

# 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

December 4, 2024

PO Box 6303, 59406

Issue 49

Rev. Dawn Skerritt  
(406) 781-4524  
revdawnskerritt@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 8, 2024  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
9:30 A.M.**



Worship Leader: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith  
Scripture: Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 1:68-79  
Lay Reader: Dick Kloppel  
Ushers: Lois Baker, Susan Thomas  
Acolytes: Zurie Goss, Chase Schrader  
Advent Candle Lighting: The Schrader Family  
Choir Director: Jason Webster  
Accompanist: Victor Tsai  
Sunday School: Janet Koostra  
Nursery: Gracie Kuszmaul, May Harris  
Coffee Fellowship: Dave & Debbe Rothweiler  
Treats: Carla Smith  
Tellers: Steve Gettel, Noël Walker

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.

---

**The December 8 worship service will include the commissioning of the Pastoral Search Committee. Once they are commissioned, they will begin their work to discern and search for a transitional minister.**

---

## ***Prayer Chain Ministry***

Christ United Methodist's prayer chain has moved over to join with the UCC email prayer chain. **This is sent out every Monday and even people without computers can participate.** Please contact Holly in the church office to let her know of your interest in being a part of this ministry. **All those who wish to pray in person will meet on Wednesday, December 11 at 1:00 P.M. in the church parlor.**

## *In Our Thoughts and Prayers*



- † **Jack Armstrong** is home after a short stay in the hospital.
- † **Carol Davidson** is recovering from diverticulitis.
- † **Patty Bergquist** for ongoing health issues.



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

This week, children will begin in worship. **Pastor Lynne will share a “brown bag” children’s message. Then children will go to Sunday School for a seasonal Advent /Christmas lesson with teacher Janet Koostra.** Nursery care is provided for children through age 5. Child care will also be provided for the budget hearing that will follow worship.

**It’s Aalayah’s turn to bring an item for the Children’s Message in the Brown Bag.  
Thank you, Aalayah!**

### ***Pageant Rehearsal- Saturday, December 7***

Attention families! Pageant Rehearsal will be on Saturdays for the next two weeks. **Saturday, December 7 pageant rehearsal will begin at 10:00 A.M. in the sanctuary.** Children will use props, test microphones and maybe even wear costumes! The cast will practice music with Jason Webster. The goal will be to have two complete run-throughs. **Dress rehearsal will be on Saturday, December 14 at 10:00 A.M.** This will also be two complete run-throughs and will include the choir. Tech crew help is still needed to move set pieces and make costume changes. **Contact Janet Koostra at [janetkoostra@gmail.com](mailto:janetkoostra@gmail.com) or 406-727-8443 if you can help.**

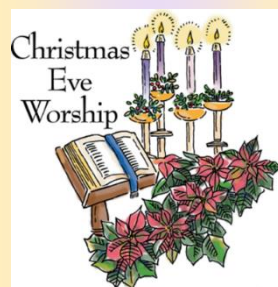


### ***Christmas Poinsettias***

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.

### ***West Elementary Christmas***

A few tags remain on the gift-giving tree for West Elementary. **Imagine Together** spreading joy and making a lasting impact in the lives of others. If you wish to fulfill a child’s wish, please **select a tag, purchase the gift, and return the gift wrapped with the tag securely attached to the church no later than Monday, December 16.** Thank you for sharing your love and compassion.



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.**

*A Little White Party for World AIDS Day*

Saturday, December 7, 7:00 – 10:00 P.M.

Luna Coffee, 9 5<sup>th</sup> Street N.

HIV and Hep C tests available from 7:00-8:00 P.M. provided by Alluvion



---

*Special Conference Meeting – December 8, 1:00 P.M. via Zoom*

The Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference Board of Directors has approved to hold a special meeting of the Conference on **December 8, 2024** to vote on becoming a signatory Conference to the STAR Coalition Resolution. The documents for the meeting can be viewed on the Conference Website: <https://www.mnwcucc.org/>. Click on “Events” for a drop-down menu for all related material. Please join us for this meeting to support the STAR (Small Town and Rural) Ministries.

Zoom Registration

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtc-CgrTkuG9YMGke4rkEBtkZw-vUDLw09](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMtc-CgrTkuG9YMGke4rkEBtkZw-vUDLw09)

According to the Conference bylaws, **we are allotted 4 lay delegates**. Clergy attend as clergy delegates. **If you are interested in participating as a delegate to this meeting, please contact Rev. Lynne or the church office ASAP.** Thank you.

---

*Thankful for Contributors*

Many, many thanks from the Christian Education Board and the Christian Service Board to all who shopped, donated food, donated dollars, organized & packed the food, and delivered everything for the West Elementary Thanksgiving Basket Ministry. The Sunday School class sorted, organized and packed most of the food items on Sunday, November 17. The seven Thanksgiving Baskets (turkey, pie, dressing, potatoes, yams, olives, corn, green beans, gravy) and a few extras—bread, peanut butter, jelly, pancake mix & syrup, apples, milk, butter-- **were delivered on November 22 to West Elementary where all was gratefully received.** Again, thank you to the many busy hands and generous hearts that made Thanksgiving –and beyond—a sumptuous time for seven food insecure families in our community. Blessings one and all.

