

# The Good News of First Congregational UCC and Christ United Methodist Church

Volume 2024

Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

(406) 453-4316

greatfallsucc@bresnan.net

www.greatfallsucc.org

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PO Box 6303, 59406

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Rev. Dawn Skerritt

(406) 781-4524

revdawnskerrit@gmail.com

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

## Worship Notes For December 15, 2024 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent



## Children's Christmas Pageant 9:30 A.M.

Worship Leader: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Ushers: Lila Byers, Susan Thomas

Acolytes: Elvis Light, Bailey Schrader

Advent Candle Lighting: Dennis, Sue & Ashton Turton

Choir Director: Jason Webster

Accompanist: Barb Swaby

Nursery: Gracie Kuszmaul, May Harris

Coffee Fellowship: Bill Tiskus, Dennis & Sue Turton

Treats: Rosemary Neilsen, Betsy Rogstad

Tellers: Paul Haffeman, Liz Lee

The service will be live-streamed on both church Facebook pages and a recording of the livestream will be available on YouTube later in the day and on the UCC website.



### **Invitation to the Christmas Pageant "Nativity"**

The prophets foretold it. The angels proclaimed it. The wise ones observed it. The stories of the birth of Jesus have been told for thousands of years. **Once again this year, children of First Congregational United Church of Christ will present "Nativity", a Christmas Pageant sharing the good news of the birth of our Savior.** Families, members and friends are invited to join the children for this joyous event! **The pageant will take place during 9:30 A.M. worship on Sunday, December 15.** Child care will be provided for children through age 5.

## *In Our Thoughts and Prayers*



- † Congratulations to **John & Lynda Baker** on the birth of their great-granddaughter, **Maysen Mae**.
  - † **Carol Davidson** continues to recover from diverticulitis.
  - † **Linda Larson's** brother is in ICU being treated for congestive heart failure.
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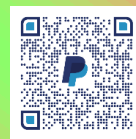
**“... The Glory of God Shone Around Them...”**

**Luke 2:9**

Each year during our Christmas Eve service, two organizations are selected as recipients of your generosity. This year, the **YWCA Mercy Home** and **Veterans of the Cross** have been chosen. **The Veterans of the Cross Christmas Fund** has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas checks each December to lower-income retirees. What a great way to say “Thank you.”

**Mercy Home** is more than emergency housing for women impacted by domestic violence; it's a 60-day program providing a comprehensive support system for women and their children escaping abusive relationships. The approach empowers participants to pursue goals, regain control of their lives, achieve self-sufficiency, and live with dignity. Additionally, Mercy Home offers a 24/7 crisis line for those seeking assistance and support in dealing with intimate partner violence.

Christmas offering donations can be brought to church or you can use the QR code to access our PayPal page. Please remember to indicate the designation of your gift in the “note” section on PayPal. **You are welcome to contribute to one or both.**



### ***Christian Education News***

**No Sunday School December 15 or 29. There will be class on December 22.  
Nursery care will be provided all Sundays EXCEPT December 29.**

**The nursery needs a volunteer on Sunday, December 22. Please contact Janet Koostra, 406-727-8443 or [janetkoostra@gmail.com](mailto:janetkoostra@gmail.com) if you would like to help.**

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### ***Pageant Rehearsal- Saturday, December 14***

Dress Rehearsal for the Christmas Pageant is this Saturday, December 14. **Actors and crew arrive at 10:00 AM. Choir arrives at 10:30 AM.** Music will be rehearsed until 11:15 A.M. when choir will be dismissed. Actors and crew will rehearse until 12:15 P.M. **On pageant day, actors should arrive by 9:00 A.M.** Performance will take place during worship.

