

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST (UCC)

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- Vacation Bible School
- Camp Mimanagish
- Priority List

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THE *Congregationalist*

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From the Moderator: Mic Dawson

What's in a (Brand) Name?

I wrote "What's in a name?" previously. With the continued concern regarding the use of Billings First Church as the name for our church, perhaps looking at the issue from another perspective is helpful: What's in a brand?

In Montana a brand is a permanent symbol. Registered with the State and used to distinguish one person's livestock from another they can only be used and changed under very specific legal circumstances.

In the culture at large, a brand is a way to capture attention, a new twist to an established usage.

There are some examples very close to our church building: the Yellowstone Art Museum presents itself as "The YAM", the Alberta Bair Theater is affectionately known as "The ABT".

The name and brand usage was discussed at the Church Council meeting on May 19th and it was voted that the brand of Billings First Church be used for communications within and outside the church and the legal name of First Congregational United Church of Christ remain the legal name.

As I noted previously, we, our values and missions, have not changed but the way we represent ourselves has been refreshed to convey to others our history and continued presence in the community.

Thank You, From Rev. Michael Mulberry

Thanks to all those people who helped to fund the mission delegation and pray for us while we were there. Rev. Cheryl Stewart, Abe, and I hope that it will come back hundred-fold to the congregation. As I shared with many of you, there must have been at least five different times when "United Church of Christ" was lifted up in gratitude and thanks for the continuing role we play in Chiapas. The small community on the edge of the rainforest, Emiliano Zapata, could not believe that people from our part of the world cared enough to visit them and hear their story. We were evidence of God's love and care for them. Thanks for making all of that possible and real.

Thanks also to all the people who came together to help with my installation and the reception that followed. Thanks to our Conference Minister, Rev. Marc Stewart, for his willingness to share his good word with us all. I am also thankful to the Church and Ministry Committee of the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference for their support and participation. Thank you to everyone for the set up downstairs, the floral arrangements, the food, and all of the intention that went in to making it a wonderful day. I am deeply grateful.

Gallery Opening

Barbara Gunn & Edward Barta cordially invite you to the seasonal opening of our gallery in Nye. Windy Flats Gallery will have new work by Edward as well as work by 20 other regional artists. Mark your calendars— Saturday & Sunday June 6 & 7, 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Address is 259 Limestone Road, Nye.

Time With Teresa

- The Lord works in mysterious ways...When God sends you help, don't ask questions. The woman hurried to the pharmacy to get medication, got back to her car and found that she had locked her keys inside. The woman found an old rusty coat hanger left on the ground. She looked at it and said, "I don't know how to use this." She bowed her head and asked God to send her some HELP. Within 5 minutes a beat-up old motorcycle pulled up, driven by a bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag. He got off of his cycle and asked if he could help. She said: "Yes, my daughter is sick. I've locked my keys in my car. I must get home. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?" He said, "Sure." He walked over to the car, and in less than a minute the car was open. She hugged the man and through tears said, "Thank You, God, for sending me such a very nice man." The man heard her little prayer and replied, "Lady, I am NOT a nice man. I just got out of prison yesterday; I was in prison for car theft." The woman hugged the man again, sobbing, "Oh, thank you, God! You even sent me a Professional!" Is GOD great or what?! May His Spirit Fall Afresh on you~ Teresa
- NEW NEW NEW! Primetimer's Older Adult Lunchtime! June 18th at Dos Machos on the patio. If you don't want to drive at night, how about during the day! Monthly on the 3rd Thursday at 11:30am. All Older Adults 50+ are welcome to meet at a local restaurant to share fellowship and lunch! RSVP the church office or me by Wednesday.
- END OF LIFE CARE PLANNING WORKSHOP Sunday, JUNE 14th 12:30pm. Have you completed an Advanced Medical Directive so your loved ones are aware of what medical treatment you would or would NOT want if you were unable to make medical decisions for yourself? Have you appointed someone to be your voice? Have you planned your funeral or memorial service? Do you want some help writing your obituary? Have you considered leaving a financial gift to the church? JOIN US for a frank discussion about medical care, financial planning, and being prepared for your death. JUNE 14th 12:30pm following worship, lunch will be catered. PLEASE RSVP to the church office so we have enough materials and lunch.
- Primetimer's Dinnertime June 18th @ 5:30 pm at Cactus Creek out on the patio. All Older Adults 50+ are welcome to meet at a local restaurant to share fellowship and a meal. Come and make some new friends. RSVP by Wed. Invite your neighbor!
- Primetimer's Winetime June 25 @ 5:30pm at Katie Blaesius' home. Join us for fun and fellowship. Bring a friend! Wine provided, please bring an appetizer to share.
- PRAYER CONCERNS: Please keep the families of Jeff Gertula, Jody Cranston, and Betty Wilson in your prayers. We also lift Lois Ramsett who is ill with lung cancer, and continued prayers for Bonnie Wamsley whose cancer has spread to her liver, Bill Hawk, Jori Lokken, Noah & Devon, friends of Mark Palmer, who are both going to prison, and need support.
- Our Prayer Chain can always use more prayers! Call Bonnie Conn 373-6740 if you would like to be a prayer or to request prayers for someone.
- Home Communion-If you would like to share communion in your home, please let Pastor Teresa or the Rev. Mike know. We'd love to see you!

