

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

Volume 2025

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  
revdawnskerritt@gmail.com

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

## Seventh Sunday of Epiphany Worship Notes For February 23, 2025 Praise Service 9:30 A.M.



Minister: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Scripture: Psalm 121

Lay Reader: Dana Kirkmeyer

Ushers: Bruce Cole & Bill Tiskus

Acolytes: Jullian Valley, Elvis Light

Accompanist: Victor Tsai

Choir Director: Jason Webster

Sunday School: Erin Borland

Nursery: May Harris, Gracie Kuszmaul

Treats: Dean Jardee, Karen McElroy, Sue Skees

Tellers: Paul Haffeman, 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.

### *In Our Thoughts and Prayers*

† **Paul Holland** is recovering from a fractured hip after a fall.

† **Verna Kessner** remains in hospice care following a stroke.

† **The Search and Call Committee** and the person whom God is preparing to be our next pastor.

### *Pictorial Directory Update*

Over 40 pictures of church singles, couples and families have been taken so far. **February 23 will be the final day for photos during coffee fellowship. But fear not! Eric Dunn plans to schedule blocks of time for people to sign up for their directory pictures.** This schedule will be available next week. Many thanks to all who have had pictures taken so far! **Folks may also send in a digital photo to Eric Dunn at tech@greatfallsucc.org.**

***Special Announcement!***  
***Beginning March 2, 2025***  
***Worship time will be 10:00 A.M.***  
***Be sure to tell all your friends!***

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***Christian Education News***

February 23 will be the monthly “theme” day for Sunday School. The topic will be “Caring For . . . VJ Antonette”. Children age 5 through grade 8 are invited to join the class for this special monthly event. Children will begin in Sunday School and remain for the entire worship hour. **Erin Borland will lead the class. As usual, nursery care will be provided for children through age 5.**

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***20<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner & Auction***

An evening of good food (Salmon Loaf, Cucumber Sauce, Rolls, Coleslaw, Jell-O, Desert Bars) plus silent auction and raffle.

**Friday, March 21, 2025**

**Our Savior’s Lutheran Church**

**1326 1st Ave. N.**

**4:30 P.M. – 6:30 P.M.**

**Free will offering**

**All proceeds support FISH, the emergency food program for the hungry in Great Falls.**

FISH is in need of raffle items and silent auction items. Do you knit or crochet? Are you crafty? Do woodcarving or woodworking? Do quilting or needlework? Paint? Or making theme gift baskets? If you know a local merchant that is willing to donate gift certificates or cards, these would be greatly appreciated. **If you have raffle or auction items to donate, please drop them off at Our Savior's Lutheran Church by Wednesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>.** Thanking you in advance.

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***FCUCC-CUMC Merger Next Steps***

**We are in our 6<sup>th</sup> month of unified worship. We are in our second month of a unified budget and unified leadership.** Holly is delving into covering the administrative needs of both congregations. Rev. Lynne is serving the pastoral needs and administration support of both congregations. Rev. Dawn continues to be available for administrative support. The unified Search and Call Committee is working well together to develop a profile that reflects our church(es). You may have even noticed that folks are mixing things up more at coffee fellowship. Before you know it, UCCs and UMs will be sitting next to each other in worship! So... what’s next?

**The Exploration Committee will begin their work this coming Sunday, February 23.** They will start exploring what needs some specific attention regarding some of the important details about merging the two congregations. The members of that committee are: **Lois Baker, Rosemary Neilsen** representing Christ UMC and **Hank Branom, Steve Gettel, Dick Kloppel, Mende Kloppel,** and **Nancy Zadick** representing First Congregational UCC. Revs. Dawn and Lynne will also be participating in the work of the committee. Please keep these dedicated leaders in your prayers as they set about doing their work and look for updates in the future.

## ***Last Call for Search & Call Surveys***

This is the last call for surveys for the Search and Call Committee. **The final deadline is Sunday, February 23.** Paper copies are available on the table in the narthex. Or fill out the form electronically at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Pk7YI5ni2MX1vmDFnYMFcQaljvEfzC6E/view?usp=sharing>

**Return paper copies to the church and send electronic surveys to [dogger.drd@gmail.com](mailto:dogger.drd@gmail.com).** So far, the committee has received over 100 surveys! Thank you to everyone from both congregations who have participated in this important part of our Search & Call process.

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## ***Ash Wednesday Service and Stone Soup Supper March 5, 5:00 P.M.***

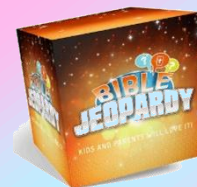
Our Ash Wednesday service will continue the tradition of utilizing a variety of meditation centers to explore and reflect on the season of Lent. **The service will conclude with the imposition of ashes.** Following the service, the Fellowship Board is sponsoring a Stone Soup Supper.

