

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

December 2023

PLYMOUTH'S LABYRINTH



I recently received an email from Rev. Cathy Barker, our neighbor and former pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church, about the labyrinth on the North 40. She shared some of the history of the labyrinth, details of which I, as a newer member of the congregation, was unaware of. As there are several people who are new to the congregation, I asked Cathy if I could share her email with you all, and she agreed. Here is the wonderful story of how the labyrinth was created:

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Hello Charles,

I am happy to report that the Plymouth Labyrinth is restored and ready to be walked! Dick [Weaver] and I have worked quite a bit to clear the weeds and landscaping-gone-rogue so that the path is now evident and walkable. The very best thing now would be for it to be walked frequently (as much as is possible in winter) to discourage the remaining growth. In the spring it would be great to get a team effort to remove the fresh starts which will inevitably come! Please invite your congregation members to walk the labyrinth - it's a wonderful form of meditation.

A bit of history: In May 2014 Plymouth held a community weekend event we called "Spiritual U." We invited people from a variety of spiritual paths to lead workshops. Scott Ward, an artist friend of ours from Seattle, was the keynote on Friday night and also preached on Sunday. In preparation, we had asked Scott to offer 4 designs of labyrinths. They were on display at church for several weeks, and on Easter we asked the congregation members to vote on the one they most wanted to have in the "North 40." The winner was one of Scott's original designs, the four spirals. He created it with two entrances "because the UCC has multiple ways to come in." As far as I know, this is the only labyrinth of this design! People were invited to bring rocks to the back parking lot, and wow did they respond! "Rock drops" were frequent. Anna Demaree led a project day when we made pavers in Blue Bunny tubs - everyone got behind the project of emptying those tubs!

On Saturday, during Spiritual U, a dozen or more people from the church and the community joined in placing the rocks on the lines that Scott had marked. For the center area, Boyce Fowler ran home and brought bricks that he had been saving and had never used. Anna and Julie Demaree worked on the landscaping and water lines. Later that week we had a shooter truck come and spread the gravel along the path - that was amazing. (Years later, when we put rock in our front yard, the shooter truck guy remembered doing the labyrinth, and said it was one of the most interesting jobs he'd ever had!)

Dick and I are grateful that we were part of this huge endeavor, and now we are glad to have done some much-needed maintenance. I'll try to keep better aware of the needs so it doesn't get out of hand again.

Cathy

The labyrinth is a beautiful gift from the congregation of Plymouth's past to the congregation of Plymouth's future. We often see our neighbors using it as well. Maintaining the labyrinth is one of our priorities as we continue to develop ideas about what to do with the North 40, and I hope you will all continue to enjoy it and help us to keep it beautiful for those who will come after us, and for the wider community.

~ Rev. Charles Wei

Moderator's Message

For the third Thanksgiving, I went to Los Angeles to visit my daughter's family, including a seven-year-old grandson. This new tradition includes a night in a beach hotel with a pool, walking along sandy and rocky beaches, collecting seashells, exploring a museum, and eating seafood. Camille likes the idea of establishing traditions for her young family. But with family split and scattered, Christmas can be challenging--every third year, perhaps, a "family tradition" is kept.

At Plymouth, we can count on our traditional Christmas Eve, with the sanctuary's familiar greens, trees, and angels, the story of the Christmas, music and candles. It's a holy night, a night we pray could be peaceful for all.



On the Council and in committees, as the year comes to a close, we will be writing summaries for the 2023 Annual Report and preparing a 2024 budget. We are grateful for all the people who have helped Plymouth nurture the congregation and the community with acts of love.

May your Christmas be filled with peace and joy!

~ Jan Clinard

YOU'RE INVITED!

Blue Christmas Service: The holidays can be a tough time of year when all is not holly and jolly. Dealing with death, illness, or other situations that put a question mark over the future are daily realities, even in Advent. You are welcome to bring a friend and come to this service on Thursday, Dec. 14 at 12:30pm—First Presbyterian Church - 535 N. Ewing St. Blessings, Janet Potter (815-226-8783).

Christmas Brunch Potluck—Sunday, December 17 at 11:30 a.m. after the worship service. Please join us in the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome!

Christmas Eve Services—10:00 a.m. and again at 7:00 p.m. Please join us for the fellowship, the music, and the fun celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ.

In Our Prayers Today

In treatment/healing: Greg Bolin, Gus and Brenda Byrom, Margy Kohl, Karen Mills, Dianne Senne, and Grace Solis.

Bereavement: Claire Crosbey, Marlyce Taylor, and Bob Morgan's family.

