

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

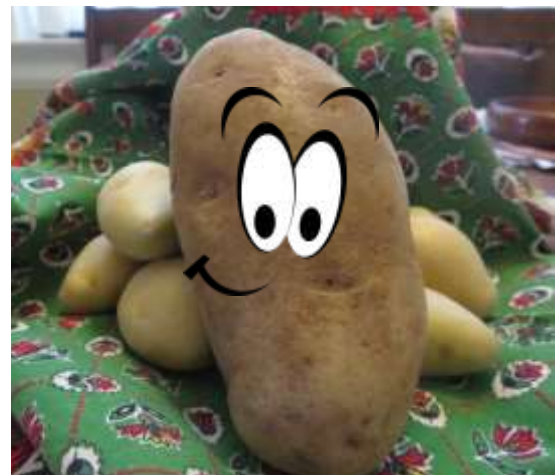
March 2022

Outreach and Social Justice Committee Invitation

From Gus Byrom, Frank Kromkowski, Brenda Senne, Kathleen Culver and Jennifer Thompson

We look forward to welcoming Valerie Hellermann, Executive Director, Hands on Global, to Plymouth on March 20th. Valerie has traveled extensively worldwide, serving refugee resettlement camps, and now is actively involved in providing for and welcoming Helena's newest neighbors, men, women and children from Afghanistan. Valerie will provide the sermon on Sunday the 20th and will be available to address your questions about the Helena Afghanis following worship.

Rather than adjourn for our usual fellowship hour across the hall, you are invited to participate in our Baked Potato Buffet, downstairs. Kathleen Culver is providing an abundance of potatoes from Townsend, so many in fact you may be able to take some home. The event is in memory of Ken Davenport who, during his time at Plymouth, was known to provide "spuds" in mid March in recognition of St. Patrick's Day. Sign-up sheets for toppings will be found on the table in the narthex in coming days.



Rev. Dick Weaver will facilitate any questions you may have for Valerie during our time downstairs. Don't miss out on this great opportunity to learn more about our new neighbors, and also to enjoy some great baked potatoes.

More from OSJ...

Thank you so much for your interest in helping us serve the Afghan families new to Helena. In our conversations with Valerie Hellermann we have learned that Helena has provided a warm and generous welcome. Thanks for your offers, but it appears at this time that clothes or household donations are not needed. However, wouldn't you know that when we asked for two sewing machines, no fewer than six were offered! Two are now in the hands of Afghani women who Valerie reports are great seamstresses.

The Committee is working with Valerie to determine the best ways that Plymouth can become involved in helping in other ways. In the works are efforts to provide instruction in sewing and

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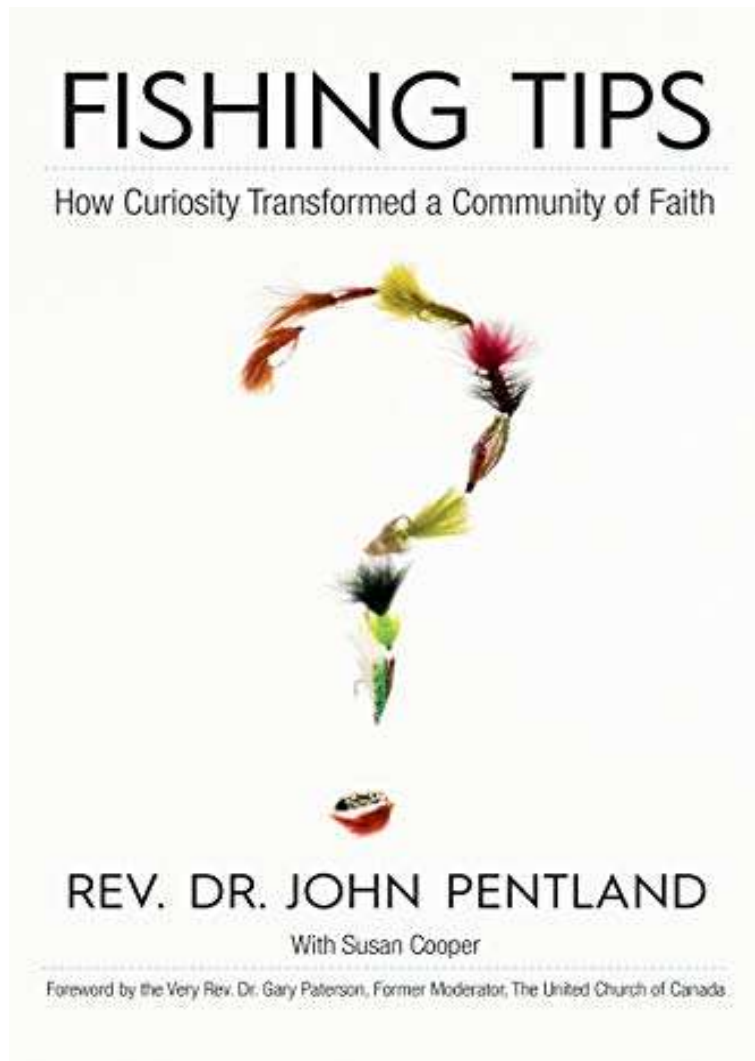
marketing locally produced crafts, which may eventually be sold at Farmer's Market this summer. We hope to also provide classes on fishing, ping-pong, basketball, gardening, and baking once our kitchen is up and running.

