

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

Volume 2026  
Pastor Laura Ymker  
(406) 453-4316  
pastor@greatfallsucc.org

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PO Box 6303, 59406  
greatfallsucc@gmail.com  
www.greatfallsucc.org

Issue 10  
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*

**March 15, 2026**

**Fourth Sunday of Lent  
Worship Service**

**10:00 A.M.**

**Worship Leader: Pastor Laura Ymker**

Lay Reader: Dana Kirkmeyer

Ushers: Darlene Gardner, Linda Redding

Accompanist/Music Director: Melissa Gilbert

Sunday School: Dean Jardee, Caroline Houtz

Nursery: May Harris, Lily Yelvington

Coffee Fellowship: Peggy Seeley, Dennis & Sue Turton

Treats: Elaine Balzer, Carolyn Dowdy

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.



## ***Two Congregations, One Shared Future***

It's official! Following many months of prayerful consideration and conversation, members of both First Congregational United Church of Christ and Christ United Methodist Church have voted in favor of forming a federated church and have approved the proposed bylaws that will guide our shared governance and ministry. **This decision reflects a mutual commitment to strengthening our ministries and deepening our impact in the community while honoring the traditions of both congregations.**

Our next step will be selecting a name for the new federated church (see article below). Once a name is determined, Articles of Incorporation will be filed with the State to formally establish the new entity. We celebrate this meaningful step forward and look ahead with gratitude and faith.

## *Choosing Our New Church Name - A Word from the Naming Committee*

Friends, this is a special season in the life of our church. We celebrate that both Christ United Methodist Church and First Congregational United Church of Christ have voted to federate to form a new church, bringing together the traditions of UMC and UCC. **As we come together as one congregation, we are stepping into something new that God is doing among us. In Scripture, names matter. They tell a story. They reflect identity, purpose, and promise. Sometimes God even gives a new name to mark a new chapter.** As we prayerfully consider what our church will be called, we're not just picking words for a sign. We're discerning who God is calling us to be in this community. **The Naming Committee has planned a six-step process for creating and selecting the new name for the church. On March 15, an explanatory letter and a survey will be distributed at church. This information will be mailed to members and friends who are not in church on this Sunday.** We invite you to pray, reflect, and share a name that speaks to our unity in Christ, our shared mission, and the hope we carry into the future. Sincerely, your Naming Committee  
**Kim Kay c. McCarty Martin, Chair**

**Members Lois Baker, Steve Gettel, Janet Koostra, Karen Spencer, and Rebecca Marinko**

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## **One Great HOUR OF SHARING**

### *Mission Moment: YWCA of Palestine – Jalazone Kindergarten and Community Center*

What better way to support a more sustainable and hopeful future than to support and educate future generations? **The YWCA of Palestine, a United Church of Christ partner through Global Ministries and supported by One Great Hour of Sharing, has engaged local Palestinian communities since 1893.** Today, it offers programs of economic empowerment, women's rights, youth leadership, and children's education. An example of the latter is the **YWCA's nursery schools and kindergartens in refugee camps**, schools that the YWCA has run for decades. In addition to regular classes, the YWCA offers skill-based camps such as photography and sports, as well as other extracurricular activities at its schools. In the occupied Palestinian West Bank, roughly one-fourth of the 900,000 Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations live in 19 refugee camps. The YWCA kindergarten in the Jalazone Refugee Camp near Ramallah is a sign of hope for a community that has endured over 75 years of displacement.

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### *Christian Education News*



**Children, ages 5-grade 6, will begin in worship this Sunday.** After sharing a time with **Janet Koostra**, kids will head to Sunday School. This week, **Dean Jardee and Caroline Houtz** will be teacher and helper for the lesson, “The Promised Land”, the second story in the unit titled “Water Wonders”.

### *Easter Bunnies Needed!*

Our Easter Basket Ministry is well on its way to success! **All of our Easter Eggs have been adopted, and donations are making their way back to the church (please return items by March 22).** But the job can't get finished without a crew of **EASTER BUNNIES!** **Would you like to deliver completed Easter gift bags to their special recipients?** It's a heart-warming part of this fun ministry. **Please contact Janet Koostra, 406-727-8443 or [janetkoostra@gmail.com](mailto:janetkoostra@gmail.com) if you would like to help. Gift bags will be ready for delivery by March 25, and should be dropped off before Easter.**



### *From the Pastor*

**Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me on my first Sunday with you.** I look forward to sitting in small groups with you and learning more about you as individuals- **your hopes and dreams for yourselves, the church, and your community** as well as what your pain points are and anything else you think will help me serve you better. **And while we gather, let's have a little fun!**

Since preaching from Mark in Red Lodge in October, this short gospel has intrigued me. It raises questions, letting them linger in the air without providing clear answers or any answer at all before turning to the next scene of the story. **This coming Sunday we will wonder with a teacher of Hebrew law and Jesus about the greatest two commandments.**

We'll ask, **"Who is our neighbor?"** and a few verses in Hebrew Scripture about a little girl will answer that question. We'll wonder about a different question Mark's narrator does not answer before again moving on to the next scene.

May God's abundant joy accompany you this week as you "play" God well, acting as Jesus did, taking on the form of a servant, and giving life to all.

**Pastor Laura**

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### *Supporting the Children of West Elementary*

Thank you for the many ways you continue to care for the students of West Elementary. Your generosity makes such a difference, and we are grateful for every gift you offer. This month, we are collecting **new underwear and socks** for elementary-aged children.

#### **Underwear**

##### ***Girls***

- Wonder Nation Cotton Briefs, 10-pack  
Sizes 6 or 8 — \$8.98

##### ***Boys***

- Wrangler Cotton Briefs, 5-pack  
Sizes S–XL (M or L recommended) — \$10.98



#### **Socks**

##### ***Girls***

- To Be in Style ankle socks, 12-pack  
Sizes 4–6, 6–8, or 9–11

##### ***Boys***

- Wrangler Cool Comfort crew socks, 6-pack  
Sizes S, M, or L — \$9.98

We also continue to support the **West Elementary Food Pantry** year-round. Items such as **Chef Boyardee meals, tuna, stew, jelly, and manual can openers are especially helpful.** Please place all donations in the box marked **West Elementary** outside the sanctuary doors. Thank you for your steady kindness and the way you lift up these wonderful children.

**Your UCC and Christ UMC Christian Service Board**

## *In Our Thoughts and Prayers*

- † Prayers for **Hank Branom** (and Sara!) as Hank is having shoulder surgery March 12.
- † **United States Military Personnel** throughout the world.



### *Fishing for Volunteers*

**Hey all you FISH volunteers! First Congregational UCC and Christ UMC's next turn to work at the FISH Food Pantry is March 23-27 from 9:00-11:00 A.M.** If you'd like to volunteer and distribute food to families in need in our community, **please call Carol Davidson at (406) 836-1862.** Thank you so much if you can help!

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### *Cottage Meetings*



Would you like to get to know our new pastor, Laura Ymker, better? Plan now to host or attend a cottage meeting, being organized now! **Folks are asked to host 6-8 people for small group gatherings at their homes or at the church. Members can sign up to attend and spend a relaxed time getting to know Laura—and letting her get to know you!** So far, 5 hosts are ready to entertain- but we can use more! Sign up this Sunday to serve as a host OR to attend one of the five gatherings that are currently available. What a fun

and low-key way to begin wonderful new relationships with our wonderful new pastor! **Questions? Contact Janet Koostra, 406-727-8443 or [janetkoostra@gmail.com](mailto:janetkoostra@gmail.com).**

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### *Retreat Deadline Coming Soon!*

**The registration deadline for “In the Moment” spiritual retreat is Wednesday, March 18.** Check out the signup sheet on the table in the narthex (entryway). **Cost is \$25/person which includes breakfast, lunch and activity supplies. Some scholarships are available.** The retreat will be facilitated by different members of our own (newly federated!) congregation. Activities include the Lord's Prayer, Chair Yoga, Dot Painting, Sandwich Making, Singing, Labyrinth, and Bracelet Braiding. The activities have been chosen as simple ways to allow participants to practice staying focused “In the Moment” on their own spirituality and connection to the Divine. Plus, it's going to be a lot of fun! **Sign up today to join us on Saturday, March 21 from 8:30 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.**

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### *Upper Room Chat Group*

**Do you read the *Upper Room*? Would you be interested in a group that uses text messages to chat about the daily reading? The Christian Education Board has been asked to find out if “Upper Room” readers would like this kind of group. All you need is the devotional book and a phone that can text. Members of the group would share their feelings, comments, questions and interpretations of each day's entry. Please contact Janet Koostra (406-727-8443 or [janetkoostra@gmail.com](mailto:janetkoostra@gmail.com)) who will help get the group organized.**

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### *Women's Coffee*

**The Women's Coffee group will meet at Wheat Montana (1116 9<sup>th</sup> St. S.) at 10:30 A.M. on Saturday, March 14. All are welcome to attend!**



## *Egypt*

The Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) stands as one of Egypt's most influential and compassionate development organizations, guided by its commitment to promoting life's sanctity, equity, and harmony. CEOSS is a beacon of hope for millions- Muslims and Christians- delivering integrated education, health, agriculture, environment, and economic development programs. CEOSS alleviates poverty and improves food security. It champions women's empowerment, gender equality, disability inclusion, and inter-religious dialogue, reinforcing that development and justice flourish where respect, opportunity, and belonging do.



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**The church phone lines were down at the beginning of the week so you may have had trouble contacting the office. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused. Rest assured, we are back in business, thanks to a new modem.**

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### *Coming Up*

#### **Thursday, March 12**

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

#### **Saturday, March 14**

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

#### **Sunday, March 15**

8:45 A.M. Christian Ed. Board, Parlor

9:15 A.M. Choir Rehearsal

10:00 A.M. Worship Service

11:00 A.M. Coffee Fellowship

#### **Monday, March 16**

6:30 P.M. Church Council meeting  
IN PERSON, Fellowship Hall

#### **Tuesday, March 17**

1:00 P.M. Prayer Circle, Parlor

#### **Wednesday, March 18**

10:00 A.M. Bible Study, Parlor

1:30 P.M. Pinochle, Fellowship Hall

6:00 P.M. Youth Group, **2900 9<sup>th</sup> Ave. S**

6:00 P.M. Handbells

7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal

#### **Thursday, March 19**

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

1:00 P.M. United Women In Faith, Fellowship Hall

