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# The Good News

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Issue 06

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

## February 11, 2024 Transfiguration Sunday Worship Service 11:00 A.M.



He was transfigured before them ...  
and his clothes became dazzling white ...

Minister: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Scripture: Mark 8:27-30, 9:1-7

Lay Reader: Noël Walker

Ushers: Dale and Nancy Dallmann

Organist: Tyler Menzales

Choir Director: Cindy Stevens

Acolyte: Bailey Schrader

Elementary Sunday School: Janet Koostra

Nursery: CJ Mollohan, Mackenzie Noble

Fellowship: Verna Kessner, KimKay McCarty Martin

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 Conversation*

Please plan to participate in this Sunday's Congregational Conversation about a potential merger with Christ United Methodist Church. **The conversation will take place after worship in the Fellowship Hall.** It will be helpful to review the Talking Points that were published in the January editions of The Good News. **See next page.**



Part of the conversation will focus on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that could be part of a merger. **Bring an open mind and be prepared to speak your thoughts in love.** If you are not able to attend in person, you can join the conversation on Zoom using the following:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81830283450?pwd=VDF3R00rTkNNMFhPQ1V4dUw2U2Radz09>

Meeting ID: 818 3028 3450

Passcode: 112758

# ***First Congregational UCC and Christ United Methodist Church Merger Conversation Talking Points***

## **Talking point I: History**

- Christ UMC has decreased in size and is on a trajectory to closing
- UCC may not be far behind
- All Protestant churches (mostly mainline Protestants) are in the same place
- Christ UMC leadership brought the question re: a potential merger to the UCC leadership
- Christ UMC sees this potential merger as a place that they can go to have hope
- Leadership teams met on October 24, 2023
- No decisions were made
- There is a general commitment to explore possibilities together
- Are now seeking to share information with congregations and get initial feedback

## **Talking point II: Why doesn't CUMC close and join UCC?**

Several folks have raised the possibility of Christ UMC simply closing and the members join the UCC or First UMC.

- In the United Methodist polity/structure, when a congregation no longer exists, all the assets and resources go to the conference. The UCC would be forced to buy the UM portion of the building, should the conference offer it to them
- Christ UMC would not be able to turn any financial or other resources over to the UCC
- For many of Christ UMC members, it's important to maintain a UM identity and membership
- There is no potential for First UMC and Christ UMC to merge. The ministries are very different. Christ UMC recognizes that they are already in relationship with the UCC

## **Talking point III: Current and historical Relationship**

- The UCC came to this location in 1976, built the sanctuary & offices, etc.;
- In the early 90's the UCC expanded the sanctuary and narthex, added nursery, choir room, basement, main floor bathrooms and revised the office suite
- A reciprocal agreement was developed that spells out the shared use and maintenance of the facility. The Joint Facilities Committee was created at this time and continues to oversee the facility maintenance and upkeep
- There have been several shared ministries over the years, including but not limited to: Family Promise, Mitten Makers, periodic shared events and ministries (VBS, Pageant, diaper drive, mid-week programs, etc.) In many ways, we already have a common ministry throughout the years
- When we have worked together in the past, we're good at it

## **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 at the close of 2023:
  - UCC 2023 Budget Expenses: \$286,696
  - Christ UMC 2023 Budget Expenses: \$127,256
  - UCC Endowment (Memorial Funds): 1,920,182
  - Christ UMC Endowment: \$102,447

## **Conclusion – Talking Point V**

- 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



## Christian Education News

This week, the young people of our congregation will begin in worship and will share a time with Pastor Lynne. **Younger students (age 5 through grade 5) will go to class with teacher Janet Koostra.** This week's class will include learning camp songs for Camp Sunday on February 25.

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### *Soup-er Bowl of Caring Offering*

This Sunday you can help tackle Hunger with our Soup-er Bowl of Caring! This nationwide offering collects donations for a wide variety of organizations fighting food insecurities. **This year's donations to First Congregational United Church of Christ will go to the FISH Food Pantry. Following worship on February 11, children holding soup kettles will be stationed at the sanctuary doors to receive the Soup-er Bowl of Caring Offering.** Checks can be written payable to FCUCC with Soup-er Bowl in the memo. Donations can also be made using PayPal through our website.



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### *In Our Thoughts and Prayers*

† **Bob and Janet Koostra** as Bob continues to recover at home from abdominal surgeries.

† **June Rovero's** 8 month old grandson **Alex** spent some time in the hospital with double ear infections, influenza A and low oxygen levels. He is home with his parents **Lori and Jason** and big brother **Sammy** and is feeling much better.

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### *Widows Support Group*

Linda Redding of Christ United Methodist is starting a support group for people who lost have their spouse or partner. It will be a time of discussion and sharing of experiences and feeling. **The first meeting is Friday, February 16, 2024 from 1:30-3:00 P.M. in the church parlor. For more information, please contact Linda at 406-868-1282.**



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### *Acolytes Abound!*

In January, Pastor Lynne held an "Acolyte Training & Refresher Class" which boasted a wonderful turn-out. First Congregational United Church of Christ is now blessed with six new acolytes and five returning candle-lighting veterans.

