

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF
CHRIST (UCC)

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- 2010 Lenten Recital Series
- Faith into Action
- Mayflower Circle
- Word from Amy Dunphy
- Memorial Gift from the Diede family

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THE Congregationalist

VOLUME 23

NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY 1, 2010

This Life, This Faith

There's a new study out, one done by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. What they found was an "apparent shift in patterns of spiritual practice away from familiar institutions." Said Omar M. McRoberts, team leader, "We are witnessing a decoupling of 'spirituality' from 'religion.'"

As might be expected, this has tremendous implication for us as a church, and largely confirms what many pastors, irrespective of denomination, have been seeing for a long time. Put simply, fewer and fewer folks who believe in God feel that the church is that important to their lives.

We have to try and remedy that. For we must do a better job of helping people not only feel a greater sense of community in the church, but see the benefit of being connected by the church! That doesn't mean we encourage folks to substitute the church for God at work in their lives. But the church should be a place where some encounter-point not available anywhere else is offered.

If you were in worship this past

Sunday, you heard that very idea expressed, eloquently, by three of our laity: Rosalee Zeier, Mark Moak, Bob Keenum, and Jim Harris. Each talked about their faith, what they valued and required most for it to remain healthy, and



how being a part of this fellowship aided them and supported them in their own respective spiritual journeys.

I want to thank them for the enthusiasm they showed—and the courage they displayed in accepting my invitation to "Stand Up and Testify!" Their words were a enormous inspiration to all of us.

And beyond that, I want to publicly thank John Crist, our outgoing

Moderator, for all his leadership in first chairing the Capital Funds Campaign, the Search Committee that brought me here as your pastor, then as Vice Moderator and Moderator for the past four years. We have benefited greatly from his wisdom, passion, and steady discernment—and I have been personally blessed in having him as both a neighbor and a friend.

I want to thank Amy Dunphy who now steps up to a role that will change her—and us!—forever. I call on each of you to support her, encourage her, and pray for her and her family as she daily seeks God's heart in piloting our ship.

Appreciation is expressed also to Ron Burnam who steps into the No. 2 spot. I know Ron to be a sensitive and caring person, with a good head and an even bigger heart.

And to the rest of you who said "Yes!" when called upon, thank YOU for the labor of love you are about to perform in the name of Christ and his Church. May you know the greatest blessing God offers: joy in obedience to his will!

JDH +

Noonday Lenten Recital Series!

The 2010 Lenten Recital Series begins Friday, February 19, at 12:05 p.m.. For six consecutive Fridays outstanding music, followed by a warm bread and hot soup luncheon are offered at the church.

February's program schedule is as follows:

Feb. 19 Barbara Gulick, organist

Feb. 26 Nicole Ficek, violinist and pianist, with Sandy Rabas, pianist

Artists in March include Daisy Eddy (harp), Palma Wolvertson (piano), Karen Poling (piano), and Stephanie Davis (organ). The public is invited. Call 245-6477 for more information!

Older Adult Ministry



**Grief
Education
and Support
Group,
Mondays
at 1:00 p.m.
in the Parlor**

Wow, Donna Forbes! We are so proud you are in our church family! Thank you for the many years of sharing your time, talent, and resources at YAM. WAY TO GO!

Diaconate meets Tuesday, Feb. 9, 7:00 p.m. in the Library. Make sure you mark your calendar for this very important meeting to welcome new Diaconate members, elect a new Chairperson and Secretary, plan our *Second Sunday Lunch* for Feb. 14, and brainstorm service, mission, and ministry ideas for our church and community. If you can't make it, please let me or Jim Harris know.

Prime-timer's (55+) Dinner-time—3rd Thursday of the month. We had a great time at Torres' Mexican Restaurant in January. Feb. 18 we are heading to Bruno's Italian Eatery, meeting at 5:30 p.m. RSVP the church office the day

before. Limited transportation available. Call me if you need a ride!

Prime-timer's (55+) Wine-time—4th Thursday of the month. Wine and hors d'oeuvres from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Feb. 25th Lyla Dyer is our host. Even if you don't drink, you are welcome to share food, faith and fellowship. If you're able to bring an appetizer or a bottle of wine to share, please let the hostess know. And if you're interested in hosting a future Winetime yourself, please call the church and let me know, 245-6477.

