



WYOMING ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES

**An ecumenical community whose mission is to foster and promote
spiritual growth, stewardship of the land, and social justice
in Wyoming, since 1976**

2011

2011 Report Wyoming Association of Churches

The Wyoming Association of Churches (WAC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization independent from any other national organization.

The mission of the Wyoming Association of Churches is to foster and promote spiritual living, stewardship of the land and social justice.

The Wyoming Association of Churches formed in 1976, formerly known as the Wyoming Church Coalition. It replaced the Wyoming Council of Churches that had formed in the mid 1960's.

Congregations, religious organizations, and individuals and families may join the Wyoming Association of Churches.

3 Active Teams/9 Denominations:

WAC's 3 teams, Spiritual Life, Sacred Ground and Peace & Justice, implement WAC's mission.

Board members are appointed by the judicatories of 9 denominations with churches in Wyoming: American Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalians, Friends (Quakers), Lutherans (ELCA), Presbyterians (USA), Roman Catholics, United Methodists and United Church of Christ.



Executive Director: Chesie Lee became WAC's executive director in March of this year. Chesie, an attorney at law, has been a certified lay speaker and is a graduate of the 2-year Academy for Spiritual Formation. She has lived in Wyoming 25 years and has extensive experience with nonprofits and in church leadership. She was the primary founder of Jubilee House, Inc., a transition home in Douglas, for women coming out of prison. She lives in Laramie where she's a member of the First United Methodist Church. She enjoys reading, writing and travel.

Rev. Warren Murphy volunteers as the Environmental Projects Coordinator working with the Sacred Ground Team. He lives in Cody and is former director of WAC from 2003 to 2008. In 2011 he published a book entitled *On Sacred Ground: A Religious and Spiritual History of Wyoming*. The proceeds of the book will be equally shared with the Wyoming Association of Churches and the Thomas the Apostle Center.



Warren is the one on the right.



At WAC's Annual Meeting and Retreat at Thomas the Apostle Center in Cody in September: Front left to right: Sally Palmer, Dee Lundberg, Dwight Welch, Chesie Lee, Mary Beth Mankin, and Becky Anderson; Back row: Jim Carlson, Warren Murphy, Tim Trippel, Steven Mitchell, Carl Carmichael, Doug Goodwin, Bill Mankin and Donn Kesselheim. These and the others attending not pictured explored God's call to WAC for action in Wyoming.

Faith in Action in 2011

A Faith Response to Immigration, It Begins with Understanding the Issues workshop was held in Cheyenne at First Presbyterian Church, January 8 with 50 participants from throughout Wyoming.



Speakers: (left to right): Carmina Oaks, Social Services, Jackson; Jen Smyers, Church World Services, D.C.; Floyd Esquibel, Wyoming Senate, Cheyenne; Amy Mendez, Presbyterian, Denver; and Stevon Lucero, Artist, Mural Presentation: *Walls that Speak*

Presence at Wyoming State Legislature:

Priorities for advocacy in 2011 were:

- Immigration clone to Arizona's bill – opposed
- State Lottery – opposed
- Funding for Nursery at Women's Prison – supported

With WAC's hard work, the immigration and state lottery bills were defeated. The nursery was delayed until the 2012 budget session. WAC also spoke on other bills reflecting WAC's positions on social justice. Positions taken by WAC on public policy requires a consensus of the board of directors.



Boar's Tusk at Sunset

Raising Red Desert Awareness: In late April, events were held in Lander, Rock Springs, Casper and Laramie to highlight the beauty of Wyoming's Red Desert. June 17-18, a Rendezvous included ground and flight tours, an art show, dinner, symposium and ecumenical worship. About 200 participated in the events. The Red Desert, home to much wildlife, has no protected areas. WAC supports protections of some of the unique and sacred features of the Red Desert public land from development.



New Pastors Retreat: WAC welcomed new clergy to Wyoming by hosting a retreat held at Ring Lake Ranch August 22-23 led by WAC leaders. WAC provides support for those new to the ministry and/or new to Wyoming.

