



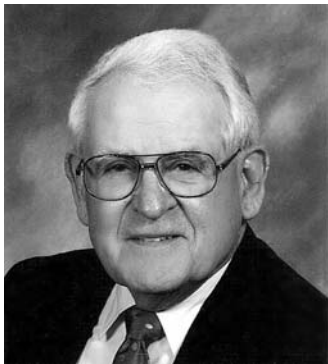
MAC Messenger

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

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May 2009

MAC Presence Advocates Our Positions at the Montana Legislature



Ray Peck, The Montana Association of Churches' presence at the legislature, explains the processes by which change is brought to our life together.

The Montana Legislature is an unusual organization in many ways, unusual in that it meets only on the odd-numbered years in regular session to create a budget of some four billion dollars for the coming two years and consider mundane matters like whether the state should have an adopted love song or pancake (huckleberry, no less).

A lot of terminology abounds among those familiar with the process. For example, being "on the floor" has little to do with the floor. It only means that all members of each house are meeting in their respective chambers to consider a bill brought out of the various committees. "Recess" and "adjourn" are first cousins in legislative parlance, but when a committee recesses it means they will return for further work at a stated time that day; to adjourn means the committee has stopped for the day and will not reconvene on some future day. A motion to "pass consideration for the day" merely means that the subject/bill under consideration will not be acted on at that time. An objection of a proposed amendment to a bill on the basis "it does not fit under the title" means the proposed amendment is outside of the title at the top of the bill, and, if upheld by the chair or ruled so by a committee vote, the amendment is rejected. This is a crucial rule that does not happen frequently, but it is a good rule to keep extraneous materials from piggybacking on the back of good legislation.

There are some rules that differ in the two houses. For example, a motion to take a bill from one of the committees "and place on second reading" (debate on the floor) requires a three-fifths vote in the House but only a simple majority in the Senate. A motion to "suspend the rules" can be made in both houses and requires a two-thirds vote of those present and voting. This motion is seldom made unless there is a crisis or semi-crisis situation created by major new information. Legislators who learn the finer points of the rules governing their house can be highly effective in accomplishing goals and protecting their view when in a minority position. There is a tendency for members in both houses to become district on long floor sessions and surprise motions some times are effective at that point because of the inattention of members.

The practice of "vote swapping" by members is one of the most secretive acts that take place in the legislative process and seldom come to light. However, there are certain issues in which a sponsor of a bill knows he has a close vote coming and he wants to secure a little insurance by recruiting some additional votes. He may approach those who he knows are not supportive and propose giving his support to on a bill that he has indicated he has been opposing -- often called "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." If a member received a 51-49 vote on his bill on second reading, he is likely nervous about the vote that will follow on third reading so he may be tempted to resort to some vote swapping. He knows that the opponents will be working hard to defeat the bill on the third reading by recruiting others to join them. Experienced members can often recognize this activity shortly after close votes on the floor and may be able to anticipate votes in committees.

The question is often asked if contacting a legislator may really influence a vote of a member and what is

(Continued on Page 3)



*From the Interim
Executive Secretary*
**“Hang On
Tight!”**

By Pam Shelden

Have you ever stepped into one of those little carnival cars where you put on your seat belt and then have an attendant lower the bar over your head to *really* secure you into place? At that moment, I find myself thinking, “What have I gotten myself into?” or “Maybe I just changed my mind, is there any possible escape?”

These were not my exact thoughts in October of last year, but I must confess that they were close. I was so excited and grateful to have been offered a position at MAC that I was guilty of not stepping back and looking at the whole ride and asking some questions that would have helped alleviate some of my fears. However, I can now see that my oversight was the beginning of a blessing in the making.

Now that I am in the middle of the “ride” I am beginning to enjoy whatever pops up around the next turn. I am also beginning to relax and enjoy whatever presents itself each day. Isn’t that what truly defines an adventure?

My MAC adventure began with the 2008 Annual Assembly where I experienced the peace of the Ursuline Centre, the fellowship of believers, and the vision that has sustained the organization for over 35 years. I was moved by the dedication of those attending and even though MAC had just endured an unspeakable violation of trust, there were still loyal believers supporting that vision and looking into the future. I heard about all the work that needed to be done and I became a believer too.

