

# Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

August 2023

## The Baptism of Christ (Part 4)



This is the fourth article in my series about my mural, Faith, Hope, & Love, which is currently on display in the Fireside Room. If you haven't seen the first three articles, I encourage you to read those first. The section I will be describing in this article is the one right in the center, the one that started it all, The Baptism of Christ.

I created this mosaic as a part of my concentration in Christian Spirituality. Students were required to complete a 6-month long project, separate from the classes required for the concentration. I asked if I could install a mosaic somewhere on the San Francisco Theological Seminary campus for my project, and the program leaders agreed.

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The baptism of Christ was the scene that first entered my mind when I considered creating this mosaic, because I liked how all three **members of the Trinity were present. It's one of the few times that** this occurs in the Bible. After exploring the campus, I decided the best place for this mosaic would be the back wall of what was the student coffee shop called Holy Grounds. The wall was painted a horrible pumpkin orange, and I thought I would be doing everyone a favor by covering it with a mosaic. But, the wall was over thirty feet long, and I thought it might look a little strange if there was a mosaic in the middle of it. I started to wonder about the possibility of covering the entire wall. Having never done a mosaic that large before, I naively thought the project would take about a year. It ended up taking three. But, when it was done, I was so glad to have completed such a massive piece of art, and the lessons that I learned along the way changed my life.



As the person who created the mural, it's obvious to me that this is the first section that I worked on. The design is more elaborate than the rest of the mural, and the representations of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Creator are too small. If I could go back and do it again, I would make these figures larger and easier to see. The figure of Jesus sits at the exact center of the entire mural, and I used a patterned orange and gold ceramic for his body, which I also used for his body in the Sermon on the Mount, The Last Supper, and his face in the Ascension. I also used it for the bread in The Last Supper. Jesus stands in the Jordan River, which flows down into the foreground of the scene. Within the waves of the water is the third hidden ichthus, the fish which is a symbol of the church.

In order to create this mosaic, I first sketched out rough drawings on the wall with chalk. My friends though it would be funny to add little drawings of their own, which included stick figures of themselves, so I immortalized one of them as a stick figure in the trees to the right of the river. The root of the larger tree trunk points to this stick figure, just to its right, with a green oval head, and a body formed from the lines of grout.

I've always loved looking for hidden Mickeys at Disneyland, the stylized shape of Mickey Mouse's head hidden throughout the park, and so I decided I wanted a hidden Mickey of my own. This is also hidden in the trees, and going from left to right, Mickey's head is the second round green shape, with two more round green shapes forming his ears on top of it.

About eight inches directly above Jesus is the form of a dove descending upon him, the Holy Spirit, and above that, at the very top, is a hand pointing down, representing the Creator. Beams of light come down from this hand, made of yellow glass and mirror.

There is a large circle of shinier mosaic pieces, including glass beads, mirror, and pieces of tile with interesting colors and textures. This was supposed to represent the power of Christ emanating out in the world, which I suppose it still does. But, when I stepped back to look at this section after it was complete, I realized it could also be an "O", which made me think that I could hide words in the mosaic, as well. And so, the "O" became the "O" in "LOVE", and after hiding the words "Faith" and "HOPE" in the mosaic, I realized that the mosaic had a name.

Next month, we will look at The Last Supper.

~ Rev. Charles Wei

## Moderator's Message

Last Wednesday night, beginning about 10, I started hearing a loud obnoxious noise—perhaps a cross between a buzzer and a siren—intermittently every 15-20 minutes. I would jump out of bed to try and figure out where it was coming from and then it would stop. Returning to bed, I would begin to doze, only to be awakened again. After about two hours of this madness, my cat wanted out. Finally around 3:30 a.m., the noise persisted and I followed it to the smoke detector hard-wired in the upstairs hallway. I got a stool; then a step-ladder; and finally the 8-foot ladder hanging in the garage. The alarm held firmly to the ceiling and the noise was unbearable up close. I ran for a screwdriver, then a pair of pliers, and finally—mercifully—it came down.



Perhaps that old smoke detector was sick of smoke from distant fires. Perhaps it was just too hot, without air conditioning. Perhaps it was some kind of strange message to me about the fire alarm situation in my church.

