



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 35

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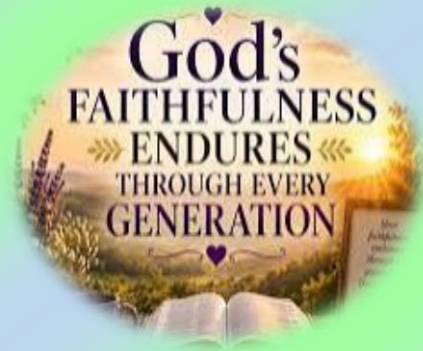
*like us on Facebook: First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls, MT
Christ United Methodist Church Great Falls*

September 13, 2026

Worship Service

Rally Sunday

10:00 A.M.



Worship Leader:

Pastor Laura Ymker

Lay Reader: Dennis Dell

Ushers: Russ & Shirley Davis

Acolytes: Anthony and Jaycee Storle

Accompanist/Music Director: Melissa Gilbert

Nursery: May Harris, tbd

Sunday School: Janet Koostra, tbd

Treats provided at Rally Sunday tables

UCC Tellers: Carol Shipley, 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.

Rally Sunday

Sunday, September 13, is our annual Rally Sunday celebration, when our congregation gathers together after a busy summer of travel, play and other adventures. It is the kick-off event of our 2026-27 Program Year and it is a really fun time! This year's theme is "The Great Outdoors" and groups from the church have been working hard to provide snacks, activities, guessing games and prizes to entice adults and children to visit their tables. This year, there is a new twist: **Rally Day Bingo!** Children and adults will receive a "bingo card" as they enter the Fellowship Hall. As they visit each display, they will get a mark on their card. **Once they have a "blackout", they can turn in the card to enter a drawing for a \$25 Gift Card to Luna Coffee, a \$25 Gift Card to Cassiopeia Books and for kids A Book and Treats!** What a great day to visit friends, eat delicious snacks and enjoy the happy atmosphere of our church family together!

In Our Thoughts and Prayers



† Our sympathy to former members **Dan & Heather Levandowski** in the death of Heather's mom, **Lindy Farrell**, who passed away on September 1.

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.

Christian



Education News

Welcome back to Sunday School! **On September 13, Children age 5-grade 5 will start the morning in worship.** After a **children's message with Janet Koostra**, kids will head to Sunday School for a "Back to Sunday School" morning. The class will **go over rules, learn some new activities and make new decorations for the wall at the base of the stairs.** We will use the curriculum "**Shine! Living in God's Light**" once again this year, with the accompanying "**Peace Table Bible**". Our classroom is also getting some techy updates – TV, tablet, and a portable speaker. **This year will see an increase in the use of music and video related to our lessons.** It's going to be a fun year!

New Sunday School Paperwork

The Christian Education Board has been working hard to **review, improve and update** our Sunday School paperwork. The registration form has a new look; so does the media release. **In addition, there is a brand new form, a Christian Education Covenant.** The covenant (which means “promise”) outlines the relationships and responsibilities among those who are part of Sunday School-the Christian Education Board, the teachers, the children and the parents. It is designed to make sure all participants are on the same page for a successful and fun year in Sunday School. **Forms will be available on the round table in the narthex (entryway) before worship on September 13 and also at the Christian Education table during the Rally Sunday event in the Fellowship Hall.**

A New Sign In/Sign Out Process

Sunday School is also trying a new process to get kids signed in and signed out. **Each Sunday morning, families will stop at the round table in the narthex(entryway). A volunteer will sign each child in and give them a number.** This number will be written on a disposable name tag which will be placed on the child’s back (to reduce the chance of it getting peeled off). **The adult accompanying the child will get a card with a matching number. After worship, the number card will be given to the Sunday School teacher as a “signing out” action.** This will make picking up kids a bit more streamlined. Let’s work together to get used to our new process!

“Lean Into the Storm”

141st United Church of Christ Conference Annual Meeting September 25-27, 2026 in Helena

Seeking delegates to represent United Spirit Community Church at this year’s UCC Conference Annual Meeting in Helena. This is a great opportunity to see the work of the conference in action and to meet our friends in Christ around the state. **This year’s meeting is hosted by Plymouth Congregational Church.** There will be a meet and greet Thursday evening, September 24 at the church. Workshops take place during the day on Friday followed by a banquet that evening. **Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund**, Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice in the UCC, will keynote on Saturday morning and lead a workshop Saturday afternoon. **Rev. Jennifer Sowell**, Associate General Minister for Love of Church, will preach on Sunday and lead a workshop on Saturday.

If you are interested in attending this year’s Conference Annual Meeting either in person or virtually, **please contact Moderator Karen Spencer or Pastor Laura.** Cost of registration will be paid for by the church. Delegates are responsible for their lodging. Names of delegates need to be submitted by **Monday, September 14th.** Final reservation deadline is Thursday, September 18.

YOUTH DELEGATES WELCOME!

***Both Congregational and Methodist members and friends are encouraged to attend as guests.
Guests will not have a voice but can still see the inner working of our conference.
Registration not required for guests.***

***Ladies Coffee
Saturday, September 12
10:30 A.M. at Wheat Montana
(1116 9th Street S)***



Topic for this month: What were you doing on 9/11 when the terrorist attack on the United States occurred? What were your thoughts and feelings watching it unfold?

A Sure Foundation

A reflection on *A Sure Foundation*, (the UCC's handbook for relationships between pastors and congregations) 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 other ministers. Relying on God's grace, I make seven promises to each of these parties. **You should know that in her relationship with God, your pastor has agreed to:**

1. Lead a life worthy of the calling to which I have been called.
2. Demonstrate a sincere yearning for connection with the triune God, expressed in prayer, worship, Bible study, retreat, and other spiritual practices.
3. Affirm the importance of discernment in relationship to my call and, using the [Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministers](#), will continue to discern the nature of my call in community.
4. Grow in faith, knowledge, and the practice of ministry through intentional continuing education, study, and devotional life.
5. Cultivate a culture of call by nurturing the gifts of others in the Church and joining their gifts with mine in seasons of change and continuity for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ and the health of the Church.
6. Honor the diversity of God's creation and work for the unity of the body of Christ (John 17:21).
7. Recognize the communal nature of God, ensuring that ministry does not happen in isolation.



From the Pastor

This past Sunday I shared a few small bits of wisdom before moving to explore two prayers I was taught as a child: **“Show me thyself”** and **“show me myself.”** When we gaze on the beauty of our Creator, we learn who God is and also who we are. We were, after all, created from the atmosphere of God.

This coming Sunday we will delve into God's faithfulness throughout history and our hope for the future. Several months ago I wrote down this quote while listening to *A Doomful of Sugar*, a cozy mystery by Carrie Doyle.

“Is it going to be permanent?” He addressed the question to my mother, but his eyes were pinned on me. Like the leaves outside, things would change forever.”

Change is inevitable. We can choose to resist it or embrace it. But ultimately, we cannot stop it. How do we keep hoping in God in the midst of change, particularly when the change is unwanted or unpleasant? Is it okay to wonder if God is actually faithful? Is God faithful? Or is that just what the Good Book and hymns say? **Let's wonder together.**

Each day this week, **may you gaze upon the beauty of Christ and be transformed. Christ is in you.** This is your hope for glory. **Be blessed. Be transformed. Walk in peace.**

Pastor Laura

“Gracious Space” begins next 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.

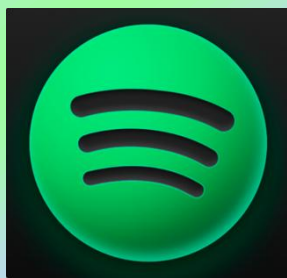
Don't be intimidated by the thought of all these scholars. The Bible for Normal People's mission is to make scholarship approachable for everyone, to do so with curiosity and playfulness, and to help you incorporate what you've learned into your faith. **You can listen to the episode at this link: <https://thebiblefornormalpeople.com/episodes/episode-266-candida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



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.**



Music in the News

You can quickly find September 13's music on YouTube:

- “Auld Lang Syne” and “Psalm 77: Hallowed Memories” in a bulletin insert and from *The Psalter*. (I can't find the psalter on YouTube; it has the same tune as “Auld Lang Syne.”)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lMlGDZ5xBo&list=RD6lMlGDZ5xBo&start_radio=1
 - “I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry” in the *New Century Hymnal* #351
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6H0bTokdK5c&list=RD6H0bTokdK5c&start_radio=1
 - “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
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwuDSw-9cUQ&list=RDJwuDSw-9cUQ&start_radio=1
 - “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” in the *United Methodist Hymnal* #117
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5tBJ9gliMs&list=RDm5tBJ9gliMs&start_radio=1
 - “Go Forth for God” in the *United Methodist Hymnal* #670 vs. 3
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUftW1f593k&list=RDiUftW1f593k&start_radio=1
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2026-2027 Youth Group

Youth Group is starting! The new season kicks off with a barbecue for youth AND and their families on Wednesday, September 9 at 6:00 P.M. Parents are asked to attend and siblings are welcome. Menu includes hamburgers, hot dogs, black bean burgers, potato salad, chips, drinks, cupcakes and more!

Youth group is intended for kids in grades 6-12.
It meets on Wednesday evenings from 6:00 P.M.-8:00 P.M.
at United Spirit Community Church, 2900 9th Ave. South.



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.

“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 –
2900 9th Ave S. Great Falls
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 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.

Coming Up

Thursday, September 10

- 8:00 A.M. Pray with the Pastor, Sanctuary
- 9-10 A.M. Pastor Laura Office Hours
- 12:00 P.M. Facilities Committee
- 1:00 P.M. Church Growth & Vitality
- 6:30 P.M. Christian Ed. Board, Zoom

Saturday, September 12

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

Sunday, September 13

- 9:15 A.M. Choir Rehearsal
- 10:00 A.M. Worship Service
- 11:00 A.M. Rally Sunday Events, Fellowship Hall

Monday, September 14

- 5:30 P.M. Pray with the Pastor, Sanctuary
- 6:30 P.M. Finance Committee, Zoom

Wednesday, September 16

- 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

It's a New School Year! 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
