



Montana - N. Wyoming Conference
United Church of Christ

CONFERENCE NEWS

Together in Spirit - November 27, 2025



SEASON OF RICH HARVEST

Rev. Dr. Tony Clark, Conference Minister

Dear Folks:

Thanksgiving comes with mixed emotions. In the UCC, our Congregationalist history goes back to the Pilgrims and Puritans, who fled religious persecution to settle at Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620, and after a hard year had a bountiful harvest and a feast with the local Wampanoag peoples. Much of what we celebrate of that event (1621) is ahistorical; the plain-clothed Pilgrims did not wear buckled shoes or hats, and the feast did not include pumpkin pie. It was not a peaceful celebration, but rather it was a feast that portended the violence and suppression of Native peoples that has lasted 400 years. Our Thanksgiving today is more mythic -- describing an American ideology -- than a fact-based historical ritual.

Thanksgiving marks the change from Fall to Winter, from secular summer holidays to winter liturgical holidays. It is a fusion of American Patriotism and an ambiguous sense of faith in both God and American strength. Advent often begins on Thanksgiving weekend, signaling the end of one church year and the beginning of the next one. It is the beginning of "The Holiday Season" that turns us toward Christmas and New Year, combining secular music, Christmas carols, Santa Claus, and sacred celebrations of the birth and return of Christ.

On this secular-sacred historic-mythic patriotic-religious holiday, I stop and give thanks. I am grateful for friends and family, mentors and colleagues who shaped me and continue to shape me into the person God has in mind for me. I give thanks for the turn of season from rich harvest to barren fallowness, when short days mean more time for inward contemplation. I give thanks for congregations working with land conservancy, school boards, FEMA and the Crow Nation, refugees and asylum seekers, welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry, clothing the poorly dressed. I give thanks for churches seeking to deepen conference connections, believing we are stronger together than apart. I give thanks for our country, with all its faults and faultlines, and I give thanks for faith that holds me together during long winters of my soul. I give thanks for the first snowfall of big fluffy flakes reminding us to get ready for winter that is coming, and I give thanks for Advent that reminds us to prepare for Christ who is coming.

My prayers go out to you this Thanksgiving. May your Thanksgiving be filled with gratitude. May your holiday season be filled with the hope, peace, joy and love our God promises. And may your preparation for the day celebrating Christ's birth ready you for what is to come.

In prayer and peace,

Pastor Tony

November

November 27 - Thanksgiving (office closed)

November 28 - Day After Thanksgiving, (office closed)

December 2 - Finance Task Force @ 3 pm

December 3 - Church & Ministry Commission @ 1 pm

December 3 - Board of Directors @ 5 pm

Happy Thanksgiving