Special Prayers: Ed Canty, Art Gilreath, Loraine Hopgood, the people of Israel and Palestine, Evelyn Nelson, Richard & Carol Penfield, Missie Nicole Pope, Jim and Doris Powell, Marlyce Taylor, and Giles Walker

Prayers for us and the families of the victims of war and gun violence, around the world 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.



OUTREACH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Empty Stockings

We are pleased to offer another outreach opportunity on behalf of our friends at Our Place, the day-time shelter run by Good Samaritan on North Main across from the Vision Center. This year the little tree in the Fireside Room will feature paper “crock pots”, one for every month of the year beginning in January 2024. We ask you (or a group of your friends) to retrieve a “crock pot” from the tree, write your name on each paper copy, and return one of the copies to the tree.



Keep the other copy for your records so that you can be reminded of the month in which you plan to deliver a crock pot snack to Our Place. The office will help with reminders, also.

The church now owns two large-sized crock pots which will be available for you to borrow. You may prepare your snack ahead of time, take it to Our Place, and plug it in. Return the following day to retrieve the crock pot. If the transportation part of that plan sounds daunting, never fear. Gus Byrom and Frank Kromkowski have volunteered to shuttle your snack; just let them know.

You may wonder what kind of nourishment would work. Anything warm is our only request. You could provide a large serving of Campbell's Tomato Soup, or perhaps something more complicated that is to your liking (mac-n-cheese, Rosana's Kugel, stew, or baked beans, for example). Granted, portions will be small; we can't expect to feed everyone.

The folks at Our Place are very pleased that Plymouth is offering to provide this outreach service. They ask us to schedule a specific day and time so that they can anticipate the food each month. So with that in mind, we suggest that each serving be prepared and delivered on the third (3rd) Thursday of the month at 11:00 AM. The crock pot should be retrieved the following day before noon. Disposable cups and utensils will be provided, thanks to the support of a grant from Town Pump.

Thank you, thank you, Plymouth people! You are the best.

Status of Emergency Shelter for Helena's Unhoused

Members of the OSJ Committee have been very busy these past months attending a variety of meetings with representatives of the city and area non-profits, all of whom are contributing to practical responses to concerns about emergency shelter for Helena's “rough sleepers”. What follows is a summary of the proposal currently drafted and submitted to the city for ARPA funding. There are no assurances at this time that this effort will be funded, but the proposal is significant, important, and the best response to the crisis to come before our community.

The grant proposal (submitted by Good Samaritan at the end of November) describes a facility to house 25 women. Simple Cremations and other renters currently occupy the back half of Our Place, facing Jackson Street, and are willing to relinquish that space for the purposes of a shelter. The ARPA funds coming from the city total \$100,000 and will be used for staff, fire suppression systems, and some building remodeling (like the addition of showers, etc.) Unlike other facilities in our community that serve or house women **with certain restrictions, this space is described as “low barrier;”** that is, no woman living on the streets can be disqualified from seeking shelter here. Other housing will be found for women with children.



Jennifer Jeffries Thompson

This initiative is considered a Pilot Project; the realities of this program will be used to finesse other applications for support and other opportunities to address the housing crisis in Helena. **It’s going to take a while, but this is an amazing start. We are proud to be part of this effort.** If you would like to offer your comments, you are encouraged to attend either or both upcoming hearings.

Wednesday, December 6, Room 330 at the City-County Building, at 6:00 PM – City Zoning Meeting, and Monday, December 18, Room 330 at the City-County Building at 6:00 PM – City Commission.

Thank you, thank you, Plymouth people! You are the best.

Faces of Our Unsheltered Neighbors

You are cordially invited to attend the Open House at Our Place on Tuesday December 5 from 5 – 7 PM. The photo-exhibit “**Faces of Our Unsheltered Neighbors**”, photos by Ed Field and funded by Town Pump, will be featured in the upstairs community room (not easily accessible for those with mobility issues.) Cookies and beverages will be available, and staff from United Way and Good Samaritan will speak and answer questions about Our Place. Thank you to Amy Demaree, Mary Lou Weddle and Rev. Charles Wei for providing some of the snacks and beverages.

The exhibit will return to Plymouth during the week of December 11th and will be installed in the Fireside Room in time for our many Christmas guests and special events in late December and early January. More on that celebration our next issue.

Special Olympics Dinner

Thank you to all who provided, prepared, served, and set-up tables in preparation for the **Special Olympians on November 10.** Even though the Olympians didn’t show up, **WE DID** and it was fantastic! Rest assured, something amazing will come out of disappointment.

Romans 8:28—“We know that for those who love God, that is, for those who are called according to His purpose, all things are working together for good.”

