

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

Volume 2025  
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November 26, 2025  
PO Box 6303, 59406

Issue 36  
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*like us on Facebook: First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls, MT  
Christ United Methodist Church Great Falls*

**November 30, 2025  
First Sunday of Advent  
10:00 A.M.**



Worship Leader:  
Rev. Sara MacGillvra Branom  
Scripture: Jeremiah 33:14-16,  
Isaiah 2:4-5, Luke 21: 25-36  
Lay Reader: Lois Baker  
Ushers: Dale & Nancy Dallmann  
Accompanist/Music Director: Melissa Gilbert  
Acolytes: Aalayah Dunn, Jaycee Storle  
Candle of Hope: Bob & Carolyn Dowdy  
Sunday School: Erin Borland, Janet Koostra  
Nursery: May Harris, Lily Yelvington  
Coffee Fellowship: Dave & Debbe Rothweiler  
Treats: Shirley Davis, Rosemary Neilsen  
UCC Tellers: Steve Gettel, Liz Lee  
Christ UMC Tellers: Rosemary Neilsen, Jeanne Nobbs

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.



To better focus our hearts, minds and spirit during Advent **there will not be a time for announcements during Sunday worship.** If you have a church announcement during the Advent season, please contact Holly so Eric can make a slide to play before worship, or to include in the worship bulletin or weekly newsletter. Rev. Sara

## *In Our Thoughts and Prayers*

† Our sympathy to Dennis Turton and family in the death of his brother Larry, 86, in Pennsylvania.

† JoAnn Gold remains in rehab at the Goodnow Cottage at Grandview.

### *2026 Stewardship Campaign*

Thank you to everyone who has pledged to support the church, its staff, and its ministries for the coming year! Last year, we had 107 combined pledges between First Congregational United Church of Christ and Christ United Methodist Church for a total of \$258,080.00. This year's pledge packets went to both churches for a single campaign. *To date, we have received 91 pledges totaling \$221,392.00.* We are a bit behind from where we would like to be. **If you plan to financially contribute, please return your pledge cards as soon as possible. Adjustments to pledges already turned in can be made by calling or emailing the church office at (406) 453-4316 or [greatfallsucc@gmail.com](mailto:greatfallsucc@gmail.com).**

**Friendly reminder from the Stewardship Board:** As 2025 comes to an end please consider completing your 2025 pledge as the financial statement indicates pledged giving is lagging as we go into the final two months of the year. **Thank you for your help to make this year's budget.**

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### *Christian Education News*



**Children will begin in worship.** They will share a children's message with **Janet Koostra**, then go to Sunday School for Advent/ Christmas activities. Children age 5 through grade 6 are welcome in Sunday School. Nursery care is also provided by trained staff for children through age 5.

### *Shoebox Update*

**Reminder-** Items for this ministry will be collected until **December 7**. Then items will be packed and wrapped, ready to hit the road to Browning on December 15. Would you like to help? Here's how. **Pick up a flyer from the table in the narthex for instructions. Purchase items to donate. Donate dollars.** (A donation jar is also on the table in the narthex; or write a check to FCUCC and mark the memo "Browning" and place it in the offering.) **Buy items, fill and wrap a box of your own! Volunteer to pack and wrap boxes.** Very Important: **please mark items with age and gender if applicable.** What a joyful way to share the excitement of the birth of Baby Jesus!

### *Christmas Pageant Rehearsal*

**Pageant Rehearsal continues at 11:15 A.M. on Sunday, November 30.** We may try on costumes this week! Dress Rehearsal is December 13. The Pageant will be presented during worship on December 14.

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### *Whittier School Christmas Store*

We are seeking items to sell at a little Christmas store for \$1.00. The kids at Whittier Elementary love to buy their parents a gift for Christmas. Items can be things you no longer want or need. It does not have to be new or Christmas related as the kids will buy almost anything. **Please bring donations to church or call me and I can pick them up (deadline is December 14). Thank you, Sue Turton (406) 899-5652.**





### *West Elementary Angel Tree*

The Angel Tree is up and tags are on! The Christian Service board is so grateful for the generosity of this congregation in making Christmas a little brighter for 5 families at West Elementary.

