



- Amending the bylaws to reflect the Conference COM as a standing committee of the RMC.

All three motions passed. I am grateful to Rev. Dr. Sarah Linn for her leadership, to Rev. Kari Collins and Teresa Campbell, the Finance Committee, and Brianna Gillmore for their work on the 23-24 budget, and to all who have served, will continue to serve, or will begin serving on the Committee on Ministry. There are still some positions open on the Committee on Ministry and more information is available further down in this newsletter.

Sarah and I read this blessing from Jan Richardson in our sermon on Sunday, and I'd like to offer it here to you as well. Blessings in the waking.

## Blessing for Waking

This blessing could  
pound on your door  
in the middle of  
the night.

This blessing could  
bang on your window,  
could tap dance  
in your hall,  
could set a dog loose  
in your room.  
It could hire a  
brass band  
to play outside  
your house.

But what this blessing  
really wants  
is not merely  
your waking  
but your company.

This blessing  
wants to sit  
alongside you  
and keep vigil  
with you.  
This blessing  
wishes to wait  
with you.

And so  
though it is capable  
of causing a cacophony  
that could raise  
the dead,  
this blessing  
will simply

lean toward you  
and sing quietly  
in your ear  
a song to lull you  
not into sleep  
but into waking.

It will tell you stories  
that hold you breathless  
till the end.  
It will ask you questions  
you never considered  
and have you tell it  
what you saw  
in your dreaming.

This blessing  
will do all within  
its power  
to entice you  
into awareness  
because it wants  
to be there,  
to bear witness,  
to see the look  
in your eyes  
on the day when  
your vigil is complete  
and all your waiting  
has come to  
its joyous end.

—Jan Richardson

In Peace,  
Rev. Erin Gilmore  
Acting Conference Minister  
Rocky Mountain Conference, UCC

---

## Open House at Conference Office

After over a year on the market, the conference has a potential buyer!  
In preparation for the eventual selling of the building we are holding two open houses at the conference office.

Monday, Jan. 8th from 9-1 pm.

We have several bookshelves, office desks, chairs, and small appliances that we will not be taking with us and would love to find them a new home!

Rev. Erin Gilmore  
Acting Conference Minister  
Rocky Mountain Conference UCC

---

## A Brief Report on the Special Conference Meeting (Nov. 28)

### Greetings, all:

Last week's Special Conference Meeting was, in my opinion, rather uplifting. We had over 90 attendees (voting delegates and guests) from over 30 churches, so a solid quorum, and discussed and voted on three items, as follows:

- The proposed FY 2023-24 budget was approved (Votes: 73 Yes | 0 No | 7 abstain).
- The establishment of the Committee on Ministry as a standing committee of the Conference (Votes: 76 Yes | 3 No | 1 Abstain).
- Updates to the RMC Bylaws to codify COM as a standing committee (Votes: 77 Yes | 3 No | 0 Abstain). The revised RMC Constitution and Bylaws can be found [HERE](#).

### Announcements:

- The Nominating Committee has been working for months, identifying nominees to serve on COM, in case it was adopted. Now that COM is a standing committee, the Board will appoint those nominees, who will be voted on at the Annual Celebration in June 2024. This will synchronize their terms with the Conference calendar.
- We announced that the RMC office building was under contract – which was good news. Unfortunately, the deal fell through this week (Dec. 5). We will likely lower the asking price and keep praying and working for a deal that will stick.
- As outlined in the Together Newsletter, everyone is invited to participate in an Advent Listening Session. The first round is scheduled for: Dec. 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14.
- Finally, we held a Special Board Meeting this Thursday (Dec. 7) to begin discussing priorities and process issues for this time of transition. As always, your questions, concerns, and ideas are welcome along the way.

Thank you for your care and commitment to the members and ministries of the Rocky Mountain Conference!

Peace to you,

Rev. Dr. Sarah Linn

## Listening Sessions

As we all know (and feel) the past year has seen a lot of change in the Rocky Mountain Conference. There is joy and possibility here. There is also anxiety, grief, and pain in our collective body. So we are taking the call of Advent to heart. Advent is a liturgical season of waiting. It is an opportunity to practice spiritual listening. There is an invitation to slow down and to make room for God to birth a new thing within us and within our community.

During this season, we are committed to slowing down, making space, listening for the wisdom of the Spirit through the voices of our community.

