

FIRST  
CONGREGATIONAL  
UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST (UCC)

SPECIAL POINTS OF  
INTEREST:

- Worship Highlights
- Annual Reports
- Christmas Fund Offering
- Christmas Poinsettias
- Christmas Music
- Christmas Eve & Day Services

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# THE *Congregationalist*

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## Festival of Giving Dec. 11 10am-1pm

### **In the Narthex:**

Youth Sweets and Savories Bazaar. Bring a sweet and/or savory for the youth to sell to raise funds for their 2017 Mission Trip.

Mayflower Circle will be offering a variety of items for sale to fund their gifts to church and community, including baked items and their signature Bean Soup mix.

Festival Cafe: Enjoy a cup of coffee while sampling your purchase of edibles!

### **In the Parlor:**

Global Village will be offering a large variety of free trade gift items for all ages. Your Global Village purchase will benefit the crafters, mostly women, so that they are able to feed their families and provide for their children's education.

### **in the Library:**

Alternative Christmas Fair. Tired of Christmas consumerism? Consider making a donation to the organizations selected by the Board of Outreach to honor those special persons in our lives who are beyond needing or wanting "stuff." One tax-deductible check to First Congregational UCC covers all donations. Participating in our Alternative Christmas Fair are:

Family Promise, both Family Promise of Yellowstone Valley and Family Promise—First Congregational UCC.

Habitat for Humanity, both Habitat International and Habitat for Humanity Mid Yellowstone Valley.

Heifer Project International. Buy a shares of plants and animals that will benefit persons and impact communities around the world.

HEPAC, Home of Hope and Peace whose mission is to create a healthy community in Nogales, Mexico where citizens do not feel that their only choice for survival is to risk their lives in the desert in an attempt to immigrate to the United States. An important part of our Youth Mission Trip 2016. Craft items can also be ordered.

Spare Change for Real Change, a Community Innovations program to curb transiency and public intoxication issues and better serve our city's most vulnerable citizens.

## Annual Reports Due December 16th

2017 is just around the corner and those Annual Reports are coming due!!! The Annual Meeting will be January 22 or 29, but reports are due in by December 16 so that they can be compiled and reports available for members/friends on Sunday, Jan. 15. 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](mailto:firstchurch@firstchurchbillings.org) Hope you all have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!

## Advent Wreath. Rev Michael Mulberry

Liturgically, Advent wreaths remind us of the alternative rhythms of Advent. Christian faith is really not about hope. At the time of Jesus of Nazareth, all hope was lost. There was not going to be a time when the Jewish people gave thought to a Roman official or someone serving as a client king would be more humane, more just, or more righteous in their behavior. The system was rotten to its core. It was a hope against hope--that God was active and moving and creating transformation in the womb of night.

Our church is a little bit different when it comes to the color of the Advent candles. We use a dark purple to recognize the world at two minutes to midnight. Hope is not even on the horizon. Hope is not a good thing because to get hopes up is to believe that Caesar or Herod will somehow relent when all of their interests are served through wickedness and cruelty. No, God's hope is found among the forgotten and obscure, the economically poor and destitute.

So make sure to look at the sky at dawn or the night sky at sunset to see all of these colors. We see no light but recognize that transformation is taking place next week. We see a dark blue. Then the sky moves to light blue. Finally, to rose. God is at work. Transformation is taking place. A new day is dawning.

"Everything is gonna' be changin' over. Where you gonna' be standin' when it comes?"

The circle of the wreath symbolizes God's love which has no beginning or end. Evergreen braches symbolize everlasting life—green, even in the midst of the cold of winter. To make a simple wreath: Place evergreen sprigs in the circle so that they overlap; wrap string or twine around them, in a spiral to hold them in place. Arrange the candles consecutively to represent the four Sundays: hope, peace, joy, and love—dark purple, dark blue, powder blue, rose, with a white candle in the center.

## A Family In Need

There is a family in our community who came to our church asking about Christmas presents for our family. I agreed to put their needs before our church community. If you are willing to purchase and wrap any of these gifts for this family, please let me know ([revmikemul@firstchurchbillings.org](mailto:revmikemul@firstchurchbillings.org)). They have two boys, ages 9 and 15. Here are the things listed for each:

### 9 year-old

Blacksmith

Star Wars Legos

Star Wars figurines

Socks

Boxers—medium

### 15-year old

Size 16 shoe

Box of Airheads

New large backpack for school

## Announcement Policy

Mic Dawson, our beloved Moderator, has been asked to give the announcements every Sunday. Mic will either do them or ask someone else to do them. She has asked that all announcements for a given Sunday be sent to her the Wednesday before as a way of making everyone think ahead. We will still have announcements in the bulletin. Oral announcements will be collected and given by Mic. You can write her at her email at ([micdawson646@gmail.com](mailto:micdawson646@gmail.com)). Thanks to Mic for her willingness to do this!

## Gratitude from Rev. Mike

- Thanks to Kay Bartlett for all of her work in going through the membership directory. All of that work helps us keep current and alive as a church.
- Feels like I am saying this every month, but thanks to Bonnie Daniels for organizing Hanging of the Greens and to her accomplice in crime, Brian Bross for helping to make it all happen. Thanks to everyone who came out to help with the Hanging of the Greens. Our building and sanctuary looks wonderfully festive for these holiest of days.
- Thanks to Lisa Harmon and all of the Downtown Billings Alliance for not only their attendance on DBA Sunday but also their continuing partnership with us.
- Thanks to Virginia Bryan and Rev. Barbara Archer for their decorative touch in bringing beauty to our worship altar.
- Thanks to Karen Stainton and Suzie Eades for their leadership with Dash for Cash.
- Thanks to Cheryl Hudson for putting forward her wonderful art work for Art Walk, for the consistent organization done by Edward Barta for our church and everyone else who helps, and to Virginia Bryan for overseeing the whole community event.
- Thanks to Shelly Rumsey for stepping up with the Sunday School and to Kim Harris, Julie Solberg, and Shelly Rumsey for helping out with the Bible presentation liturgy.
- Thanks to an anonymous donor for helping out with a turkey feast for one of our families!
- Thanks to Dan Cohn and Emma Kerr-Carpenter for making the trip to Standing Rock and once again leading out as you do so often.

## Buildings and Grounds

Building and Grounds December Newsletter

Approximately 20 church persons decorated our church building for the Advent season on 26 November. Afterwards we enjoyed a chili lunch in the Fellowship Hall. Please mark your calendar for Advent decorating on 25 November 2017!

Building and Grounds has repaired several piano benches, replaced several bulbs with efficient LED light bulbs and painted! We began painting the two mezzanine level offices in mid-November. Email or text Bonnie (206-619-7152) if you would like to help with painting.

The Downtown Billings Alliance grant, which was awarded in November, the roof insurance money and supplement monies from the Endowment Committee will enable us to replace the sanctuary roof! We have started the process of acquiring updated and new bids. There is much more happening - small and large. If you are a "hands-on" person with a vision for Billings First Church Building and Grounds welcomes you to join us!

Wishing you and yours a blessed Christmas season.

Bonnie Daniels, Chairperson, Building and Grounds

## Youth and Young Adults

- December is shaping up to be another busy month again for the youth. The youth will be helping with the women of Mayflower Christmas bazaar on Saturday, December 3 and will be having their sweet and savory bazaar with the alternative Christmas at First Church on December 11.
- We will be helping with just a child on December 8 and be helping with the food bank service project on the 10th.
- We will have family fun night and older youth mystery event combined on December 11. We will be going to look at Christmas lights on the trolley two different times are available 5:30 to 7 or 7 to 8:30 pm. The cost is \$12 per person and seats are very limited so please RSVP with Kim as soon as possible.
- December 18 both churches will be having their Christmas pageants where the youth will be helping with both.
- On Thursday, December 22 the older youth will be having their Christmas party and overnight retreat. It will start at 6 PM with dinner and gift exchange and then we will be going to the escape room and ice skating at centennial ice arena and then returning back to First Church for a night of games and movies.
- On December 31 the younger and older youth will be going to a movie during the day details about the time and movies will be coming out in the weekly emails and by mail.
- We will have our next 12th night parent meeting on Wednesday, December 7 at 6 o'clock at First Church. I'm still looking for people to provide dinner for the youth on Wednesdays for March, April and May of this year if you're interested please contact Kim!

## 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 altar. The price is \$15.00 the last day to purchase them will be Thursday December 15, 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.



