
The Good News

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like us on Facebook at First Congregational United Church of Christ-Great Falls, MT

Worship Connection

May 2, 2021



It's a Communion Sunday! (BYOE-Bring Your On Elements)

- 9:15 A.M. Zoom Fellowship begins
- 9:30 A.M. Worship begins with Livestream to Facebook
- 9:30 A.M. Abbreviated televised service on KBGF
- 10:30 A.M. Full pre-recorded service available on YouTube

Contact Rev. Lynne for Zoom details (pastor@greatfallsucc.org)

In Our Thoughts and Prayers

† **Dick Farrell** is under hospice care at home.

† **Gary Wyman** has been moved to his own room at Benefis Eastview, 2621 15th Ave. S. #108. Correspondence to Gary should be sent to his niece Barbie Brumbaugh, 1505 2nd Avenue NW, 59404 (please note that Barbie's address has been updated).

† Congratulations to **Lori Rovero** on being accepted to Montana State University Graduate School, pursuing a degree in Educational Leadership.

† A celebration of life for Christ United Methodist's **Karen Smith** will be held on Saturday, June 12th at 1:00 P.M., primarily for family and close friends, due to capacity needs. Additionally, the service will be live-streamed, TBD.

Why Are You Doing This?

A few weeks ago, a member of the Stewardship Board asked if I would be willing to write a few words explaining what keeps me coming to church. I was thinking about my response when Rev. Lynne offered a sermon on the question "Why are you doing this?" Boy oh boy, that was timely! It really helped me clarify my answer to the question about why I keep coming to church. The short answer? Because I love God. And I want to serve God. First Congregational is the place that nurtures my love of God and provides the place where I can serve the congregation, community and world in meaningful ways. The congregation is my community, the "us" in "give us this day" and "forgive us our sins"; the community, body and family that I feel we are called to embrace as followers of Christ. I love my church family. I have fun here. That's why I keep coming. - Janet Koostra



Christian Education News- Sunday School on the Lawn

Our second "Sunday School on the Lawn" is rescheduled for this **Sunday, May 2nd at 1:00 P.M.** (We cancelled last Sunday due to wet weather.) Join Janet Koostra for a Bible story, games and snacks! We will have fun with a parachute, play pool noodle tag and the ever-popular Red Light, Green Light. Snacks will be provided. Some pool noodles are available, but please bring your own if possible! All activities will take place outside; the building will not be open and bathrooms will not be accessible. Feel free to bring a lawn chair!
Masks are required, even though we will be outside.

2021 Youth Summer Camp Schedule

It's time to register for camp!! Once again this year, youth in grades 4-12 are invited to attend Camp Christikon operated by the Lutheran church. Six UCC youth participated last summer and reported that the experience was great! Janet Koostra is the camp contact person for our congregation and she is required to submit all pre-registration paperwork. Pre-registration is due by May 15, so please contact Janet by May 10th to pre-register. Three youth camps are scheduled for the following dates:

Pathfinders-July 5-8 for kids finishing 4th -finishing 6th grades

Prospectors-July 10-16 for kids finishing 6th through finishing 8th grades

Trailblazers-July 18-24 for youth finishing 9th through finishing 12th grades

The camp has implemented strict health protocols due to the pandemic. Memorial funds from the church cover all registration costs for all campers—thank you Memorial Fund! Please contact Janet Koostra, 727-8443 or janetkoostra@gmail.com, as soon as possible to pre-register! ***Watch for information about Family /Intergenerational Camps and Adult Camps in upcoming newsletter!***

Upper Room- Where the World Meets to Pray

The May/June Upper Room daily devotionals are available in the bin outside of the front doors to the church. *The Upper Room* daily devotional guide provides a practical way to listen to scripture, connect with believers around the world, and spend time with God each day. You can spend time with God and receive encouragement for your faith journey through meditations that have been written by readers from all around the world.

Each devotion includes a suggested Bible passage, a personal story relating the message of the scripture to daily life, a thought for the day, a prayer, and a prayer focus. Strengthen your faith and deepen your relationship with God through this devotional magazine.

Stop by and grab your complimentary copy next time you're in the neighborhood!

Time for a Re-Launch!

(Rev. Lynne sent the following note out via email on April 22. Knowing that not everyone in our congregation has access to email, we are including it in our newsletter this week)

Yes, it's going to happen... or at least, that's the plan. Our Church Council met with the Leadership Team of Christ United Methodist Church last Monday. Together, we discerned that we can move forward to safely open the building for worship. A date of May 9th has been set. We will meet in joint worship with CUMC at 9:30 am and share worship leadership for the three additional joint services in May. Beginning Memorial Day Sunday, we will move into our regular summer joint worship schedule.

At this point, the building will be open for Sunday worship only. We will continue to deliberate the opening for other purposes (meetings, outside groups, etc.).

Here's what we know:

- The criteria to consider regathering has been met. Cascade County has maintained a < 4% test positivity rate for quite some time. Both of our congregations (based on self-reporting) are at least 50% fully vaccinated.
- We know that Cascade County is currently 24% fully vaccinated.
- We know that there are areas in the country and the world that are experiencing upticks in the number of cases, hospitalizations and deaths.
- We know that even those who are vaccinated can still contract and spread the virus. We know they may get sick but not critically.
- We know that a combination of safe practices will need to be in place in order to establish a safe atmosphere (hand sanitizing, properly worn face masks, distancing, effective ventilation).
- We know that re-gathering for worship will not be the same as returning. We will not be returning to how things were before. It will be very different (see the description below).
- We know there are many people who will choose to not to re-gather just yet.
- We know we will continue to offer virtual worship through Zoom and Facebook live streaming, YouTube, and the television broadcast.
- We know that, should conditions in Cascade County deteriorate, we may need to close again.
- We know none of us have done this before and we will be figuring things out as we go.
- We know we will continue to be the church in new ways.



- We know God is and will be with us.

A Re-Launch committee made up of representatives from both congregations has been meeting over the last couple of months to prepare this this event. They have consulted local health officials as well as multiple on-line resources to make sure we are working with the most up-to-date statistics and information about the virus. We've purchased the supplies and equipment we will need to create a welcoming yet safe environment. Rev. Dawn and I have been discussing the particulars about the worship services themselves.

Here's what you can expect when we re-gather:

- Everyone will properly wear face masks, completely covering nose and mouth.
- Everyone will maintain 6-foot distancing by family groups.
- Everyone will be registered upon entering.
- Hand sanitizers will be available and expected to be used.
- We will continue to pre-record and present parts of the service on the screen.
- We will refrain from singing and unison reading.
- We will be dismissed by ushers and leave the building.
- We will keep the rest of the building closed.
- We will maintain a safe working atmosphere for all staff.
- We will limit our presence in the building to the narthex, sanctuary and rest rooms. The rest of the building, including the office will remain closed.

With all of these restrictions, it may feel as if we are setting ourselves up to exclude people. One of the reasons we have put off opening so long is so we could give enough time for enough people to be vaccinated in the community for a safe return. Any exclusions on the church's side of things are about behavior, not the person. We hold that everyone is welcome. However, in this time, we will require behavior that will help us create a safe space for everyone.

We realize that not everyone will be with us when we re-gather. It's important that we support everyone's decisions, knowing that they are all personal and made for reasons we may not know.

I am both excited and worried about re-gathering. I still want to be able to say, when this is all over, that no one contracted the virus because they came to a church event. We are now at a point where we can dip our toes back into the pool of a gathered community and see how it goes.

Between now and May 9th, I hope still see you virtually in some manner. Be well.

Rev. Lynne

Virtual Worship Continues!

Once we've opened the building, what happens to all the virtual stuff? IT CONTINUES! We will still be offering Zoom Fellowship and Facebook streaming. We will still post the services on YouTube and our website. We will still be on television.

Upcoming Meetings

Worship Board (tentative)	Monday, May 3	7:00 P.M.
Church Growth & Vitality	Tuesday, May 4	5:30 P.M.
Christian Service Board	Monday, May 10	1:00 P.M.
Business Affairs Board	Monday, May 10	6:00 P.M.
Joint Re-Launch Team	Tuesday, May 11	6:30 P.M.
Stewardship Board	Wednesday, May 12	7:00 P.M.
Church Council	Monday, May 17	6:30 P.M.
Christian Ed Board	Tuesday, May 25	6:00 P.M.

Emerging

Each spring for the last couple of years, I've watched (through the wonders of Facebook) an annual event that takes place at the home of some friends. It's an amazing transformation that takes place as a plump yellow and black and white caterpillar attaches itself to the roof of a screened tank and wraps itself in a bright green chrysalis. While they (and the friends who follow them) wait, they reflect on things like spring and growth and transformation. After about 10 days, the chrysalis starts to change color and then becomes transparent and you can see the color and design of the wings. Eventually, the shell of the chrysalis splits and the new butterfly slowly emerges. It clings to the



chrysalis and unfolds its wings. Then it ever so gently, starts to move those wings up and down. After all the new butterflies have emerged, the family takes the tank out into their yard and they release the butterflies so they can enter the world as these new creations.

We are about to emerge out of a chrysalis that has held our transforming “body” for over a year. We will move carefully and slowly, taking our time to make sure that everyone is informed and we all participate in ways that will promote the safety and care of everyone. We will need to hang onto some of that chrysalis for a while as we slowly move our wings to make sure we’re ready for flight when the time is right.

When we emerge from that which has held us safe for all this time, we will be different. We will still be the church but we will “look” different. The way we engage our mission and ministry will be different but it will still be the mission and ministry to which God has called us. The way we live into community will be different but we will still be the body of Christ.

Because of this amazing transformation that butterflies go through, they have long been a symbol for resurrection. What existed before dies and emerges as something very different. It’s a reminder of just how creative God is, how innovative the Creator is, how resilient the Holy Spirit is. Emerging is both exciting and a bit frightening. There are a lot of questions that we don’t quite know how they will be answered. We don’t even know if we are asking the best questions. So, we will lean with faith into the creative, innovative, resilient One, listen to good wisdom and emerge into the new life that awaits us. May the transforming be amazing!

Rev. Lynne

***Happy May
Birthday To:***

Abilene M.	1
Joan T.	1
Jeff W.	1
Jim Z.	1
Mary B.	2
Tom M.	2
Jeff T.	2
Scott B.	3
Ellisyn B.	3
Marv D.	3
Del J.	3
Colleen M.	3
Dick K.	4
Annie P.	5