As with any good adventure, one never knows what the next day, the next phone call, the next piece of mail or the next person that walks in the door will bring. But isn’t that what makes the ride so enjoyable? In the past several months, I have sat baffled and been challenged in several situations. Every time that I have reached out for information or advice, it has been there. Every time I have attended a meeting on behalf of MAC, I have been greeted with great respect. All of this is contributing to a surprising journey.

As for what keeps me busy, I can always count on several emails and phone messages on a daily basis. Mak-

President’s Column
**“Cycles of Grace
and Challenge”**

By
the Rev. Lyle Hamilton



As the Montana Association of Churches continues to purposefully emerge from a dark and scary tunnel of uncertainty, I am very proud of the way our Board, Executive Committee, and developing Commission Leadership have responded and are seeking to guide us. In addition, Pam (in the office) and Ray (at the Legislature) have worked tirelessly to enable MAC to be present and make a difference within the fabric of faith and social consciousness that help strengthen our political life and processes here in the state of Montana. And even after struggling to find a way to respond to a significant financial loss, a theft in the MAC office, we are now letting go and beginning to cycle into a new day of resurrection and hope, as we ponder how to accept the challenge of God’s invitation to discern a new Divine Call into the future?

1] Looking ahead, we will be seeking to work on Assembly themes that will lead one into the next over the upcoming two to three years. Watch for additional information, and please be willing to respond with your questions and opinions. Since the MAC website is kept more up-to-date on a regular basis these days, **all of us would benefit from checking the website every week or two.**

2] We will also be looking at our MAC office-related leadership as we go into the summer and prepare once again to gather at our 2009 Annual Assembly in Great Falls, MT, next October. There are legitimate questions concerning exactly what our leadership requirements are, and what we can afford during this more difficult economic time. Our Search Committee, Executive Committee, and Board of Directors will be attempting to put these pieces together as we go forward. **Pray for and with us.**

3] This spring is the time for our judicatories and local churches to determine to honor our ecumenical relationships as we honor the ministries of MAC in our worship and the receiving a special offering during the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** next January 18 – 25, 2010. If January 24, 2010 could be honored as special mission support Sunday for ministries that cross denominational boundaries and enable us to truly feel like a Christian family, what a difference that could make in our denominations, in our state, in our communities, in our congregations. **Please think about this with us, let us pray and exercise generosity together.**

May the grace of God embrace us and hold us close during this 2009 Easter Season . . . and may the blessings of Almighty God -- Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit – live within you, walk beside you, and go before you to show the way.

ing deposits are much more fun than paying the bills. Preparing for meetings is made less stressful by the help of the Commission Chairs and our President. The legislative session has been enlightening and emotional. Trying to keep the website and the Judicatory Heads up-to-date with timely information has been challenging but extremely worthwhile.

Today, I am also looking to the future and excited about the opportunities I see for MAC the unknown adventures that are waiting to be experienced. We are still somewhat in the dark about how our finances will sustain us through another year, but so far we are holding steady.

Thank you all for strapping me in and taking me along with you on what has turned out to be a most humbling journey. I can honestly say that I am no longer looking to get off the ride but I am instead looking forward to discovering new opportunities for MAC to be a partner in "uniting by the power of God's word for witness and worship, justice and service" are endless and timeless. Remember what the carnival attendant says as he walks away, "Hang on tight and enjoy the ride!"

Ray Peck at the Legislature, continued from page 1

the best way to attempt to influence a member's vote. Personal contact/face-to-face is the best way to influence them, much like door-knocking for a candidate. Probably the next best is via telephone in the evening or leaving a message requesting the member to call you back. It appears e-mails may not be as productive with most legislators as a hand written note. Long letters that require much time to read may be less effective. Some legislators get home nearly every week-end and hold public meetings, which is a good time to make contact. Organized phone calls via telephone trees can impress your legislator, but it requires time and organizational skills to keep them working. Whether your legislator will vote your way is highly dependent of the personality of your legislator and what information he has that you do not have, which is a somewhat treacherous area for the legislator. Strong, factual testimony that is not common knowledge or reported in the media put him/her in the position of wondering whether the vote cast should be based on what his/her constituents believe or what the member knows.