### Important Dates This December

12/2 Art Walk 5pm-9pm  
 12/2-3 Confirmation Youth Retreat  
 12/5 Westpark Christmas Service 3pm  
 12/11 Alternative Christmas Fair  
 12/11 Belissimo Bell Concert 3pm & 5pm  
 12/15 Lee Hancock Concert 7:30pm  
 12-13 Diaconate Meeting 7 pm~ Library  
 12/20 Mayflower Circle 1:30pm~ Conference Office  
 12/20 Church Council 7pm~ Library  
 12/20 Christmas Staff Party 12:30pm  
 12/21 Longest Night Service 7 pm  
 12/24 Christmas Eve Service  
 12/25 Christmas Day Worship 11 am  
 12/26-1/3 Office Closed  
 12/29 Newsletter Due

## Save the Date: December 11

**SAVE THE DATE! Sunday, December 11 - Alternative Christmas Fair & Sweets Bazaar**

## Church Office Hours: Correction

Monday 9:00 am- 12:00 pm

Tuesday 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Wednesday 9:00 am -12:00 pm

Thursday 9:00 am -12:00 pm

Friday 9-noon

Other times Breanna will be out running errands and doing church business. If you need to stop by outside of these hours please call the church an arrange an appointment.



The Family Promise angel tree is decorated with paper angels, made by Penny. Each angel has a tag attached with a teeny tiny clothes pin. Cool huh? Here's what you can do: 1) Take a tag. 2) Purchase the recommended item. Could be a gift card, or some diapers, or some other necessity for a young family. 3) Bring the goodie you bought back to church. If it is a gift card, give it to Bre in the office.

## Christmas Fund Offering

The Christmas Fund Offering will be received on Sunday, December 18. The Christmas Fund 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. A ministry of the Pension Boards, the offering is especially helpful for those retirees who have served small churches.

## Save the Date: Women's Christmas

**SAVE THE DATE!** Women's Christmas on January 6, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Bring friends and a savory or sweet Christmas leftover to share. Labyrinth for "Illuminating the Threshold" of the New Year or personal thresholds in Fellowship Hall. Food and conversation in the Narthex .

## Mayflower Circle

Mayflower Circle will meet at 1:00 on December 20th at the Conference office 2016 Alderson Ave.

Our speaker will be Alice Lyon. Her topic will be The Music of Christmas. In the past, Alice has led our choirs, especially the Children's choirs, to lean and love the glorious music of Christmas.

She will share her love of music with us. All of the women of the church are invited to attend this meeting. For more information or questions, call Gerry Mangis (245-5530) or Myrle Theimer (245-3650)

Mayflower Circle is participating in the Alternative Fair on Sunday, December 11th before and after the worship service. We will again be selling our Bean Soup bags, as well as baked goods, and other gift items. All proceeds will be distributed to the Church and local profit free agencies in Billings.

A member of Mayflower Circle maintains a prayer chain. If you have a family member or friend who is having a hard time with illness or other hardships and would like to know that church members are praying on their behalf, please call the church or Reverend Mike who will arrange that their names are placed on the prayer chain.

## Spiritual Director-In-Residence

I and many others of my acquaintance are deeply troubled by reports of hate crimes and hate speech directed at people of color, the LGBTQ community, women and immigrants after the election of Donald Trump as President. Large populations with whom those of us in the progressive church work alongside and support are in mourning and are scared. The number of persons contemplating suicide has risen dramatically. To an economically secure privileged cisgender white person this may seem strange, but people who have been living with the sting of racism, heterosexism, sexism and the kind of nationalism that wants immigrants to "go home" have known for a long time that this country has a dark and dangerous shadow side.

How do we deal with this reality? When the outer world seems untrustworthy, many people turn their attention to the inward journey and consider how they will nurture their soul. It's a healthy practice, not to be confused with denial or spiritual bypassing (using spirituality to bypass feelings they would rather not have). If you need to take the time and space to process and regroup in the midst of this whirlwind of change, please take it.

You may even need someone to walk alongside of you in the process. Spiritual direction is a safe place to explore feelings of anger, rage, sorrow, distrust, frustration, and powerlessness (what have I omitted?) A spiritual director is trained to deeply listen, holding space in prayer and trust while you let it all out, with no judgment. We won't rage with you (we do that on our own time and with our own spiritual directors), and your rage will not freak us out.

If we think of spiritual direction in larger terms than the practice of sharing your journey with someone trained to listen and pray with you, then this nation is in sore need of a spiritual direction, one that is filled with hope for the future and strength for today.

In peace and hope,  
Barbara Gulick, MRE, DASD

# DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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

**We're now on facebook!**  
 Become a friend of "Billings First"  
 and get important information online and updated daily!

# Billings First Church

## First Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC)

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

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Billings, MT 59101

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An "Open & Affirming/Peace with  
Justice" Church

### Our Staff

**Rev. Michael Mulberry, Senior Minister**

**Kimmie Harris, Youth/Young Adults**

**Laura Blodgett, Chancel Choir**

**Barbara Dobesh, Organist/Pianist**

**Steve Plaggemeyer, Assistant Organ/Piano**

**Maddie Aplert, Melody Choir**

**Brigid Shearer, Nursery Attendant**

**Jan Duffy, Bookkeeping**

**Breanna Rolandson, Administrative Assistant**

**Barbara Gulick, Spiritual Director-In-Residence**

### Our Ministers

**Every member of the congregation!**



[www.firstchurchbillings.org](http://www.firstchurchbillings.org)

**Your December Congregationalist is here!**

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# Longest Night Service December 21 7pm

Longest Night Service~ Wednesday, 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.

For this special service, we ask that you bring a photo of a person, the loss of relationship or connection, or a situation for which you are grieving. During the service, you will be asked to come forward and place these photos on a table that will become a collage of joint grief and pain. Then, if you wish, you might light a votive candle to seek out a way forward with God in what may seem like an impossible situation. You may collect your photo at the end of the service or leave it as a way of letting go. Rev. Mulberry will hold the photos left till after New Year's Day and then dispose of them if you do not return to claim them.

## Worship

- World AIDS Day Interfaith Service Thursday, December 1, 2016  
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church: 180 N. 24th St. West 7:00 p.m.
  
- Second Sunday in Advent~ Dark Blue: Peace December 4, 2016  
Scripture: Isaiah 2:1-5; 11:2-9 "Resilience" Ms. Laura Keating preaching
  
- Advent Service and Communion at Westpark Village Monday, December 5, 2016 3:00 p.m.
  
- Third Sunday of Advent~ Light Blue : Joy December 11, 2016  
Scripture: Isaiah 9:1-7; Matthew 2:1-15a "The Gift of Love"
  
- Fourth Sunday of Advent~ Rose: Love December 18, 2016  
Scripture: Isaiah 12:1-6; Matthew 5:12 "The Shopacolyse Is Upon Us"
  
- Longest Night/Blue Christmas Service Wednesday, December 21, 2016 7:00 p.m.  
Scripture: Job 1:13-20; Isaiah 5:5-7; Matthew 1:23
  
- Christmas Eve Saturday, December 24, 2016  
Service of Lessons and Carols Offering of Musical Gifts 5:00 p.m. Worship 5:30 p.m.
- Christmas Day December 25, 2016 Fellowship Hall~ Dressed in Pajamas!

# Christmas Eve Music

## Christmas Eve Music

We invite anyone who would like to make a musical offering before the Christmas Eve service to call the Church Office so that we might set up a schedule. We are asking each person to limit their offering to two short songs/hymns with short introduction so that everyone's offering is honored.

# Christmas on Sunday!

Christmas Day on Sunday, December 25! Come dressed in pajamas!

Worship will be at 11:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall

This year Christmas Day falls on a Sunday! Many churches will be cancelling their worship services to spend time with friends and family. We say, "Stay in your pajamas, bring your friends and family, and any leftover food you would want to share with the congregation." We will participate in Christmas Mad Libs, sing joyous carols, and maybe even share in a small mission project. Rarely do we get a chance to share in Christmas Day joy as a Christian community. This will be the day! Plan for it on Christmas Day and come join us! I am supposed to get new footie pajamas so I'm looking forward to it!

## Church Directory Update.

We are currently working on updating the church directory and we need your help. WE NEED EVERYONE TO FILL IN THE INFORMATION SO WE CAN MAKE SURE ALL INFORMATION IS CORRECT AND UP-TO-DATE.

**We would appreciate if you would supply us with your email address so that we can add you to the email list to receive the newsletter and weekly emails. Please fill in the information and return to the church. Thank You!**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Family Members:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Numbers:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_