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August 2009

Dear Montana Association of Churches Member:

WORKING TOGETHER

American Baptist Churches
of the Northwest

Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
in Montana

Episcopal Church
Diocese of Montana

Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America
Montana Synod

Presbyterian Church (USA)
Glacier Presbytery

Presbyterian Church (USA)
Yellowstone Presbytery

Roman Catholic Diocese
of Great Falls/Billings

Roman Catholic Diocese
of Helena

United Church of Christ
Montana/Northern Wyoming
Conference

United Methodist Church
Yellowstone Conference

On October 1, 2009, the Montana Clean Indoor Air Act will be fully implemented which means you, your family, friends and co-workers will all be able to breathe the clean air which you deserve in all public places and workplaces.

The effects of secondhand smoke have been felt in each of our communities. Breathing secondhand smoke causes lung cancer, heart disease, and other fatal diseases. In fact, exposure to secondhand smoke can immediately increase a person's risk of heart attack. It also damages children's health. Exposure can cause Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and more frequent and severe asthma attacks.

MAC is partnering with the organizations Faith United Against Tobacco and Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP, which is under the Dept. of Public Health & Human Services). For successful implementation of this health protection law, we need community members in Montana to show their support. The Act requires every enclosed public place and workplace to be smokefree. It honors an individual's right to breathe clean air and protects the health of workers and the public. Over time, the law will save lives, reduce illness and stop the unnecessary drain on our health care dollars. MAC and Montana Faith United Against Tobacco agree that we have a moral and ethical imperative to accomplish these goals.

With that in mind, please consider ways to share information with your congregations and communities, such as discussions regarding this important public health issue in church, the distribution of materials, letters to the editor and providing Montana Quit Line information. I have enclosed a brochure on the Montana Clean Indoor Air Act and a list of Tobacco Prevention Specialists throughout the state. These individuals are working hard in their communities to increase educational outreach, gain community support, and plan celebration events in early fall. The services the tobacco prevention specialists provide are free of cost to any organization so please give your local person a call or send them an email! Feel free to also contact Michelle McNiven with MTUPP for more ideas. She can be reached at 406-444-6911 or mmcniven@mt.gov.

You may be hearing soon from the tobacco prevention specialist in your area. These specialists are planning "celebration" events in the weeks prior to October 1st to engage communities and supporters in promoting clean indoor air. Churches and other faith congregations are encouraged to be part of these local events, including Smokefree Sabbath celebrations which will be planned for communities across the state during the last weekend in September.

As we move toward the first day of the enactment of the Clean Indoor Air Act on October 1, 2009, let us make a commitment to help those who want to make a clean break from their nicotine addiction. There is free help available by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and plans for sharing this important information across the state. Please let me know how I can be of assistance.

Regards,

Pam Shelden, Executive Secretary