

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

October 2022

Moderator's Message

Thresholds, the theme of the recent Montana-Northern Wyoming UCC Conference, reflected Rev. Marc Stewart's retirement and search for his replacement. Here at Plymouth, we are on the threshold of installing Pastor Charles, committing support to one another in our spiritual journeys. We are also on the threshold of fall. Despite a lifetime in Montana, I'm never quite ready for chilly mornings and shorter days. Perhaps living on a wheat ranch made the transition easier: the wheat ripened, was harvested, and fields of stubble signaled winter. Our country church celebrated with a harvest dinner and hymns like "Bringing in the Sheaves." Your church council nears completion of some significant work and enters the stewardship and budgeting phase.



In the last break-out Zoom Room of the UCC Conference Annual Meeting my group discussed the future of the Conference. I've adapted some of my notes from that session as they apply to Plymouth:

We are moving ahead as a unified congregation, embracing a new minister and seeing where that takes us. We hope our budget will fund a robust church and an impactful ministry.

Our stories are important, so we need to hear one other, weaving our stories together, remembering that as a church, we share a common history. Although we share common issues and beliefs in the UCC, we understand that we fulfill those beliefs in different ways.

We must find ways to expose our kind of worship and our beliefs to the wider community. Our world is changing; but our church is the solid rock that can get us through these difficult times.

Soon, a Stewardship Committee will ask you to make a financial pledge for 2023 and a Nominating Committee may ask you to serve on the Council. What gifts can you share?

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We've noticed an uptick in the number of online Plymouth worshippers. We hope even more members of our community will hear our message of God's love and affirmation. For those whose summer pursuits have kept you away, welcome back! For those who have winter homes elsewhere, please join us on online in your absence. Plymouth's threshold is wide-open and welcoming for wherever you are on life's journey.

Blessings,

~ Jan Clinard

Afghan Update

Valerie Hellerman, Executive Director of Hands on Global, will provide the sermon meditation on Sunday, October 2. She will speak to us this time about her experiences in Ukraine, where she served with a medical team during the first couple weeks of the engagement.

When she is not providing for and working with many refugee camps throughout the world, Valerie is especially busy attending to the needs of the growing Afghan presence in Helena. She mentioned recently that there will be new families arriving soon, including 18 children and 2 newborns by the end of the month.

Of the funds raised during the ping pong benefit, Plymouth reserved \$1500 to purchase new winter coats, hats, gloves, and boots for the children. If you are willing and interested in adding to this reserve, your gift will be greatly appreciated.

Checks can be made to Plymouth, with Winter Wear for Kids in the memo section. Local musician Judy Fjell will be providing a benefit concert at Plymouth on Sunday, October 9th. The funds raised at that time will also contribute to the winter fund.

Take time to enjoy Valerie's paintings now on display in the Fireside Room. In between her nursing assignments in refugee camps, Valerie relaxes by painting portraits of refugees she has come to know.



Giving to Plymouth "...with what we have"

It's that time of the church year, again, the time to make your 'giving' Pledge for 2023.

It is no accident in the life of the church that Pledge time is in the fall, just as we approach the day of Giving Thanks. In fact, the so-called Pledge 'commitment' Day is the Sunday before Thanksgiving, Sunday, November 20th.

Of course, it would be especially nice to have our Pledges made before November 20th, as the Board works on developing the church budget for 2023.

As I noted on Sunday September 25, Giving to Church is very personal.

I like this statement of Stewardship of Life from the United Church of Christ about Giving: "Stewardship, simply put, is what we do with what we have".

I read it for the Congregation, and it repeat here, as I like its meaning, and hope you do too. Think about it and what it means to you and Plymouth then join in Giving to support our church "... with What We Have!".

Watch for an envelope from Plymouth in "snail mail" that will have a Pledge form for you to complete and return to church. And, please don't mistake the Plymouth envelope from one for another request for a political contribution.

Submitted by Chuck Butler, Stewardship Chair 2023



“Fishing Tips” Tips

Thanks to all of you who participated in the “Fishing Tips” Potluck and Review after worship on September 11. With Pastor Charles orchestrating, Pat Christian and Jennifer Thompson presented three discussion topics for the group to discuss. Of the many ideas suggested during our summer read, the full group responded to three over-arching challenges.

- 1) **Pentland writes: “Pay for what you want, not what you have. Budget for growth”.**

Pat asked, “If money were no object, what would you wish for Plymouth?”

- 2) **Pentland writes: “Say who you are.”**

Charles asked, “What tagline do you propose that describes Plymouth?”

- 3) **Pentland writes: “Connect to culture and pay it forward.”**

Jennifer asked, “What are your creative ideas about and hope for the north side lower level?”

If you were unable to attend the potluck and have some ideas to offer, contact Charles. Liz Gundersen, Pat, Jennifer and Charles will meet on Thursday September 29 to review the many excellent remarks and to propose an agenda.



