
The Good News

Volume 2020

July 15, 2020

Issue 25

Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith
(406) 453-4316

E-Mail: greatfallsucc@bresnan.net

www.greatfallsucc.org

P. O. Box 6303, 59406

like us on Facebook at First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls, MT

In Person Outdoor Worship 9:30 A.M. July 19, 2020



Grab your LAWN CHAIR and your Sunday go-to-meetin' FACE MASK and join us for our first, IN PERSON, SOCIALLY DISTANCING, worship service! We'll gather on the front lawn of the church. We'll have some visual aids to help us stay at safe distances and worship under the dome of God's big Montana sky. For those of you who will be staying home, the service will be live-streamed to Facebook and posted on Youtube by mid-afternoon. (The easiest way to get to our Facebook page if you do not regularly do Facebook is go to our website: <https://www.greatfallsucc.org>, scroll all the way to the bottom and click on the "f" (Facebook icon). **There will be no Zoom component for worship this Sunday. PLEASE NOTE THE BUILDING WILL NOT BE OPEN.**



Worship At Home- July 19, 2020

Set a Sacred Place:

Green cloth (for the Season of Growth), a candle, your favorite Bible open to Genesis 28:10-19a, a rock in a bowl or cup, a small cup or vial of oil

Settle into a comfortable place with your favorite, comforting beverage. Allow yourself to rest into the presence of God.

Read the following (note that there is language designated for individual worship as well as more than one).

We/I come to celebrate God's blessings. Surely God is in this place!

We/I come to open ourselves/myself to God's guidance and love. Surely God is in this place!

We/I come to see more clearly God's presence in our lives/my life. Surely God is in this place!

We/I come to see God in the diversity of the world. Surely God is in this place!

We/I come to pray, praise, and offer ourselves/myself to God. Surely God is in this place!

Let us worship!

Prayer

Gracious God, you have led us/me to this holy place to sit with you a while. We/I welcome your invitation and eagerly wish to please you. Open our/my eyes to see your amazing face in the eyes of those we/I encounter this day. Open our hearts/my heart to feel your assuring presence in the words spoken and heard. Open our/my hands to offer gifts of thanksgiving and love to the world. In Christ, your beloved and our savior we/I pray. Amen.

Read Genesis 28:10-19a

Reflection

Jacob was on the run from his brother from whom he had finagled their father's blessing and birthright. In short, Jacob was a bit of a scoundrel. Not what you might say one of the most righteous of people. Yet, he had this very intimate relationship with God, or, should we say, God had this rather intimate relationship with Jacob. Maybe it was God's way of getting back at Jacob for his arrogance. Whatever it was, in the night of strife, Jacob is assured of God's presence. His response was to mark the place where it happened. He took the stone that he had used for a pillow and poured oil all over it—essentially anointing it as a holy place.... because God had been there.

Give yourself some time to recall a time when you were aware of God's presence. If you can't think of a particular time, perhaps it is this time. Then allow yourself some more time to simply rest in the holy place you are in. Even if you are anxious, it is holy because God is there. If you are joyful, it is holy because God is there. If you are regretful, God is there and you are in a holy place together. If you are angry, you are angry in a holy place because God is there with you in your anger. Whatever is going on with you, God is with you. You are in a holy place. Take the container holding the rock you have brought. Slowly pour some oil over the rock and give thanks for God's presence. Consider leaving the rock in a visible place throughout the week as a reminder of God's presence.

Prayer

Ever-present God, thank you for being with me/us in good times as well as the challenging ones. Open my/our heart(s) to know your abiding presence more fully in every day. Draw me/us to an awareness of the sacredness all around me/us. Lead me/us in peace and justice, the way of Jesus, my/our Savior. Amen.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers



† Our sympathy in the death of **Kitty Braund**, 99, who passed away July 4, 2020. No service is scheduled.

† Our sympathy in the death of **Nick Cetto** who passed away July 11, 2020, age 83. A private family service will be held.

† **Jerome Garrett** (Rev. Lynne's son-in-law) will be on long term course of IV antibiotics following surgery to remove a staph infection in his skull from a previous surgery.

† **Katie** (Greg Smith's daughter) has tested positive for COVID-19 in Tennessee.

† Best wishes to **Erica, Dawn, and Ariana Mays** as Dawn transitions to a new job in Helena.



Sunday School News

On Monday, families received a survey regarding virtual Sunday school options for this fall. The Christian Education board will use this information to make decisions about upcoming children's programming. Thank you for your input! We hope to have information to share soon!

Summer Fun Kid Care Packages

Last week, children received the second of three Summer Fun Care Packages from the Christian Education Board. July's surprise extravaganza included squirting fish toys, beach balls, fish-shaped squirt guns, cross-and-bead necklace kits, fruit rollups, teddy grahams and Kool Aid. Thank you to **Susan Thomas** and **Sue Turton** for delivering these gifts to the children of our church! One more fun pack will go out in August.

Pool Party Cancelled

Amid concerns of the increasing numbers of COVID-19 in Cascade County and across the state, **the pool party on Tuesday, July 21st, has been cancelled.** Numerous families raised concerns earlier this week. After learning of these concerns, members of the Christian Education board and church leaders agreed that cancelling was the best and safest decision, and also a sad decision. Save your big splash for next year!





Fishing for Volunteers

Our week to work at the FISH Food Pantry is coming up July 27-31. If you feel comfortable volunteering one of those days from **9:00 A.M.-11:00 A.M., please call Carol Davidson at 452-6620 or 836-1862.** We will be wearing masks and gloves, wiping down surfaces often, and the families can only enter one at a time in order to stay six feet apart. Thank you very much if you are able to help distribute food to families in need!

Need to Connect?

Even though our staff is not in the building as often as they were in the past, they are still available to help you with your church needs. Staff is doing most work from home and can be reached by email below and phone numbers as listed in the church directory.



Holly: greatfallsucc@bresnan.net
Janet: janetkoostra@gmail.com
Cindy: cynthia.stevens@gfcmsu.edu
Tyler: tmenzel91@gmail.com
Lynne: pastor@greatfallsucc.org

Rev. Lynne can also be reached by phone, text, and Facebook messenger.

Holly is typically in the office on Wednesdays but the doors to the building continue to be locked. If you need to visit with Holly for something that cannot be handled via email or phone, please make arrangements with her ahead of time.

Part of our restriction to the building is to make sure we keep a safe working environment for Holly and Jetta. If you need to be in the building, please be considerate of their “bubble” and wipe down any surfaces you touch with sanitizing wipes located on the table in the Narthex.

Church Council Meeting- Monday, July 20th at 6:30 P.M.

The Church Council will continue to examine the decision to keep the church building closed until the last Sunday in November. If you have any thoughts about this, please be in touch with any member of the Council: ***Hank Branom, Dick Kloppel, Ashley Lyon, Elaine Balzer, Susan Thomas, Mary Fry, Carol Noble, Sara Branom, Bill Walters, Dave Neagle, and Greg Smith.*** Feel free to log into the meeting as well. Email/text/call Rev. Lynne for log-in information.

Gentleness in Not-so-Gentle Times

I recently learned of a daily devotional book that focuses on Virtues. Each week, a different virtue is highlighted. Each day, there is a short meditation about that virtue and a question or statement about taking that virtue more deeply into life. This past week the virtue of focus has been gentleness. Some of the questions have been powerful:

When have I given the gift of gentleness to one who has been wounded?
What difference does it make when I respond with gentleness instead of anger?
I have the power to listen quietly and respond gently in every situation.
What simple activities restore the gentleness in my spirit?

These times often don't feel so gentle. Things that shouldn't be politicized are. Social media serves to divide rather than unite. We don't know what the future will hold (we never really do but it's so obvious these days!). Uncertainty leads to anxiety which leads to fear which leads to anger... all leading away from gentleness. Loss of control over things we have taken for granted leads to disappointment, regret, and a sense of loss... which also lead away from gentleness. I find myself drawn to respond in many ways these days but few of them are gentle—towards others as well as myself.

It has been good to walk around with these questions about gentleness this week. I pray that gentleness will bless you in this time. May you be gentle with yourself and those who share

your space. May we be gentle with opinions—both given and received. May we offer the gift of gentleness to those who have been wounded (including ourselves). May we receive the gentleness of others. And may we always know the gentle presence of the one whose gentle breath stirs the dust into life.

Have a gentle week.

Rev. Lynne

***Zoom Log-ins:
Email/text/call Rev. Lynne for log-in information***

Book Study

“White Fragility- Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism”

by Robin DiAngelo (beginning July 15th)

Wednesdays, 7:00 P.M., via Zoom

The Thursday Evening Bible Study/Prayer meeting will be taking a break until after Labor Day. Watch for news for it to resume and plan to join the conversation.