We have also learned that three Afghani babies from Helena are due before September. We hope to host a baby shower sometime soon and to provide three new infant car seats through the generosity of Town Pump. If you are interested in helping, let a member of the committee know of your availability.

And wait, there's more...

When she can't sleep, Valerie Hellermann paints. The inspiration of her art is the faces of the people she has met and served from around the world. She will exhibit her work in the Fire-side Room beginning on March 20th.

Upcoming Book Read and Discussion



Fishing Tips: How Curiosity Transformed a Community of Faith, written by Rev. Dr. John Pentland, a Canadian UCC pastor, who presents an amazing guide and true story about his faith community that experienced a huge transformation. The book is under 220 pages, 10 chapters, of easy to read and engaging text. It provides specific and amazing examples of how his church was renewed and transformed. In the coming months you will have a chance to participate in this discussion and to have a hand in recommending ways in which Plymouth can follow suit. Although some meeting details have yet to be finalized, there will be one opportunity to meet after Easter with Charles, and again in late July with Jennifer. Gloria will order books in the coming weeks. Be thinking about it, and plan to sign up when the details are made available.

Property Management Report

Good news! Our day care and church had its annual review by the Fire Department for fire and safety requirements. The Little Sprouts Day was given approval to Tarah Bullock, the director, and our fire extinguishers and suppression system in the kitchen were all charged in compliance. However, the fire extinguishers were mounted too high. Dick Burns, Ed Fields, and I rehung them at the required height. The suppression is required to be connected to a fire alarm system before we can fully use our commercial oven. We have been working to get that by having the NICO company draw the plans for the system followed by Steve Bingham, an electrical engineer, who attended our Sunday school while growing up in our church, drawing plans for the system to be installed. We have received one electrical bid for the installation and trying to get a second bid. Construction and supplies are delaying getting the second bid. The system design will meet all fire and safety codes including smoke and heat detectors, emergency signaling, lighting, and immediately connected to the fire department. This has been a slow process but we are hopeful we can soon let bids for the system to be installed.

~ Boyce Fowler



Guest Speaker Coming in March and New Art Exhibit in April

We will have a guest speaker representing Helena Afghan Refugee Resettlement Team (HARRT) during worship on March 20th. Join us following the service in the downstairs Fellowship Hall for a baked potato buffet, courtesy of Kathleen Culver and in memory of Ken Davenport, who loved the potatoes from Townsend. The representative will be available to answer questions you may have about the Afghan refugees currently residing in Helena. Rev. Dick Weaver will moderate the discussion. Kindly indicate your plan to participate by signing the sheet provided on the table in the Narthex.

Artwork by Valerie Hellermann will be showing once she returns from the Romain/Ukraine border. Valerie Hellermann has a long history of humanitarian work. A Registered Nurse, she is the founder and executive director of “Hands On Global”, a Montana-based, medical NGO working with refugees around the globe. Previously Valerie spent 12 years as the project manager for the Tibetan Children’s Education Foundation, working with Tibetan refugees in the US and India. Currently she is a member of the HARRT, Helena Afghan Refugee Resettlement Team. HARRT welcomes 10 adults, 7 children and awaits the delivery of 4 babies. To decompress and process, she sketches portraits of refugees she has met.



<http://handsonglobal.org/about/>

Plymouth Congregational Church

*Join us for
Lent & Easter!*

Lenten Lectio Divina Series
Fridays, March 4 - April 8
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Lectio Divina is Latin for "divine reading." It is a guided group prayer and meditation that focuses on a selection of scripture. The origins of this practice go as far back as the 3rd century C.E. We will gather for a simple meal, and then move into the practice of Lectio Divina, opening our hearts and minds to the presence of Christ in our midst.



Easter Sunday
April 17, 2022

Worship 10:00 am - 11:00 am

Join us for music, scripture, and prayer, followed by refreshments and fellowship after the service.

Easter Egg Hunt 11:30 am

All ages welcome! RSVPs are not required, but are encouraged, so that we can ensure we have enough treats and eggs for all participants!

400 South Oakes Street, Helena, MT 50601



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

A Lenten Message

Lent is an interesting time in the liturgical calendar for those of us who grew up in the Protestant traditions. It's the beginning of the period of waiting for Easter, which is in itself significant, but one can't help but notice all of the rituals and traditions observed by people from other denominations. I didn't grow up with getting ashes put on my forehead for Ash Wednesday, and no one ever talked about giving up meat for Lent. These were things that other people did, even though their faith traditions seemed so similar to mine.



It wasn't until later in life, when I started attending youth group, that Lent became something more. One year, the youth leader challenged us to give up something for Lent, and I was excited to finally participate in this mysterious practice that had been happening around me for my entire life that I never really understood. I remember thinking very carefully about what I was going to give up. It had to be something significant, otherwise it wouldn't mean anything, but it couldn't be something too difficult, otherwise I might not be able to make it the whole 40 days. I eventually landed on sugar. And, I wasn't going to just give up sweets and soda; this was my first time, and I was gonna really do it, so I even avoided sweet sauces, fruit, and artificial sweeteners. A few years later, as an adult, I gave up coffee for Lent, and I haven't really been able to handle caffeine ever since.

There are different reasons that we give things up during Lent. Some say it mimics the suffering of Jesus as he wandered through the wilderness for 40 days before he was crucified. Others claim that it helps us to remember the crucifixion itself. There is another way to practice Lent, and that is to add something to your life for 40 days, such as a new prayer practice, exercise, or meditation.

However we look at it or choose to observe it, Lent is a sacred time of preparing ourselves to once again hear the resurrection story. Lent reminds us of our own mortality, and helps to keep us grounded in our faith. Before Jesus was resurrected, he died, just like we all will. But, the Good News is that Jesus was brought back to life, which is a message of hope for us, that death does not have the final word, and that God welcomes all of us into eternity with open arms.

I hope that you have peace, love, and understanding during this season of Lent, especially now when it seems like chaos, war, and cruelty are running rampant everywhere. The Holy Spirit is in our midst, and this time of tribulation will eventually pass. Honor this sacred Lenten season, and prepare yourselves for the resurrection.

~ Pastor Charles

Creation Care Tips

Taking care of our world can seem like a daunting task, but there are simple things that we can all do to make the world a better place for everyone.

Did you know that real change can be as simple as changing which search engine you use when browsing the Internet? Ecosia dedicates 100% of its profits to climate action, with at least 80% of that going towards planting trees. Since they started in 2009, they have already planted over 144 million trees all over the world!

Ecosia is free and easy to add to your browser. Go to Ecosia.org, and follow the simple instructions to start planting trees with every search that you make!



Moderator's Message

Many years of my career were spent collecting and examining student assessment data and helping teachers use that data to improve results. The key was often hidden in the sub-scores that revealed strengths and weaknesses, where teachers could target instruction. My work for Plymouth this month felt similar: gathering data for the United Church of Christ Yearbook and analyzing the Budget Prioritization surveys.

Plymouth is newsworthy as a church that responds to the needs of other faith communities (the Menorah Project) and as a church that welcomes a community leader to share his voice, celebrating Black History Month. How can such notable ministry in the wider community and in worship services, coupled with an examination of our data, help grow our church?

Yearbook Data

Each year, the UCC requests information about membership, attendance, community impact, and finances. Inside the data hub are numbers we reported in several categories since 1992. Like many churches, Plymouth has reported declining membership and attendance over those years. For 2021, we reported 108 members, a weekly average attendance of 45 in person and 25 online, 12 people attending adult Christian education, and a community impact to 454 people (including missions such as Family Promise, Gas Vouchers, the Community Garden, hosting AA meetings, etc.) Despite membership declines, our income has held relatively stable. Although expenses sometimes exceed new income, we have savings. Plymouth contributes about 6% of its budget to the UCC; and our largest expenditure is for personnel. If we proceed with two new boilers and heat pumps and fire alarm system in the coming year, then capital expenditures will be reported as the largest expenditure in 2022.

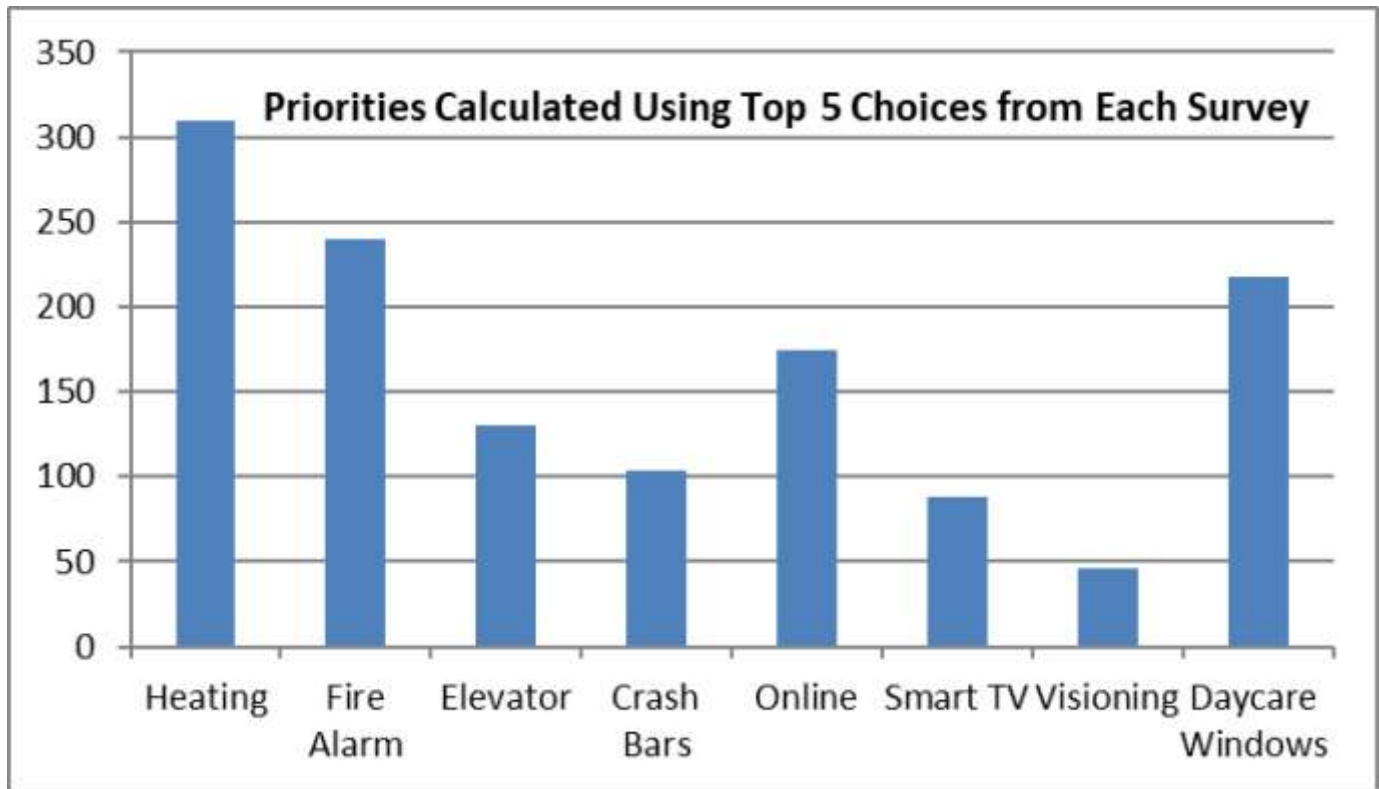
Budgetary Prioritization

Twenty prioritization surveys have been returned from the congregation. The top four priorities were a new heating system, fire alarms, daycare windows, and enhancements to the online experience. Half of the surveys ranked heating system at #1 and almost a third ranked fire alarm at #1. This graph assigns a value to each ranking (#1 = 20 points; #5 = 10 points) in order to compare the concepts numerically.

A number of people added ideas to the mix, including solar panels or alternative heating solutions that avoid fossil fuels, hearing aids in the sanctuary, an outdoor storage shed for Christmas decorations, mowing and pruning, better messaging, addressing needs in the community and the world, salary upgrades, a TV monitor in the rear of the sanctuary, a curriculum purchase for Bible study and/or vacation Bible camp, and consideration of a less expensive visioning process.

