
The Good News

Volume 2021

November 3, 2021

Issue 41

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

November 7, 2021 Stewardship Sunday/Communion Sunday Daylight Savings Time Ends

Serving in Worship
Lay Reader: Sue Skees
Ushers: Joan Dailey, Susan Thomas

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:8-16

In-Person worship will be offered in the church sanctuary at 9:30 A.M. The service will be live-streamed onto Facebook and a recording of the livestream will be available on YouTube later in the day. An abbreviated version of this service will be on the local NBC TV station at 9:30 A.M.

Remember to wear your facemask to completely cover your nose and mouth throughout the service and try to observe some physical distancing.

We will celebrate Holy Communion! Participants will be invited to come forward to be served. Elements will be handled only by those who are serving them and participants are urged to maintain physical distancing when coming forward. Those who prefer to remain seated will be provided with pre-packaged elements.

Plan to leave the sanctuary as soon as possible after our service to allow our friends from Christ United Methodist Church to prepare for their worship at 11:00 A.M.

There will be Coffee Fellowship in Fellowship Hall after the service. Please remember to wear your face mask unless you are actively eating or drinking.

Thanksgiving Potluck, November 14th, 5:00 P.M.

Sign-up sheets are available on the table in the narthex. The Fellowship Board is asking for RSVPs this year so they can plan for food, fun, and safety guidelines. Potluck items will be based on the first letter of your last name as indicated below. **Sign up on Sunday or call the church office.**

Gravy- F, G

Dressing- K, L

Mashed Potatoes- C, D, E

Sweet Potatoes- A, B

Rolls- T, U, V

Hot Vegetable- H, I, J

Relish Tray- W, X, Y, Z

Salad- M, N, O, P

Dessert- Q, R, S



Christian Education News

November 7th is Communion Sunday. Children will begin in Sunday school before joining their families for the end of worship and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. This week, older children will learn about Global Ministries from **Carol Shipley** who currently serves on Global Ministries' National Board of Directors. Younger kids will learn "Pilgrim Fun Facts" with **Janet Koostra**. Families are asked to bring turkey gravy mixes for the Thanksgiving Basket Offering Project.

Halloween Party Howling Good Fun!

About 12 kids enjoyed the Halloween Party last Sunday at church. Rooms full of games, activity sheets and treats made for a howling good time! Many thanks to **Liz Lee** and **Betsy Rogstad** for their leadership. Thanks also to **Carolee Hinckley** who helped with the party, **Erin Borland** who donated activity sheets, **Gwen and Jullian Valley** who made spooky treats, **Tom Spencer** who shopped and assembled treat bags and **Karen Spencer** for delivering treat bags to both nursery and Sunday school. It takes a lot of goblins to make a good party! Many, many thanks!

Celebrating Stewardship

What is it that brought you to this church? What about this church nurtures you? As part of our annual Stewardship Campaign, a variety of members have been asked to share their response to these questions (as well as others) in worship. Because what they have to say is so powerful, the Stewardship Board has also asked them to provide a written version to be shared in our newsletter. As you read about their stories, perhaps you could ask yourself the same questions and think about that as you consider making your annual pledge. **Here are Tyler and Norman Menzales' stories:**

When I was asked to be a stewardship speaker, I happily agreed. When I began to collect my thoughts, I realized this might not be as easy as saying, "please give your time, talents, and the money to the church."

You see, the reason I come this church, or go to any church for that matter, is to experience God. Now, this may sound heretical, but this building does not make a church. The stained glass windows, the hymn singing, not even the illuminated cross make me "experience God." My experience with God comes from the people and the work that we do.

I was born to a white, solidly middle class family in Michigan. My father is a proud atheist jaded from a childhood as a Jehovah's Witness, and my mother believes she can experience God without the ritual Sunday tradition.

