

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

Volume 2026  
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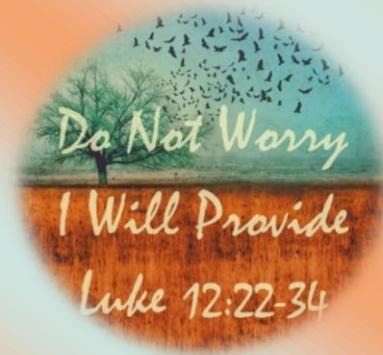
Issue 05  
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*like us on Facebook: First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls, MT  
Christ United Methodist Church Great Falls*

**February 8, 2026  
“Soup-er Bowl” Sunday  
Worship Service  
10:00 A.M.**

**Worship Leader:  
Laura Ymker,  
Pastoral Candidate**



Lay Readers: Liz Lee, Marilyn Sheffels

Ushers: Todd & Heidi LePard

Accompanist/Music Director: Melissa Gilbert

Acolytes: Jullian Valley, Lily Borland

Nursery: May Harris, Lily Yelvington

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL

Coffee Fellowship: Bill Tiskus, Dennis & Sue Turton

Treats: Dennis Dell & Sue Skees, Syneva Heupel, Lynne Weeks

UCC Tellers: Paul Haffeman, Nancy Zadick

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*



*† Our sympathy to Todd LePard and family in the death of Todd's mom, Sharon, January 18, age 88.*



**Call to Church Conference**

Christ United Methodist Church and Rev. Dawn Skerritt invite you to this called Church Conference to **vote to move forward with Federation with First Congregational United Church of Christ**. The meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 7:00 P.M. in the Fellowship Hall (2900 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. S)**. *The meeting will be presided by Rev. Karen McRae, District Superintendent.*

# You're Invited! It's a Party!

All members and friends of Christ United Methodist Church and First Congregational United Church of Christ are cordially invited to an **Open House this Saturday, February 7, to meet our ministerial candidate, Laura Ymker!** Come meet Laura in a casual setting from 1:00-4:00 P.M. in the Fellowship Hall, hosted by the Search & Call Committee. Introduce yourself to Laura, have a little dessert, drink a cup of coffee, tea, or punch. Stop in for a few minutes or spend all afternoon to take advantage of this exciting opportunity to meet our wonderful candidate, Laura!

## **More from Search and Call**

The Search and Call Committee would like to share a little more information about **Laura Ymker**. She is single and does not have any children (these are questions many have asked). **Farm hand, nanny, certified personal trainer, virtual admin, online marketer, assistant manager, project director, youth mentor, recovery ministry leader, strategic assistant, and member in discernment** are the many hats Laura has worn. Minister at FCUCC/CUMC will be her next!

In her recommendation for Laura, the pastor at Red Lodge stated, “Our congregation looks forward to the Sundays Laura preaches, knowing they will both learn and be encouraged by what she shares from the pulpit.” After preaching in Molt, the editor of their e-newsletter thanked Laura for her wonderful message and stated, “Laura will be a wonderful pastor to the lucky church she chooses to serve.”

**“May the God of our present, past, and future guide us in this process of decision-making. As we take each step of faith in our communication, may we each deeply know that our Provider will not fail us. There will be a right time. There will be a right place, and there will be a right person.”**

These are the closing words from Laura’s profile. This is the right time, Great Falls is the right place, and she is the right person! We can’t wait for you to meet her!

**To make it easier for Laura to get to know you, please wear your nametags this weekend.**



## **Christian Education News**

All Sunday School children are invited to attend worship on February 8 to participate in the candidacy Sunday of Laura Ymker. Janet Koostra will provide the children’s message. Nursery care will be available for children through age 5.

## **Youth Group Happenings**

For the month of February, Youth Group is meeting downtown at First United Methodist Church, from 6:00-8:00 P.M. (610 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. N.). Please use the Rainbow Door! On February 4, youth are asked to bring donations of non-perishable food items for SOUP-ER of CARING. Did you know? Every week, the youth group makes sandwiches for the Sack Lunch Ministry at First UMC. Nice work, youth group!

## February 8 is “Soup-er” Bowl of Caring

This Sunday at First Congregational UCC and Christ UMC will be an exciting and extraordinary day as we welcome candidate Laura Ymker to become our new minister. It's also exciting because it is our annual SOUP-ER BOWL of CARING offering. **Children will be stationed at the sanctuary doors as the congregation leaves to collect the offering in soup kettles.** Donations can be made in cash, by check (please mark “Soup-er Bowl” in the memo), or on our website (please note “Soup-er Bowl”). May this exciting day in the life of our congregation also be an exciting day for our ministry to the hungry. **Together, we can tackle hunger one donation at a time.**



## West Elementary Food Pantry

Friendly reminder that we continue to support the children of West Elementary School throughout the year. There is an on-going collection for food pantry items such as cans of **Chef Boyardee, tuna, stew, can openers, jelly, etc.** The school receives cheese and peanut butter. Everything helps. Thank you for always coming together with your kindness and generosity to support these wonderful children.



**Please leave items in the box marked for West Elementary outside the sanctuary doors.**

Your UCC and Christ UMC Christian Service Board

## Daily Devotional

### Both Straps On- Phiwa Langeni

*[Jesus said,] “Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light.” -Matthew 11:28-30 (CEB)*

Back when I was a teen, I used to wear my backpack slung over one shoulder, the bulk of the bag sliding halfway down my back. It supposedly looked cooler that way. Never mind the inconvenient readjusting or constant aches it put on my shoulder and back. As the years went on, I learned the painful way that sustainability beats cool every time. Both straps on. Properly adjusted. Snug against my back. Turns out, backpacks work much better when used as designed to distribute the weight correctly.

And I haven’t gone back to using the single strap method since. The shift was permanent and simple, because it had nothing to do with my willpower or discipline. I finally came to understand what my body knew all along: I wasn’t made to carry things a certain way. Fighting against that design only left me in pain.

Jesus offers us a yoke. Not because we’re beasts of burden, but because yokes are designed for sharing weight between two. They fit. They balance. They turn solo struggling into partnered movement.

When we finally adjust both straps, when we finally accept the support we were designed to receive, our posture changes. While the weights never go away, the carrying of them changes. We stop performing independence and start experiencing the gentle, humble presence of Jesus redistributing what we cannot bear alone. Responsibility is inevitable. And because of the Presence of proper support, rest is possible.

**Prayer: Teach us to carry well, Jesus. Help us to accept the yoke that fits instead of the burden that breaks. Amen.**



## Eswatini

Kukhany'Okusha Zion Church (KZC)- meaning “new light”- is more than a place of worship: it is a force for hope and transformation across Eswatini. With over 36 congregations in Swaziland and South Africa, KZC blends spiritual nurture with deeply rooted social action. The church runs extensive outreach through Neighborhood Care Points, preschools, feeding programs, health and HIV/AIDS education, and scholarship support for vulnerable youth. Under its guiding pillars of spiritual growth, expanding fellowship, financial sustainability, and compassionate service, KZC doesn’t just preach love- it lives it, providing material aid, opportunity, dignity, and the chance for brighter tomorrows.



## *Making Peace Peacefully: Educators and Church Leaders Renew Commitment to Peacebuilding Across Asia Pacific*

In January, leaders from Methodist educational institutions across the Asia Pacific region gathered in Manila, Philippines, for the 2026 Asia Pacific Association of Methodist-related Educational Institutions (APAMEI) Conference, themed “Making Peace Peacefully through Education in our Multicultural World.” The formal program began with worship led by Bishop Emerito Nacpil, whose sermon explored the relationship between grace and peace. Naming the many realities of violence—from poverty and illness to political conflict—he called participants to embody Jesus’ message of peace as a gift to be extended to others. Throughout the conference, one theme emerged clearly: Methodist education in Asia Pacific plays a vital role in shaping leaders who can build peace peacefully—through justice, dialogue, spirituality, and courageous action. As Dr. Fernandes noted, the challenges are immense, but so is the opportunity. By walking together, APAMEI and its partners can help create a future marked by hope, collaboration, and God’s peace for all.



## *Time to Register for Summer Camp*

What? It's only February! (Although we might not believe that based on our weather, lol!). **But, yes indeed, it's time to think about summer camp!** Since the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference is not sponsoring camps, we are encouraging our campers to attend **Flathead Lake United Methodist Camp (flatheadcamp.org)** or **Flathead Lutheran Bible Camp (flbc.net)**. Registration is open now and not just for kids. Both sites offer camps for youth, families, adults, and intergenerational groups. Funds from several sources are available to help defray the cost of camp registration—but only if you let us know that you are going. Funds will be divided among participants. **Please contact Janet Koostra, 406-727-8443 or [janetkoostra@gmail.com](mailto:janetkoostra@gmail.com) for more information.** Sign up today! Summer will be here before we know it!

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### *Retreat Coming in March*



The Church Growth and Vitality Board  
is happy to announce our annual  
all-church retreat!  
The event will be a one-day gathering  
**scheduled for Saturday, March 21.**

This year's theme is **“IN THE MOMENT”**  
and will focus on simple everyday activities  
that can guide our hearts, minds and souls  
to help us recognize our connection  
to God “in the moment”.

**More details and signups will follow soon!**

### *Coming Up*

#### **Thursday, February 5**

10:00 A.M.    Grief Group, Fellowship Hall  
7:00 P.M.    Christ UMC Meeting, Fellowship Hall

#### **Saturday, February 7**

9:30 A.M.    Church Council Brunch, Fellowship Hall  
1 - 4 P.M.    Dessert Open House, Fellowship Hall

#### **Sunday, February 8**

9:15 A.M.    Choir Rehearsal  
11:00 A.M.    Congregational Mtg/Charge Conference  
followed by Coffee Fellowship

#### **Monday, February 9**

1:00 P.M.    Church Growth & Vitality, Fellowship Hall

6:30 P.M. Finance Board, Zoom

**Tuesday, February 10**

10:00 A.M. Mitten Makers, Fellowship Hall  
12:00 P.M. Joint Facilities, Fellowship Hall

**Wednesday, February 11**

10:00 A.M. Bible Study, Parlor  
1:30 P.M. Pinochle, Fellowship Hall  
6:00 P.M. Youth Group, 610 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. N  
6:00 P.M. Handbells  
7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

**Thursday, February 12**

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

**Saturday, February 14**

10:30 A.M. Ladies Coffee, Wheat Montana