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Positioning Plymouth to Thrive

Drawing from savings accounts, the Council will use congregational input to address some of these needs, solicit bids, weigh options, and proceed with caution. At the same time, we must operate on a day-to-day basis within the approved budget. We should also consider our ongoing data collection--attendance, online viewers, social media and website, and other feedback—to focus on providing the kinds of community and worship services that position Plymouth to thrive.

Exciting things are happening at Plymouth Congregational Church, and we plan to expand our reach to the wider community in the coming year. Invite your friends and family to join us on this new adventure!

~ Jan Clinard



Steve and Nancy Michelson
leading Plymouth Singers
practice.



Pat Christian serving
Sunday Fellowship,
Feb. 27, 2022.



A bit of Pat Buell's artwork
on display in the Fireside
Room.



Beautiful Mardi Gras Cake from Sunday Fellowship on February 27, 2022.



Upcoming Events at Plymouth

Tuesday, March 6th at 10:00 a.m.—PCC Women's Fellowship—Fireside Room

Friday, March 10th at 6:00 p.m.—Lenten Lectio Divina with Pastor Charles— Fireside Room

Sunday, March 13th at 10:00 a.m.—Worship— Sanctuary

Sunday, March 13th at 11:15 a.m.—Plymouth Singers Practice—Sanctuary

Wednesday, March 16th at 9:30 a.m.—PCC Council Meeting—Fireside Room

Friday, March 18th at 6:00 p.m.—Lenten Lectio Divina with Pastor Charles—Fireside Room

Sunday, March 20th at 10:00 a.m.—Worship with Guest Speaker from HARRT— Sanctuary

Sunday, March 20th after worship—Potato Bake and Q&A with HARRT—Fellowship Hall

Friday, March 25th at 6:00 p.m.—Lenten Lectio Divina with Pastor Charles—Fireside Room

Sunday, March 27th at 10:00 a.m.—Worship— Sanctuary

Sunday, March 27th at 11:15 a.m.—Plymouth Singers Practice—Sanctuary

Friday, April 1st at 6:00 p.m.—Lenten Lectio Divina with Pastor Charles—Fireside Room

In Our Prayers Today

At Home: Giles Walker, Margy Kohl, Jay Shelden, Greg Bolin, and Nathan Schreder as they go through cancer treatment. Lorraine Hopgood, for continued recovery.

Touchmark: Evelyn Nelson, and Art and Clara Gilreath; **Hunter's Point:** Marlyce Taylor; Edgewood: Ed Cauty

Continued prayers for Kevin and his family, the family of Margaret Miller, and the people of Ukraine.

To add someone to the prayer list, please call the church office at 442-9883 or email pccofficemgr@gmail.com.

Bridging Divides: Opportunities to Learn



Virtual Cooking Class—March 23rd

Learn how to cook a Ukrainian dish AND join Soft Landing Missoula in supporting World Central Kitchen, a fantastic organization that is on the ground in Poland and Ukraine, feeding displaced people. Register here: <https://unitedweeatmt.org/products/virtual-cooking-class>



<https://unitedweeatmt.org/>



<https://softlandingmissoula.org/>



<https://wck.org/>

Holy Joe's Café, a coffee house ministry that supports U.S. military chaplains, is seeing a urgent increase in the need for support as U.S. military troops are deployed to Europe in response to the Russia–Ukraine conflict.

Holy Joe's began as a ministry of First Congregational Church of Wallingford, Conn., in 2006. The cafe provides coffee to military chaplains to help them make connections with active-duty military personnel.



<https://www.holyjoes.org/>

Plymouth Church, U.C.C.

400 S. Oakes St.

Helena, MT 59601

Plymouth's Mission is to nurture our congregation and the wider community with acts of love and a vision of God's image in all things.



Plymouth Church

400 S. Oakes St.

Helena, MT 59601

Office Hours

- Pastor Charles Wei: 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m. (Tues. & Thurs.), and by appointment.
- Office Manager Gloria Soja: 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. (Wed.-Thur.)
- Bookkeeper Gail Tronstad by appointment.

Sundays
10:00 a.m. Worship Service
In Person and Online

Contact Us

Church Office: 406.442.9883

Web: www.plymouthmontanaucc.org

Email: pccofficemgr@gmail.com

Also: www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational