

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST (UCC)

SPECIAL POINTS OF
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THE *Congregationalist*

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From the Moderator: Mic Dawson

Advent – A Time of Preparation for New Beginnings

The theme for our Stewardship drive this year was Extravagant Hope – the notion that God has plans for us greater than we can imagine. Advent begins this week, the season in which we contemplate Peace, Love, Joy and Hope.

The dictionary defines hope as trust and resilience. Extravagant hope, trust and resilience, peace, joy and love – all will be required as we move forward in moving our church to new beginnings

Please plan to attend the all church meeting after church on Dec. 13th to hear Ed Gulick's excellent and hopeful plan for our church. I believe you will find all the Advent attributes in the presentation and discussion.

Annual Reports Due December 17th.

2016 is just around the corner and those Annual Reports are coming due!!! The Annual Meeting will be January 24 or 31, but reports are due in by December 17 so that they can be compiled and reports available for members/friends on Sunday, Jan. 17. If you do not have your report in by then it may be left out of the annual report booklet. Hope you all have a good holiday. Please submit all annual reports in a word document to firstchurch@firstchurchbillings.org. Hope you all have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!

AdventFest December 4-6

Friday, December 4, 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. Art Walk

The Church will display Northern Cheyenne artist Alaina Buffalo Spirit's Ledger art Titled Through a Cheyenne woman's eyes . She will give a talk about her art at 7:00 pm. There will be snacks and beverages along with music from the Quint Essentials. The art will be on display through January.

Sunday, December 6, Noon – 2:00 p.m. Festival of Giving & Sweets Bazaar

This is an expanded version of the former Alternative Christmas Fair and organized by the Board of Outreach. In addition to opportunities to give to those agencies we support there will be music, games, activities for children, and a food court in the Fellowship Hall.

Time With Teresa

- **"There's nothing sadder in this world than to awake Christmas morning and not be a child." - Erma Bombeck**

"He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'" Matthew 18:2-4 (NIV)

Is there anything more exciting than being a child on Christmas morning? And yet this is what God asks of us each day, to change and become like little children. Not just on Christmas, but each day approaching God our Father, God our Mother as a child, with excited anticipation of his goodness, humbly trusting him that every need will be met and every care will be under his control. Merry Christmas! Enjoy Christmas like a child! May His Spirit Fall Afresh on you - Teresa

- ANNUAL ADVENT service at West Park retirement. December 10th at 2:00pm. Refreshments provided.
- **Worship opportunity at West Park Saturday 12/03 @ 2:00 pm. We have begun a new worship service at West Park every month at 2:00pm with Holy Communion. Join me Dec. 3rd in the Lower Level in the Chapel. If you would like to provide music or participate in worship, or help serving communion, let me know. All are welcome!**
- GRIEF EDUCATION AND SUPPORT GROUP MONDAY'S @ 4:00pm @ Conference Office. All are welcome. No charge.
- ***Primetimer's Studytime~ Sunday mornings @ 10:00 in Teresa's office.*** Curriculum focus is what God would want for us as we pass from middle-age towards the final quarter of our lives, according to scripture references.
- ***Primetimer's Dinnertime~ MERRY CHRISTMAS!***
- ***Primetimer's Winetime~ MERRY CHRISTMAS!***
- **PRAYER CONCERNS:** For the family of Michael Brown (Barbara Dobesh's nephew). For those facing change of address, grieving, with financial concerns. We pray for the Church, Staff, and Leadership. We pray for peace, and for the people of Paris.
- **Our Prayer Chain can always use more prayers! Call Bonnie Conn 373-6740 if you would like to be a prayer or to request prayers for someone.**
- Home Communion-If you would like to share communion in your home, please let Pastor Teresa or the Rev. Mike know. We'd love to see you!
- *Home-Bound? Need A RIDE? It's SUPER easy to use our Transportation Ministry. A cabbie will show up just when you request~ Please call the church office to get a voucher. Suggested rides: Church, Primetimer events, funerals, doctor, senior lunch program? HOME-BOUND Older Adult Primetimer's 55+) only.*

Christmas Eve Music: An Offering from the Whole Congregation

Rev. Mulberry is asking for anyone and everyone who would like to offer music before the Christmas Eve service to contact the church office. Solos, duets, trios, voices, piano players, guitarists, or any other offerings. There is no age limit. Please let him know by Wednesday, December 16, if you or someone in your family would like to play or sing. We would love to have a wide variety of voices and instruments. Please limit selections to one piece. The only other guideline is that the piece have meaning you would like to share with the congregation.

Rev. Michael Mulberry, Sr. Minister

Sunday, December 13, is a big day in our church. After worship, we will hold a congregational meeting to determine what may be a radical new step in our ministry together.

Our church building is, functionally, our bones. We may supply the sinew, muscle, and skin, but our church building has historically provided the central location and launching point for our mission and ministry.

And our bones are aging. For many of us, we know what it means to experience the pain and torment of rheumatoid arthritis or osteoporosis. Parts of our body that once functioned well and helped us to accomplish many things now become unusable or so painful to the point where our body feels like it becomes an albatross. To continue the metaphor, we have an incredible space that has now fallen into a state of disrepair. Many of our rooms are unusable. Other rooms lie dormant or empty for a good portion of the time. One congregational member showed me how our outdoor railings are just waiting for a good lawsuit.

The proposal Ed Gulick will put before us will require an initial investment so that we might discern how we, as a community of people, might go forward. Ed was a little worried that his involvement in High Plains Architecture might make it appear to be self-serving. I almost laughed at him. Ed is such a naturally humble, modest, and giving person that I never had any worries about that. I came out of the recent Northern Plains Resource Council annual meeting and felt like I had been to church—energized, hopeful, and confident of God's work in the world.

Ed has presented this proposal before Church Council twice and electrified us with excitement each time.

We are a spiritually powerful church. I think, however, we need to “re-boot” or as Rev. Marc Stewart related in one of his epistles, “re-purpose” our bones. Downtown Billings is coming alive with activity and hum. I believe the proposal Ed Gulick will put before us will sharpen and hone our mission and ministry. I hope you all will be there to listen, ask questions, and discern next steps for our life and ministry.

Open House at the Heilman-Mulberry Home!

Open House at the Heilman-Mulberry Household

Saturday, December 12, 3:00-7:00 p.m.; 1241 Avenue F

Revs. Tracy Heilman and Mike Mulberry would like to invite you to an Open House at the Heilman-Mulberry Household as a way to give thanks to the congregations we serve for supporting and loving us over the course of this past year. We had a great turnout last year and loved seeing all of the joy and conversation shared with so many people we care about and who care about us.

Youth and Young Adults

We've had a productive month of November! The older youth put together and planned Youth Sunday to share what they did on their mission trip to Monterey Bay, California last summer and shared it with both congregations this past month! Be looking for more from all of them as they share their thoughts on their time spent on the mission trip through here, weekly emails and Facebook! We will also offer more pictures in the narthex in the future. We have a very busy month of December coming up! The Younger Youth group will be learning about and doing craft projects around the birth of Jesus and we will also be making goodies for our homebound friends and sandwiches for the HUB. We will also be having our Christmas party at our meeting on 16. **The older youth are busy working on rehearsing for their big fundraiser in January which is a 12th night feast, January 10th at 5:30 pm in Fellowship Hall! Be looking for the Lord and Lady to be making announcements in church in the coming weeks!!** As the holidays approach we also have quite a few mission projects we are helping with around town. On Dec. 12 we will be helping with the Salvation Army Bell Ringing at Hobby Lobby. On the evening of December 14 we will be helping out with Dress A Child at K-mart and on December 19 we will be helping out at the Food Bank. The older youth also have a our Sweets Bazaar fundraiser at First Church on December 6 from noon-2! Please feel free to donate baked goods for us to sell, or come and visit us and buy up some yummy goodies for the holidays!!

The older youth will have their mystery event on December 20 at 5-7 pm. We will meet at First Church around 4:45. The Clue is **Dress to the Nines and Come to Dine!** Cost is \$10/person and they will need to RSVP no later than Friday, December 18! To round out the month and year the older youth will be having their annual overnight retreat on Tuesday, December 29. We will be going ice skating that evening along with some other surprise activities! The cost is \$20/person. Please RSVP by Sunday, December 27. The younger youth will be going to a movie the afternoon of December 31. Movie and time TBA.

We have had great monthly Family Fun Nights! In November we enjoyed an evening of painting at In Good Glazes! This month on December 11 we will be taking the trolley around town to look at Christmas Lights while enjoying hot chocolate and Christmas goodies! The cost is \$10/adult and \$5/child under 12. Space is very limited so please RSVP to Kim asap, but no later than Wednesday, December 9!

Christmas Poinsettias

We are selling poinsettias again this year that will also be used for decorating the Sanctuary, there is a sign up sheet in the Narthex to purchase Christmas Poinsettias that will adorn the alter. The price is \$15.00 the last day to purchase them will be Thursday December 17, there will be signup sheets in the narthex and it will be announced during worship. There are several different reasons to purchase one; in memory of a loved one, to celebrate the Christmas season, or to wish the whole congregation a Merry Christmas. Please don't forget to take your poinsettia home after worship to enjoy them throughout the holiday season. The Poinsettias were purchased and grown locally from the Will James School.



All Church Meeting Sunday December 13

Important Dates This December

- 12/3 Classical Guitar Concert, 7 pm
- 12/4 Billings Art Walk 5-9 pm
- 12/6 Alternative Christmas Fair following worship.
- 12/10 Advent service at Westpark retirement, 2:00 pm.
- 12-15 Council Meeting 7:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall
- 12/17 Mayflower Circle Meeting~ First Church
- 12/20 Children's Program
- 12/21 Longest Night Service, 7 pm
- 12/24 Christmas Eve Service, 7:00 pm
- 12/25 Christmas Office Closed
- 12/25-1/1 Office Closed, Breanna back in office January 4.

All Church Meeting-Sunday, December 13, after worship

The Emergent Church—A Vision for the Future

Church Council has called an all-church meeting for Sunday, December 13, right after worship. Ed Gulick will present a vision for the future of our church. Ed's presentation to Church Council led to excitement about the possibilities for the future of our church building, our congregation, and how we might join with the rest of downtown Billings in a rejuvenation of church life and ministry. Please plan to attend as this vision will entail an initial discernment process that requires high investment from our church. We need your voice and collective wisdom to make the best decision for our future.



Family Promise Holiday Party: Saturday, December 12th, 1-4pm American Lutheran Church, 9 Lewis Avenue

Donations Needed:

- Children's books
- \$25 Walmart Cards
- \$25 Gas Cards
- Holiday Decorations (for families to take with them)
- Parent Gifts (for kids to shop for: lotions, jewelry, knickknacks, grooming supplies,.)
- Plain sugar cookies, frosting, sprinkles (for cookie decorating)
- Glue guns, craft supplies, glue sticks, crayons, construction paper (for ornament making)
- Wrapping paper, tape, scissors, bows (for present wrapping station)
- Picture frames, picture printer, photo paper (for Pictures with Santa)

Volunteers Needed At Holiday Party:

- Cookie Decorating Table (4 volunteers: Two Tables)
- Crafts (Ornaments) Making Table (4 volunteers: Two Tables)
- Teen Helpers (10-15 volunteers)
- Present Wrapping Table (2 volunteers)
- Shopping Helpers (2 volunteers)

- Picture taking and framing (2 volunteers)

Last year our church was not well represented at the Family Promise Holiday Party. I'm hoping to see more of you there this year. I'll be there. I'll be glad to see you. We'll talk. We'll have lunch and talk. We'll hang out with people from all over town.

Was the party last year a lot of fun? Well, I'll tell you a little.

I wanted to assure you it wasn't, but it did make me feel pretty good. A bunch of us gathered around a piano and sang carols in harmony. Chanted, really. The food was the usual church lunch fare, cold cuts on white bread, potato chips, red punch. Green Jello. Pretty humble. Prior to eating we gathered in a room something like our fellowship hall and helped children pick out and wrap gifts for their family members. The kids I helped did a worse job wrapping than I almost always do. That's because I didn't do it for them. I did help them by handing them things and making suggestions.

Family Promise week dates for 2016

January 31 to February 6, May 1 to 7, July 31 to August 6, and October 30 to November 5



“For to us a
child is born, to
us a son is given;
and the
government
shall
be upon his
shoulder, and
his name shall
be called
Wonder-
ful Counselor,
Mighty
God, Everlasting
Father, Prince
of Peace.”
Isaiah 9:6

Mayflower Circle

Mayflower Circle will meet December 15, 2015 at Billings First Church. The meeting begins at 1:00 pm. Program to be announced. Guests are always welcome and you are encouraged to bring a friend. Call Myrle Theimer at 245-3650 with questions.

