

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

January 2023

Moderator's Message

Our 2022 seemed to conclude abruptly, perhaps because the long, glorious fall ended with a sudden onslaught of winter—freezing leaves on their branches and blanketing green grass with snow. Now, the New Year begins with the ground exposed, ready for fresh snow. In January, the Plymouth Congregation will read our **annual report and review 2022's accomplishments, then elect Council members and approve a 2023 budget; refreshing leadership and goals for the coming year.**



At the Annual Plymouth Congregational UCC Meeting on January 29, immediately after church, the Council will present a slate of officers for approval: Jan Clinard, Moderator; Lynn Bolin, Vice-Moderator; Jill Van Alstyne, Secretary; Terry Tatchell, Building and Grounds Coordinator; Pat Christian, Financial Affairs Coordinator/Treasurer; and Jennifer Jeffries Thompson, Mission and Outreach Coordinator.

The 2023 budget which will be presented for congregational approval or revision includes a 5% raise for Pastor Charles Wei, salary for a single office manager/bookkeeper position, and an increase for professional janitorial expenses.

The Council has begun looking at the possibility of installing solar panels to offset our **electrical costs, which constitute about 30% of Plymouth's utility bill (\$3-4,000 per year).** Secretary Mary Drysdale contacted providers, secured initial bids, and organized a presentation for several members this summer. Projections for increases in these rates range from 4%-14%. With an upfront cost of \$48-56,000, the payback period for solar panels could be about ten years. Grants or other incentives could help with the cost. The Council will bring questions to the Annual Meeting about whether we want to pursue this possibility, begin a fund-raising campaign, and/or form a "solar" committee.

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New bylaws were designed to invigorate committee work. If you have suggestions for 2023, please communicate your ideas to the appropriate Council member, to the Worship Committee, or ad hoc committee, such as “North Forty.”

A recent article in the New York Times, “One Resolution You Might Just Keep” was about Samuel Johnson’s resolution to resolve each year, despite the fact that he could seldom keep his resolutions. I could understand that sentiment. However, perhaps we can all keep a resolution to support Plymouth Church through the coming year, following our mission “to nurture our congregation and the wider community with acts of love and a vision of God’s image in all things.”

~ Jan Clinard



Fruit to Tamarack House

Thank you to all who eagerly and generously agreed to purchase fruit for the residents of Tamarack House for the year ahead. Within a matter of 10 minutes, all Empty Stockings from the little tree in the Fireside Room were assigned. Tamarack House is located directly behind the church and is a service provided by Spring Meadow Resources. Indeed they are our neighbors in more ways than one, and Plymouth is pleased to be able to provide for and remember our new friends throughout the year. For those of you who signed up, office staff will remind you of your commitment as your month of giving approaches.

Thoughts on Ukraine

You will be pleased to know that Valerie Hellermann, Hands on Global, returned safely from Ukraine at the end of December. Notes from her report are included in this newsletter. Svetlana Prouty, part owner of Sage Gallery in downtown Helena, is traveling to Ukraine to visit family and friends in January. When she returns she will display some of her art in the Fireside Room. If you are interested in making donations either to Hands on Global for the purchase of medical supplies or to assist Lana in her efforts to help resettle refugees, there will be opportunity in February. We will keep you posted.

Excerpts from Valerie Hellerman's Ukraine Report Dec. 2022

Three team members went to Ukraine Dec 1 -15, 2022. We carried over 300 pounds of trauma equipment including intraosseous infusion kits for frontline medics and limb saving orthopedic supplies. Our team planned to take the supplies to Kyiv, but the night before we were scheduled to leave there were 60 missiles launched at Kyiv and the suburbs. Our driver arrived at 6am and advised us that the road was just too dangerous. Through reliable contacts we were put in touch with a volunteer medical delivery team in Chernavitzki that took the supplies and delivered them to the surgeons. These brave Ukrainian drivers risk their own lives to get supplies where needed.

In Chernavitzki, our team returned to an orphanage for whom we provided primary care in April through May of 2022. This orphanage houses 51 disabled children; it had been home to 10 before the war. The institutional budget was for the initial 10 children and has not been increased to accommodate the other 41 kids.

Rolling power outages due to the missile attacks on power stations complicate the conditions here. There is a generator to provide basic lighting, but not enough money for fuel. There was a need for a generator for the washer and dryers. Many of the children had incontinence issues and laundry is essential.

Our team was able to purchase a generator in Romania, get it transferred across the border into Ukraine and we provided \$1000 USD towards diesel fuel to run it. However getting diesel fuel is an issue as most is reserved for the military. It took three days to get an initial delivery.

Due to the inadequate budget providing food is a challenge. Local organizations helped but the director had to constantly work on getting food donations. Hands On Global was able to work with a local Ukrainian food distributor and funded a guaranteed 3 month supply of food (including meat and eggs).

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In addition we took a day to return to Romania and buy flashlights, batteries, power-banks, hats, gloves, battery operated radios and energy bars. We filled the trunk and backseat of the rental car and were able to cross the border with these supplies. They were distributed at the Italian run Warming Center in Chernavitz. This warming center supplies warmth, food and charging stations for anyone. There were limited accommodations for internally displaced people arriving from other parts of Ukraine with no place to go. We were told this number was growing.

When this war is over there will be a tremendous medical need; physical therapy, pain management and psychological care. Hands On Global will be there. Our team is small but one of action and with your help we continue to work “hand to hand and heart to heart”.



Outreach and Social Justice Meeting

OSJ Committee will meet at the church on Friday January 13th at 9:30 AM. Included in our discussion will be Plymouth's efforts to address housing and the unsheltered in our community. Even if you have not participated in the work of this committee before, you are welcome to attend.

Food for God's Love

In honor of the work and vision of Dave Donaldson and his late partner Sava Mathou, Plymouth collected over \$500 to provide meat for God's Love from February through May, a time when their freezers and pantries are low. We are pleased to announce that Town Pump recently awarded Plymouth another \$500 to match the funds already collected, enabling us to do a little more. If you would like to help OSJ Committee members shop and/or deliver food supplies or meals in the months ahead, let Jennifer know.



In Our Community, for Our Neighbors

Plymouth Congregational Church hosted a luncheon get-together for faith leaders on December 15, 2022. United Way's Jeff Buscher, community impact coordinator, led a discussion about homeless in the Helena area - a serious, growing problem, especially at this time of the year.

Included in Jeff's discussion about homeless in Helena and America, Jeff read a series of quotes from deep thinkers about America and the struggles far too many people face in their daily lives.

Here's mine: "No man, woman or child in the United States of America- the wealthiest nation in the world- should go without food on the table, clothes on their backs, health care and a roof over their heads, No One, Period."

Thanks Jeff and United Way of the Lewis and Clark Area for making Housing a Priority and Pastor Charles for taking a leading role in getting the Helena faith community together to address Homeless in Helena.

Thanks also to Plymouth and Jennifer for arranging and hosting lunch, Rosana for always being ready to assist, Frank for his longstanding dedication to Peace and Justice and likewise Plymouth's Social and Justice Committee and to Gloria for caring and support.

~ Chuck Butler, 2023 Stewardship Chair



“Souper” Bowl Fun

Kansas City Chiefs, San Francisco 49ers, Buffalo Bills... Do you have a favorite team? Denver Broncos maybe? The Super Bowl will be February 12th. Starting on Communion Sunday, February 5th, you can “vote” for your favorite team by dropping a non-perishable food item in your team’s box. Stuffing the ballot box is encouraged. After the 12th we will count the food donations to see which team has won. All food items will be donated to Food Share.

After the holidays, donations drop off at the food bank, but the need remains the same. According to the Food Share website, 1 in 5 children and 1 in 5 seniors in Helena are food insecure. Some of the items you might donate could be: canned vegetables, canned fruits, canned meat, cereal, peanut butter, rice, beans, pasta, pasta sauce, cake mix, canned frosting, canned soup, cooking oil, etc.

A Super Bowl tradition in the Mandeville family is to make gorp and watch the game. For fellowship on the 12th, you could bring any dry ingredients and we will share in this tradition by making and sharing our own gorp. Some possibilities are raisins, nuts, M & Ms, etc.

We hope you will join with us in having fun and sharing with our neighbors who need a helping hand.

~ Lucinda Sheldon

Hold the Green Jello

Have you ever thought about your own memorial or funeral service? If you could chose, where would you like that service to take place? What would you include in your obituary? Do you have favorite hymns or scriptures or prayers? As people gather to celebrate your life, what are some ways to remember you and to honor your life? Do you hope that green jello will be available at your memorial luncheon? (Me either...)

“Hold the Green Jello” is a fun and participatory way to think ahead with friends in a small group setting. The class will meet four times in February and is limited in attendance. If you are interested in learning more or signing up, see Jennifer Thompson; together we will determine a time and day to hold class. Summary notes will be held in digital church files for future reference at the conclusion of the class.



Creation Care Tips

Solar?

Thinking about solar panels? Prices for electricity are poised to increase dramatically in the next few years, and solar panels might be what you need to offset some of those costs, while also reducing the amount of fossil fuels we need to burn to light our homes. The church is currently looking at some solar panel options for just that reason, but we are still in the early research stage, so there isn't anything to report yet. Because of several factors, including our electric use and our geographic location, it might turn out that solar panels are not feasible for us. We will keep you updated as we learn more, and let you all know when and if this might be a possibility for Plymouth.

~ Rev Charles Wei



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

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