My faith journey began as a teenager when curiosity brought me to a Church of Christ with my grandfather. VERY different from a congregational UCC. I can say with certainty that those four walls, stained glass windows, and cross did not make me experience God. In fact, the teachings and the hate harbored in the hearts of that church may have done more damage than good to a 12 year old grappling with his sexuality. But I did experience God in the car with my grandpa and over pancakes after church in our conversations.

After my grandfather passed, I found myself at the Free Spirit Worship Center. There was no cross, no stained glass windows, but I experienced God within the four walls of that rented dingy hall. These folks had felt cast out by a UCC church whose open and affirming vote failed. The love that was present in that room healed several spiritual wounds.

I went for a long time without entering another place of worship when I moved away from home. But when I moved to Great Falls, my husband Norman had already found this church. It was obvious that I should come along.

I can say with certainty that I have and continue to experience God there. Not because of these four walls or the Christ-like adornments, but because of each and every one of you. Together as a church, we do incredible work. We not only talk the talk, we walk the walk, combating the cruel injustices of the world. I give my time, talents, and resources to this congregation, because I see results. We are incredible community parts, and we find ways to leverage our resources in every way to do good-without pretense.

So before you grumble about joining another committee, volunteering for another event, or signing your name on another check- know that you are changing lives. You may not see all the lives you have changed, but I am here today to say that you all as this church have changed my life and I am better for it. Thank you!

Tyler Menzales



Celebrating Stewardship continued

(Norman offered his reflection on Halloween)

When I was growing up, religion was a very big aspect of my life. I grew up Catholic and went to Catholic School from kindergarten through my senior year of high school. Every school day, I attended religion class as part of my curriculum. I went to church almost EVERY Sunday, and even served as an altar boy when I became of age. I loved going to mass, hearing the organ played at full volume, and going to our social hall to eat delicious southern food. I never doubted or questioned what I was told to believe because I wanted to be a "good guy" and accepted.

But, it was also a confusing and challenging time for me because I was coming to terms with who I was as a gay, minority in my Southern, conservative community. I had been taught that being gay was a mortal sin and wrong which, as a "good guy," was devastating to me. I found myself praying a lot to God, wishing that I wasn't what I was, and thinking that I was broken. I remember at one point in my life thinking "All I have to do is to pretend to be straight until I die, and, hopefully then, I'll be good."

When I left home for college, it was a tremendous time of growth for me on so many levels. I learned how to become a better flutist, I created life-long friendships with people from so many different backgrounds, and I finally got to meet other gay people in my community who taught me that if I believed that God loved me, then that was all that mattered. Yet, even after I came out to my family, I only went to church when I came home for holiday breaks and, I felt like a hypocrite because I no longer believed in much of the Catholic doctrine that I was taught. Even though I believed in God and enjoyed going to church, I still felt alone because I could not feel comfortable being myself.

Flash forward to 2012. It was a big year for me. In May, I was lucky enough to win the principal flute position with the Great Falls Symphony even though I really had no clue where Montana was on a map at the time. In July, Tyler and I got engaged in Aspen, Colorado after a failed surprise party in which my friends accidentally told him I was in town to propose. And in September, I discovered and decided that First Congregational UCC was going to be my church.

As I reflect on my time here at UCC, I am proud and grateful to have so many shared experiences with all of you like Thanksgiving with the Koostra's and the amazing engagement party that Carol Noble and others organized for Tyler and me. On top of all this, seeing and being a part of the Open and Affirming Process to fully embrace my LGBTQ+ community has meant so much to me because it amplifies my voice to help and show love. We are one big community, one family. Everything that I have been through has taught me that God and the universe does not give us anything we can't handle. We just have to choose to handle it. Being a part of UCC helps me not feel alone or ashamed of who I am. As I stand before all of you as a man dressed up as a demented, Dalmatian-hating woman whose name will not be mentioned for copyright purposes, I know that I am loved and for me, that makes all the difference.