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### ***Christmas Poinsettias***

Honor a loved one or just contribute to the beauty of our sanctuary this Christmas by donating **\$15** for a live poinsettia. Names of those who are honored will be included in our Christmas Eve bulletin. **Please send checks made out to UCC (with flower fund in the memo) and names of those to be honored to the church office no later than Sunday, December 15.** You may also place checks and names in an envelope in the offering trays each Sunday. Poinsettias will be displayed the entire Advent season.

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### ***95 Years Around the Sun***

Come help celebrate **Louise Toole's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday** at **11:30 A.M. on Sunday, December 15** in the Fellowship Hall. Cake, light snacks, and coffee will be served.



## *West Elementary Christmas*

Thank you to everyone who took a tag from the gift-giving tree for West Elementary. **Please return the wrapped gifts by Monday, December 16th, with the tag securely attached.** Your Christian Service elves will gather everything and deliver them to the school. We thank each one of you for the blessings you have extended to the students and staff at West Elementary this year. **Imagine Together** the joy you are sharing this Christmas.

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## *Women's Coffee*

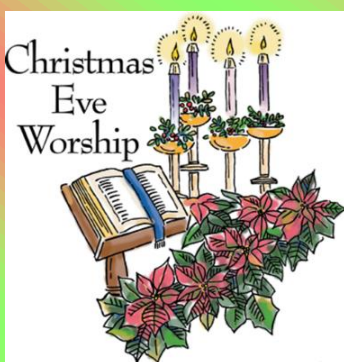
**Due to conflicts and the busy-ness of the season, the group will not meet this month. See you next year! Have a Merry Christmas. Joan Duncan**

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## *Mitten Makers*

**The Mitten Makers are meeting for coffee next Tuesday, December 17 at 9:30 A.M. at Wheat Montana (1116 9<sup>th</sup> Street S).**

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Save the date and make your plans for our annual

Christmas Eve Service!

**Service of Lessons, Carols and Candles**

*This will be a unified service, an offering for both congregations, friends and families.*

**Tuesday, December 24**

**4:30 P.M.**

***The office will be closed on Christmas Day and may have reduced hours December 24 and 26. The newsletter will be mailed on December 18, 24 and then January 8. Please have information to Holly in the office by January 7 for the January 8 newsletter. The December 24 newsletter will include the January 2025 calendar. Happy Holidays!***

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## *Justice 100*

This is the final call for contributions. The Justice 100 Team is people, churches, and organizations who join the mission of the **ONA Coalition of the United Church of Christ** and will commit to raising at least \$1,000 in new funds for the Coalition. **So far we have raised \$700.00 of our \$1,000.00 goal.** If you'd like to donate, you may do so by giving through the church (cash, check or PayPal) and indicating "Justice 100" in the memo. Thank you!

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## *FISH Week*

Who would have thought that medical issues would keep me away from FISH last week! But they did, and an amazing group of UCC volunteers took over and it was a great week, I understand! Thank you SO much to **Elaine Balzer, Harry & Connie Brauer, Lila Byers, Peggy Floen, Bev Harris, Steve & Karen McElroy, Sandi Nicolai, Sharon Oakland, Janet Olson, Karen Spencer, Dennis & Sue Turton, and Nancy Zbinden.** Cassie Wilson, who is part of the Great Falls FISH Board, filled in for me all week! I couldn't have done it without all of you! Thank you! **Carol Davidson**

**Our next turn to work at the Fish Food Pantry is January 20-24, 2025! Maybe see you then!**

## *The Unified Journey – Part III*

Thanks to everyone who participated in the budget hearing this past Sunday. Next steps for the unified budget:

- December 9- Adjustments made at Unified Business Affairs Board meeting
- Adjusted draft budget will be sent to leadership of each congregation for their approval
- January 19- Congregations (FCUCC and CUMC) adopt unified budget at Unified Congregational Meeting

We have a few other leadership plans that are underway:

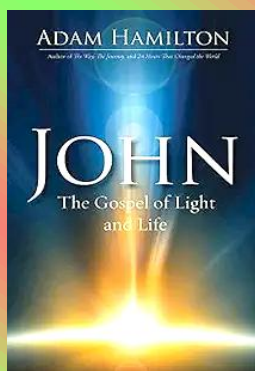
- Beginning this month, we are hoping to initiate unified monthly leadership meetings for both congregations, bringing the UCC Church Council and Christ UMC Leadership Team together on a regular basis
- There will be a UCC congregational meeting on January 5 following worship (see last week's newsletter for more detail)
- Plans are underway to hold a unified congregational meeting on January 19 to vote on unified leadership and a unified budget. There will be an Annual Meeting Booklet that will contain the reports of both congregations

It feels like there's a lot on our plate these days, probably because there is. It's both exciting and a bit daunting. Anytime we are faced with challenges that have the potential to lead to change, it's helpful to take some time to sort a few things out with some questions:

- What is going well that helps bring a positive light to the pending change?
- What challenges seem to be the hardest and how can they be broken down into smaller pieces?
- What voices am I listening to? Are they the voices of wisdom and knowledge or the voices of speculation and fear?
- How can I use my voice for good and not harm?

This is new territory for all of us. My prayer is that we continue to be open to the process and one another and continue to walk gently with one another in faith. Big changes done well take time and energy. May we know God's presence in it all.

Have a blessed week. Rev. Lynne



### ***Bible Study to Begin***

**The bible study group that has been meeting for years on Wednesday mornings will begin again on January 8 at 10:00 A.M. We meet in the church parlor for 1.5 hours and all are welcome. The next session will be led by Retired Pastor Paul Holland. We are going to look at Adam Hamilton's study of John. The book is entitled *John: The Gospel-Light and Life* by Adam Hamilton. Please purchase your own book for the class. Cost is \$15.52.**



## RAISE A PINT FOR ADOPT-A-BEAR!

MONDAY, DEC. 30

5 P.M. - 8 P.M.

MIGHTY MO BREWING COMPANY

412 CENTRAL AVE.

GREAT FALLS

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Come support the Falls Quilt Guild's mission of providing teddy bears and cozy quilts to children in Pediatrics, the Emergency Department, Peace Hospice, Mercy Flight, and Benefits' critical access hospitals.



### Coming Up

#### Thursday, December 12

1:30 P.M. UCC Pastoral Relations

#### Friday, December 13

1:30 P.M. Grief Support, Parlor

4:00 P.M. Fellowship Board, FH

#### Saturday, December 14

10:00 A.M. Pageant Rehearsal, Sanctuary

1:00 P.M. Women's Christmas Tea

First United Methodist Church downtown

#### Sunday, December 15

9:30 A.M. Children's Christmas Pageant

11:30 A.M. Louise Toole 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday

Celebration in Fellowship Hall

#### Monday, December 16

6:30 P.M. Church Council, Zoom

#### Tuesday, December 17

9:30 A.M. Mitten Makers, Wheat MT

#### Wednesday, December 18

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

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, FH

4:00 P.M. CUMC Leadership, Parlor

6:00 P.M. Youth Group

6:00 P.M. Handbell Rehearsal

7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

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*The Adopt-A-Bear program was started in 2000 by Suzan Seery. Since then, Suzan's crew of quilters have provided bears and quilts to over 7,000 kids in Montana during their most vulnerable moments. Stop by the Mighty Mo on December 30 from 5:00-8:00 P.M. and help support Suzan's legacy!*

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### Upcoming Meetings

*First Congregational United Church of Christ Conversation on Sunday, January 5, 2025 following worship. Get updates on the unification process and vote to approve the formation of an Exploration Committee. This meeting is for UCC members only.*

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*135<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of First Congregational United Church of Christ held in conjunction with Christ United Methodist Church - Sunday, January 19, 2025 following worship. Receive reports, vote on the 2025 unified budget, install new leaders and board/committee members, and more! Annual reports are due December 30. This meeting is for both UCC and CUMC members*