A Change in the Weather

A few weeks ago, I came to the office, expecting it to be another hot Montana summer day. But, that evening, as I was walking to my car to go home, I noticed there was a cold wind blowing. It was a welcome relief from the heat, but I was shocked at the abrupt drop in temperature. The seasons were changing, and it was a poignant reminder of all of the other changes that are happening around us.



I'm fast approaching my one-year anniversary with Plymouth Congregational Church, and I am so grateful that the congregation voted at a congregational meeting two Sundays ago to call me as their settled minister. I can't believe how quickly a year has gone by! It's surprising how quickly a person can become acclimated to a place, especially a place as wonderful as Helena, filled with people as wonderful as the people in Helena. I have truly enjoyed my time here so far, and I look forward to all of the wonderful things we're going to do together.

During that same congregational meeting, the church voted to adopt the new bylaws that the council has been working on updating the last several months. While the bylaws don't do much to change the day-to-day operations of the church, they are significantly different from the previous bylaws, and reflect the way things have been done at the church for quite some time. It was an important change that we needed to make, and the congregation bravely stepped into this change without the hand-wringing or bullheadedness that often accompanies these kinds of organizational shifts.

Another change heading our way is new leadership at the conference level. A search committee is currently accepting applicants for a new conference minister, and whoever this new person will be is likely going to bring with them a new vision and leadership style. Now is the time that we have to ask ourselves what we want the future of our conference to look like, what we want our relationship with the new conference minister to look like, and to communicate all of that clearly with this new person.

There is a lot of talk within the conference about the shrinking sizes and advancing ages of the congregations here, often spoken of with tones of inevitability. While these comments can be discouraging, there are also voices of hope, people who understand that change is inevitable, but not necessarily bad. Sometimes, you need to shed your old skin in order to become something new. As someone who is very new to the conference, I know I didn't come here to spectate at the last hurrah of a great party coming to its end. I am not ready to turn off the

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lights. There is so much energy here right now at Plymouth, and I think we can be an example to the rest of the conference for what engagement with the wider community can look like. God still has a lot of work for us to do, not only as a congregation, but as a conference, and I for one think we are up to the challenge. I hope you will join me in welcoming our new conference minister when they arrive, and join me in letting them know that this isn't the end of the party, but a chance to do something exciting and new. God isn't done with us yet!

A Note from Dr. Steve Michelson

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Rev. Wei, the church administrators and the people of Plymouth Congregational Church for having the confidence and trust in Nancy and I to lead the music in worship each Sunday. It's been a blessing to help choose and organize the music each week in order to create a worship service that is, hopefully, inspirational and meaningful.

My father was an American Baptist minister (as differentiated from Southern Baptists!) so I grew up regularly attending THREE church services each week—Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings and Wednesday night Prayer Meetings (Things certainly have changed, haven't they!). Those services included several hymns from the Baptist hymnal, always accompanied by my mother on piano. At the Sunday evening services, my dad would ask people to raise their hands if they had a favorite hymn, then he'd call on several of them and we'd sing one verse of those hymns—a good old-fashioned “hymn-sing.” The folks in attendance at these services would sing very heartily because of their familiarity with the hymns. I would join in with my small, not-so-great voice without really thinking about the words I was singing. However, I DID learn hundreds of hymn melodies and really grew to love many of those hymns.

As I became more proficient on the piano, having formally started piano lessons with my mother at age four, I learned how to read piano music at sight (i.e. before practicing the music) by opening a hymnbook and just playing some hymns, without being overly concerned about mistakes and not stopping to correct them. It wasn't long before I was allowed to accompany the hymns at the Sunday evening and Wednesday night services, which of course made me feel pretty important. However, in accompanying the hymns I still didn't pay much attention to the words of the hymns and their relevance to my Christian faith.

Throughout my choral music conducting career, I conducted choirs and handbell choirs in the churches for which I was the music director. I was never given the responsibility for hymn selection each week as Nancy and I are asked to do here at Plymouth Congregational. Each week

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Pastor Charles gives us the scripture readings for that Sunday and suggests several themes that are represented in the scripture readings. We then use the New Century Hymnal, the Chalice Hymnal, the Covenant Hymnal, the Sing! hymnal, and several other hymnbooks that we have accumulated throughout our years of church service. The NCH, the Chalice Hymnal and the Covenant Hymnal have several thematic indexes, organized in different ways to suggest songs representing various scriptures from the Old and New Testaments. As you might imagine, this is a fairly time-consuming process because we always want to choose the “perfect” hymns that represent the scriptures and themes of the week, but that are also familiar to congregants, are inspiring, and are fun to sing.

