



# MAC Messenger

Montana Association of Churches: *Uniting by the power of God's word for witness and worship, justice and service.*

Vol. 25, No. 1

March 2008

## Leadership Transitions Unfold MAC's Future

### Executive Director Rev. Brady Vardemann Announces Resignation

The Rev. Lyle Hamilton, President of the Montana Association of Churches (MAC), announced on Tuesday, January 29, the resignation of The Rev. Dr. Brady Vardemann, MAC Executive Director. Her resignation was effective on January 31.

Dr. Vardemann's tenure with MAC began in 2005 when its office was moved from Billings to Helena.

"Dr. Vardemann has been instrumental in the relocation and the implementation of MAC's mission," Hamilton said. "Brady has worked tirelessly for our organization and we shall miss her counsel and good work."

The MAC Board of Directors appointed The Rev. John C. Board of Helena to serve as its interim executive director. Board is an ordained deacon in the Episcopal Diocese of Montana.

"MAC will begin its search for a new executive director immediately," Hamilton said.

### Rev. Lyle Hamilton - MAC's Current President

The Rev. Lyle Hamilton, a United Methodist clergy and former District Superintendent in the Yellowstone Conference, is the Montana Association of Churches' current president.

Lyle has served the church for the past 41 years. A graduate of Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, Texas, he moved to Montana in 1969 and has been the pastor of church congregations in Troy, Anaconda, Missoula, Valier, Butte, Three Forks, and Willow Creek.

He served as a district superintendent in the Yellowstone Conference of the United Methodist Church from 1988 to 1994.

In 2002, Lyle retired from parish ministry and has since served as Church Relations Coordinator for Intermountain – *restoring hope for children*, in Helena. Intermountain is a healing ministry for young children. It is sponsored by the United Methodist Church (UMC), the Presbyterian Church – USA (PCUSA), and the United Church of Christ (UCC).

Lyle is married to The Rev. Marianne Niesen, pastor of St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Helena. He has two children: The Rev. Kama Hamilton Morton, pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Great Falls, and Dr. Kaleb Hamilton, a family physician who lives and works in Oklahoma and is the father of Lyle's two grandsons.

Ecumenical affairs, issues, and relations have long been a part of Lyle's personal ministry. He has been involved with the Montana Association of Churches from his earliest years in Montana. He has hosted and participated in MAC's events, programs, and public policy outreach efforts through the years. Lyle has served on MAC's Board of Directors for the past 20 years.

### Important Date Change For 2008 MAC Assembly

**The dates for the 2008 MAC Assembly have been changed to October 27 and 28. The Assembly will be held at the Ursuline Centre, 2300 Central Avenue, Great Falls.**

**The deadline for filing names of Representatives to the Annual Assembly with the Executive Director is September 26.**



*From the Executive Director*

## ***“A Parting Message”***

*The Rev. Brady Vardemann*

***“For surely I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord, “plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”***

Jeremiah 29: 11 (NRSV)

Although this message will be my last to you as Executive Director, my prayer is that it will not be my final point of connectivity to the people of MAC. Over the past two and a half years, it has been my privilege to be part of the Montana Association of Churches in our common mission to work on behalf of the unity to which we are called by God in Christ. You have enriched my life in ways too numerous to mention, as together we have worked to achieve greater justice for the vulnerable and voiceless among us.

Even so, we know that life is a series of transitions – times when we cross from something familiar to something new, from predictable to unpredictable. Certainly this has been our experience at MAC over the last few years in both organizational and human ways, and I have been honored to be part of this association during a period of significant transition and change.

Jeremiah speaks of God’s intentional plan for our safety and hopefulness and well-being. Our faithful responsibility is to learn to notice (and act upon) the changing seasons of our lives with renewed energy, renewed hope and renewed desire to continue to grow. It is because of these imperatives that I have resigned as Executive Director of MAC in order to have time to follow other paths along which I believe God has called me. *May blessings and wholeness and peace and joy be with us all!*

Brady+

***“I know what I’m doing. I have it all planned out – plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.”***

(Eugene Peterson, *The Message*)

*President’s Column*

## ***“Musings”***

*By The Rev.  
Lyle Hamilton*



As we move ahead during 2008, the Montana Association of Churches has, I believe, a very special calling to find ways to embody the Body of Christ in our place and time. We’ve an opportunity to be the Body of Christ, filled with hope, trust, and love in such a way that our Montana people will be inspired to new ways of living. A new way of living that empowers everyone to live together with grace and gentleness so that none will be left out or left behind. We must dedicate ourselves to becoming instruments of wholeness and holiness that God can use to heal and redeem our portion of a world that is in pain and uncertainty.

