

# CONFERENCE PROFILE



ROCKY  
MOUNTAIN  
CONFERENCE  
UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST

WINTER 2004-2005

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**ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
CONFERENCE MINISTER SEARCH COMMITTEE**

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Greetings from the Rocky Mountain Conference!

The Rocky Mountain Conference is seeking persons interested in being our next conference minister.

This profile will introduce you to the Rocky Mountain Conference. It reviews our history, our current status, and our promises and challenges.

We are excited about our conference's future. After a year of self-assessment, the Rocky Mountain Conference is prepared to move forward and is looking for someone to lead us as we enter a new era with a new structure. We need a conference minister who will help:

- ◆ Make the conference structure more relevant to churches in the conference
- ◆ Improve communications across the conference
- ◆ Lead our conference into the twenty-first century

We are looking for someone with integrity and character, someone with strong Christian beliefs that she/he lives by. We need someone willing and capable of leading, learning, and growing into the job. We want someone with energy, enthusiasm, and passion.

We offer the challenge and in return we offer a rewarding opportunity. At the end of a decade we hope to be able to look back with pride at changes that have helped make our conference grow in spirit and strength.

To learn more about the Rocky Mountain Conference, we invite you to visit [www.rmucc.org](http://www.rmucc.org)

In Christ,

Mrs. Alice Silver  
Conference Moderator

Mr. Harley Tripp  
Chair, Search Committee

Harley Tripp, Chair • Rev. Julie Parmenter, Vice-Chair • Barb Cherrington, Corresponding Secretary  
Rev. Lisa Hart, Recording Secretary • Rev. James Foucher, Chaplain • Robbie Carlson, Hospitality  
Rev. Curt Minter • Rev. Ron Parker • Alice Silver • Gerry Venard

## **CONFERENCE MINISTER POSITION DESCRIPTION**

The RMC conference minister shall be an ordained minister with standing in the United Church of Christ, who has general supervision over the work of the conference under the guidance of the conference Board of Directors. The conference minister will meet periodically with the Board of Directors and/or the Moderator.

To fill this position we seek:

### **A Minister:**

- Who has theological competence and a deep Christian faith that he or she lives by
- Who is committed to teach the gospel with the needs of different settings in the conference in mind; expanding our understanding and practice of life in covenant
- Who has the pastoral skills to coach our ministers and support them in their ministries
- Who has a gift for pastoral discernment and presence
- Who is an effective spokesperson for the conference

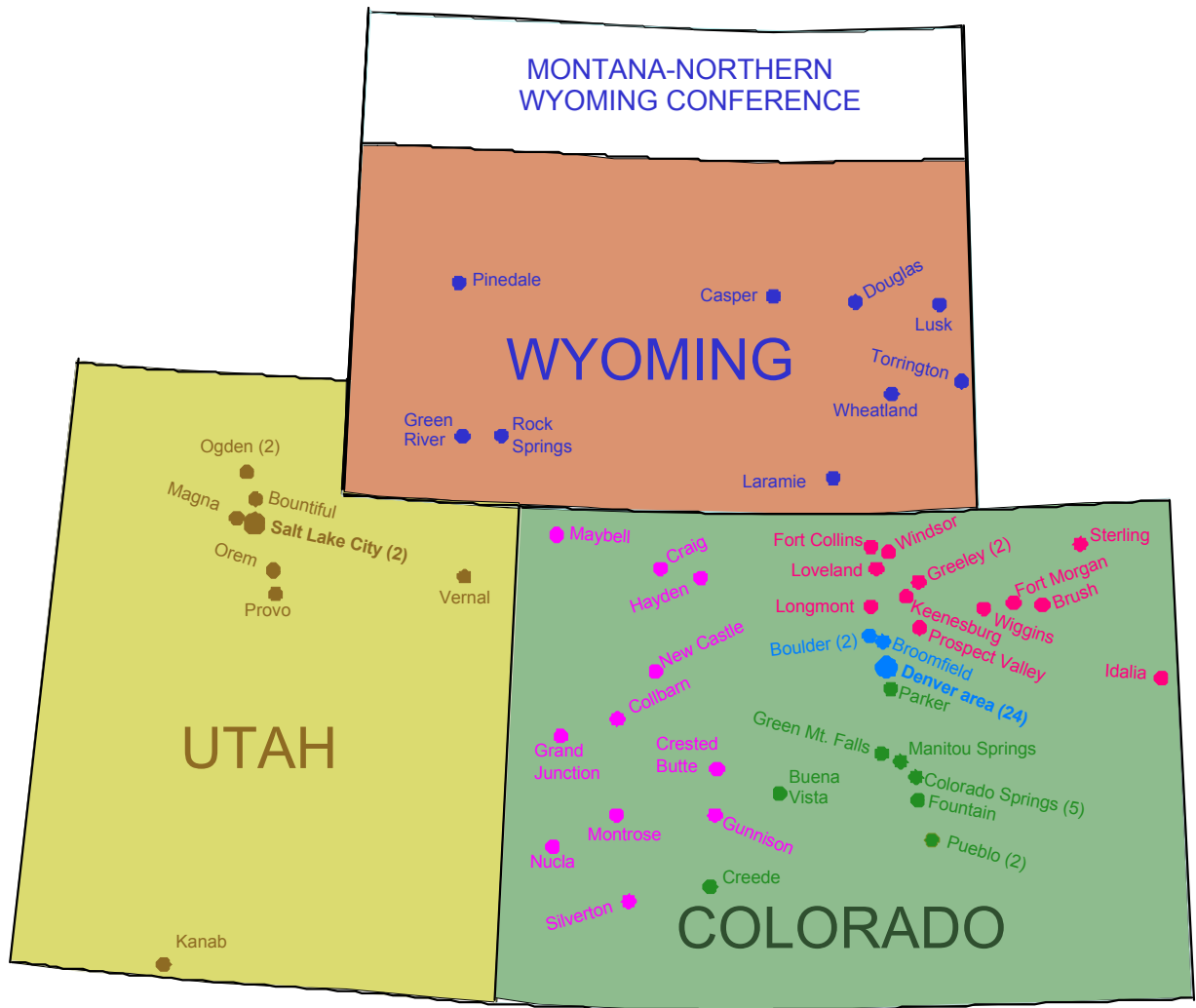
### **An Effective Executive:**

- Who has leadership skills and vision necessary for our conference to grow spiritually, numerically, and financially
- Who is able to develop strategic plans and help achieve the results
- Who is an able administrator who will set objectives. Someone with organizational, motivational and communication skills
- Who will help develop lay people and pastors for a variety of conference leadership positions
- Who has professional, interpersonal and collegial skills for relating to staff and our conference committees
- Who feels compelled to be an active participant in the work of the conference

We seek someone who brings energy, enthusiasm, and passion for this ministry; who is willing and capable of learning in this position.

The RMC has much to offer a prospective conference minister. We offer an opportunity to help make a real and meaningful change in the RMC. At the end of a decade we hope to be able to look back with pride at:

- Vital, growing churches
- Healthy, effective, faithful ministers both in our churches and other kinds of ministries
- A stronger emphasis on service, mission, and discipleship



**The Location of Churches in the Rocky Mountain Conference**

The Rocky Mountain Conference includes Colorado, Utah, and most of Wyoming. The conference churches are in six associations, four in Colorado and one in Utah and one in Wyoming.

## INTRODUCTION

To speak of the Rocky Mountain Conference, United Church of Christ is often to speak in superlatives. The vast area it encompasses makes the Rocky Mountain Conference (RMC) geographically one of the largest conferences in the United Church of Christ (UCC). Extending east to west from the Great Plains over the Rocky Mountains and Continental Divide to the High Desert with vast stretches of rugged beauty in between—from north to south through mountains, deserts, farms and ranch lands, mines and tourist mecca, cities and towns—the conference covers all of Utah and Colorado, and most of Wyoming. In spite of the great distances and long hours of travel all the associations have provided the conference with many excellent leaders.

The eighty-two churches making up the six associations in the conference are as diverse as the terrain, ranging from relatively large (1,119 members) to quite small (14 members), and from theologically liberal to theologically conservative—often within the same congregation. The congregations are rural, urban and suburban. Affirming this diversity, they covenant together as a united body under this Statement of Purpose:

*The purpose of the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ by covenant of its members is to serve God in the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ by:*

- *Providing leadership to our local churches, associations, and organizations as we seek to do ministry in the world;*
- *Caring for, nurturing, and empowering our clergy, local churches, associations, and conference for ministry;*
- *Helping to identify, develop and use resources, which are needed for ministry,*
- *Promoting the work of the wider church through denominational and ecumenical relationships and activities.<sup>1</sup>*

The Rocky Mountain Conference also covenants with the whole United Church of Christ, joining in its mission and service to the world and its action for social justice and peace. The Rocky Mountain Conference is governed not only by its own constitution but also by the Constitution of the United Church of Christ and is guided by the UCC Statement of Faith, the national UCC Mission Statement, and UCC faith stances. Rocky Mountain Conference financial support to the wider church through Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) is also backed by dedicated and enthusiastic personal service from conference members on the boards, committees, special assignments, and on-site mission work.

Population shifts are occurring in this geographical area. There is an influx of people into all three states as well as a shift from rural to urban in some areas, further increasing the sense of isolation present in some locations. Adverse effects on any one industry can precipitate emigration from the region. In areas that have been heavily reliant on defense and government contracts, ministers have sometimes found themselves preaching to a passing parade rather than to a stable congregation. Economically the area has less unemployment than other areas of the United States, at this time. However, many areas are economically depressed, thereby testing the mission and stewardship vision and commitments of many churches within the conference.

Most people in the Rocky Mountain Conference are relative newcomers to the area, but they are self-consciously western. The conference is rooted in European traditions but situated in an ethnically diverse area. In addition to Native Americans, there are communities of Asian and Pacific Americans, significant numbers of African Americans (although less than in more populous

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<sup>1</sup> From the RMC By-laws

states), and a large Hispanic population. Although the Rocky Mountain Conference has a commitment to inclusion and diversity, this ethnic and racial medley does not always translate into cultural and racial variations within the pews. There are six ethnic churches; one Samoan and two Japanese churches in Utah, and one Samoan in Colorado Springs, and a second forming in Aurora with the assistance of a local UCC congregation, two African-American churches, one in Denver, and the second in Colorado Springs. In addition, there are several churches in the Denver area sharing their facilities with Spanish-speaking congregations of diverse traditions. They may develop closer relationships than merely sharing facilities. However, most churches still largely reflect our German and Congregational Christian heritage.

The Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ and the Central Rocky Mountain Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have had a working relationship for some time with many theological similarities and ministry objectives. In addition to the current very active Global Partnership Program with the Evangelical Pentecostal Union of Venezuela (UEPV) now merged at a national level, the regional partnership between the DOC and the UCC is alive and well. For example: clergy continuing education is conducted jointly; there is a mutual recognition of ordained ministry; clergy have served as interim in each other's judicatories; the DOC uses Camp La Forêt; and some UCC congregations support the DOC Colorado Christian Home, a center for abused children. The regional ministry of the Christian church (DOC), which includes Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Northern New Mexico, has as its Executive Regional Minister the Rev. Dr. Ronald L. Parker who has Ordained Ministerial Partner standing in the UCC. Ron, a minister for 35 years, is a member of our current RMC/UCC Conference Minister Search Committee. The Chair of the Conference Ministry Committee also has Ordained Ministerial Partner standing and pastors a DOC Church.

# **CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS**

## **CURRENT CHARACTERISTICS**

The RMC is shaped by our large geographic area. We are not DEFINED by our geography. We want to be defined by our spiritual values, inclusive love, and our fellowship. Our pioneer spirit is very strong; we see a positive for every negative. With God's help we will find a way!

The RMC is a mirror of our national church in progressive theology. Our greatest pride and joy comes from the theology and values of the UCC. We are proud of our progressive theology and unity amidst diversity.

Our RMC resources include:

- Gifted and passionate people
- A demonstrated spirit of generosity
- Excellent educational opportunities, including the Iliff School of Theology, two other accredited seminaries, and the Theological Education Institute (TEI)
- La Forêt Conference and Retreat Center
- A special relationship with the Disciples of Christ – examples include a global partnership with Venezuela and TEI
- Natural beauty of our surroundings

The current conference structure is being revised to better meet the needs of the churches and associations. The Board of Directors appointed a Transition Task Force in 2003 and has begun implementing its recommendations. The Board of Directors recently hired a new part-time Interim associate conference minister to assist in implementing the God is Still Speaking Initiative. They are investigating ways to enhance care and support of clergy and church leaders at the association level, and they are looking at ways to improve liaison between churches and the conference office. The new conference minister will have a leadership role in these and other changes.

## **CONFERENCE VISION**

A major purpose of the Rocky Mountain Conference is to encourage and support local congregations so that each may be a center of worship, ministry and mission. Associations within the conference are important partners in this ministry. The 2004 report on the RMC by Connections Partners (our consultant), underscores the need for effective interrelations and shared responsibility within and among these several settings of ministry. The large geographical area of the conference and the relatively small conference staff makes this shared responsibility imperative.

Our vision of what the RMC should look like includes:

- Spiritual mentoring of ministers and laity will be a top priority
- Churches will grow and members will contribute financially and be actively engaged in covenantal relationships of local, association, conference, and national church settings
- Caring and open communication will be common practice
- A planned giving program for the RMC will be implemented and multiple revenue streams will be developed
- Leadership from within the RMC will be nurtured for church vocations
- Qualified clergy from outside the conference will be drawn to the RMC
- Youth will be a more active, vital part of the current church and as future members and leaders
- The programs, goals, and priorities of the churches, associations, the RMC, and the National Church will be synergistic
- The associations will be more visibly involved in the ministry within the RMC

## A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

With the exception of the large geographical size, the RMC is statistically an average UCC conference. <sup>1</sup>

- Thirty of the 39 UCC conferences have more churches than the 82 churches in the RMC
- With an average congregation size of 219, we are above the 208-member average for UCC churches in the United States. As shown on the table below, the distribution of the sizes of the churches in the RMC is very similar to the distribution of all UCC churches
- With 17,951 members, we are well below the “average conference” that has 34,000 members. Yet 16 conferences have fewer members
- Our average pastor's salary of \$45,000 ranked eleventh among all conferences of those reported to the UCC Pension Boards in 2003
- The \$28.05 of basic support per member places the RMC thirteenth among all the conferences and above the average
- Nationwide, 0.44% of the population belongs to UCC churches. In Colorado and Wyoming 0.36% of the population are members of UCC churches
- The geographical size dominates the RMC. With almost 300,000 square miles, the geographic area of the RMC places it among the largest conferences. The state of Colorado is almost as large as seven of the New England States combined. The distance from eastern Colorado to southwestern Utah is further than the distance between Washington D.C. and Chicago
- Of the 260 Congregational churches founded during the church's first century in Colorado 190 churches had disappeared by 1960

### **Sizes of RMC Churches Compared with the UCC Average Church Sizes**

ASSOCIATION NAME	NUMBER OF CHURCHES	NUMBER OF MEMBERS	NUMBER OF CHURCH MEMBERS						
			50 OR LESS	51 TO 100	101 TO 200	201 TO 400	401 TO 600	601 TO 1000	OVER 1000
METRO-DENVER	27	6,799	5	2	11	5		2	2
NORTHEASTERN	12	4,042		1	3	4	3		1
SOUTHEASTERN	13	3,435	2	2	2	4	1	2	
UTAH	10	1,040	3	4	2	1			
WESTERN	11	1,128	4	2	4	1			
WYOMING	9	1,507		1	5	3			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>17,951</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
PERCENT OF VARIOUS SIZE RMC CHURCHES			17.1%	14.6%	32.9%	22.0%	4.9%	4.9%	3.7%
PERCENT OF ALL UCC CHURCHES			14.2%	19.4%	26.0%	25.0%	8.9%	4.7%	1.8%

<sup>1</sup> from The United Church of Christ 2003 and 2004 yearbooks.

## THE RMC AT A GLANCE

While the Rocky Mountain Conference is in no way divided theologically by our geography, we are most easily described by that geography. Covering a large physical expanse of alternately dense urban areas, wide-open plains, and mountains, our embodiment of the United Church of Christ is rich and diverse. Take a tour with us of 82 churches and three beautiful states.

- **COLORADO** Number of UCC churches: 63 (plus 1 schedule-one church)

The concentration of UCC churches in our conference is heaviest in Colorado, which is home to 77% of them. The membership concentration is even higher with 15,404 members (86%). Over half the churches (57%) with close to three-quarters of the conference membership are located in eleven front range counties which extend from south to north, along and to the east of the Continental Divide of the Rocky Mountains.

This concentration of churches along the front range means that 14% of the membership is scattered over vast geographical areas of western Colorado, the whole state of Utah and much of the state of Wyoming. The Rocky Mountain range and the Continental Divide which runs through it, tend to isolate the churches on the west side of the Continental Divide from those on the eastern plains of Colorado and Wyoming.

The 2000 census revealed a total population of 4,301,261 persons in the state of Colorado. Of the total population, 74.5% are Caucasian, 3.8% are African-American, 1.0% are American Indian, and 2.3% are Asian Pacific. The 700,000 Hispanics that are 17.5% of the state's population are heavily concentrated in southern and eastern counties. This Hispanic population is not only a dynamic force in the present, but also a key element in the history of the state, having been the earliest settlers in the area.

In the past, Colorado's economy relied primarily on agriculture and mining. As these two industries have faded in importance in recent years, new industries have grown to take their place. Manufacturing now employs 13% of the work force. Products include electronic instruments, computers, food items and non-electrical machinery. Colorado is also home to the research and manufacture of many products used in space exploration.

The area of Colorado west of the Continental Divide has experienced growth in mountain communities and resort towns. Two driving forces are the growth in the numbers of tourists who visit the state and the number of retirees moving into these areas. Tourism is a vital source of state revenue with over 9% of all jobs in Colorado tied to the tourist industry. Millions of people visit the state each year to enjoy its scenic, historic and recreational attractions. One of the most important trends is the development of partnerships between the family ranch and agricultural landowners, preservation groups, and developers, federal agencies and local citizens, all of whom contribute to an atmosphere of cooperation and appreciation for the integrity of creation.

The Denver metropolitan area is the largest population center in the state. A significant part of the state's economy (9% of the workforce statewide) is the result of national defense related activities, especially in the Denver and Colorado Springs, where five large military installations are located.

Colorado Springs, the second largest metropolitan area, is the home of the United States Air Force Academy. Colorado Springs has also evolved into a major center of Christian conservatism, serving as headquarters to Focus on the Family and the birthplace of Promise Keepers.

Most of Colorado has a semi-arid climate with an average rainfall of 10-20 inches each year and a low humidity. Most agriculture, gardens, and home lawns depend on irrigation. Water rights and usage are major concerns. Colorado has the highest elevation of the lower 48 states. Fifty-four of the Colorado's mountain peaks rise above 14,000 feet. The lowest point in the state is

3,350 feet above sea level. The elevation of the cities and towns with UCC churches varies from Sterling at 3,950 feet to Crested Butte at 9,000 feet and Silverton at 9,300 feet.

The average educational level attained in Colorado is the highest in the nation. In addition to the Colorado state system of universities and colleges, there are a number of independent colleges and universities including Colorado College, Colorado Technical College, Naropa University, Regis University, Teikyo Loretto Heights University and the University of Denver.

Finally, three of the congregations of the Metropolitan Denver Association of the Rocky Mountain Conference are ecumenical churches, affiliated with the United Presbyterian and United Methodist Churches.

- **UTAH** - Number of UCC Churches: 10

Eight of the ten churches in Utah are in the Salt Lake City metropolitan area, the major population area of Utah with 80% of the state's population of 2,233,000 (as of the 2000 census). These include: Bountiful Community UCC, Japanese Christian (Ogden), Ogden UCC Congregational, Orem Community UCC, Community UCC (Provo), Holladay UCC (Salt Lake City), First Samoan United Congregational Christian UCC (Magna), and Japanese Church of Christ in Salt Lake. Kingsbury Community UCC in Vernal is 175 miles from Salt Lake City near the Colorado border and the United Church of Kanab-Fredonia is 202 miles south of Salt Lake City, near the Arizona border and 600 miles from the conference office in Denver.

The largest congregation in the Utah Association has 351 members. The ethnic Japanese churches are federated churches that report half of their membership to the UCC and half to the Presbyterian Church, USA. The Kanab church is also a joint denominational ministry.

Utah was the eighth fastest growing state during the 1990's and the projected rate of population growth is expected to be higher than any other state in the U.S. This expected growth rate is twice the national average. Utah is also home to the youngest population in the nation with the median age in 2010 expected to be 29 years versus 39 years for the rest of the nation. There is a relatively small ethnic population; currently less than 10% of the total, but the population continues to grow with implications for new church starts.

Businesses are looking at relocating to Utah because of the well-educated work force. There are already a high number of federal programs located in this area. The unemployment rate in the state has been consistently about 2% below the national average and the state has been listed in several national publications as among the highest standard of living.

Unique to Utah is the presence and socioeconomic domination of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which comprises 50% of Salt Lake City's population and 90% of the state's more rural municipalities. The Mormon Church is one of the two largest holders of securities in the United States. In addition Roman Catholics comprise approximately 4% of the population and the remainder of denominations about 5%. It is estimated that approximately 20% of the population of Utah is not actively affiliated with any church.

People living in areas away from the central population area experience the challenge of living in a community that may be more than 90% Mormon. The ministry in these areas is truly a call to mission! Particularly difficult are the isolation and the feelings of ostracism experienced by non-Mormon children. It has been difficult to retain pastors because of these pressures.

Like Colorado, Utah is a beautiful state with many natural attractions. Utah contains five national parks, seven national monuments, eleven state parks, eleven historic areas, and twenty-three lakes and water recreation areas.

• **WYOMING** -Number of UCC Churches: 9

Stretching over 400 miles from east to west and 300 miles from north to south, Wyoming is one of the largest states in the United States in area, but is the smallest in population. By the latest count, there are 493,782 people, making Wyoming one of the few states which has two senators in Washington D.C. but only one representative in the House.

The Congregational Church arm of the UCC was one of the first religious presences in the state. The church in Rock Springs started as a Sunday school in the late 1870's and began having Sunday services in a small wooden building in 1881. These evolved to become First Congregational UCC. There are two churches in the state that are part of the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference. The remainder of the UCC churches is part of the Rocky Mountain Conference. These include: First Congregational Church UCC (Casper), Congregational UCC (Douglas), Union Congregational UCC (Green River), St. Paul's UCC (Laramie), The Congregational Church of Lusk UCC, Community UCC (Pinedale), First Congregational UCC (Torrington), United Church of Christ (Wheatland), as well as the aforementioned Rock Springs Church.

Church life in Wyoming is affected by the strong influence of the Mormon Church in the western half of the state. The state is home to 52 distinct ethnic populations, many traditionally Catholic, giving those churches a strong base of influence.

Frequently thought of as a land of cowboys and jack-a-lobes, Wyoming can be deceiving to the uninitiated. Like Utah, it has a younger than national average population and the levels of income and education are higher than the national averages. Wyoming is a state of transplants, which belies its small population. Many of its citizens come from other areas of the country and live far from family and friends. There is an openness and friendliness among people as they form new families and communities.

An independent spirit and attitude are significant factors for anyone coming to Wyoming. There seems to be a predilection for personal autonomy and independence, which affects all aspects of life from status symbols to church. For example, Wyoming was the first state in the U.S. to have women's suffrage, beginning in 1869, and has been called "The Equality State."

Several overland trails and the railroad brought settlers to and through Wyoming. Highways have replaced trails, but trains and freeways still move people and materials. A significant portion of the population is relatively transient, coming into the state during boom cycles and leaving at times of bust. Many workers are shift-workers for Wyoming's coal mines and deposits of oil and gas. The southwestern third of the state produces 95% of the world's baking soda. These industries play a role in the quality of family, community and church participation. It has also been observed that alcohol lubricates the social interaction of a transient, isolated population and the shadow of potential alcoholism is an ever-present reality.

There is no single industry that predominates in the state. The eastern areas are largely agricultural. The federal government owns fifty percent of the land in Wyoming and many of the holdings include national parks. With the presence of many natural wonders such as Yellowstone, Grand Tetons and Devil's Tower National Park, tourism and recreation have also become major industries.

All three states are beautiful and breathtaking. Members of United Church of Christ in the Rocky Mountain Conference consider ourselves truly blessed to live in this segment of God's glorious creation. For further information on the area of the conference, consult the following web sites:

[www.colorado.com](http://www.colorado.com) (tourism)

[www.denverchamber.org](http://www.denverchamber.org) (area info/housing)

[www.denvergov.org](http://www.denvergov.org) (local sites/history/about Denver)

[www.salt-lake-valley-living.com](http://www.salt-lake-valley-living.com)

[www.state.ut.us](http://www.state.ut.us)

## CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	2002 ACTUAL	2003 ACTUAL	2004 BUDGET
<b>REVENUE</b>			
OCWM	\$540,467	\$511,535	\$500,000
PER CAPITA	\$83,212	\$82,758	\$83,000
NIN OFFERING	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$8,500
FAITH NURTURE RETREATS	\$67,818	\$38,070	\$43,050
FAITH NURTURE CAMPS	\$89,645	\$86,223	\$83,130
ROCKY MOUNTAIN FOUNDATION			\$18,964
MISCELLANEOUS	\$832	\$2,294	\$14,327
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$790,474</b>	<b>\$729,380</b>	<b>\$750,971</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>			
<b>BASIC OPERATIONS</b>	<b>\$74,489</b>	<b>\$55,810</b>	<b>\$62,665</b>
<b>CHURCH DEVELOPMENT AND RENEWAL</b>	<b>\$6,356</b>	<b>\$4,467</b>	<b>\$8,700</b>
<b>COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES</b>	<b>\$14,366</b>	<b>\$15,396</b>	<b>\$29,000</b>
<b>CONSULTANTS</b>			<b>\$30,000</b>
<b>RESERVES (GENERAL SYNOD, STEWARD ED, SABBATICAL)</b>	<b>\$6,397</b>	<b>\$6,396</b>	<b>\$9,800</b>
<b>STAFF SERVICES</b>			
INSURANCE, RETIREMENT, PAYROLL TAXES	\$61,303	\$66,225	\$40,009
SALARIES AND WAGES	\$224,000	\$252,130	\$189,176
TRAVEL - STAFF & VEHICLE EXPENSES	\$29,932	\$24,607	\$29,500
OTHER	\$9,066	\$910	\$3,500
<b>TOTAL STAFF SERVICES</b>	<b>\$324,301</b>	<b>\$343,872</b>	<b>\$262,185</b>
<b>PROGRAM SUPPORT</b>			
MISSION PARTNERS	\$24,725	\$25,284	\$17,350
CROSSROADS			\$8,500
CAMPUS MINISTRIES	\$18,493	\$18,332	\$18,900
GLOBAL PARTNERS	\$2,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
ECUMENICAL MINISTRY	\$7,700	\$7,700	\$7,700
JUSTICE/PEACE TASK FORCE	\$920		\$1,000
UCC SEMINARIES	\$1,872	\$1,732	\$1,800
OCWM	\$162,140	\$102,307	\$150,000
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM SUPPORT</b>	<b>\$217,850</b>	<b>\$159,355</b>	<b>\$209,250</b>
<b>CONFERENCE MINISTRIES</b>			
FN CAMPS AND RETREATS	\$149,518	\$129,090	\$128,891
OTHER PROGRAMS AND YOUTH TRAVEL	\$8,543	\$6,006	\$10,479
<b>TOTAL CONFERENCE MINISTRIES</b>	<b>\$158,060</b>	<b>\$135,096</b>	<b>\$139,370</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$801,819</b>	<b>\$720,392</b>	<b>\$750,970</b>

## **OUR CONFERENCE STAFF**

Currently the staff consists of an acting conference minister, an interim associate conference minister for camping and Christian education (hired to work 75% of full time), a part-time interim associate conference minister to coordinate the God is Still Speaking Initiative, a full time administrative assistant, and a communications director who works a 30-hour week.

The staff has been faced with frequent turnovers in the last several years. The Rev. Bill Dalke was conference minister from 1993 to 2000. During the early part of his tenure, the staff included three one-third-time deployed associate ministers; two generalists and one program specialist for Christian education, camping and youth. When one of the three retired, the program staff position was increased to half time. The Rev. Dr. Tom Rehling was called as full-time associate conference minister for new church starts. After Bill Dalke's departure, the Rev. Lynn Simcox served as interim conference minister for about 18 months, assisted by Tom Rehling as associate conference minister and Ms. Sara Weatherman, who left in the fall of 2001, as part-time minister for Christian education. At that time the search for new support staff also began.

The Rev. Kenn Leischner was called as conference minister and began work in September 2001. Also hired at that time was Priscilla Corsi, administrative assistant, and Peggy Ice, communications director. Tom Rehling's job description was officially changed to reflect that his job had become more general. Tamara Boynton was hired as an interim associate minister for programming from November 2001 through the 2002 summer camping season, when the Rev. Clairnel Nervik was called as full-time associate conference minister for programming. Tom Rehling continued as associate conference minister, bringing the called staff to three full-time conference ministers. In May 2003, Kenn Leischner resigned. In December 2003, Clairnel Nervik resigned to return to parish ministry. Tom Rehling has led the conference since then as acting conference minister, assisted by the Rev. JoAnne Bogart as part-time interim associate conference minister and the Rev. Michael J. Leite as part-time interim associate conference minister.

## **RMC IN TRANSITION**

Following Kenn Leischner's resignation, the Board of Directors appointed a Transition Task Force to consider how best to proceed, rather than calling another interim or immediately forming a search committee. Connection Partners, a consulting firm specializing in church issues, was hired to assess the needs of the Conference and submit a report and recommendations. The report was received April 30, 2004 by the Board of Directors and presented at the Annual Meeting June 10, 2004. The entire report is accessible on the Conference website at: <[www.rmccucc.org/aboutus/aboutus.htm](http://www.rmccucc.org/aboutus/aboutus.htm)>

The Task Force organized a search committee to call a conference minister. Other staffing recommendations include hiring at least two part-time associate ministers (expanding to full time as finances allow) to deal with the geographical challenges of the conference. In September 2004, the Rev. Dr. Michael J. Leite joined the RMC staff, as a part-time interim associate conference minister to coordinate the God is Still Speaking Initiative for our Conference and to work with Tom Rehling to assist local church search committees in the search and call process.

The Board of Directors is pursuing several other Transition Task Force recommendations at present, intending to implement them as soon as is practicable.

Because of transitions in the conference leadership and the downturn in the national economy, finances in the conference have also taken a downturn. However, at the 2003 annual meeting the delegates refused to approve the recommended cut in OCWM giving to the National setting and chose to reverse the downward trend with extra-mile giving programs in various associations. The year 2003 closed with the financial picture looking far better than anticipated. We will need to continue to urge this pattern of giving as we seek to strengthen the conference

staff and leadership. The determination of the 2003 delegates to the Annual Meeting NOT to cut giving but to raise extra funds showed one of the strengths of this conference.

How does our vision project for the future? Recognizing that "the basic unit of the life and organization of the United Church of Christ is the local church" (Article IV, UCC Constitution), the Rocky Mountain Conference holds as a major purpose the encouragement and support of local congregations so that each and all may be vital centers of worship, ministry and mission. Associations within the conference are also seen as critically important partners in this ministry. Recent discernment by Connections Partners, based on surveys and conversations, underscores the need for effective interrelations and shared responsibility within and among these several settings of ministry. Communications across the large geographical area of the conference and the relatively small conference staff makes a sense of shared responsibility imperative.

The report by Connection Partners makes it very clear that people love being part of the UCC: they value our inclusivity, our affirmation of all people, our genuine caring for the disadvantaged, our stands on peace and justice. The focus of the conference vision has not always been as clear as would be most helpful, nor have funds been committed to the extent that would be equal to the challenge.

Recently the Board of Directors has signed on to the *Still Speaking* Initiative, has committed resources to it and is seeking ways to carry it out. Currently more than 30 RMC churches have chosen to "opt-in" to the initiative. The Transition Task Force and Connection Partners' report have highlighted other goals and the Board of Directors wants to begin putting these pieces together.