A visit to the Montana Legislature is worth your time and expense. Be guided by contact with your Senator or Representative as to which day(s) would be best and ask him for suggestions as to what committees and activities -- such as a guided tour of the Capitol -- they recommend. Encourage your local high school to bring students in their American History and Government classes.

The Montana Abolition Coalition Gains Ground!



The Montana Abolition Coalition has been hard at work during the 2009 Legislative Session. Senate Bill 236 that will abolish the death penalty and replace it with life without the possibility of parole is gaining momentum. Montana made history with the 27-23 Senate vote in favor of the bill; no Republican controlled body in the United States has ever passed such a bill. In fact, the Coliseum in Rome was even lit in our honor! Our bill is now headed to the House of Representatives where it will be heard in the Judiciary Committee on March 25th.

Now is the time to get involved! Our legislators need to hear from you! If you are interested, the Coalition can provide you with letter-writing kits that include supplies for 10 letters. This is an excellent way for your congregations to become involved in a significant life issue. Thank you all for your continued prayers and support. Let us stand together as people of faith to end the death penalty in Montana once and for all!

Heather Hass
MAC Organizer, Montana Abolition Coalition
431-2970
heatherh@mtabolitionco.org

The Montana Association of Churches is YOUR Ecumenical voice in Montana!

Congregations - Please consider a special offering to support the work of MAC! We exist only through the support and contributions of Montana Churches.

MAC Asks for New Wilderness Protection



Jared White

A little over a month ago, the United States Congress made their most significant and lasting conservation achievement in over fourteen years. It was called the Omnibus Public Lands Act and it was a widely popular bill that protected over two million acres of stunning wilderness areas, hundreds of miles of wild and scenic rivers, and forever ensured new generations of Americans will be able to hunt, fish, hike, backpack, and camp in these truly gorgeous and special places.

But you may not have read about it in Montana...we were actually left out of the celebration. In fact, you probably haven't read much about wilderness in Montana because it's been twenty-six years since this state has protected a single acre. In that same time period, the nation has added 490 wilderness areas, but none beneath the big sky.

Fortunately, after so many years, we are beginning to see a new demand for protection emerging across the state. Many caring individuals and groups across the state who understand the value of passing wild places onto the next generation are now speaking up with renewed vigor to protect a few deserving areas of the "Last Best Place". The Montana Association of Churches has graciously joined this growing choir by joining a group of prominent Montanans including conservation leaders, famous authors, and former Forest Service officials in requesting that our Montana delegation introduce a wilderness bill soon.

That request has made some waves. It has sparked a growing interest among others in Montana and it has been referenced many times in newspaper articles and newspapers opinions across the state. Only a few weeks ago, a group of Montanan businessmen and women in the northwest portion of the state were inspired enough by that request to send out their own call for new wilderness protection.

Montana has many unprotected special places that can be considered sacred and deserve wilderness designation. Our lawmakers are supportive of wilderness protection, but have repeated over and over again that the actual proposals must be 'made in Montana' and originate from local people. Well, that's exactly what we have. We have many enterprising and deserving locally crafted wilderness proposals across the state for them to choose from. Our delegation just needs to be reminded of that fact again and again.

Jared White works at The Wilderness Society in Bozeman. You can contact him at jared_white@tw.s.org.

Montana Faith Community Works to Reduce Smoking

by Vincent DeMarco
Faith United Against Tobacco

Last November, over fifty congregations representing a wide-range of faith communities from across Montana came together in a Smokefree Sabbath Weekend to celebrate the state's new smokefree workplace law which is scheduled to take full effect on October 1 of this year. The congregations distributed materials prepared by the Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP) about the new law which explained the health benefits to us all of smoke free workplaces. They also discussed the importance of the law becoming fully implemented in October so that all workplaces, including bars, become smokefree. Evidence from other states that have had such laws for a while make clear that this will save the lives of many Montanans.

The Smokefree Sabbath Weekend also received terrific news coverage. The Helena Independent Record include quotes by Montana Association of Churches leader Pam Shelden, United Methodist leader Rev. Su DuBree and St. Peter's Chaplain Jim Shelden all talking about how important reducing smoking is to Montana faith leaders. Faith United Against Tobacco is very grateful to these leaders as well other faith groups across the state who helped to make the Smokefree Sabbath Weekend a success.

