
The Good News

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Issue 39

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

**Unified Service of
First Congregational United Church of Christ
and Christ United Methodist Church
September 29, 2024
9:30 A.M.**



Dr. Kelly Quick will lead worship this Sunday, bringing insights and experiences from Ecumenical Pride Camp. Please plan to attend and learn more about how a group of folks from multiple denominations imagined together creating a safe space to learn and grow.

Scripture: Joshua 3:2-4, Psalm 46:8-11, Matthew 11:28-30

Lay Reader: Dale Dallmann

Ushers: Nancy Dallmann, Steve Gettel

Acolytes: Bailey and Chase Schrader

Accompanist: Jason Webster

Sunday School: Susan Thomas, Linda Grossman

Nursery: Gracie Kuszmaul, CJ Mollohan

Fellowship: Peggy Floen, Doris Motley

Tellers: Steve Gettel, Paul Haffeman

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

Christian Education News

This



week, children will begin in worship. Kelly Quick will present this week's children's message. Susan Thomas and Linda Grossman will provide the Sunday School lesson about "Hannah and Samuel".

A teacher and helper are needed for the October 6 Sunday School class.

Registration Reminder

Registration forms for Sunday School and the Nursery, as well as Parent/Guardian Information Forms are due by September 29. Hard copies are available at the church in the narthex. Digital copies will be sent out again this week. **Please contact Janet at 406-727-8443 or janetkoostra@gamil.com with any questions.** Thank you for your cooperation!

In Our Thoughts and Prayers 

† Our sympathy to **Steve Gettel** and family in the death of Steve's father, **Arnie**, 93, who passed away September 17 in Power, MT.

† **Shirley Scott**, 96, former member of First Congregational UCC, passed away September 8. Following a private burial, there will be a reception for family and friends in Shirley's honor on **Friday, September 27 at 3:30 P.M.** at the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, 600 3rd Ave. N.

Grief Support Group

Please make note that GriefShare will NOT meet on Friday, September 27. The group will resume on October 4 at 1:30 P.M. in the parlor. For more information, please call the church office or email Linda at lindakredding@hotmail.com.

Thank you for Fishing 

We had a semi busy week at the Fish Food Pantry and everything always goes so smoothly with our amazing volunteers! Thank you to those who helped distribute food: **Jack Armstrong, Harry & Connie Brauer, Lila Byers, Carol Davidson, Peggy Floen, Bev Harris, Syneva Heupel, Sandy Nicolai, Janet Olson, Dennis & Sue Turton, and Nancy Zbinden.** Our next week to volunteer is December 2-6. Don't forget about the annual "Be a Friend in Deed, Help Those in Need" Campaign. Between now and November 30, Town Pump will match every donation given to Fish!



World Communion Sunday – October 6, 2024

Join us as we celebrate world communion Sunday with breads representing various cultures. We will also hear the Lord's Prayer offered in a variety of languages.

Change of Venue

Next month, **Women's Coffee will meet at Miss Kitty's (2501 6th Ave. N).** Join us on Saturday, October 12 at 10:30 A.M. and share one of your earliest childhood memories.



Our Stewardship Campaign for 2025 is underway! This year's theme, *Imagine Together*, encompasses what we can do together, if we just imagine. Imagine what your gifts can do to sustain the life of the church, the staff, and the ministries. Imagine being able to reach outside the church to share what your gifts can do for the community and beyond.

141 pledge cards and Opportunities to Serve forms were mailed. To date, we have received 22 pledge cards in the office. Thank you to those who have already sent in their financial and time commitments for next year. **Consecration Sunday is October 20 and we ask that pledge cards and Opportunities to Serve forms are turned in by then.**

Next week's newsletter will be one of unification and will include a unified October calendar. The newsletter will continue to go out weekly on Wednesdays, the calendar once a month. Rather than separate out the churches, both will be represented with articles and those articles will appear in one newsletter. Please send me what you would like to have in the newsletter and I'll do my best to see that it gets in. **The cut off to submit information will have to be Tuesdays at 10:00 A.M. of the week you want the information printed.** Thank you, Holly (greatfallsucc@bresnan.net)



Reflections on A Congregational Conversation

This past Sunday (September 22), we enjoyed an abbreviated worship service and then remained in the sanctuary for a congregational conversation with our friends from Christ United Methodist Church. It was all about where things are with the unification conversation. The meeting started with both congregations remaining together to receive the same information and updates. We then divided into individual congregations for further discussion. Recordings of the combined session and the separate UCC session are available. Contact the church office for the link. Here are some of the highlights and information that was shared:

- The two major concerns identified earlier from FCUCC (impact on open and affirming status and pastoral leadership) have been addressed.
 - Christ UMC is now a part of the Reconciling Ministries network (the UMC version of Open and Affirming). We can move forward together in a mission that welcomes and affirms everyone.
 - The proposal from Christ UMC that was presented in late July identified that they would accept Rev. Lynne as their pastor and future pastors would be obtained through the UCC process of search and call and would include the United Methodist clergy pool.
- Rev. Dawn announced that beginning November 1, her time with Christ UMC will be reduced to 10 hours per month. Her involvement will be administrative and emergency pastoral care only. Rev. Lynne will be responsible for all worship services. Rev. Lynne will be available for pastoral care for both Christ UMC and First Congregational UCC members. Revs. Lynne and Dawn will be working together to create a way for Lynne to become more acquainted with CUMC members.
- Christ UMC has begun providing financial support for shared staff: Media-tech Coordinator (Eric), Office Manager (Holly) and musicians (Dean and Jason).
- Along with other developing unified board leadership, our goal is to create and adopt a unified budget for 2025.
- Christ UMC is undergoing a fall stewardship campaign in anticipation of participating in a unified budget for 2025
- Beginning in October, Holly will publish a weekly unified newsletter that will contain information for both congregations.
- Members of both congregations shared positive reflections on actions that are being taken, including efforts to become better acquainted with one another (Speed Dating event in June; Rally Day; Women in Faith; etc.)
- It was acknowledged that challenges and apprehensions still exist should a complete merger take place due to the development of bylaws, property ownership, finances and naming.

Next steps—the ball is in our court. The church council will be working to develop a response to Christ UMC's latest response (to our response to their proposal). That response includes items mentioned above: timeline of Rev. Dawn's service with Christ UMC; Financial support of shared staff; Christ UMC conducting a stewardship campaign; Christ UMC is seeking clarity to the question of what constitutes a UM presence; Christ UMC is seeking to receive detailed financial reports from FCUCC; Christ UMC's property has been appraised at \$1,400,000.

We will continue to develop unified offerings of worship, education, leadership and mission.

Questions and comments can be directed to Dick Kloppel and Karen Spencer.

The Announcement (in case you missed it.....)

12 months, 10 days.... And a few hours. That's how long it will be until October 5, 2025, my last Sunday, not only as your pastor, but as one serving in active local church ministry in the United Church of Christ. I'll be retiring!

What a year it will be. We'll get to mark it with the usual things: another Christmas, another Easter, more children's sermons and sermons for everyone. We're all going to be one year older by the time the big day comes around. Who knows where we will be in the unification discernment between Christ UMC and First Congregational UCC. We anticipate that the coming year will include much more conversation and experimenting.

Although it will most likely happen towards the end of that years' time, we'll be saying our goodbyes, remembering and celebrating what we've done together and sharing a bit of grace. I also anticipate that it will be a year for me to get used to the idea of not writing a weekly sermon. By the time October of 2025 rolls around, I will have preached over 1,500 sermons—which is quite a feat for someone who went to seminary intending not to preach at all! For someone who appreciates the importance of church meetings, there may be a bit of withdrawal from not attending monthly council meetings—I've participated in somewhere around 375 of those. If I attend any congregational meetings in the future, it will be as a church member and not the pastor. And books.... 32 years of ministry-related books will hopefully find new homes. Some of the hardest ones to pass along will be the classics that I've carried with me from seminary. I've accumulated communion sets from various General Synods over the years. I have some plans for those, as well as my collection of stoles, that I'll tell you about later.

I know I don't need to tell most of you about the odd sense of what it's like to get ready to move out of an almost life-long vocation. Many of you have taken that journey up to and through retirement and have done it so well. I will look to you for inspiration! I'm finding that this is a season of seasons as we circle around the sun one more time together. I'm recognizing that the cycles of growth, life, harvest, and rest are very real.

New seeds are being planted: seeds of rest; seeds of seeking what to do with time and energy; seeds of strengthening relationships that, all too often, have taken a back seat to the demands of ministry. They are all being nurtured by love and prayers for what is to come. There are seeds that have been planted and have started to germinate and grow: some of the experiences and insights gained from my time in sabbatical and other times of sabbath are sending up shoots that give me energy to transition practices and knowledge on to others. There are seeds that are ripening for harvest: I now have a limited opportunity to preach, teach and lead! I'm becoming aware that there is yet more I'd like to share! And, there are seeds that are beginning to move into dormancy and rest, settling into the soil of my soul to nurture what will be next. Just like the seeds that quietly rest and transform in the depths of the winter soil, I am curious about what will spring forth after October 5, 2025.

As I take my own journey towards retirement, you will be taking your own towards calling and welcoming your next minister. It's been my privilege to be among the thirty or so folks who have served this congregation as authorized ministers in settled, interim or student capacity. Right now, your next pastor is going about their day, perhaps not realizing what the future holds for them. I believe that God is already at work doing what needs to be done to prepare that person to come to Great Falls, meet you all, learn of your mission and passion and be stirred by the Holy Spirit to come alongside you in ministry. I'd ask that you keep this person in your prayers... even if you don't know them by name, yet.

So, here we go! Off into this season of seasons, a year of firsts and lasts and waiting and wondering. May it all be blessed and filled with God's grace. Have a wonderful week. Rev. Lynne

*Lifting up those who will be participating in this weekend's Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference Annual Meeting. We will be represented by Lay Delegates **Dean Jardee, Carol Shipley, Ray Young, June Rovero and Karen Spencer**; Board members **Hank Branom and Denise Jackson**; Clergy delegates **Revs. Sara MacGivra Branom and Lynne Spencer-Smith**.*

Coming Up

Conference Annual Meeting in Billings September 27- September 29

Friday, September 27- NO Grief Support

Wednesday, October 2

10:00 A.M. Bridge, Sunday School Wing

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, Fellowship Hall

6:00 P.M. Youth Group

6:00 P.M. Handbell Rehearsal, Sanctuary

7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary

Thursday, October 3

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

Friday, October 4

1:30 P.M. Grief Support, Parlor

**Holly will be out of the office
September 26-30.**
