

The Good News

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Issue 46

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

December 10, 2023 Third Sunday of Advent Worship Service 9:30 A.M.



Minister: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Scripture: Psalm 126, Luke 1:46b-55

Lay Reader: June Rovero

Ushers: Dale and Nancy Dallmann

Advent Candle: The Storle Family

Choir Director: Cindy Stevens

Accompanist: Linda Hallock

Sunday School: (Elementary) Erin Borland, Janet Koostra

Fellowship: Verna Kessner, KimKay McCarty Martin

Tellers: Carol Shipley, Nancy Zadick

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 This Sunday, December 10, 10:45 A.M. In Fellowship Hall – NO ZOOM

The **Business Affairs Board** has called for a **Congregational Meeting on Sunday, December 10 following worship**. 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 intent is to hear from members to help guide in the formulation of the 2024 budget.**



Christian Education News

On Sunday, December 10, all children will begin in worship and will share a time with Pastor Lynne. Then students from the Elementary Sunday School Class will head to Sunday School with teacher **Erin Borland** and helper **Janet Koostra**. The lesson will focus on Advent and Christmas. **Offering will be used to support our mission sponsor child, VJ Antonette Benarao. The Youth Sunday School Class will remain in worship.**



Christmas Pageant Update

This week, pageant rehearsal will be held on **Saturday, December 9 at 12:30 P.M.** in the sanctuary. **ALL children need to attend**. Those with speaking roles will practice using microphones. Angels and animals will try on costumes. Adult helpers will pitch in with costume changes and set changes. **MANDATORY dress rehearsal with the choir is**

Saturday, December 16 at 12:30 P.M. Performance is during worship on **Sunday, December 17. Cast and crew should be by 9:00 A.M. that morning. Contact Janet Koostra with any questions, 406-727-8443 or janetkoostra@gmail.com.**



West Elementary Gift Tree

ALL tags have been taken- thank you! Each Christmas, the Christian Service Board adopts two West Elementary families, and each year, your generosity fulfills the children's wishes. If you took a tag, please be sure and return the gift **WITH** the tag to the church no later than December 17. The gifts will be wrapped and delivered to West Elementary on December 18. If you choose to wrap the gift yourself, don't forget to attach the tag. Thank you for sharing your love and joy.



Cookie Exchange and Lumpia Christmas Fundraiser 2023

Friday, December 15- 5:30-6:30 P.M.

Fellowship Hall

Taste and trade some delicious goodies and sing some carols accompanied by a flute choir led by Norman Menzales. This event is family-friendly and free!

Cookie Exchange Rules

1. Make 2 to 4 dozen cookies – one batch to taste and share, the other to swap!
2. No store-bought cookies please.
3. To participate, sign up in the fellowship hall or call the office to list the cookies you'll bring.
4. Cookies should arrive on a platter or container labeled with cookie name and if it contains nuts.
5. Bring a container to bring your traded cookies home.
6. Please arrive on time.
7. At the end of the exchange, everyone should have an equal number of cookies – unless you've already eaten some of them!

In addition to sweet treats, nothing says "Happy Holidays" like good food and good music! The Sampaguita Flute Project celebrates Filipino culture by bringing works of Filipino classical music to diverse audiences. In this special fundraising event, you can support Norman and the Sampaguita Flute Project while enjoying delicious Filipino cuisine. **Lumpia is a Filipino egg roll and will be available to sample and purchase! \$20.00/15 lumpia. For questions, please contact Norman at 478-747-6565.**



Fishing for Volunteers

Hey everyone! Just letting you know that our turn to work at the FISH Food Pantry is **December 11-15 from 9:00-11:00 A.M.** So if you'd like to volunteer and distribute food to families in need, please call Carol Davidson at 406-836-1862. And wearing a mask is fine, too....I probably will be wearing one at the window. Thank you so much if you can help!

Thanks to those who donated to the Town Pump \$25,000 Challenge. FISH met plus exceeded this challenge raising a total \$53,300 for FISH because of your generous giving.



Each year during our Christmas Eve service, two organizations are selected as recipients of your generosity. This year, the **West Elementary Food Pantry** and **Veterans of the Cross** have been chosen. The Veterans of the Cross 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 checks each December to our lower-income retirees. What a great way to say "Thank you."

West Elementary is one of the lowest socioeconomic schools in our district. Our church has been very generous to West Elementary, but they continue to have significant needs. The Christian Service board will match your contribution to the food pantry up to \$200.00 to help fill the pantry for when the kids return to school after the holidays. Many students are receiving special care during Christmas, so let us ensure they continue to feel love and care into 2024.

You are welcome to contribute to one or both; please mark your donation as you wish.
Have a blessed and wonderful Christmas.



Ecumenical Solstice Service
Central Christian Church (1025 Central Ave.)
December 21 – 7:00 P.M.

Several area Open and Affirming (and ONA leaning) congregations and spiritual leaders are coming together to observe the Longest Night in observance of some of the challenges that the holiday season brings. Watch for more details but plan to attend to find some time and space for comfort and hope.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

† **Gwen Valley’s** grandson **Troye** is in the hospital in Seattle.

† You are invited to attend a celebration life for **Daniel Dunn** on Sunday, December 10 at 2:00 P.M. in our sanctuary. Please extend your love and care to Dan’s family: **Kathy; Eric, Cara** and children: **Kaeden, Aalayah, Angelito**, and **Saint; Chelle Herbruger** and **Scott Schrader** and children: **Bailey** and **Chase**; and out-of town family Rob and his family, and Dan’s sisters Kathy and Sue and their families.

Upcoming Worship Schedule

December 10	9:30 A.M.	Regular service
December 17	9:30 A.M.	Christmas Pageant with choir
December 24	9:30 A.M.	Christmas Eve morning service
December 24	4:30 P.M.	Christmas Eve service of Lessons and Carols and Candlelight
December 31	10:00 A.M.	Joint service with Christ UMC, UCC leadership
January 7, 2024	11:00 A.M.	Begin new worship time for 2024



Working on the Nursery

On November 26, First Congregational UCC bid farewell to Whitney Mulready, the nursery care provider who worked with us for five years. However, the church is working to find new staff to care for our youngest members. Two candidates will be interviewed in the next week. Both currently work as childcare providers. **We hope to have the nursery staffed again very soon.** Until that time, parents are welcome to use the nursery with their children; however children cannot be left unattended --adults must stay in the nursery to supervise their children. Hopefully, a new nursery attendant will be in place soon! Thank you for your patience and understanding.

VJ Antonette Benarao

First Congregational United Church of Christ sponsors a young woman, VJ Antonette Benarao through the Global Ministries Children and Elder Sponsorship Program. VJ is 16 years old and lives in the Philippines. **She receives \$25 each month from us.** This support helps provide food, clothes, medical care, housing, education and even money for college when she leaves the sponsorship program. 100% of the money we give—which is monitored and distributed through Global Ministries—goes to the support of VJ and her family. VJ is being raised by a single mother with a low-wage job, and she has a sister with developmental disabilities. Our church changes the lives by offering this family a more stable life. A portion of each month’s Sunday School offering is used to support VJ.



If you would like to make a difference for a family on the other side of the world, please use the QR code here or make checks payable to the church, memo “VJ”. Thank you for interest and support. Because of you, our church changes lives in the Philippines.



The Great Falls Public Library has recently discovered that neo-Nazi propaganda has been placed inside an undisclosed number of books in the Library. The Library staff has joined with the Great Falls YWCA and other community groups to launch a “Hate Has No Home Here” campaign. Please consider joining this campaign in any way you can. We will have copies of the sign being used at the church. Pick up as many as you need to place in your home and car windows. Business owners are encouraged to place them in their business windows. Let’s work together to stop these hate-filled campaigns before they take root.

Greetings!

Thank you so much for inviting us to celebrate with you this year in your annual Thanksgiving dinner celebration. We had so much fun and were so glad to be a part of your event! It means the world to us to have an ongoing and strengthening relationship with all of you in this season of our ministry. May peace, love, joy and hope find you all this season!

Sending love and light,
Pastor Dawn and the Leadership Team, Christ United Methodist Church



Coming Up

Thursday, December 7

12:15 P.M. Genesis Bible Study, FH
4:00 P.M. Joint Facilities, FH

Sunday, December 10

10:45 A.M. Budget Hearing, FH
2:00 P.M. Dunn Memorial Service

Monday, December 11

6:00 P.M. Business Affairs Board, Zoom
6:00 P.M. Christian Ed. Board, Parlor

Tuesday, December 12

10:00 A.M. Sewing Group, FH
12:45 P.M. Reading, West Elementary

Wednesday, December 13

1:00 P.M. Prayer Meeting, Parlor
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, December 14

12:15 P.M. Genesis Bible Study, FH

Friday, December 15

5:30 P.M. Lumpia Christmas, FH

Saturday, December 16

12:30 P.M. Mandatory Pageant Rehearsal

. The Veterans of the Cross 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 checks each December to our lower-income retirees. What a great way to say “Thank you.”

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