Rev. Michael Mulberry, Sr. Minister

Last month I wrote about change and how the lifecycle of a congregation necessarily leads to a place where many people begin to bristle and rub against any change brought to its doorstep. Hopefully, a congregation develops a little romance with a pastor that creates some trust and energy to make necessary changes as that bristling and rubbing starts. I may have undercut that romance by the issues I chose to address when I first started at this beloved church.

I did that because I saw them as necessary for another group of people in the church who have either left or stand at the edge hopeless that things might be any different. All congregations these days struggle with numbers. Numbers often translate into potential leaders, energy, or new life which might help the congregation do more than just survive. So I wanted to begin creating a vision for the incredible history of this church to become new again. I saw very few people translating that incredible history for a new age. Frankly, I saw a church, collectively, in deep depression. I saw many people energized for doing church work individually. I saw very few people energized for doing work together. And doing work together defines church for me. So how would a healthy congregation act in an environment of great change? Healthy congregations are like healthy bodies. Healthy bodies are supple, relaxed, and at ease. Unhealthy bodies are tight and rigid (at dis-ease). Much like a healthy body, when healthy congregations are resilient, they are more effective in responding and adapting to change. They are more imaginative and free to act.

Rev. Peter Shober, the Senior Minister at University UCC in Missoula, the church with the greatest numbers and some of the best energy in our conference, told me that their church has suspended their constitution twice to re-vision their church within the last few years. For many people, that seems counter-intuitive for doing good church work. For University UCC, that means they are particularly open to how God might be leading them into a new day.

Healthy systems are flexible. They have more options for interacting with their environment. Organizations often become more rigid in stressful situations. Sufficiently threatened, people end up at the mercy of their instincts. They have a small repertoire of responses. Healthy is “the ability of the organism to respond appropriately to a wide variety of challenges” to maintain balance and integrity. Disease is “a failure to adapt to challenge . . . the source of disease is any challenge to the body with which it is unable to cope.”

Flexibility contributes to good functioning. It allows the blood to flow through the musculature to provide power and action. Flexibility also promotes resiliency, an ability to bounce back and come back stronger. When we talk about unhappy families’ systems we talk about fixed patterns of responding where family members get into nonnegotiable positions. They “get stuck.” Happy families cherish the individuality of each member.

Warren Bennis, a writer in leadership studies, was asked advice he would give good leaders today. His response was, “Be nimble.”

As many of you know, that term, “resilience” is a big one for me. It countenances that we will fail in a world where rapid change is happening. Resilience is a recovery from hardship and a fomentation of spirit. It is a bouncing back, buoyancy, or elasticity connoted by a lightness of being and a sense of humor. If church is about death marches with Russian dirges playing in the background, where people just need to be “more committed and dedicated,” we are in trouble. Resilience congregations feel energized during change, are willing to learn, give space for exploration and time for innovation, and enliven members by making more and more people believe they can impact the outcomes at a church. Unhealthy congregations are forever whittling down the number of people who can truly influence outcomes.

