

Mountain Proclamations

a publication of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, of Mountain Home

www.mhfirstcongregational.org

December 2020

churchinfo@mhfccucc.org

Volume 53 - Issue 11

Return to Virtual Worship

Due to the recent increases of COVID cases, the State of Idaho has requested that churches return to virtual worship services.

The leadership of Mountain Home First Congregational, in an effort to show love, compassion, and respect for our members, neighbors and community, has decided that we will comply with this request. **There will not be in-person worship until further notice.**

Worship materials will be emailed and posted to our members for their personal and family worship time. If you are not receiving these and would like to, please contact the church office.

If you are part of worship – liturgist, choir, organist/pianist, Advent Candle lighters – please be at the church on your appointed Sunday for recording.

We are, at this time, in the process of setting up a YouTube channel to broadcast worship services live and these services will also be saved for later viewing. We hope to begin by the Sunday, November 29th worship service. If you search the YouTube website for MH First Congregational, that's where it should show up.

If you are a local member and have an email address, but you are not receiving church emails and would like to, please contact the church office at churchinfo@mhfccucc.org.

If you are not a local member and would like to be included in the Sunday worship emails, please notify the church office at churchinfo@mhfccucc.org.

Sunday School Schedule

Sunday School has been postponed until further notice.

Virtual Communion

We will still have Communion on the first Sunday, even while we are having worship virtually. You may come by the office sometime during the week before the First Sunday and pick up your communion cup to have for Sunday worship or you may use your own bread and juice, donuts and coffee, tea and toast – whatever

allows you to feel connected and part of the meal.

Office hours are Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Poinsettias

Poinsettia Dedications will be a bit different this year; it will be much like the Easter Lily dedications were this past Easter.

Because we will most likely not be having worship in the church for the remainder of 2020, there is no need to have actual poinsettias for decoration. However, the tradition of remembering or honoring loved ones **will go on!**

If you would like to dedicate a “Virtual Poinsettia” as memorial or dedication to a loved one in the Christmas Eve bulletin, be sure to give this information to the church office by **Thursday, December 17th.**

Forms will be included with the electronic and posted bulletins beginning **Sunday, November 29th.**

Women's Fellowship Christmas Bazaar

As with all things 2020 – the Women's Fellowship Christmas Bazaar is going to look quite different this year.

The Inventory – If you have crafted things for this year's Bazaar, **please bring them to the church by November 30th.** Bring them to the office, bring them to Worship, arrange with someone to pick them up. Just get them to the church on time.

The Sale – The sale will be virtual. Pictures will be taken and prices listed. These pictures will be posted in the *In the Loop* and on the church's website under the Women's Fellowship tab. **The sales will begin on December 5th and run through December 14th.** Purchases can be made by calling Linda Ramsey at [REDACTED] or Sherry Bush at [REDACTED]

Purchases are first come, first served!

Editor's note: Thank you for your continued support of the Women's Fellowship. They do so

much for the church – let's be sure to give back in a big way.

Giving Tree

Tags are in, there are 9 left. If you would like to take a child or two, please contact Ann Carlin between Nov. 15th to Dec. 6th. Wrapping can be done this year. If you wrap your gifts, please put tags on the gifts with the child's name and family #. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ann @ 208-366-1010

*Sincerely,
Ann Carlin
Giving Tree Coordinator
First Congregational Church*

Samaritan's Purse Christmas Child Shoebox Project

Thanks to the generosity of our congregation, we were able to deliver NINETEEN very stuffed shoeboxes to the designated drop-off point to be delivered to children across the world. Accompanying each of these boxes is a storybook about Jesus in the child's language.

We had enough donations to pay the \$9 per book delivery fee and enough left over to give us a good start for next year! Thank you, Generous Givers!

My thanks, also, to Linda Ramsey, Nadine Roberts, Doreen Solum, Grace Townsend, Sherry Bush and Gail Banner for your much-needed help in the three-day packaging sessions! You are truly angels!

Nancy Sobien

For the Women of the Church

Women's Fellowship December Meeting

We will have a Zoom December meeting/visit time at 11:00 a.m. on the second Friday. Watch your email for sign-in link.

If you wish to be added to the Women's Fellowship email list, please contact the church office.

Women's Bible Study

The Women's Bible Study will meet the first and third Wednesdays in November, **December 2nd and 16th at 10:30 a.m.**

These studies are being done via ZOOM. Please contact Beth DeVore or the Church office if you are not getting the email updates and invites.

Christmas Program

Due to the ever-increasing cases of COVID and the return to virtual worship, there will not be a Christmas Program this year.

Christmas Luncheon

Due to the ever-increasing cases of COVID and the return to virtual worship, there will not be a Christmas Luncheon this year.

Office Christmas Schedule

Since Christmas and New Year's falls on a Friday, there are no special office hours this year, *at this time.*

Christmas Eve Service

As with so much this year, our Christmas Eve service will look a bit different this year.

On **Thursday evening, December 24th, at 7:00 p.m.** we will hold our annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship Service *virtually*. Tune in to our YouTube channel and join us on this special and holy night of nights as we celebrate the birth of Christ with music and the telling of the story that never grows old.

Should the state of Idaho meet the required benchmarks of COVID decline required to move to Stage 3 by Christmas Eve, we will endeavor to switch gears and have worship in-person. We will still broadcast the worship service for those who wish to remain safely tucked in at home.

Thinking of you

“Greeting from Bridgeport UCC in Portland, Oregon!

Love and prayers for your journey. I have hope for your search and discernment. Rest in your collective wisdom

In Peace and Joy,
Sash”

Thank you

From the Ronald McDonald House –

“Dear Nancy and everyone at First Congregational Church,

THANK YOU!

The Ronald McDonald House is extremely grateful for your donation of gift cards (gas and grocery specifically). During these trying times the needs of our guest-families still endure.

The stories of the families staying at the Ronald McDonald House, personal stories of in-the-moment fears and more importantly of the hope that helped each family overcome the darkest moments of their lives, all share a similar pattern – feeling connected to and the support of a community. Knowing that we are not alone during turbulent times is so important and why your donation is so impactful.

Thank you for all your support over the years and please stay safe!
Taylor ☺, Jordyn, Stephanie, Ellen, Mike ☺,
Kathy ☺, Ramone, Jill”

Curb Appeal

Thank you, again, Wade Baumgardner, for edging and weeding along the side walk in front of the church. This is no small task and it makes our church home look so much better.

Lawn Care

Fall has arrived and the lawn mower is put to bed for the winter. Thank you, Eddie Bush, for all the care you have taken from mid-spring to mid-fall on mowing the lawn and maintaining the sprinkler system. Your dedication of time and talent has been invaluable to the church.

Pie Sale

Thank you to everyone who purchased a pie from Women’s Fellowship. Over \$600 was made from the Pie Sale. Proceeds will go toward enhancing ongoing church projects.

Special thanks to the following people who made and donated pies: Gail Banner, Lee Wright, Judy Case, Linda Ramsey, Nancy Sobien, Nadine Roberts, Doreen Solum and Rick Bush. They carried out the theme of Women’s Fellowship which is to “Spread Joy”. What better way than through home-made pie!

*Nadine Roberts
Women's Fellowship*

Editor’s Note: Thank you, Nadine, for coordinating this event this year. You and Women’s Fellowship did a wonderful job “switching gears” so folks could still enjoy y’all’s wonderful pies.

Fall Decorations

Thank you goes out to Lee Wright, Rita Olson, Eddie, Mike, Rick & Sherry Bush for the beautiful harvest decorations in the Sanctuary. Thank you for bringing some beauty in what has been a very trying year for us all.

*Sincerely,
Ann Carlin, Diaconate Board Chairman
And the Diaconate Board*

Editor’s note: Rita Olson provided the vase of wheat stalks on the chancel and Mike Bush shared his white pumpkins and squashes with us. Thank you both for your generosity.

Food Bank

Thank you, Church Family, for your continued generous support of the Grace Lutheran Food Bank. This support is so much more needed this year. Thank you, thank you.

Pocket Crosses

Many “Thank You”s from all over the church family for the quilted pocket crosses mailed out to members of the congregation, near and far.