Stewardship 2024

What We Do with What We Have

Thanks to everyone who submitted pledges for 2024!

Thanks to your generosity - Our Plymouth Stewardship 2024 campaign: "What We Do with What We Have," we did darn great!



There were 58 pledges submitted. These pledges total \$131,060!

Moderator Jan Clinard suggested to me this fall that it would be great if we could get pledges of up to \$130,000. 'Okay,' I said, 'that's a stretch, but we'll try.'

So, thanks to personal stewardship remarks by Lucinda Sheldon, Dewey Skelton, Liz Gunderson and Claire, we exceeded that hoped-for goal.

In the spirit of Thanks-Giving,
Chuck Butler, chair
Stewardship 2024

P.S. Please remember to drop a quarter or two in the collection plate on Sundays - those quarters add up and are used towards our Just Coffee outreach fund.



Women's Fellowship Epiphany Celebration

We've all heard the story about how Epiphany would have been different if women had been the bearers of gifts, rather than those three kings. Offerings would have been diapers and casseroles, rather than gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Ladies, get ready for an Epiphany celebration Plymouth style! Please save, wrap, and bring the worst Christmas present you receive this year (or previous years) and bring it to the January 9th, 2024 meeting.

~Jennifer Jeffries Thompson and Susan Butler

December and January meetings schedule:

Tuesday, December 12th at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room

Tuesday, January 9th at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room

Tuesday, January 23rd at 11:30 at the Overland Express Restaurant

Creation Care Tips

COMPOSTING

The holidays are upon us, which means lots of food! Along with the food we eat comes all of the onion skins, carrot tops, and bones that are left behind. What do we do with all of this?

The best thing to do with green waste is to compost it, either by having it picked up by a green waste service, or composting it yourself. When green waste is sent to a landfill, it has less oxygen around it as it breaks down, so it produces methane, an incredibly potent greenhouse gas. When we compost, the waste items break down in the presence of oxygen, which produces carbon dioxide, instead. Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas, but methane traps as much as 100 times the amount of heat that carbon dioxide does.

So, compost if you can, and help to protect God's creation for future generations.



SEASONS GREETINGS FROM YOUR MUSIC DIRECTORS



This year has gone by too fast! I suppose as one gets older, the realization sets in that time moves quickly and is more precious and significant than at a younger age. It's also possible that if one is involved in enjoyable and rewarding work, time also moves very rapidly. This is certainly the case for Nancy and me in our positions as music directors of Plymouth Congregational Church.

We have come to love and appreciate the people in this church as we've become acquainted with more and more of you. We love working with the Plymouth Singers, whose members are dedicated and loyal to the choir, as well as very committed to the music ministry of our church.

Thank you for the many positive comments that you've made regarding the worship service music and the contribution made by The Plymouth Singers. They've shown tremendous growth in their vocal ability and musicianship, and in their willingness to accept and implement our musical direction. Each has made a unique, individual contribution; we thank them for their positive attitudes, commitment and effort. It is our sincere pleasure to work with these dear friends each week! (MORE ARE WELCOME TO JOIN US AT 9:00 AM EVERY SUNDAY)

During the Advent and Christmas season this month, we'll be including as many of your song choices as possible in the worship services. There were over 30 responses to our questionnaire regarding favorite advent and Christmas hymns, so it'll be difficult to include them all, but one way or another--preludes, hymns, musical interludes, musical reflections, offertories, special music and postludes--we'll do our best to sing or play your favorite hymns. If you don't hear one of your hymn choices, it could be that you missed the Sunday that we presented your songs. The obvious solution to that issue is to attend church every week in December!

We'll be having great musicians every Sunday in December, and Nancy and I are preparing some four-hand piano selections also. Thank you for your tremendous support of the music ministry here, the positive comments and suggestions we receive and your support of the Plymouth Singers. It's our pleasure and privilege to be the music directors here at Plymouth Congregational Church.

~Dr. Steve and Nancy Michelson



THE HELENA CHAMBER SINGERS present
“Christmas Through the Eyes of a Child”

The Helena Chamber Singers, a community choir directed by Dr. Steve Michelson, will be presenting two concerts this month, Sunday, December 17 at 4:30 pm and Monday, December 18 at 7:30 pm. The concerts will be held at Plymouth Congregational Church. Tickets can be purchased at Piccolo’s Music, from HCS choir members, and at the door. Tickets are: Adults \$15, Students \$10, Under 10 Free.