**Please sign up for the supper on the sheet in the church narthex.** You are encouraged to help create the soup by providing vegetables. Vegetables should be canned or frozen (no fresh veggies) and brought to the kitchen by 5:00 P.M. (before the service). Suggested donations by last name: **A-H: Peas; I-N: Carrots; O-S: Green Beans; T-Z: Corn.** The Fellowship Board will be providing water, coffee, juice, rolls and dessert. Please use the sign-up sheet in the church narthex to let the Fellowship Board know you are coming and how you'll be contributing.

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## ***Bible Jeopardy***

On **Sunday, March 9**, the Christian Education Board will host an intergenerational "Bible Jeopardy" game during coffee fellowship. Plan now to join in the fun!



## ***"For Such A Time As This"- Spring Retreat***

Sign up now for the annual spring retreat sponsored by the unified Church Growth and Vitality Board. **Rev. Sara MacGilvra Branom will facilitate "For Such A Time As This" on Saturday, March 22.** Breakfast will be served at 8:30 A.M. The retreat will begin at 9:00 A.M. Lunch will also be served and the event will wrap up at 4:00 P.M. **Cost is \$20.00 and scholarships are available.** See the sign-up sheet on the table in the narthex. Checks can be written to First Congregational UCC with "Retreat" on the memo line. Cash payments should be placed in the offering in an envelope with the participant's name clearly marked on the envelope. It will be a wonderful day of reflection and fellowship.

## *Empowered Hope*

We hear the concerns raised during prayer time: fear for trans friends and relatives; uncertainty about government overreach and how broadly it will impact our society; loss of access to vital information; and more. I also hear individually from folks about their fears and anxieties in the midst of a fast and broad shift in our nation's political atmosphere. There's a lot of uncertainty, a good deal of anger, growing despair, fear and frustration.

Add all of that to life's regular challenges: jobs, family, health, the weather, and more.

After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Psalm 46 became very popular. This ancient song speaks of God as a source of refuge and strength even though destruction is at hand. It strikes me that the song is not about the challenges and destruction being removed but that there is a source of strength in the midst of it. Eventually, the wars cease and the destruction comes to an end. It's also important to note that this is not a Psalm of retreat. The author is still very present in all that is going on. However, they can recognize that even in the midst of the turmoil, God is in the midst of the city and will not be moved. A river, the source of life and renewal, flows through.

I am reminding people more and more that we believe in a God who's revealed in resurrection; a God whose ultimate reign is that of peace and justice; a God who doesn't abandon us when the going gets tough but rolls up the holy sleeves and walks with us through the valley of the shadow of death.

I find that not only comforting but empowering. Since God is present in the midst of challenges, how can we not embrace that resurrecting power and use it to face the challenges and seek a better way? "The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (Psalm 46:11) May that promise be our empowering hope.

Have a blessed, safe and faith-filled week.

Rev. Lynne



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## *Help Our Local Kids*

Dear Members of Christ United Methodist Church and First Congregational United Church of Christ,

We are reaching out to you with a heartfelt request to support the children of West Elementary School. Many of these young students arrive without essential items, and together, we can make a meaningful difference in their lives. Please consider donating to our West Elementary mid-year drive. Here's what we need:

- **Food Pantry Items:**
  - Cans of Chef Boyardee, vegetables, fruit
  - Tuna, cream of chicken and mushroom soup
  - Stew, tomato soup, chicken noodle soup
  - Can openers
  - Jelly, mac and cheese, ramen
  - The school receives cheese and peanut butter.
  - Everything helps



- **School Supplies:**

- Notebooks, pencils, pens, backpacks, crayons, markers
- Any school essentials for students who arrive late in the year

- **Clothing:**

- All sizes, for both boys and girls
- New or gently used clothes that can help a child get through the day with comfort and confidence

By contributing these items, you can help ensure that every child at West Elementary has the nourishment and tools they need to succeed. Your generous donations will go a long way in making their school year brighter and more hopeful. Thank you for always coming together as a church community and supporting these wonderful children. Please leave items in the box marked for West Elementary in the narthex. Thank you for your kindness and generosity.

Your UCC and CUMC Christian Service Board

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***Coming Up***

**Thursday, February 20**

1:00 P.M. Women In Faith, FH

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

**Sunday, February 23**

12:00 P.M. Exploration Committee, Parlor

3:00 P.M. CUMC Confirmation, FUMC

**Tuesday, February 25**

10:00 A.M. Mitten Makers, FH

**Wednesday, February 26**

10:00 A.M. Book Study, Parlor

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, FH

6:00 P.M. Youth Group

6:00 P.M. Handbells

7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

**Thursday, February 27**

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