Let us go forth to listen and learn, pray and contemplate, and serve others near and far away so that we may indeed be and become the people God has named and claimed us to be in Christ.

As MAC moves forward at this time to carefully select and hire a new Executive Director to lead us toward our Annual Assembly next October and the Montana Legislative Session that will follow next winter, let us all hold our Faith and Order Commission, Church and Society Commission, the Board of Directors, Executive Committee of the Board, and our Interim Executive, John C. Board, in our thoughts and prayers daily.

Perhaps the following words might assist us in both our inward and outward journey of growing in faith and service.

### **We Would Be Instruments of Wholeness**

*We would be instruments of wholeness,  
In a world that knows no peace;  
We would live the life of Jesus in our time.  
In life and death and life together,  
All of us belong to God.  
Enemies and friends all share the sacred sign.*

*O God, Almighty, come and bless us all.  
O God, Almighty, come and bless us all.*

*Within us plant your seeds of healing,  
Gracious God, who holds us all;  
Make us able to be channels of your love.*

Musings, Continued from Page 2

O grant us strength to change the  
Systems which seek power of their own;  
May your great heart open wide, within, above.

O God, Almighty, come and bless us all.  
O God, Almighty, come and bless us all.

O may we all submit our spirits  
To the Presence of our God,  
Who will meet us in this moment, here and now.  
O let us hold to one another,  
Holy living shared by all;  
Let us now rejoice before our God of power.

O God, Almighty, come and bless us all.  
O God, Almighty, come and bless us all.

May the blessing of God be with all of us, during this  
Lenten Season and beyond.

*MAC Officers and Staff*

**OFFICERS**

The Rev. Lyle Hamilton  
President  
Helena

Dr. Walter Gulick  
Immediate Past President  
Billings

Mrs. Laurie Croghan  
Secretary  
Bozeman

Mrs. Marge Short  
Treasurer  
Helena

Mr. Don Patterson  
Dean of the Executives  
Bigfork

**STAFF**

The Rev. Deacon John C. Board  
Interim Executive Director  
Helena

Ms. Adena Savage  
Administrative Assistant  
Helena

*From the Interim  
Executive Director*

*“We Must Think  
Anew and Act  
Anew”*

*By the Rev. John C. Board*



God seems to catch some of us off guard and to offer us opportunities that we never would have imagined. That happened to me last month when President Lyle Hamilton approached me with the offer from the MAC Executive Committee to serve as MAC's Interim Executive Director.

Like Moses and many of the prophets, I conjured about every reason or excuse I could for refusing that offer. I prayed; consulted with some key MAC people; and I meditated on MAC and its future. In the end, as is obvious, I communicated with President Hamilton and told him that I would accept the executive committee's offer. The MAC Board of Directors graciously concurred with its executive committee's recommendation.

I have pondered how to best serve MAC in this period of transition. For whatever reason, a line from Abraham Lincoln's Annual Message to Congress in 1862 has been on my mind. In that message, Lincoln wrote, "As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew." It seems to me that the same is true for MAC.

The culture, environment, and issues in which MAC was created 34 years ago, are not the same as they are today. MAC's "case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew."

A rigid plant is snapped in two in a storm. A plant that bends with the forces of a storm is not broken in two. It survives and continues to grow. MAC must do the same, and it can do so without destroying the roots for its being.

MAC's roots have been and continue to be witness, worship, justice, education, and service. Those roots have served MAC's constituents well. In the current culture, however, MAC's roots are searching for new ways to stretch, grow, and become stronger.

Thinking and acting anew are as old as the New Testament. For it is in the Gospels that we find Jesus challenging the sacred and secular powers of his time to do just that. And it is in the Gospels that Jesus tells us that in serving others we find ourselves. Surely service and justice were two themes of Jesus' ministry. They must be a part of MAC's ministry as it thinks and acts anew.

Pray that MAC may feel the Holy Spirit calling it to new ways in which to serve.

Pray for MAC's Search Committee as it seeks a new executive director.

Pray for the MAC Board of Directors that it may have the discerning wisdom to call the best person to be its new executive director to serve its constituents well as they witness for justice and education in the here and now.

# SOJOURNERS CAMP 2008

Dear Friends and Co-workers in the MAC Community:

Preparations are underway for this year's Sojourners Camp. Last year proved to be a healthy re-start for the Montana Association of Churches' camp ministry to at-risk 11-13 year-olds. We had registrations from kids from a wide range of backgrounds, kids referred both by agencies and by churches, kids from different ethnic heritages, and kids from a healthy variety of faith communities.

Our partnership with Christikon Camp on the Boulder continues this year, with some new changes to solidify and make the best use of the advantages of this relationship.

In reviewing last year's camp, the Sojourners committee opted for a program that was based a little more on-site, acknowledging the stresses placed on campers of this age by an extended wilderness backpacking trip. The wilderness backpacking experience will still be at the heart of Sojourners Camp, augmented by other days devoted to social interaction, working and playing and worship.

This year, our team of Adult Advisors from MAC is joined by Julie Donald, a teacher from Billings. John Mitchell and I will also return to camp as advisors.

Camp takes place July 6-12 this year, with transportation to Christikon available from Billings, Laurel, Columbus, and Big Timber.



We have secured places for 12 campers this year, 6 boys and 6 girls. Our drive for camper registration will begin in a few weeks, but we wanted to give members of the MAC community the first chance to refer campers to us.

So, if you know an 11-13 year-old who is at-risk due to any circumstances, who could benefit from MAC picking up the bill for an amazing camp experience in July, please fill out the form below as quickly as possible and return it to the MAC office.  
- Sojourners Co-Director Erik J. Thorson

## SOJOURNERS CAMP 2008 REGISTRATION

*This form secures a place at Sojourners Camp. Additional information will be sent upon registration!*

Name of person making referral \_\_\_\_\_

Church or Agency of person making referral \_\_\_\_\_

Camper's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Camper's Age \_\_\_\_\_ Gender Male Female

Church, Denomination, or Faith \_\_\_\_\_

*Campers and their families will be contacted by both Christikon camp and the Montana Association of Churches.*

*Set aside July 6-12 on your calendar!*

## **Making Connections: Conference on Domestic Violence Victims in Rural Montana**

The Billings REMEDIES Conference *Making Connections: Strengthening Domestic Violence Services through Economic, Faith-Based and Native American Advocacy* will be held May 12 and 13 at the Billings Train Depot. This day-and-a-half conference will begin Monday, May 12 with breakfast at 7:30 A. M. with the conference running from 8:30 A. M. to 4:30 P. M. and 8:00 A. M. to 12:00 Noon on Tuesday.

Attendees of the Making Connections Conference will learn about issues particular to domestic violence victims in rural Montana. They will hear national and local speakers on the following topics: "Faith and Spirituality in Domestic Violence", "Building Economic Security for Domestic Violence Survivors", "Risk and Risk Assessment in Working With Domestic Violence Victims", and "Understanding Domestic Violence in Native American Communities".

The REMEDIES Conference is sponsored by the Montana Department of Justice, Office of Victim Services (DOJ/OVS). There is no cost to attendees. There is no registration fee. DOJ/OVS will pay for lodging at the Best Western Clock Tower and will reimburse participants for meals and mileage.

Registration and lodging reservations are to be made through:

Sandy Matule  
Grant Project Coordinator  
smatule@mt.gov  
406-444-2071

PLEASE NOTE: When registering, each individual is to list his/her Title, Occupation, and Organization as it applies to his/her faith community. Clergy are critical to accomplish the mission of reduced domestic violence in rural Montana.

Brochures will be available March 1.

Some denominations will provide clergy continuing education units for attending this conference. Please check with your judicatory executive if you are interested in obtaining those units.

## *Update on the Warm Springs Hospital Chapel Project*

Patti Jacques

Montana State Hospital (MSH) is a state-owned Psychiatric Hospital located at Warm Springs, Montana. It provides psychiatric treatment and substance abuse treatment to patients. It is a community within itself. It was originally established in 1877 by Montana's Territorial Legislature. The census of Montana State Hospital averages over 200 people.

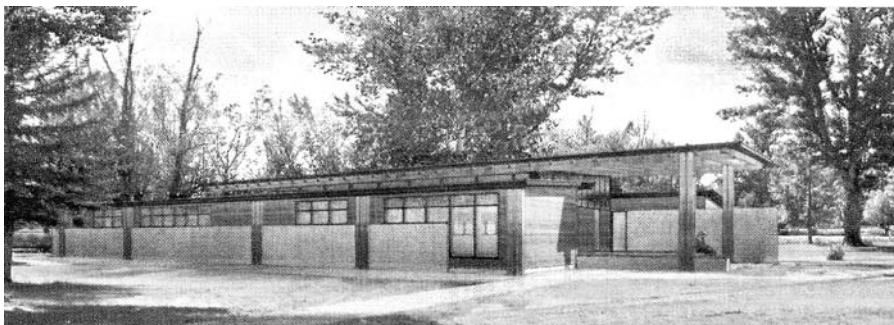
In 2005, the Montana Legislature authorized the Hospital to raise money for construction of a Patients Chapel on the Warm Springs Campus. A dedicated group of hospital employees has raised over \$60,000. Donations have been received from across the state. Promises donated use of equipment and construction personnel have been received. The estimated cost for the Patients Chapel is between \$500,000 and \$600,000. No public funds can be appropriated for this project.

Montana State Hospital Staff recognizes the important role of faith and hope in recovery from mental illness. Spiritual beliefs of patients and staff are supported by chaplains who conduct regular worship services and provide spiritual counseling for hospital patients. Outside ministries also visit regularly. Currently worship services are held in classrooms, dining rooms, and small conferences at various places on the Warm Springs Campus. The atmosphere in these rooms is unlike a chapel setting and does not provide a sense of "prayerful space."

Members of the MSH Chapel Committee are visiting local communities across Montana providing people with a presentation about the Montana State Hospital and the Chapel Project. The visits are an effort to raise money for construction of a Patients Chapel on the hospital campus.

Churches or groups within churches that desire to learn more about the Patients Chapel effort may contact Patti Jacques, MSH Chapel Project Volunteer Fundraiser Coordinator, or Cristi Boyd, Accountant, at 406-693-7024 for more information or to set up a presentation.

Those who wish to donate may send their donations to the MSH Chapel Project, PO Box 300, Warm Springs, MT 59756. MSH has a 501 (c) (3) status. Donations are tax deductible.



# Montana Association of Churches

## Position Description: Executive Director

February 5, 2008

**Position Title:** Executive Director of the Montana Association of Churches  
Status: Half time, with possibility of additional time depending on funding. Exempt Responsibility for administration of Lay Ministry Institute a possibility for additional compensation. Possibility of coordinating with denominational education position as well.

**Accountability:** The Executive Director is accountable to the Board of Directors and, through the Board, to the Annual Assembly. This accountability is described in the By-Laws, especially Article VII.

**Qualifications:** Person of faith, with membership in a MAC-member denomination  
  
Effective communicator of the ecumenical vision  
  
Ecumenically minded, ecumenically experienced  
  
College degree required; theological education and ordination an asset  
  
Culturally and inter-personally sensitive and interested in Montana  
  
Willing and able to travel distances, mostly in-state  
  
Well organized person with record of accomplishment

**Vision:** MAC - uniting by the power of God's word for witness and worship, justice and service.

### **Responsibilities: Enactment of Vision**

#### **Witness**

Create opportunities for education and outreach to inspire public witness to MAC's vision  
Witness to MAC's values at the state legislature and other venues

#### **Justice**

Uphold and promote MAC's stance toward issues of the day as articulated in the Position Papers  
Stand in solidarity with victims of injustice, providing leadership in Montana for works of justice, peace and reconciliation

#### **Service**

Facilitate opportunities for ecumenical service in camps and gatherings  
Seek and support, usually in partnership, grants that meliorate spiritual and social problems in ways consistent with MAC's vision  
Encourage and coordinate meetings of judicatory heads

### **Responsibilities: Administrative**

#### **Interpretation and Communication**

Communicate issues concerning Christian dialogue, unity, discipleship, and fellowship through the *MAC Messenger*, press releases, interviews, email, and the MAC website  
Disseminate the ecumenical vision of MAC by speaking to and being present at denominational conferences and judicatory celebrations as invited, within budgetary and time constraints

#### **Office Management**

Oversee the scheduling, organizing, and convening of Board and Commission meetings and the Annual Assembly

**(Position Description, Continued from page 6)**

Practice good stewardship, in coordination with the Treasurer, by nurturing financial support and prudently managing the budget  
Hire, supervise and empower staff necessary to achieve MAC's goals within budgetary constraints in consultation with the Board of Directors

**Application Deadline:**

Please submit a cover letter stating how you would respond to the need articulated in the job description as well as the gifts you would bring to the job along with a resume and three letters of reference not later than April 30, 2008.

**Information Contact:** Dr. Walter Gulick,  
wbgulick@bresnan.net,  
406-259-3622

**Application address:** MAC Executive Director Search  
Committee  
c/o: Montana Synod ELCA  
2415 13<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.  
Great Falls, MT 59405

**BOOK REVIEW**

***Velvet Elvis: Repainting The Christian Faith*  
by Rob Bell  
Zondervan, (2005) ISBN 0-310-26345-X**

The Rev. Dr. Keith M. Swenson

Rob Bell, in his book, *Velvet Elvis*, makes his debut for many of us as one we might typically dismiss. He is a fundamentalist-trained clergyman, yet he is very surprising! Bell offers a fresh and very scholarly and amazingly powerful biblical theology. He calls the church to engage in "a journey" of faith with our generation.

*Velvet Elvis* will inevitably bring readers to rethink and restructure their thoughts of the church. It will also call them to respond to contemporary and common thought and, perhaps, to reconsider their own understanding of faith. What is stimulating and refreshing is the way Rob Bell retains basic and mainstream Christian theology as the uncompromising foundation for the church. Bell integrates that with new thoughts of what the church can and should be.

At the core of his writing, Bell calls the reader to a mission statement which demands love and acceptance patterned after the disciplined teachings of Jesus. He urges his readers put away "clichés of the faith and church."

One thing is certain *Velvet Elvis* is not a dull book. It is a single, straightforward, and basic attempt to stimulate people, both inside and outside the church, to recommit and join a movement of Christian renewal, energy, and hope. Read it.

***Positions To Be Filled  
At The 2008 MAC Assembly***

Delegates to the 2008 MAC Assembly will be voting to fill 11 positions within the Association. Those positions are **President-Elect** (4 years), **Secretary** (1-year term), **Treasurer** (1-year term), **five (5) Board Members At-Large** (2-year terms), and **three (3) Nominating Committee Members** (1-year terms).

Individuals interested in being nominated to any of the foregoing MAC positions may contact the MAC Office or any member of the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee is to report a slate of nominees to the MAC Board of Directors at its May meeting.

Nominating Committee Members and their contact information are as follows:

The Rev. Vernon F. Wright  
Plymouth Congregational Church-UCC  
400 South Oakes  
Helena, MT 59601

Phone: 406-442-9883  
Email: plymouthchurchcc@juno.com

The Rev. Ronald C. Greene  
Central Christian Church  
1025 Central Avenue  
Great Falls, MT 59401

Phone: 406-453-4317  
Email: capnRonG@aol.com

The Rev. John R. Payne  
Heritage of Faith Christian Church  
101 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue W  
Polson, MT 59860

Phone: 406-883-5160  
Email: rev@majorpayne.org

Mrs. Maureen Theiler  
36500 Haak Road  
Polson, MT 59860

Phone: 406-883-5871  
Email: mcal3kab@polson.net

The Rev. Alice Ebi Kestler  
104 South Iowa Street  
Conrad, MT 59425

Phone: 406-278-5596  
Email: alethia52@hotmail.com

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Permit 300

Montana Association of Churches  
25 South Ewing St.  
Suite #408  
Helena, MT 59601  
406.449.6010

## MAC Calendar of Events

<b>May 15</b>	<b>Commission on Church and Society*</b> 11:00 A. M. – 3:00 P. M.
<b>May 20</b>	<b>Executive Committee*</b> 10:00 A. M. – 12:00 Noon  <b>Board of Directors*</b> 1:00 P. M. – 5:00 P. M.
<b>May 21</b>	<b>Board of Directors*</b> 9:00 A. M. – 12:00 Noon
<b>July 6-12</b>	<b>Sojourners Camp</b> Camp Christikon on the Boulder River
<b>September 11</b>	<b>Executive Committee*</b> 10:00 A. M. – 12:00 Noon
<b>September 11</b>	<b>Board of Directors*</b> 1:00 P. M. – 5:00 P. M.
<b>September 12</b>	<b>Board of Directors*</b> 9:00 A. M. – 12:00 Noon
<b>September 26</b>	<b>DEADLINE FOR FILING NAMES OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE ANNUAL MAC ASSEMBLY</b>
<b>October 26</b> Registration	<b>MAC Assembly</b> 5:00 P. M. – 8:00 P. M. Ursuline Centre - 2300 Central Avenue, Great Falls
<b>October 27</b> Registration	<b>MAC Assembly</b> 7:00 A. M. – 9:00 A. M. <b>MAC Assembly</b> 9:00 A. M. – 8:00 P. M.
<b>October 28</b>	<b>MAC Assembly</b> 9:00 A. M. – 12:00 Noon
<b>October 28</b>	<b>Board of Directors</b> 12:30 P. M. – 1:00 P. M.

*The MAC Messenger is published by the  
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[www.montana-churches.org](http://www.montana-churches.org)  
\* \* \* \**

*The Rev. Lyle Hamilton, President  
The Rev. John C. Board,  
Interim Executive Director  
Adena Savage  
Administrative Assistant*