

The Insight

Giving *insight* into the life of FUMC Loveland and keeping our mission *in sight*.

Bird's Eye View, by Rev. Don Bird

Hello, Friends!

While my appointment officially begins on July 1, my first Sunday with you won't be until August 10. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and share a little bit about what this season looks like for my wife, Mandy, and me.

Transitions are important. They mark the ending of one chapter and the beginning of another. They invite us to reflect on where we've been, celebrate what has been, and prepare ourselves for what lies ahead.

That's exactly what Mandy and I will be doing this July.

After saying goodbye to the congregation we've served and loved, we're intentionally creating some space to rest, reconnect, and recharge before beginning ministry with you. Ministry is most life-giving when it flows from a healthy and grounded place, and I want to arrive in Loveland ready—not just to work—but to listen, build relationships, dream together, and join you in discerning where God is leading us next.

Part of that time away includes a special trip with my family. Mandy and I will be taking a Mediterranean cruise to celebrate a milestone that means the world to us: my sister's 10-year anniversary of being cancer-free. It's a gift we don't take for granted, and we're looking forward to celebrating life, resilience, and the people we love.

As I think about joining Loveland First UMC, I find myself filled with curiosity and wonder. Every church has a story. Every congregation has unique gifts, passions, and possibilities. The months and years ahead won't simply be about me arriving; they'll be about all of us discovering together who God is calling us to be in this season.

I believe the world is hungry for communities where people can belong, ask honest questions, experience authentic relationships, and encounter the love of Christ in meaningful ways. I believe churches can still be places of hope, healing, purpose, and joy. And I believe Loveland First UMC has an important role to play in the life of this community and beyond.

My prayer is that together we will continue finding new ways to pour God's love into our neighborhoods, extend Christ's compassion to those who are hurting and are on the margins, and create spaces where people of all ages can grow in faith and connection. I hope we'll laugh often, serve generously, dream boldly, and remain open to the surprising ways God's Spirit moves among us.

Thank you for welcoming me and my family before we've even arrived. Your kindness has already been a gift.

Know that while I'm not yet physically present, I am praying for you and looking forward to the day when we can begin this new chapter together.

Enjoy these summer days. Celebrate the people you love. Look for signs of grace wherever you are. And know that exciting things lie ahead.

I look forward to being in ministry with you.

In Hope,

Pastor Don

2026 Youth Mission Trip

FUMC Loveland youth traveled to Shiloh UMC in Billings, MT for a week of service, learning and fun! Here is a photo from Day 1 after hiking around Pictograph Cave State Park.



Loveland Community Pride Festival

On June 20, Loveland held its 2nd annual Community Pride Festival at North Lake Park. FUMC had a booth once again, handing out free water and popcorn, stickers and buttons, and welcoming visitors to check out our church. Young people expressed appreciation knowing there is a safe and welcoming faith community available for them. We were in good company with a few other churches at the festival, too. Thank you to the servants who showed up to be a face and loving presence on Saturday!



Desiree Aragon, Pastor Lee, Andrea Ortega, and Judy Stout at FUMC's booth



Judy's grandchildren, Rylan and Kenzi, showed up to show off their colors

What's Next for the Associate Pastor, by Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

When meeting with SPRC and with Pastor Don to discuss what my role as Associate Pastor will look like moving forward, we talked about what the needs of the church are as well as what I am passionate about, and tried to find where those intersect. I referenced a book titled *Not Just Sunday*, which is an apt description of the Church in general: Church does not just happen on Sundays. It happens in all of the ways we connect and minister to each other and to the community. Further, Church is the people, not just the pastors, staff, and worship leaders. Because I will not be at FUMC Loveland most Sundays, I see my role as a good reminder of this.

So what would a “Not Just Sunday” pastor look like: This pastor might...

- Lead people in learning who our neighbors are, and in discerning how this church can serve our neighbors.
- Lead people in being a face in the community.
- Guide people into service to the church and community as a part of discipleship. Use spiritual gifts tools to help people understand how they fit into the body.
- Be a connecting point so that those who are part of the church can find their community and participate in meaningful ways. Support fellowship/community building opportunities beyond Sunday mornings.
- Provide pastoral care (in partnership with lead pastor) and coordinate congregational care ministries.