---

*Christmas Tea*  
*Saturday, December 14*  
*1:00 P.M. at*  
*First United Methodist Church*  
*610 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue N. (downtown)*

Please note there is No Women In Faith meeting this month. Last month we had a lot of fun making gingerbread decorations and visiting with one another. **In place of December’s WIF meeting, you are invited to Christmas Tea on Saturday, December 14 at 1:00 P.M. First United Methodist Church, 610 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue N. (The date on the December calendar that went out last week is incorrect). The tea is in fact on Saturday, December 14. Reservations are appreciated and can be made by calling (406) 453-3114.**







Saturday, December 14 at 10:30 A.M. at Miss Kitty's. Share your favorite holiday movie!

---

***Spaghetti Dinner Proceeds***

Income from Dinner	\$885.00
Expenses	113.12
Net income	771.88
50/50 Raffle	66.00
Total from Dinner	\$837.88

**Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the Veteran's Day Spaghetti Dinner!**

---

***The Unified Journey – An Update – Part II***

Last week I lifted up some of the latest joys we have seen along the Unified Journey. An additional one that wasn't quite finalized last week is that we now have a Search Committee! They will be commissioned as part of the worship service on December 8. An initial meeting with Conference Minister Tony Clark is scheduled for the week of December 16 so the Committee can begin working on the UCC search process. Congratulations and thank you to those who have agreed to serve. They are taking on a big task and will need your support and prayers.

Those who have agreed to serve are:

- UCC members: **Hank Branom, Rev. Sara MacGilvra Branom, Dale Dallmann, Dean Jardee, Janet Koostra, Liz Lee, Noël Walker**
- UM members: **Rev. Paul Holland, Marilyn Sheffels**

We are going forward with a unified budget hearing this Sunday, December 8 following worship. Our dedicated Fellowship Board will be bringing fellowship refreshments to the sanctuary.

Because of the UCC congregational polity, the UCC congregation's input and authorization is needed before we go much further. To that end, there will be a brief UCC congregational meeting on January 5 for members to give feedback and possible approval to move forward with the formation of an exploration committee to research some of the technical issues of further unification and begin working on addressing them.

That's it for now but there will be more next week.... Stay tuned!

---

***“From Where Will My Help Come?”***

This is the heartfelt plea that begins the beautiful Psalm 121. It's a plea that is not unique to a song writer that existed over 2,000 years ago. It's the plea that has forever existed on the lips of humanity. From where will my help come?

The Psalm points to help coming from God and then goes on to list the multiple amazing things that God has done: made heaven and earth, kept Israel in safety, kept people from evil, and protected people from the elements. And that's all good, very good. I love that the Psalm actually begins with the writer turning to the hills. In Montana, we like to think of those hills as mountains.

Sometimes, it's helpful to turn to others for some of that help. Sometimes those others are called counselors or therapists. Sometimes, God works through the wisdom and guidance of a trained professional as much as the power and beauty of the mountains. Sometimes, we're reluctant to admit that we're in need of some mental health help. It's time to remove that stigma.

I recently turned to a therapist to help me. As you may remember, our horse, Phoenix passed away unexpectedly and suddenly on a Sunday afternoon about a month ago. That Tuesday was the election. I knew I was going to need to provide some support for some folks in the days to come but felt I had to sort out some of my own reaction to the outcome. I was in the midst of some challenging conversations regarding the relationship between Christ UMC and First Congregational UCC. I've been trying to sort out what it will mean for me to retire from a vocation that has defined my life for over 30 years. The bottom line is that there was just a whole lot going on in my soul and I knew I would need some help sorting it out so I would be able to function well in the days to come. I gave a call to my therapist (yes, I have one) and reached out to fellow clergy colleagues. We had a quick Zoom clergy support gathering and I had an appointment with my therapist a week later.

It was a bit like twisting my ankle and reaching out to medical professionals to help me straighten things out and get me the tools to help me heal. It's a health thing—a mental health thing.

The Advent and Christmas seasons are some of the most challenging times for our mental well-being. There are a lot of expectations. Some come from others. Many come from ourselves. There are financial stresses related to the holidays that come from decorating to gift giving to desired charitable giving. Family issues become heightened over the holidays. Grief over loved ones that will not be present for the holidays is heightened. Throw in shorter days and gloomy weather and it has the potential to be a mental health disaster. From where will your help come?

Certainly, mental health help can come from God, whether you find God in the mountains or on the prairie or in your favorite chair at home. God can also be found in the wisdom and compassionate care of a mental health professional. If you need help finding one, let me know or get in touch with your primary health care professional.

Have a physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually blessed week and beyond.

**Rev. Lynne**

*Coming Up*

**Thursday, December 5**

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

**Friday, December 6**

1:30 P.M. Grief Support, Parlor

**Saturday, December 7**

10:00 A.M. Pageant Rehearsal, Sanctuary

**Sunday, December 8**

10:30 A.M. Unified Budget Hearing

1:00 P.M. MNWC Meeting, Zoom

**Monday, December 9**

10:30 A.M. Canoeing Book Study, Parlor

1:00 P.M. Church Growth & Vitality, FH

6:00 P.M. Business Affairs, Zoom

**Tuesday, December 10**

10:00 A.M. Mitten Makers, FH

**Wednesday, December 11**

1:00 P.M. Prayer Meeting, Parlor

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, FH

6:00 P.M. Youth Group

6:00 P.M. Handbell Rehearsal

7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

**Friday, December 13**

1:30 P.M. Grief Support, Parlor

4:00 P.M. Fellowship Board, FH



