

FIRST
CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST (UCC)

SPECIAL POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- **Worship Highlights**
- **Save the date: Alternative Christmas Fair**
- **Letter from Council**

**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:**

Stewardship	1
Senior Minister Rev. Mike	2 & 3
Youth and Young Adults	4
Family Promise	5
Mayflower Circle	6
November Birthdays	7

THE *Congregationalist*

VOLUME 29

NUMBER 11

NOVEMBER 1, 2016

Stewardship 2017: Go and do the same

Go ---and do the same

Luke 10:37 comes from the story of the "Good Samaritan" and is the theme of our 2017 stewardship campaign. This is the parable of the man who was robbed and beaten and left at the side of the road. A priest and a Levite passed by and avoided him, but a Samaritan comes and rescues the man. Jesus asks "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be neighbor to the man..." "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

What an appropriate theme for our stewardship campaign as we focus on being a good neighbor in downtown Billings! We are being called to go and do the same kind of things for our neighbors through our church. We are being asked "to make a deep response to others and to God's presence and purposes at the center of our life. The parable invokes compassion for others based on a response to God's purpose for all to experience as much blessing as possible...Those who commit themselves to living according to these purposes become a blessing to the community and to themselves." (Adapted from Go---and Do the Same)

Pledge letters have been sent. An automatic withdrawal form has also been included. We also have a credit card reader available so that you can make your pledge payment with a credit card. In light of our budget concerns, it would be a great help to the finance committee to have the pledge cards returned within the next two weeks. PLEASE RETURN YOUR PLEDGE CARDS PROMPTLY. The outlook is good that we will be able to reach our goal for increasing our income from pledges for 2017. 31 pledge units have participated in our Pledge Plus campaign for 2016. If those people can maintain that level of giving for 2017 and we increase our total number of pledges by even a few units, we should be able to lower our dependence on endowment next year, even if it is just by a small amount
Lyla Dyer

Hanging of the Greens Nov. 26th

Billings First Church will be decorated when persons arrive to celebrate the first Sunday of the 2016 Advent season on 27 November! Read carefully as there are changes to behold!

What: "Hanging of the Greens" When: Saturday, 26 November from 09:00 until 12:00.
Where: Throughout First Congregational United Church of Christ - Billings First Church

Who: The entire congregation - members, children, non-members - everyone, all ages!
Why: To work together as a congregation to prepare our church for the 2016 Advent season and in preparation of the Christmas season; to provide memories for all ages!
Lunch: If we can solicit enough chili cookers, we will conclude with a chili lunch! Contact Bonnie if you can donate a pot of chili. bonnie70daniels@icloud.com
Please come and enjoy time together as we prepare for Advent 2016 !

Donut holes and cucumbers. Rev Michael Mulberry

In preparation for the sacred place worship series, I read quite a bit of Wendell Berry. Berry is a prolific Christian novelist, agricultural ethicist, and farmer. What I wanted from Berry's writing, however, was his soul as a poet and lyrical wordsmith. His poem, "Manifesto: The Mad Liberation Front," still makes my soul soar, my eyes water, and my faith rise up in anger and courage.

On Sundays, we have been blessed to have a number of people share the beautiful biological growth of their gardens. I have been taken by how all of those beautifully leafy, green vegetables seem to create joy, conversation, and an ambiance of joy. No, really. I know that sounds like Mike spouting off his central care and concern about food and food justice, but there just seems to be this communal energy I cannot really describe. And that energy seems to radiate from that table outward.

Berry actively writes about the difference between centering our life around the mechanical as opposed to the biological. The mechanical life centers around values of production and consumption that lead to a waste that somehow needs to be disposed of in some way or another. Skill in that model is measured by efficiency and "faster and faster" which pretends we can know all things. As we move faster and faster, we lose rhythms of Sabbath and rest and our ability to pay attention to what is before us becomes less and less. In this model, the soil, the animals, and, finally, humans become expendable machines. All is defined quantitatively and commercially.

