

The Good News

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Issue 13

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

March 31, 2024 Easter Sunday Worship Service 9:30 A.M.



Minister: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Scripture: John 19:38-42, 20:1-18

Lay Reader: Noël Walker

Ushers: Lila Byers, Steve Gettel

Acolyte: Zurie Goss

Organist: Tyler Menzales

Choir Director: Cindy Stevens

Nursery: CJ Mollohan, Mackenzie Noble

Fellowship: Verna Kessner, KimKay McCarty Martin

Tellers: Liz Lee, Carol Shipley

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

† **Earl Ackerman** is home following a hospital stay.

† **Rick Greenlee** has transitioned to a care facility.

Maundy Thursday Service- March 28, 7:30 P.M.

Gather in person to participate in a time of service, communion and shadows. We will remember and experience some of the events of the night when Jesus gathered with those who knew and loved him on the night of his arrest. We will be sharing this experience with our friends from Christ United Methodist Church. **Everyone is welcome to attend and fully participate.**

Easter Sunday Worship



Join us in a Celebration of Resurrection at **9:30 A.M.** This will be a combined service with Christ United Methodist Church, including lay and pastoral leadership from both congregations. Rev. Lynne will be preaching.

The service will begin with the remnants of Good Friday. The sanctuary will be darkened. The altar will be draped in black. You are invited to enter as did the women who went that early morning, expecting to anoint the body of Jesus. Come prepared to be amazed and experience God's love.

There will be coffee fellowship after the service!

Upcoming Worship Schedule (All services will begin at 11:00 A.M.)

April 7	Praise Service
April 14	Regular worship
April 21	Regular worship with The Rev. Dr. Tony Clark
April 28	Cindy Stevens Retirement Sunday

Note that the church office will be closed on April 1. (No fooling!)



Christian Education News

There is no Sunday School on Easter Sunday. All students are invited to attend worship with their families. The Elementary Sunday School class will resume on April 7. The Youth Class will resume on April 14. Happy Easter! Christ is risen!

Thanks to the Bunnies!

A standing ovation for all of the Easter Bunnies who donated items which turned into 25 baskets for members of our congregation. And a second round of applause for the Bunnies who delivered the baskets: **Elaine Balzer, Carol Davidson, Joan Duncan, Liz, Zoie & Tucker Lee, Karen & Steve McElroy, Dave Neagle, Rev. Lynne, and Gwen & Jullian Valley.** Without all of you, this ministry of love couldn't happen! Thank you so very, very much.



Fishing for Volunteers

Hey everyone! Just letting you know that our next turn to work at the FISH Food Pantry is **April 15-19 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 836-1862.** Thank you so much if you can help!

Spring Retreat

"Seeking God: A Spiritual Practices Retreat"

Facilitator: Rev. Charles Wei, Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ, Helena

Friday, April 19, 4:00 P.M. – Saturday, April 20, 7:00 P.M.

Cost: \$25 – scholarships available upon request.

Those who have registered can submit their registration fee to the church office. Please indicate "2024 Retreat."

Participants will be creating personal mosaics. If you have access to materials to be included in your mosaic, bring them! They should be items that will not be damaged when placed in grout. Do not break them up ahead of time.

Our Relationship with Christ United Methodist Church

One of the concerns that came up early in the conversation about deepening our relationship with Christ UMC was how it would impact our Open and Affirming designation and focus. Following those early conversations, the leadership of Christ UMC started looking into becoming a Reconciling Ministries Congregation (the UM version of Open and Affirming). With work that was started several years ago and recent conversations, Christ United Methodist Church officially became a Reconciling Ministries Congregation. Be sure to extend a joyful “congratulations” and “welcome” to them.

The pastors and lay leaders of both congregations will be meeting with judicatory leadership on April 11 to explore the wider church’s commitment to a merger or deepened shared ministries. We will be sharing concerns about pastoral leadership changes and the potential future of building ownership.

If you have any questions or thoughts, please be in touch with Dick Kloppel, Karen Spencer, Rev., Lynne or any of the Church Council members.

Please continue to hold both congregations and our leadership in your prayers.



2nd Annual SOC HOP: Dinner, Fundraiser, Auction. Saturday, April 27, 5:30 P.M.-10:00 P.M. The Elks Lodge (500 1st Avenue S.). Tickets are \$50.00 each and are available on the Family Promise website at www.familypromisegf.org or in their office at 1019 Central Avenue.

Coming Up

Thursday, March 28- Maundy Thursday

7:30 P.M. Combined Worship Service

Monday, April 1- Office Closed

Wednesday, April 3

10:00 A.M. Bridge, 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. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

Thursday April 4

4:00 P.M. Joint Facilities, FH

Sunday, April 7

11:00 A.M. Praise Worship Service

12:15 P.M. Worship Board Meeting

12:15 P.M. Game Day Fellowship!

Moon Talk

This year, March 25 was the date that determined when Easter would be observed. That’s because March 25 was a full moon. Back in 325 CE, the Council of Nicea determined that the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ would be held on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox. Whew. But not all Christians follow that formula. Our Orthodox friends celebrate the resurrection on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Passover.

Either way, the celebration of the resurrection of Christ is tied to the moon... the full or whole moon. (I love that one of the key celebrations in the church is

linked to nature!) Christopher Grundy, (Professor of Worship and Preaching at Eden Seminary, Singer/Songwriter, Ordained UCC Minister and all-around wonderful person) wrote a lovely song about the moon as an image of how we are drawn to God. The song is called, “As the Moon.” (You can listen to it on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/qkDwd0uv178?si=9h7jbGKe9-igexGN>). You may have seen it on our Facebook page earlier in the week. It’s a wonderful reminder to take some time to slow down, look up and let nature remind us to reconnect with God through all our cycles of life.

When I saw the full moon on March 25, I was also reminded of a statement I heard or read years ago that the moon is always whole. We may not always be able to see it because the light of the sun doesn’t always shine fully on it. Yet, the moon itself is always whole. That image has been a powerful one for me to remember during those seasons of life that come with challenges. Again, leaning into nature, the moon is a reminder that, although we may not always be able to see it fully, God’s love is always with us. God’s love, like the moon, is always whole. That’s one of the things we celebrate on Easter. The fullness of God’s love that, even when it seems hardest, is full and whole.

I look forward to celebrating the resurrection with you this Sunday. Don’t forget, worship is at 9:30! Bring your family and friends. We’re setting up some extra chairs in the sanctuary. Let’s fill them!

Happy Easter!

Rev. Lynne

