

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

Volume 2026
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Issue 02
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*like us on Facebook: First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls, MT
Christ United Methodist Church Great Falls*

**January 18, 2026
2nd Sunday after Epiphany
Worship Service
10:00 A.M.**



Worship Leader:
Rev. Sara MacGivra Branon

Lay Reader: Dana Kirkmeyer
Ushers: Linda Grossman, Bill Tiskus
Accompanist/Music Director: Melissa Gilbert
Acolytes: Lily Borland, Erika Greene
Sunday School: Betsy Rogstad, Susan Sanford
Nursery: May Harris, Lily Yelvington
Soup Lunch: Camp fundraiser sponsored by
the Christian Education Board
UCC Tellers: Paul Haffeman, 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.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers



- † Prayers for peace in our country, our world, and every weary heart.
- † The community of Nye following the December 8 fatal shooting of mother and daughter **Justine and Nila Dawson**, and that left husband and father **Greg Dawson** with significant injuries.
- † Prayers and praise for the faith community and neighbors of **Mayflower Congregational UCC** in Billings coming together in response to antisemitic vandalism at the church.



Call to Annual Meeting 136th Annual Meeting of First Congregational United Church of Christ / Christ United Methodist Church - Great Falls, MT

The First Congregational United Church of Christ/Christ United Methodist Great Falls Council has announced the 2026 Annual Meeting for **Sunday, January 25 following worship**. We will **conduct the business** of the congregation, **vote on the 2026 recommended budget, install board members and officers**, and discuss other items of interest to the congregation. **Lunch will be provided by the Fellowship Board**. The annual meeting of the Memorial Fund Corporation will follow immediately after. All members and friends of First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls are strongly encouraged to attend and participate, keeping in mind that only FCUCC members are able to vote.



Christian Education News

Children will begin in worship on January 18 before going to Sunday School. **Teachers will be Betsy Rogstad and Susan Sanford**. Kids will learn about the Soup-er Bowl of Caring, a nation-wide offering that raises money to battle food insecurity all over the country. **Kids will respond by making posters advertising our own Soup-er Bowl of Caring offering that will be collected on Sunday February 8**. More details coming soon!

Soup + Donations =Camp Scholarships

Do you have fond memories of church camp? Do you love good soup? Then do we have a great deal for you! **The Christian Education Board is sponsoring a SOUP LUNCH on Sunday, January 18 following worship to raise money for camp scholarships!** What kind of soup you might ask? Taco soup, chicken noodle soup, potato soup, chili, tomato soup and more! Plus, bread, crackers and desserts will round out this delicious meal. And all of this can be yours for a **FREE WILL DONATION!** **All money raised will be used to help families pay the cost of church camp, which now has a price tag of \$325-\$500/per kid.** WOW. Campers from our church are encouraged to attend Flathead Lake United Methodist Camp or Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp. So please bring your appetite and your free will donation to help us get kids to camp!



Pak Talk

Leigh Larson is completing her Master of Divinity degree and will be continuing for a Doctorate in Public Theology. Leigh spent two months in Pakistan in an immersive experience. She will discuss misconceptions Christians and Muslims have of one another and where these faiths agree and overlap.

The talk is sponsored by the Great Falls Progressive Ministerial Association and will be at First Methodist Church (610 2nd Ave. N.) on January 15 at 7:00 P.M. There will be a free will offering in support of Toby's House or bring baby supplies to donate.

Christmas Eve Offering

Thank you to everyone for your holiday generosity! **The Christmas Eve offering totaled \$843.00!** That amount is equally split between The UCC Christmas Fund (formerly Veterans of the Cross) and Housed Great Falls. With specific donations that came in, **The Christmas Fund will receive \$721.50** and **Housed Great Falls will get \$571.50**. Thank you again. You are making a difference and showing kindness and compassion to those who need it most.

Friends,

I follow the local charity **Helping Hands** on Facebook. Below is a post from the Executive Director **Carrie Hill Parker** that is a balm to my soul after the events in Minneapolis, and the car accident in Lincoln that has affected so many in our congregation and community. I have read the post repeatedly, and saved it to refer to when I need the comfort it brings. I share it with you as a reminder and encouragement that in the midst of pain, grief and despair, good still happens. Acts of love continue in spite of everything, restoring hope and dignity. Though the brokenness of our world takes its toll, sometimes mightily, it is no match for the restorative power of love.

When you read “Helping Hands” in the post, pause each time for a moment and think of additional organizations and people who do the work of love. And include your own name, for all this happens as we work together as a community, taking turns to rest and then go again.

Peace to all of us. - Rev. Sara

“I forgot to post a Feel Good Friday at Helping Hands at First English yesterday, so let’s feel good today. (About something. Anything. Please...)

These are the bags of groceries waiting to go out today, prepped with loving hands and hearts by our incredible volunteers. We fed 363 people today.



But we also gave out more hugs than I can count. We took turns holding one another’s burdens, if even for a moment. We helped a neighbor make a plan to find housing, helped another neighbor get a phone, provided follow through to acquire mental health care for another struggling neighbor, helped another neighbor get their laundry clean for an important appointment, and at the end of it all shared our extra produce with the mission.

While it feels like the world is broken, like the disconnect and divisiveness could just about make you lose hope, at Helping Hands we keep putting our heads down and looking for more ways to love one another. We can all do this.

Thank God for Helping Hands and the people who make it go, and for every person and heart out there like it. I wish there could be one on every block—what a different world it would be.”



West Elementary News

Our Churches, Christian Service, and West Elementary School

West Elementary School continues to be the heart of our outreach- our most significant, most transformative mission. West Elementary has one of the highest percentages of economically disadvantaged students in the entire state of Montana.

West Elementary faces daily realities that require more than occasional assistance; they call for steady presence, compassionate partnership, and a community willing to stand in the gap. Time and again, you have shown that this congregation is exactly that community. Your generosity is evident in every ministry we undertake, but nowhere does our church's light shine more brightly than in your care for the children, families, and staff at West Elementary. This year, our impact was more apparent than ever. The newly appointed Principal, Vice Principal, and Counselor were genuinely moved by the strong support they received from our church.

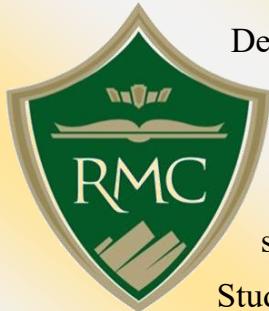
Each year, volunteers step into the weekly Reading Program, offering not just literacy support but encouragement, stability, and the priceless gift of time. This year's new format asked even more of you, and once again, you responded with grace and commitment, changing a child's day, strengthening a teacher's work, and reminding the school they are not alone.

Our mission at West Elementary extends far beyond the classroom. Twice a year you provide warm, nourishing dinners for teachers and staff during Parent-Teacher Conferences, giving them a moment of rest and appreciation during their longest days. Throughout the year, the church narthex becomes a visible symbol of love as it is filled with school supplies, clothing, and essentials for students who arrive without what they need. Your steady donations of canned goods and non-perishables keep the school's food pantry stocked, ensuring families have support during difficult seasons.

Through our partnership with the Christian Education Board, Thanksgiving Dinner Baskets are assembled and overflowing with food, care, and dignity- this past year for seven families who might otherwise go without. Janet and her crew do an amazing job, including the Sunday School children in this activity. And at Christmas, the Angel Tree transforms the narthex into a celebration of generosity. This year your gifts brought joy, relief, and hope to five families and 12 children.

Our ministry at West Elementary is not simply charitable work; it is a living expression of compassion, justice, and community. You are helping children feel seen, assisting teachers to feel supported, and helping families feel held. This mission is our most significant impact because it changes lives in real time, and it continues because of your unwavering love.

A heartfelt thank you from your Christian Service Board



Dear Partners in Ministry,

At Rocky Mountain College, we celebrate our long history with the **United Methodist Church**, the **Presbyterian Church (USA)**, and the **United Church of Christ**. We also celebrate the opportunity to be your partners in ministry with students at Rocky Mountain College.

Students explore and practice faith, attend Bible study and worship, gather for civil dialogue, put faith into action, and plan projects allowing them to grow as spiritual leaders and make a difference in the community.

Please mark your calendars for the upcoming **Wheatley Lecture event, planned for March 26, 2026**. The lecture will feature **Darrell Ehrlick**, editor-in-chief of the Daily Montanan. The Wheatley event

will include our Clergy and Church Leader breakfast- an opportunity to learn more about the mission and vision of Rocky Mountain College and to ask any questions you may have. More details to come but plan now to attend!

Rev. Kimberly Woeste, Chaplain/
Director of Spiritual Life and Church Relations
Rocky Mountain College
1511 Poly Dr.
Billings, MT 59102

Coming Up

Saturday, January 17

- 11:00 A.M. Ecclesiastical Council for Laura Ymker, Red Lodge Community Church UCC
- 1:30 P.M. Service of Installation for Rev. Teressa Clark, also at the Red Lodge church
- 2:00 P.M. Gary Wyman Memorial Service with reception to follow, 2900 9th Avenue S.

Sunday, January 18

- 9:15 A.M. Choir Rehearsal
- 3:00 P.M. Stewardship Board, Zoom

Monday, January 19

- 7:00 P.M. Church Council, Zoom

Tuesday, January 20

- 1:00 P.M. Prayer Circle, Parlor

Wednesday, January 21

- 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, 2900 9th Ave. S
- 6:00 P.M. Handbells
- 7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, January 22

- 10:00 A.M. Grief Group, Fellowship Hall
