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

Volume 2025

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Issue 01

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

Worship Notes For January 12, 2025 Baptism of the Lord 9:30 A.M.

Minister: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Scripture: Luke 3:15-22

Lay Reader: Ray Young

Ushers: Cara and Kaeden Dunn

Acolytes: Kaeden Dunn, Lily Borland

Choir Director: Jason Webster

Accompanist: Victor Tsai

Sunday School: Janet Koostra

Nursery: Gracie Kuszmaul, May Harris

Coffee Fellowship: Molly Beck, Peggy Floen,

Bev Harris, and Susan Sanford

Tellers: Steve Gettel, Paul Haffeman

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.



This Sunday we will celebrate the Baptism of Jesus and acknowledge those who were baptized in the past year with the presentation of Baptism doves. Our 2024 baptisms were **Aalayah, Angelito and Saint Dunn; Aurelia Oakes; Bailey and Chase Schrader.**

In Our Thoughts and Prayers



† We've learned that long-time Christ United Methodist member, **Norine Smith** passed away on January 6 in Wisconsin. **Condolences can be sent to Kenyard at 2455 Sawgrass Place, Apt #233, Altoona, WI 54720.**

Call to Annual Meeting

First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls Council has scheduled the **2025 Annual Meeting for Sunday, January 19 following an abbreviated worship service.** We will conduct business, vote on the 2025 unified budget, install board members and officers, and discuss other items of interest. **The meeting will be followed immediately by the annual meeting of the Memorial Fund Corporation.** All members and friends of First Congregational United Church of Christ and Christ United Methodist Church are strongly encouraged to attend and participate, **keeping in mind that only members are able to vote.** Lunch provided by the Fellowship Board.



Christian Education News

Children begin in worship on January 12. They will share a time with Pastor Lynne before going to Sunday School. This week's lesson is "Boy Jesus in the Temple". **Teacher is Janet Koostra.** Children 5 years old and up are invited to attend Sunday School. Nursery care is provided for children through age 5.

Volunteers Needed to Teach Sunday School

It's time to set up a schedule for winter/spring Sunday School teachers and helpers. For those who have been teachers already, watch your inbox for information about lessons and scheduling. **And new teachers are welcome! Contact Janet Koostra, 406-727-8443 or janetkoostra@gmail.com for more information.** Sunday School is lively and fun! Come join us!

Women's Coffee

**Saturday, January 11 at 10:30 A.M. at Miss Kitty's (2501 6th Ave. N).
What one small thing brings you happiness every day?**



If you helped contribute to the beauty of the sanctuary by donating for a poinsettia, feel free to take a plant home with you.

Christ UMC December Financial Report

December Income	\$14,867.57
December Expenses	\$13,221.47
Net Income for December	\$1,646.10
Checking Balance December 31	\$56,969.91
Year to Date Income December 31	\$8,538.07

Thank you to everyone for your continued support of our church.
Blessings to all for a happy and healthy New Year. Jeanne

Fishing for Volunteers

Hey all you FISH volunteers! Just letting you know that FCUCC's next turn to work at the FISH Food Pantry is **January 21-24 9:00-11:00 A.M.** (we won't be working on Monday of that week since it is a MLK holiday). **If you'd like to volunteer and distribute food to families in need, please call Carol Davidson at 836-1862.** Thank you so much if you can help!



United
Women
in Faith

Women in Faith will be meeting January 16t at 1:00 P.M. for a Pledge Program. This is where we review what the Women of Faith do world-wide and we pledge our support of this women and children support program. **All women are welcome to come and join in the missional and fellowship group. We meet in the Fellowship Hall.**

UCC Congregational Meeting – January 5

Thank you to all who participated in the UCC congregational meeting after worship on January 5. As our only item of business, **we approved going forward with the selection of an exploratory committee** (to include members of Christ UMC) to explore the technical aspects of further unification and begin drafting documents towards deeper unification.

Worship Time

There has been discussion at some of our board meetings regarding moving our Sunday worship time to 10:00 A.M. Since we no longer need to accommodate Pastor Dawn's schedule for attending both Methodist services, the thought is that moving the start time back a half hour might make it more convenient for members and families to attend more regularly.

The possibility of moving our worship time from 9:30 A.M. to 10:00 A.M. will be a topic of discussion at the Annual Meeting on January 19. Please be thinking about your opinion regarding the potential time change and be ready to address the question at the Annual Meeting.

Search and Call Update

The Search and Call Committee met on Thursday, January 2. **The group elected Liz Lee as chair, Dale Dallmann as vice-chair, Rev. Sara MacGivra Branom as chaplain and Noël Walker as secretary. Other members are Hank Branom, Rev. Paul Holland, Dean Jardee, Janet Koostra and Marilyn Sheffels.** The committee meets again on Thursday, January 9.

Facilities Calendar

Did you know that between church needs and outside groups using the church space, in a typical week there will be 15 – 20 things going on in the church building? This is a busy place! **If you are scheduling anything at the church (including Zoom meetings) please coordinate with Holly to make sure the space you need is available.** Having your meeting on the calendar also helps us keep track who is coming and going in the building for safety purposes. Thanks!



House of Hope

Located in Kupang, Indonesia, House of Hope is a shelter for former victims of human trafficking- providing a safe haven for emotional recovery and assistance with transitioning back to community life. The project is a ministry of Global Ministries partner, the Evangelical Protestant Church of West Timor (in Indonesian, Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor, abbreviated GMIT). Because the experience of each candidate is unique, House of Hope takes a social work approach to assessing the social resources, needs, and interests of each participant. With personalized care, each woman has the support she needs to begin the healing process. The organization strives to provide hope and transformation, reflecting the love and teachings of Christ while fostering sustainable development and holistic well-being in the region.



What Kind of Days...?

Ephesians 5:5-12 (lectionary reading for January 8) says:

¹⁵ So be careful to live your life wisely, not foolishly. ¹⁶ Take advantage of every opportunity because these are evil times. ¹⁷ Because of this, don't be ignorant, but understand the Lord's will. ¹⁸ Don't get drunk on wine, which produces depravity. Instead, be filled with the Spirit in the following ways: ¹⁹ speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts; ²⁰ always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Common English Bible)

These words written sometime around 2,000 years ago to a community of faith, located some 6,000 miles from Montana by an unknown author are a bit of a mixed bag for today's needs. (Note about the author.... Tradition claims that the Apostle Paul wrote the letter but scholarship points instead to someone who was highly influenced by Paul and wrote in his name. This was a very common practice of the time.) The church in Ephesus was dealing with some of their own issues unique to their place and time. Yet, the message can, with limitations, be meaningful for today.

I like the instruction to "live wisely...." Whatever that means. I tend to think of things like thoughtful, informed, sensible, and something about integrity. Who can go wrong with living with those things?

Some would think that we are indeed in evil times for a number of reasons and not all the same reasons. Some point to the inclusion of women, people of color and the LGBTQ+ community as hallmarks of evil times. Some think they are indicators that the world is becoming more just and equitable. We've had feedback from our message board from someone who clearly believes that this time is particularly evil and we are headed to the apocalypse any day now. They apparently also believe that our commitment to inclusion is an indication of just how evil the times are. (Evil, apparently, is in the mind of the beholder.) No time is exempt from evil things happening (think war, slavery, genocide, racism, classism, sexism... you get the idea). Advice about wine.... having experienced a bit too much wine (on rare occasions), I'm not so much concerned of the depravity of which I would be guilty as I am the headache that is sure to follow.

The Lord's will.... you just can't go wrong with understanding the Lord's will. The challenge comes because folks can't agree on just what God's will is (Hmm... same issue as with determining evil times). Proclaiming God's will usually involves cherry-picking some scripture texts that tend to back up that person's opinions and expectations of just what God's will is.

So, what's a Christian to do? Someone who is wiser than I has said that if there's any question about God's will you're pretty good to go with what expresses the deepest love. It ties back to the great commandment of loving God with all you've got and loving your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:37-39) And, in the midst of doing all of that, you also can't go wrong with keeping some good churchy music in your heart while you're going about loving yourself and others.

The times are what they are and there's evil and goodness in them. Lean into the goodness and watch what happens to the evil stuff. Have a blessed week.



Coming Up

Thursday, January 9

5:30 P.M. Memorial Corp., Conf. Room

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

Saturday, January 11

10:30 A.M. Women's Coffee, Miss Kitty's

Sunday, January 12

10:45 A.M. Christian Ed. Board, Parlor

10:45 A.M. Unified Worship Board, Sanct.

Monday, January 13

6:00 P.M. Business Affairs, Zoom

Tuesday, January 14

10:00 A.M. Mitten Makers, FH

6:30 P.M. UCC Church Council, Zoom

Wednesday, January 15

10:00 A.M. Bridge, SS Wing

10:00 A.M. Book Study, Parlor

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, FH

6:00 P.M. Youth Leaders

6:00 P.M. Handbells

7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, January 16

1:00 P.M. United Women in Faith, FH