I spent the first week of July on Flathead Lake, enjoying a blessed time with my children and grandchildren. However, the lake is over two feet below full pool, meaning about half of the boat-owners can no longer use their docks. Apparently, light snowpack melted too soon and too fast and there just isn't enough water in the rivers. That's truly alarming.

I pray my "night of the alarm" doesn't portend an August with raging forest fires and smoke-filled air. However, as I write, it's sprinkling, the air is cool and clean, my flowers are profuse, and the sky is a gorgeous mix of pink and blue. I expect to sleep well.

~ Jan Clinard



# Creation Care Tips

## Ways to Care for Creation Food & Water

### Reduce food waste

- Plan ahead
- Use up what you have in the fridge, pantry, and freezer
- Buy only food you need
- Learn recipes for soups, smoothies, & casseroles to use up leftovers
- If you have too much, share it!

### Save water

- Shorter showers
- Turn off tap when brushing your teeth
- Keep a pitcher of water in the fridge instead of running water till the water gets cold
- Save your rinse water from doing dishes and use it on your plants
- Install a rain barrel
- Fix any dripping taps

### Compost!

### Plant something

- Herbs in your windowsill
- A garden or tree
- Support programs that plant in your community

What creative ways can you come up with?



# JUST COFFEE MINISTRY

## Cafe Justo Report

In 1986, Pastor Mark Adams, a Presbyterian Pastor in Douglas, Arizona started his ministry and the idea that some Mexican families could be encouraged to provide for themselves and their families if they could own and operate their own coffee growing farms and roasting facilities as a "co-op," marketing their home grown, organic coffee product directly to churches, other non-profit organizations, and others within the United States. In this manner fewer members of their households would have to undertake the perilous journey crossing the U.S. border in the hope of finding jobs that could support their families back home.



Today in 2023 the Just Coffee or Cafe Justo non-profit organization, owned and operated by 22 Mexican families, grows and roasts organic coffee. Most of the families are located in Chiapas, southern Mexico. Coffee beans are transported north to Aqua Prieta, Sonora, where they are roasted, ground, and packaged just across the border from Arizona.

Plymouth has supported Cafe Justo for over 20 years, inspired by Pastor Randy Mayer (son of Dick and Florence Mayer) of The Good Shepherd UCC in Sahuarita, Arizona (about 35 miles north of the border). Plymouth does not profit from any coffee sales. All proceeds are used to purchase more coffee and support more families. One pound bags are \$10 each.

If you have any questions or would like to buy your coffee from us, please contact Dick Mayer or Gus Byrom of our congregation. Thank you for supporting this worthwhile mission.



## Volunteering for Family Promise

Message from our Vice-Moderator

Family Promise is an organization that is “Helping Children & Their Families Overcome Homelessness.” Plymouth is one of many churches and organizations that provide volunteers. The families work hard to get into and to stay in the program. Meals, showers, day care, and other needs, are provided for them at the Day Center.

Our duties are so easy. We just show up at First Christian Church at 7pm, greet families as they return for the night, lock the door and go to one of the two rooms provided for us and go to sleep. In the morning the families usually leave around 7am and then you can lock up and leave. We provide our own sleeping linens.

I encourage everyone to consider volunteering for an overnight stay the next time Plymouth is asked to participate.

~Lynn Bolin

# FAMILY PROMISE

Transforming the lives of families experiencing homelessness.

Because every child deserves a home.

## In Our Prayers Today

At Home: Giles Walker, Margy Kohl, Gus and Brenda Byrom, Greg Bolin, Nathan Schreder, Dianne Senne, and Dianne Wei as they go through cancer treatment. Loraine Hopgood, for continued recovery.

Touchmark: Evelyn Nelson and Art Gilreath.

Edgewood: Ed Canty / **Hunter's Point:** Marlyce Taylor; Jim and Doris Powell.

Special Request: For Claire Crosby, Kelly Murphy, and Michael Blanchard and his family.

We remember Rachel Kathleen Kromkowski, beloved daughter of Carol and Frank.

Prayers for us and the families of Andy Tran, Ray Kilius, and all the victims of gun violence, as we mourn the loss of our loved ones.