Now we are working with Montana faith leaders to make sure that Montanans know about the health hazards of smokeless tobacco. As state workplaces become smokefree, tobacco companies are encouraging people to use smokeless tobacco which is not legally prohibited in public places. But, using smokeless (or "spit") tobacco can cause oral cancer, tooth decay, nicotine addiction, face disfiguration, bad breath, gum disease, pancreatic cancer, and other serious illnesses – and death.

Across the state, Montana faith leaders are distributing a terrific brochure put together by MTUPP which explains the dangers of smokeless tobacco. You can find out how you can get copies of this brochure or other MTUPP materials by calling 1-866-787-5247 or by checking out the MTUPP website, www.tobaccofree.mt.gov.

We also encourage faith leaders across Montana to get in touch with their local MTUPP prevention specialist who can help you to find tobacco prevention and cessation programs that could help save lives in your congregations and communities. For more information on how to do this, you can contact Michelle McNiven at MTUPP at 406-444-6911, mmcniven@mt.gov,

Faith United Against Tobacco is a national coalition of faith denominations and organizations working to reduce smoking, particularly among children, everywhere. We are very proud of the Montana faith leaders who have stepped up on this issue over the past few months. Under the leadership of the Montana Association of Churches, I know that this partnership will grow and help make Montana a healthier state for all.

A New Thing

*Pastor Scott Hedegaard
MAC Commission on Faith and Order*

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? – Isaiah 43:19a



Little did I know when I titled this piece that I would find something with a newness so unexpected as to be bizarre. As I sought to find the latest edition of the MAC Messenger, I clicked in my Favorites on the MAC website. Rather than being directed to Montana Association of Churches, a site appeared that was written mostly in Chinese, with a photo of someone brushing their teeth! And while this might convince me of the importance of good oral hygiene, it wasn't exactly what I was searching for. I was left wondering if MAC was truly doing "a new thing." For those like me who have an old bookmark, the website is www.montana-churches.net.

The Commission on Faith and Order is charged with the responsibility of "understanding and expressing faith, church structure and organization, and theological dialogue. Its major focus is on the promotion of Christian unity" (Montana Association of Churches Bylaws, Article X, Section 2A). We are indeed blessed to belong to an association in which our unity in Christ Jesus is expressed in the manifold ways in which our member judicatories cooperate in the promotion of the gospel and in seeking God's justice in the world. One of the means by which this unity is made known is through the process of making decisions by consensus.

I have noted, however, over the years that, as Assemblies go through the decision making process on items such as position papers, we often find confusion when significant alterations are proposed. Newcomers especially struggle when the polity of one judicatory body might not allow assent to major changes in the wording of a document without review and approval by the judicatory head. Put more simply, sometimes we just don't understand each other and how we do things!

If Faith and Order is charged primarily with the promotion of Christian unity, it seems imperative that we have some comprehension of what such unity is. Unity, as we understand it, does not demand uniformity; rather unity celebrates our diversity even as we seek common ground upon which to stand. Central to that unity is the one who unites us all, Jesus Christ, who is "the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:22b-23). At the same time, we recognize that Jesus himself called a diverse cadre of followers – fishermen, a tax collector, political activists, men and women – to follow him, to learn from him, and to be sent forth by him to proclaim the good news and bring healing to those in need.

At our recent gathering, Faith and Order discussed some ways in which we might celebrate our diversity, even as we gather in unity in our Assemblies. A proposal is being developed whereby we might become more aware of the history and traditions that make each member of MAC unique, in order that we might better understand one another. Is this a new thing? Perhaps not. But perhaps this might encourage us to a deeper comprehension of the grace in which we stand which draws us together as the people of God and as MAC.

Montana State Hospital Chapel Project Sees Progress

Montana State Hospital Chapel Project Committee is continually amazed and thankful by the generosity from the Church communities and people throughout Montana. Because of your efforts we are now at \$95,000 and getting closer to our goal of \$350,000. God Bless you and thank you for your prayers and dedication toward the Patients Chapel.