In the biological model, God's model of the creation stories, we "would aspire to diversity; it would enable the diversification of economies, methods, and species to conform to the diverse kinds of land. It would always use plants and animals together. It would be as attentive to decay as to growth, to maintenance as production. It would return all wastes to the soil, control erosion, and conserve water. To enable care and devotion and to safeguard local communities and cultures of agriculture, it would use the land in small holdings." There is no waste. All die into another's life, live into another's death. All is defined qualitatively.

So I was thinking of our church life. I know the donut holes are an important part of our church life and tradition. The problem with donut holes is that they are manufactured, processed food (darn good processed food) that can exist for days maybe even months without much care or stewardship. Like Twinkies, they may be the one thing that survives the zombie apocalypse. They may get stale and hard and lose their flavor but they still are around to eat after days on a table or months in our fridge. We can always make tons and tons more.

On the other hand, cucumbers* can quickly go to rot. They depend on our watchful eye and can become compost rather quickly. Cucumbers are easy enough to grow but they rely on our care and stewardship to become part of a biological community that provides for our health and well-being. And we certainly know that a diet of diverse green vegetables that includes cucumbers provides for our community well-being and joy. In that diet, there is a real quality of life.

I will certainly eat my share of chocolate and donut holes, but I would like to think we are quickly becoming a biological culture of cukes. And maybe it's just me, but I see conversation, joy, and a qualitative community life breaking out in our church. I hope and pray that others are experiencing that too.

*I refuse to use zucchini for this analogy.

Rev. Mike on Vacation

Although Rev. Mike will participate and help lead the service on Sunday, November 6, he will be on vacation from Wednesday, November 2nd through Wednesday, November 9th. Please direct all emergency pastoral caregiving to Rev. Steve Gordon, the pastor at Mayflower Congregational UCC.

Gratitude from Rev. Mike

- Thanks to Bonnie Daniels and Brian Bross for all of the work they put into the church work day. Once again, we were able to do so much with all of the people who participated. It was another great day at 310 N. 27th. Thanks to especially the Boy Scouts and the one or two members from Wellbriety who also participated.
- Thanks to Virginia Bryan for all of her work in organizing and making possible Happy Meals to convey our love and compassion to individuals and families connected to our congregation. Thanks also to all those people who have provided food for the meals. Individuals and families are so grateful for this display of hospitality.
- Thanks to all of the work and leadership provided by Ed Gulick and the Crossroads Visioning Steering Committee. The energy and life found around this last meeting was palpable.
- Thanks to so many of the Chancel Choir members for the way they surrounded Laura Blodgett with the loss of her mother and the way you represented us in the joint choir at Mayflower. What an amazing way to represent our mutuality and care as a church!
- Thanks to all of those who brought food to share from their gardens. Just having that table of fresh food at the center of our narthex seemed to create so much conversation, life, and joy.
- Thanks to Brian Bross for bringing pumpkins to share with the children and the congregation.
- Thanks to Addy Cooper, Julie Solberg, Walt Gulick, Karen Stainton, and Aaron Blakeslee for getting our Sunday School and Adult Forum off to a terrific start!
- Thanks to Maddy Alpert, our new Melody Choir Director, for jumping right in with our children. We are excited for this new direction.
- Thanks to Church Council for participating and sharing their hard work and vision during two retreats at Eagle Rock Sanctuary. I pray that your hard work will bring about the necessary changes we need to make as a congregation to serve our church and community.

Totenfest November 6th

On Sunday, November 6th, we will be remembering those people, members and friends and people closely connected to our congregation, who died over the last year. So that we do not forget anyone, we ask that people you would like to see commemorated be shared with Breanna Rolandson, our Office Administrator, by sharing the birth date, date of death, and an electronic photo that we might use for that day. I believe this has become a holy and sacred time in our church's liturgical year. We want to make sure that all are remembered to once again share in our community loss and bring comfort and hope to those who continue to love them. Here are the names we have so far of people who have passed from November of last year that are closely associated with our church:

Vern Prill
Carol Heald
Lorene Keefe
Pat Baker
Dorothy Florey
Russell Lee Ostermiller
Jessica Stickney

Youth and Young Adults

As always the youth had another busy, busy month of October with Youth Sunday at First and our first fundraiser for our mission trip this summer.

Thank you to everyone who supported the youth through your presence and your generous financial support. Whew, I can hardly believe it's already November and it doesn't seem that we will slow down anytime soon!

Due to Kim being out of town the 2nd week in November for a National Outdoor Ministries Conference we will be having our monthly Family Fun Night on the 3rd Friday, November 18. We will be going to Get Air the local trampoline Park from 6-8 pm. Cost will be around \$12/person, we will also be combining this with the Older Youth 'Mystery' Event for the month so surprise, our mystery is Trampolines! Please RSVP to Kim by Thursday, November 17 if you and/or your family is going to be coming!

The Older Youth will be sharing their Youth Sunday once again on Sunday, November 20 this time at Mayflower UCC at 10 am.

The Youth Group will also be helping again with the Dash for Cash run before the Downtown Holiday Parade on Friday, November 25 and they will also be helping with a chili luncheon after the Hanging of the Greens at First Church on Saturday, November 26.

We have started planning this year's 12th Night Feast and it promises to be yet again a wonderful, magical evening that you are not going to want to miss! So put Saturday, January 14 or Sunday, January 15 on your calendars now to come experience the annual 12th night feast. It is our biggest fundraiser of the year which will go to help the older youth for their mission trip this summer to Alaska. We will have more details coming out about their trip in upcoming issues. We are still looking for people to provide meals for our youth on a Wednesday evening in February-May. Please contact Kim if you are interested.

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). Thanks to Mic for her willingness to do this!



Important Dates This November

11/2-9 Rev. Mike on Vacation
 11-8 Diaconate Meeting 7 pm~ Library
 11/13 Second Sunday Lunch following worship~ Fellowship Hall
 11/15 Mayflower Circle 1:30pm~ Conference Office
 11/15 Church Council 7pm~ Library
 11/18 Newsletter Due
 11/24-25 Happy Thanksgiving Office Closed
 11/26 Advent Decorating and Chili lunch 9-noon

Save the Date: December 11

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

Church Office Hours

Monday 8:00 am- 4:00 pm
 Tuesday 10:00am-4:00 pm
 Wednesday 8:00 am- 4:00 pm
 Thursday 8:00 am- 4:00 pm
 Friday 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

*At times Breanna will be out getting supplies, at the post office mailing newsletter etc., or out doing other church business.



All around Billings church members of a variety of denominations volunteer their time and talent to house the homeless. And so do we!

At Billings First Church, our turn comes the week of October 30. That's right. Two lucky people will spend Halloween night sleeping over as volunteer hosts for homeless families. What will it be like? Will it be spooky? I mean seriously frightening?

Sunday Mary Jane Taylor pulled me aside after volunteering to be one of the overnight hosts. She told me someone had (slightly less recently) asked her if it was scary to spend the night in the church.

"Well, no," Mary Jane told me. "Why should it? I'm never afraid."

I stepped back and sized up Mary Jane. Slightly built, she resembled Lois Lane more than she resembled Superman. Apparently one need not look like a gorilla to feel safe in church.

My own take on the question is, 'what could be safer than a church?'

On the other hand, suppose it weren't safe? Could a boogey man show up, stalking the hall

between the Sunday School rooms where people sleep?

Well, as one who sometimes spent more than one night during our host weeks, I have to admit I've never seen a boogey man, but I'm a heavy sleeper.

On the other, other hand, those of us who spend the night, especially Halloween night, in the church, retain certain boasting rights. One of those, though, cannot be that we spend the night alone. We always have a volunteer co-host sleeping nearby on a cot in another room. Also, the homeless people count as our allies. These homeless families always consist of one or two adults with children per family, multiplied times the number of families: usually three or four. For some reason they have always been friendly to us.

As (economic) refugees, the families have been thoroughly vetted by the staff of Family Promise and are used to sleeping in churches staffed with volunteer hosts.

I think I have deflated my boasting rights.

