

# The Good News

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Issue 45

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

E-Mail: [greatfallsucc@bresnan.net](mailto:greatfallsucc@bresnan.net)

[www.greatfallsucc.org](http://www.greatfallsucc.org)

P. O. Box 6303, 59406

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

**November 19, 2023**

**Praise Service**

**9:30 A.M.**



Minister: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Scripture: Psalm 95:1-7a, Matthew 25:31-40

Lay Reader: Betsy Rogstad

Ushers: Steve Gettel, June Rovero

Worship Leader: Dean Jardee

Vocalists: Cindy Stevens, Cara Dunn

Sunday School: (Elementary) Janet Koostra, Susan Thomas

(Youth) Carol Shipley

Nursery: Whitney Mulready

Fellowship: Dennis and Sue Turton

Tellers: Paul Haffeman, Carol Shipley

The service will be live-streamed and a recording of the livestream service will be available on YouTube later in the day.

## ***Congregational Budget Hearing***

***Sunday, December 10, 10:45 AM***

***In Fellowship Hall and via Zoom***

The preparation of the 2024 budget is underway. Your **Business Affairs Board** has called for a **Congregational Meeting on Sunday, December 10 following worship**. The meeting will also be offered via Zoom. The purpose of the meeting is to provide information on the 2024 budget and to seek input from FCUCC-GF members regarding the development of the budget. With limited resources, the Business Affairs Board is faced with some hard decisions. The board welcomes all suggestions. **No vote on the preliminary budget will be taken at this meeting. The purpose is to hear from members to help guide in the formulation of the 2024 budget.** Please plan to attend.



## ***Christian Education News***

**This week, all children will begin in their Sunday School classes and have class for the entire worship hour.** The Elementary Class (children through grade 5) will meet in Sunday School Room 4 to learn about “The Annunciation” with teacher Susan Thomas. The Youth Class for grades 6-8 will meet in the parlor to discuss “Why does the Bible Contradict Itself at Times?”. **There will not be Sunday School on November 26.** (But there will be Christmas Pageant Rehearsal that weekend.) **Happy Thanksgiving!**

## ***Pumpkin Pals Reveal Party***

Attention Pumpkin Pals! It's time to write your last letter in the Pumpkin Pals secret pen pal program! **Drop your letters into the Pumpkin Pal Post Office before worship this Sunday, then join Janet Koostra and all the pen pals in the Fellowship Hall for a Reveal Party!** Find out at last who has been your secret pen pal! Enjoy a special treat! Make a craft project led by June Rovero! Check out the Fellowship Hall for your special Pumpkin Pals table and have a great time!

### *Farewell and Best Wishes!*

On November 26 we will bid a fond farewell to our nursery attendant, Whitney Mulready, who has worked with us for 5 years. Whitney and her family are moving to Michigan for job opportunities and to be closer to family. She has been a caring, dependable, and cheerful presence on many Sunday mornings. We are sad to see her and wish her all the best for a happy and successful future. Please stop into the nursery to offer thanks and good wishes!

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### *Christmas Pageant Rehearsals Begin!*

The 2023 Christmas Pageant will begin rehearsals this weekend. Rehearsal will be held on Saturday, November 18 at 12:30 P.M. in the sanctuary. This week will be only children with speaking roles. Janet Koostra will contact families through text or email to assign roles. Please contact Janet at [janetkoostra@gmail.com](mailto:janetkoostra@gmail.com) or 406-727-8443 with any questions. The Christmas Pageant performance is scheduled for Sunday, December 17 during worship. See you there!

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### *In Our Thoughts and Prayers*



† You are invited to celebrate the baptism of Calvin, Anthony, Anna, Jaycee, Rose and Cameron Storle and welcome their parents, Keith and Allie into membership on Saturday, November 25 at 11:00 A.M. in the church sanctuary.

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### *Upcoming Worship Plans*

November 26 - a joint worship service with Christ UMC leadership at 10:00 A.M.

December 17 - our annual Christmas Pageant with Choir at 9:30 A.M.

December 24 (Christmas Eve Day) - a regular service at 9:30 A.M.

December 24 - Christmas Eve Lessons, Carols and Candlelight will be at 4:30 P.M.

December 31 New Year's Eve Day - a joint worship service with UCC leadership at 10:00 A.M.

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### *Staff Schedules*

The office will be minimally staffed the week of Thanksgiving.

Holly will be out of the office November 16-26.

Rev. Lynne will be out of the office November 20-24, available by phone or email.

There will not be a newsletter next week.

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# BEHOLD!

“God saw everything God made and it was behold, it was very good”

Genesis 1:31

### *Neighbors In Need*

The Neighbors in Need offering, which we will receive during the month of November, supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. Working with members of the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network, Justice and Witness continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties, and environmental justice. Neighbors in Need also supports our American Indian neighbors in the UCC. One-third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Today there are 20 UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These churches and their pastors are supported by CAIM. With your help, together we can help our Neighbors in Need. Donations can be made online or with a check written to the church. Please be sure to indicate NIN in the memo. Thank you.



*Shifting Advent*

Just because the way the secular and church lectionary calendars don't always consult each other, we've ended up with an alignment of holidays and holy days that just don't seem to be giving us much time to observe and embrace the full meaning of the season. This year, if we were to strictly follow the church calendar, the fourth Sunday of Advent would fall on the morning of Christmas Eve. It pushes us into rushing through Advent's fourth Sunday in the spirit of patiently waiting just so we can shift gears and get to the manger in time for the holy baby to arrive, panting, checking our watches to make sure we're not late and hoping that we don't miss it. Never fear! We are not bound to follow every twist and turn of the liturgical calendar as it's laid out. We're going to shift Advent by one week. **We'll begin the Advent season on November 26 (the Sunday after Thanksgiving).** The Chrismon Tree will be in place. The first candle on the Advent Wreath will be lit. We'll start our gentle, faithful journey to Bethlehem with plenty of time to pick up a few shepherds and wise ones along the way. On the morning of December 24, we'll worship in the morning and do something a little different as we observe Advent 4 part 2. Then, we'll gather again at 4:30 that evening to celebrate Christmas Eve with lessons and carols and candlelight. We'll get to the manger in plenty of time without any unnecessary rush. I hope you'll be on the journey with us.



Rev. Lynne



*“Grace upon Grace.” John 1:16*

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees.

United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. **Donations can be made online or with a check written to the church. Please be sure to indicate Christmas Fund in the memo.**

*Coming Up*

- Thursday, November 16
- 12:00 P.M.        Genesis Bible Study, FH
- Sunday, November 19
- 9:15 A.M.        Youth Sunday School, Parlor
- 9:30 A.M.        Worship Service
- Monday, November 20
- 6:30 P.M.        Church Council, Zoom
- Tuesday, November 21
- 12:45 P.M.        Reading, West Elementary
- Wednesday, November 22
- 1:30 P.M.        Pinochle, FH
- 6:00 P.M.        Youth Group, SS Wing
- 6:00 P.M.        Handbells, Choir Room
- Sunday, November 26- Advent I
- 10:00 A.M.        Combined Worship Service, led by Christ United Methodist
- Tuesday, November 28
- 10:00 A.M.        Sewing Group, FH
- 12:45 P.M.        Reading, West Elementary
- Wednesday, November 29
- 1:30 P.M.        Pinochle, FH
- 6:00 P.M.        Youth Group, SS Wing
- 6:00 P.M.        Handbells, Choir Room
- 7:15 P.M.        Chancel Choir, Sanctuary
- Thursday, November 30
- 12:15 P.M.        Genesis Bible Study, FH

## ***“Finding Our Way”***

“A map says to you, ‘Read me carefully, follow me closely, doubt me not... I am the earth in the palm of your hand.’” — Beryl Markham

*(About this quote: Beryl Markham (born October 26, 1902) was a noted horse trainer; the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic, and the author of the memoir West With the Night, which was envied and praised by Hemingway.)*

Some say that with GPS, we’ll lose the ability to read maps. I guess that’s possible. Over time, we’ve lost a lot of the skills to find our way from one place to another. I don’t know anyone who reads the stars to find their way to a new restaurant. I haven’t met anyone who regularly follows the path of a creek to do out-of-town business. Less and less, we give directions like “go ½ mile on Charlie Brown’s Road (which is not the actual name of the road but apparently, at some time, someone named Charlie Brown lived somewhere on that road) and turn left when you come to the barn that used to have the white trim but is now all red.” Most likely, when we want to find our way from one place to another, we punch an address into our cell phone and wait for the automated voice to tell us to turn left or right and on which side of the street we will find our destination. Now, instead of gazing into the heavens to find our way, we wait for a disembodied voice to tell us where to go.

The irony is, this amazing marvel of technology is able to help us find our way because of satellites orbiting around us in space. I suppose you could say that we are once again “finding our way” in the world because something is “speaking” to us from the heavens. We may not be looking at the stars for guidance but the heavens are still talking to us.

Advent is the church’s call to set aside the things that keep us from hearing the message of heaven and gaze back into the stars to “see” the way that God sets before us. It’s a way of angels speaking to lowly shepherds about the birth of a king who rests in a feeding trough. It’s a way of dreamers hearing the longed-for promise of justice and peace that will come true in unimaginable ways. It’s the way where danger and fear are outsmarted by wisdom—wisdom that is not defined by power or corruption but centered on awe and praise. Advent calls us to lift our faces again to the heavens to see and hear the way God would have us go to find the new thing God is doing in creation.

May we, this Advent season, from time to time, lift our heads from GPS, Facebook, cookbooks, checkbooks, catalogues, wish lists, and screens (both big and small) and peer into the heavens to listen for song the of the angels reminding us that God *is* with us to always show us the way.

Have a blessed Thanksgiving on your way to the first Sunday of Advent (celebrated November 26).

Rev. Lynne

