

Presbytery of Yellowstone

November 6-7, 2015

**Montana Association of Christians MAC Connect**  
October 23-24, 2015      Ursuline Retreat Centre      Great Falls, MT

Presbytery Representative:

RE Susan Gibb      First Presbyterian - Bozeman

***Theme: "Deep Listening for Collaborative Service"***

**Keynote Speaker:** Rt. Rev. Carol Gallagher, Assistant Bishop in The Diocese of Montana & Bishop Missioner for the Bishop's Native Collaborative. A member of the Cherokee Tribe, she is the first American Indian female bishop in the Episcopal Church and first Indigenous female bishop in the worldwide Anglican Communion.

**Workshop Leader:** Missioner Charles Wynder, Social Justice & Advocacy Engagement at The Episcopal Church in Charlotte, North Carolina & most recently was the Executive Director of the Boston Workers Alliance.

The inaugural "Mac Connect" Annual Assembly was a very interesting, but in some ways, too short rendezvous of Christians from around Montana under the re-organization of MAC. (See end of this report for details.) Individuals, congregations and non-profit organizations can now be members of MAC along with our charter or newly-approved ecclesiastical judicatories. Membership details are available online at [www.macmt.org](http://www.macmt.org). All are encouraged to join!

The Ursuline Centre in Great Falls is a wonderful and central venue for annual assemblies, providing low-cost meals, on-site lodging and meeting rooms. We began on Friday evening with dinner, an overview of MAC's re-organization, Taize Service and reception.

Saturday morning began with Bishop Carol Gallagher's keynote address where we were encouraged to focus on *listening*. Too often we see a perceived problem and *want to fix it* instead of *listening* to the people involved and find out what they need. An interesting statistic is that four percent of Montana's population is American Indian, but 30-40% of Montana's prison population is Native. Native peoples preserved America's space before the eventual conquering cultures arrived, and what have we done with this space since? America's political borders are artificial, as they are around the world. Carol encouraged us to remember that "we don't change people by words; we change them by relationships."

A Togendowagan Service, Native American Service of Celebration, was celebrated prior to Saturday lunch. This service is held monthly at the St. Peter's Cathedral (Episcopal) in Helena. Table topics led by conference leaders were discussed during an extended lunch.

Participants attended both workshops after lunch, switching between locations. Bishop Gallagher led a discussion "Listening with the Heart" using personal storytelling and discerning what each of us heard and what the story evoked in us. Missioner Charles Wynder led the interactive workshop "Deep Listening, Engagement & Action: Pathways to Social & Racial Justice." He encouraged us to consider the first time we noticed racial differences and the first time we advocated or spoke up for someone else. A most useful idea is that during group discussions we need to *really listen* as others speak. Frequently we interrupt with questions that *steer* the person to say what *we* want them to say. Just listen!

The 2015 MAC Connect closed at 3:30 pm with prayer. The 2016 conference will be held either October 21-22 or October 28-29. Stay tuned for the latest announcement. Financial support is available for groups that propose an "Action Team" and wish to partner

with MAC in line with our Covenant, Mission and Values of MAC. Details are available by contacting MAC through Web site [www.macmt.org](http://www.macmt.org) .

Submitted 10-29-15 by RE Susan M. Gibb, First Presbyterian - Bozeman

*For those not in attendance at our November 2014 Presbytery meeting, following is a brief recap of the major changes instituted by MAC:*

*The Montana Association of Churches celebrated its 41<sup>st</sup> year (2014) with significant organizational changes. A re-visioning task force (TE Dan Krebill was a member) spent the year working on proposed changes and drafting new bylaws. After close review and extensive discussion, Annual Assembly delegates voted overwhelmingly in October 2014 to accept the new bylaws. Major changes are as follows:*

- 1. The name is changed to Montana Association of Christians, still known as MAC.*
- 2. Membership is open to ecclesiastical judicatory members; local church congregations; individuals; and non-profit organizations approved by Council.*
- 3. Any judicatory interested in the purpose of MAC but for whatever reasons cannot or will not join in full membership, may have Observer Status (voice, not vote).*
- 4. In lieu of the Annual Assembly, as done in the past, MAC now will be governed by a Council as the policy and decision-making entity. Council members will be one appointee from each charter and later judicatories plus three to six at-large members.*
- 5. Annual Assemblies (now known as MAC Connect) still meet for the purpose of education, worship, service, fellowship, and generating issues for Council's consideration.*
- 6. Action Teams will be established by Council to do the focused work of MAC.*
- 7. Standing Committees will be an Executive Committee, Legislative Committee, Nominating Committee and Assembly Planning Committee.*
- 8. The Council may employ staff as programs require and resources permit.*
- 9. Public Statements on moral, social and political issues may be adopted and published by MAC.*

*MAC's Guiding Vision [from the new bylaws]*

- 1. Our Covenant: We covenant as ecclesiastical judicatories, congregations, non-profit organization and individuals in Montana to make visible our unity in Jesus.*
- 2. Our mission: We are called together by God to
  - a. Pray together as one*
  - b. Be present in our state's broken places*
  - c. Walk in the freedom and openness of the Holy Spirit**
- 3. Our Values: faith, unity, justice, and compassion.*
- 4. The Corporation is organized exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, or scientific purposes within the meaning of section 501(3)(C) of the Internal Revenue Code.*