*To add someone to the prayer list, please call the church office at 442-9883 or email [pccofficemgr@gmail.com](mailto:pccofficemgr@gmail.com).*



John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled, **neither let it be afraid.**”




**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**Conference-Wide Workshop on Planned Giving**  
Friday, September 29  
11:00 am – 4 pm  
First Congregational UCC  
Great Falls, MT

The event will be held in-person (preferable) and on Zoom

Facilitator is The Rev. Andrew Warner  
UCC Generosity Outreach Officer  
Director of Development for the Wisconsin Conference

Who should participate:

Individuals interested in learning more about planned giving  
Church stewardship and finance leaders  
Church stewardship committees



Registration information will be coming soon.

From the Outreach and Social Justice Committee (OSJ)



THANK YOU TOWN PUMP CHARITABLE FOUNDATION!!!



**“We are pleased to inform you that the Board of Directors has approved your grant request for “Rough Sleepers: The Faces of Unsheltered People”. The grant amount approved is \$7000. Our Board joins me in commending you and**

**Plymouth for your generosity of spirit and dedication of time and effort to your Montana community...”**

The photo exhibit proposed will consist of ten black and white photo images of unsheltered men, women and families living without permanent shelter in Helena. Participants will be interviewed and photographed in August. The exhibit is designed to travel to a variety of churches and non-profit organizations, beginning with a related program planned at Carroll College during the week of October 9. Plymouth is scheduled to receive the exhibit after that.

Ed Field, photographer, Rev. Dr. Jeff Buscher, interviewer and writer, join Jennifer Jeffries Thompson in preparing the exhibit. If you have questions, contact any member of the OSJ Committee; we are pleased to be part of this exciting project.

#### English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes for Afghan Women

Valerie Hellermann, Hands on Global, met with the OSJ Committee on July 21 to report on ESL classes funded by a recent grant awarded to Plymouth from the UCC Ministry for Refugees and Migration Services. She reported that summer classes are going well and that the children have been busy in summer camps.

We also learned that Hands on Global HARRT (Helena All Refuge Resettlement Team) has been approved by the State Department and the International Rescue Committee to become a co-sponsor for the settlement of vetted refugees from Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our refugee community is growing.

**HARRT is looking for volunteers willing to adopt a family. An example of the “adoption” responsibilities include friendship, driving to appointments, assisting with paperwork, shopping, learning the culture and language, and socializing. Having groups adopt a family strengthens the work of HARRT and our community.**

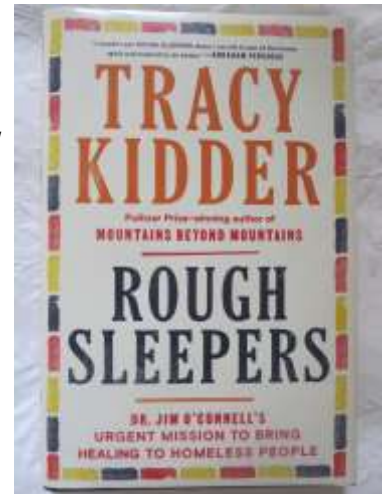
If you are interested or if you have questions, contact Jennifer Jeffries Thompson. She will provide contact information.



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## Rough Sleepers: A Community Conversation about the Unsheltered in Helena

Set your calendars for an exciting series of community conversations regarding issues raised in Tracy Kidder's book, *Rough Sleepers*. All sessions are scheduled for 12 noon (bring a sack lunch). Although not all facilitators are confirmed at this writing, the following will definitely garner some interest.



August 30 at Lewis and Clark County Library  
“Why Now? Historical Origins of the Housing Crisis,” discussion about why homelessness seems like a national crisis now; facilitated by Dr. Pat Christian, Carroll College.

September 6 at Our Place  
“Who Is My Neighbor?” Stories of people living on the streets; facilitated by Theresa Ortega, Good Samaritan, and Rev. Dr. Jeff Buscher, United Way.

September 13 at Temple Emanu-El  
“What’s Education Got to Do With It?” Information from school counselors and administrators about the role of education in addressing homelessness.

September 20 at Covenant United Methodist Church  
“Did you Hear Me? Not in My Backyard, Please” A perspective from local government regarding low-income housing; facilitated by city/county administrators including Commissioner Andy Hunthausen.

September 27 at Plymouth Church – UCC (lunch provided)  
“What About Drugs, Addictions, Mental Health and Other Life Threatening Concerns on the Streets;” facilitated by medical providers.