At our last fundraising event in Anaconda a young adult patient sat with me and told me her story. This young lady came to the hospital at the age of 18 and currently is now 20 years old. She stated to me how she has not received a visit from her family since she arrived at the hospital. She told me she calls her mother once a week, but due to finances it makes it impossible for her family to come visit. She shared with me what she misses the most and that was to go to church with her family on Sunday. My prayer for this young lady is for her family to come visit her and again be able to attend church with them on Sunday. Being separated from your family for long durations is emotional upsetting especially when a person is ill. This is why it is so important for the patients to have a chapel dedicated to providing a place for meditation, spiritual awakening, and practicing one's faith.

Montana State Hospital staff believes an important component of successful treatment and recovery is having hope and finding meaning and purpose in one's life. Faith and spirituality are important components of this process for most people. Treatment begins by developing a therapeutic relationship and helping the individual recognize benefits of therapy and treatment, including medications that will make a positive difference in their lives. The opportunity to practice one's faith or to discuss beliefs and experiences with a chaplain greatly supports other treatment efforts.

If you would like the MSH Chapel Project committee to come visit your community or provide more information on the MSH Chapel Project, please contact Patti Jacques at 406-431-3245, Cristi Boyd 406-693-7024 or email Patti at djjacques1@bresnan.net. Thank you for all your help!

*“Lay Ministry Institute:
Share the Gift!”*

As the Lay Ministry Institute continues into its fifth year, students from a variety of backgrounds and many Christian traditions come together to learn and grow in ways that make a difference in their lives and in their communities.

Unfortunately, the program has struggled at times with registration, which was so low for one course we were forced to reschedule it. For our upcoming course on Preaching, I am pleased to report a full roster and a number of new students to the program. This is an exciting and encouraging sign for our future.

In my nine months as Dean of LMI, I have the privilege of hearing first hand from students about what the program means to them. Here are a few of their stories:

“God was calling me. My curiosity was calling me. I apparently needed more than what Bible study and Sunday sermons could supply. The Lay Ministry Institute came and provided a venue for me to do my in-depth religious studies while still raising my family.”

--Denise Jackson, Great Falls

“It has been several years since I retired for the third time. I chose the Lay Ministry Institute program, to stay active in both volunteer work in our community and my church. I may not complete all the program offerings, but I find it does keep me in the game.”

--Eldon Jensen, Red Lodge

I know there are still many others out there who would love to be a part of the Lay Ministry Institute, but they haven't heard about it or been encouraged to attend. Do you know someone who has gifts and interests in ministry and service? Share with them the gift of this program, encourage them to make meaning of their faith and sense of their calling. Your gift to them can multiply their passion and ability to share their God-given gifts with the world.

Laurie Budlong-Morse
Dean, Lay Ministry Institute

*Commission on Church and Society
Works to Make our Unified Voice
Heard*

John Duckworth, Chair of the Commission



How can the voice of Christ be heard in the 21st century? Perhaps an even greater question is, “How can the larger Christian community impact society in a God-honoring fashion?” The Commission on Church and Society is tasked with being a voice for justice and righteousness in Montana. Currently the commission is refining a position paper to speak

to the issue of climate change and supporting Heather Haas and Ray Peck as they lead the charge against the death penalty in the Montana state legislature. We are also disappointed that Judy Reel's position with Remedies has not been funded for this year. The committee will consider all issues raised and everyone is invited to propose issues for our consideration.

+SSM Catholic Social Services
of Montana

Realizing the Dream

Catholic Social Services of Montana has been helping families to realize their dream of a family for 54 years. We are currently seeking families for the adoption of infants. If you have been dreaming of adopting a baby, contact Catholic Social Services at 1-800-Baby Due (1-800-222-9383).

*Upcoming LMI
Course Offerings*

July 17-18, 2009

“Worship and Music in the Small Church”

September 18-19, 2009

“Educational Ministry -Teaching for Transformation”

November 20-21, 2009

“Congregational Dynamics”

People of Faith Awards



National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

Promoting Cooperation, Communication, Coordination and Collaboration in Disaster Response

The Montana Association of Churches joins in celebrating the ministry of lay persons in Montana churches who live out their faith in exemplary ways in their congregation and community

For many in the emergency management community, the acronym VOAD is a familiar term – Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. VOAD is the association recognized by FEMA and the various state emergency management agencies as being the national, state, and local body for coordinating non-governmental response and recovery actions in time of disaster. VOAD seeks to optimize the effectiveness of charitable organizations by disseminating information and assisting in the prevention of duplication or the inadvertent omission of effort. Simply put, we serve best when we serve together.

