



Montana - N. Wyoming Conference  
United Church of Christ

## CONFERENCE NEWS

*Together in Spirit - February 12, 2026*

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## IN GRATEFUL MEMORY

*By Conference Minister, Rev. Tony Clark*

Dear Folks:

My father died February 2, merely 9 days before his 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday, which would

have been yesterday. He was a jazz musician (bass), a librarian, designer and builder of both a house and the hull of a sailing boat, and he mentored many people into music and librarianship. He outlived his second wife, his younger sister and brother, and my mother (they were divorced by the time of her death). He loved to hike and camp, and as a younger man he canoed long-distance with a friend.

He spent the last 8 years living in northeastern North Carolina in a location often called the Inner Banks, a reference to the Outer Banks barrier islands. His house was along a canal that was fed by the Albemarle Sound, and he watched turtles lay eggs and hatch and enjoyed regular visits by herons. In October, my spouse and I took him to his favorite Outer Banks Island and had a great time with him before his decline began to define his last few months. A month later, he moved into my sister's home to be cared for in his last 2 months, and I was able to visit him twice in that time. Two weeks after that last visit, knowing he was close to death, he asked that we come back, and we were able to spend a few days with him saying good-bye.

My father was not religious. He was kind, loved children and dogs, saw beauty in nature and art, and instilled in me a sense that all people were equal. To me, he was one of the most Christ-like people I knew.

There will be no funeral or memorial service. We donated his body to a mortuary school so that part of his legacy will be to continue his love of teaching.

My sister and I have struggled to find the midpoint between him not wanting any memorial and us needing something. What seems appropriate is a not overtly religious prayer I use when I lead funerals. "We hold in grateful memory this one who is now separated from us by death. Though we cannot recall him to life, we can remember him and fix his memory within our hearts for as long as we shall live. We can celebrate the fullness of his life, with all its strengths, foibles, goodness, and weaknesses; and rejoice in the ties that bind us one to another."<sup>1</sup>



I don't know if death is an end point or a pivot point. I know the living are left to grieve. I know that while we mourn and remember, the world goes on with its machinations, meanness, and mindless killing. It also continues to be profoundly beautiful.

As the fog of grief begins to clear, I step back into ministry with all of you as we love kindness, do justice, and walk humbly with God.

In peace and prayer,

Pastor Tony

<sup>1</sup> Chalice Worship, compiled and edited by C.S. Cartwright and O.I. Cricket Harrison, (St Louis, MO: Chalice Press), p.

# FEBRUARY



# 2026

February 16 - President's Day (office closed)

February 17 - Green Team @ 3 pm

February 25 - Board of Directors @ 5 pm

March 4 - Church and Ministry @ 1:30 pm





*Keeping in Prayer...*

Broadus  
Powder River  
Congregational  
UCC

Big Timber  
First  
Congregational  
UCC



The joined congregations of First Congregational UCC and Christ UMC of Great Falls voted unanimously that Laura Ymker will be the 20th FCUCC minister and the 17th Christ UMC minister. She will be the first to serve our new federated church. Hallelujah! We thought we would not have her in the pulpit until the end of March, but God is at work and she will be able to begin much sooner. The plan is to start in the office on March 4 or 5 and to lead worship on March 8.

CONGRATULATIONS TO FCUCC AND CUMC,  
AND TO LAURA YMKER.

INFORMATION ABOUT LAURA'S ORDINATION AND  
INSTALLATION WILL BE COMING SOON!





### *Announcing...*

The next step in the history of our churches occurred on Sunday, February 8. **The joined congregations voted unanimously that Laura Ymker will be the 20<sup>th</sup> FCUCC minister and the 17<sup>th</sup> Christ UMC minister. *She will be the first to serve our new federated church.*** Hallelujah! We thought we would not have her in the pulpit until the end of March, but God is at work and she will be able to begin much sooner. The plan is to start in the office on March 4 or 5 and to lead worship on March 8.

Thank you to all who were able to attend the brunch and open house and welcomed Laura so well at those events. She was given a true idea of the kind of Church we are. The turnout on Sunday was tremendous, and it showed how much we care about who our next spiritual leader is.

Our pulpit supply has been outstanding, but it is time to move forward into our next chapter with Laura Ymker at the podium. *And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.* Mathew 21:22



SNIP FROM THE GREAT FALLS NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 11

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE UCCMUSICIANS ASSOCIATION?  
THEY ARE INVITING MUSICIANS TO JOIN!



Read about them on our website under resources at [www.mnwcucc.org](http://www.mnwcucc.org) and [here](#).

Register for the annual meeting [here](#).



# RACIALIZING BLACK WOMEN

*Equity, Exceptionalism &  
Sustaining Resistance*



**FEBRUARY 18TH, 2026**  
3:30 PM Eastern



**SCHMIAN EVANS**  
*Minister for Women and Gender Justice,  
National Ministries of the UCC*



## READING INTO THE NEW YEAR

*The Story of Bob - a Trailblazer  
in Faith & LGBTQ+ Advocacy*

Thursday, February 19th | 3:30 PM Eastern



with: **Steven C. Law**

*Author, pastor & co-founder of the Law Stroud  
Foundation, a non profit organization that focuses  
on expansive & quality care for older adults.*



**Rev. Dr. Tony Clark** - Conference Minister

**Jennifer Penfield** - Administrator & Registrar

**Patty Martinson** - Administrative Assistant

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