Prime-timer's (55+) Studytime—Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in my office. Were you a middle child? An only child? Was your family of origin similar to your partner's? What are the high and low points in your life? How sustaining is your career and your marriage? Was parenting every-

thing it was cracked up to be? These are some of the questions we'll be addressing as we begin a new curriculum called A LIFE IN REVIEW. Study-guides are posted on the Prime-timer's Bulletin Board.

Other important stuff...

We still need a few drivers for Sunday worship. PLEASE consider picking up someone who can no longer drive!

If you would like Holy Communion served to you in your home or apartment, or if you are having surgery or know of someone in the hospital please let Jim or me know. Just call the church. One or both of us would love to come see you.

Teresa Kennedy, LCPC, CT, GC-C
teresa@firstchurchbillings.org

From the Moderator

So many members of our congregation braved the cold and snow to be in church for Sunday services and our 128th Annual Meeting. While the city plows pushed snow into our front parking area, as well as entrances to surrounding parking areas, we were not deterred! Morning services were wonderful and the Annual Meeting was productive and beneficial to the future of our church.

The election of new Board and Committee members brings new and renewed energy to the mission to which we are committed. My thanks to all of you who have agreed to serve our church in these capacities. I look forward to developing and convening a new

Council in February.

The passage of our new budget speaks to our commitment to our various ministries, including our youth, education to all ages, fellowship, worship, mission and outreach. It includes a substantial faith and unpledged income expectation which we must monitor and be intentional in its fulfillment.

Thank you, John Crist, for your leadership and commitment to First Church. You have been a wonderful role model and you leave big shoes to fill. Together, we will continue to move forward, to create and fulfill the goals we set for ourselves, both within and outside our church walls.

Thank you, too, for putting your trust in

me. I endeavor to earn that trust every day.

Amy Dunphy
Moderator

DON'T FORGET!!!

Church Council meets Tuesday, Feb. 16th at 7:00 p.m. in the Library. Council consists of the Executive Committee, all Committee and Board Chairpersons, members-at-large, and the Senior Minister. Once your committee has met and elected a chairperson, please forward the name to the church (245-6477) or me (651-0890).

Church & Society Forum Goes “Artsy”!

The theme for the February through March Adult Ed **CHURCH & SOCIETY FORUM** is *The Arts and the Spiritual Life*. Exploring the questions of “What do you see as the role of art in culture?” and “How does your art inform or enhance your personal spirituality?” we look forward to experiencing examples of local artists’ work or interest, and hearing their reflections on it. The upcoming schedule goes like this:

Feb. 7 Wayne Gustafson, “Touring Our Church’s Artistic Treasures”

Feb. 14 Patricia Vettel Becker, “Christian Artistic Heritage”

Feb. 21 Paul Whiting, “Photography as Spiritual Expression”

Feb. 28 Susan Sommerfeld, “Heavenly Light: Where Does the Inspiration Come From?”

Mar. 7 Youth music, “What Moves Us?—Our Youth and Their Music”

Mar. 14 Candace Forette, Linda Snider, Rhett Moak, “Works in 3 Dimensions: 3

First Church Artists”

Mar. 21 Karen Durphey, “Illuminating Sacred Text”

Mar. 28 NO ADULT FORUM. Palm Sunday Youth Pancake Breakfast

All forums at 10:00 a.m. in the Parlor. Grab a cup of coffee and a donut hole (or two) and join us!

And for other Adult Ed offerings, call the church at 245-6477, or see your *Weekly WORD*.

**SUNDAY 01/31
FORUM:
“Let’s Talk About
Art Museums”
with former
YAM Director
and
Governor’s Award
recipient,
Donna Forbes**

Youth and Young Adult Stuff!

Well, we had a pretty quiet start to 2010 for the youth, but awesome and new stuff on the horizon! The Older Youth ended 2009 with an overnight retreat at the church where we enjoyed dinner and some icebreaker games, and then late-night bowling! We then came back to the church and spent the rest of the evening playing games and watching movies until the sun came up! The Older Youth had planned to go skiing on Jan. 23, but due to weather we had to postpone that trip. Instead, we did an impromptu sledding excursion at Pioneer Park and then enjoyed hot cocoa, cookies, and games at one youth’s house afterward!