There was consensus among the SPRC, Pastor Don, and I that this list of items is a good framework rather than a specific job description. Job descriptions are not as helpful for pastors as staff because we do many things, need to adjust and be flexible, and meet needs as they arise. But it's helpful to have a framework like this one as a guide. As I...and all of you...live into this, we will take an assessment after a few months to see what is working and what needs to be adjusted.

It is important to note that Pastor Don is also a “Not Just Sunday” pastor! Further, he and I will share pastoral care. He has said that being with someone in the hospital, or who is dying, or in another time of need is “sacred.” You can turn to him as much as me for pastoral support and for memorial services.

Starting July 1, I will be in Loveland on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and will be present as I can for gatherings and events outside of office hours too. Every 5-6 weeks I will be in worship at Loveland. I will be in Fort Lupton on Mondays, Wednesdays, and most Sundays. Some of you have expressed concern about my balance of time and the potential for burnout, and that is a valid concern! I will be tracking my time for both churches. It will be necessary not just for my own well-being, but also to have an accurate accounting that will help me and SPRC see what adjustments need to be made.

A major part of being a pastor is that we are to equip and empower the laity of the church to carry out the ministry of all Christians. In some ways, by my “doing”, I have not fulfilled this part of my role. I say this to encourage you any time you worry about how things will “get done” with me being part-time. As a body you/we will pinpoint what is most important to do, and will continue on in ministry. Not busy work, but ministry. This is exciting! I look forward to watching and being a part of this unfolding!

A Word from Union and Trinity, by Rev. Bryson Lillie

Greetings, friends!

Since July is basically the start of a new year in Methodist life, I'm making a resolution of sorts: I need to communicate more. Pastor Lee kindly invited me to write newsletter updates about Union, but too often I miss the deadline! Since there's a lot happening between Union, Trinity UMC, and First UMC right now, I hope to share updates more regularly in the months ahead. I'm also hoping to get back to making video announcements soon.

For now, here are a few quick updates. As always, feel free to reach out with questions or thoughts at pastor@tumc-loveland.org.

1. Union's Leadership Transition

With the Mountain Sky Conference CVC grant ending, the funding that supported half of my salary for Union ministry is ending as well. As a result, Union is shifting to a more lay-led model.

I'll continue serving as Spiritual Curator, providing spiritual content and support, while much of the day-to-day leadership moves to a new Community Coordinator. This person will oversee communication, organization, and volunteer coordination for Union's groups and activities. The position is 6-8 hours per week, and we are currently hiring. I look forward to sharing more soon.

2. Community Dinners with FUMC and TUMC

As TUMC and FUMC continue discerning greater cooperation in ministry, Pastor Don, Pastor Lee, and I thought it would be good for our congregations to get to know one another better. And what better way to do that than over two community dinners? (We are Methodists, after all.)

You'll find more information in the Window, weekly email and [fumcloveland.org/Upcoming Events](http://fumcloveland.org/Upcoming%20Events), but I want to make sure you receive a personal invitation. Join us as we share a meal, build relationships, and discover that our neighboring Methodists are pretty wonderful people!

3. JOY Fellowship

TUMC has an older adult ministry called JOY Fellowship. It meets on the first Wednesday of each month during the school year for a meal, fellowship, and a guest speaker/presentation.

We'd love to have you join us. It's a great way to connect with others, learn something new, and build friendships. Throughout the year, we also enjoy trips to Candlelight Dinner Playhouse, bingo, and other special events. It's yet another great way to get to know your neighbor congregation!

That's it. Thank you for all you do to support the ministries of our churches. I'm excited to see how these relationships and opportunities continue to grow in the months ahead.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Bryson

Annual Conference 2026, by Rev. Lee Anderson-Harris

From June 10-14, clergy and lay people from across the Mountain Sky Conference gathered in Billings, MT for the 2026 Annual Conference. As always, it was a time of worship, business, learning, fellowship, and celebration. Here are some highlights from my perspective. For a full report each day, see the insert for this newsletter called *The Daily News*, which was provided by The Mountain Sky Conference. The print is small, I know, so get out your magnifying glasses! You can also read more and watch videos by going to mntskyumc.org. Click on the red Annual Conference 2026 button at the top of the page.



*Your FUMC
representatives:*

*Lay delegates
Mariah & Ben
Clegern,*

*Revs. Matthew
Uttley, Lee
Anderson-Harris,
and Leslie Wood*

I have written about the Sand Creek Massacre in *The Insight* before. I have heard it described as “our tragedy,” meaning that we as United Methodists have a responsibility for ongoing learning and reconciliation as we seek to heal. Colonel John Chivington, who led the raid, was a Methodist Episcopal clergy, and Governor John Evans, also a Methodist, ordered the raid. Sadly, afterward, the Methodist Church did little to acknowledge the harm or repent. And so, each year in more recent times, we make progress as a conference alongside the descendants of the Arapahoe and Cheyenne peoples toward that healing, through continued conversation and listening, and by remembering the event. This year, a display was set up that taught about the events surrounding the massacre, and we heard from Otto Braided Hair, who has been instrumental in the healing work. He said that it’s not just his people’s history, it’s our history; the descendants want and need healing, and we (the people of the Mountain Sky) want and need healing too. We are spiritual descendants of those who led and participated in the killings, and also of people like Silas Soule, who ordered his men not to attack. It was a

moving and honest talk. Mark your calendars for November 29 of this year, as the new Sand Creek monument will be installed at the state capitol.

While we voted to close five churches, we also celebrated the chartering of three new churches. These are all offshoots of parent churches that were created in an effort to provide an alternative faith community, and after a few years they have grown and stabilized enough to elect to become official churches. Free, Belong, and Prairie are all now United Methodist churches.

We did not have any contentious legislation to debate, but there was a debate that stood out to me as we voted on MSC 140-Resolution for Fossil Free Investments. In the debate I learned more about the complexity of caring for creation while also caring for people (who are also part of creation). Concerns were voiced...by people who are concerned for the environment, to be clear...that in creating a statement that the conference will divest from fossil fuel investments, a message will be sent not to the oil executives but to the workers in our communities. The message they might hear is that their livelihood is of no concern, for instance. MSC 140 passed but with a narrow margin. The Bishop reminded all of us that in our work, it is often not an either/or proposition. You can read about the legislation that passed in the enclosed Daily News, and read what that legislation is about by going to mtnskyumc.org, clicking on the red Annual Conference 2026 button at the top of the page, and clicking on “Petitions, Elections, and Legislation” on the right-hand side menu.

We grieved together as we remembered the clergy and clergy spouses who have died since we gathered last, during the annual memorial service. Rev. Ted Nutting and Rev. Bob Link were remembered. It was an opportunity to once again give thanks to God for their lives and work.

Last but not least, we gave thanks for the ministries of clergy who retired, and welcomed new clergy into our midst. There is a moving ceremony called the “Passing of the Mantle,” where retired clergy and those being ordained come together. All retired clergy were gifted with walking sticks, so Pastor Leslie has a new walking stick to use on her next long hike! And of course, Matthew Utley was commissioned as a Provisional Elder! He was unanimously approved by the clergy session and was welcomed into our midst. Then during the closing worship service, Bishop Kristin Stoneking commissioned him. He is not yet ordained, but this is a big milestone, and you can now refer to him as “Reverend.” Here are some photos from that moment...





MOUNTAIN SKY CONFERENCE · 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Daily News

Thursday, June 11, 2026 — Billings, Montana
Unofficial Recap

THE WAY OF
Loving Boldly
Micah 6:8

OPENING OF CONFERENCE

The Ninth Session of the Mountain Sky Annual Conference opened Thursday morning with joyful worship featuring **Montana musicians** and an inspiring **Episcopal Address by Bishop Kristin Stoneking**. The Bishop called the gathered body to embody the Way of Loving Boldly — seeking justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8). DS **Karen McRae** offered a warm welcome to Billings. Opening business included approving Session Rules with the Blues Brothers, the Detailed Agenda, and presenting the Budget and Nominations Reports for vote later in the session. Co-lay leaders **Susan McIntosh, GaylaJo Slauson**, and **Wesley Reynolds** all addressed the body with grace and warmth. **GaylaJo Slauson** was given special recognition for **eight years of faithful service** as co-lay leader — a tremendous gift to this conference. Youth and young people also brought greetings to the body!

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DAY

- ◆ **70 Years of Women's Ordination**
Rev. **Allison Skillman** led a moving and joyful celebration marking **70 years since the UMC opened full ordination to women**. The body gave thanks for the trailblazers who paved the way and prayed a litany of gratitude alongside all women clergy present — a holy moment.
- ◆ **Sand Creek Remembrance**
Betty Nguyen and **Otto Braided Hair** invited the conference into honest, prayerful reflection on the church's historical relationship with Indigenous peoples. It was a sacred and sobering moment that called us to do better, together.
- ◆ **Mission Celebration Dinner**
The evening came alive with stories of mission across the conference and around the world:

 - **Janet Fitzgerald** — Mission Team: 4 Abundant Health Grants approved, EarthKeepers LED Grants for 10 congregations, RAN Construction Grants for 8 churches
 - **Gail Hoyt** — BUMP Ministry: equipping Blackfeet reservation families toward Christ-centered self-sufficiency
 - **Sara Lattimore** — East Angola Partnership: mutual transformation, clergy support, and every resource used to its fullest
 - **Janice Lee** (Global Ministries) — 5 global response areas; 9 MSC-supported missionaries including vocational training for women in Cambodia

A HISTORIC FIRST: DELEGATION ELECTIONS

With great energy and prayerful discernment, MSC elected its **inaugural delegation to the 2028 General Conference** (Minneapolis, MN) and **Jurisdictional Conference** (Reno, NV) — a milestone moment for this newly formed conference, accomplished through six rounds of voting.

General Conference	Jurisdictional Conf.
Laity: Wesley Reynolds Dawn Givens Clergy: Rev. Brad Laurvick Rev. Lynn Miller Jackson Alternates (Clergy): Rev. Jasper Peters Rev. Jessica Rooks	Clergy Delegates: Revs. Jasper Peters, Jessica Rooks, Val Jackson, Philip Rogers, Allison Skillman, Zach Bechtold, Megan Burg, Paul Grossman, Calvin Hill

FINANCIAL REPORT & 2027 SPENDING PLAN

Treasurer **Christy Drenner** and CFA Chair **Laura Rainwater** presented the financial state of the conference alongside a proposed **2027 Spending Plan totaling \$5,648,648**. The full plan is posted on the conference website — vote is scheduled for **Saturday, June 13**.

- Completed the first audit since 2018 — received a clean, unmodified opinion. A strong result worth celebrating!
- MSC paid 100% of apportionment commitments in 2025 — the first time in several years
- Revenue breakdown: Mission Shares 86%, Designated/Restricted Funds 11%, Grants 3%
- Expense breakdown: Staffing 41%, WJ Apportionments 29%, Programs 28%, Ministry Support 2%

The CFA's goal: bring expenses into alignment with income, deploy reserves thoughtfully, and make sure every dollar advances the mission. Please read the budget narrative on the conference website.

NOMINATIONS REPORT

Angie Dornisch presented the Nominations Report, which provides oversight for five primary areas of conference life: **Leadership Development, Communications, and three additional areas**. The full report will be brought to the body for a vote during this session.

ROUND TABLE & CALGARY GATHERING

Sarah Merchant presented the Mountain Sky Round Table's **CLIMB framework** — the guiding vision for conference life, with budget aligned to its mission:

- **C** — Connection & Collaboration: relationships across conference and ecumenically
- **L** — Living Wesleyan Practices: spiritual identity, disciplines of grace
- **I** — Integrity & Innovation: courageous leading, risk-taking, Holy Spirit-led
- **M** — Missional Identity & Measurable Expression: outward-focused ministry
- **B** — Belonging & Empowerment: uplifting diverse voices, building bridges

Bishop Stoneking, Wes Reynolds, Maggie Taylor, and **Sara Lattimore** reported on the **Calgary Leadership Gathering**, underscoring the vital importance of young and diverse voices in shaping the UMC's future together.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE RESULTS

All three committees met Thursday evening. **Five of six petitions were approved** and move to the **Consent Calendar** for a single ratifying vote.

Cmte	Petition	Result
Cmte A (Online)	MSC 141 Clergy Min. Compensation	✓ Approved 95%
	MSC 142 Rocky Mtn College MOU	✓ Approved Unanimously
Cmte B	MSC 140 Fossil Free Investments	✓ Approved 87%
	MSC 143 Tribal History Report	Floor action (< 80%)
Cmte C	MSC 139 Caretaker of God's Creation	✓ Approved 94.7%
	MSC 138 Safe Sanctuary Team	✓ Approved Unanimously

MSC 143 was referred to the plenary body.

RETIREMENTS & APPOINTMENTS

- **Revs. Bill Briggs, Teena Rachelli, Cathie Kelsey, Charles Alkula, Leslie Wood, Susan Otey, Derek DeToni-Hill** (celebrating new granddaughter Maeve Elise!)

Bishop Stoneking and the District Superintendents read new **clergy appointments effective July 1, 2026** for Utah/Western Colorado and Eastern & Southern Colorado. Newly appointed clergy received a blessing through the laying on of hands. Congratulations!

LOOKING AHEAD — FRIDAY, JUNE 12

- Morning clergy and laity sessions & plenary session and Memorial Service
- Consent Calendar discussion— MSC 138, 139, 140, 141 & 142
- Continued delegation elections · Plenary body action on MSC 143
- Nominations, budget discussion & memorial service



MOUNTAIN SKY CONFERENCE · 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Daily News

Friday, June 12, 2026 — Billings, Montana
Unofficial Recap

THE WAY OF
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Micah 6:8

MORNING SESSIONS

Friday morning opened with two parallel sessions. The **Clergy Session**, led by the Board of Ordained Ministry, featured a wellness presentation from **Wespath's Krystal Holmes** before moving through required conference relation business. The **Laity Session** — themed **Called to Love Boldly** — was a Spirit-filled gathering led by **Susan McIntosh, GaylaJo Slauson, and Wesley Reynolds**. Wesley offered a moving reflection on Luke 10:1–6 and the lesson his beloved dog Ingram taught him: love is not something we feel — it is something that moves us.

♦ **Christina Ostendorf** (Miles City UMC, MT) was elected the new Conference Co-Lay Leader with 122 of 200 votes (61%). **Stephen Macauley** received 78 votes. Both were prayed over with gratitude.

♦ **GaylaJo Slauson** was honored for eight years of faithful service as one of MSC's first Co-Lay Leaders. Susan McIntosh gifted her a handmade UMC pillow in her honor.

MEMORIAL SERVICE

At 2:00 p.m., the conference gathered for a deeply moving **Memorial Service** honoring clergy, spouses, and laity who have passed — rooted in the truth that **love shared, given, and lived does not end**.

Opening with **Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing** and a responsive Call to Worship, the service held grief with honesty: *"Mercy through rest is primal and revolutionary."* Scripture from **Matthew 28:16–20** was followed by **Through It All** performed by **Daryl J. Walker**, and a reflection from **Jon Hurst** titled *"I Think I Am Going to Run On."*

The **Litany of Names** honored all whose lives were woven into this conference — families stood as names were spoken aloud. The **Stones of Remembrance** ritual invited each person to hold a stone as a symbol of grief and gratitude, then place it in water (love rippling outward) or keep it as a reminder that grief is held, not abandoned.

The service closed with the **Kyrie, Shall We Gather at the River**, a Benediction by **Bishop Kristin Stoneking**, and the recessional **We Are Marching in the Light of God** — sending the body forward with joy, even through tears.

AFTERNOON PLENARY

Bishop Stoneking called the afternoon plenary to order at 3:23 p.m. Before diving into business, the Bishop paused to acknowledge a **7.8 magnitude earthquake in the Philippines** and a car accident involving a group from Loveland UMC — a reminder of the world beyond our walls and the call to hold one another in prayer.

The newly elected **Co-Lay Leader Christina Ostendorf** was formally announced to the full body. **Stephen Macauley** read a poem with characteristic grace. The **Monitoring Report** (Emily Kintzel & Daniel Viehland) renewed the body's commitments to accessibility, inclusive language, and welcome for all attendees both in-person and online.

CONSENT CALENDAR & LEGISLATIVE REPORTS

Conference Secretary **Sandi Dillon** presented the Consent Calendar — five petitions approved by legislative committees — for presentation Friday and vote Saturday, June 13. Removal requires 10 signatures by 10:00 a.m. Saturday.

MSC 138 Safe Sanctuary Team (Cmte C, unanimous) · **MSC 139** Caretaker of God's Creation (Cmte C, 95%) · **MSC 140** Fossil Free Investments (Cmte B, 87%) · **MSC 141** Clergy Min. Compensation (Cmte A, 95%) · **MSC 142** Rocky Mountain College MOU (Cmte A, unanimous)
MSC 143 – Tribal History Report: **Just Anderson**, the petition's author, moved to withdraw — expressing a desire to continue healing work with Sand Creek and tribal communities and return with stronger proposals. Motion approved.

CHURCH CLOSURES

With gratitude for the life and ministry of each congregation, the body prayerfully approved the closure of five beloved churches — each a sacred chapter in the story of God's people. We grieve their ending and trust that the Spirit who breathed life into these communities will breathe again, making a way for new life to rise where these saints once gathered.

- Aldersgate UMC — Utah
- Eureka UMC — Colorado
- Evangelical UMC — Billings, Montana
- First UMC of Douglas — Wyoming
- Berkeley UMC — Denver, Colorado

Each closure was marked by prayer from the district superintendents — a sacred act of loving release.

DELEGATION ELECTIONS — ROUNDS 7 & 8

Elections continued through Rounds 7 and 8. Laity nominations for **Reserve Jurisdictional Delegates** were received from the floor, including youth delegates **Aribelle Moffatt, Brayden Go, and Keria Randall**, as well as **Hamu Chigwada, Olivia Pilivi, and Ken Scott**. A ballot display error was corrected and confirmed valid; results revisited Saturday morning.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

♦ **30th Anniversary of the Order of Deacons** — Phil Rogers led a celebration of this milestone. The body also paused to mark the **10th anniversary of the Pulse Nightclub shooting**, reaffirming MSC's commitment to the LGBTQ+ community.

♦ **Iliff School of Theology** — President Lee Butler shared updates on Iliff's ministry, new Kathy Kelsey Art Gallery, and an upcoming preaching conference: *"Preaching in the Age of Contempt."*

♦ **Guiding Policies & Procedures** — Amendment approved expanding Lay Equalization Member eligibility to retired Deaconesses and Home Missioners.

♦ **Nominations Report** — Rev. Angie Dornisch presented final slate with verbal amendments; **Carmen Benoit, Tim Cook, Rev. Dawn Scarett, and Paul Morales** added. Approved.

♦ **Ecumenical Report & Appointments** — Logan Robertson presented the Bishop's Task Force report.

MIRACLE SUNDAY — GIVE TODAY

As we celebrate today's **Ordination Service**, MSC will receive a **Miracle Sunday** offering supporting the **Endowment for Theological Education** — strengthening theological education in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines.

A gift to Miracle Sunday is an investment in someone's calling to serve congregations and transform communities. Give during the Ordination Service or scan the QR code now. **Every gift matters.**



Scan to give

LOOKING AHEAD — SATURDAY, JUNE 13

Ballot 8 results · Consent Calendar & Budget votes · 1:00 p.m. New Delegates Meeting (Breakout Room 1018) · **Ordination & Commissioning Service with Miracle Sunday offering**



MOUNTAIN SKY CONFERENCE · 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Daily News

Saturday, June 13, 2026 — Billings, Montana
Unofficial Record

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Micah 6:8

MORNING PLENARY

Bishop Stoneking called the final plenary session to order Saturday morning, beginning with the revisiting of **Ballot 8 reserve delegate results** — correcting a display error from Friday evening. **Brayden Go and Keria Randall** were confirmed as validly included in the ballot; results were accepted. The body then turned to the day's major votes.

CONSENT CALENDAR VOTE

The five petitions approved by legislative committees were brought to the full body for a single ratifying vote — the **Consent Calendar** — and passed. Each petition carried meaningful amendments from committee:

MSC 138 Safe Sanctuary Team — amended to require at least 2 members per district · **MSC 139** Caretaker of God's Creation — amended to add the caretaker to the Round Table · **MSC 140** Fossil Free Investments — directs conference to transition away from fossil fuel investments · **MSC 141** Clergy Minimum Compensation — 4% minimum increase · **MSC 142** Rocky Mountain College MOU
All five petitions **passed**. The body received the work of its legislative committees with thanksgiving.

2027 BUDGET VOTE

The conference voted to approve the **2027 Spending Plan totaling \$5,648,648**, presented by Treasurer **Christy Drenner** and CFA Chair **Laura Rainwater**. The plan reflects a commitment to alignment between mission and resources — with 86% of revenue from Mission Shares and major investments in staffing (41%) and WJ apportionments (29%).

The clean audit opinion, 100% apportionment payment in 2025, and this approved budget together signal a **season of renewed financial health and missional clarity** for the Mountain Sky Conference.

DELEGATE ELECTIONS — FINAL RESULTS

Delegate elections concluded Saturday morning. The conference celebrated the completion of its **inaugural full delegation** to both the 2028 General Conference (Minneapolis) and Jurisdictional Conference (Reno), including reserve and laity reserve delegates. **Brad Laurvick** hosted a new delegates orientation meeting at 1:00 p.m. in Breakout Room 1018.

ORDINATION & COMMISSIONING SERVICE

The 2026 Annual Conference reached its sacred crescendo with the **Service of Ordination and Commissioning** — a holy and joyful celebration of those answering God's call to ordained ministry in the Mountain Sky Conference. The service was both a send-off and a beginning. Preaching was offered by **Bishop David Wilson** of the Great Plains Conference, whose message — **"Shaped by Creator God, Again and Again"** — drew from **Jeremiah 18:1-6**, the vision of the potter and the clay.

Bishop Wilson's sermon was rich with image and memory. He recalled watching his aunt, **Anna Mitchell** — a self-taught Cherokee potter and the first Cherokee National Treasure — shape clay at a summer camp gathering. She told him: "A lot of times, the clay decides what it wants to do." And then: **"God is the great Potter and molds us the way he wants us to be."** That, he said, was his aha moment.

He reminded the ordinands — and the whole body — that formation is not a single moment but a lifelong process: **"Just when I think I 'got it,' it happens again!"** He described broken pottery shards still prized as art in an Albuquerque flea market: **"What was once complete, now broken, still has great meaning and use for many."** So it is with us, he said — broken, reshaped, and still beautiful in the hands of God. Closing with Romans 12:1-2 from The Message, Bishop Wilson sent the newly ordained forward: **"Take your everyday, ordinary life and place it before God as an offering... fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out."**

MIRACLE SUNDAY OFFERING

During the Ordination Service, the conference received the **Miracle Sunday** offering — a United Methodist initiative supporting the **Endowment for Theological Education** in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. Every gift is an investment in a future pastor's calling — and through that pastor, in generations of people yet to be shaped by faithful leadership.



Scan to give

Giving is still open. Scan the QR code or visit the conference website. **A small gift, given in faith, becomes part of something far larger than we may ever see.**

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

◆ **Nominations Report** — The final Nominations Report, with verbal amendments adding **Carmen Benoit, Tim Cook, Rev. Dawn Scarett, and Paul Morales**, was approved by the body.

◆ **Guiding Policies & Procedures** — The body approved an amendment to Section C500 Letter F, designating retired Deaconesses and Home Missioners as **Lay Equalization Members**. Approved without objection.

◆ **Church Mutual** — Pam Keeser (Senior Regional Rep) and team shared that MSC achieved single-digit premium increases through the use of smart sensors — a financial win for our congregations.

◆ **Bishop's Task Force on Ecumenical & Interreligious Concerns** — Logan Robertson presented, including the After Hours Den ministry and a November 6 celebration honoring Bishop Maryanne Swensen. **Adrian Miller** of the AME Zion Church was recognized.

◆ **Methodists Helping Methodists Foundation** — Kristi Kinnison invited the body to consider including MSC in estate planning, sharing a legacy impact video. commitment to radical welcome.