This mailing was done, in part, by the Women’s Fellowship. The pocket crosses themselves were put together by Kelli Collett, who cares very much for her church family.

Thank you, Ladies and Kelli for your uplifting gift in these times of increased stress.

End of year giving

If you want credit in **2020** for your December tithe, be sure to have it to the church before **December 31st**. If you mail it, be sure that it is in the mail to be **postmarked** before or on December 31st. Anything received after that will go on you 2021 giving statement.

Pledges for 2021

If you were not able to get your pledge in before the Pledge Blessing on Sunday, November 22, no worries. Just bring it to church anytime during office hours, drop it in the UPS box (no money, please), or mail it back to us in the envelope provided with the Stewardship Letter you received.

You lost your card? The church has more; just contact the office.

Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross

On **December 24th** we will take our *Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross* offering.

See the website (www.christmasfund.org) and the bulletin inserts for all the wonderful things that the Christmas Fund does for our active and retired clergy and their families.

All Boards and Committees

Year-end Annual Reports are due in the office by **Wednesday, January 6th**, earlier if possible, so

they can be prepared for distribution at our Annual Meeting on **Sunday, January 17th**.

2021 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting for 2021 will be on **Sunday, January 17th**, immediately after worship. This is the time when we review all the happenings of 2020 and finalize the budget for 2021.

Public Service Announcement

Mountain Home Food Distribution – Friday, December 11th Optimist Park. Food for 250 Families from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Please stay in your car and follow all directional signs and volunteer flaggers.

There are no qualifications for food boxes beyond a stated need for food assistance. Only household size and city/zip code information will be collected for data purposes.

- Each household will receive two boxes of food (until food runs out).
- These boxes contain a variety of dairy, pre-cooked meat, and produce items.
- All boxes are the same.

Supported by:
The Idaho Foodbank, The City of Mountain Home, Desert Sage Health Centers, Team Rubicon-Disaster Response.

Birthdays in December

2 – Richard Bush 21 – Maurie Townsend
15 – Todd Paille 22 – Truman Parker
15 – Lee Wright 26 – Bud Weise
19 – Lucas Brumley 28 – Ethan Townsend
19 – LeeAnna Lathrop

Anniversaries in December

8 – Sue and Wade Baumgardner
9 – Sherry and Eddie Bush
18 – Diana and Dale Hooley
28 – Rita and David Olson
29 – Grace and Maurie Townsend

Special Angels for December

LITURGISTS (Jennifer Dillenbeck)

6 – Susan Mussler
13 – Heidi Harris
20 – Grace Townsend
27 – Gail Banner

GREETERS (Not yet)

FELLOWSHIP HOUR (Not for December)

FLOWERS (sign-up sheet)

Christmas Décor

ADVENT CANDLE (Ann Carlin)

6 – Betty Ashcraft and Al Foster
13 – Heidi and Allen Harris
20 –
24 –

USHERS (Curtis Carlin)

PARAMENTS (Allen and Heidi Harris)

COMMUNION (Heidi Harris)

From Our Interim Pastor

Christmas Expectations

We have had to lower our Advent and Christmas expectations this year due to the Corona Virus. First Congregational has wonderful and beautiful traditions for Advent and Christmas celebrations with decorations and candle lighting but we have been highly encouraged not to have in-person worship during this time. I am very sorry that we are not together but I value your health and want you to stay healthy.

The guidelines and restrictions have not only affected our faith community but has changed our home and social celebrations. Personally I have enjoyed past years' December excursions, going out for special dinners, parties with friends, seeing the Christmas lights, even shopping. But we won't this time. In the solitude of home, I will turn my thoughts inward. For me, it is a time of self-reflection and meditation of a deeper meaning and purpose of Christmas.

A. E. Housman has written a poem that speaks for a time of contemplation.

Men could be drunk forever on liquor, love or fights

Glad would he rise of mornings and glad lie down at nights

But man at times is sober and thinks by fits and starts

And when he thinks, he fastens his hand upon his heart.

Psalm 46:10 "Be still and know that I am God."

May God's presence be felt in your life this advent season even though we are not together.

Pastor Gary Smith