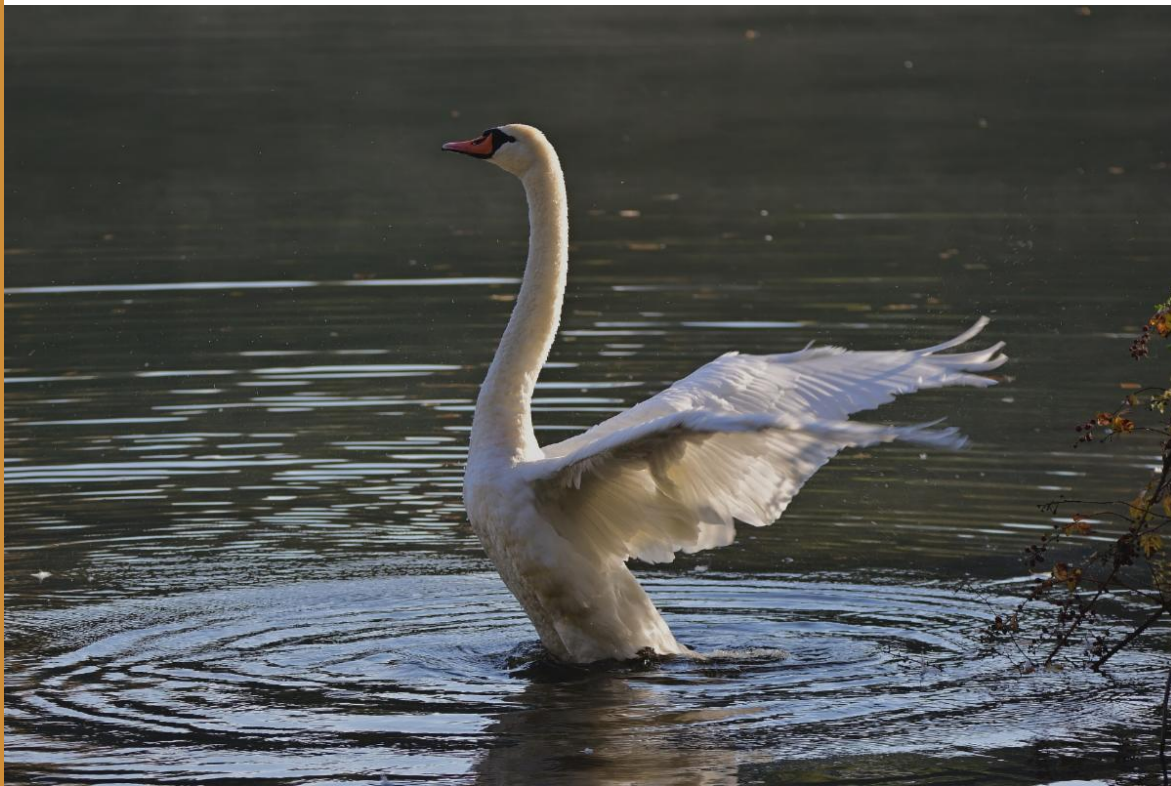




CONFERENCE NEWS

Moving Together in Spirit as a Conference - September 6, 2024



CONFERENCE MINISTER'S CORNER

Rev. Dr. Tony Clark

Transitional Conference Minister

How do you interact with social media like Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter)? Do you post, repost, or follow/like content on TikTok? These questions would not have even made sense 15 years ago. Now these apps are

important means of communication that connect us over the miles and help keep us informed of people and issues across the country and around the world. We are still learning how to define ethical boundaries, police bullying and threatening posts, and name what is necessary personal data to share.

As communication tools, social media is fraught with the same problems of other forms of communication: misunderstanding, disinformation, meanness, disrespect, derision, and contextually inappropriate statements. Added on to these is the ability to tag other people in order to get their attention or response. And these apps have provided us with (limited) emotional responses in the form of emojis and GIFs. However, these symbols are also misread, misconstrued, and misused. Does a thumbs-up symbol mean you have read the post, liked the post, or agreed with the post?

Perhaps the biggest effect social media has had is in giving each of us a global platform to share cute kitty videos and grandkids' pics, as well as screes on anything from the idiot who hit your parked car in a parking lot to politics. Some of these posts are relatively benign (cute kitty vids), while others can go from unclear (tagging someone) to malignant (bullying behavior). When you tag someone on a post, you call them into a public conversation that they may or may not want to be in. When you are tagged on a post you don't agree with, do you ignore it, reply to it, repost it with your own response, or block the original poster?

The major problem with social media is that, although it may feel intimate, it is not private or confidential communication. It is a broadcast bigger than a billboard, a voice louder than star-splashed movies, and readership larger than any published news media. Anything, even if posted in a private post, can be reposted to the world wide web. Digital communication is not confidential. Assume that anything you put online is seen by millions (or more!) of people. Once you post it, it is beyond your ability to retract it.

