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Dear Montana Synod Assembly,

God's peace and blessing be with you as you meet together in Great Falls to celebrate the life and ministry of the MT Synod. The prayers of the Montana Association of Christians (MAC) council go with you – rejoicing in your ministry and our walking together ecumenically in ministry in MT.

Thanks to the sustained efforts of Bishop Jessica Crist, Pastor Peter Erickson, and many other dedicated Lutherans, along with their sisters and brothers in Christ from other traditions, the new MAC, with new bylaws and invigorated purpose, has been reborn and is gaining footing.

- ✓ We have a new, dynamic website www.macmt.org and a re-invigorated Facebook page. MAC is not only publishing MAC news and events, but also now has a MAC reviewed Community Bulletin Board for giving voice to events and information important to MAC members. Through this venue, for example, events such as the January Peace Vigil in Missoula, Helena, Bozeman, and Billings, and the February Mountains of Courage 'conversations with the living about dying' have been shared with MAC members.
- ✓ Through multiple venues – local churches, judicatory meetings, and ecumenical gatherings – as well as person-to-person and on-line, MAC members and leaders have been inviting individuals, churches, and non-profits to engage with MAC as members and collaborative partners. While we need to increase these efforts and results, MAC is building momentum and staying financially solvent.
- ✓ MAC Presidents (past, current, and elect) have penned letters to the Governor and the MT press in support of Montana's welcoming the immigrant.
- ✓ MAC President Elect, Rev. Dave Andersen, and MAC President, Rev. Valerie Webster, have been visible in interfaith contexts: Each spoke at the January Peace Vigils – in Helena and Bozeman respectively; Rev. Dave Andersen spoke on behalf of MAC at an Evangelical – Latter Day Saints Dialogue; and Rev. Valerie Webster attended the opening of the first Islamic Community Center in (Bozeman) Montana on MAC's behalf.
- ✓ Increasingly members of our MAC Council members are participating in MAC leadership because they are personally drawn to ecumenical, social justice ministry, and not simply because they were 'assigned' to this work by the judicatory heads. This change is invigorating MAC.

- ✓ Our MAC legislative Committee, chaired by Jana Staton (UMC), has initiated regularly facilitated meetings by phone, which has resulted in greater MAC involvement in advocacy between legislative session advocacy. For example,
 - Deacon Donna Gleaves was recommended by MAC and now serves on the *Montana Partnership to End Childhood Hunger* (Children & Families);
 - Archdeacon Roxanne Klingensmith continues to serve as MAC’s representative on the *Energy Share Board* (Children & Families), and after being recommended by MAC was appointed by the Governor to serve as a Public Member on the *Commission on Sentencing* (Prisoners, Prisoner Re-entry); and
 - Pastor Peter Erickson continues to represent MAC at *ABCO*, the Abolition of the Death Penalty Coalition.

- ✓ October of 2015 we welcomed 35 participants to MAC’s annual assembly re-configured as MAC Connect 2015. Now toggling between “education” oriented offerings on non-legislative years, and “advocacy” oriented offerings on legislative years, we presented on “Deep Listening for Collaborative Service.” Our presenters included, Bishop Carol Gallagher, Episcopal Bishop for Native American Ministries, and Missioner Chuck Wynder focused on racial reconciliation.

MAC’s revised mission as of January 2016 – ‘to make visible our unity in Jesus by educating and advocating for justice and compassion, in our communities and our world’ – is beginning to take shape thanks to the support and prayers of its member judicatories, churches, and people. MAC’s wonderful history, born in the grand days of major ecumenical breakthroughs, is writing new chapters. This is vital Christian work. The Montana Synod is a vital member of MAC. We thank you for your recommitment to MAC last June and for your continued involvement. We remain a network of Christians and Christian organizations praying together as one, present in our state’s broken places, walking together in the freedom and openness of the Holy Spirit.

Sincerely,
Valerie M. Webster
The Rev. Valerie Webster, President of MAC (2016)