We will be hosting a series of Quaker-style listening and discernment sessions and we invite you to bring your hearts. How do you see God at work among us? Where do you feel anxiety or concern? What questions do you have? We want to hear from you! This will not be a session in which we respond to what we hear; rather a session for the Board to listen with deep curiosity to all that is happening among the Conference and integrate and hold a variety of truths. We will use this information to understand how to best move forward.

A graphic with a warm, golden-brown background featuring pine branches at the top and bottom, and soft bokeh light effects. The title "A Season for Listening" is written in a large, elegant red cursive font. Below the title, the text "The Board of Directors invites you to share what is on your heart during one of our upcoming listening sessions. Space is limited to 15 people per session and your RSVP is required." is written in a smaller, dark green serif font. At the bottom, a list of dates and times for the sessions is provided in the same dark green serif font.

*A Season  
for Listening*

The Board of Directors invites you to share what is on your heart during one of our upcoming listening sessions. Space is limited to 15 people per session and your RSVP is required.

Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2:30pm  
Wednesday, Dec. 6, 6:30pm  
Friday, Dec. 8, 9:00am  
Friday, Dec. 8, 3:00pm  
Sunday, Dec. 10, 2:00pm  
Monday, Dec. 11, 6:30pm  
Thursday, Dec. 14, 9:00pm

We are offering numerous opportunities to participate in a listening session; you need only attend one. Sessions are limited to 15 participants each so registration is required. The Board will open more sessions if needed. For now, sessions are scheduled for:

- Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2:30pm
- Wednesday, Dec. 6, 6:30pm
- Friday, Dec. 8, 9:00am
- Friday, Dec. 8, 3:00pm
- Sunday, Dec. 10, 2:00pm
- Monday, Dec. 11, 6:30pm
- Thursday, Dec. 14, 9:00pm (Yes! We really do mean 9pm!)

Please register for a session here. We look forward to hearing what is on your heart this season.  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C4AA4AA29A6FDC52-46403301-advent#/>

---

*From Creede Community Church, UCC:*  
**Blessings & Congratulations,**



**Rev. Dr. Jesse B. Ophoff, Phd**

on your ordination as the Director of Spiritual Care for Rio Grande Hospital  
with ministerial standing in the Rocky Mountain Conference, UCC!

*Thank you, COM and everyone who supported  
Jesse in care and discernment!*

---

Last Saturday, I was truly touched as people from around the Conference, many that I've mainly known through Zoom or by phone, made the trek out to Creede to ordain me into my call as a spiritual care provider at Rio Grande Hospital. This was a big moment for me, but also for this hospital.

Earlier this year the Formation and Authorization Subcommittee asked me to complete a CPE credit. Unfortunately, the closest ACPE networked location is in Denver, and I could not relocate to do it. They worked with me to provide a cohort, a curriculum, evaluation, and supervision so I could gain the experience I needed at Rio Grande Hospital. By the end of the summer, the hospital recognized the value of spiritual care and brought me on staff to continue my work and help shape a new department.

I've discovered that many critical access hospitals like Rio Grande are not able to offer spiritual care to their patients. There is a need for this kind of care, but it's difficult to recruit, train, fund, and network chaplains in rural areas. What the CWCOP made possible for me here is a landmark in the San Luis Valley, and I am getting calls from other ministers in the area asking how they might do something similar.

My many thanks to the Rocky Mountain Conference, the CWCOP, and particularly my cohort (Sarah Linn, Mallory Everhart, and Ben Konecny) for supporting me. What you all have made possible has rippling effects throughout our region.

Rev. Dr. Jesse Ophoff

---

## Lapp Lodge Capital Campaign

We have launched our Capital Campaign to raise funds for Lapp Lodge. This new "home away from home" with 15 private rooms will offer quality family and adult lodging options with a variety of beds and configurations. Best of all, each private room will have its own bath! Lapp Lodge also includes meeting and community space.



If you knew there was a Place . . .  
Not very far away . . .  
Where your body and soul could rest, renew,  
rejuvenate . . .  
In a safe space. A Sacred Place . . .

A Place where Love is found . . .  
where strangers transform into friends,  
Where "You all are a part of me I don't yet  
know."  
Would you long to go there?  
Long to bathe in the forest, commune at the  
Table . . .  
Walk the Labyrinth, center with the Source of  
All Life in the Chapel . . .  
Hike the meandering trails, through ravines  
and hilltops,  
finding perspective restored . . .  
Take off your shoes and know you were  
surely on Holy Ground?

Once you found yourself Home, would you wish you could stay a day, a week . . .  
and be comforted in the knowledge that . . .  
You can return, again and again, for a very long time?

[Rev. Rebecca Kemper Poos](#) from Congregational UCC of Buena Vista, and [Debbie Harrington](#) from First Plymouth UCC in Englewood are piloting our Capital Campaign efforts.

Watch for letters, emails and social media posts which will share the many ways you can be a part of this opportunity to create memories today, tomorrow, and forever at La Foret! We hope you will contemplate the many ways La Foret has been a part of your personal journey, or your family's history, or in whatever way our lovely forest has touched you when you consider what and how you will give. We encourage you to prayerfully consider how to support this effort, at whatever level you feel able. We hope you will want to be a partner in the construction of Lapp Lodge and take pride knowing you helped to make a difference! Gifts of all sizes from recurring monthly donations to one-time gifts, investment transfers, bequests and estate plans are all appreciated. Together we can do this!

We hope you will choose to be part of these exciting times and the building of the future of La Foret!

If you knew there was a Place . . . .

Click [HERE](#) for the full introduction to our campaign!

---

## **Volunteers Sought**

### **Conference Committee on Ministry:**

- Formation and Authorization Committee:
  - Platte Valley has both a lay and a clergy position open
  - Intermountain has an opening for a clergy person
- Supportive Oversight Committee:
  - Three of the our openings for the retired clergy team
  - One opening for the Local Church Pastors team

### **Endowment Board of Trustees:**

- there are two openings on this board, they can come from any association.

**Board Clerk:** Attends all board meetings and takes notes of the meetings. This is not a position with voice and no vote.

### **Nominating Committee:**

- At-Large Position: Can come from any Association.
- 

## ***Employment Opportunities***

### **Communication Specialist**

In 2021 David Bristow graciously offered to volunteer his time to maintain many of the essential responsibilities of the Director of Communications when Deryl Gerboth resigned from her position, including but not limited to, updating the RMC website, putting together the RMC newsletters and email communications, overseeing the Salesforce database and Google drives, and providing overall technical support for conference meetings. What began as a temporary offer to fill-in, has now lasted for over two years and we as a conference are truly indebted to the generosity of time and talent that David has shared with us. We extend our heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation for the many ways he has supported the conference in the last two years.

Following the approval of the 2023-2024 Budget at the November 28 special meeting, the Rocky Mountain Conference has voted to move forward with hiring a part-time Communications Specialist.

More information about the position can be found [HERE](#).

We are hoping to have someone in place by mid-January so if you or someone you know would like to apply please encourage them to apply in the next couple of weeks.

---

### **La Foret Treasurer**

La Foret Retreat & Conference Center is looking for someone to serve as its next Treasurer. This would be a three-year term effective Jan. 1, 2024. Details of the position are below:

The Treasurer shall be responsible for ensuring that La Foret's financial performance is clearly understood by the board and that its accounting procedures meet current GAAP standards. Working with the Executive Director, the Treasurer shall be responsible for the preparation of annual operating budgets, shall review monthly financial reports (operating statements, including annual and year to date budget comparisons, and balance sheets) as prepared by the Executive Director, shall interpret said financial reports to the board, shall represent the board in preparation of annual audits in those years when the board determines an audit is necessary, shall assure that Forms 990 are filed annually with the I.R.S., shall ensure that the corporation complies with government laws and tax regulations, shall monitor the corporation's banking and accounting procedures in an effort to protect against theft and fraud, and in general perform all the duties as from time to time may be assigned by the President or by the Board of Directors.

If you are interested or know of someone who might be, please contact:

[Brad Carroll](#), Exec. Dir. of La Foret OR [Michael Blackwood](#), Pres. La Foret Board of Directors

---

### **Audio/Visual Worship Technician**

The Audio/Visual Worship Technician will set-up, operate, and disassemble the audio/visual equipment required to provide worship services via Zoom at Mountain View United Church, a Progressive Christian Community.

If you are interested please contact [Donna Palmer](#).

