

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

Volume 2025

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Issue 03

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

Third Sunday of Epiphany Worship Notes For January 26, 2025 9:30 A.M.



Minister: Rev. Sara MacGilvra Branom

Scripture: Luke 4:14-21

Liturgist: Rev. Paul Holland

Ushers: Jenn & Zurie Goss

Acolytes: Jullian Valley, Ellie Bucher

Accompanist: Dean Jardee

Choir Director: Jason Webster

Sunday School: Erin Borland

Nursery: Gracie Kuszmaul, May Harris

Coffee Fellowship: KimKay McCarty Martin,

Verna Kessner, Doris Motley

Tellers: Liz Lee, Nancy Zadick

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.



Christian Education News

On January 26, children will begin in worship. Sunday School teachers will be Erin Borland and TBA. This week will be our monthly “Caring For . . .” theme lesson. Children will hear the story of “The Widow’s Offering” as an example of “Caring. . . and Sharing”. The lesson will lead into a discussion about The Soup-er Bowl of Caring offering and kids will make posters to advertise a fundraiser and bake sale on February 9, Super Bowl Sunday, to benefit the local FISH Food Pantry. **Nursery care is also available for children through age 5.**

Soup-er Bowl of Caring

Offering and Bake Sale **Sunday, February 9** Benefits FISH Food Pantry

In Our Thoughts and Prayers



†Our sympathy to **Steve Gettel** and family in the death of Steve's brother, **Roger**, 63, who passed away January 17, 2025 due to complications from ALS.

Annual Meeting Re-Cap

Thank you to all who participated in last week's first-ever unified Congregational Annual Meeting of First Congregational United Church of Christ and Christ United Methodist Church. Thanks also to the Fellowship Board for lunch! The highlights of the meeting include:

- **The adoption of a balance unified budget that:**
 - Incorporates the Joint Facilities budget (was previously a separate budget managed by the Joint Facilities Committee);
 - Provides staff salary adjustments for cost of living and extra work-load related to unification work;
 - Continues to fund denominational support to both the UCC and United Methodist Church
- **A vote to change the time of worship to 10:00 A.M.** The motion did not specify when that time change would take place. Watch for a further announcement to come from the Church Council and/or Worship Board. **Until notified, worship will continue at 9:30 A.M.**
- **Election of new leadership** and recognition of those who have completed their terms of service (many of whom are shifting to other leadership responsibilities).
- All boards going forward include **elected members from both congregations.**
- **The approval of two UCC Bylaw revisions:**
 - Removes associate members from membership count submitted to the denomination
 - Adds representative from Joint Facilities Committee as voting member of the Church Council
- **Commissioned a unified Exploration Committee** to continue the work towards federation of the congregations.

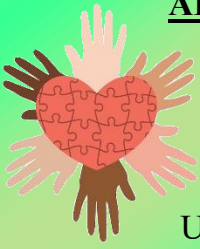
Search and Call Committee News- Surveys Needed from Everyone!

The Search and Call Committee is doing a survey of the unified congregations to gather information for a church profile. The church profile is one of the documents provided to prospective new ministers to tell them "Who We Are". It contains information about membership demographics, programming, staff, finances, information about Great Falls, and more. **Your information will only be used to compile statistics.** Surveys were passed out last Sunday, January 19. If you weren't at church, paper copies are available in the church office. You may also click the following link for an electronic copy:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Pk7YI5ni2MX1vmDFnYMFcQaljvEfzC6E/view?usp=sharing> .

Preparing the profile is a time-sensitive project. **Paper and electronic copies should be returned ASAP, please--by January 26.** Please bring paper copies to the church and send electronic surveys to Dale Dallmann, dogger.drd@gmail.com. Since we are exploring unification, the committee needs surveys from members and friends of both congregations. It is important for the S&C Committee to get input from as many members and friends as possible so the profile is as accurate and transparent as we can make it. Please be sure to include your name so the committee can follow up with all members and friends of both congregations. Thank you for your cooperation and help with this survey.

ALL Are Welcome Here



With the change in national administration and related pronouncements and presidential executive orders that are being issued, **know that we will continue to be a community of faith who takes seriously the inclusive, expansive message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.** We will continue to live into our commitments as a

UCC Open and Affirming church and United Methodist affiliate member of Reconciling Ministries. **We will continue to welcome, love, support and advocate for all people, especially those who may feel targeted by recent and imminent legislative actions.** It is for such a time as this that we have been called and empowered to be who God has called and empowered us to be in this place: a faithful movement of love for all people in the spirit of the risen Christ. We encourage all members and friends to be paying attention to legislative activities local, state and national and make your voices known.

God is Still Listening (and so should we)

The daily lectionary readings for January 15 included a section from Numbers 27:1-11. I have to admit, the Book of Numbers is not one of my favorites. It's part of the Decalogue (the five books of Moses) and tends to repeat what shows up in the other four books. Numbers has a lot to do with who begat whom and when and extends some of the laws of Moses. It also has a lot of stories about people coming to Moses with their gripes. And that's what 27:1-11 is about. It turns out that the daughters of Zelophehad (I didn't even know there was anyone with that name!) had a gripe.

Their father was descended from a long line of men from the Manassite clan (I didn't know that existed either). It was the tradition (and apparently the law) that inheritance happened through the males in the family. Sons inherited from their fathers who had inherited from their fathers and so on. Apparently, Zelophehad had no sons and an abundance of daughters—five of them: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah. And they all showed up before Moses one day complaining that, because their father died in the wilderness with no sons, that it was the end of his line. The inheritance and their father's name ended there.

