

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

August 2022

Treasurer's Report

Greetings from the woods of New England and my joyful family reunion on Silver Lake in Harrisville, NH. Every little town here has its white clapboard and steepled Congregational Church, reminding me of the role these self-governing institutions took in forming our nation's ideals from the earliest days. It leads me, like the meandering path to the lake, to thoughts about our own self-governing responsibilities at Plymouth, and that takes me to a consideration of our by-laws revision process. The council has been discussing the appropriate role of the council and the treasurer in financial oversight of committee expenditures. We want to strike the right balance between being good stewards of the church's resources, supporting creative ideas,

and nurturing new leadership. Those of you who have read and/or discussed the book Fishing Tips have heard the advice (I'm paraphrasing here) to budget for your values. It is also true that we are in the process of several major projects – which we have been saving for prudently for years – but which are depleting our reserves significantly. We do not have to worry about paying our bills, and indeed our heating bills will be lower this winter – reducing our carbon footprint, an important value. All this being said, we are looking to you for your serious consideration of how we go forward as a community to fulfill our mission: nurturing families, promoting community, respecting diversity, encouraging exploration of faith.



Photo by Ed Field

~ Pat Christian, Treasurer

A Note from Pastor Charles

There is so much going on in the world, and in my life, it's making my head spin. There is the ever-present threat of climate change, and the temperatures lately, here in Helena, have been doing a really good job of reminding us about that. There is devastating flooding happening in Kentucky and its neighboring states. Fires are raging in California once again as the years-long drought continues throughout much of the American West and in many other parts of the world.

The politics in this country right now, coupled with yet another pandemic on the horizon, seem like something out of an apocalyptic horror movie. And, I was reminded yet again about the awful suicide rates in this country, especially in the states of Wyoming, Alaska, and Montana. None of this stops us from having to deal with our smaller issues at the church: installing a new boiler and upgraded fire alarm system, not to mention the mini-flood we had a few weeks ago. And, of course, I'm still dealing with my injured shoulder, which reminds me every day that my life will never be the same.

Like I said, it's enough to make my head spin.

So, while I continue to worry about all of this, life goes on. Every week, I feel so blessed to be serving one of the kindest, most-generous, and justice-minded congregations I could have ever hoped to serve. I still look back at my transition to Montana with a sense of awe, the story almost mythological in my mind: from the first email I received from Rev. Marc Stewart, to the impossibly fast interview process with the search committee, to my injury and recovery, and an epic road trip with my parents, during which I got to cross off one of my life's bucket list items: a visit to Arches National Park.

It doesn't make any sense that I'm here, but I am so glad that I am, and will be forever grateful that God called me here. As I drive around exploring my new home, I often take a deep breath and sigh with wonder that I get to live in such a beautiful place. And, while I had some trepidation about moving somewhere that I assumed would be much more conservative, and have much less diversity, than the place that I was coming from, everyone that I've interacted with has been so incredibly welcoming and hospitable. In even the short time that I've been here, already friends have come and gone, but I know I'll make more, and I treasure the time that I get to spend with the friends that I do have.

Life is a mixed bag. It always has been, and always will be. So, while we struggle with all of life's challenges, remember all of the love and the joy that God has given us, too. God's kingdom is not supposed to be filled with worry. It is filled with glory and wonder, and it is all there for us.

~ Pastor Charles

Fishing and Gardening: Barefoot on Holy Ground

There is an interesting remark in Chapter Seven of Rev. John Pentland's book, "Fishing Tips: How Curiosity Shaped a Community of Faith." He speaks of an encounter with a barista who had known hard times and had little occasion to value a relationship with any church. They visited briefly and in the end, the pastor was transformed. He knew that he was "barefoot on holy ground." It happens sometimes, especially when you least expect it. The message for me, at least, is to be open to all possibilities, to all people, in all encounters.

Pat Williams, pictured in Plymouth's Community Garden, recently retired from state government after over 30 years in a variety of capacities ranging from library work to tax return reviews. Pat has her hands full watering, weeding and planning at least four plots of her own. She also mentors the gardeners responsible for the Afghan garden in the kindest most complete and professional way imaginable. She is as close as an email; or as immediate as a chance encounter in the garden in early morning. She is the "barista" among us, an angel not expected. Thank you, Pat, for all your help.

Meanwhile, the second "Fishing Tips" group will wrap up their four-week discussion on Wednesday August 10, 9 to 10:30. You are welcome even if you haven't had time to read the book. Who knows, maybe a chance encounter or someone special will open your eyes to new revelations. We meet in the Fireside Room; snacks and beverages provided.



Moderator's Message

Last month I urged gratitude for rain; this month, I'm not so keen on the heat. My fixation on weather is a result of growing up on a dryland wheat farm, where we depended on snow and rain and feared hail. Although we Montanans expect "weather" events like storms and hot summer days, we must acknowledge that world-wide drought, flooding, fires and rising seas threaten God's beautiful creation. How can we help?

Watching the destruction in Ukraine and hearing concerns about food shortages as Europe's bread basket is bombed and stranded, I've noticed high-rise apartments, even in small Ukrainian towns, preserving productive farmland. Here, we sprawl housing all over our fertile valleys (think Gallatin, Flathead, Lewis and Clark) because we all think we need our own space. Could we love our neighbors better if we lived closer together?

At the fair on Saturday, I was astonished that a free ventriloquist, magic show, and hypnotist could fill a set of bleachers in the hot vendor tent. The loud hypnotist was not only able to draw a crowd, he was also able to talk people into coming forward to be hypnotized and act in whatever foolish way he suggested. Church is free (offering and pledging are optional) and rather than mindless imitation, Pastor Charles asks us to think about our actions. Also at the fair, I confronted an older man who was "interviewing" young people about how they thought their life choices and beliefs would earn them a place in heaven, causing one to cry. How can we attract youth to Plymouth to hear a message of love and inclusion?



Photo by Ed Field

With the remnants of a flooded basement waiting in the Stockade Room for sorting, purging, and re-shelving; parts arriving for a new heating system; and wiring made ready for fire alarms, the church is busy and messy. What's next?

Updating bylaws is in its final stage for congregational approval September 18. The new draft will be posted to the website and copies will be available in mid-August. You are encouraged to ask questions and make suggestions. In addition to updating committee structures and duties, these bylaws encourage committees to engage in long-range planning. Can planning help as we deal with unforeseen events?

If you would like to serve on the Council or on a Committee, let us know. You can help answer these questions.

Blessings,

~ Jan Clinard

Coming Up: 60th Anniversary

Sunday, May 28, 2023

We will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the groundbreaking for Plymouth Congregational Church on Sunday, May 28, 2023. To help us do that, you are invited to share recipes for a church cookbook, as well as stories and memories for a booklet we can hand out. Also, if you have any pictures you would like to share, or if you have any other ideas of how we can celebrate, we welcome all of that! Please send your recipes, stories, and pictures to pccofficemgr@gmail.com.



Photo by [NIPYATA!](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Community Paddles Blazing with Love—August 6th

You're invited to Plymouth Congregational Church's Community Ping Pong Festival/Benefit Fundraiser for Afghan Refugee Families and Children of Helena -- Join us Saturday, August 6th any time between 9am-1pm, downstairs in the Fellowship Hall.

Everyone is invited to come and bring their friends and family to this fun event, a project of Plymouth's Outreach and Social Justice Committee in collaboration with Hands On Global's Afghan Refugee Resettlement Team/HARRT and many other community partners.

In this Festival, ping pong players of all ages and all playing levels will come together for free fun playing (and/or) watching ping pong, the second most popular sport in the world, next to soccer, while giving the Helena community a chance to both have some fun together and also donate some funds to meet some of the pressing needs of Afghan refugee families and children in the Helena area. Donations will be collected to meet some of the pressing needs (food, clothes, shoes, car seats, health care goods, school supplies and more) of the Afghan refugee families and their 11 Afghan children now living in the Helena area.