The concert will feature a variety of choral music that should be appealing to all ages. It includes:

- Serious music with beautiful, poetic, and familiar Christmas arrangements,
- Light-hearted Christmas songs presented by soloists, an audience singalong with familiar Christmas songs,
- Three great arrangements from the Christmas classic film “Home Alone,”
- The familiar song “I Wonder As I Wander,” sung by a wonderful soloist with a PowerPoint background of Ed Field’s photo gallery of the unsheltered people of Helena,
- A silent auction with some “pretty cool stuff,” and
- A post-concert reception in the Fireside Room with holiday baked goods from HCS choir members and holiday drinks (non-alcoholic!).

We hope to see you there!



TO APPLAUD OR NOT TO APPLAUD...THAT IS THE QUESTION

Nancy and I believe that applause is an appropriate and welcomed part of a worship service if it is a spontaneous response to an exciting or meaningful performance by guest musicians. However, applause is not welcomed if it is done out of guilt for not applauding or if the musical moment calls for reflection or prayerful meditation instead of a burst of applause. When those reflective moments occur, the most appropriate response that is welcomed by musicians is silence, even though that may seem awkward to some. This is an issue that might never be solved to everyone’s satisfaction unless a musician expressly suggests either verbally or in printed form that a moment of silence might be most appropriate.

For example, with my Helena Chamber Singers concerts, I don’t want our audiences to applaud after every piece because the pieces are relatively short and there are too many songs for which to applaud. As the concert unfolds, applause tends to wane even though the audience is very appreciative of the performance. People simply get tired of applauding! The way this problem is solved is to group songs together in a logical series of two or three songs, and then expressly say in the program, Please refrain from applauding until all songs in the set have been sung. This really works and audiences appreciate the silence after slow, quiet, emotionally-moving pieces, instead of raucous applause after all pieces, regardless of mood or emotion.

Regardless of the preference of musicians, it is still up to the audience to deliver applause when it seems appropriate.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS—December 2023 Update

Hello everyone from the Building and Grounds department. I just have a couple of things to keep you current on. First, the leaky north roof has been replaced, and with a much improved design. The contractor discovered rotten plywood along with other damage when the old roof was torn off. Thanks to Christman Roofing for completing the project before real winter hits.

Our new fire alarm system is now complete with only a software customization needed to get final approval from the Helena Fire Marshal.

Singing Waters Camp has taken ownership of the white Ford van. Dick Weaver has it ready to go for the 2024 camping season.

The maroon colored Dodge van is ready to be sold, so if anyone knows of a potential buyer, please let Alane know.

~That's all for now - Terry Tatchell

WE ARE IN THE LOCAL NEWS—AGAIN!!!

Good Samaritan Applies for Permit for Emergency Shelter in Helena

Homeless and unsheltered folks in Helena are fortunate to have Our Place open for them during the day, and the Emergency Overnight Shelter for women is greatly needed and should make it possible for God's Love to shelter more men, hopefully not all on the floor, as is the situation.

Further, the staff at Our Place are all very caring individuals who respect the homeless folks who drop in!

Look forward to the reception at Our Place on December 5, at 5pm.

Recently, the Women's Fellowship group at Plymouth Congregational Church had a fundraiser to purchase Sleeping Bags that were delivered to Our Place for Street Outreach Coordinator Mark Nay to distribute to Helena's Homeless. More sleeping bags are on the way, thanks to the generosity of Plymouth and many individuals.

Article link: <https://www.ktvh.com/news/helena-news/good-samaritan-applies-for-conditional-use-permit-for-emergency-shelter-in-helena>





WITH A GRATEFUL HEART

THANK YOU

Plymouth Congregational Church is home to a unique and extraordinary group of amazing people who dearly love each other, this church, this community, and beyond—and they show it by generously giving their time, talents, and financial resources in the most selfless ways.

Hats off with heart-felt gratitude to:

Pastor Charles Wei for your leadership steering the PCC ship; the Women's Fellowship Group; all the committees (Church Council, Worship, North 40, Buildings and Grounds, Outreach and Social Justice, Finance, Membership, Stewardship, and the Disciples Group); the Music department [music directors, The Plymouth Singers, and all the guest musicians], to the guest ministers who graciously fill in while Charles is away; and to those folks who serve doing things like the entryway flowers, weed and maintain the flower gardens/labyrinth, sidewalks, decorations and liturgical art/floral arrangements, fixing and cleaning carpets and floors—so many tasks that may not be readily noticed or acknowledged. I applaud you all! I have witnessed that it literally takes a village—the PCC village!

I am delighted and very proud to be your office manager and bookkeeper and look forward to the new year.

~ Alane Dallas



From our Plymouth Congregational Church family to yours: We wish you a joyous and blessed Christmas season!

Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC

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.



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

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Also: www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational

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