ALERT: Change

Mayflower Circle Bazaar will happen as scheduled. Just one change.

The bazaar will be held at Mayflower Church from 9:00 to 2:00 on December 5th. The church is on the corner of Poly Dive and Rehberg Lane.

This is how we raise the money that we give to many profit free organizations in Billings. Please come! There is plenty of parking! You will find lots of goodies and hand crafted items to help with your Christmas shopping or your own pleasure.

The Christmas Fund Offering

Each year we receive an offering on the Sunday before Christmas for the Christmas Fund, a ministry of the UCC Pension Boards. This offering provides direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas thank-you checks. This is especially helpful to those who have served or who are serving small churches where salaries are low. We will receive this offering on December 20.

Spiritual Director-In-Residence

FOR WISE WOMEN ONLY! In Matthew’s Gospel we find the familiar story of the Wise Men coming from afar to present their gifts to the baby Jesus, arriving on January 6, Epiphany, the day after the twelve days of Christmas. Combined with Luke’s story of the Adoration of the Shepherds we have the basic elements of which Christmas pageants are made. There is a custom, rooted in Ireland, of celebrating Epiphany as Women’s Christmas. Called *Nollaig na mBan* in Irish, Women’s Christmas originated as a day when the women, who often carried the domestic responsibilities all year, took Epiphany as an occasion to celebrate together at the end of the holidays.

SAVE THE DATE AND INVITE YOUR FRIENDS! On Wednesday, January 6, 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. we women of wisdom will celebrate Women’s Christmas at the Illuminated Labyrinth in Fellowship Hall and with light refreshments in the Narthex around the theme of threshold. As we step into a new year, a new stage of life, a new job, a new spiritual practice, a new diet, a new place, or a new way of “knowing,” we’ll cross the threshold and walk the labyrinth for ourselves or for another woman in our lives and then celebrate with friends what our wisdom walk has revealed to us. More in the January [Congregationalist](#).

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Scott Mitchell	2 Eliza Bentler Margaret Cunningham	3 Cookie Coats	4 Marjorie Fulton Irene Moore Dave Shearer Richie Moodie Tom Tully	5 Laura Blodgett
6 Aldeu Jaeger Brian Andersen	7 Adrian Wegner	8 Maggie Dunphy	9 Judith Burnam	10	11 Doris Andersen Caitlin Bailey	12 Bryan Mitchell
13 Bonnie Conn	14 David Elison	15 Thelma Hamby	16 Dennis Duffy	17	18	19 Lorene Keefe
20 Wilma Reich	21	22 Doug Andersen Jean Grocholski	23 Siri Smillie Jay Montague	24	25 Don Meseberg	26
27	28 Zackary Degges	29 Patricia Selover Sue Stanaway	30 Herbert Mangis Daren Stanaway	31 Dorothy Stratford		

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Billings First Church

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. Michael Mulberry, Senior Minister
Teresa Kennedy, Pastoral Care Associate
Kimmie Harris, Youth/Young Adults
Laura Blodgett, Chancel Choir
Jo Lokken, Melody Choir
Barbara Dobesh, Organist/Pianist
Steve Plaggemeyer, Assistant Organ/Piano
Susan Ogden, Parish Nurse
Jan Duffy, Bookkeeping
Breanna Rolandson, Administrative Assistant
Barbara Gulick, Spiritual Director-In-Residence

Our Ministers

Every member of the congregation!



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Worship ~ December

Second Sunday of Advent (St. Nicholas Day)~ December 6

Zechariah and the Children of Promise Sunday

The Advent Worship Team continues its good work through our Advent season. The great string group that Julie Solberg is a part of, "Quintessentials", will be supplying our Prelude music for that day. Rumor has it that there may be a sighting of St. Nicholas as well. The Melody Choir joins us to sing, "Bugs for Lunch!"

Third Sunday of Advent~ December 13

The Marginal People Sunday

We remember those people who cry out far away from the political, economic, and religious power centers. The gospel is clear about the matrix in which people find themselves.

Fourth Sunday of Advent~ December 20

Sunday School Christmas Pageant

The Christmas story retold by our children and youth!

Longest Night Service (Blue Christmas)~ Monday, December 21, 7:00 p.m.

On the longest night of the calendar year, we remember those who do not always experience the Christmas season as a time of great joy and love. Difficult and haunting memories, family markers of grief and pain, or just a general depression are real and must be affirmed. We come together to hold one another's hand during a season when it can be difficult for many people.

Christmas Eve~ Thursday~ December 24, Music begins at 6:30 p.m., Worship begins at 7:00 p.m.

Come to hear the musical offerings of people from our church and stay for the tradition, beauty, and story of lessons and carols.

First Sunday of Christmas~ December 27

Faith Formation on Sundays

Sunday, December 3, Intergenerational Sunday

Adult Forum remaining Sundays in December, 10:00 a.m., Parlor

Eclipsing Empire, facilitated by Walt Gulick

Join preeminent New Testament scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan on location in Turkey as they trace the Apostle Paul's footsteps throughout the Roman Empire. This 12-session DVD and web-based study explores fresh insights into Paul's message of the Kingdom of God, its challenge to Roman imperial theology, and the apostle's radical relevance for today.

The Jesus Seminar ~ January 8-9 2016

Reserve January 8-9, 2016!

The Jesus Seminar is coming to Billings First!

The Ethics of Paul: Bernard Brandon Scott and Art Dewey

Paul is being re-discovered as the radical egalitarian, anti-imperialist he was. As scholars recognize that much of the material attributed to Paul was not actually from his own pen, we begin to see how strongly Jewish and how anti-establishment Paul truly is. Come to hear two pre-eminent Christian scholars from the Jesus Seminar as they “unearth” the ethics of Paul.

The cost will be \$75 total for lectures on Friday evening, two on Saturday morning, and a lecture and Q & A on Saturday afternoon. This is a great opportunity to learn about the latest in Biblical scholarship. Costs for separate lectures may be designated at a later time.

Bernard Brandon Scott is the author and editor of many books, including *The Real Paul: Recovering His Radical Challenge* (2015!) and *The Trouble with Resurrection*. A charter member of the Jesus Seminar, he is chair of Westar’s newly established [Christianity Seminar](#). He served as chair of the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media Section of the Society of Biblical Literature, as well as a member of several SBL Seminars including the Parable Seminar and Historical Jesus Seminar. He holds an A.B. from St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, an M.A. from Miami University, and a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University.



Arthur J. Dewey is a distinguished teacher, writer, translator and commentator. He is co-founder of the Healing Deadly Memories Program, a unique project that conducts workshops on how to deal with the question of anti-Semitism in the New Testament. A specialist on the historical Jesus and the Gospels, he has also taught and written extensively on Paul, the Gospel of Peter, the Gospel of Thomas, the Acts of John, and on the oral, written and electronic gospel. He served as co-chair of the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media Group of the Society of Biblical Literature and was the recipient of a Wheeler Grant for investigating and reporting on Religion in the Media, a seminar surveying the use and abuse of religion in print journalism. His poetry has appeared in the Christian Century. His poetic perspective, on the Saturday Morning Edition, has been heard for over a dozen years on the Public Radio Station WVXU (91.7) in Cincinnati.



Blessings in Gratitude

Sunday, November 29, a day filled with being “church”. Thanks so much to the Just Eating? group and Donna Forbes for a wonderful event on Sunday. There was a tremendous amount of work put into a great experience for the entire congregation. The Just Eating? Group is Virginia Bryan, Susan Ogden, Emma Kerr-Carpenter, Janet Hawk, Barbara Gulick, and Lyla Dyer. Through their study and faithful practice they lifted all of us up on Sunday.

Thanks also to the Advent Worship Team for a beautiful service on Sunday and their continuing practice. Thanks to Cody Solberg, Dan Struckman, Janet Hawk, Tom Tollefson, Julie Solberg, Clair Howard, and Sophia Heilman. Thanks also to John Smillie for stepping in with his gifts as a musician and a leader and to Laura Blodgett and Barbara Dobesh for rolling with the musical punches as we figure all of this out.

It truly was a magical day through the gifts of so many people!