Studies done about the ability to change and deal with stress have named health groups as “hardy.” Groups with a high hardiness are stimulated by change and challenge, accepting each as natural and seeing opportunities before them. They also involve a wider and wider swath of people in what they are doing and show a willingness to motivate and act on that motivation. These groups also felt hopeful because they believed they could influence outcomes and make change happen. Groups with a low hardiness focus on security by seeking to avoid disruption and having a strong preference for the familiar. These groups appear bored with few things worthy of their attention and no compass to guide them. Low hardiness is also characterized by a powerlessness that shows no ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

At the very least, I want you to see me trying to lead us to recapture our brilliant history in new and challenging ways. It may mean that I’m not popular as we bend and stretch to adapt. That’s ok though. My hope and prayer is that we all become ever more open to the ways that God is leading all of us to a place of health, resilience, and hardiness

Reserve January 8-9, 2016!

The Jesus Seminar is coming to Billings First!

A HUGE THANK YOU!!!!

HUGE (BELATED) THANK YOU

Thank you to all who helped put on the installation luncheon for Mike. To all who contributed food, cooked it and washed up the dishes, to those who set up the tables and decorated them so beautifully, to those who created and presented the entertainment and all who attended to welcome our new(ish) Senior Minister.

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH

Mic Dawson, Moderator

Vacation Bible School

G-Force 2015: At Cokesbury's G-Force VBS, kids explore how to put their faith into action. In this mission-focused VBS, kids experience God's unstoppable love and discover how to fuel up and move in and through life with God. Watch your church come alive with movement and images of all sorts of kid-friendly transportation, such as skateboards, running shoes, roller blades, and more! Watch the G-Force meter climb illustrating how God is at work around the world and how God's people are on the move.



The overall Bible verse for the program is Acts 17:28a, "In God we live, move, and exist." A life with God is one of movement! Each session's action word sparks a way to show God's unstoppable love: Move! Act! Care! Follow! Share! Go out and serve!

VBS will be held at Mayflower UCC June 15-19 everyday from 9-noon and is offered for kids in grades pre-school-6th grade. The cost is \$10/child. Please contact the church office or Kimmie (855-4317 or kim.harris@campmimanagish.org) to register your kids! We are also looking for volunteers to help provide snacks each day! If you are available please contact Kimmie.



Camp Mimanagish Schedule

Important Dates This June

6/2 **Christian Education Meeting 6:00 pm**

6/7 **Choir Appreciation Sunday @ 10 am**

6/9 **Diaconate Meeting 7:00 pm** Library

6/15-19 **VBS at Mayflower**

6/16 **Council Meeting 7:00 p.m.** Library

6/18 **Primetimer's Lunch Time 11:30**

a.m. at Dos Machos. RSVP to Teresa.

6/18 **Newsletter Deadline**

6/18 **Primetimer's Dinnertime 5:30pm** at Cactus Creek . Rsvp to the church office or Teresa.

6/22-26 **Breanna Out of the Office**

6/25 **Primetimers Winetime 5:30 pm** at the home of Katie Blaesius. Bring an appetizer to share, wine provided.

There truly is a week for everyone at Camp Mimanagish! If you've never refreshed your soul along the deep valleys of the Boulder, do yourself a favor and come to camp this year. It could just change your life.....FOREVER!

- June 4 Seasoned Adults Camp
- June 5-7 Family Camp
- June 4-7 Geography of Grace
- June 19-21 Young Adults Camp
- July 6-8 Grandparents and Me Camp
- July 9-12 Reunion
- July 14-18 2, 3,4 Grade Camp
- July 19-25 5&6 Grade Camp
- July 26- Aug 1 7,8,9 Grade Camp
- Aug 2-8 10, 11, 12 Grade Camp
- Aug 14-17 Women's Retreat
- Aug 14-17 Fishing Camp
- Sept. 18-20 Men's Retreat
- October 15-17 Fall Youth Retreat



Dude, I'm in Istanbul! Anyway, I don't have much to say, except a big shout out to everyone who helped with fixing meals and hosting, setting up and taking down. We get pretty much the same good folks helping each time, and we only have to swing into action about every three months.

I find the most fun hosting experiences occur whenever someone cooks a real feast for supper. An example was the Thanksgiving supper. Even though that was an isolated sumptuous feast I think great food, comfort food, is beneficial body and soul for homeless type people and for the nervous nellies who may be inexperienced with hosting. We found ourselves pushing back from the table after the pie, sipping water or coffee, and having great conversations.

We are keen to train some new volunteers this summer to host. Turns out evening hosts, who work from about 6 to 8:30, are in short supply. Could this be something you would consider? No experience is necessary, just willingness to be sociable. Some volunteers enjoy bringing other members of their family, especially children to play with our guests' children.