Dan Struckman

Mayflower Circle

Mayflower Circle will meet at 1:00 on November 15th. We meet at the Montana Northern Wyoming Conference Office, 2016 Alderson. All of the ladies of the church and their friends are welcome. The program this month will be given by Kimmie Harris. She will be telling us all about the Youth Trip to Mexico this past summer. Lyla Dyer and Mary Jane Taylor will be hostesses. If you have questions please call Gerry Mangis 245-5530 or Myrle Theimer 245-3650

Buildings and Grounds

Buildings and Grounds Committee is thankful for the many persons who participated in the 2nd 2016 All Church Work Day. We were able to accomplish a lot and have fun doing it! As many of you commented, our church building is large and needs lots of loving attention. The next All Church Work Day is in April 2017. All Advent decorations have been moved to a room on the lower level so the elevator can be used to move the heavy pieces. Diaconate and Buildings and Grounds are working together with the 2016 "Hanging of the Greens". This All Church event will take place 26 November from 09:00 until 12:00, followed by a "chili cook off" for lunch. Please mark your calendars and bring your family to decorate Billings First Church for the Advent season. We continue to work here and there to repair, replace and update areas around the church. Our major emphasis for 2017 is replacing the sanctuary roof. It has been a real need for a few years but monies have been tight - as they continue to be. Still, this is a necessity. Think about what a leak in the sanctuary would do. So... Please be prayerful as you consider your Stewardship pledge for 2017. We must all work together to care for our Sacred Place.

Blessings,

Bonnie Daniels

Chairperson, Building and Grounds.

Spiritual Director-In-Residence

This election cycle is one in which several candidates have played to our fears. I believe that it was Franklin D. Roosevelt who said in his first Inaugural Address: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." The fourth chapter of I John is about God's love for us. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because God first loved us" (18,19). Wherever you focus your attention is where the energy of your body, mind, and spirit goes. If you focus on giving and receiving love, fear has no power over you. The first step is to "count your blessings" as spiritual practice.

THE THANKSGIVING EXAMEN

To give thanks in general to God for the benefits received in your life, in others, and in the world today.

To ask for grace to recognize all those particular things that happened to you and others that you should personally be grateful for.

To take account of your day from the hour that you arose up to the present time, hour by hour, or period by period: first your good thoughts, ideas, and intentions; then your good words spoken and heard; and then good acts, your actions and those of others, small or large, that positively touched your life or the life of someone else. Record these in your journal.

To praise and thank God for all the opportunities you had to make a difference in the world today and to inspire you to recognize more and more such opportunities in the future.

To thank God for all God has done for you, and to ask yourself: What can I envision doing that would lead me to be even more deeply grateful? (Louis Savary, *The New Spiritual Exercises In the Spirit of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin*, pp. 51,52)

Barbara Gulick, MRE, DASD

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Paige Cooper-Cole Patricia Morledge	2	3 Alex Elison	4 Judy Doll Scott McCallum	5 Hunter Eliason
6 Dan Erickson William Smith-Mickelson	7 John Crist Breanna Rolandson	8 Jeff Lokken	9 Stan Eliason Shelby Lubbers	10 Phyllis Bakko Pat Larmoyeux Jaeli Lokken Tom Tollefson	11 Carmen Barry	12 Paige Fredlund Marguerite Ostermiller
13	14	15	16	17 James Court	18	19
20	21 Donna Degner Sherm Oland Jock West	22 Ceci Bentler Colton Eliason	23 Fred Betz Penny Struckman	24	25 Bradly Blaesius Jan Paulsen	26 Rachel Court
27 Gary Coats	28 Zoe Erickson Trevor Krieger	29 Karen Fried Stewart Taylor	30			

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

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

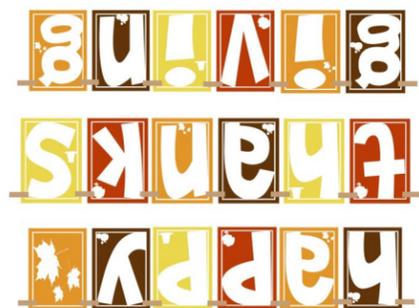
Every member of the congregation!



www.firstchurchbillings.org

Your November Congregationalist is here!