The Younger Youth have started a new series this month called *Build A Better World*. The curriculum is put out by the Church World Service and allows them to travel around the globe and learn how other children live. This month we are journeying to Ghana and learning about how they raise rabbits for food and money. Come check out the bulletin board outside the Library to see what they have learned. They have also made rabbit cookies to sell to make money for the rabbit fund through CWS. Ask any one of

the Younger Youth to tell you about the rabbit project! I’m sure they will be happy to share!

The Older Youth plan to make up the Ski Trip Mar. 20, but in the meantime they will be participating in the Conference Youth Retreat in



**Kimie’s office
after youth makeover**

Bozeman Feb. 19-21. We will also go ice skating on Feb. 27! In addition, the OY will be holding soup bowls in the Narthex as you leave church on Feb. 7 for **SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY**. All money gathered will go to the local Food Bank!

We will also be starting Confirmation for those youth who are 8th Grade and up. We will again be doing the mentor program. So if you have a youth going through Confirmation, or if you are an adult interested in being a mentor, please let me know! Call the church at 245-6477.

There will also be a Young Adult group starting Feb. 28 for all of you who are 18-35ish! We will meet the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month from 6-8:00 p.m. Again, see me for more info.

Of course, both youth groups will continue to meet every Wednesday night and the OY will continue to *Journey to Starbucks* on Sunday mornings! We still need volunteers to cook dinner for the youth on Wednesday nights for March through May. Please let me know if you can help out. And remember to check the calendar on my office door for more upcoming events as they are planned!

Kimie :-)
kimie@firstchurchbillings.org



Mayflower Circle Feb. 16

The Tuesday, Feb. 16 *Mayflower Circle* program will feature Terry Fettig of **AIDSpirit**

Montana. He will be sharing how he became involved in **Lifestraws**, a personal,

mobile water-purification tool. In 2000, AIDSpirit looked beyond Montana to Africa in order to focus on children who had HIV/AIDS or who had lost their parents to AIDS. Mr. Fettig realized on his first visit that one of the needs was clean water.

You are invited to the Tuesday program Feb. 16 to hear how Lifestraws is making a big difference in the lives of African people.

The meeting will be at the home of Carol Heald, 1710 Mariposa, and starts at 1:00 p.m. with refreshments. Mr. Fettig's presentation will follow at 1:30 p.m.

If you require more information, or have an interest in coming, please call Jane Jones at 656-4717. Don't miss this inspiring program!

February Liturgists

The word liturgy is from the Latin, *liturgia*, meaning "the work of the people." At every service in our church we ask someone who is non-clergy to be "Liturgist of the Day" and share in leading worship. If you would like to be Liturgist and offer the Call to Worship, read the Old Testament Lesson, and offer the Prayer of

Dedication, please let us know! The February schedule is as follows:

- Feb. 7 Mic Dawson
- Feb. 14 Amy Evangelisti
- Feb. 21 John Smillie
- Feb. 28 Pat Burg



Christian Ed News

"By learning you will teach, by teaching you will learn"—a Latin Proverb.

In a few weeks, the children's Sunday School program will begin a new rotation and new teachers are needed! No experience is required; the curriculum is great and easy to use. The lessons are laid out clearly and tell you everything you need to know. Additionally, the children are friendly and eager to learn! It's a wonderful way to interact with young people in the church, to have fun, and to learn something as well. The commitment is just for 4 to 6 weeks. Please let me know if you might be interested!

Also...

NOW is the time to offer your ideas re-

garding new Christian Ed programming that goes beyond Sunday School. For example, Adult Ed program planning for the fall will



Kim leading a planning session at 2009 Staff Retreat

soon be underway! If you have ideas for a class or gathering, proposals for a theme or book to study, or thoughts about a spiritual need that is being unmet by current CE

programming, NOW is the time to make your suggestions known. Maybe it's a group to focus on scripture study or spiritual disciplines, or something about parenting for young families—all ideas as welcome! Beginning in late February, small gatherings will be held following worship to provide you with an opportunity to voice your opinion. Watch for more information on this, coming soon.

Kim Woeste
Associate Pastor/
Christian Education & Mission
rev_kim@firstchurchbillings.org



Memorial Gift

Important Dates in February

- Personnel Committee meets, Feb. 2, 5:15 p.m.
- CE Committee meets, Feb. 2, 7:00 p.m.
- Kimmie @ National Outdoor Ministries Workshop, Moon Beach, WI, Feb. 3-5
- *Super Bowl Sunday*, Feb. 7—Older Youth and Boy Scout Troop #2 collecting donations for the Food Bank
- Diaconate meets, 7:00 p.m.
- Outreach Committee meets, 7:00 p.m.
- *Second Sunday Lunch* hosted by Diaconate, Feb. 14
- Church Council meets, Feb. 16
- *Ash Wednesday Service*, Feb. 17, marking the beginning of Lent, 7:00 p.m.
- *Lenten Recital Series* begins, Feb. 19

There is a new piece of furnishing in the Narthex, one you will find opposite the doors at the far west end of the building below the Ralston painting. It is a beautifully constructed stand for the Memorial Book made by Bill Hawk. The stand itself is a memorial gift provided by the family of Helen Diede, longtime member of First who passed in 2008 and whom we dearly miss. If you have a moment, stop by and peruse the book itself, and note the craftsmanship of the stand—then offer a personal word of appreciation to Bob and Phil for making possible this wonderful addition to our church.

The Cultural Criticism Book Group meets every Tuesday for lively discussion and breakfast at 7:00 a.m.

The Spiritual Growth Book Group meets the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month at 7:30 p.m. Call for more info, 245-6477.

Thanks to Carolers, the Church!!!

Following services on Sunday, Dec. 22, any and all were invited to join our own Chancel Choir in spending the remainder of the day visiting our homebound, delivering holiday poinsettias, and caroling familiar Christmas hymns. What followed was an avalanche of THANK YOU cards. We heard from Norm Shorb, who had of course only recently lost Irene, and we heard from others who called to pass on their

deep, deep appreciation. Obviously, we can't pass on everything written, we but did want to share this letter from Gordon and Lila Weber:

Dear Rev. Herron,

The poinsettia plant brought by members of the choir is still in excellent condition. Makes a person think the plant arrived yesterday! What a large choir arrived that filled the hall by our apartment

room. The choir sang several lovely hymns for Gordon and me (Lila). We are very grateful. Again, many thanks for the beautiful plant.

*Our love,
Lila & Gordon Weber*

Making some else's day—it's what ministry in the name of Christ is all about!

Hold in Your Prayers

As is often the case in a church our size, there are many people struggling, grieving, recovering, hurting, searching for employment, hungry for hope. The book of James says, "Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. [For] the prayer of faith will save the sick..." (Jas. 5:13-15a, NRSV).

Each week in the bulletin we list those who have requested prayer, that as a community we might lift them up. Others, not wishing that their names be recorded,

also call and ask for prayer privately from one of our staff. If you or a family member is hurting, we want to surround you with prayer and do what we can to make you feel the presence of God in your life. Don't be afraid. It is never the weak who seek God's face and God's heart; we who pray are rather those made strong by time on our knees! Prayer is never our preparation to do battle with darkness—however it might be manifested in our lives; a spirit which prays is the truest sign that we have secured victory over that darkness, and feel empowered to be God's light and love no matter what difficulty presents itself. So pray! Pray for yourself, for our staff, and all those you know who need the Spirit's touch in their lives.



**"God, in your mercy...
Hear our prayer!"**



Entertain
well—
and often!

“Too many
people have just
enough religion
to make them
hate—and not
enough to make
them love.”

-Jonathan Swift

Teresa's Crockpot Reuben Dip

This is the delicious dip Teresa Kennedy served at the Prime-timer's (55+) Wine-time last fall. She suggests doubling, or even tripling, the recipe if entertaining!

Ingredients

1 lb. Carl Buddig packaged corned beef, diced
1/2 c. Thousand Island dressing

1/4 c. Miracle Whip
1 can sauerkraut, well-drained
1 lb. Swiss cheese, diced

Directions

Mix ingredients in a crockpot. Heat on low all day. Serve with party rye bread or rye crackers. Makes about 10 servings.

Do you have a favorite family recipe you're willing to share? Send it to us and our staff will be happy to prepare some and sample it before each *Congregationalist* is mailed! That's our commitment to you. (It's the LEAST we can do!).

Faith into Action!

We are heirs of God's good creation where there is abundance for all. At the Communion Table, we enact what God has intended from the beginning, that we live as companions (*com* and *panis*, those who share bread together) throughout our earthly existence. When this vision of goodness is broken, there are many who are excluded or denied participation in the created abundance.

