



## Montana - N. Wyoming Conference United Church of Christ

### CONFERENCE NEWS

*Together in Spirit - January 15, 2026*



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY - JANUARY 19, 2026

### EMBRACING THE FIFTH STREAM

*By Conference Minister, Rev. Tony Clark*

*The Church and Ministry Commission met on January 7, 2026 and requested the*

following

article be shared in our Newsletter from our Conference Minister.

Dear Folks:

In my confirmation class, and then later in seminary, I learned that the UCC was formed by "four streams"— Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, Reformed. Congregationalism goes back to the Pilgrims, Christian was a uniquely American frontier denomination, and the Evangelical and Reformed churches were German, arriving in the decades before the Revolution (Reformed) and the decades before the Civil War (Evangelical). In mid-20th century, they came together to form the United Church of Christ.

The story of the mergers missed an important fifth stream, the Afro-Christian Convention and the Black Congregationalists in North Carolina and Virginia. The more numerous Afro-Christian Churches were part of the Christian Church, today known as the Disciples of Christ. The Black Congregationalists were seeded by northern abolitionist Congregationalists through the American Missionary Association, which developed schools and colleges to train Black people into Congregationalism. When the Congregational and Christian denominations merged in 1931, the Black Congregationalists and Afro-Christians, while part of the big-tent denomination, were kept separate from their white counterparts; it was finally in 1950 that the two groups joined together in the Black Congregational Christian Convention of the South, and when the UCC was formed in 1957, they found themselves part of this new united and uniting church.

Their struggles have included being Black in a primarily white denomination and the differences between the historical traditions of Black Congregationalists and Afro-Christians. The lasting legacies include [Franklinton Center at Bricks](#), North Carolina, which was formed out of the Franklinton Christian College and the Congregationalist Bricks School. The Franklinton Center has been supported by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries, and became its own 501(c)3 in 2015.

"Regardless of when and how you enter the Black sacred cosmos space in the United Church of Christ, you will be blessed by the giftedness of the Afro-Christian Church, now embraced as the fifth stream. The lesson for all who will listen is that to ignore a story doesn't negate the truth of its existence; to silence a story does not prevent the power of the story to live; and to discover a story doesn't make it yours unless you embrace it. As long as there are some who remember the story, remember to tell the story, and stand watch over the story, the story lives."

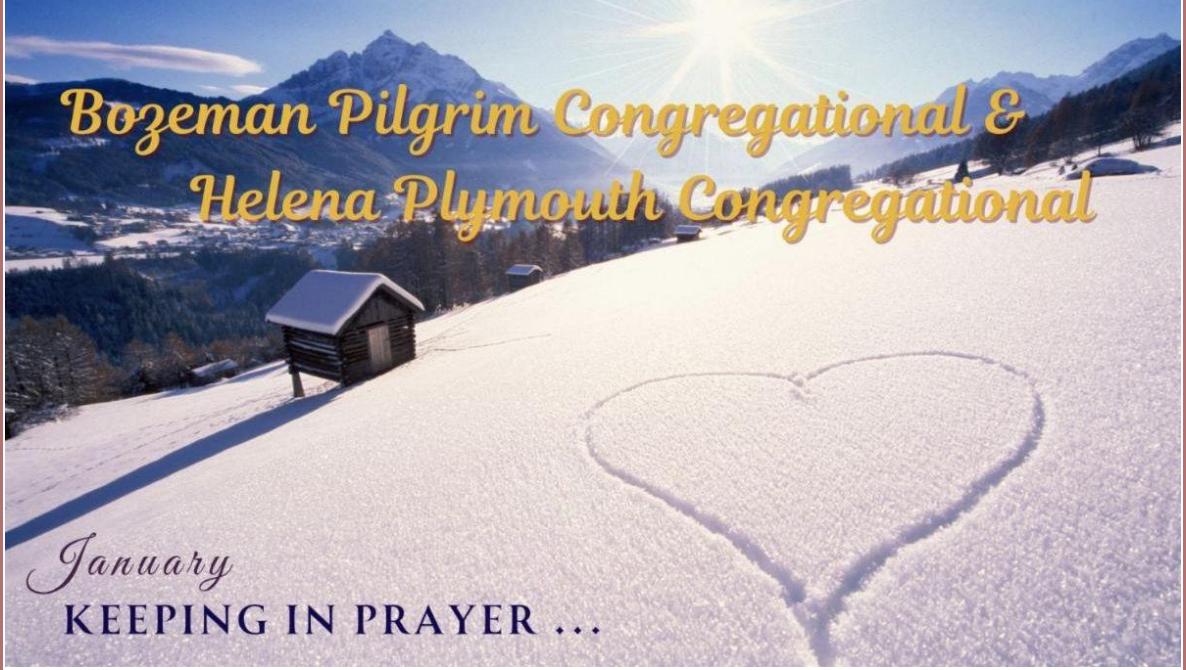
In Peace and Prayer,

Pastor Tony

[1] Iva E. Caruthers, "Flowing as an Everlasting Stream for Spiritual Transformation: A Global Model of Ubuntu for Justice and Liberation: in Afro-Christian Convention: The Fifth Stream of the United Church of Christ, Yvonne V. Delk, ed. (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2023), p. 120.

January 17 - Ecclesiastical Council, Laura Ymker @ 11:00 pm  
January 17 - Installation of Rev. Teressa Clark @ 1:30 pm  
January 19 - MLK Jr. Day - Office Closed  
January 20 - Green Team @ 3 pm  
January 28 - Board of Directors @ 5 pm

**JANUARY 2026**



# Bozeman Pilgrim Congregational & Helena Plymouth Congregational

*January*  
KEEPING IN PRAYER ...

JOIN US JANUARY 17 IN RED LODGE FOR TWO SPECIAL EVENTS!



*You're*  
**INVITED**

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE  
INSTALLATION WORSHIP SERVICE FOR  
*Rev. Teressa Clark*



SATURDAY @ 1:30 PM  
JANUARY 17, 2026

RED LODGE  
COMMUNITY CHURCH

Register  
**NOW**  
\*\*\*\*\*

YOU ARE INVITED TO  
AN ECCLESIASTICAL  
COUNCIL FOR

*Laura Kae Ymker*



SATURDAY @ 11:00 AM  
JANUARY 17, 2026

RED LODGE  
COMMUNITY CHURCH



Register  
NOW  
\*\*\*\*\*

**FREEDOM**

NEW RESOURCES FOR MLK DAY 2026



## 2025 IN REVIEW: TEN HOPE-FILLED STOREIS FROM UCC NEWS



### WHERE IN THE WORLD WERE UCC MISSIONARIES?

**NURTURE  
THE SOUL**

# READING INTO THE NEW YEAR

*Not Just for Kids, Children's Book Edition*



Join author Becky Manfredini and illustrator-writer, Meredith Gould, as they discuss their decades-long friendship that culminated in developing a children's book series published by The Pilgrim Press: "Slug and Snail"

**Thursday, January 22<sup>nd</sup> | 3:30 PM Eastern**

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST 3 AMERICA

the pilgrim press



**Rev. Dr. Tony Clark** - Conference Minister  
**Jennifer Penfield** - Administrator & Registrar  
**Patty Martinson** - Administrative Assistant

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