If you are clergy, you understand your professional role and how your

presence in any space has ramifications. Our words and actions are held to higher standards. We must discern when it is appropriate to share personal information and when to keep quiet. One ethical practice we are called to is to unfriend church members or constituents when we leave a ministerial setting, and this needs to be clearly communicated at the time of departure.

As Christians we called to live our lives in private and in public doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly. Facebook and X, Instagram and TikTok exponentially multiply and magnify our words and images, smashing ideas of humility, highlighting unkindnesses, and amplifying injustices. Conversations are both interpersonal and disconnected from individual context. Mean or snarky or unclear statements will not simply go away once they are put out there. My personal thought is "If you wouldn't put it on a billboard for everyone to read, don't put it on Facebook." Perhaps, too, we might say that if it does not promote the gospel of Jesus, we need not post it.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and comments.

Peace,

Pastor Tony

SEPTEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

SEPTEMBER

September 20 - Rural Workshop, Absarokee

September 21 - Rural Workshop, Miles City

September 26 - Boundary Training

September 27-29 - Conference Annual Meeting

KEEP IN PRAYER

Absarokee Community Congregational &
Miles City United Christian Church

Congratulate our newest Clergy Member!



Barbara Gulick was officially
approved for ordained ministry
in the United Church of Christ
by a majority vote on
September 5, 2024

*Ordination Service
Rev. Barbara Gulick*

Saturday, October 26 - 2:00 pm

<http://www.mnwcucc.org/events>

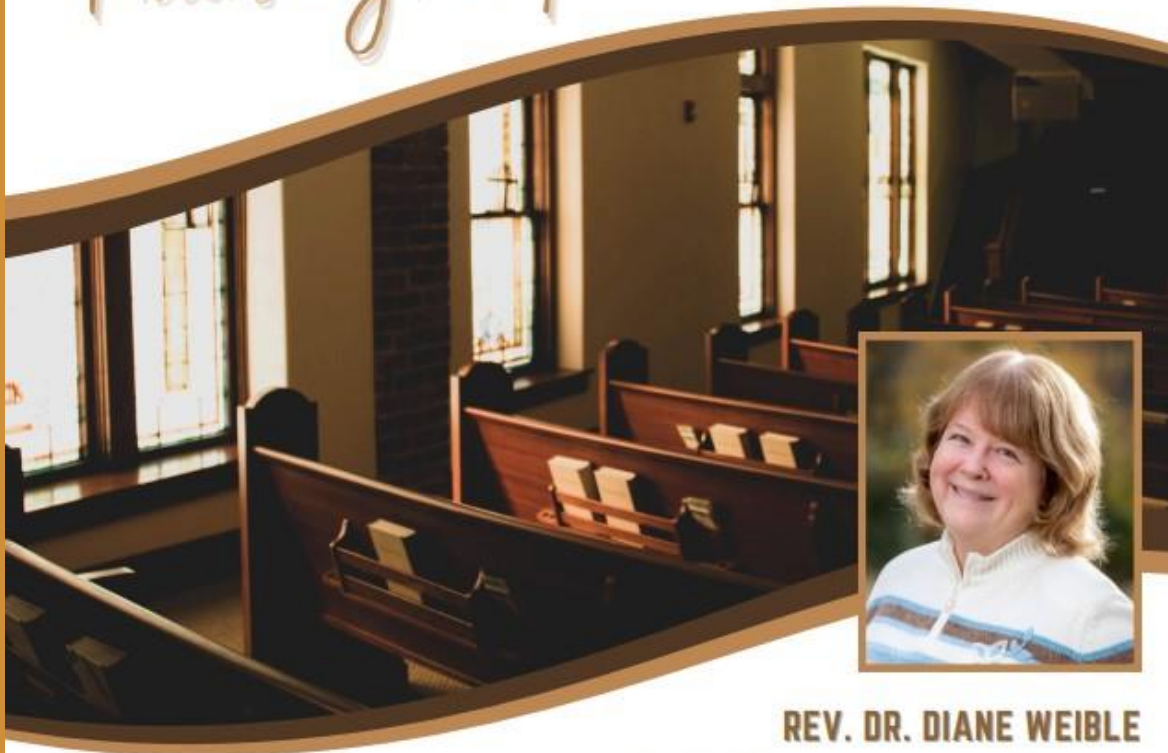


139th Conference Annual Meeting

September 26 - 29, 2024

BOUNDARY TRAINING

Thursday, September 26, 2024



REV. DR. DIANE WEIBLE

A certified professional coach with the International Coaching Federation, Diane is passionate about the work of coming alongside individuals and organizations seeking to move forward, grow, and transform. An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and former Conference Minister of the Northern California Nevada Conference UCC, Diane spent most of her professional life working with churches and organizations to reach their full potential and discover the vitality that is within.

Mayflower
Congregational UCC
Billings, Montana
9 am to 3:30 pm

\$125 per person
Lunch Included

SEPTEMBER 26

Register: www.mnwcucc.org/boundary



CONFERENCE STAFF

Rev. Dr. Tony Clark

Transitional Conference Minister

Jennifer Penfield

Conference Administrator &
Registrar

Patty Martinson

Conference Administrative
Assistant

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