Nominate Your Hero or Heroine of Faith TODAY!

The Montana Association of Churches wishes to celebrate men and women of faith in Montana. This recognition is a wonderful way to thank the one who inspired you.

What To Do

Simply complete the details about you and your Hero or Heroine of Faith including his/her age category. On a separate piece of paper tell us several ways you have observed this individual putting their faith into practice.

Many of your denominations are members of the national VOAD (www.nvoad.org) and I personally want to extend an invitation to you to affiliate with the Montana chapter. Presently, our state membership includes secular agencies such as the American Red Cross, United Way, and Noah’s Wish and the emergency services arms of the Lutheran, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist, Southern Baptist, and United Methodist churches.

Each year a special committee will select award recipients from those nominated. Criteria included in the committee’s consideration will be persons who have lived out their faith in witness and service. This award honors individuals whose faithfulness, compassion, or efforts to bring reconciliation to churches and community have inspired others. Mail your statements with this nomination form by **August 17**.

If your denomination provides humanitarian assistance within Montana, would you please identify a contact point by providing that person’s name, telephone number, mailing address, and e-mail to me? You may reach me either by e-mail (linc_umc@bresnan.net) or by letter at P.O. Box 393, Lincoln, MT 59639.

Guy Youngblood
Chairman, Montana VOAD

People of Faith Nomination Form

Category: _____ **YOUTH** (ages 15-25) _____ **SAINTS** (ages 26-65) _____ **SAGES** (ages 66+)

About your Hero/Heroine of Faith:

Name: _____

Address: _____ City and Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Congregation: _____

About you:

Name: _____

Address: _____ City and Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Congregation: _____

QUESTIONS? **Call** (406) 449-6010 **Email:** macexecutivedirector@montana-churches.net

Send by August 17th to:

**Montana Association of Churches
525 South Ewing, Suite 408
Helena, MT 59601**

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Montana Association of Churches

MAC Calendar of Events

- 5/7/09 (DATE CHANGE) Commission on Church & Society (10:00 AM - 3:00 PM) Covenant United Methodist Church, 2330 E. Broadway, Helena. No Host lunch at St. Peter's Hospital cafeteria.
- 5/14/09 (Canceled) Commission on Faith & Order
- 5/21/09 Executive Committee (8:00 - 10:00 AM) Covenant United Methodist Church, 2330 E. Broadway, Helena. Coffee & pastries will be served.
- 5/21/09 Board of Directors (10:30 AM - 5:00 PM) Covenant United Methodist Church, 2330 E. Broadway, Helena. No Host lunch TBD
- 5/22/09 LMI Steering Committee (10:00 AM - 2:00 PM) Rev. Su DeBree's 1106 Wilder Ave., Helena
- 9/9/09 Commission on Church & Society (10:00 AM - 3:00 PM) Covenant United Methodist Church, 2330 E. Broadway, Helena. No Host lunch at St. Peter's Hospital cafeteria.
- 9/10/09 Commission on Faith & Order (11:00 AM - 3:00 PM) First Baptist Church, 525 2nd Ave North, Great Falls. No Host lunch will be ordered.
- 9/17/09 Executive Committee (8:00 - 10:00 AM) Covenant United Methodist Church, 2330 E. Broadway, Helena. Coffee & pastries will be served.
- 9/17/09 Board of Directors (10:30 AM - 5:00 PM) Covenant United Methodist Church, 2330 E. Broadway, Helena. No Host lunch TBD
- 10/18/09 MAC Assembly Registration (7:00 PM - 9:00 PM) Registration (Ursuline Centre - 2300 Central Ave, Great Falls)
- 10/19/09 MAC Assembly Registration (7:00 AM - 9:00 AM) Ursuline Centre
MAC Assembly (9:00 AM - 8:00 PM) Ursuline Centre
- 10/20/09 MAC Assembly (9:00AM - 12:00 Noon) Ursuline Centre
- 10/20/09 Board of Directors (12:30 PM - 1:00 PM) Ursuline Centre Lunch room

*The MAC Messenger is published by the
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* * * **

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