
The Good News

Volume 2024

March 6, 2024

Issue 10

Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

(406) 453-4316

E-Mail: greatfallsucc@bresnan.net

www.greatfallsucc.org

P. O. Box 6303, 59406

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

March 10, 2024 Fourth Sunday in Lent Worship Service 11:00 A.M.



Daylight Savings Time Begins

Minister: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Creation Worship Theme: Wood

Scripture: Matthew 5:21-24, 38-48

Lay Reader: Joan Duncan

Ushers: Suzan Seery, Susan Thomas

Organist: Tyler Menzales

Choir Director: Dennis Dell

Acolyte: Jullian Valley

Elementary Sunday School: Janet Koostra

Nursery: CJ Mollohan, Mackenzie Noble

Fellowship: Peggy Floen, Bev Harris

Tellers: Noël Walker, Nancy Zadick

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

Journey With Us Through Lent

Upcoming Worship Theme Schedule and Notes

March 17	11:00 A.M.	Taizé Service; Worship Creation Theme: Seeds
March 24	11:00 A.M.	Palm Sunday; Worship Creation Theme: Stones
March 28	7:30 P.M.	Maundy Thursday; Tenebrae service with Communion Joint service with Christ UMC
March 31	9:30 A.M.	Easter Sunday; Joint service with Christ UMC, Rev. Lynne Preaching





One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is a United Church of Christ offering that supports recovery efforts when disasters devastate communities and lives. It empowers partners worldwide in their labors to build sustainable futures. It plants seeds of peace where war has multiplied despair and destruction. Societies need these blessings so much right now. Our role as faithful light-bearers carries a witness of love, hope, and persevering possibility that counteracts the cynicism, hatred, and hopelessness that are all too prevalent right now. **Please consider giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering this year with a spirit of joyful generosity!** Thank you for ‘bringing out the God-colors in the world’ by sharing your gifts with OGHS. This is why we are here: to be shining witnesses of uncommon love and enduring hope and to be generous with our lives. **Give to One Great Hour of Sharing by check, on our website at greatfallsucc.org, or by clicking on the QR code. Be sure to mark your donation OGHS.**

Imagine together

Your support is making an impact on our wider community.
We will collect this offering during the month of March.



Christian Education News

This week all Sunday School children will begin in worship. After a message with Pastor Lynne, Elementary Sunday School students will go to class with Janet Koostra. Youth Class students will remain in worship. Sunday School Offering will be designated for VJ Antonette. **The total offering for VJ so far this Lent is \$25.50, half-way to our \$50.00 goal!** Thank you to all who have donated to help support our global mission sponsor child!



Kids Class: Baptism

Families, mark your calendars to join **Pastor Lynne on March 17** for a Kids Class about Baptism. The entire family is welcome! Meet Lynne in the sanctuary at **12:15 P.M.** for a fun and informative exploration of baptism.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers



† Our sympathy in the death of **Diane Young** who passed away February 28 at Peace Hospice. Prayers for her husband **Ray**, daughter **Denise Jackson**, and sons **Chris** and **Steven**.

All-Church Game Party

Fun fellowship is on the way with an Intergenerational Game Party! **Join the Christian Education Board on Sunday April 7 following worship for lunch and games of all kinds!** We'll have games for kids, games for grownups, games for everyone! Want to bring your own game? Wonderful! The Game Party will take place during an extended coffee fellowship. Not into games? Then come anyway to enjoy lunch and watch the fun! See you there!



Women's Devotion and Coffee

Women's Devotion and Coffee group will start meeting again, beginning this **Saturday, March 9**. We will meet the second Saturday of the month at **Morning Light Coffee: 1701 9th Avenue S., 10:00 A.M. with hostess Joan Duncan, 406-315-2874.**

Prayer Meeting

Our monthly Prayer Meeting is next **Wednesday, March 13 at 1:00 P.M.** Any one is invited to gather in the parlor for an hour of sharing and praying.



Seeking Church Music/Choir Director First Congregational United Church of Christ 2900 9th Avenue S., Great Falls, MT

Wednesday evening rehearsals,
Sunday morning worship, and special services

Salary: \$8,000-\$10,000 DOE

Application Deadline is March 15, 2024

Start Date: May 2024

For a full job description or application, please email Karen Spencer, Vice Moderator at **karen1spencer@charter.net**

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

Sign up at church or contact the church office to be added to the list of attendees.

The Church Growth and Vitality Board is very excited to be bring the **Rev. Charles Wei** from Plymouth UCC in Helena to lead us in a retreat bringing spiritual practices to a whole new level. He will be bringing a replica of a 30' mosaic he created and guiding us to create our own personal mosaic's (a bit smaller!). He will also help us explore the spirituality of food as we prepare some of our own meals for the retreat. There will be plenty of other opportunities to explore spirituality in some unique fashion.

Our members will have first dibs on registering but spaces will only be held until March 17. After that an invitation will be sent to Christ UMC and Fairfield UCC. Retreat participation will be limited to 30 people.

There will be a fee to cover the cost of food, supplies and an honorarium for Rev. Wei. That cost will be determined at the Church Growth and Vitality meeting on March 11 so watch next week's newsletter for more information. Scholarships will be available.



Relationship with Christ United Methodist Church

Thank you again to everyone who participated in the Congregational Conversation on February 11. The information that was shared during our SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) has been compiled into a spread sheet for analysis. You can view the spreadsheet here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1XfewyOycD8siPdxJt-BfOGE6cON5NMeS/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=110039022915146490474&rtpof=true&sd=true>

The identified strengths and opportunities point to consideration of what we might do better together with the availability of more people (such as worship, outreach, education) and leadership collaboration.

The weaknesses and strengths relate to a number of things: finances; pastoral leadership; the differences in the size of the memberships of each church and related financial concerns; and identity.

It's clear that we have questions that need a response from the United Methodist wider structure. Several folks have asked about how pastoral changes would happen and what happens to the building should Christ UMC eventually close. Because of those questions, it is the hope of the Church Council that some of our leaders can meet with the Methodist District Superintendent (DS) and Rev. Dr. Tony Clark, our Transitional Conference Minister. Our churches would be represented by both pastors and 2 or 3 key lay leaders. The process to make that meeting happen has begun.

We have previously raised the concern of the impact on our Open and Affirming focus. We have been assured that Christ UMC has taken the first steps to become a Reconciling Ministries Congregation (the UM version of Open and Affirming).

During our last Council meeting (February 19) the conversation shifted from "merger" to the idea of exploring shared ministry without full merger. Rev. Lynne has shared that concept with Rev. Dawn. The hope is to discuss it further at a meeting of leadership from both congregations to be held in the near future. We will also be asking the leadership of Christ UMC to keep us informed about the work being done among their membership regarding a potential merger or shared ministry.

We've been wondering who has done this before and what might we learn from them. We've discovered some information that came from a study done by the UCC in 2015. (You can access the report here: <https://new.uccfiles.com/pdf/UCC-Multiply-Affiliated-Congregations-Report.pdf>) It turns out that, yes, this has been done before and of the denominations that UCC congregations have aligned with the most is United Methodist! We will be finding out who some of those are and reach out to them to see what we can learn, especially from those who have done so more recently.

Please remember to keep your church in your prayers as we continue with this conversation.

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.

From the Community

Every once in a while we get some feedback about the messages we post on the electronic message board on the back of the church building, seen mostly by the folks in the drive-through at Dairy Queen. Up until now, that feedback has been positive and appreciative of the messages that are about what it means to love your neighbor. We have included the image of a pride flag that says, “All means all.”



Earlier this week, for the first time, we received a different message. Someone (no name or phone number available on caller id) left a voice message on our phone sharing their opinion that it’s “in very poor taste” to put it out there and “like, maybe it’s accepted and an okay thing.” (I’m assuming they mean homosexuality... and yes, it is an okay thing!)

To everyone in our congregation who strives to live into what it means to be an open and affirming congregation, I say “Thank You” for the faith that strengthens you to be clear that we will continue to welcome and affirm all people as God has created them to be: amazing, beautiful, loving and lovable. As a white, cis-gender, straight person, I realize that I am sheltered by privilege. Yet, I will continue to stand with you all as we continue to work in partnership with God to create a world where all are loved and valued and where hatred and fear are silenced. I am honored to do so.

Rev. Lynne

Coming Up

Thursday, March 7

4:00 P.M. Joint Facilities, Fellowship Hall

Friday, March 8

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

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

Saturday, March 9

10:00 A.M. Women’s Coffee & Devotion, Morning Light, 1701 9th Avenue S.

Sunday, March 10

9:30 A.M. Christian Education Board, Conference Room

Monday, March 11

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

6:00 P.M. Business Affairs Board, Zoom

Tuesday, March 12

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

12:45 P.M. Reading, West Elementary

Wednesday, March 13

1:00 P.M. Prayer Meeting, Parlor

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, Fellowship Hall

6:00 P.M. Youth Group, Sunday School Wing

6:00 P.M. Handbells, Choir Room

7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

Friday, March 15

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

4:30 P.M. Loaves & Fishes Dinner, 4:30-6:30 P.M., 1326 1st Avenue N.