There are still copies of the book available. Let Charles or Jennifer know if you would like a copy.  
~ Jennifer Jeffries Thompson

### **UPCOMING EVENTS AT PLYMOUTH!**

#### **Breakfast by the Lake**

**August 20, 2023. Breakfast at 9:00 a.m. followed by the service at 10:00 a.m. We encourage carpooling. Suggested donation of \$5.00 to cover the cost of breakfast.**

**Bring a camp chair, hat, and insect repellent.**

## TREASURER'S REPORT—2ND QUARTER

Dear Plymouth family,

Here we are just past the middle of summer – and just past the middle of our fiscal year. We are witnessing God's bounty in the beautiful Montana landscape, and at the farmer's market and perhaps our own gardens. Let's build memories to sustain us through the coming winter. And just as we anticipate the changing of the seasons, we stop to consider where we are in our church budget at the halfway point.

First, a quick refresher on our budget. Sixty-one percent of our revenue comes from pledges, with another 11% from non-pledge donations (collection plate and other spontaneous donations). Twenty-four percent of our revenue comes from our regular building users (daycare, the UUs, AA groups, and a few others). Only 1% comes from what we call "ad hoc" users (one-time or occasional users). This category has increased, which is great!; nevertheless, it is a very small part of our budget. So, how does our revenue situation look at the halfway point? Well, it's a mixed picture. Our pledges are lagging, as we have received 42 percent of what we budgeted for at the halfway point. I know most of our pledgers will come through for us, so I am not frantic (yet). Our total income is good at 54 percent of what we budgeted for, but... that includes our one-time payment from the community garden and interest income from the Montana Community Foundation (not the same as our Endowment Fund, which we are not getting income from since its value fell below \$100,000).

Our expenses are also tracking at the budgeted amount – 52%. However, there are a few areas of concern that we would like to bring to your attention. Our accounting fees continue to be higher than budgeted; we are currently exploring other options. We are also looking at what we spend on contracted services and worship. We do consider cost-cutting measures where we can find them, and I encourage anyone with ideas on how to tighten our belts to share your thoughts with me or anyone on the council. We hope God will provide, but we also believe that God expects us to be good stewards of our resources.



Another reminder from an earlier report, salaries account for 57% of our expenses, with conference expenses 6%, insurance 8% , and city and county assessment 5%. This means three quarters of our expenses are in these categories. We could cut salaries and conference dues but that would be a difficult decision which we should not undertake lightly.

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The beautiful 60th Anniversary event in May brought in about \$3200 after all expenses were paid. The council decided that any funds generated by the event would go towards the fire security system. This system, which we are required to have by the city, cost much more than we anticipated when this process began. To make a long story short, we brought in a contractor to repair the fire suppression system in the kitchen and that cascaded into a requirement for the building to be completely wired with flashing lights and a voice system warning anyone in the building to leave.

While the system is currently functioning (flashing lights if there is a fire), the voice system is not yet working due to back-ordered parts. When the voice system is operative, we will owe an additional \$11,000. In total, the complete system is costing us a daunting amount of approximately \$39,600. Our building reserve fund balance was \$25,092; however, is now around \$8,000 in order to pay down the current balance owed of about \$17,000.

The Endowment Fund at United Church Funds is now at \$98,500. If it goes over \$100,000, we recommend taking \$1000 of it in interest. We also need to think about adding to the sabbatical fund and replenishing the building reserve fund. I will recommend that any funds left at the end of the year be added to those funds.

As we reflect on our financial situation, let us remember that everything we have is a gift from God and that we are called to be good stewards of these resources. Let us continue to give generously and wisely as we work together to further God's kingdom here on earth.

In Christ,

Pat Christian, Treasurer



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## Plymouth Church, U.C.C.

400 S. Oakes St.

Helena, MT 59601

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**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.**



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 Alane Dallas: 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. (Tues.-Thurs.)

### Contact Us

**Church Office:** 406.442.9883

**Web:** [www.plymouthmontanaucc.org](http://www.plymouthmontanaucc.org)

**Email:** [pccofficemgr@gmail.com](mailto:pccofficemgr@gmail.com)

**Also:** [www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational](http://www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational)

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