Moses took the concern to God who said, “Hmmm. How about if a man dies without any sons, the inheritance goes to his daughters?” And that was that. No sons? No problem. The family farm will go to the daughters. It's not as complete of a shift as we might have hoped but in a thick patriarchal society, this was huge, especially since it was coming from God.

Every once in a while, we still hear of some of our Christian cousins who don't support things like the ordination of women, female leadership in the church, full inclusions of members of the LGBTQ+ community (including ordination), equality of races in society, affirmation people with disabilities, or the extension of value to everyone.... Every One... no exceptions. Most of these claims for exclusion or limitations are often traced back to some cherry-picked Bible verse that has been taken totally out of context to make a point. Well, doing a bit of our own cherry-picking, let's remember Numbers 27:1-11 and the empowered daughters of Zelophehad as a reminder that God is not only still speaking, God is still listening. We should listen, too. Otherwise, we miss out on some pretty terrific folks who have some fabulous gifts to offer the church and the world.

Let's cheer on the folks who are today's Mahlah's, Noah's, Hoglah's, Milcah's, and Tirzah's as they stand up and speak up and change the world (and sometimes God's mind). Thanks, sisters!

Have a blessed week!

Lynne

Lynne out of town January 24 – February 2

Risa Paul (First Presbyterian Church) will be on call for pastoral needs.
Please contact her at 406-453-1411 or, after hours
for emergencies on her cell phone 406-0544-3952.

Grief Share

Are you grieving the death of a spouse or know someone who is? Your life has changed forever. The daily emotions and challenges can seem too hard to bear. **Join Linda Redding for an encouraging seminar on Tuesdays, February 4 and 11, 1:30-3:00 P.M., in the church parlor.** For more information, please contact Linda at lindakredding@hotmail.com or (406)868-1282.



Four Chaplains Memorial Service
Sunday, February 2 at 2:00 P.M.
Church Sanctuary

This non-denominational service celebrates the true story of four World War II U.S. Army Chaplains. Sponsored by American Legion Post 341, this service honors those men who joined together despite their different beliefs. In February of 1943, the U.S.A.T Dorchester sunk in the cold Atlantic. Lt. George Fox, Lt. Alexander Goode, Lt. John Washington, and Lt. Clark

Polling, brought hope in despair and light in darkness. Quickly and quietly, they spread out among the soldiers, trying to calm the frightened, tend the wounded, and guide the disoriented toward safety. When the ship went down, the four chaplains, who had given their life jackets to others, linked arms offered prayers. Of the 902 men aboard the U.S.A.T Dorchester, only 230 survived.

Bingo!

The Fellowship Board is hosting **Bingo** after worship on **Sunday, February 16**. Cards can be purchased for **\$1.00/ea**. Prizes will be awarded. **Proceeds will go towards scholarships for the 2025 Camp Mimanagish season**. Mark your calendars and bring your family and friends!

Coming Up

Thursday, January 23

- 1:30 P.M. Safety Committee, Parlor
- 5:30 P.M. Search and Call, Parlor

Tuesday, January 28

- 10:00 A.M. Mitten Makers, Fellowship Hall

Wednesday, January 29

- 10:00 A.M. Book Study, Parlor
- 1:30 P.M. Pinochle, Fellowship Hall
- 6:00 P.M. Youth Group
- 6:00 P.M. Handbells
- 7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, January 30

- 5:30 P.M. Search and Call, Parlor

Rev. Lynne on vacation
January 24-February 3

Supporting Youth Group

With youth from Christ United Methodist Church, First Congregational United Church of Christ, and First United Methodist Church, there has been an average of 15-20 + kids each week, with a high percentage of middle schoolers. We have had several new teens in the middle school group and a couple new teens in the high school group. Youth group nights include group check-ins, guided conversations, a mix of table and movement games/activities, and making sandwiches or muffins for distribution at First UMC.

Special Events:

- Back to school bash with pizza and 9 square tournament
- Game night at the old Rec Center (now owned by Laurie O'Leary)
- Corn Maze in Craig
- Two high school coffee nights, while the middle schoolers stayed at the church (the high schoolers LOVE to have time as their separate group)
- Halloween costume and karaoke party (AWESOME karaoke setup by Erin Dunn)
- Bystander training (identify racist or bullying behavior and five different ways to respond). This program was INCREDIBLE! The kids were very engaged.
- Christmas caroling with treats and hot chocolate provided by Lois and Doris
- Two impromptu Christmas break mission opportunities: making sack lunches, followed by coffee at Luna.
- Lock-in at First United Methodist Church

Planned special activities for the next couple of months:

- Possible snow shoe/ski trip with another church
- Roller Skating
- Senior Sunday
- Year-end activity
- Kids and leaders have expressed desire to explore Our Whole Lives curriculum

Needs:

- Weekly snacks
- Weekly sandwich-making supplies (bread, peanut butter, jelly, bologna, American cheese, sandwich-size bags)
- Funds for activities, materials, senior gifts, summer camp
- Adult supervision/participation/drivers
- Special topic/activity presenters

To donate to Youth Group, please write checks to either Christ United Methodist Church or First Congregational United Church of Christ with “youth group” in the memo.
