



The Good News of United Spirit Community Church



A Federation of Christ United Methodist Church & First Congregational United Church of Christ

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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*

September 20, 2026

Worship Service

10:00 A.M.

Worship Leader:

Pastor Laura Ymker

Lay Reader: John Baker

Ushers: Steve & Karen McElroy

Acolyte: Aalayah Dunn

Accompanist/Music Director: Melissa Gilbert

Nursery: May Harris

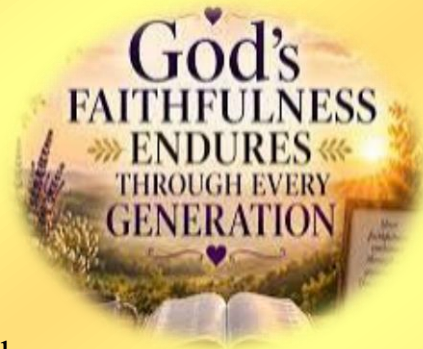
Sunday School: Janet Koostra

Fellowship: Doris Motley, Susan Thomas, Heather Weibel

Treats: Karen McElroy, Rosemary Neilsen

UCC Tellers: Paul Haffeman, Ed Venetz

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 United Spirit website.

The "Great Outdoors" was a Great Time!

Rally Sunday, the first Sunday of our program year, was so much fun! **Snow cones, bingo, rock painting, flower bomb planting, popcorn, cookies, gummy bears** were just a few of the many activities and treats that 60+ folks joined in last Sunday. Tables were creatively and beautifully decorated. Some of the guessing game winners included **Lily Borland, Steve Gettel, Jeanne Nobbs, Dennis Dell** and **Heather Weibel**. The Bingo Game winners were **Allie Storle, Nancy Dallmann** and **Angel Cortez** (new foster son in the Dunn Family). Folks strolled through the fellowship hall, enjoyed hot and cold beverages, snacked on a wide variety of treats, visited, and shared all around the room. **Many thanks to all the boards for their wonderful displays and to Eric Dunn and Janet Koostra for setting up.** And of course, a big round of applause for the Church Growth and Vitality Board which sponsors this annual activity.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

† **Kelly Quick** is having shoulder surgery this week and anticipates a challenging recovery. You can offer your support by providing meals at the following link, <https://mealtrain.com/50e4ry>, or reach out to Kelly directly.



From the Pastor

Rally Sunday was a lot of fun. In service, we were challenged by the faith of a father, desperate to save his son's life; and we wondered how following Jesus' command to love each other as he has loved us might lead to the growth of our congregation and the church as a whole. Afterward, it was all fun in games in the fellowship hall.

Next week I will be telling two stories that will challenge us to think and rethink how we create the legacy we'll leave. What impact do our actions actually have beyond our lives? Will people remember us? Does it matter if they do? If they don't? How should we align our priorities in response to the answers to these questions?

This week may you obey Jesus' command to **love quickly**, confident that if you do, you will discover, "Love never fails" (I Corinthians 13:8).

Pastor Laura

A Sure Foundation

A reflection on *A Sure Foundation*, (the UCC's handbook for relationships between pastors and A reflection on *A Sure Foundation*, the UCC's handbook for relationships between pastors and congregations)

Covenant is central to the UCC's organizational structure. Its *Manual on Ministry* describes covenant as "the commitment of God to God's people, of the people to God, of the people to one another as the Body of Christ." In the UCC ministerial code, I covenant with God, myself and family, the UCC, my ministry setting, and all ministers. Relying on God's grace, I make seven promises to each of these parties. **You should know that in her relationship with her ministry setting, your pastor has agreed to:**

1. Preach and teach the gospel without fear or favor, regarding all persons with equal respect and concern, and undertaking to minister impartially.
2. Honor all confidences shared with me; telling only those who need to know, what they need to know, when they need to know it.
3. Steward church funds and property faithfully, while overseeing the administrative tasks of ministry with integrity.
4. Speak the truth in love, not using my position, power, or authority to exploit any person nor using my position for unwarranted personal gain, including financial gain.
5. Assess with care the implications of accepting gifts from congregation members.
6. Not perform pastoral services within a congregation or for a member of a congregation, without the invitation of the current pastor of that congregation.
7. Neither interfere with nor intrude upon the ministry of my successor upon my departure from a ministry setting; and to deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and successor.



Christian Education News

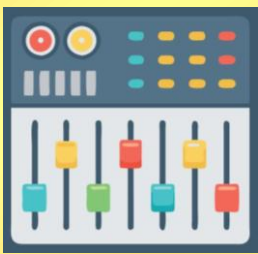
Children will begin in worship on Sunday, September 20. After the children's message, Sunday School will have the first fall lesson from our curriculum, *"Shine: Living in God's Light"*. Each week, students will **review the Class Covenant outlining the class rules**. Time will be spent with **prayer, a story and an activity** which might be a craft, a game or puzzle, a video or a song. **Extra emphasis will be placed on music this year, with children learning the same new song each month that the congregation will be learning.** The classroom will have more access to technology with a TV monitor, wi-fi, and a tablet or laptop. These changes will make all resources in the curriculum accessible for teachers and students. **Families, please be sure to return your registration paperwork. See you on Sunday!**

Nursery Hits a Bump in the Road

We need adult volunteers to help in the nursery. Currently, we have one nursery attendant; our second staff person has quit. **Our Safe Conduct policy mandates that two attendants must be present in the nursery at all times. The Personnel Committee recommends helpers be at least 18 years old.** The process has begun to hire two new staffers for the nursery. Three staff persons will provide better coverage and more flexibility for our nursery care givers. This process will take a little time. **Until we can fill at least one staff position, nursery care will depend on church volunteers to help fill the gap. Nursery is a critical ministry for a thriving church.** Please prayerfully consider lending a hand. The paid nursery care provider will handle messy chores like diaper changes. Church volunteers may engage with kids at their own level of ability and comfort. **Without help from the congregation, we will have to cancel nursery care. Please contact Janet at [\(406\) 727-8443](tel:4067278443) or janetkoostra@gmail.com or the church office, 406-453-4316, if you can volunteer.**

United Women in Faith

All women are invited to join us this **Thursday, September 17, at 1:00 P.M.** in the Fellowship Hall. **Allie Storle** will be our guest speaker to talk about **foster kids, adoption, and the Hot Mess Homestead.**



Slides and Soundboard

Operation of the slides and soundboard during our Sunday morning worship service falls under the duties of the Worship Board, **who are currently looking for volunteers to learn this process.** If you would like to learn to help with this important aspect of our ministry, **please contact Dale Dallmann, chair of the Worship Board, at (406) 253-4640 or dogger.drd@gmail.com.**

We are United Spirit Community Church

Reminder that our bank account for the new church name is in place! **Folks should be writing checks to United Spirit Community Church. If you have automatic payments sent from a financial institution, be sure to give the new name.** This needs to be done any time before December 31st.



Town Pump has selected FISH to be part of the 25th Anniversary of "HELP THOSE IN NEED" Challenge. **Town Pump will match all donations to reach \$30,000.00 that FISH receives September 1-November 30.** What a great way to double your gift & help FISH. Donations can be made through the church with "FISH" in the memo or sent to **P.O. Box 662, Great Falls MT 59403.**

Open Minds Discussion Groups

The definition of us:

We are those who at one time were trained to believe that members of the LGBTQIA+ community are in one way or another unacceptable to God. **We seek to understand God's love in new ways that are true to the nature of God, faithful to Scripture, and inclusive of all people as God's beloved children created in the Divine image.**

About our destination:

We are people who are on a journey of faith. Perhaps we've left where we came from permanently, perhaps someday we will return to it, but today we journey together into the unknown, hoping God is more gracious than we ever imagined "he" could be, hoping God is not male as we once may have thought "he" was, **hoping God accepts all people including those we once were certain were rejected by the Holy One.**

This group is a place where we can:

- Be honest about where we came from, where we are, and where we want to go
- Be sad about the ways where we came from may have hurt us
- Grieve the things we once loved about our pasts or perhaps still love about our pasts
- Acknowledge in the midst of our grief that we may also feel relief that we've moved on
- Talk about new ways that we are discovering God's goodness and the words of Scripture

Here we are honest in hope that our honesty will lead to a greater knowledge of God, ourselves, and each other. Interested in joining? **In order to keep the groups emotionally safe, times and dates will not be advertised and, if Pastor Laura doesn't know you, she will meet with you prior to your decision to join.** This is to prevent anyone from showing up to taunt or argue rather than engage in honest reflection. **Anyone and everyone is welcome to join as long as they are interested in honest reflection.** Please call or email Pastor Laura with questions or your desire to join.

"Justice Isn't Blind: Race and Inequality in the Federal Criminal Justice System"

Sponsored by the Progressive Ministerial Association

Presented by Hank Branom, Criminal Defense Attorney

United Spirit Community Church: October 1, 7:00-8:30 P.M.

A person can be subject to a federal criminal prosecution based in part upon their ethnicity and where they live. With six federal jurisdiction reservations, this has an impact upon our native neighbors in Montana. **This free and open to the public presentation will delve into the impacts of federal criminal law upon Native Americans from the 1880's to the present day.** It will also address the current immigration prosecutions occurring in our state and elsewhere.

Read With the Pastor

Pastor Laura is still reading *A Hidden Wholeness* by Parker Palmer. Palmer is a popular Quaker writer, and there is much to learn from his thinking. **You'll still get together this fall, perhaps sometime in early October to discuss the author's vision for a journey toward wholeness and how we can incorporate what we learned into our own faith.** In the meantime, keep reading and feel free to begin mini-discussions about this topic (or anything else) when you see me around.



Music in the News

You can quickly find September 20's music on YouTube:

- **"Harvest Time"** in the *United Methodist Hymnal* back cover
 - **"I Sing a Song of the Saints of God"** in the *New Century Hymnal* #295 (Recording of verses 1 & 3. We will also sing verse 2.)
 - **"Come, Share the Spirit"** in the *New Century Hymnal* #62 vs. 1 (I can't find this song on YouTube. The choir will lead us.)
 - The doxology will be **"Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"** in the *United Methodist Hymnal* #64 v. 4
 - **"Cornerstone"** by Hillsong, words on the screen and in the insert
 - **"Go Forth for God"** in the *United Methodist Hymnal* #670 vs. 3
-

"Gracious Space" begins this week!

When: 6:30 P.M. on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month, beginning September 17

Where: the Fellowship Hall

Gracious Space is a place to **re-examine**, **re-imagine**, and **re-form** our faith in an environment where we stubbornly insist on believing that God will always be "more good" than anything we can imagine and where we also commit to believing the best about other people and other expressions of faith.

Our first conversation will be inspired by "Episode 266: Enslaved People & the Making of the Bible" of the podcast The Bible for Normal People. Biblical scholars Pete Enns and Jared Byas host the podcast. (Watch out for their sense of humor! The tagline that begins every episode is a joke and not what they really think.) **In this episode they interview Candida Moss, biblical scholar and author of *God's Ghostwriters: Enslaved Christians and the Making of the Bible*.**

Don't be intimidated by the thought of all these scholars. The Bible for Normal People's mission is to make scholarship approachable for everyone, to do so with curiosity and playfulness, and to help you incorporate what you've learned into your faith. **You can listen to the episode at this link:** <https://thebiblefornormalpeople.com/episodes/episode-266-candida-moss-enslaved-people-the-making-of-the-bible>. Or you can find it on a podcast app on your smartphone.

Listen to the episode and show up at 6:30 on Thursday, September 17, to discuss its content and your reaction with others as we decide whether this ancient information is relevant to our faith today. Never listened to a podcast? Don't know what they are? Think of a radio show on demand. There are Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, and more for movies; and there are podcast apps for "radio" shows. **To find the podcast app on your iPhone, look for this icon:**



Open it, and search for "The Bible for Normal People." Follow the link to the show, and then tap "follow." Scroll through the episodes until you find the episode we are listening to this week.

If you don't have an iPhone, you can also listen to podcasts on Spotify. If you haven't already downloaded the Spotify app, download it from the app store.



It's icon looks like this:

Open it, and search for "The Bible for Normal People." Follow the link to the show, and then tap "follow." Scroll through the episodes until you find the episode we are listening to this week.

Confused? Just follow the link shared above, scroll slightly down the page, and click the play button next to Candida's picture to listen online. This is, perhaps, the most hassle-free way to access the info.

School has Started! Let's help the kids get off on the right foot.

Dear United Spirit Community Church,

We are reaching out to you with a heartfelt request to support the children of West Elementary. Many of these young students arrive back to school without essential items, and together, we can make a meaningful difference in their lives.

What We Need:

- **School Supplies: watch for the Sales.**



- United Way and many other outlets provide backpacks for the kids to start the year. But after that, the need remains. **So, while everything is on sale**, please consider picking up a few items and donating them so staff always have supplies to hand out.
- Notebooks, pencils, pens, backpacks, crayons, markers
- This assists with school essentials for students who arrive late in the year

- **Clothing:**

- All sizes, for both boys and girls
- New or gently used clothes that can help a child get through the day with comfort and confidence
- Sometimes children arrive at school without the clothing they need. Or there is an accident. It happens for many reasons, and the staff works hard to care for them. We'd like to help by collecting new or gently used clothing items the school can give to students when needed.



By contributing these items, you can help ensure that every child at West Elementary has the tools and confidence they need to succeed. Your generous donations will go a long way in making their school year brighter and more hopeful. Thank you for always coming together as a church community and supporting these wonderful children. **Please leave items in the box marked for West Elementary in the coat room area.** Thank you for your kindness and generosity.

Your Christian Service Board



Quilt Raffle

United Women in Faith is sponsoring a quilt raffle. The quilt is on display in Fellowship Hall and will be raffled during coffee fellowship on December 6. 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.

Coming Up

Thursday, September 17

- 8:00 A.M. Pray with the Pastor, Sanct.
- 9-10 A.M. Pastor Laura Office Hours
- 1:00 P.M. United Women in Faith, FH
- 6:30 P.M. Gracious Space, FH

Saturday, September 19

- 9:00 A.M. Craft Fair at First UMC (9:00A.M.-2:00 P.M., 610 2nd Ave. N)

Sunday, September 20

- 9:15 A.M. Choir Rehearsal
- 10:00 A.M. Worship Service
- 11:00 A.M. Coffee Fellowship
- 2:00 P.M. United Methodist Circuit Gathering at Big Sandy UMC

Monday, September 21

- 5:30 P.M. Pray with the Pastor, Sanct.
- 6:30 P.M. Church Council, Zoom

Wednesday, September 23

- 10:00 A.M. Bible Study, Parlor
- 12:30 P.M. Pray with the Pastor, Sanct.
- 1-2 P.M. Pastor Laura Office Hours
- 1:30 P.M. Pinochle, Fellowship Hall
- 6:00 P.M. Youth Group
- 6:00 P.M. Handbells
- 7:15 P.M. Choir Rehearsal



RAISE A PINT FOR ADOPT-A-BEAR!

**MONDAY, SEPT. 28
5 P.M. - 8 P.M.
MIGHTY MO BREWING COMPANY
412 CENTRAL AVE.
GREAT FALLS**

Come support the Falls Quilt Guild's mission of providing teddy bears and cozy quilts to children in Pediatrics, the Emergency Department, Peace Hospice, Mercy Flight, and Benefis' critical access hospitals.