Thank you. Norman Menzales

136th Annual Meeting of the Montana-N. Wyoming Association and Conference

The Conference Annual Meeting (CAM) will be held via Zoom on Thursday, November 18th. This year's CAM is a "business only" meeting beginning at 7:00 P.M. The meeting will be preceded by a Zoom "social/happy hour" beginning at 6:00 P.M for those who wish to participate. Based on membership, our church is allowed to have 5 lay voting delegates. Pastor Lynne will attend as Conference Moderator as will Carol Shipley (Conference Board/National Board member) and Greg Smith (clergy). Our church will have great representation and voting strength if we can fill all 5 lay delegate positions. **If you are interested in serving, please contact the office by November 11th.**



Christmas Pageant Planning

The Christian Education Board plans to produce a digital Christmas Pageant again this year. Readers, musicians and artists of all ages are needed to make this special event a success. **If you would like to participate, contact Janet Koostra, 727-8443 or janetkoostra@gmail.com, for more information.**

Veterans Helping Veterans

Brunch Fundraiser and Silent Auction
Sunday, November 7th
10:00 A.M.-2:00 P.M.
Knights of Columbus
906 Central Ave. W
Sponsored by American Legion Post 341
Suggested donation of \$10.00

Neighbors In Need Offering

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Neighbors In Need offering. **Your generosity totaled \$840.** Donations can be brought with you, mailed to the church with the memo NIN, donated through the United Church of Christ national website: <https://www.ucc.org/neighbors-in-need-special-mission-offering/>, or through our own Great Falls United Church of Christ website with the memo NIN, <https://greatfallsucc.org/>.

Neighbors in Need helps make Unfailing Love possible.
For this to occur, it needs your support.

“Healing”

Over some of the next few newsletters, I'll be going into a bit more detail about my sabbatical plans for next summer. However, it's not going to be all about me. Read on.

In 2018, I experienced a rather frightening accident on my horse. Without going into details, the folks who witnessed it were amazed that we both (Phoenix and I) came out of it with nothing more than a few scrapes and some sore muscles. Or so we thought. Since that accident, I've discovered that I've developed some riding behaviors that are not conducive to a nice, enjoyable ride for either of us. My anxiety has been transferred to Phoenix which has resulted in additional, not-so-pleasant riding experiences.

As I've been doing some reading about generational trauma in relation to racism, I've begun to understand that the trauma I experienced while riding back in 2018 has settled into my being (mainly my brain) more deeply than I first believed. Part of my sabbatical next year will be used to address some of my reaction to that trauma (although I'm already working on it). I've started to do some reading about the brain's response to trauma and will be working on some activities to work on my brain and body to get some of that trauma-response re-processed prior to sabbatical.

Once my sabbatical begins, I'll be engaging some help from a spiritual director to help me further heal. Greg and I will also be spending a week at the Bitterroot Ranch outside of DuBois, Wyoming, participating in a Centered Horsemanship Clinic. With the help of the clinician, it is my plan to develop a deeper sense of confidence to aid in the healing from that trauma. I really believe I have more years of riding ahead of me and I long to do so joyfully.

There's a spiritual side to all of this. It seems to be connected to trust and hope. Drawing on the wonderful response that Kate Bowler had to the question, “What gives you hope?” She expressed that her hope comes in the recognition that we have this profound capacity to begin again. Resurrection. New life.

As I prepare to take the steps to begin my riding life again, I invite you to consider the places in your life where you would like to experience some new life. How is it that God might be there to help you experience resurrection?

Thanks for going on the journey with me!
Rev. Lynne



where are you on your spiritual journey?

Upcoming Events

Thursday, November 4- Church Growth and Vitality Board, 5:30 P.M., Zoom

Monday, November 8- Joint Facilities, 12:00 P.M.

Christian Education Board, 6:00 P.M.

Business Affairs Board, 6:00 P.M.

Tuesday, November 9- Sewing Group, 10:00 A.M.

Prayer Meeting, 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday, November 10- Stewardship Board, 7:45 A.M.