◆ **Wyoming District Appointments** — Read by DS Mark Calhoun. The body received these appointments with prayer.

A WORD OF CLOSING

The 2026 Mountain Sky Annual Conference ends as it began — with worship, with prayer, and with the conviction that we are called to walk boldly in the way of love.

We gathered in Billings as delegates, clergy, and laity. We passed legislation that will shape the direction of our conference. We elected a historic first delegation. We grieved together at the memorial service and celebrated together at the table of ordination. We received new leaders and honored those finishing their service. We closed churches with love and commissioned new ministers with hope. and the work of Saturday carries forward the promises made across this session. May we go from this place **shaped, renewed, and sent** — clay still in the hands of the Potter, ready to be formed again.

Go in peace. Love boldly.

Loveland Preschool

Loveland Preschool is incredibly proud to announce that, after two years of hard work from the staff, we have earned a Level 4 rating through Colorado Shines. This recognition reflects the dedication, passion, and hard work of our teachers, staff, families, and community who work together every day to provide high-quality early childhood education for our students.

Achieving a Level 4 rating is a significant accomplishment and demonstrates our commitment to creating a nurturing, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning environment where children can grow socially, emotionally, academically, and creatively. The Colorado Shines rating system recognizes programs that go above and beyond in areas such as family partnerships, staff qualifications, classroom quality, and ongoing professional development.

At Loveland Preschool, we believe that early childhood education lays the foundation for lifelong learning. This achievement affirms the care and intentionality that our staff bring into the classroom each day and highlights our mission to support every child in reaching their fullest potential.

We are deeply grateful to our families for their trust and partnership, to our teachers for their unwavering commitment, and to our community for supporting our program. Together, we celebrate this exciting milestone and look forward to continuing to grow and serve the children and families of Loveland with excellence.

Sincerely,

Miss Jen Kuzmich

Director and Lead UPK Teacher

LOVELAND PRESCHOOL INC

HAS RECEIVED A COLORADO SHINES RATING OF:



PROGRAM QUALITY RATING



Valid Through 5/31/2029



COLORADO
Department of Early Childhood



In Search of My God

by Jan Krening, December, 1991

I think everyone at sometime in his/her life, searches for the God who created us. Some search often; some early in their lives, some at mid-life crisis, some in their golden years. Some of us may search throughout the seasons.

Springtime fills me with joy and wonder, as bulbs push forth from their winter hibernation and flowers emerge. Leave sprout overnight, the grass turns green, and visions of beautiful flower gardens encompass my thoughts. Then I watch as my mother-in-law changes week by week, and day by day in her battle with cancer. In her death, reality sets in.

Colorado summers find me hiking the Rockies. Surely no one can deny the majesty of God of His existence from

the top of a mountain, above all His creation. After such magnificent reward, I return to the valley below. Somewhat fatigued, I am assaulted by sirens and shouts, traffic and work, dirty dishes and an empty house.

Fall sends my heart sailing as Larry and I set out on a month-long journey together—a dream come true. I am amazed at Niagara Falls and its tremendous and overwhelming power. I ponder at seeing a sunset in a romantic place poetically called St. Andrew-by-the-Sea. The Bay of Fundy and its every-changing coastline by the action of the tide sweeps me into wonderment. Newfoundland and its vastness enchant me, as I gaze all at once over sea, shoreline, tree, lakes and hills. I am awed and know that I stand among the work of the Great Creator. I am humbled and exalted. But the bubble is burst upon the return home. The normalcy of the “real world” sets in; work-days, appointments, deadlines and stress headaches. How distant seems the ecstasy of vacation.

Winter is settling in. Skies darken. The sun disappears a week at a time. Days run together as they all seem colder and more dismal than the one before. Around me, others are preparing, scurrying, and busy. Children’s eyes turn saucer-like in anticipation. In Church, candles glow as choirs announce the birth of the special child. Alas, my heart is awakened!

Psalm 138...“And they will sing of the ways of the Lord. For great is the glory of the Lord. He regards the lowly. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me. Thy right hand will save me. The Lord will perfect what concerns me. They loving kindness, O Lord, is everlasting.”