



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 37

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

September 27, 2026

Worship Service

10:00 A.M.

Worship Leader:

Pastor Laura Ymker

Lay Reader: Paul Haffeman

Ushers: Lois Baker, Louise Toole

Acolyte: Lily Borland

Accompanist/Music Director: Melissa Gilbert

Nursery: May Harris

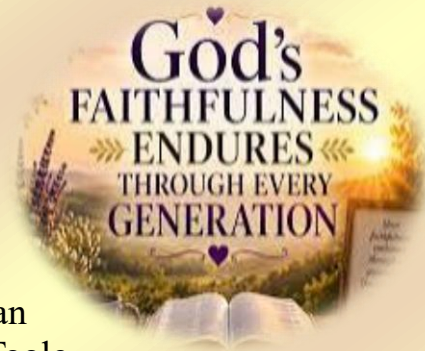
Sunday School: Erin Borland, Sue Turton

Fellowship: Bev Harris, Terry Roemmich

Treats: Judy Feiden, Darlene Gardner

UCC Tellers: Kristine Berntsen, 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 United Spirit website.



This new logo was chosen by Church Council to represent United Spirit Community Church. It has a black and white version which you will see in the print version of the newsletter, as well as a color version which email readers will receive. But don't worry! **This new symbol will be used with the logos from the denominations, too.** It will be very clear that we are a combined congregation of the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church. **Watch for the new symbol on the reader board, slides during worship and on new nametags** (coming soon!). This is an exciting edition to our life as a federated congregation!

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.

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

† **Rose Storle** is recovering from having had hip surgery (that went well!) in Missoula. She and Keith will be home soon for continued recovery.

† **Ken Kirkmeyer** went to the ER for testing for chest pains, not heart related and also for vertigo.

† **Kelly Quick** is recovering from last week's shoulder surgery. You can offer your support by providing meals at the following link, <https://mealtrain.com/50e4ry>, or reach out to Kelly directly.

Read With the Pastor

If you've read *A Hidden Wholeness* by Parker Palmer and would like to discuss the author's vision for a journey toward wholeness and how we can incorporate what we learned into our own faith, *please let Pastor Laura know so a discussion time can be formed.* Thank you.



From the Pastor

On Sunday, we pondered a challenging question. Will we be like Hezekiah who didn't care that his decisions destroyed the future of his children or will we be like Abraham who left all comfort and routine at 75 years old to wander around in a new land because God promised that if he did one day his children would bless the world and the world would bless his children? **Watch the video [here](#).**

This coming Sunday the message will be lighter. **Jesus welcomes children; and what Jesus does, we are invited to do.** I haven't found following Jesus to be without its challenges. **"Taking up your cross" isn't easy though somehow Jesus' words "my yoke is easy and my burden is light" hold true.** Perhaps because when we give, reconcile, and forgive, our hearts are filled with joy and peace instead of fear, frustration, and bitterness.

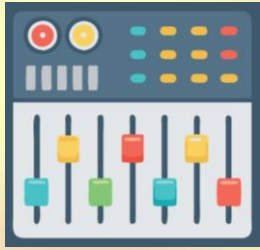
This week, may your spiritual "eyes" be opened to see the impact your decisions will make on future generations. May you have the wisdom, tenacity, and faith of Sarah and Abraham. Be blessed in all you do.

Pastor Laura

Christian Education News



Children from 5 years old through grade 5 will begin in worship on Sunday, September 27. This week, the Sunday School class will begin a new year of lessons in the "Shine: Living in God's Light" curriculum. This 15-week session is called "Peace Inside" and focuses on three themes: **I Am Special, I Need Comfort and I Am Not Alone.** Bible stories will be paired with these themes to help children explore their relationship with God through music, prayer, activities and more. ***Please return Sunday School paperwork!* Nursery care will be provided for children through age 5.** Registration paperwork is also required for children who use the nursery. The nursery attendant will make sure families have the paperwork.



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.**

Exploring Prayer

The last few months, the “Sharing of Joys and Concerns” have been missing from our Sunday services. Most of you have noticed though no one has come directly to me and told me that you miss this portion of the service. Why do I add this comment? **Because I want you to know it’s always okay to come and tell me you miss something I’ve taken out of a service. Letting me know this doesn’t mean I will be able to add it back into our service all the time, but it does let me know what is important to you.** If no one tells me they miss something, I will understandably assume that it was unimportant to the congregation.

Why have I been changing the way we do prayer? A few reasons. 1.) **We are live online.** That means if someone overshares in a way that could harm themselves or others, there is no way to not have it be on the internet. 2.) As I’ve explored best practices with colleagues and mentors, **I’ve discovered that congregants should be asked to not make a public prayer request for someone unless they’ve explicitly asked that person for permission.** 3.) As someone who previously led recovery groups, **I am sensitive to vulnerable populations.** When we publicly share information that shames a friend or family member, (even if they certainly really do need prayer!), it makes it hard, if not impossible, for them to enter our space and feel loved and welcomed by us. No one wants to join a group of people who know about their biggest mistakes and embarrassments. **We each own our own story and should have the right within a church community to be the one who tells it.**

In the last few weeks, I’ve introduced the **index card prayer request exchange** to try a different way to pray communally. At the advice of my mentors, we will try it a few weeks in a row before exploring other types of communal prayer. What Dean shared as he gave the Invitation to Offering this past Sunday is what I hoped to build through these prayer requests: **a community where people pray for each other and check in with each other about the prayer requests.**

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.** Want to learn more? Email, call, or text Pastor Laura with questions or your desire to join.

Youth Group is Going Strong!

Last Wednesday, 21 youth from 6th to 12th grade plus 6 adults attended Youth Group. **It’s not too late to join in! The group meets at 6:00 P.M. at United Spirit Community Church, starting in the Fellowship Hall.** The evening begins with some social time, snacks and a game. Then the group splits into middle school and high school groups for learning and discussion. **The first class this fall is titled “Courage”.** Using Bible stories as a starting point, kids consider questions about what courage means in different contexts. Please encourage your youth to join and commit to helping them attend!

Veteran’s Day Spaghetti Dinner



November 11, 2026

5:00-7:00 P.M.

\$15.00/person

\$30.00/family

Tickets are available from
Carolyn Dowdy or Jeanne Nobbs



The Fellowship Board would like to sincerely thank everyone who came and helped clean the kitchen and Fellowship Hall on September 14 and 15. It was a monumental task that got completed. Thank you!

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 all ministers, your pastor has agreed to:**

1. Work cooperatively and collegially, with intercultural awareness.
 2. Stand in mutual relationships with colleagues in ministry, offering and receiving counsel and support with intentionality.
 3. Use technology and social media responsibly.
 4. Act to prevent and to report known or suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse or neglect.
 5. Attribute the sources of words and ideas that are not my own.
 6. Accurately represent my professional qualifications, education, experience and affiliations, acknowledging the limitations of my office, abilities, skills and competencies, and making referrals when necessary and/or appropriate.
 7. Maintain appropriate boundaries and practice self-differentiation in both my personal and professional life, including within the Local Church where I hold membership.
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"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.



Music in the News

You can quickly find September 27's music on YouTube:

- **"Just as I Am"** in the *New Century Hymnal* #207 verses 2-4p
- **"All Glory, Laud, and Honor"** in the *United Methodist Hymnal* #280 verses 1, 2, 5

- “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 Century Hymnal* #670 vs. 3



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

Coming Up

Thursday, September 24

8:00 A.M. Pray with the Pastor, Sanctuary
9-10 A.M. Pastor Laura Office Hours

September 25-27 Conference Annual Mtg. Plymouth Congregational Church

Sunday, September 27

9:15 A.M. Choir Rehearsal
10:00 A.M. Worship Service
11:00 A.M. Coffee Fellowship
11:30 A.M. Worship Board

Monday, September 28

5-8 P.M. Raise a Pint, Mighty Mo
5:30 P.M. Pray with the Pastor, Sanctuary

Wednesday, September 30

10:00 A.M. Bible Study, Parlor
12:30 P.M. Pray with the Pastor, Sanctuary
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

Thursday, October 1

8:00 A.M. Pray with the Pastor, Sanctuary
9-10 A.M. Pastor Laura Office Hours



7:00 P.M.

Blind Justice, Sanctuary

Gracious Space
Episode 266: Candida Moss –
Enslaved People & the Making of the Bible
September 17, 2026

Opening Questions

What emotions did the podcast bring up? Do you struggle with the passages in the New Testament about slavery more or less after listening to it?

Do men in our community really think about the Roman Empire a lot?

Notes and Questions from the Teaching

Slavery was a structuring device in Roman society. Why people were enslaved in Roman times:

- Not based on race
- Poverty
- War
- Kidnapping
- Abandoned/exposed children

What was writing like in the ancient world?

- No desks
- Hunched over left knee if they were right-handed
- No artificial light
- No glasses (so 40% of people can't read due to sight)
- Painful and uncomfortable

Modern people prevented slaves from becoming educated. In ancient times, slaves were educated precisely because rich people didn't want to do the hard, unpleasant work.

Who became educated?

- Child slaves were educated young because the senses of a child are keener than an adult and so can work longer hours and can be shaped into the perfect kind of worker
- Often slaves were educated with the freeborn
- An enslaved worker who wrote their own bill of sale in Pompeii

The Gospel of Mark

- The earliest gospel, written around 70, just after the fall of Jerusalem
- Mark was not an apostle
- Papias, bishop in what is now Turkey, says Mark was an interpreter or translator for Peter
- Though Mark was probably a slave, Mark is not remembered as enslaved.

How do you read Mark differently if you realize it was written by a slave or someone who was formerly enslaved?



Many of the New Testament texts were probably written by slaves in collaboration with apostles.

- Paul tells us that he is writing with other people: Timothy, Tertius, Sosthenes, and Silvanus.
- Would have had to dictate to other people in prison
- Nothing unusual about a slave or secretary doing the writing

Christians as “Slaves of God”

- Christians didn’t just mingle with enslaved people, but were enslaved people. As a tanner, Paul would have worked with slaves. He would have shared stories with slaves and free alike in the public square.
- People in the ancient world were enslaved to deities.
- *How do you feel about this actually being possible?*
- *How do you feel/what do you think about Candida’s explanation of the imbalance of the interpretation of the New Testament by slaveholders in America?*
- *Do you believe Paul is responsible for how his writings have been used?*
- Early Christians saw dying for Jesus as a really important thing. In wider society, the way a slave could demonstrate fidelity to their master was by risking their life and dying for them.
- Paul’s description of his trials in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28, “Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches.”
- *With this passage in mind, do you think Paul oversteps when he calls himself a slave of Christ? How does his context play into his metaphors?*

Stories in Scripture to consider:

- The healing of the paralytic (Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:3-12)
- Get up and walk. Don’t expect other people to carry your bed.
- Onesimus
- Did he write the letter to Philemon? Why would Paul want him to stay? Was he advocating for himself?

Closing Questions to Ponder:

How big of a problem for you is it that Paul never outright condemns slavery? Before answering, consider:

- 1 Cor. 7:20-24 NIV, “Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them. **Were you a slave when you were called? Don’t let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so.** For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord’s freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.”

- 1 Timothy 1:9-11, “We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for pederests, for **slave traders** and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.” *How does what you learned affect how you explain why the writer condemns slave traders but not slave owners?*

How does this podcast and teaching shift how your view of the inspiration of Scripture?