One piece that will need to be phased in over time is having some associate conference staff sited in the western part of the conference, to more easily reach and be reached by churches in Utah, and the western parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

Clearly, we also need to focus more intensively on stewardship/fundraising. The Rev. Anne Kear, immediate past chairperson of the conference Stewardship Committee, is trained as a Stewardship Associate and is putting together a cadre of stewardship trainers in each association. We intend to raise the profile of stewardship throughout the conference and make it more central to each church's program. This will take some real changes in thinking, as many of the churches from the German Reformed tradition are rooted in a "harvest bounty" frame of stewardship once a year. Anne is very dedicated to this stewardship vision and brings many skills to it.

Other special strengths of the conference are the La Forêt Conference and Retreat Center, Rocky Mountain Housing Development Corporation (RMHDC), Global Partners, and the tradition of having an "...Alive" event every few years. The "Alive" series has focused on various aspects of our church and all the resources we have pertaining to that aspect, such as education, spirit, mission, etc. People come from all over the conference to these special weekend events and find them very enriching and uplifting. A recent one, "Spirit Alive" in Feb 2004, had 130 participants. Our next "Alive" event, in February 2005, will focus on justice.

One of the biggest challenges in the conference is developing and maintaining communications with our churches due to the large geographic area of this three-state conference. The Rocky Mountain Conference includes 82 churches, some of which are isolated. Thus the Transition Task Force report and all evaluations have stressed having one part-time or full-time associate conference minister located on the western side of the Continental Divide.

The Rocky Mountain Conference is organized as a non-profit corporation in the State of Colorado. A copy of the conference constitution and by-laws are available at our conference website: <[www.rmccucc.org/aboutus/aboutus.htm](http://www.rmccucc.org/aboutus/aboutus.htm)>

# **OUR SPECIAL RESOURCES**

## **THE OUTDOOR MINISTRIES PROGRAM**

The Rocky Mountain Conference provides camps and retreats for children, youth, and adults. These camps and retreats provide a time, place, and program which support individuals in their Christian journey. We seek to provide participants with the opportunity and resources to build a relationship with God, God's people, and God's creation. Most of the RMC retreats and camps take place at La Forêt, our beautiful and sacred retreat center located near Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Retreats are offered three times a year for senior high and twice a year for middle school youth. A confirmation retreat is also offered for youth. Camps are offered during the summer for children, youth and adults. This summer's camps included various camps for children in grades 2 through 6; MADD (music, art, drama, and dance) Camp for grades 9-12; Grandparent and Me Camp for grandparents with children 5-11 years old, and much more!

The La Forêt Conference and Retreat Center began in 1944 when the Bemis-Taylor Foundation gave a 400-acre site with a dramatic view of Pikes Peak to the Colorado Conference. Since then, responsibility for the building and grounds and financial management was transferred to a non-profit corporation, the La Forêt Conference and Retreat Center. The La Forêt Board of Directors, which includes the conference minister, is charged with the oversight responsibility for La Forêt operations. The Faith and Nurturing Ministries Committee of RMC sponsors camps, conferences and retreats for all ages.

La Forêt is a source of pride and spiritual renewal to the whole conference. The programs are regularly sold out. The DOC also uses La Forêt for their separate program. Most of the facility has been upgraded to year-round use. The camp served the conference well for many years, but continued to be a financial burden. Several years ago while undergoing a particularly difficult economic period the conference was faced with the possibility of losing La Forêt. Many people came to rescue La Forêt and as a result a capital campaign was initiated to upgrade the camp. An independent board, yet connected to the RMC, has undertaken another capital campaign to finish the upgrades and still keep the camper costs affordable. More information is also available at the conference website and on La Forêt's website at: <[www.laforet.org](http://www.laforet.org)>. This is yet another example of the caring nature and pioneering spirit of the people in the RMC.

## **MISSION PARTNERS WITH THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE**

The RMC continues Congregationalism's long-standing commitment to education and other outreach programs. Among other programs, we help support:

The Rocky Mountain Housing Development Corp. is a faith-based, non-profit community housing effort begun in 1995. They have been active in restoration, development and construction of affordable housing and associated social services in the Metro Denver area.

The Global Partners is a joint UCC/DOC mission project with the UEPV (Union of Evangelical Pentecostals of Venezuela). This partnership in mission goes back to the mid 1990's, with mission trips several times a year, and delegates being exchanged each year. Representatives from Indianapolis have told us that our GP partnership is one of the most successful in the nation.

Advocates – Crisis Support Services is a private non-profit organization that provides crisis/victim services in Moffat County, Colorado. ACSS is committed to the empowerment of

individuals and to the elimination of emotional and physical abuse.

Crossroads Urban Center of Salt Lake City, Utah, is a nonprofit, grassroots organization, which assists and organizes low income, disabled, and minority Utahans to meet basic survival needs and to address essential issues affecting quality of life.

Food & Care Coalition of Provo, Utah works to further mentoring efforts with the local homeless population. They work with Wasatch Mental Health and Share a Smile Foundation to address mental health and dental health needs of clients. Clients of the Food & Care coalition are assisted with finding affordable housing, managing finances and locating the community resources available to them.

Goshen Faith Community Concerns of Torrington, Wyoming, addresses community problems, including youth and elderly concerns, the problems of low income and indigent minorities in Torrington, and medical assistance for children of low-income families.

Horizons Specialized Services is located in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Horizons works in partnerships with families and communities to expand opportunities for individuals with, or at risk of, developmental disabilities. Screening and therapy are provided, as well as supported living services and group homes.

Housing Justice! mobilizes diverse faith communities of Colorado to join and give voice to the struggle to secure decent and affordable housing for all.

Inter-church ARMS of Arvada, Colorado works to provide help with utility bills, gasoline costs, and groceries. In collaboration with Interfaith Hospitality Network, it provides shelter for homeless families. The ARMS Medical Needs Program is designed to pay medical bills for the poor who are uninsured or underinsured. They also sponsor a literacy education program.

Interfaith of Natrona County, Inc., of Casper, Wyoming, is a non-profit faith-based agency formed to provide emergency services to the poor in the community. Financial assistance is provided to meet basic needs, including housing, gasoline, prescriptions and utilities.

Loomiller Neighborhood Trojan Café is located in Longmont, Colorado. This facility helps to provide lunches for the over-crowded high school, helping cut back on pedestrian and auto traffic in the neighborhood.

Love in the Name of Christ in Yampa Valley and Craig, Colorado, goes by the name Love Inc. Its mission is to mobilize the church to transform lives and communities in the name of Christ. It stresses aid to clients in non-financial ways, but also help with furniture, food, school supplies, food and other basic needs.

