Deep learning about our world around us, and 7. A combination of Quantum Computing, Fusion Energy, and AI. We have actively moved powers traditionally granted to God: creation, destruction, omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence into the mysterious ether of the digital.

Humans have had to rethink God's powers in the past. As Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) removed the earth from the center of creation by revealing that the earth revolved around the sun, theologically, people began to understand that God did not center the universe on humanity and the earth. When Isaac Newton (1643-1727) defined gravity and other mechanical forces, the mystery of these moved from the prevue of God and into the physical laws of the universe. Albert Einstein (1879-1955) moved us into the world of the atom and sub-atom, revealing, like Copernicus and Newton did, a world connected by invisible forces. I have heard it said that Copernicus made God homeless (as heaven lost its geographical location), Newton made God jobless (God as constant intervener was turned into a "clockmaker" who set the world in motion and then took a long vacation), and Einstein made God uncertain (while God is the totality of all natural laws, our natural laws suggest that we lose predictability, particularly at the sub-atomic level). Arguably, our thoughts on God have shifted from a very intimate reliable earth-bound God who controls the weather and human history to a transcendent unpredictable God who at a macro level set the natural laws in place and stepped aside and at the micro level is uncertain.

The difference between what we have created and how we think of God is more about us than God. Has God changed in the last 500 years? Probably not. Yet humanity has changed. Our innovations in literacy, science, medicine, engineering, communication, finance—all moving into a digital world—have exponentially expanded us individually and as a species. In my thinking, all of these are inspired by the Holy Spirit, who brings creativity and insight into our ideas. As humans, we have more power to create and destroy than ever before. We can use our new tools for good or evil, and soon good and evil may be a dichotomy for AI to exploit. Indeed, AI is talked about in Silicon Valley as a god, offering miracles and becoming omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

I think God is still very much present with us, in the form of Love. I experience God as surrounding me with love, and my best way to love God is to pass that love onto our neighbors. I'm pretty sure that God's love for humanity, in all our humility and hubris, is still omnipresent. I hope and pray that God's example of love becomes the defining activity of humanity, even as the world around us moves us into new ways of being community.

In Peace and Prayer,

Pastor Tony



UCC friends in the Plains,

Your Conference Ministers have invited my wife, Linda, and me to join you for a weekend at Placerville Camp near Rapid City, South Dakota, November 6–8. We represent Faithful and Welcoming Churches (FWC) of the UCC, a network of ECOTs—Evangelical, Conservative, Orthodox, or Traditional

pastors, churches, and laity.

This gathering will be a "first" in the UCC. We have previously held events for UCC ECOTs and facilitated conversations among them, but this is the first such gathering initiated by Conference staff. Tony Clark, Roberto Ochoa, and Erin Gilmore are among a growing number of UCC Conference and Association leaders who are reaching out intentionally to their ECOT pastors and churches. They are communicating something important: when we say "everyone's welcome" in the UCC, we really do mean everyone—including those whose theological, cultural, or political perspectives may differ from the denomination's more progressive voices.

Our UCC General Minister and President, Karen Georgia Thompson, has also initiated a series of conversations called "A Tent of Our Own Making." She has emphasized that the UCC's theological diversity is not simply part of our past or an ideal we hope someday to achieve. It is "already here." The question is how we live faithfully together within that diversity.

That is part of what we hope to explore at Placerville.

The goal of the retreat is to identify, support, and build relationships among ECOTs in the Plains states. We'd like to get to know you, hear your experiences and concerns, and learn what it is like for you to live out your faith and ministry within the UCC. Linda and I will also share some of what we have learned as we have navigated the dual identity of being both UCC and ECOT for almost fifty years. Together, we can talk about strategies, perspectives, and relationships that might help all of us.

We want this to be a conversation, not simply a presentation. We want to listen as much as we talk. Whether or not you are ECOT or plan to join us at Placerville, if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions about how we

might best use our time together, please email me at RDBobT@gmail.com.

Bob Thompson, President

Faithful and Welcoming Churches



65th Anniversary - Pilgrim Congregational - November 15, 2026

Pilgrim UCC will be celebrating their 65th Anniversary on Sunday November 15th, 2026.
A special worship service in the sanctuary at 10:00 a.m. will be followed by a joyful reception!



Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table

Monday, November 2nd | 1:00 PM Eastern



LAKHIYIA HICKS
Spoken Word Consultant, Public Health Cultural Shapeshifter, & Liberation Arts Alchemist

NURTURE THE SOUL

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

FUTURE OF FAITH:

Embodiment & Co-Creativity Starts at HOME

Thursday, November 5th

3:30 PM Eastern

Voice Recognition

Vocational Retreats for Clergy

You've given years to ministry. Give a day to what comes next.

A guided online retreat to reflect on how ministry has shaped you and get clearer about where God is calling you now.



Molly Baskette | Kaji Douša | Phiwa Langeni | Kenneth Samuel

Mid-Career Clergy

Friday, November 6, 2026

Molly Baskette, Kaji Douša, and Phiwa Langeni

Late-Career Clergy

Friday, November 13, 2026

Molly Baskette, Phiwa Langeni, and Kenneth Samuel

Both retreats:

Online | 10 am–4 pm Eastern

$50; $40 for UCC clergy

Reserve your place.

voicerecognitionretreats.com



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