Until I began this music selection process, I hadn’t really thought a great deal about the hymn meanings or messages. Now, as I’m looking for relevant hymns each Sunday, I’m finding that hymn texts are amazingly meaningful and relevant to my Christian faith, that they speak to me in a way I couldn’t verbalize myself and are not as out-of-date or corny as I might have thought earlier in my life. What a revelation!! For instance, after studying the hymn “What A Friend I have in Jesus,” I found the three verses to be so profound that I made a copy of the hymn and put it on my living room end table so I could read the verses on a regular basis. Some examples from that hymn: *“What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer,” “Have we trials and temptations?” “Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear,” “Jesus knows our every weakness,” “Do your friends despise, forsake you?” “Jesus’ arms will take and shield you,” “Are you weak and heavy laden?”* and *“You will find a solace there.”* What great words, very comforting and reassuring, and yet how many times have we sung those words without thinking about what they mean for our own lives?

My challenge to all of you regarding hymn-singing is to view the words of the hymns each week in a different way, perhaps as to how they pertain to your own lives, perhaps **how they pertain to the scripture readings or Pastor Wei’s Pastoral Reflections or even** why those particular hymns were chosen that week. A different perspective might help to inspire you to sing the hymns in a more robust and enthusiastic way.

The Pre-Service and Prelude music each week include hymns that we’ve chosen for the service that day, performed and recorded by amateur and professional choirs and instrumentalists. We do this to give you a subliminal introduction to hymns that might be unfamiliar to you. We try not to play the pre-service music too loudly because that’s a time to greet, socialize and reacquaint yourselves with friends and introduce yourselves to people you might not know. Most hymns are not difficult to learn once you’ve heard them so we’re not too concerned about introducing new hymns. One of Plymouth Congregational Church’s former ministers, Roger Lynn, was really helpful by keeping a record of the hymns this congregation sang from the NCH, the Chalice hymnal and the Sing! hymnal, so we have some idea of the hymns many of you have sung. We will also be using the choir and individual singers to lead hymns throughout the year so you might have more confidence to add your voices to theirs. I should mention that Nancy and I have been very encouraged by your willingness to learn new hymns and by the un

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usually enthusiastic hymn-singing in this church. If you are unfamiliar with a hymn, one suggestion would be to just read the words while others are singing them; perhaps the hymn will have some meaning for you in this way.

If you have a favorite hymn you would like us to sing or any other ideas or suggestions for improving the music each Sunday, please don't hesitate to text or email us, or just tell us in person what you're thoughts are. We certainly welcome your input.

Steve

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Nancy's info:

(949) 351-5029

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Save the Date—Installation of Rev. Charles Wei

Rev. Charles Wei will be installed as the settled pastor of Plymouth Congregational church on November 6, 2022, at 3:00 p.m. Social hour with light refreshments will be held at 4:00 p.m. You are all invited to help us celebrate!

Women's Fellowship Meeting

Fall is here and it's time to begin Women's Fellowship meetings again. Our October meeting will be Tuesday, October 11th at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room. Sunny Ray will have the program and treats. We will discuss monthly meetings, sign up for monthly programs and treats, and discuss our 60th anniversary and how we can help. It will be fun to get together and catch up with each other. See you October 11th!

~ Sunny Ray Mandeville



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](#)

SAVE THESE DATES!

October—Valerie Hellermann Exhibit and Presentation at Plymouth

Sunday, October 9th at 3:00 p.m.—Judy Fjell Concert for Hands on Global—Sanctuary

Tuesday, October 11th at 10:00 a.m.—Plymouth Women's Fellowship—Fireside Room

Wednesday, October 19th at 1:30 p.m.—PCC Council Meeting—Fireside Room

In Our Prayers Today

At Home: Giles Walker, 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; Jim and Doris Powell.

Edgewood: Ed Canty

Prayers for David Donaldson and family in their grief over the death of Sava. Continued prayers for Anna Demaree, Ben Sweeney, and Jeff Alberta.

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 and Share



Community Opening and Sukkot Celebration

- ~Learn about Sukkot and help us decorate the sukkah~
- ~Celebrate the new building of Montana Jewish Project!~
- ~Activities for all ages ~ Light refreshments~

Celebrate with MJP at Helena's historic synagogue!

Sunday, October 9 from 4-6pm

Temple Emanu-El

515 Ewing St, Helena, MT 59601



Creation Care Tips

UCC Green Team!

Did you know that Plymouth Congregational Church is part of the Green Team of the Montana/Northern Wyoming Conference? We meet every month to talk about the different things that our churches are doing to help take better care of God's creation. I've enjoyed sharing with the group about our Let's Talk: Creation Care series, the success of the community garden on our property, and the fun Meatless Monday dinners that we had. Meanwhile, I get to hear about the seed banks, pollinator gardens, and tree plantings that the other churches are doing.

If you have a heart for creation justice, and would like to get to know some of the other folks in the conference, we are always looking for some fresh faces. Please let me know if you would be interested in being part of the group!

~ 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

Contact Us

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Also: www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational