

# The Good News

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

## Worship September 20, 2020 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost



For this week's worship, we will be participating in the worship offering from the  
*Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference Annual Meeting.*

It will be available in a variety of places beginning at 10:00 A.M.:

Primary transmission:

<https://vimeo.com/456314646>

Streamed to Conference Facebook page as a watch party:

<https://www.facebook.com/mnwcucc>

Shared to our own Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/greatfallsucc>

Shown as a video on our YouTube channel later in the day:

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for **First Congregational UCC Great Falls**

*The worship service will feature participants from around the conference, a virtual choir (including three of our own members), and the Rev. Traci Blackmon from the national UCC staff as preacher.*

**We will resume our virtual worship on September 27<sup>th</sup>  
through Zoom, Facebook and YouTube.**

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## Worship At Home- September 20, 2020

### Set a Sacred Space

Settle into a comfortable place with your favorite renewing beverage and nourishing snack.

Set onto a table: a green cloth for the season of growth, a lit candle, your favorite Bible opened to Exodus 33:7-10.

Be invited into a sacred time with God and those who are with you in body or spirit.

Bring to mind that the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference Annual Meeting is worshipping this day.

### Call to Worship *(consider reading responsively if there are more than one of you)*

The world belongs to God, **the earth and all its people.**

How good and how lovely it is **to live together in unity.**

Love and faith come together, **justice and peace join hands.**

If God's people were silent, **even the stones would shout aloud.**

God, open my/our lips, **And my/our mouth(s) shall proclaim your praise.**

### Prayer

**Gracious God, we pray that you will astound us with your love this day. We open our hearts to receive the stranger and the sojourner. We open our souls to receive your presence and grace. We open our hands to receive the tasks you set before us. Overwhelm us with your extravagant hospitality, your spirit of love, your call to service – so that when our worship has ended, you would continue to the world through us. Welcome, God! Welcome. Amen.**



**Scripture** – Read Exodus 33:7-10

### **Reflection**

The kind of worship described in this text would have seemed a bit odd to us prior to the pandemic of 2020. The idea of standing at the door to your tent (or home) while someone else entered the sanctuary to be in the presence of God goes against any idea of worshiping as a community and the sense that we can be in God's presence anywhere. But, now, during this time of separation due to the corona virus, it's not so odd to be in our own homes worshiping.

The pillar of cloud was one of the physical reminders of God's presence and guidance for the Israelites as they fled Egypt. It remained with them throughout their 40-year journey through the wilderness until they entered the promised land.

Since we don't have access to the physical reminders of God's presence that we keep in our own church sanctuary, what have you discovered provides that reminder for you while you worship at home? What is God giving to you this day as a promise of God's protective and guiding presence?

Although you will not have visual contact with the rest of the congregation as they worship in their homes, bring to mind the people with whom you usually sit in the sanctuary and offer a prayer for them. Bring to mind the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference as it gathers in virtual worship today and offer a prayer for God to guide the conference and wider church into the future. Bring to mind those who hold a special place in your heart and offer a prayer for them. Offer a prayer for those who are affected by the western fires, the eastern storms, and the widespread pandemic. Offer a prayer for your family and friends and for yourself.

Blow out the candle.

As you watch the smoke rise, remember the many ways that God goes with you.

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### **Daily Devotionals**

The **Upper Room** daily devotional, where the world meets to pray, is available to all who wish to receive it- both small and large print. ***They are in the brown bin to the left of the front doors of the church.*** Stop by and grab your complimentary booklet next time you're in the neighborhood!

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### **In Our Thoughts and Prayers**



† **For all the Saints...** On September 7<sup>th</sup>, the United Church of Christ lost two of our great saints. The **Rev. Avery D. Post** served as President of the UCC from 1977 to 1989. I hope you'll take a few moments and read about Rev. Post at <https://www.ucc.org/>.

The **Rev. Evan Golder** served as the editor of the UCC's monthly newspaper "United Church News" from its beginning in 1985 until 2003. The spirit he brought to the publication lifted up the freedom of the press, even in a church newspaper. To read more about Rev. Golder's life and influence, please go to the following link:

[https://www.ucc.org/news\\_evan\\_golder\\_founding\\_editor\\_of\\_united\\_church\\_news\\_dies\\_at\\_82\\_09\\_092020](https://www.ucc.org/news_evan_golder_founding_editor_of_united_church_news_dies_at_82_09_092020).

May we give thanks for the lives of those who have shaped the world and the church in ways for the better. May we live deeply into their legacies and carry the mission of love, peace and justice into the future.

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### **Christian Education News**

#### **First Zoom Sunday School Meeting**

The first-ever Zoom Sunday School Meeting took place on Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>. Four families participated in the half-hour event. Attendees talked about summer activities, the new school year and discussed ideas for future get-togethers. Future gatherings might include show-and-tell, Bingo and I Spy. These meetings will not be Sunday school lessons but are intended to be more social events for our church's children. Each meeting will include prayer and may include a brief discussion about at-home Sunday school. Gatherings will be scheduled once a month; October's meeting date will be determined soon!



### **At-Home Sunday School Ready to Go!**

Resource books have arrived and extra activities have been planned! 13 families have signed up to receive two lessons each month to do at home. Curriculum is called “*Celebrate Wonder*”, produced by Cokesbury. Each family will get a Bible storybook, a Family Activities Book and supplemental activities for learning and fun at home. The program was planned to be simple to do at home while engaging children of all ages. The first two lessons are “God Creates the Earth” and “God Creates Living Things”. Books and activity guides will be delivered by the end of the week. Happy learning! *\*If you have not signed up yet, please contact Janet Koostra, 727-8443, for more information.\**

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### ***Anti-Racism Book Study***

Our study on James Baldwin’s “The Fire Next Time” will conclude this week. ***Beginning September 27<sup>th</sup>, we will begin discussing “How to be an Anti-Racist” by Ibram X. Kendi.*** We’d love to have more people in on the conversation. Join in whether you’ve read the material or not. The Zoom login for the book study will be the same login each week:

Lynne Spencer-Smith is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Anti-Racism Book Study

Sundays at 7:00 P.M.

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

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### ***Serving West Elementary***

As most of you know, First Congregational United Church of Christ has been supporting West Elementary now for several years. Upon visiting with the secretary and the principal of West Elementary, we learned their biggest need is **underwear for boys and girls sizes 4-7, and stretch/sweat pants for boys and girls sizes 4-7, as well as socks. *These items must be new and unworn.*** Because of the virus we are suggesting a check donation made payable to FCUCC with the memo saying underwear. If you choose to donate actual Items, please put them in the big box used for food donations in front of the church.

Thank you,

Your Christian Service Board

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### ***Bible Study on The Acts of The Apostles Begins***

**Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup> at noon**

**Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 P.M.**

We’re gearing up for our Fall Bible Study on the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Like usual, our Bible Study will be offered twice a week: Wednesdays at noon and Thursdays at 7:00 P.M. As always, if you miss one session you can join in on the other one offered that week. What will be different this time is we’ll do everything on Zoom. It will be helpful to know who will be attending each day so ***if you’re planning to participate, drop Rev. Lynne a note at pastor@greatfallsucc.org or call the church office and leave a message with Holly.*** Please provide the following information:

- Your name
- Contact information (phone or email)
- Which sessions you’ll attend (Wednesdays or Thursdays)

### ***CROP Hunger Walk***

This year’s CROP Hunger Walk is going virtual! You can walk in the park, along the river, hike the mountains or around your neighborhood. You don’t even have to walk at all to contribute! **The Great Falls Ministerial Association is asking those who do walk to get your walk in between October 11<sup>th</sup> – October 18<sup>th</sup>.** Contributions to walkers can be made through our FCUCC team page at:

[https://www.crophungerwalk.org/greatfallsmt/Team/View/136458/First-Congregational-UCC.](https://www.crophungerwalk.org/greatfallsmt/Team/View/136458/First-Congregational-UCC)

**All contributions must be in by October 25<sup>th</sup>.** Although online giving is preferred, if you are not able to do so, you can send a check to the church and mark “CROP” in the memo line. Local support from this year’s walk is going to Helping Hands Ministry, a ministry that provides food and clothing to those who need a little helping hand. This ministry has been in existence for 40 years and is located in the offices of First English Lutheran Church.

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We will observe **ALL SAINTS SUNDAY** with special recognition during our **worship service on Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>**. Candle lighting will be virtual and pre-recorded. If you experienced the loss of a loved one this past year and would like them acknowledged, please let Holly in the office know **by October 26<sup>th</sup>**.

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### ***Around the Building***

We've been at this "church outside of the building" now for six months. As much as we dislike it, we're kind of getting used to a lot of this. It's easy to let a few things slip. As we watch the numbers in the nation, Montana and Cascade County rise, we are reminded that the corona virus is still active in our world. The COVID-19 related deaths in the United States are approaching the 200,000 mark. Each one of those numbers represents someone who once laughed and loved and was loved. Let us respect the price they paid by continuing to be diligent in our efforts for our own health and well-being and that of others.

**Please remember that we are continuing to keep the church closed to protect our members and our staff.** Every person that enters the building can potentially carry the virus into the space where our staff needs to be to do their work. Please do not go to the building unless you absolutely have to. If you do need to go, wear a mask (your exhalations will linger in the air after you have left the area) and wipe down all contacted surfaces with sanitizing wipes. In the near future, we will have sign-in stations located at each door in case we need to do some follow-ups with folks that have been in the building.

If you need to bring something to church or pick something up, contact Holly via email at [greatfallsucc@bresnan.net](mailto:greatfallsucc@bresnan.net) to make arrangements. We are utilizing the brown box outside the front door as a drop box as much as possible. Staff needing to do work in the building are working out a schedule to stagger their time in the building.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

### ***Notes from the Loft***



Greetings, Friends!

I hope this note finds you well and singing with great gusto from the safety and comfort of your home, car or shower. Isn't it interesting that one of the things that brings us the most pleasure, gives us a sense of belonging, encourages us and gives us a method of corporate praise is one of the worst things that we can do for ourselves and our neighbors in the pews around us?! We are in the midst of strange and interesting times.

The questions have come up, "Why can't we sing in church? Why can't we return to choir?" As we know, the COVID-19 virus travels through the air we inhale and exhale. As we are learning, the COVID-19 virus is an equal opportunity illness and attacks young and old alike. As we hope, no one will contract COVID-19 from attending or participating in a church event.

The information provided in the link included came from the Insurance Board and was sent to me by Reverend Dawn Skerritt. It comes from the Wisconsin Council of Churches and presents the reasons we can't sing together at this time. It also presents some ideas for what we *can* do.

I am pleased that we have already been able to engage in some of the suggestions presented in the report. We have been able to record music for worship services...the Cantabellé Ringers have been able to provide socially distanced hand bell music...we have held outdoor worship services...families have been able to provide music—Tyler and Norman, Karen and Raelene, Cindy and Darryl.

So even in this time that we are out of the building and therefore out of the loft and cannot meet

together as a congregation or as a choir, we are still working to provide musical offerings that support the services and needs of the church.

Sending my best until we can sing again.

Cindy Stevens

<https://www.wichurches.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Returning-to-Church-Church-Music-final.pdf>

## *Permission*

Community. Relationships. Risk. Play. Humanness. Courage. Receiving Love. Sharing Love.

These are all sections in one of the books I use frequently for meditation and devotions (“Refill: Meditations for Leading with Wisdom, Peace, and Joy” by Kirk Byron Jones).

In any other time, these topics would be great. But not so much in this time. All of those things that used to deal with being close to others have shifted. I no longer jump in the car to go out to eat with friends or go to a movie or give someone a hug after church. Things like “risk” and “courage” have to be weighed differently. Six months ago, I might have encouraged someone to take the risk to enter into a new social situation or develop the courage to face a fear that was interfering with life. Now the idea of “taking a risk” seems much more life-threatening. Courage has to be balanced with precaution.

Sometimes I just skip over those sections of the book and head for something that takes less work like “Stillness” or “Peace” or that aren’t going to depress the bejabbers out of me like “Awe” or “Holy Lunacy.” Those seem safe. Yet, all those things that once involved close physical proximity are still important parts of being a human, spiritual being. Concentrating just on the things that can be done solo feels like living an off-balanced life. It means doing things in different ways. There are days that all this “different way” stuff is exhausting. There’s nothing that says we have to be doing it all in one day.

It’s about pacing. On those days that I just can’t handle another “different way,” I settle into the stuff that’s easy to do. And on those days that I feel a bit adventurous, I delve into exploring different ways with creativity and hope: different ways of doing relationships, different ways of taking risks, different ways of being in community.

It comes down to giving ourselves permission to be exhausted and shifting our energies for that which works for us on any given day. Do what must be done for the day (like work responsibilities) and then give yourself permission to be creative or go the easy route. It’s a big picture thing. Look wide. Breathe deep. You’ve got this.

Love and blessings to you all.

Rev. Lynne

