

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF
CHRIST (UCC)

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THE *Congregationalist*

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Rev. Michael S. Mulberry, Sr. Minister

As I remind the children in every children's sermon during this time, we are presently in the liturgical season of Epiphany. Epiphany is the second oldest Christian liturgical season behind Easter. During this season, the Christian church is to remember its focus on mission. As the great American poet and Civil Rights leader, Dr. Howard Thurman related,

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:*

*To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers [and sisters],
To make music in the heart.*

Healthy congregations focus on mission. The theologian Emil Brunner related the inseparable relationship between mission and the church, "The church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning." Out of mission, the church serves its essential purpose. We become people who spend less time anxious and hand-wringing and more aware of God's presence and activity moving in our lives. We become aware of the fire that ignites us. As Rev. Henry Delaney wrote, "I want to get people involved in what we're doing. It's like putting a poker in the fire. After a while, the fire gets in the poker too."

Without a mission, a faith community's responses to the winds of the Spirit end up being random, habitual (It's our tradition!), or meaningless. Congregations with a vision set their sails. And healthy leaders within these congregations are the sailors.

A focus on mission recognizes that all forms of matter strive to organize into relationships. There is a pervasive search for connections. Missions honor this truth. For the congregation is an expression of the search for connected and purpose.

Mission is the expression of the church's deep, abiding beliefs and corresponding actions. Mission statements are one of those ways to set our sails so that our movements are regularly interpreting God's movement. Author Beth Jones suggests that a mission statement should have three characteristics:

The statement is no more than a single sentence long.

The statement is easily understood by a 12-year old.

The statement can be recited at gunpoint.

In healthy congregations, once a mission statement is developed, good leaders help the congregation develop vision. A vision is how the congregation will live out the mission in the future. All healthy relationship systems exist in a creative tension between vision and reality. In healthy congregations, leaders accept this tension. They are not merely problem solvers (driving something out, i.e., "the problem"). Putting something out of existence is not their goal. Leaders want to bring something *into* existence.

In this Epiphany season, this season of mission, what is our mission statement and then the vision which flows out of that statement? And in knowing both of those, where do we see God seeking to bring something into existence? As we install our officers during the first Sunday in February, the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany, we are the ship on the sea and we commission the sailors to help us chart the course.



**“Jesus said to him,
'You shall love the
LORD your God with
all your heart, with
all your soul, and
with all your mind.'
This is the first and
great commandment.
And the second is like
it: 'You shall love
your neighbor as
yourself.'”
Matthew
22:37-39**

Time With Teresa

- Time with Teresa.....The days are staying lighter longer~ The snow storms are further apart. The Transfiguration is coming! May the Spirit fall afresh upon you and your family.
- NEW MEMBER CLASS following worship 3/1, for about 1.5 hours. Lunch provided. Any are welcome.
- NEW MEMBERS JOINING March 8 during worship. If this does not work for you, let the church office. We'll figure something out!
- ASH WEDNESDAY-Ashes on the Run 12:40-1:40. Also, evening service at 7:00pm.
- **Second Sunday Lunch** Feb 8th following worship. If you would like to decorate a birthday table or bring a homemade cake, please call Belle Moore @ 656-3742
- **Diaconate** Next meeting in 2/10/13 7:00pm. Welcome new Deacons! We will need to elect a Moderator. Reminder that we are preparing and sharing a chili supper with the Youth of our church at Mayflower Church@ 6:00pm Wed. 2/11/15. **Anybody in the congregation is welcome to join us in this intergenerational event to get to establish deeper and more meaningful relationships between our youth and the more mature members of our family!**
- **Primetimer's Dinnertime** Thurs. Feb 19th 5:30pm. Gusick's. PLEASE RSVP to Teresa or church office by Feb 18th. All 55 + Older Adults are welcome. Come make some new friends and enjoy a great meal and time of fellowship. We had a blast at Fancy Sushi Asian last month!
- **Primetimer's Winetime** Thurs. Feb. 26th 5:30 pm at the home of Edward Barta and Barbara Gunn. Bring an appetizer to share wine is provided.
- **Primetimer's Studytime_***NOTE** As of February, we will not meet the 1st Sunday of the month. This will allow us the opportunity to participate join in the fun with the Intergenerational Mission Project. There will always be 2 options for folks to choose from, with one option taking place in our building, and one option taking place outside or offsite. These Mission projects typically start at 9:30am. We have asked that all Adult Education classes be part of these Mission projects.
- Teresa will be on vacation 2/22-26, returning to church 3/1. She will be on vacation 3/8-3/12, returning to church 3/15.

Listening Sessions

I am overwhelmed with gratitude for all of those people who were a part of our listening sessions. Your participation helps us to be a stronger congregation. I am especially grateful for the two other people who provided leadership for these sessions. Ann Hanson helped to create an ecosystem of trust, safe space, and mutual respect. As participants, the people who came to share their concerns, questions, and listen carefully followed through on Ann's leading.

Jane Moses listened carefully to group dynamics and helped all of us to listen more carefully to one another. I know there was one moment in the first session where Jane stopped me, and I saw an opening occur where the Spirit moved and breathed and rested in the whole of our conversation.

I am also grateful to Kim Harris, Teresa Kennedy, and Breanna Rolandson for their attendance and attention to our wider staff narrative. Their contributions were invaluable.

Again, thanks to all of those who participated. As I continue to say, I believe only the glories of community can hold such complexity. May our hard work continue to cast health and well-being out onto the waters of our wider community life. And may we continue to listen for and be attentive to God's presence and activity in our common life together.

Lenten Recital Series and Soup Luncheon

Our annual FRIDAY NOON LENTEN RECITAL SERIES will begin on Friday, February 20. Programs are as follows:

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Steve Plaggemeyer, Theatre Organist~
In Fellowship Hall

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Coulson City Clarinet Ensemble:
Maryann Jacobson,
Jolane Jones, Laurel Linde,
and Sheri Rolf

FRIDAY, MARCH 6

Anne Kania, contralto and
Lee Hancock, pianist

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

Mark Souedi, trombonist, and
Sandi Rabas, organist

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

Dr. Fred B. Binckes, organist

FRIDAY, MARCH 27

Palma Wolverton, pianist

Recitals begin at 12:05 in the sanctuary. A soup and bread luncheon will be available following each program in the parlor/library of the church. Soup is catered by Soup and Such. Suggested donation \$5.00.

This is a long-standing program of our church, and well received by music lovers in the community. It happens only because we have musicians from Billings and the surrounding area who are willing to share their talents in a program for which they receive no remuneration. Please remember to thank these performers for their generous gift to us all!

Special thanks also to Breanna, Kim, Steve, and the women of Mayflower Circle, all of whom play a big role in getting everything lined up and set for the Series and lunches to follow. Plus the faithful members of First Church who assist with serving lunch and clean up following each program. We are blessed in this community!

Priority List

Thanks to all of those who are helping our congregation to discern a priority list for capital needs within our congregational life. Breanna tabulated the results and compiled them into a list that now goes before our Church Council to determine a list of 10 items. That list will be used in two ways.

First, if there are people in the congregation who are passionate about one of the items, they are invited to organize around pursuing the purchase of that item for the life of our church. They shall be "Champion" for that item. We ask that you identify with a committee or a board of the congregation and report to that board or committee along with making regular reports to Church Council. Such reporting will not only increase transparency but also may lead to problem solving as a wider group of people contribute potential answers, insights, and contributors. The "Champion" shall also work with the attendant committee and Church Council to identify potential sources of funding.

Second, the list will then be put before the Memorial Committee so that they might develop a subset of items to put before friends and families of loved ones who are trying to discern how they might honor their loved one through gifts or memorials. Once decided, we hope that subset will be shared with all of the local funeral homes so that the family and friends of loved ones can make their gifts and memorials with confidence.

As these lists are published, I ask that you would make them part of wider and wider conversations. I am consistently amazed by someone who reports back to me and says something like, "We have that item. We no longer

Youth and Young Adults

The youth had a slow January as they prepared for finals and a new semester at school! We had a meeting to gauge interest in the Older Youth Mission trip to Monterey, CA to study Eco-justice issues and partner with the aquarium on beach clean ups and trail preservation! We were limited to 16 youth slots and by the end of the meeting we had 18 youth interested in going! The organization generously allowed our group to go over in numbers so we will have 18 youth and 4 adult chaperones heading to Monterey in June! We also began the 7-9 grade Our Whole Lives class with a parent orientation this month! We have 8 Jr. High youth attending the class which began in late January and will continue through March! February looks a little busier for our youth! We start the month with the Sweetheart Dinner on Feb. 8 starting at 5:30 with appetizers and dinner and talent starting at 6. Cost is \$15/person and is held at Mayflower! Come and support our youth and have a wonderful Italian themed evening! Our Jr. High OWL class continues to meet throughout this month and Kim and Ann Hansen will be preaching on Our Whole Lives on Feb. 15! Come listen to why Our Whole Lives is an important thing throughout our lives and is relevant to everyone in our church family. The Older Youth will end the month with an overnight retreat on February 27. We will be going late night roller skating and then returning to the church for a night filled with games, snacks and movies and of course very little sleep!! We will be having a Faith Formation Teacher and safe church boundary training on February 28 from 2-4 in the Library!

Spiritual Director-In-Residence

Toward the end of this month we move into the season of Lent. Whereas, we used to think of Lent as a time to give up some vice---sweets, especially chocolate, cigarettes, alcohol, etc., we now view it as a time of preparation to receive anew the Good News of Easter, that Christ is alive---in us! How do we prepare to receive such Good News afresh, with new eyes? One way is to commit ourselves to spiritual practice---regular, consistent, persistent---that helps us to discover who we are at a deeper level, to discover who we are in God and who God is in us. A tool that assists persons in their spiritual journey of self-discovery is the enneagram, a tool with ancient roots and modern interpretation. I will be facilitating a DVD-based class, "The Enneagram As a Tool for Your Spiritual Journey," for four Saturday mornings, beginning on Saturday, February 28, 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon, in the church library/parlor, followed by optional lunch across the street at Soup and Such. The teachers are Richard Rohr, Franciscan founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in New Mexico, and Russ Hudson, co-founder of The Enneagram Institute in Denver, Colorado. There is no registration fee and attendance at every session is optional, but helpful. The books, which are also optional but helpful, are "The Enneagram: A Christian Perspective," by Richard Rohr and Andreas Ebert, and "The Wisdom of the Enneagram," by Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson, which are available through the bookseller of your choice. May your Lenten journey lead you to receive the Good News of Easter!

Barbara Gulick, MRE, DASD

Prairie Tower "Play Date" Last Wednesday Every Month

Is there a child in your heart that would like to get out and play? Here is your chance. The Outreach Board is supporting a "play date" with the residents of Prairie Tower every last Wednesday of the month at 2:00. We will play board games, watch movies, have a sing along, be entertained...whatever the folks want to do. If you would like to join this group, just show up at Prairie Tower, 725 N. 27th St. at 2:00 every or any last Wednesday of the month. If you have a question, call Myrle Theimer 245-3650.

Seven residents and five First Church members met on January 28th for our first Play date. We had a good time and hope that more residents will join us as we continue this ministry. Next play date will be February 25th. Thank you to all who attended.



Important Dates This February

- 2/5 **Concert at Billings First** tickets \$35
- 2/8 **Second Sunday Lunch, 12:00 pm** F.H.
- 2/10 **Diaconate Meeting** 7:00 pm Library
- 2/16 Breanna Not in Office
- 2/17 **Council Meeting** 7:00 p.m. Library
- 2/18 **Ash Wednesday Service** 7pm Sanctuary
- 2/19 **Primetimer's Dinnertime** 5:30 p.m. at Gusick's rsvp to Teresa or church office.
- 2/20 **Lenten Recitals Series and Luncheon**
- 2/25 **Lenten Program and Soup Dinner** at First Church 6 pm
- 2/26 **Primetimers Winetime** 5:30 pm at the home of Edward Barta & Barbara Gunn. Bring an appetizer to share, wine provided.
- 2/27 **Lenten Recitals Series and Luncheon**

Lenten Soup and Bread Supper

Lenten Soup & Bread Suppers - Wednesdays, February 25 through March 25 at 6:00 pm. Our Lenten program series will be *The Jesus Fatwah: Love Your Muslim Neighbor as Yourself*, a shared Lenten experience with Mayflower Church. Dinner will begin at 6:00 pm so that our program will be over on time in consideration of travel for various choir rehearsals.

- **February 25 at First Church**
- **March 4 at Mayflower**
- **March 11 at First Church**
- **March 18 at Mayflower**
- **March 25 at First Church**



Family Promise
of Yellowstone Valley

Every week Jenn at Family Promise Yellowstone Valley sends out information about the families who stay at our church, taking meals in Fellowship Hall, sleeping in our Sunday School classrooms. Those of us who volunteer (you can also!) become fond of these people and it's mutual! Here, in raw, unedited form, is the weekly report I received last Thursday about those staying with us. If part of the page is clipped at the right margin, you can begin to imagine how it feels to have your entire life clipped and being dependent on the good will of people in churches around Billings!

Tylor and Margaret: Tristin (4) and Lily (infant). Tylor is allergic to bananas but there are no other known allergies for this family. Tristin is autistic and has a unique diet that is very specific. He will eat the original Tyson brand chicken nuggets (please no special shapes), Pop-Tarts (cherry, strawberry, or peanut butter cookie flavor), *Gold Fish Crackers (Cheddar)*, Ritz crackers and peanut butter, and he likes juice. **Tylor works Saturday and Sunday from 1pm – Approximately 9pm. He also works Monday-Wednesday 9am – Approximately 4pm/5pm. Margaret works Thursday-Sunday 5am – Approximately noon.**

Geronimo and Cindy: Cienna (F) 1 ½. & Priseis (F) 2 ½. There are no known food allergies for this family. Geronimo is looking for employment and does not have a set schedule as this time. Cindy (Geronimo's mother) takes care of her granddaughter. **Geronimo and Cindy did not sign a photo release, please ask before taking any pictures of them or the girls.**

Jolene and Tyler: Joshua (15) and Katelin (8). Joshua is allergic to most kinds of nuts. There are no other known food allergies for this family. This family is VERY busy. Jolene has an appointment every Monday evening at 5:30pm, please hold a dinner plate for her. They go to church Wednesday nights from 6:30-8. Tyler works Thursday-Saturday 4-10pm. Joshua works Friday and Saturday from 4-10pm. Joshua goes to Youth Group from 6-7:30pm every Sunday. Jolene and the kids cook dinner for her grandmother every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night; this means they will be missing dinner those nights. Jolene plans to stay at her grandmother's house until Tyler is off work and then they will return to the church. They will have a few more appointments in the evenings next week but they don't know exactly what times yet. As soon as they know I will update coordinators



“Twenty years
from now you
will be more
disappointed
by the things
that you didn’t
do than by the
ones you did
do. So throw
off the
bowlines. Sail
away from the
safe harbor.
Catch the
trade winds in
your sails.
Explore.
Dream.
Discover.”
-Mark Twain

Mayflower Circle

Mayflower Circle will meet February 17, 2015 at the home of Doris Anderson. The meeting begins at 1:00 pm. the program will be “MSU-B Campus Ministry” by Rob Kirby. Guests are always welcome and you are encouraged to bring a friend. Call Myrle Theimer at 245-3650 with questions. Please bring cookies for the Daycare.

From The Moderator: Mic Dawson

“Begin, be bold, venture to be wise” said the old philosopher (Horace to be exact) and so I begin my tenure as your moderator.

As noted at the annual meeting where I was elected, transparency is a key value for the congregation. I invite all interested parties to attend Council meetings, held 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 PM in the library, to observe and comment on the business of the church and, maybe, volunteer to undertake that work. Keeping in mind that attending an evening meeting may not be to your liking I will look for ways to bring Council business to you.

At this time, an important item of business is the work on the priority giving list. The results submitted by you have been tabulated and ranked highest to lowest. A committee of Council members with representation from Memorial will be looking at the tabulation to see common themes and determine a top ten list. With that list “Champions” will be named to lead the effort to fulfill those items. Stay tuned!

Outreach

Offerings of Service

- Habitat for Humanity— Prepare lunch for work crew
- Family Promise Network— Help with hosting
- Help with Prairie Towers monthly game event
- Attend Montana Organizing Project Lobby Day in Helena on February 24th.

Your Name: _____

Contact Number: _____

Please fill out an return to the church office. Thank You

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>*If you, or someone you know, has a birthday not listed, please let us know so we can make the correction!</p> <p>1 Susan Betz</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4 Lisa Chapman Lisa Kemnick</p>	<p>5 Joan Hughes Cameron Ostermiller</p>	<p>6 Marcy Brown Dazalyn Degges</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>9 Dawn Chapman Katherine Howland Bill Howland</p>	<p>10 Harry Andersen Rose Poppler</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12 Ken Brown Jori Lokken Dick Stratford</p>	<p>13 Amy Evangelisti Maybelle Reichenbach Terri Smith</p>	<p>14 Loraine Armstrong Elvera Burnham</p>
<p>15 Alice Lundgren</p>	<p>16 Christy Jaeger</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18 Lily Harris</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 Jase Norsworthy Alice Roberts Ava Shearer</p>
<p>22 John Burg Lyla Dyer Laura Mellor</p>	<p>23 Ron Burnam</p>	<p>24 Virginia Montague Samantha McLeod</p>	<p>25 Steve Plaggemeyer</p>	<p>26 Dorothy Florey David Solberg</p>	<p>27 Henry Crist Tiffany Degges Sydney Emond</p>	<p>28 Finnian Bentler Cindy Krieger</p>

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!*

310 N. 27th Street
Billings, MT 59101

Phone: 406-245-6477
Fax: 406-245-6478

E-mail: firstchurch@firstchurchbillings.org

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!



Your February Congregationalist is here!

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Highlights of Worship in February

Every Wednesday at 12:00 p.m.~ Tolling of the Bell

- ⊕ Chapel, 12:10-12:40 p.m.~ “Rest” worship with *lectio divina* and communion

Sunday, February 1, Fourth Sunday after Epiphany~ Green

- ⊕ Installation of New Officers at Billings First Church
- ⊕ Sacrament of Holy Communion

Sunday, February 8, Fifth Sunday after Epiphany~ Green

- ⊕ Boy Scout Sunday~ Celebrating Troop 2
- ⊕ Birthday Cake Sunday

Sunday, February 15, Transfiguration Sunday~ White

- ⊕ Trained Acolytes light candles for the first time!
- ⊕ Our Whole Lives Sunday~ A Healthy Sexuality presented by Ann Hanson (former UCC Our Whole Lives Coordinator) and Kim Harris
- ⊕ Renewal of Vows (15 minutes) immediately following the service: a time to celebrate the wonders of covenanted love and cupid’s arrow. We hope to have a photographer present to chronicle the day for the Billings Gazette and share our identity as an Open and Affirming Congregation.

Wednesday, February 18, Ash Wednesday~ Purple

- ⊕ “Ashes on the Run”- Please leave the parking in front of the church free as we offer the imposition of ashes for anybody who may not be able to make our worship service from 12:40 p.m. to 1:40 p.m. All are welcome to park and receive the ashes with the words:
- ⊕ Officiant: From ashes and dust you were made, to ashes and dust you shall return.
- ⊕ Person receiving imposition of ashes: I was made in the image of God.
- ⊕ Ash Wednesday Worship, 7:00 p.m., Chapel

Sunday, February 22, First Sunday of Lent~ Purple

- ⊕ Montana Organizing Project (MOP) Lobby Days~ Barbara Gulick preaching

Please Join Us in a Lenten Fast . . . From Carbon

An invitation: Please Join Us in a Lenten Fast . . . From Carbon

Make this your Lenten discipline!

2015 is the fifth year that a day-by-day opportunity to fast from carbon as a Lenten discipline is provided. Initiated by the UCC and endorsed by other denominations and faith groups, people of every Christian perspective – and people who are not Christians – have benefited from this opportunity to become more conscious and conscientious in their daily lives. If you wish to receive daily emails, you can go here where the Massachusetts Conference is providing ideas: <http://www.macucc.org/carbonfast>. Or use the daily calendar provided. Or friend the Billings First Facebook page and receive them that way.

Ash Wednesday (February 18, 2015) invites us into the season of Lent – a time within the church year to acknowledge that we are mortal, limited. Lent awakens us to hope in God whose "steadfast love endures forever" and to struggle against everything that leads us away from the love of God and neighbor. The Lenten disciplines of repentance, fasting, prayer, study and works of love are guides for returning to the steadfast love of God. During Lent we confess our mortality, our limits and our vulnerability so that we might be transformed and become the new life God calls us to be.

We invite you to join us as we commit to fasting from carbon during Lent. Beginning Ash Wednesday and throughout Lent. Many will also suggest ways to engage others. Each daily email will also provide material that can be the basis for a weekly congregational conversation.

