

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

Volume 2025

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Issue 05

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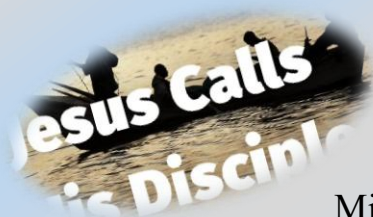
*like us on Facebook: First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls, MT
Christ United Methodist Church Great Falls*

Fifth Sunday of Epiphany

Worship Notes For

February 9, 2025

9:30 A.M.



Minister: Rev. Lynne Spencer-Smith

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Lay Reader: Kelly Quick

Ushers: Lois Baker, Lila Byers, Joan Duncan

Acolytes: Kaeden Dunn, Bailey Schrader

Accompanist: Victor Tsai

Choir Director: Jason Webster

Sunday School: Betsy Rogstad, Susan Thomas

Nursery: Gracie Kuszmaul, May Harris

Coffee Fellowship: Dennis and Sue Turton

Tellers: Noël Walker, 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

† *Lois Baker's granddaughter, Addy, is at The Children's Hospital in Seattle for a severe infection related to Crohn's disease.*

† *Ron Shipley has been transitioned to hospice care.*

† *Former CUMC member and dear friend of Dana Kirkmeyer's, Leslye Schoenhuth is home after being treated in the hospital for medical concerns.*

Say Cheese!

Come and get your picture taken for the **new pictorial church yearbook!** Starting this Sunday and continuing all four Sundays in February, **look for Eric in the fellowship hall after worship.** He'll be to your right as you come through the door. Enjoy some fellowship while you wait! **For those not in the area, feel free to send a**



digital photo to Eric at tech@greatfallsucc.org. Don't forget to include your name!



"Soup-er Bowl of Caring"

For more than 10 years, our two churches have participated in the "Soup-er Bowl of Caring" offering that has traditionally benefited the FISH Food Pantry. **Thirteen Great Falls churches support the local FISH Food Pantry with food donations, monetary gifts and volunteers.** The "Soup-er Bowl of Caring" is a nation-wide effort to "tackle hunger" on the local level. School groups, churches, fraternal organizations and many more groups collect donations in communities across the country to help food insecure people in towns and cities across the U.S. The biggest day for the "Soup-er Bowl of Caring" is Super Bowl Sunday. On Super Bowl Sunday, when two NFL teams are playing for a championship, our church will be playing for a win for FISH. **Children with soup kettles will be waiting at the sanctuary doors following worship on February 9 to accept donations of cash or check, (made payable to either FCUCC or CUMC, with "FISH" in the memo) or online through the UCC PayPal account (www.greatfallsucc.org).** Then look for the kids in the Fellowship Hall to pick up baked goods and other treats for your Super Bowl Party at the Christian Ed/Sunday School Bake Sale. All items will be available for a free-will offering. And all proceeds will be added to the "Soup-er Bowl of Caring" offering for FISH. **Together, let's tackle hunger in Great Falls!**



Christian Education News

This week, children begin in worship. They will have a Brown Bag Children's Message with Pastor Lynne, then go to Sunday School. Children ages 5- 8th grade will learn about the "Wedding at Cana". Nursery care is provided for children through age 5. **At the end of worship, Sunday School children will collect the "Soup-er Bowl of Caring" Offering to benefit the FISH Food Pantry.** A bake sale, sponsored by the Christian Education Board and Sunday School will take place in the Fellowship Hall during Coffee Fellowship. **This week's Sunday School offering will also go towards the "Soup-er Bowl of Caring".**



Quilt Raffle

Christ United Methodist's Women in Faith is sponsoring a quilt raffle. The queen sized quilt is on display in Fellowship Hall and will be raffled during coffee fellowship on Mother's Day, May 11. **Tickets are 1/\$1.00 or 6/\$5.00.** All proceeds will benefit local charities. Please see Jeanne Nobbs or Carolyn Dowdy for tickets. Need not be present to win.



Women's Coffee

New venue! Our next women's coffee is **Saturday, February 8, 10:30 A.M. at Wheat Montana** (1116 9th Street S.). Look for us at the round table. Share your favorite types of books to read and your favorite author.

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!



Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your generous donation of **\$800** to the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ. Because of your donation, we will be able to extend our advocacy and work. Your gift will fund new educational programs, better access to resources, and more support to help Open and Affirming congregations live into their covenant. **This movement changes lives and hearts!** Adi, a young trans woman living near Atlanta, transitioned during college and her family rejected her. The year before, Adi had found a UCC church after visiting a table the church had set up at a Pride festival. The community and love Adi found at that church has supported her and loved her through her transition. **This type of connection is holy and vital**; and many are finding such connection in Open and Affirming congregations. Thank you once again for your generous contribution. The impact we can create with your partnership and support is effective and widespread! With all our gratitude, Yours in Christ, The Rev. Dr. Katrina Roseboro-March
Executive Director

(Thank you for participating in our Justice 100 Offering. Though we didn't quite reach our goal of \$1,000.00, your gifts to this cause are meaningful and appreciated!)

West Elementary Christmas Thank You's

- ❖ A very big thank you from our family! Merry Christmas!
- ❖ Merry Christmas! Thank you!
- ❖ Thank you so much!
- ❖ Thank you so much for the Christmas stuff for the kids! Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!
- ❖ Karen, Chris and all members of UCC- Thank you so much for once again choosing to bless West Elementary families during this holiday season with your giving tree. Your support gives our families a much needed boost and joy during this time. We really appreciate you and all you do for our students and staff! Sincerely, Dana and Lyndsey



Ghana

The Evangelical Presbyterian (EP) Church, **Ghana's Girls Empowerment Project** is an initiative aimed at **promoting the education, empowerment, and well-being of girls in Ghana, particularly in underserved and rural communities**. The project focuses on addressing barriers to education, such as poverty, early marriage, and gender-based discrimination, while also encouraging the participation of girls in leadership and community development. Through this project, the EP Church, Ghana works to provide girls with access to quality education, life skills training, mentorship, and health



education. It also seeks to raise awareness about the importance of girls' rights and gender equality. **By empowering young women, the initiative helps create a more equitable and sustainable future for girls in Ghana**, enabling them to become leaders in the communities and contribute to the nation's overall development.

Coming Up

Thursday, February 6

4:00 P.M. Joint Facilities, FH

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

Saturday, February 8

10:30 A.M. Women's Coffee

Wheat Montana (1116 9th Street S.)

Sunday, February 9

10:45 A.M. Worship Board, Parlor

Monday, February 10

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

Tuesday, February 11

10:00 A.M. Mitten Makers, FH

1:30 P.M. Grief Group, Parlor

Wednesday, February 12

10:00 A.M. Book Study, Parlor

1:00 P.M. Prayer Meeting, Parlor

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, FH

6:00 P.M. Youth Group

6:00 P.M. Handbells

7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

From Rev. Lynne:

It's good to be back from vacation but, if someone could kindly shut the freezer door? You're letting all the cold escape from the arctic! Thank you to Rev. Sara MacGivra Branom for leading worship the last two weeks and all those who stepped up to pick up a few extra responsibilities. It's always good to get back to things running smoothly.

While we were on vacation, I managed to keep abreast of much of what is going on in the world and our country. My prayers are with those whose loved ones perished in the two aviation accidents in Washington DC and Philadelphia and those who are still impacted by the California wildfires. I also watched and read some of what is going on in our country as we move into a new, uncharted political era. The following reflection emerged:

Lives Are Involved

"Maj. San D. Francisco"

That is the name that was engraved on the 1/2-inch shiny silver band I wore on my wrist through a large part of my youth. I quite frankly don't remember when it was that I joined the throngs of youth who sent away for POW/MIA bracelets. It was an effort to help remember those who were imprisoned or missing in action in Southeast Asia. I wish I could say that I was extremely passionate about the cause but, the reality is, it was the trendy thing to do. After years of wearing the bracelet,

even after the US's involvement in Southeast Asia came to a close, I eventually took it off and kept it. Over the years, it has disappeared but there's still a memory of it around my wrist. I'm sure that subtle reminder of someone I never knew but whose name I carried through a portion of my life is nothing compared to the memories of those who actually knew and loved San DeWayne Francisco.

After reading Kristin Hannah's "The Women" (which I highly recommend), the memory of wearing that bracelet rose through my soul and I turned to the internet. I had never found out what actually happened to Maj. San D. Francisco. I learned that he was a year younger than Greg. I've learned that he had a wife and a son. He was a fighter pilot. Shortly before taking R&R to meet his wife and son, he volunteered to fly one more mission and was shot down on Nov. 25, 1968 (I was not yet 11 years old). He was captured by the North Vietnamese and later killed by shrapnel from American bombs. There are ongoing efforts to find his remains. I once carried the name of a man whose remains have been lost for more than 55 years. *Information from "San DeWayne Francisco Memorial Archives, Central Washington University Libraries.*

At the time I sent that \$2.50 to get my POW/MIA bracelet, I had no idea what the war in Vietnam was all about (Quite honestly, I still don't think I know much about it). By the time I realized that there was a big wide world beyond my experience, this war was a just part of that broader reality. As far as my limited civic knowledge was involved, it was simply part of normal—in other words, no big deal. So, too were peace protests, love beads and teens sending \$2.50 in the mail to purchase a trendy bracelet with some stranger's name on it.

Eventually, (thank God!) I came to realize that what might come across as just part of "normal" is actually a really big deal for those whose lives are impacted by it. Every big decision that is made that changes rules and policies has the potential to be a big deal to someone which means someone's sense of "normal" is about to change and usually not for the better.

Because I have chosen to follow Jesus, there's a question that keeps emerging in my soul: "Who is the least among us that will be impacted the most?" (If you're not sure if this really is a Jesus thing, check out Matthew 25:31-46)

There are a lot of potentially really big policy and rule changes in the works. So many that the shifts can feel overwhelming and out of control. They are coming at us so fast, we run the risk of falling into the "it's normal" abyss. Remember, it will not be normal for many people, especially those whom Jesus would have considered among "the least." For his day, Jesus identified them as the hungry, the thirsty, strangers (also known as foreigners), those without clothing (also known as those without... anything), the sick, the imprisoned. I'd say that list is still pretty valid for today.

Let's keep asking the question of ourselves, one another and those who are saying "yes" to these policy and rule changes, "Who is the least among us that will be impacted the most?"

Have a blessed, safe and faith-filled week.

Rev. Lynne