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



Important News from Church Council

Last spring and again this fall Church Council has had weekend retreats to discuss how the church functions. We have been hard at work examining the mission and values that the congregation of First Congregational Church has brought forth through the discussions at the Visioning Dinners and the Crossroads Design Workshops. Our efforts have been focused on coming up with a plan that will fit our church as we move forward.

As we examine our committee structure we are able to see a need for a structure that will call for fewer committees with fewer members. A workable solution is starting to develop. Task forces (project-specific working groups) will be formed to carry out tasks and work of the church, including single events and on-going programs. One excellent example of this is the Happy Meal Ministry. The need for a meal ministry when families are struggling with illness, hospitalization, or bereavement was voiced. Virginia Bryan, Chair of the Diaconate Committee, responded by putting out a call for volunteers. A Task Force of about 12 people was called to action to provide these meals.

Other fantastic examples of this concept are Bonnie Daniel, Chair of Building and Grounds Committee, and her success with using Task Forces to accomplish individual improvement projects. Ed Barta, Chair of Outreach Committee, has successfully used a Task Force to facilitate our participation in the ArtWalks.

The Church Council anticipates the benefits of this restructuring will be fewer meetings and more time spent on fulfilling the mission and work of our church. This structure will have fewer people involved in meetings, but having continuing input from our members is essential. Therefore, we are also developing a protocol for the advancement of new ideas. As a congregation we don't want to miss great opportunities! In this process, ideas will be presented to the Moderator, a committee chair, or the pastor, preferably in writing. Having this process in place will ensure that every idea is given consideration and appropriate action as deserved.

Developing a workable solution involves everyone's participation. Let's practice this process! We encourage you to submit your thoughts and ideas about restructuring our committees. A proposed committee structure will be outlined in the next Congregationalist. You are invited to talk with any Council member about this process at any time.

For more information contact either Lyla Dyer 252-0602 or Karen Stainton 425-0082

Worship

All Saints Sunday~ White

November 6, 2016

Totenfest

Ms. Laura Keating preaching

Stewardship Sunday/Hunger & Homelessness Sunday~ Green

November 13, 2016

Reign of Christ Sunday~ Green

November 20, 2016

Scripture: [Jeremiah 23:1-6](#); [Luke 23:33-43](#) "Preaching the gospel with your bags packed."

Hanging of the Greens!

Saturday, November 26, 2016

First Sunday of Advent~ Dark Purple

Sunday, November 27, 2016

Scripture: [Isaiah 1:10-28](#); [Matthew 3:1-12](#)

"Behaving Badly"

Great New Leadership

We have great new leadership in the life of our church. So let's get started with the introductions. Brigid Shearer is our new Nursery Attendant! We think Brigid will make a great addition to the care and love expressed at our church. She is a graduate of the University of Montana at Missoula with a degree in social work. She has already been an important part of the work at Camp Mimanagish as a counselor and a camp assistant. She secretly confessed at church camp this year a dream to run an orphanage. What a wonderful thing it is to have such a heart working in our nursery!

Maddie Alpert is our new Melody Choir Director. Maddie works at the Billings Housing Authority and is just a fundamentally kind person. For those who attended, Maddie sang with Webster Crist at our Twelfth Night Feast last January and also for the Faith Unity Concert this past summer. She has that kind soul, a beautiful voice, and is excited to begin work with the children of our church.

Laura Keating is our new Pastoral Intern. Laura will be preaching once a month through March and participating in the leadership of our common life together to discern if ordained ministry is her calling. After her first post to a blog written by the community of former Jesuit Volunteers in Billings (<https://goo.gl/2Ognk8>), I have very little doubt. She has already met with Church Council and Mayflower Circle to much delight and excitement. Laura communicates strength, kindness, courage, and enthusiasm for faith in the work she does. She presently works at Northern Plains as a canvasser.

Please welcome these young women into the deeper life of our church and ministry. All of them are powerful, kind, and compassionate in such delightfully diverse ways. They are in keeping with our historical church's mission and ministry.

Christmas on Sunday!

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: _____