New acolytes are:

**Lily Borland, Alicia Light, Elvis Light, Bailey Schrader,  
Anthony Storle and Calvin Storle.**

Returning acolytes are:

**Liam Brewer, Ellie Bucher, Kaeden Dunn,  
Zurie Goss and Jullian Valley.**



**These 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be commissioned for our acolyte ministry during worship on Camp Sunday, February 25<sup>th</sup>.**



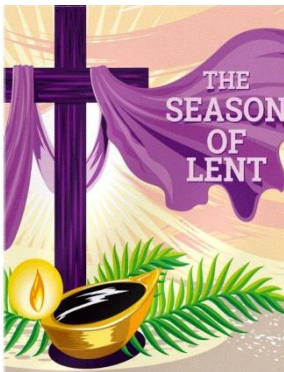
## ***Camp Sunday- February 25***

Are you ready for Camp (Sunday)? It's coming up pretty quick so it's time to start packing! What should you bring to Camp Sunday so you can get the most out of it?

- First of all, if you've got an old favorite **camp t-shirt or sweatshirt**, wear it!
- An **old camp name tag**? Bring that along!
- Some **memories of camp**? There's plenty of room for those both in worship and during fellowship.
- Bring along some of your best generosity! We hope to raise some good funds for camp scholarships through a silent auction and noisy offering. **Bring your loose change to worship because we'll be passing around some tin pie plates so you can toss it in and make a lot of noise for camp.** Our silent auction will be set up beginning February 18 so you can start placing your bids on your favorite items.
- Bring along **your appetite**! The Fellowship Board is going to be setting us up with some good camp-style eats!
- Don't forget to pack your calendar and start making plans for what great summer church camp you'd like to experience. The offerings from the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference include:
  - You and Me Intergenerational Adventure Camp at Mimanagish, July 5 – 8
  - Youth Adventures Camp (grades 5 – 12) at Mimanagish, July 9 – 12
  - Great Escapes Adult Adventures Camp returns this year at Christikon, dates TBA

**If you want to contribute an item for the Silent Auction, please bring your item (or a description of it if it involves fresh food) by February 15. We hope to open bidding on all items beginning Sunday, February 18.**

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## ***Ash Wednesday Service and Soup Supper- February 14***

**5:30 P.M.** Service that includes a variety of meditation stations and imposition of ashes.

**6:15 P.M.** Stone Soup Supper.

Please bring canned or frozen vegetables to the kitchen **BEFORE** the 5:30 service to contribute to the soup (no fresh veggies please).

*Both events are provided through the combined efforts of First Congregational UCC and Christ United Methodist churches.*

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## ***The Elements of Lent – Version 2024***

The season of Lent is often a time to slow down and engage in some spiritual practices that might deepen our faith as we journey towards Easter. It's fashioned after the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness following his baptism. Although a great deal has often been made about the temptations that Jesus faced while he was fasting and praying in the wilderness, we often forget about the part of the story where he was surrounded by creation and tended to by angels. For Lent this year, we will be surrounding ourselves (so-to-speak) with some elements of creation. Each Sunday's theme will lift up an element of creation as a way to connect with the Creator and Jesus as if we were on that wilderness journey as well. Our journey will take us through the following:

**February 14 (Ash Wednesday) - Ash**

**February 18 – Sand**

**February 25 – Water**

**March 3 – Earth**

**March 10 – Wood**

**March 17 – Seeds**

**March 24 - Stones**

Certainly, there are many more elements to creation but we only have six weeks. Perhaps, we'll pick up some of the rest another time. For now, I hope you'll be preparing yourselves for this Lenten journey by slowing down a bit and take each of these elements of creation into your thoughts and prayers. Where and how do you encounter these elements in your life? Do they play an important part in your life? How is this element part of what is needed to sustain creation? Is there something about this element that reflects the nature of God and how? Where in scripture have you read about this element? How can you use what you know about this element to explore your faith? I'm looking forward to exploring some of these questions with you as we journey through Lent together.

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### ***Coming Up***

#### **Thursday, February 8**

6:00 P.M. Black Heritage Celebration, Great Falls Public Library

#### **Friday, February 9**

4:00 P.M. Fellowship Board, Fellowship Hall

#### **Sunday, February 11**

11:00 A.M. Worship Service

12:15 P.M. Congregational Conversation

#### **Monday, February 12**

1:00 P.M. Church Growth & Vitality, Fellowship Hall

6:00 P.M. Business Affairs, Zoom

#### **Tuesday, February 13**

10:00 A.M. Sewing Group, Fellowship Hall

12:45 P.M. Reading, West Elementary

#### **Wednesday, February 14- Ash Wednesday**

1:00 P.M. Prayer Meeting, Parlor

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, Fellowship Hall

5:30 P.M. Ash Wednesday Service

6:00 P.M. Youth Group, SS Wing

6:00 P.M. Handbells, Choir Room

6:15 P.M. Stone Soup Supper, Fellowship Hall

7:15 P.M. Chancel Choir, Sanctuary

#### **Friday, February 16**

1:30 P.M. Widows Support Group, Parlor