
The Good News

Volume 2024

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Issue 04

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

January 28, 2024
Fourth Sunday of Epiphany
Worship Service
11:00 A.M.



Annual Meeting Sunday will feature an abbreviated worship service.
We'll take a short break to transition to Fellowship Hall
for lunch and the Congregational Meeting

Minister: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Ushers: Nancy Dallmann, Keith Storle

Organist: Tyler Menzales

Choir Director: Cindy Stevens

Elementary Sunday School: Liz Lee

Nursery: CJ Mollohan, Mackenzie Noble

Fellowship: The Fellowship Board is providing lunch

Tellers: Paul Haffeman, Liz Lee

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

In Our Thoughts and Prayers



† **Bob and Janet Koostra** as Bob has been released from the hospital and continues to recover at home from having complications and additional surgeries.

† Family of **Tim Benson**, friend and former colleague of **Revs. Lynne and Greg**.

Shhhhhhh, It's a Secret

Our Choir Director, Cindy Stevens, has announced it's time for her to retire from church choir directing. She will be with us through the end of April. We'd like to present her with a gift of our appreciation. If you would like to contribute to that gift (which is yet to be determined) **donations can be made to the church designating it "Cindy's retirement."** And keep it quiet. We want to have a great surprise for Cindy on her last Sunday with us.

134th Annual Meeting of First Congregational United Church of Christ- Great Falls, MT

It's here! The 134th Annual Meeting of First Congregational United Church of Christ is this Sunday, January 28, following an abbreviated worship service. We will conduct the business of the congregation, vote on the 2024 recommended budget, install board members and officers, and discuss other items of interest to the congregation. Lunch provided by the Fellowship Board.

The annual meeting of the Memorial Fund Corporation will follow immediately after. All members and friends of First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls are strongly encouraged to attend and participate, **keeping in mind that only members are able to vote.**



Annual report booklets are on the table in the narthex. You may also access the report using the following link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MBjQTM5MMCx4Cwm1tKOIEtnCo3_ojjUL/view?usp=sharing

For those who are out of town or unable to attend in person, we will be offering your participation in the meeting via Zoom. Use the following to log into the meeting:

UCC Tech-person is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: FCUCC Congregational Annual Meeting 2024

Time: Jan 28, 2024 11:45 AM Mountain Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87626003389?pwd=bkU2TThmN2dNWUJnOUUyZ1BVSUZUQT09>

Meeting ID: 876 2600 3389

Passcode: 100608



Christian Education News

This week Elementary Sunday School children will begin in and remain in Sunday School. The Youth Class will remain in and begin in worship. If parents would like childcare during the Annual Meeting, contact Janet Koostra at 406-727-8443 or janetkoostra@gmail.com so nursery attendants are prepared to stay extra.

Four Chaplains Memorial Service



This non-denominational service, celebrating the true story of four World War II U.S. Army Chaplains, will be held in our Sanctuary on **Sunday, February 4 at 2:00 P.M. (doors open at 1:30 P.M.)**. Sponsored by American Legion Post 341, this service honors those men who joined together despite their different beliefs. In February of 1943, the U.S.A.T Dorchester sunk in the cold Atlantic. Lt. George Fox, Lt. Alexander Goode, Lt. John Washington, and Lt. Clark Polling, brought hope in despair and light in darkness. Quickly and quietly, they spread out among the soldiers, trying to calm the frightened, tend the wounded, and guide the disoriented toward safety. When the

ship went down, the four chaplains, who had given their life jackets to others, linked arms offered prayers. Of the 902 men aboard the U.S.A.T Dorchester, only 230 survived.



Fishing for Volunteers

Hey everyone! I know it seems like we just had our turn, but just letting you know that our next turn to work at the **FISH Food Pantry is February 5-9, from 9:00-11:00 A.M.**

If you'd like to volunteer and distribute food to families in need, **please call Carol Davidson at 406-836-1862.** Wearing a mask is fine, too... I will probably be wearing one at the window. Thank you so much if you can help!

Merger Talking Points

As we prepare to engage in a congregational conversation regarding the request from Christ United Methodist Church to enter into a deeper relationship (possible merger), we will be presenting four talking points over the course of four weeks. Please consider these talking points and formulate some thoughts and questions about the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that a deeper relationship with Christ UMC would bring. We will have time for in-depth conversation at a Congregational Hearing on February 11 after worship.

Talking point IV: Congregational Status

- UCC membership has declined to 226 members on 11/1/23
- Christ UMC is at 75 members on 11/1/23
- Finances:
 - UCC 2023 Budget Expenses: \$286,696
 - Christ UMC 2023 Budget Expenses: \$127,256
 - UCC Endowment: \$1,920,182
 - Christ UMC Endowment: \$102,447

Previous Talking Point (see the Jan 3, 10 and 17 newsletters)

Talking point I: History – What's this about and how did we get here?

Talking point II: Why doesn't Christ UMC close and join UCC?

Talking point III: Current and historical Relationship between the two churches

Other points to remember:

- Both leadership teams have a commitment to engaging in a good process to explore the possibilities
 - You will have multiple opportunities to be involved and receive information.
 - No major decisions will be made without congregational input and agreement
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Camp Sunday Silent Auction Items Needed

We are seeking donations of items for a silent auction to raise camp scholarship funds. Gift baskets are great. Homemade, specialty items are wonderful (think of something you've knitted, crocheted, sewn, wood working, pottery, painting, etc.) Home-made foods are nice (Rev. Lynne will probably have a pie on the table). Gift certificates to local businesses or services. Gifts certificates for personal services (think house cleaning, window washing, snow removal that you can offer to do for someone else). Be creative and generous. 100% of the funds raised in the silent auction will go directly to our Camp Scholarship funds to help folks get to church camp.



If you have something you'd like to donate, contact Rev. Lynne by February 15 and let her know what you are donating and what the opening bid should be. Donated items should be brought to the church by the 15th so we can set them out on the tables for Sunday, February 18 (the week before Camp Sunday). Bidding will begin on the 18th. Questions? Contact Rev. Lynne

Forebearers

In 1637, the settlers in what was to become Dedham, Massachusetts began a year-long series of cottage meetings to discuss issues related to the organization of a church that would reflect the ethic of the larger society, based in love, founded in freedom. Such meetings would have been illegal in the England that they had left behind. The people were bringing forth a free church that would result in the formation of individual congregations that would not be controlled by any outside authority. Those churches would become known as Congregational.

First Congregational United Church of Christ is a descendant of that movement. And, there's more to our story because we also know ourselves to be in covenanted relationship with others in the UCC. We can credit that to the merger with the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1957. While we embrace the autonomy of our congregation, we also value the relationship that we have with other UCC congregations and ministries. It's an odd confluence of two seemingly different ways of being. We have found ways to make it work.

This Sunday, we will be carrying on the work of our spiritual forebearers that gathered in 1637 as we gather for our Annual Congregational Meeting. Without the control of any outside authority, we will be setting the groundwork for the coming mission and ministry of our church. We will be electing leaders and voting on a budget. We'll be receiving and approving the reports from Board and church leaders. It will be a bit bigger than the cottage meetings of old but the spirit of those who gathered before us will be real.

This is not just something we *have* to do (because it's spelled out in our bylaws). It's something we *get* to do. We get to decide who our leaders are, lay and clergy. We get to decide how our financial resources will be used. We get to decide what will happen with our building and other physical resources. (In our particular situation, that's always done in concert with Christ United Methodist Church.) We get to decide what Sunday school and confirmation curriculum we use. We get to decide what our order of worship will look like. We get to decide what hymnal we'll use and what outreach ministries we will embrace. It's all on us. That's one of the things that I love about congregational meetings. We are continuing the radical work that our forebearers began back in the 1600's.

That's not the only reason I love congregational meetings. I love them because it's when I can sit back with you and celebrate all the faithful ministry that the church has engaged over the year. It's always heart-warming to see folks who have been involved in the work of the church come together in fellowship. I love to listen to the laughter and good-hearted conversation. I see long-time friends and new acquaintances bring their joy and hopes to the table. It's inspiring to witness folks who are passionate about the work of the church raise concerns about what's not being done or what could be done more or better. It's incredible when the Holy Spirit takes ahold and reveals a new direction, a new hope, a new vision.

I am grateful for all that is going on behind the scenes for the upcoming annual meeting taking place this Sunday. Folks will be preparing food. Eric will be setting up the technology so some of our members who are away can join in by zoom. Holly has been working diligently to get the reports compiled and available to everyone in plenty of time. Dick will lead us in faith and confidence. Liz will be taking notes. And you all will have the opportunity to say "yes" to what God is longing to do with and through us.

I hope you can join us on Sunday for worship and the annual meeting, if not in person, on Zoom. And if not, please hold us in prayer as we gather for fellowship and faith. Have a blessed week.



Rev. Lynne

Coming Up

Thursday, January 25

12:30 P.M. UCC/CUMC Lay Leadership meeting, Parlor

Tuesday, January 30

12:45 P.M. Reading, West Elementary

Wednesday, January 31

10:00 A.M. Bridge Group, SS Wing

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, February 1

4:00 P.M. Joint Facilities, FH

Sunday, February 4

11:00 A.M. Worship, Communion

2:00 P.M. Four Chaplains Memorial