Dan Struckman



What Is A Dad?

A dad is someone who wants to catch you before you fall but instead picks you up, brushes you off, and lets you try again.

A dad is someone who wants to keep you from making mistakes but instead lets you find your own way, even though his heart breaks in silence when you get hurt.

A dad is someone who holds you when you cry, scolds you when you break the rules, shines with pride when you succeed, and has faith in you even when you fail...

- Unknown

Endowment Update

The Endowment Committee met May 4, 2015. Earlier in the year the committee authorized \$20,000 from various endowment funds to be used for the general use of the church expenses. This was approved by the Church Council.

On May 4, 2015, we suggest that \$2300 be allocated from the Gustafson Youth Fund and \$1000 from the endowment general funds to help cover expenses 11 youths for a California mission trip. This has to be approved by the Church Council. The committee also allocated \$500 from the Eickelberg Fund for youth of our church to attend Camp Mimanagish this summer.

The Endowment Committee will meet quarterly in the future.

There have been two new recent contributions to the Endowment Funds. The Cleve Reitz Estate donated \$8,800 on March 31, 2015, and the Irene Shorb Estate contributed \$90,842.27 on April 24, 2015. The committee will be vigilant in requests from the church for funds. We wish to continue to have the funds increase even though we are using some of the funds. Hopefully individuals in the church will contribute to the fund now or remember the endowment fund in their will. There is a Perpetual Stewards Fund that one can contribute to at any time. Thus far this fund only has \$763.00.

If you have any questions about the endowment fund or its distributions, please contact me. Thank you, Stewart Taylor, 652-5022

Priority List

Work continues on this list we have before us. Ed Gulick presented his discernment process PowerPoint before council and related what an exciting endeavor this might be. Bids are being taken and evaluated for the new sound/video system. Downtown Billings Association has been working with us to talk about helping us with funding for a sign that might be displayed higher up on our building (not to replace our existing sign but to enhance) and in moving on the promised pocket park. The church is moving in some powerful ways on the priority list.

In no particular order, here are the TOP PRIORITIES! Read 'em and rejoice!

- ⊕ Van/mini-bus for seniors and youth
- ⊕ Green Energy Building
- ⊕ A new sound/video system for sanctuary and beyond
- ⊕ Outside church sign
- ⊕ Church signage within our building
- ⊕ Shelves for the sacristy
- ⊕ Recruitment/Welcome campaign
- ⊕ Powerpoint possibilities for sanctuary

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Janet Berger Rhett Moak Karen Norsworthy	2 Taylor Brown Jessie Howland Betty Lindsey	3 Vic Redinger	4 Fred Lenhardt Ginny Udem	5 Cindy Crist Jerry Dobesh	6 Sara Gunderson Michael McCallum
7 Don Stanaway Bill Bartlett	8 Mic Dawson	9	10 Erik Eliason	11 Paul Dunphy	12 Gary Doll Josh Waetzig	13 Ryan Reitz Hank Williams
14 Gerry Mangis	15 Annie Tollefson	16	17 Addison Norsworthy	18 Ron Arneson	19 Bob Lough	20 Kent Boughn Betty Chapman Tanner Osborne
21	22	23	24 June Butler Bill Hawk Ashley Reitz	25 Isabella Whitworth	26 Clair Howard	27
28 Vern Prill	29	30 Wilma Fender Laverne Royer				

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Become a friend of "Billings First"
and get important information online and updated daily!

Billings First Church

First Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC)

*Theologically progressive, radically inclusive,
committed to justice!*

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An "Open & Affirming/Peace with
Justice" Church

Our Staff

Rev. Michael Mulberry, Senior Minister
Teresa Kennedy, Pastoral Care Associate
Kimmie Harris, Youth/Young Adults
Laura Blodgett, Chancel Choir
Jo Lokken, Melody Choir
Barbara Dobesh, Organist/Pianist
Steve Plaggemeyer, Assistant Organ/Piano
Susan Ogden, Parish Nurse
Jan Duffy, Bookkeeping
Breanna Rolandson, Administrative Assistant
Barbara Gulick, Spiritual Director-In-Residence

Our Ministers

Every member of the congregation!



Your June Congregationalist is here!

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Adult Education Opportunities

Claiming the Promise:

An Ecumenical Welcoming Bible Study on Homosexuality

Beginning Wednesday, June 10, 6:30-7:30, and running for five to six weeks.

Although this curriculum was written several years ago, it is still one of the best at exploring some of the troublesome Scripture passages and how they are to be studied and interpreted for our faith journey. If you have ever felt Biblically helpless when openness to the LGBTQ community is explored at Thanksgiving Dinner, in a community conversation, or at a city board meeting, this curriculum will give you tools to plumb the depths of faith tradition and meaning.

Participant guides can be found here: <http://www.rmnetwork.org/wp-content/themes/rmn/images/claimingthepromise.pdf> or call (406-245-6477)/email (revmikemul@firstchurchbillings.org) Rev. Mulberry to receive a copy.

This educational experience is limited to 12 people. So please sign up in the church narthex to reserve a spot.

Just eating?:

Practicing Our Faith at the Table

Beginning Wednesdays this autumn, 6:30-7:30 and running for six to seven weeks.

Just Eating? Practicing Our Faith at the Table is a curriculum for congregations that explores the relationship between the way we eat and the way we live, published by the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Church World Service, and Advocate Health Care (UCC). The study uses scripture, prayer and stories from the local and global community to explore five key aspects of our relationship with food:

- the health of our bodies
- the challenge of hunger
- the health of the earth that provides our food
- the ways we use food to extend hospitality and enrich relationships
- the opportunities for action, renewal and transformation in our eating practices-as individuals and as faith communities.

Participant guides can be found here: https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/hunger/pdf/justeatpart.pdf or call (406-245-6477)/email (revmikemul@firstchurchbillings.org) Rev. Mulberry to receive a copy.

This educational experience is limited to 12 people. So please sign up in the church narthex to reserve a spot.

Billings Youth Connect

On Tuesday, June 9, 2015, the faith community—with the support of Billings Metro VISTA Project's Faith Engagement Initiative—will host a new event: Billings Youth Connect. Billings Youth Connect will be held at North Park from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The vision is to connect homeless and at-risk teens and young adults with the community resources they need. The resources will provide information about employment and educational opportunities, resume building and interview skills, food, clothing, and health resources, and much more to specifically reach teens and young adults. Along with the resources, there will be music, an art project and offerings of free food and “grab bag” gifts for guests.

If you wish to volunteer, please sign up at the volunteer website: <http://www.volunteerspot.com/login/entry/648765258077> where you can help to set up, tear down, provide accompaniment, serve food, or just provide support for the event. Or you can donate cash to the event by making a check out to the City of Billings, memo line: Billings Youth Connect, and send to 2825 3rd Avenue North, 6th Floor, PO Box 1178, Billings, MT 59103.

Thank You!!

Thanks to the hosts of the Visioning Dinners

A special thanks to everyone who hosted a dinner or helped prepare the food for a dinner. 102 people signed up for twelve dinners. If you missed out or had to cancel, don't worry. We will have dinners again in the fall to continue our conversation with one another about what the church means to us.

Seasoned Adult Camp at Mimanagish

Seasoned Adults Retreat

1-day of retreat at Camp Mimanagish

Thursday, June 4 10:00 am – 6 pm

Theme: Trails Revisited: looking again at where we have come from and where we are going

Conference Minister, Marc Stewart, will use Dr. Larry Small's history of the Montana-N. Wyoming Conference, Trails Revisited, to facilitate discussion along our faith trails

Participants do not need to have read Trails Revisited, but copies can be order from the Conference office for \$20 if you are interested. Copies will also be available for sale at the Seasoned Adults retreat.

Camp Registration \$25:

Email: <https://www.campmimanagish.org/>

Call: Elaine at Conference office at 406.656.8688

Car/Van Transportation from Bozeman and from Billings: \$25 r/t

Reservations required before June 2: ucc@mnwcucc.org or 406.656.8688

Route #1: Depart Billings from Mayflower UCC 7:15 AM

Depart Columbus Community UCC 8:15 AM

Route #2: Depart Target parking lot at 7:45 AM

Gathering at Big Timber UCC 9:00 – 9:30 AM

Opening Devotional 9:30 – 10 AM

Car Pool to Camp Mimanagish

meal, snack, guided conversation, and free time 11 am – 6 pm Depart Camp Mimanagish 6 PM