As a downtown church, we see it all, the abundance and the brokenness. We have reached out to homeless families through IHN, providing hospitality to some of the neediest in our community. We have helped create housing, contributed to the food bank, support various neighborhood programs and other worthy causes. As we explore ways to carry our outreach further, we remember that Jesus' acts of feeding, healing, caring and outreach not only provided charitable relief, but brought each beloved Child of God into a companionship of equals.

Through each loving act, Jesus challenged the social, economic, religious and political codes of his day. Jesus' vision of neighbor-love that sees each person as a precious and necessary part of creation challenges us to be open to his reconciling love.

This year, we have an opportunity to consider joining with others across the state to work toward creating a more responsive community. Since last January, an assortment of churches, labor and civic groups has been meeting to explore the possibility of joining

together to address selected issues of common concern. These institutions hope to develop leadership, deepen relationships within each member institution and between them, with a goal of identifying and acting on issues related to economic, racial and social justice that are beyond the capacity of a single institution to address. Along with the Montana Association of Churches (MAC), which is one of the bodies considering membership, this entity would include interfaith and non-affiliated members. Those bodies would canvass their own members to identify their own pressing issues, and then choose something that participating groups mutually lift up as a concern for action.

Over the next months, we will be learning more about the proposed organization. This opportunity invites us to take a deeper step into relationship with each other and with those who feel excluded through working together to change the conditions that separate us. I hope that you will take the time to participate in events and share those issues you care most deeply about as we live into new possibilities. There will be a presentation to Council in late spring, and a request for full congregational response at the next Annual Meeting (2011).

Karen Hyvonen

First Church representative to the
Montana Organizing Project Steering Committee

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| | 1 Susan Betz | 2 Sheryl Costanzo | 3 | 4 Lisa Chapman Lisa Kemmick | 5 Joan Hughes Cameron Ostermiller | 6 Marcy Brown Dazalyn Degges |
| 7 | 8 Keith Bjornson | 9 Dawn Chapman Ashley Howland Bill Howland Craig Lancaster | 10 Harry Andersen Rose Poppler | 11 | 12 Ken Brown Jorion Lokken Dick Stratford | 13 Amy Evangelisti Maybelle Reichenbach Terri Smith |
| 14 Lorraine Armstrong Elvera Burnham Rev. Henry Schneider | 15 Alice Lundgren | 16 Christy Jaeger Norman Shorb | 17 | 18 Lily Harris | 19 | 20 Harry Knodel |
| 21 Jase Norsworthy Alice Roberts Ava Shearer | 22 John Burg Lyla Dyer Laura Mellor | 23 Ron Burnam | 24 Virginia Montague | 25 Steve Plaggemeyer | 26 Charlie Beck Dorothy Florey David Solberg | 27 Henry Crist Tiffany Degges Sydney Emond |
| 28 Finnian Bentler Morris Irion Cindy Krieger | *And Nancy Ford gets to skip another year added on because she was born on Feb. 29! | | | | | |

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**First Congregational
United Church of Christ (UCC)**

*Theologically progressive, radically inclusive,
committed to justice!*

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**An “Open & Affirming/Peace with
Justice” Church**

Our Staff

Rev. James D. Herron, Sr. Minister
Rev. Kim Woeste, Assoc. Min. Education/Miss.
Teresa Kennedy, Pastoral Care Associate
Kimmie Harris, Youth/Young Adults
Laura Blodgett, Chancel Choir
Jo Lokken, Melody Choir
Barbara Dobesh, Organist/Pianist
Steve Plaggemeyer, Assis. Organ/Piano
Susan Ogden, Parish Nurse
Jan Duffy, Bookkeeping
Charlie Beck, Office Administrator

Our Ministers

Every member of the congregation!



Your February *Congregationalist* is here!

This issue of the *Congregationalist* is sponsored by Dorothy and Dick Stratford, in loving memory of Craig Alexander, b. 02/03/67 d. 10/30/09.



**The Burnams at the
125th Anniversary Dinner in 2007**

The Billings *Congregationalist* (USPS) 056-160
Published Monthly
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (UCC)
310 North 27th Street
Billings, MT 59101-1292
Periodicals Postage: Paid at Billings, MT
POSTMASTER: Send changes to above address