Sowing Seeds of Peace on 9/11: WAC co-sponsored with other faith groups, including Jews and Muslims, a gathering in Laramie to symbolically sow peace. A Peace Garden was planted at the Albany County Courthouse.



Open discussion allows for increased understanding.

Forging Consensus on Immigration Summit:

WAC co-sponsored a Mountain West Summit in Salt Lake City with 60 participating from Colorado, Utah, Idaho and Wyoming. Rev. Steven Mitchell, leader of WAC's Peace & Justice Team, represented WAC on a panel to highlight faith-based perspectives. *The Utah Impact* provides a model for Wyoming to address immigration issues in a sensible and compassionate way.



Faith intersection with immigrant communities was a topic at the Summit.

Annual Meeting and Retreat:

The Thomas Apostle Center in Cody was the site of the 2011 Annual Meeting September 21-22 that included a tour of the new interpretive center for the Heart Mountain Internment Camp led by Rev. Warren Murphy and Ann Wafer leading the retreat theme of Spiritual Wholeness. Participants explored WAC's future direction. Poverty, immigration, juvenile justice, public lands and environmental protections were selected to be issues for the WAC teams to address in 2012.

Officers elected for 2012 are: Rev. Doug Goodwin from Sheridan as chair, Rev. Dee Lundberg from Casper as vice-chair, Rev. Rebekah Simon-Peter from Casper as secretary and Dr. Bill Mankin from Laramie as Treasurer. They represent Disciples of Christ, United Church of Christ, United Methodists and American Baptists respectively.



CIVILITY MATTERS!
Open conversations. Thoughtful provocations. Shared community understanding.

DIALOGUES

WAC sponsored town-meeting style dialogues on 3 Wyoming issues on October 8 in Casper. The topics included judicial responses to youth offenders, same sex marriage and civil unions, and providing health care for Wyoming's poor. Presenters were Beth Evans, Michael Blonigen, Bob Norris, Rodger McDaniel, Kellie Clausen and Sarah Gorin with Nimi McConigley as the dialogues moderator. The presentations were filmed and DVDs are available from WAC.

Finances:

WAC has a very modest budget; for 2011, it is under \$50,000. The judicatories collectively provide a portion of the funds (about \$20,000) for WAC's work. Grants to date from the Wyoming Humanities Council, the Wyoming Arts Council, the Wyoming Office of Multicultural Health, Resist, the National Council of Churches, the Church and Society Fund of the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church, and the Foundation of the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming brought in a total of \$18,900. WAC also needs contributions from individuals and congregations to carry out its work. The proposed budget for 2012 is \$54,500, which depends on receiving donations of more than \$15,000 from individuals and congregations.

2011 WAC'S Officers and Board of Directors

- Rev. Tim Trippel, Chair, Lutheran (ELCA), Worland
- Rev. Doug Goodwin, Vice-Chair and Chair Elect, Disciples of Christ, Sheridan
- Rev. Dee Lundberg, Vice Chair Elect, United Church of Christ, Casper
- Rev. Curtis Tutterrow, Past Secretary, United Church of Christ, Green River (resigned due to health)
- Rev. Rebekah Simon-Peter, Secretary, United Methodist, Casper
- Dr. Bill Mankin, Treasurer, American Baptist, Laramie
- **Other Board Members and Alternates*:**
- Fr. Robert Fox, Catholic , Casper
- Becky Strout, Episcopalian, Jackson
- Rev. Becky Anderson, Presbyterian, Greybull
- Rev. Steven Mitchell, United Church of Christ, Rock Springs
- Gil Smith*, Lutheran (ELCA), Shell
- Rev. John Dyce, United Church of Christ, Buffalo
- Rev. Dwight Welch*, United Church of Christ, Sheridan
- Rev. Linda Wells*, United Methodist Church, Douglas
- Donn Kesselheim, Wyoming Friends, Lander
- Chelsea Kesselheim*, Wyoming Friends, Lander
- Carl Carmichael, United Methodist Church, Sheridan
- Rev. Mary Beth Mankin, American Baptist, Laramie
- Rev. Dr. Bryant Badger, Disciples of Christ, Casper

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