

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

April 2024

The Walk to Emmaus

Two weekends ago, I participated in the Walk to Emmaus, a 72-hour retreat of sorts at St. Paul's Methodist Church. For much of the time leading up to the Walk, I assumed that walking was going to be part of the experience, but walking isn't really involved. The name of the event comes from the story of when two friends were walking on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, and the risen Christ appears to them. They don't recognize him at first, even though he walked with them for quite some time, talking about the scriptures with them. It wasn't until he took some bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, that they realized who had been with them all of that time. The hope is that participants on our local Walk to Emmaus will realize that God has always been with them, that they are loved, and that they are part of an ever-growing community.



Although the Walk was only 72 hours, so much happened that it felt like it was so much longer than that! I remember at the end of the second day, thinking about what had happened that morning. It felt like it had happened days ago! It's interesting how our sense of time changes when we're put into new situations. What was especially surprising was my discovery of how dependent I was on time. We were not allowed to use phones, watches, or computers. In fact, for anyone who brought such things, those items were placed into paper bags with the participants' names on them, to be returned after the Walk was over. I never realized how often I was checking my phone and computer to see what time it was until I was no longer able to do that. I don't think I ever got used to it, even if at certain times it was freeing to not be able to check the time. Even if we asked, the organizers would not tell us what time it was; we were entirely dependent on them to wake us up in the morning, tell us when it was time to eat, and when our break times were over. Like I said, in some ways, it was freeing, but it was very strange.

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I didn't really know what to expect on the Walk, as the experience is supposed to be a surprise. And, as much as I want to share all of the wonderful things that happened during the retreat, it is my hope that some of you will someday participate, and I don't want to ruin the surprise.

Over the weekend, there was lots of good food, lots of conversation, lots of self-reflection. Various leaders, both clergy and lay, gave talks ranging from God's grace to living a life in Christ. Some of these leaders had been part of the Walk for decades, others just a year or two. As the only ordained minister participating in the Walk this year, it was also an opportunity for me to teach and guide. The participants were divided into three groups, and I ended up in a group of mostly unchurched men. Suffice it to say, it was a truly wonderful experience, which ended with a sort of graduation/closing ceremony that was more emotional for me than almost any other graduation I had been a part of, even though the whole thing only lasted for three days.

I learned a lot about myself during the Walk, as I'm sure many of the other participants did. The Walk is a different experience for everyone who does it, and a person can only do it once. The hope is that at least some of those who participate in a Walk will return to be the leaders, cooks, organizers, and all of the other volunteers that are required to keep the Walk going. It is truly a beautiful thing that happens in our community, and in communities all over the world, so I hope that we can help it continue.

If you have not participated in a Walk, or in its predecessor, the Cursillo de Chistinandad, I encourage you to think about it. Participants are never charged a fee for participating in the Walk; there are sponsors and donors who help to cover the cost. The Walk is a gift, freely given, with nothing expected in return. If, after the Walk, participants want to become sponsors, donors, or volunteers, then that is a gift that the organizers of the Walk will gladly receive.



Image by Nadarajah from Pixabay

If you are considering participating in the Walk, or if you have any questions about it, please let me know. I would love to sit down and chat with you about it. It was an eye-opening experience for me, filled with wonder, comradery, and yes, surprise, and I think it would be a wonderful and worthwhile experience for anyone who goes.

~ Rev. Charles Wei

Moderator's Message

The Day the Lord Made

On a warm sunny March 20, while using a shedding blade to begin removing the shaggy coat my mare wore all winter, I hoped for another good dump of snow. The pasture was bone dry. On Palm Sunday, many of us were faced with shoveling 8" of heavy, wet snow. Pastor Charles opened the service as he usually does, "This is the day that the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." Our Pastor, who experienced his first Montana winter in 2022, drives his little blue Prius fearlessly through the snow, praises the beauty of a white landscape, and seldom complains about the weather. After a lovely service that included a trumpet and Plymouth Singers, we enjoyed a delicious brunch of soup, salad, and pastries. Rejoice and be glad in these blessings.



~Jan Clinard

2024 Council Members

Jan Clinard—Moderator
Lynn Bolin—Vice Moderator
Gail Tronstad—Treasurer
Jill Van Alstyne—Secretary
Terry Tatchell—Building and Grounds
Gus Byrom—Outreach and Social Justice

Next Council meeting is Thursday, April 25 beginning at 4pm in the Fireside Room.



Charles' mural is again on display in the Fireside Room until mid-April. YAY! Come and view this beautiful artwork while it's here.

Treasurer's Message

Last month the article on Plymouth's finances included a line "Leave Space in Your Budget for a Miracle" and a listing of four miracles. This month the miracles continue:

- Pledges since our February 25 meeting have increased by \$7400.00.
- \$100.00 has been given by members to cover their conference per capital assessment.

Miracles indeed!! To put that in perspective the deficit on our approved budget was \$8210. How very, very generous Plymouth people are in giving time, talents and financial resources. Thank you!

If you are interested, members can still cover the annual \$20 per member UCC conference assessment simply by writing a check to Plymouth and noting the designation. Our 2024 budget for this is \$2,220 and it is paid in 12 monthly installments.

The Zoom subscription that was necessary during Covid and was an annual renewal has been canceled. A savings of \$155.

On a recent Friday I had the opportunity to participate in the PCC weekly cleaning group. What an amazing job Kathe Simons has done in organizing this. It was fun to work with the other crew members and there was so much joy in all of our efforts to make the building shine. I look forward to participating again.

The Finance Committee will meet Wednesday, April 17, at 9:30 a.m. in the Fireside Room. This is an open meeting and anyone interested is welcome to attend.

April Tidbit: What do you get when you combine THE and IRS?

~ Gail Tronstad



I dream of a world where a chicken can cross the road without having his motives questioned!



OUTREACH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Crockpot Ministry

As part of Plymouth's Crockpot Ministry, David and Pam George-Broussard recently served chili Thursday morning, March 21 at Our Place downtown, just north of God's Love. Thank you Pam and David!



David and Pam George-Broussard

Traveling Photo Exhibit

As part of Plymouth's efforts to support awareness of Helena's unsheltered population, the "Faces of Our Unsheltered Neighbors" photo exhibit will shortly be going on display at First Christian Church on Power Street (photography by Ed Field).

Our Committee was active in bringing Renee Bauer of Family Promise to speak before our congregation on March 3. Renee described Family Promise's current project to add some apartments for families at their current Day Center, as well as their recent purchase of First Christian Church to better serve the Helena Family Promise program.

Meeting Schedule

All are welcome to attend our monthly meetings—right now scheduled for the third Sunday of the month (April 21) right after church. Please call anytime with suggestions or email me. ~ Gus Byrom



(406) 202-8768 / gbyromiii@gmail.com

“Faces of Our Unsheltered Neighbors” Photo Exhibit

Upcoming Schedule

- ◆ April—First Christian Church—Disciples of Christ
- ◆ May—Montana Legal Service
- ◆ June or July—University Congregational Church, Missoula,



YOU'RE INVITED!

Summer Camp: You & Me, July 5-8;
Youth Adventures, July 8-15; and
Great Escapes: August 25-30, 2024.

Bible Study: Tuesday, April 9 at 9:00
a.m.—Fireside Room.



Women's Fellowship Group

April meeting schedule:

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

Tuesday, April 23 at 11:30 a.m. at the Overland Express Restaurant

In Our Prayers Today

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

Bereavement: Evelyn Nelson's family. The family of Archie McRee. The family of Bill Worcester. The families of the victims of war, gun violence, and natural disasters.

Special Prayers: Ed Canty, Jude Sebastian Curtis, Art Gilreath, Loraine Hopgood, Richard and Carol Penfield, Jim and Doris Powell, Bob Rasmusson, Giles Walker, and Tom Welty. The people of Israel and Palestine, Russia and Ukraine.

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.*



IN MEMORY OF OUR DEAR FRIEND AND CHARTER MEMBER
EVELYN H. NELSON

Evelyn was born in Great Falls, Montana on January 10, 1928, to Donald and Levora Hoffman. She grew up with her older brother Wallace in their family home in Great Falls, graduating from Great Falls High School in 1945. She died on February 5, 2024, in Helena surrounded by family and friends.

World War II and the Great Depression were a part of her childhood and teenage memories, but so was what she referred to as “her perfect childhood” of riding bikes, playing tennis, and going to the Missouri River. Though money was too tight for her to go to college, she, through a family friend, found an opportunity to attend college through the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps program. She graduated in nursing, with a focus on public health, from the University of Minnesota in 1949. She loved her time at college and kept in touch with her fellow nursing friends throughout her life.



After graduating from college, she returned to Great Falls and started her career as a public health nurse at the Cascade County Public Health Department. While in Great Falls, she agreed to a blind date on St. Patrick’s Day, even though she considered canceling as she had two other date invitations for the same night. However, being true to her word, she went on the date and met her future husband, Ed Nelson.

On August 24, 1952, they married in Great Falls and moved to Missoula. They were happily and adorably married for 57 years, until Ed’s passing in 2009.

In Missoula, Evelyn worked at St. Patrick’s hospital until she and Ed welcomed their first son, Mark in 1955. They moved to Helena in 1958 and embraced daughters Ruth and Jean and son Paul to the family. Once Jean, the youngest, was old enough for kindergarten, Evelyn started working as a nurse for Lewis and Clark County Public Health, then Head Start, and eventually the Helena School District. While her initial motivation to become a nurse was driven by the chance to attend college, she found pride and joy in her nursing career throughout her professional life.

As a mother, she liked to have adventures. Often it would be a trip to the national forest with a quick picnic, or a sudden decision to drive to Great Falls, Missoula, or Bozeman or wherever for the day. Many of the family adventures occurred at Ed and Evelyn’s Swan Lake property – from hunting for huckleberries, hiking, floating down the river, cross-country skiing or finding the remains of historic properties. As a grandmother, she continued to have fun and adventures with her six grandchildren, serving as a wise and positive influence in all their lives.

It was truly a blessing to have a mother like her. Her children and grandchildren could not have asked for a more caring, strong, fun, smart and generous mother, and grandmother. She was always supportive of her children’s journeys with grace and love rather than a desire to control those journeys. One of her favorite quotes was, “This above all; To thine own self be true.”

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In retirement, Ed and Evelyn traveled throughout the United States, visiting every state at least once. They also went to England, Scotland, Puerto Rico, and on a trip through the Panama Canal. They especially loved their trips to Hawaii and Alaska. Much of their travel time was spent visiting their children who had spread from coast to coast.

Evelyn volunteered for the Montana Historical Society for 14 years where, as she filed documents and photos, she learned more about her favorite place in the world, Montana. She also served as a parish nurse for Plymouth Congregational Church, where she and Ed were two of the founding members of the church.

Evelyn was predeceased by her husband Ed and daughter Ruth. She leaves behind her sons Mark Nelson (Robin), Ronan, MT, and Paul Nelson (Page), Everett, WA, her daughter Jean Nelson-Dean (Bill), Redmond, OR and her son-in-law Dan Rinck, Tabernacle, NJ. She will be fondly remembered by her six grandchildren: Micah Kemper (Michael), Kelly Rinck-Leonard (Dakota), Jacob Nelson, Zachary Dean, Mattea Dean, Scott Rinck and three great-grandchildren. She will be deeply missed.



We are a month into our new plan to bring the cleaning of the church in-house. Thanks to a couple dozen willing helpers, the church is being cleaned every week with rotating crews of 4-5 people. We often complete our work in under two hours! The schedule is made up a month at a time and is coordinated with other events at the church so that all areas are sparkling clean for those who use our building. In coordination with the Building and Grounds crew and the Women's Fellowship, we are culling out storage areas, straightening out and labeling kitchen drawers and cabinets, and look forward to more focused spring cleaning in the coming weeks. It's never too late to sign up to help. Thanks to EVERYONE who has been so incredibly helpful and hard-working as we tend to God's house in loving and welcoming ways! ~ Kathe Simons

Moving On

We've been blessed over the past several years to have Pat Christian and Jill and Mark Van Alstyne worshipping with us and serving our congregation in a variety of ways.

Jill and Mark are an exceptionally talented couple. Mark has shared his musical gifts with us on several occasions. Jill has served as the Council Secretary since 2023, worked on the special committee that pursued a solar panel E+ Green Initiative for solar panels at Plymouth, and works with the Helena Interfaith Climate Advocates. Sponsoring the Green Team at Helena High School, Jill has guided the next generation to pursue many climate-friendly initiatives, such as recycling, solar panels, and participation in the Held v. Montana lawsuit to ensure a clean and healthful environment. Jill and Mark are returning to their hometown of Rapid City, South Dakota, after 30 years in Montana. They are moving to be near Jill's mother and brothers and their son Ted, because distance has made it difficult for the family to help each other during times of illness.



Pat Christian and her husband, Dean Pavlakis, both faculty at Carroll



College, have generously shared their expertise and passion with Plymouth and with the wider community in multiple ways during the nine years they've lived in Helena. For example, Pat lent her knowledge to the Rough Sleepers Conversations with an illuminating and well-researched presentation on the origins of the housing crises. Dean led a table at Great Conversations, enlightening participants about Russia and the Russian people. Serving as our Moderator and Treasurer, Pat has also been actively involved with the Montana-Northern Wyoming United Church of Christ Conference. Pat and Dean are also moving home, to Buffalo, New York, where their families of grandchildren are growing.

I feel privileged to have known these couples, engaged in stimulating conversations, and experienced their kindness. I hope to continue our friendships across the miles. However, Plymouth will miss their gifts and their presence during worship and fellowship. We wish them the best as they move eastward in early summer and settle in to enjoy being closer to their families.

~ Jan Clinard, Moderator

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