---



# UCC WESTERN REGIONAL YOUTH EVENT



Long Beach, California

*Save the Date!*

**JUNE 23 - 27, 2024**

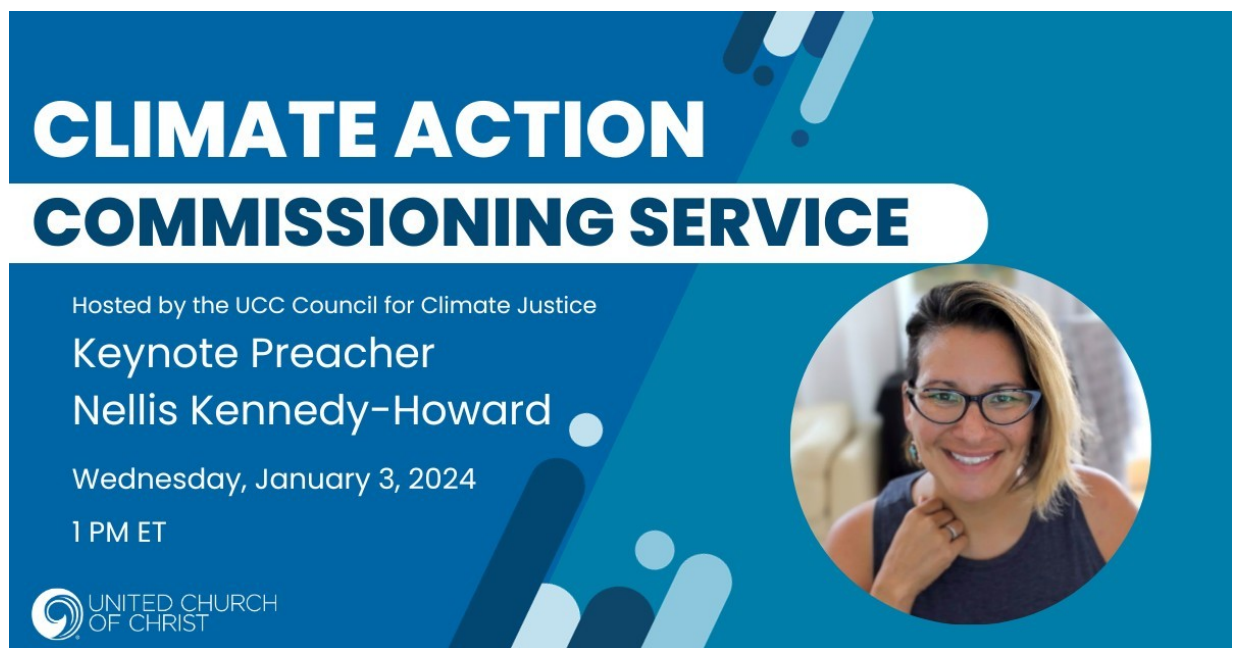
Join hundreds of UCC Middle and High Schoolers from the 8 UCC Conferences of the western half of the United States. We're gathering at California State University - Long Beach for a few days of workshops, service projects, music, worship, an adventure day at Disney and more!

- Sunday - Arrive & Evening Worship
- Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday- 3 days of Workshops, Service Project and an adventure day at Disney.
- Thursday - Morning Worship & Depart

Registration costs are still being finalized (somewhere around \$600) and will include housing, meals, and admission for one day at Disneyland. More info coming soon.

QUESTIONS? WANT TO VOLUNTEER?  
Rev. Wally Hoeger | [whoeger@firstchurchlb.org](mailto:whoeger@firstchurchlb.org)

## UCC Event—Climate Action Commissioning Service





**CLIMATE ACTION  
COMMISSIONING SERVICE**

Hosted by the UCC Council for Climate Justice

**Keynote Preacher**  
**Nellis Kennedy-Howard**

Wednesday, January 3, 2024  
1 PM ET



 UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

The UCC Council for Climate Justice is convening a Climate Action Commissioning Service as our members across the country launch into advancing climate justice in 2024. The preacher for this event will be Nellis Kennedy-Howard who once worked alongside Winona LaDuke as the Co-Executive Director of Honor the Earth in addition to later working as the Sierra Club's Director of Equity, Inclusion, and Justice. [Sign-up](#) to join us for this online event on Wednesday, January 3rd at 1 pm ET.

---

Previous versions of the Together Newsletter can be found [here](#).