**Please return the gifts wrapped with the tags securely attached by December 15.**

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### *Budget Hearing*

**The Business Affairs Board is holding a budget hearing after worship on Sunday, December 7. The preliminary proposed 2026 budget will be presented,** including projected income. This will be an opportunity to learn more about the finances of the church and to present ideas on allocating our resources. The Board will meet the following night to make changes based on information gathered at the hearing. Then, a revised proposed budget will go to the congregation for a vote at the January annual meeting. **Fellowship will be served in the sanctuary so you can still snack and drink!**

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### *Reverse Offering Stories of Generosity*

**Amount of money in envelope: \$5.00**

**What I did with the money:** I added additional monies and wrote a check to FISH.

**Why I chose this act of kindness:** So many families are in need of food and FISH is an opportunity to serve.

**What did you gain or learn from this experience?** It feels good to help the community and I realized once again that I am blessed to be able to help.

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### *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 21. You may also place checks and names in an envelope in the offering trays each Sunday.** Poinsettias will be displayed the entire Advent season.

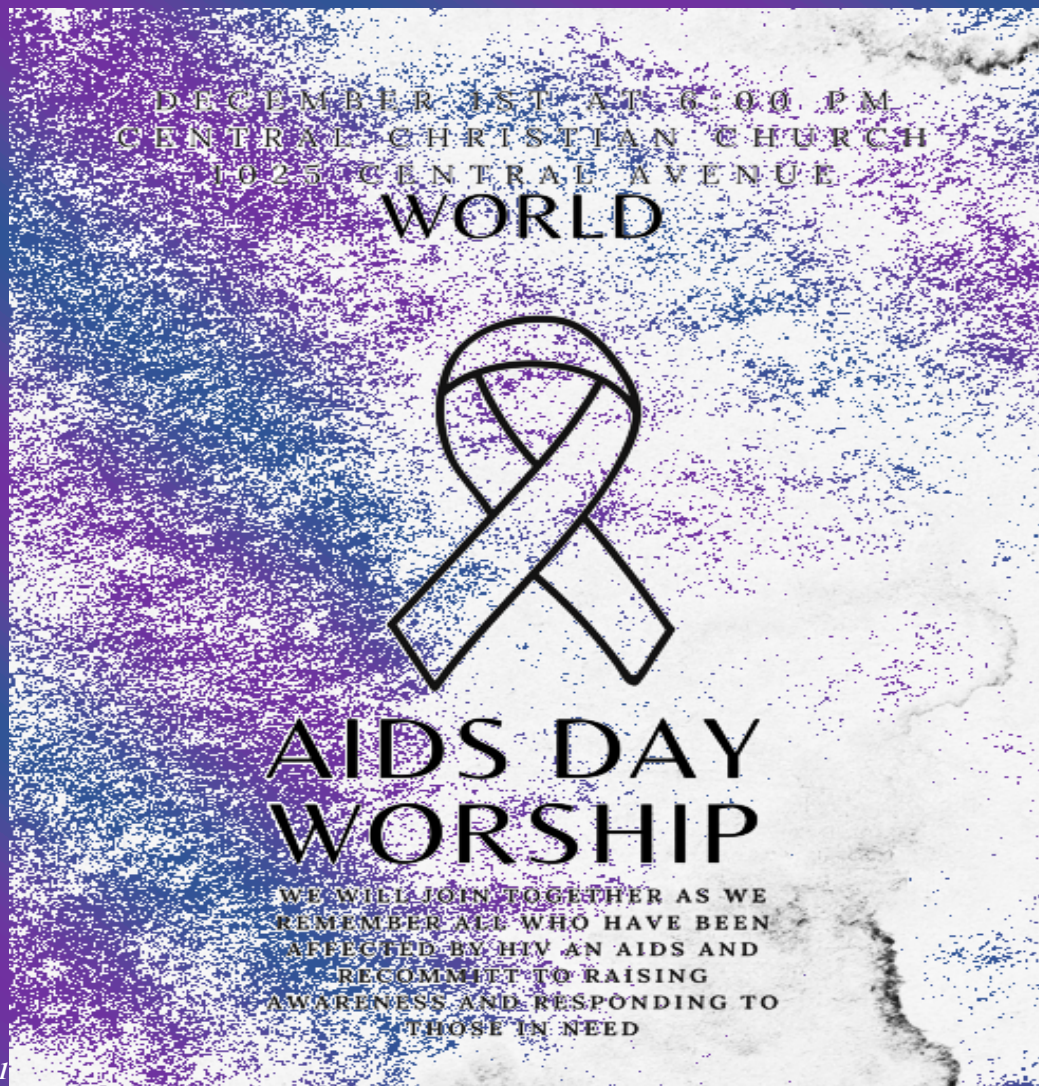
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### *Meal Train for Lacey & Family*

After having a complicated pregnancy and an early c-section delivery of baby Giddean in Salt Lake City, **Lacey Hallett is home, resting and recovering. To make life a little easier for Lacey and Kylan, a meal train has been established at the following link: <https://mealtrain.com/9wgn0o>**

There are times in our lives when friends and family ask, **"What can I do to help?"** The answer is usually to help with a meal. When many friends provide support through a meal, Meal Train keeps everyone organized. **To support Kylan, Lacey, Rafferty, Moxie and Giddean, clink above.**

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## *United Women in Faith*



The United Women in Faith are having a Christmas rummage sale of gently used items in the fellowship hall on **November 30** and **December 14**. Prices are suggested on a few items but most are a free will offering donation put in a container. **There will also be a bake sale on December 14. All money raised goes to local missions in Great Falls.** So far this month United Women in Faith have given \$1,400.00 to three different organizations that support women and children.

November's United Women in Faith meeting focused on helping to feed our community. Easy meal-prep bags filled with non-perishable foods supported families right here in Great Falls. These bags provide quick and easy nourishing options for those who may not always have access to them. **36 meal kits were delivered to Great Falls College-MSU.**

Don't forget about **Christmas Tea on December 6 at 1:00 P.M., hosted by First United Methodist Church, 610 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. N.** If you didn't get a chance to RSVP earlier, please call Vibecka Olson at (406) 781-0297.





Friends, **Advent begins Sunday** which, similar to Holy Week, is a time of anticipation. Though both seasons go about it very differently, they celebrate life and new beginnings.

As we enter Advent, I invite you to find a place in your soul to settle into reflecting and pondering this season in the context of this time where what we have always known is being upended. This is a writing by Frederick Buechner from his book “Peculiar Treasures, A Biblical Who’s Who” about how things might have seemed to the angel Gabriel when he spoke with Mary, when she was called by God. It is a different view from what we are familiar with, and I hope it encourages and calms you as it does me when we aren’t sure of what might happen next.

*Gabriel*

*“She struck the angel Gabriel as hardly old enough to have a child at all, let alone this child, but he’d been entrusted with a message to give her, and he gave it.*

*He told her what the child was to be named, and who he was to be, and something about the mystery that was to come upon her. “You mustn’t be afraid, Mary,” he said.*

*As he said it, he only hoped she wouldn’t notice that beneath the great, golden wings he himself was trembling with fear to think that the whole future of creation hung now on the answer of a girl.”*

*-Frederick Buechner*

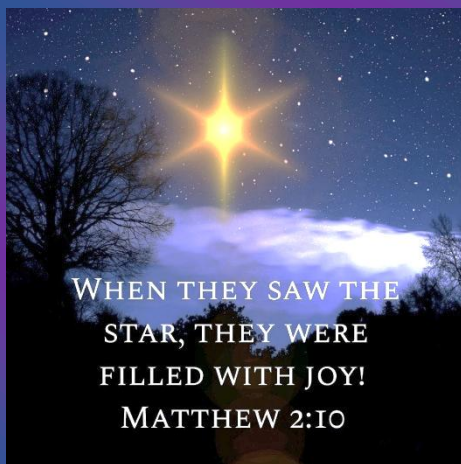
Mary’s call story resonates with me. We often overlook Mary had a choice when the angel Gabriel came to her. As the Greek verbs in the familiar story are in the future tense, not the imperative, Mary is not being commanded to bear this child. Gabriel had to wait for her answer before he left of “be it done according to your word”. Matt:1:38

Mary was perhaps as young as 14 when she was betrothed, and Gabriel came to her. Girls this age are often thought of as immature, sometimes silly or vain. Mary was none of these, she was a brave woman who loved God. She knowingly risked death by stoning by saying yes to Gabriel. Mary also risked a slower death as an outcast by bringing shame to her family and Joseph. A woman of this time would not have lived long on the margins of society. Nonetheless, she trusted God, indicating her deep and abiding relationship of trust and faith in God.

We don’t know if Gabriel had visited other girls and been turned down. We don’t know whether it was good manners that caused him to wait or if he soberly anticipated another rejection as Mary pondered her answer. In a time when the business of creating heirs was the realm of men ensuring their lineage continued for personal and business reasons, and women were considered just a tool, the incubators, for making sons (heirs) and daughters (property). Women were not deserving of a choice or the respect of being waited upon for their answer, yet the angel Gabriel considered Mary worthy of these courtesies.

God considered women differently by choosing childbirth, which only women can do, to bring the Messiah to earth. The Messiah could have come in many ways. Some would have preferred the Son of God descending from heaven on a golden cloud with a sword in His hand to destroy the wicked. But God entrusted a faithful young woman with the Messiah, for God knew she would love this child as only a mother can. When Mary said, “Be it done according to your word.” God’s son was to know a mother’s love throughout his life, all the way to the cross.

“I wait for you, O God,  
my soul waits.  
and in your word I hope.  
My soul waits for you, O God,  
more than those who watch for morning  
more than those who watch for morning”. Psalm 130: 5-6  
Amen – Rev. Sara



### *Christmas Fund* (Formerly Veterans of the Cross)

For more than a century, The Christmas Fund has been a beacon of love and care- providing direct financial assistance to the healers in our lives: retired and active UCC ministers, faithful church workers, and their families. In 2024 alone, The Christmas Fund offered more than \$1.7 million in support, touching the lives of 766 individuals across the United Church of Christ. This generosity made hope tangible. It meant:

A couple could hear each other clearly again with the gift of hearing aids.  
A family found safety through a plane ticket out of a war-torn land.  
Mounting medical bills were eased during a time of deep crisis.

Each gift represented more than financial relief. They were a reminder of God's presence and the Church's love. **We will collect this special mission offering during the month of December. Donations can be made online through PayPal or by check with Christmas Fund in the memo.**



### *Coming Up*

Happy Thanksgiving! The office will be closed Thursday and Friday.

#### **Sunday, November 30**

9:15 A.M. Choir Rehearsal

11:15 A.M. Pageant Rehearsal

#### **Monday, December 1**

1:00 P.M. Christian Service Board, Parlor

#### **Wednesday, December 3**

10:00 A.M. Bridge Group, SS Wing

10:00 A.M. Bible Study, Parlor

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, Fellowship Hall

6:00 P.M. Youth Group, downtown

6:00 P.M. Handbells

7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

#### **Friday, December 5**

4:00 P.M. Fellowship Board, FH

#### **Saturday, December 6**

1:00 P.M. Christmas Tea at First United Methodist Church

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