Pikes Peak Justice & Peace Commission of Colorado Springs, Colorado, operates the Sustainable Living Program. The purpose of the commission is to facilitate growth towards justice and peace in the Pikes Peak Community. It seeks to motivate and educate the community to protect the Earth and the local ecosystem.

Plateau Valley Faith in Action is located near Collbran, Colorado. It seeks to make up the gap in health care often found in rural areas.

Regional AIDS Interfaith Network of Denver, Colorado exists to enhance the quality of life for all persons living with HIV/AIDS in Colorado through a ministry of compassion, encouragement and friendship. The assistance it provides is non-medical and non-judgmental.

Room at the Inn in Greeley, Colorado, seeks to bring relief and vital resources to homeless families in the Greeley area.

Sweetwater Family Resource Center is located in Green River, Wyoming. Its purpose is to promote the well-being of families in Sweetwater County, improving life for children and youth and promoting safe and stable families.

Westside Cares of Colorado Springs, Colorado, is an interfaith organization that seeks to unite churches in service to neighbors in need. They help with clothing, food, medication, and assistance with rent and utilities.

Agency for Campus Ministry in Logan, Utah, fosters campus ministry in Utah. It supports three ministries in Utah: Campus Christian Ministry at the University of Utah, Interfaith Student Association at Brigham Young University, and Faith and Fellowship Center at Utah State University.

United Ministries in Higher Education of Boulder, Colorado, is an ecumenical campus ministry at the University of Colorado.

The Colorado Council of Churches brings together twelve member denominations to offer a witness of unity, reconciliation, and justice.

The Wyoming Association of Churches seeks to foster an ecumenical ministry of spiritual growth through the development of community and service in Wyoming.

The Broadway Assistance Center serves food and helps with other basic needs in Denver. It operates a soup kitchen and clothing bank, as well as helping with rent, utilities, and prescriptions.

## **A SHORT HISTORY OF THE RMC**

The first non-Native American settlers in what is now Colorado were the Spanish-American farmers and shepherders who settled on Spanish Land Grants in the San Luis Valley in the early 1850s. Of course they brought their Catholic religion with them. Next, gold prospectors and miners settled much of the mountainous region of Colorado, starting on the eastern edge of the Rocky Mountains and moving gradually westward from 1859 to the mid 1880s. Until the Leadville mining boom of 1878, cattle ranching on Colorado's high plains was the state's major employer. The largest of these, the "JJ" Ranch in the lower Arkansas Valley, embraced 2,240,000 acres. With the fencing of the open range, which started in the 1880s, farming became a major industry. Around 1900, German and "Germans from Russia" immigrants introduced raising sugar beets to the high plains. Prior to the Second World War, this was the third largest crop in Colorado and Wyoming exceeded only by hay and alfalfa.

In 1858, when gold was discovered near Cherry Creek, which is now in Denver, most of the region west of the continental divide was a Ute Indian Reservation. The Cherry Creek gold discovery drew tens of thousands of people from the eastern United States, which was then suffering an economic depression. The discovery turned out to be limited and most of the people returned home that winter. But the following year a major strike was discovered twenty miles west of Denver at Central City and Black Hawk. Again the region experienced a boom and by 1860 it had 34,277 residents. Thus started the economic and population booms and busts that have dominated much of the state since then.

Fifty years ago a noted historian pointed out that as you traveled west from England and New England, the influence of the church diminished. While religious groups founded many New England communities, this was not true on the frontier. Samuel Morison noted in his classic book, *The Oxford History of the American People*, "[In eighteenth century New England] social life in the country revolved around each Congregational church."<sup>1</sup> By contrast, the mining camps in the uncouth frontier existed for one reason, to make money; and the primitive rawness of these early camps was not favorable for church activities. Early preachers found that to survive in Colorado, the church had to adapt. As one Colorado historian wrote, "The camp molded the image of the church, not the church that of the camp."<sup>2</sup> The first religions in the Colorado mining camps were the Catholics and the Methodists who sent circuit riders to Colorado in 1859. After these two, the most commonly encountered were the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Episcopal churches.

In 1863, 243 years after the Pilgrims brought the Puritan church to America, the American Home Missionary Society, the chief home missionary agency of the Congregational Church, sent the Rev. William Crawford to what had become the Colorado Territory in 1861. As the Rev. Crawford traveled west he sent reports back describing his trip. In his report on Denver, he wrote, "I preached for Mr. Day [a Presbyterian minister] in the morning, and was strongly tempted to give out that hymn of Watts:

*Lord, what a wretched land is this,  
Which yields us no supply,  
No cheering fruits, no wholesome trees,  
No streams of living joy.*

"Yet some Denverites think they have found the best spot on earth. Poor, deluded mortals!"<sup>3</sup>

The Rev. Crawford organized Colorado's first Congregational church at Central City that year and helped organize the First Congregational Churches of Boulder and of Denver the following year. On January 16, 1866, ministers and delegates from Central City, Boulder, and Denver met in Empire, a mining camp five miles north of Georgetown, for the first General Conference of the Congregational Churches of Colorado. They ordained Harvey Mellis, an Andover Seminary graduate who had volunteered to come to Empire when no one else would. That same day, the

Empire Church became the fourth Congregational church in Colorado. Eight Congregational Churches existed a decade later in 1876, when Colorado became a state.<sup>4</sup>

As the Western Slope opened to settlers in the early 1880s, Congregational churches were organized in frontier towns such as Crested Butte, Gunnison, and Durango. By 1885, Colorado could claim 30 Congregational churches. But, in the harsh environment of the frontier, most of these churches were very fragile. The Central City church closed in 1881 and the Empire church closed in 1877. Congregational churches in mining camps, such as Aspen, Breckenridge, Pitkin, and Ruby Camp closed a few years later when the towns' populations fizzled. For various reasons, other Congregational churches changed denominations. Of the 260 Congregational churches founded during the church's first century in Colorado 190 churches had disappeared by 1960.

Even before prospectors started exploring Colorado, Mormons settled in Utah in 1847. Unlike the mission churches in Colorado, the Mormons brought their church with them and "Utah" and "Mormon" became almost synonymous. The first non-Mormon church in Utah, the First Congregational Church in Salt Lake City, opened in 1865. This church served all of the Protestants and Catholics in the area until other denominations gradually opened churches. The Mormon-dominated schools resulted in denominational schools being established. Many of Utah's Congregational churches were formed in conjunction with these schools and by 1888 the Congregational church had started thirty of Utah's 99 denominational schools.<sup>5</sup>

In 1869, the Congregational church started the First Congregational Church in Cheyenne, then a wild railroad town in eastern Wyoming. Additional Congregational churches were founded in other railroad towns across Wyoming. In western Wyoming the Rock Springs First Congregational Church was started in 1881. Over the years a few more western Wyoming churches were organized. Many of these churches were small and isolated. These western Wyoming churches, along with the Utah and Idaho churches organized the Intermountain Convention in 1951, which became the Intermountain Conference in 1965.

Although the early Colorado churches struggled, they continued Congregationalism's long-standing commitment to education. In 1874 the Congregational Church established The Colorado College in Colorado Springs. Woodrow Wilson and Katherine Lee Bates taught summer school at Colorado College in 1893. That summer, on a trip up Pikes Peak, Miss Bates wrote the poem "America the Beautiful" which was published a few years later in the *Congregationalist*. Although the college dropped its Congregational tie in 1907, it remains close to the RMC.

Early Colorado churches also practiced equality in ministry. Several of the first women to become pastors in Colorado were Congregational ministers. In 1894 the Rev. Mary Bumstead became the pastor at Highland Lake<sup>6</sup> and in 1908 the Rev. Kate Haus became the pastor at Hayden.

During the first half of the twentieth century the most significant development in Colorado Congregational churches was the emphasis on social gospel and other outreach programs. They stood for equal rights and complete justice for all in the state and "have exercised a tremendous influence on public opinion in Colorado."<sup>7</sup> Several Congregational Churches helped found hospitals. In 1923 the Congregational church in Hayden, along with one of its members, Farrington R. Carpenter, founded the J. V. Solandt Memorial Hospital, at that time the only accredited hospital between Denver and Salt Lake City.<sup>8</sup> This hospital is still used several days a week by visiting doctors.

Not all of the RMC churches started as mission churches. Starting in 1763 over a million Germans moved to the Volga River and Odessa regions of Russia under a special charter from Catherine the Great of Russia, that gave them "unhindered freedom of worship,"<sup>9</sup> local autonomy, and exemption from military service. For a century they kept their mother tongue, schools, and churches. Then, in the 1870s changes in Russia led many of these German-Russians to migrate to the United States. Between 1869 and World War I a large number of Germans from Russia settled in Colorado. By 1915, nearly ten percent of Colorado's population was of German or Austrian origin and in 1970 descendants of Germans from Russia were the second largest ethnic group in Colorado, exceeded only by the Spanish-speaking people.<sup>10</sup>

For these hardworking, thrifty Germans from Russia, "lay prayer meetings were at the center of their lives."<sup>11</sup> Congregationalism appealed to these former Lutherans and in 1871 they organized the General Evangelical Church Assembly of German Congregationalists in Crete, Nebraska. These German Congregationalists organized their first Colorado church in Globeville (now in Denver), in 1894. Over the next few years they organized 33 additional churches in Colorado and at times there were more German Congregational churches in Colorado than in any other state. They grew so rapidly that in 1914 the Board of Home Missions established an academy at Fort Collins to train their ministers. However, after two or three years the academy closed.<sup>12</sup> In 1927, the National Council formally incorporated the German Congregationalists into the main stream of Congregationalism and recognized them as the equivalent of a state conference.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1880s, a second group of German immigrants, many of whom were members of the German Evangelical Synod originally from Prussia, started moving to Colorado and Wyoming. Their first church, now Salem UCC in Denver, was established in 1884. When the Evangelical and Reformed Churches merged in 1934, Salem and more than a dozen other Evangelical churches and one Reformed church formed the Rocky Mountain Synod.

In the late 1950s, when the national Evangelical and Reformed Church merged with the Congregational Christian Church to form the UCC, the Colorado and Wyoming churches in the German Congregational Conference became the German Association of the new Colorado Conference of the UCC. A major challenge of merging the German Evangelical and the German Congregational churches with the Congregational Christian churches was the diversity of beliefs. The churches in the new conference ranged from theologically conservative to liberal. In towns such as Denver, where both English and German churches existed they frequently were as different as two distinctly different denominations.<sup>14</sup> Until the Second World War, many Germans spoke German in their churches, used a catechism, and the same traditional service they had used in Russia or Germany. The descendents of these Germans are still often troubled by the UCC emphasis on social action. Eight RMC churches in the Northeastern Association trace their roots to the Germans from Russia churches and two more were Evangelical churches. Several churches in other RMC associations can also trace their roots to these two German groups.

Another merger occurred in 1974 when the Utah and Wyoming churches of the Intermountain Conference merged with the Colorado Conference to form the Rocky Mountain Conference. Although the churches in the Intermountain Conference were strong, there were too few congregations in too large a geographic area to support a viable UCC conference. This merger doubled the size of the old Colorado Conference. The theological diversity and communications difficulties resulting from the immense geographical area still challenges the RMC.

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<sup>1</sup> Morison, Samuel Eliot, The Oxford History of the American People, Oxford University Press, New York, 1985. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Duane A., Rocky Mountain Mining Camps – The Urbane Frontier, Indiana University Press, 1967. 106.

<sup>3</sup> Goodyknott, Colin B., "Colorado as Seen by a Home Missionary, 1863-1868." Colorado Magazine, March 1935, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> Hopkins, Walter S. and Millikin, Virginia Greene, The Bible and the Gold Rush, a Century of Congregationalism in Colorado 1863-1963, Big Mountain Press, Denver, 1962. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Workers Project Administration, UTAH - A Guide to the State, Hastings House New York, 1954. 62.

<sup>6</sup> Noel, Tom, "Female preacher had role in town's legacy", Rock Mountain News 14 August 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Hopkins and Millikin. 277.

<sup>8</sup> Farrington R. Carpenter, Confessions of a Maverick, State Historical Society of Colorado, 1984. 104-12.

<sup>9</sup> Chrystal, William G, "German Congregationalism on the American Frontier," <<http://www.ucc.org/aboutus/histories/chapt5.htm>>

<sup>10</sup> Rock, Kenneth W., "Unsere Leute": The Germans from Russia in Colorado." Colorado Magazine, July 1977. 129-130.

<sup>11</sup> Crystal, William G.

<sup>12</sup> History and Program-United Church of Christ, United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 2002. 37.

<sup>13</sup> von Rohr, John, The Shaping of American Congregationalism 1620-1957, United Church Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1992. 338.

<sup>14</sup> "The Religious History of German/Russians in the USA," California District Council Report 24, Fall 2003, pages 6 and 7. ([www.lib.ndus.nodak.edu/grhc/history\\_culture/history/germanintheusa.html](http://www.lib.ndus.nodak.edu/grhc/history_culture/history/germanintheusa.html))