Facebook Event Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/edit/1416958548800343>

This Festival is an opportunity for all of us to:

- ◇ have fun together, trying our hands in easy, creative, and tricky table tennis games.
- ◇ a chance to meet and warmly welcome Afghan refugee families and their children (11 children here so far)
- ◇ enjoy some music from local musicians playing/singing some songs and leading us in some fun and uplifting sing-alongs, and music from Afghanistan
- ◇ healthy snacks, treats, and a noontime meal that that will be prepared and sold by local Afghan refugee families—including Afghan Bulani (<http://www.afghanistan-culture.com/afghan-bulani.html>), a delicious Afghan appetizer which is often prepared for special guests.
- ◇ Afghan kids (and others) flying new gift kites and selecting some children's books to be presented as gifts
- ◇ and some "celebrity ping pong all-stars" playing for fun with all of us -- including the current Montana women's and men's champions, Lena Conlan and Anders Truelson of Bozeman, Representative Mary Ann Dunwell, Helena Mayor Wilmot Collins, Helena City Commissioner Melinda Reed, Frank Kromkowski (many-time Helena city champion and Montana champion in various divisions), with many others invited.

* All funds collected will go to support our Afghan Refugee Families *

Breakfast Under the Big Sky—August 14th

The annual Breakfast Under the Big Sky is coming up quickly. We are still in need of volunteers to help with set-up, transportation of equipment, and clean-up. Please let me know if you can help!

We hold this event on the meadow next to Holter Lake on Cathy Campbell's ranch. You take Interstate 15 north toward Great Falls and follow the signs to the Gates of the Mountains. You drive through the ranch, and you'll see signs directing you off the road and out to the meadow at the ranch buildings. Breakfast of pancakes, sausage, eggs, coffee and orange juice will be served at 9 a.m. and church will follow at 10 am. Please bring your own chairs.

HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

~ Rosana Skelton



Creation Care and Vegetarian Dinners

On July 25th four of us gathered with Charles at his home for an Israeli-inspired vegetarian dinner, pictured here. As you can see, it was a feast – beautiful and delicious. How kind, right? Yet



one more extension of love from our new pastor! And in addition a reminder that in very small ways, over a period of time, each of us can make a difference in how we care for our planet, Earth.

From avoiding when possible disposable products like paper plates and plastic water bottles, to eating non-meat meals even occasionally, you can make a difference. Thank you, Pastor, for the delicious and gentle reminder.

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 Canty

Continued prayers for Anna Demaree, Ben Sweeney, Athena Blanchard, Judy Strum, Bruce Warren, Saige and James Banlchard, 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.

SAVE THESE DATES!

Saturday, August 6th from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.— Community Paddles Blazing with Love

Sunday, August 14th—Breakfast Under the Big Sky—PCC Worships at Gates of the Mountains.

Monday, August 22nd—Pastor Charles' Birthday

Sunday, September 11th after worship—Fishing Tips Final Cast Luncheon and Discussion

Sunday, September 18th after worship—PCC Congregational Meeting

October—Valerie Hellermann Exhibit and Presentation at Plymouth

November—Jeff Buscher at Plymouth

Creation Care Tips

Reduce Your Trash Load!

Composting is a great way to reduce your trash load and turn food scraps and other compostable items into organic soil nutrients. Curbside residential and business pickup is available in Helena for a very reasonable monthly fee.



<https://406compost.com/>

The collection includes meat, bones, dairy, and other compostable items such as cups, utensils, and dishware!

The material collected is processed and fed to worms by our partners at YES Compost who sell the worm casting, an excellent organic soil nutrient.

BETTER ROOTS COMPOSTING

<https://betterrootscomposting.com/>

- All food scraps including: fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy, processed foods, eggshells, bones, seafood shells, coffee grounds, tea & tea bags
- All yard waste and non-diseased houseplants
- Non-glossy paper, non-glossy cardboard, paper towels, paper bags, paper packaging, newspaper, napkins, tissues, coffee filters, non-dyed cardboard egg cartons (remove all stickers & tape)
- BPI certified products

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

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Also: www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational