

Montana - N. Wyoming Conference
United Church of Christ

CONFERENCE NEWS

Together in Spirit - February 26, 2026



COMMUNITY IN WORSHIP

By Conference Minister, Rev. Tony Clark

Dear Folks:

Have you heard about our *Conference Ambassadors*? These are members of the Board of Directors and the Church and Ministry Commission who have volunteered to reach out to congregations that have no or little contact with the Conference including the Annual Meeting. We are doing this to recapture and strengthen some of the relationships across the Conference and to make sure

that the Conference Minister is not the only connection between congregations and the Conference. The Ambassadors are beginning to call

and email lay leaders and pastors; I hope you will invite them to join with your community in worship and any other events you'd like the Conference leadership to know about.

Did you hear about the Preaching Rally we held in January? The theme was "(In)Justice in Our Community." At least 7 of our churches participated. You can find links to these worship services here. (scroll down, find it in the right column). Hopefully we will do this again next year with more advanced notice.

Have you read *Blessed Are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness, Family and Church* by Sarah Griffith Lund? Rev. Lund led workshops on mental health at our Annual Meeting last October, and I think it would make a good Conference book study.

Are you looking forward to the Conference Annual Meeting? This year we will meet in Helena, in September; we will have a hold-the-date announcement by the end of March. I am blessed to be in ministry with you.

In Peace and Prayer,

Pastor Tony

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



SOLAR FOR ALL

For UCC churches in our area, Mayflower (Billings), Plymouth (Helena), University (Missoula) and the Conference Office have solarized!

This is the last year to get rebates from the Federal Government for solar installations. It really is affordable. Red Lodge Community Church is installing a \$45,000 array. We won a \$22,000 grant from Northwest Energy, and will receive about \$13,000 in federal rebates, leaving just \$10,000 for our church to pay. Our return on investment (ROI) is 3-4 years.

Caveats: One would need to get a bid then apply to NWE by the May 1 deadline for an E+Incentive grant

(<https://www.northwesternenergy.com/docs/default-source/default-document-library/clean-energy/how-you-can-help/renewable-energy-custom-incentive-application.pdf>).

Then it needs to be installed and up and running by December 31 as the federal incentives end. We can share our grant application to save your church time and you can talk to us or other churches that have installed

solar. Lori Byron and Jay West, Red Lodge Community Church.

SATURDAY SHARING



FEBRUARY 28, 2026

12 NOON • EASTERN TIME
9 AM • PACIFIC TIME
VIA ZOOM



FREE

REGISTER
NOW

**Inclusive Liturgy:
Why and How with
Amanda Udis-Kessler**

Inclusive Liturgy: Why and How

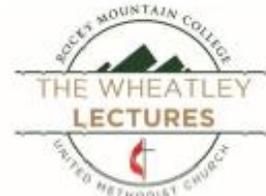
with Dr. Amanda Udis-Kessler

In keeping with the UCC's dedication to extravagant welcome of all people, the UCCMA is committed to programming worship music (and supporting liturgy) that is inclusive of all people. How we use language in our worship music and liturgy matters in welcoming all people and communicating our understanding that God loves all people and seeks the well-being of everyone regardless of their identities. In this session, sociologist and hymnwriter Amanda Udis-Kessler will draw on trainings she has previously offered to UCCMA and UCC congregations to consider why inclusive language is so important and how we might center it in our music programming.

YOUR CHURCH

EMPLOYER & SMALL BUSINESS

EXPLORE OUR NEWLY UPDATED BOOKLET—
YOUR GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES



You are invited to the 2026 Wheatley Lecture Event:

The 2026 Wheatley Lecture event will be held on Thursday, March 26, 2026 on the campus of Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Montana.

The event begins with a **reception** at 5:30pm in the Great Room of Prescott Hall. Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and conversation with others, meet RMC students and faculty, and ask questions about the College. This reception is free and open to the public.

The keynote **lecture** begins at 7:00pm and features Darrell Ehrlick, editor-in-chief of the Daily Montanan. He will be speaking on the topic "If You Believe in the Bible, You Have to Believe in Journalism: The Necessity of Prophetic Roles in our Society."

The lecture will be held in the Auditorium of Losekamp Hall, and is free and open to the public.

About our Keynote Lecturer:

Darrell Ehrlick is a fourth-generation Yellowstone County resident, having been born and raised in Billings, graduating from Billings Senior High. He received his degrees from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota in religious studies and an honors degree in Literature, with minors in Greek, Latin and Russian. He studied religion in graduate school at Candler School of Theology at Emory University and worked on an MFA in literary journalism at Bennington College in Vermont. He's authored four books and edited an anthology of local history. He has been a journalist in seven states, getting his start at The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead. He was awarded the highest honor the Veterans of Foreign War can bestow on a journalist for his work collecting and documenting veterans of the Vietnam War. He taught journalism at the university level, has been involved in numerous nonprofit boards and was the editor of The Billings Gazette before starting the nonprofit Daily Montanan, which is a part of States Newsroom, the largest nonprofit news organization in the country. He and his spouse, Cassy, have three children, three cats and live in downtown Billings.



About the Wheatley Lectures:

Through the generosity of those who appreciated the talents, contributions and Christian example of Bishop Melvin E. Wheatley, Jr., the Yellowstone Legacy Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and Rocky Mountain College established the Wheatley Lectureship Restricted Endowment account to perpetuate and to honor Bishop Wheatley's name and contributions to the United Methodist Church and beyond.

The lecture series is a collaboration between the Church and the College, and honors the ideals of Bishop Wheatley, which included social justice issues, promotion of an inclusive church, academic inquiry, pastoral care and ethics.



Thursday, March 26, 2026

Discussion:

5:00pm - Great Room/Prescott Hall
(time for RMC students and faculty to interact with our presenter)

Reception:

5:30pm - Great Room/Prescott Hall
(interact with each other and enjoy tasty food)

Keynote Lecture:

*"If You Believe in the Bible, You Have to Believe in Journalism:
The Necessity of Prophetic Roles in our Society"*

Darrell Ehrlick

Editor-in-Chief of the Daily Montanan

7:00pm - Losekamp Hall

*This event is free
and open to the public!*

*Questions?
Contact
chaplainsrocky.edu*





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