

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

September 2022

Coming Home

You can't go home again; that's the old saying right? It's something that I've been wrestling with for over 10 years now, ever since I first left home to go to seminary in 2009. The saying comes from the title of a novel by Thomas Wolfe, published in 1940, after his death. The main character of the story, George Webber, writes a book about his hometown, but the people living there are unhappy with the way they're portrayed. Wolfe wrote about how the passage of time changed things, and how the character of George Webber was never able to go "home again".



The first time I came home from seminary, I was shocked to realize that up until that point, I had spent my entire life in an agricultural area. It was something that I knew intellectually, but it wasn't something that I truly understood until I spent half a year living in the suburbs, and then returned to it. As I drove through the fields of strawberries and celery, through the orchards of avocado, orange, and lemon, it dawned on me that you can't really understand your own childhood until you leave it, and see it with older eyes.

As the years went by, every visit brought with it new changes. Every year, my parents were a little older. A new box store or distribution center would be standing where a field used to be. A place that I remembered from childhood would be gone, and I would be surprised when someone would tell me that it's been gone for years and years and years.

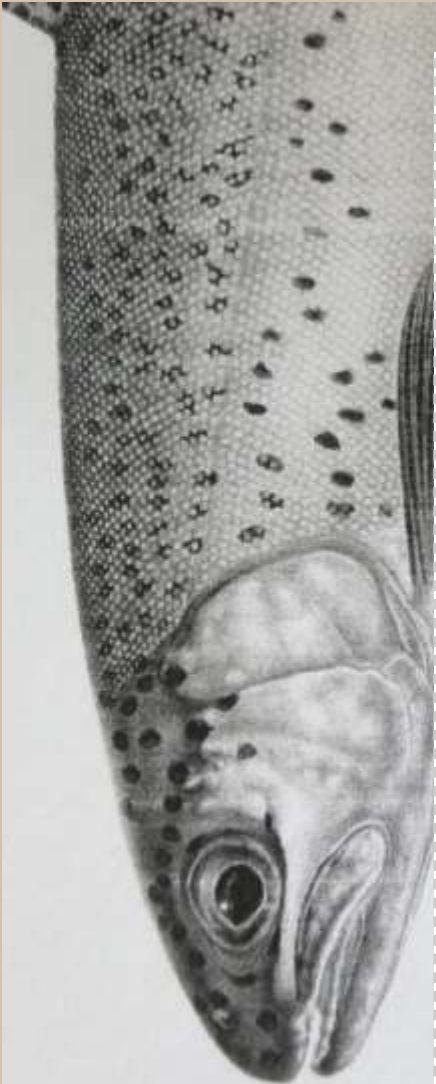
But, even though this has been going on for such a long time, I never really felt like a visitor to my own hometown, because I was still living in the same state, albeit, 400 miles away. I wasn't until I spent almost a year here in Montana that I really felt like a tourist in the place where I had grown up. And, why not? That how millions of other visitors see Southern California every year.

Continued on next page.

Continued from previous page.

I had such a wonderful time with my family while I was on this vacation that I just returned from. We went shopping and sight-seeing, spent way too much time in Los Angeles traffic, and ate at so many restaurants. And, the whole time, I couldn't help but take note of what had changed. You can't go home again, but your memories of home will always be tied to the places where you've lived. And, I realized that I have two homes, now, because I live in Montana, and what really makes a home is the people who you love. My family is in California, but my congregation is in Montana. This is where God brought me, and I love the people here. So now, when I travel between these two places, I know that I'm travelling between two homes. And maybe, I can't "go home again" in the sense of Thomas Wolfe's novel, but regardless of whether I'm in California or Montana, I know that I'll be home, because of the people there.

~ Pastor Charles



Casting Our Nets to the Other Side of the Boat

On Sunday, September 11, following worship, all "fishing" enthusiasts are invited to participate in a luncheon pot-luck and group discussion on September 11th following worship. Focusing on some of the excellent and exciting ideas proposed during the recent "Fishing Tips: How Curiosity Transformed a Community of Faith" book discussion, all are invited to take part. Whether you participated in the book discussions this summer, attended only a few, or meant to participate but didn't get around to reading the book, YOU are encouraged to have lunch and to join in this lively exchange of ideas.

What can happen if Plymouth casts our nets to the other side of the boat? (John 21: 1 – 6)

Let's be curious about and open to the prospects.

Final Cast Luncheon and Discussion

September 11th



Shehecheyanu and Many Blessings

“Blessed are You, Eternal Spirit, who has given us life, sustained us and allowed us to arrive in this moment”. On Friday, August 26th, Julie Bir led those gathered on the steps of Temple Emanu-El in this simple, ancient Hebrew prayer, celebrating the successful purchase of the Temple from the Helena Catholic Diocese. Among the celebrants were not only the officers and board members of the Montana Jewish Project, Bishop Vetter, members of his parish, but also representatives of Helena’s varied protestant denominations, including Plymouth Church. Rebecca Stanfel, board chair, recognized many in the Helena community who assisted with the purchase, including Plymouth. Thank you to all who contributed to the Menorah Project last December which raised nearly \$2000 toward the purchase of the Temple. We wish the best for our Jewish neighbors and friends who begin a new chapter in Helena’s faith community.

Moderator's Message

Seeing smoke billowing from Mount Helena last Sunday, I was anxious to get home, after stopping at a friend's after church—perhaps I would need to evacuate my home! But, when I saw my street lined with pickups sporting logos from multiple fire departments and firetrucks on the access road to the water tower, I felt relief, if the wind didn't change. Neighbors gathered in groups to watch helicopters skillfully maneuver water buckets overhead and after several hours, twenty-some firefighters with sooty faces returned to their pickups to peel off their gear, smeared with red retardant. Young Isaac, a neighbor, handed out popsicles to the exhausted heroes.



Photo by Ed Field

Unplanned events are best addressed by careful planning and adequate resources. Plymouth congregation's long-range plan to replace an old, inefficient, and possibly unreliable boiler has been realized. We can now feel a bit safer with a fire alarm system that calls the fire department. People can now see and hear our online worship services. But, with fewer reserve funds, we may need smaller plans. With ongoing monthly bills and payrolls, we will soon move into a fall pledge drive.

On September 18, after church, the congregation will decide on a pair of recommendations from the Council:

- 1) To call Rev. Charles Wei as our Settled Pastor; and
- 2) To adopt revised bylaws clarifying the roles of committees, including council approval of "long-range planning and budgeting" by committees.

In the meantime, the Council is considering how to approach a couple of "unplanned" situations:

- 1) The daycare is growing and the unused modular tables and chairs stored in Room 7 consume valuable space and block storage. Can we sell the huge oak table and six rawhide chairs in the "stockade" room and move in the more friendly, flexible tables with 12 chairs, all of which could be easily rolled into the Fellowship Hall as needed.
- 2) TDS Telecommunications has offered to buy an easement just east of the Community Garden near Oakes Street for a "nodule cabinet" to enhance internet speeds in the Helena community. Is this revenue a good trade for our space?

My message to you: The Council needs your involvement to make good decisions and insure we have the resources needed to accomplish plans. The congregation needs a robust Council to coordinate the plans of committees and committees need members involved. This fall, two ad hoc committees, one for nominating officers and one for stewardship, should be formed. Would you like to serve?

Blessings, ~ Jan Clinard



What's Faith Got to Do With Ping Pong?

Plymouth and the Outreach and Social Justice Committee in collaboration with Helena Afghan Resettlement Team rocked the community on Saturday August 6 with a ping pong tournament and benefit. Over the course of 4 hours, featuring celebrity players of all abilities, kids, Afghan families, neighbors, friends, and folks from Plymouth, the benefit raised over \$4000. The money will be used to assist 12 Afghan children as they begin public school in Helena this fall. The brain-child of resident ping pong champ, Frank Kromkowski, the event far surpassed our goal and offers some exciting ideas about future programs.

Donations continue to arrive, some from great distances. Be sure to read the note reprinted in another part of this newsletter. We are most grateful to Mayor Wilmot Collins, Rep. Mary Ann Dunwell, KTVH reporter Sam Hoyle, state champions Lena Colan and Anders Truelson as well as 18 co-sponsors who joined us in lending support.





A Letter of Support

My name is John Gage and I live in Missoula, MT.

Since late 2016 I have volunteered with Soft Landings Missoula and the IRC of Missoula, primarily assisting with moving furniture in and out of houses and apartments for their refugee clients.

Lately my work has been with the IRC and their efforts to resettle afghan refugees in Missoula.

Please accept this donation to your church to be specifically used in your efforts to assist the recently arrived Afghan refugees.

I want to thank your church for recognizing the need to assist and be welcoming to these individuals who have gone through so much upheaval in their lives and to show to them that there are loving and caring people in the United States who are willing to help the start new lives in our county.

Thanks—John Gage

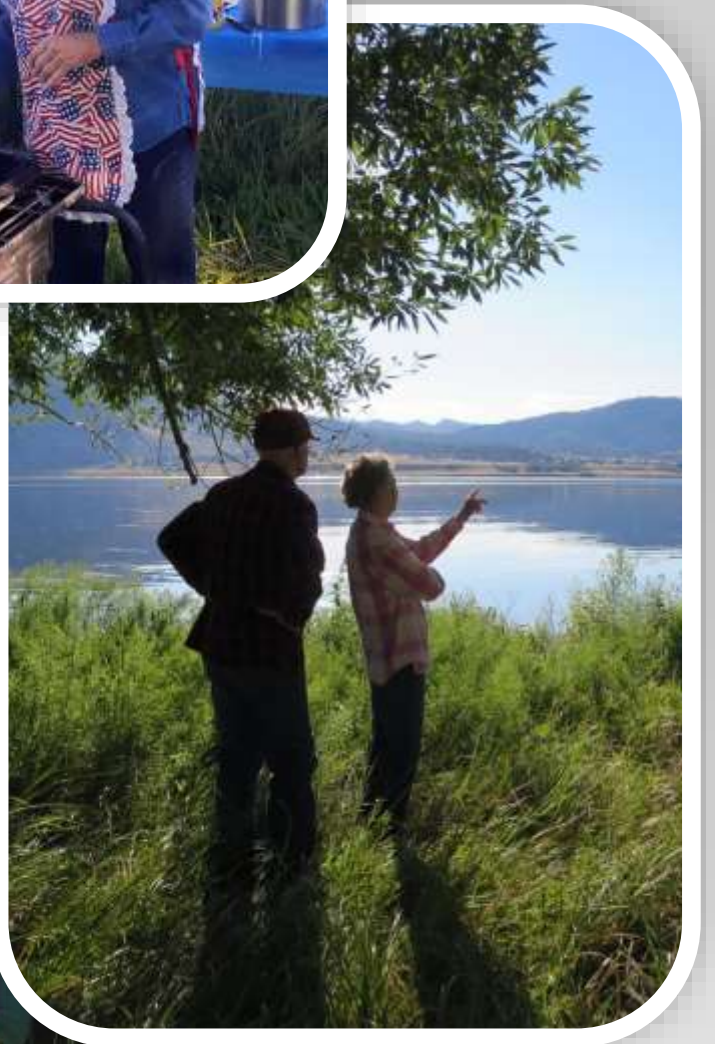


Recruiting Saints, Un-Saintly, and Undecided...

The Outreach and Social Justice Committee will resume our monthly meetings beginning in September. If you are interested in participating in this committee or would like to learn more about it, contact Jennifer Thompson. OSJ is represented on the Church Council and is active in exploring and expanding Plymouth's community service and mission beyond the walls of the church. It's a big job, and we welcome your thoughts.

THANK YOU

Photos from Breakfast Under the Big Sky



Boilers, Fire Alarm Systems, and Gardens!



THANK YOU



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](#)

Music in the Air at Plymouth—September 14th

There will be music in the air around Plymouth Church on Wednesday, September 14th at 10:00 a.m.

This is to be a special treat for teachers and children in the “Little Sprouts” program in our church building.

We appreciate what this program adds to Plymouth and find this a fun way to say thanks for helping us so much when we had our recent basement flood.

Music will come from a calliope provided by Frank Kuntz. Plymouth members and our neighbors are invited to drive by to enjoy the happy music!

SAVE THESE DATES!

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

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, David Donaldson, Sava, 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.

To learn more, visit:
HelenaHabitat.org/volunteer



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

Church Office: 406.442.9883

Web: www.plymouthmontanaucc.org

Email: pccofficemgr@gmail.com

Also: www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational