

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

May 2024

VIGIL FOR THE EARTH

On Saturday, April 20, Plymouth Congregational Church hosted a Vigil for the Earth, the first public event of the newly formed Helena Interfaith Climate Advocates (HICA), a group that I helped form and which Plymouth has been hosting since last Fall. I was not able to participate in the vigil, as I was leading a spiritual practices retreat in Great Falls that day, but I was able to watch the video recording of it, which you can find here: rb.gy/ishdfi



Over 40 people from many different faith backgrounds came together to share their thoughts, and listen to each other's understanding of our relationship to the Earth and why we should take care of her.

The event started with Native American drummers outside by the labyrinth. The vigil then moved into the sanctuary, where a member of the Helena Jewish community shared the haggadah, the text that is read at the Seder on the first two nights of Passover. A leader in the Buddhist community shared a prayer, thanking the Earth for her care of us, and then read the following gatha, which is a short verse or poem used as part of a mindfulness practice or meditation:

Earth brings us to life and nourishes us.
Earth takes us back again.
We are born and we die with every breath.

Members of the Catholic community shared this quote from the *Laudato Si: on care for our common home*, the second encyclical of Pope Francis, "Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God." A leader from the Bahai community spoke about their viewpoint for environmental and social justice, and a member of the Methodist church shared his thoughts from a Christian perspective. Finally, the president of Big Sky UU, Cass Mitchell, helped everyone gain a better understanding of how Unitarians think we should be living on this Earth.

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After listening to the speakers, participants wrote their hopes and dreams for the world onto little pieces of paper, and tied them to an apple tree. This tree will be planted at Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church, with the hope that its fruit will one day feed those in need. At the end of the vigil, participants were invited to walk our labyrinth, to meditate on all of the things they heard.

This somber yet hopeful gathering showed how we can all come together not only to protect our shared home, but to live in harmony with one another, regardless of the paths of our individual spiritual journeys. The Earth is a central component in all faith traditions. Whether this is due to all of the various creation stories, or because of the all ways that the Earth provides for us, we cannot understand humanity without understanding humanity's relationship to the Earth. We are entirely dependent on this planet for our food, water, shelter, and the oxygen that we breathe, so it only makes sense that this dependence shows up in our faith traditions.

Seeing all of these people gathered together gives me hope, which we need if we are going to pull through this. We increasingly hear stories about those who have given up, those who think there is nothing to be done and so choose to ignore this problem. This is why we need faith. This is why we need community. We need the hope that faith and community provide to help keep us going. Faith and community can inspire and motivate us when we're tired, when we're scared, when we feel like all hope is lost. Working together, we can save our planet, and in doing so, save ourselves.

~ Rev. Charles Wei



Moderator's Message

On Saturday, April 20, I welcomed a crowd of people from various faith communities to the Earth Vigil at Plymouth to talk about something that's important to all of us: this planet that we live on. I conveyed Pastor Charles' message "that it is our sacred duty to take care of the Earth, and that doing so reflects the Golden Rule, *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*. By taking care of our planet, we take care of our neighbors. Let's take care of this planet that is our home so that it can take care of us."

I also conveyed a message from our Coordinator of Outreach and Social Justice, Gus Byrom, which included a quote from Robert Lemire: "An enlightened society must save what should be saved as it builds what should be built." Gus added:

"Where do we want to put the people and what do we want to protect? Whether we seek to restore a grass field adjacent to our church or support a land purchase that adds another acre to a vital wildlife corridor, every positive action we take here in Montana now can help maintain the crucial balance."

Plymouth is poised to take a positive action in combatting climate change by installing solar panels on our south-facing roof. Soon, new shingles will replace the aging roofing. Our fundraising campaign is nearing its target. Although we do not yet have an award letter in hand, news about the status of our USB E+ Energy Incentive is positive. We are confident that we will begin collecting solar energy this summer.



New Roof

Happy Spring!

~ Jan Clinard

In Our Prayers Today

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

Bereavement: Margy Kohl's family, Evelyn Nelson's family, and Bob Morgan's family.

Special Prayers: Ed Canty, Chelsey Victoria Curtis, Jude Sebastian Curtis, Art Gilreath, Loraine Hopgood, Jim and Doris Powell, Giles Walker, and the people of Israel, 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.



Treasurer's Report—1st Quarter 2024

Review of first quarter financial reports by the Finance Committee were presented to the church Council during the April meeting and are highlighted below.



Income:

- New income for the first quarter was \$60,132.36. This is 26.32% of budget -- right on target! Thanks to all the renters, members, and friends who made this happen!

Expenses:

- Expenses are also on target for this time of year at 28.5%. This is only slightly above 25% and due to payments of regular budgeted annual fees as well as the final payment for the upgraded fire security system of over \$12,000. We were able to pay this without using funds from savings.

Both income and expenses are in line with expectations for the end of the first quarter.

Additional Discussions / Decisions:

- There are dedicated amounts of cash in the General Operating Account that will be moved to more appropriate areas:
 - * Funeral Assistance at \$2795 will be moved to a new savings account;
 - * Memorials that have been deposited in checking will be moved to the Memorial Savings account for a balance of slightly more than \$23,000 in that account; and
 - * Mission money and funds for the signage on the North Forty will be moved to the Pass-Through checking account for those specific uses when needed.
- The committee had robust discussions about the possibilities of putting some available funds into higher interest rate CDs and the possible use of funds in the UCC Endowment Fund. Consensus of the committee was to not invest in CDs until we know with certainty the total costs for the roofing and solar panels project and when we will be required to make payments.

If you have any questions and/or comments about the above information or finances in general, please ask. Watch the Sunday bulletin for dates of future meetings.

Your support and interest in the budget for Plymouth is appreciated.

~Gail Tronstad (gail.tronstad@gmail.com / 406-459-2444)

Outreach and Social Justice

Hands On Global



The Plymouth Outreach and Social Justice (OSJ) Committee recently hosted Valerie Hellermann of Hands On Global at the regular April meeting. Val inquired whether Plymouth would be interested in hosting jointly with the Big Sky Unitarian Universalists a community education forum next fall focused solely on the history of Israel and Palestine. This forum would ideally include a speaker (or speakers) very knowledgeable about the history of this key area of the Middle East. The forum would not attempt to cover the issues associated with the current struggles in Gaza, but would instead focus on the historical background. The committee agreed to consider this request which would have to be approved by our church council. Prayers and thoughts are most welcome!

Helena Unsheltered

The committee applauded the efforts of the Helena community which to date has raised over \$500,000 toward the purchase of the Quality Inn next to the older KMart site for use as permanent, supportive housing by the United Way.

Family Promise Open House



Members attended the open house celebration on April 7 hosted by Family Promise celebrating the purchase of First Christian Church on Power Street. The church building is intended to serve as Family Promise's day center, while the First Christian congregation will still conduct their regular Sunday services in the sanctuary.



God's Love Meat Delivery



OSJ purchased and delivered meat to God's Love this month. This project was made possible due to money collected in honor of Dave Donaldson and his ministry to God's Love while he lived in Helena and attended Plymouth.

Afghan Outreach Activities



Meet Zia, one of about 12 Afghan children who gathered at the Fairgrounds to celebrate the end of Ramadan with a picnic. The event was sponsored by Hands On Global. Outreach and Social Justice Committee purchased toys for the kids. They had fun with the balls, kites, hula-hoops and frisbees.

Thank you Jennifer Jeffries Thompson for continuing to serve on the OSJ committee and for the wonderful photos and articles.

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

Women's Fellowship Group

May meeting schedule:

Tuesday, May 14 at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room

Tuesday, May 28 at 11:30 a.m. at the Overland Express Restaurant

YOU'RE INVITED!

Bible Study: Tuesday mornings at 9:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room.

Big Sky UUs Sandwich Ministry—Second and fourth Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m.—come help us make PB&J sandwiches for Our Place. Meet in the kitchen.

Helena Chamber Singers upcoming concerts—See page 10 of this Waymarks edition for complete details.



Summer Camps: You & Me: July 5-8; Youth Adventures: July 8-15; Great Escapes: August 25-30. Registration is now open!

Creation Care Tips

Spring Latex Paint Exchange -- City of Helena

Residential Solid Waste Permit holders may drop off and pick up usable latex paint at the City of Helena Transfer Station between May 9 and May 12. Please only bring usable paint to this event.

If you have unusable paint you would like to dispose of, it must be dried out with kitty litter or a quick dry mixture available at paint stores. Once it is completely dry, it can be disposed of in your residential garbage can.

Yard Waste

Did you know that yard waste, when disposed of in your trash can and sent to the landfill, decomposes and contributes to the amount of green house gases released into the atmosphere. Yard waste such as tree limbs, grass clippings and leaves are accepted at the transfer station.

Each year, 4000 tons of yard waste is diverted the county landfill. It is then mixed with biosolids from the Wastewater Treatment Plant and turned into compost available to the Helena community.

- Transfer Station Hours: 8:00am – 4:15pm, seven days a week
- Transfer Station Location: 1975 N Benton Avenue
- Solid Waste Permit: This permit is required to drop off usable latex paint May 9-12 as well as yard waste. You may obtain a permit between the hours of 8:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday, at the Transfer Station. Call 406-447-8082 in advance to obtain information on documents you will need to get the permit.

Commercial composting services available in the Helena area

- 406 Recycling – contact@406recycling.com / 406-449-6008
- Better Roots Composting – info@betterrootscomposting.com / 406-603-0114

FROM YOUR MUSIC DIRECTORS

The Importance of a Choir to the Christian Church



For over half of my professional life as a musician/music educator, I've served several Protestant churches as their Music Director (Music Minister) —American Baptist, United Methodist, United Church of Christ, and Congregational churches. I grew up in an American Baptist church, where my father served as the senior minister. At an early age, I played the piano and accompanied hymns for the Wednesday and Sunday evening worship services,

thus becoming familiar with a great variety of Christian hymns. I always took for granted that music was a vital element of worship services, serving as prelude, postlude, special music, choir anthems, offertory, communion music, funeral music, and of course, hymn singing by the congregation. Never questioning any of these musical functions nor the role of a church choir in that mix, I just assumed that a choir of varying sizes was a fixed weekly or perhaps bi-weekly segment of a worship service.

In the Christian church today, statistics have shown that the role of a choir in worship has changed considerably. Furthermore, its role has diminished and even disappeared in a great many Protestant churches in this country. The purpose of this two-part Waymark article is not to provide answers as to why this is so, for there are many possible reasons for this unfortunate development. My intent here is to suggest substantial, and in some cases Biblical, reasons why a **“church choir”** should continue to play a significant role in the worship services in Christian churches, no matter how large or small the membership, how balanced or unbalanced the voice parts are (usually many more women than men), or how musically experienced or unexperienced the singers are.

If a church choir can justify its existence with only one of the suggested reasons for the inclusion of a choir in worship, it would seem to be justifiable to maintain and encourage that choir even if it's only to a limited extent, i.e. singing only once or twice a month, or perhaps only once a month. If a choir can meet one or more of the suggested “reasons for existence mentioned below, it certainly seems to be justifiable to hire a professional musician to direct such a choir, just as a church would hire a senior minister, a youth minister, or an organist/pianist, unless the church is fortunate enough to have a volunteer member of the church who has the requisite qualifications. In the next installment of this article, I'll suggest some possible reasons why a choir should be an integral part of the worship experience for Christians of all denominations.

The Importance of a Choir to the Christian Church (*Continued*)

Recently, the Worship Committee here at Plymouth, designated Sunday, June 2nd, as Music Sunday, during which the choir will sing, the congregation will sing favorite hymns, choir members will receive individual recognition, guest musicians will perform, and Rev. Wei and Nancy Michelson will reflect on the importance of a choir and music from their perspectives, which I think will be interesting and insightful for all of us.

SAVE THE DATE: Put Sunday, June 2nd, on your calendar now and invite friends and family to attend this special service. Hopefully, it will be a meaningful service for everyone!

~Dr. Steve and Nancy Michelson

Building and Grounds Spring Update

Greetings everyone,

Due to ongoing vandalism inside the building, the exterior doors have been re-keyed. If you need access to Plymouth outside of normal office hours, please talk to Alane.

The water for the community garden and our sprinkler system is scheduled to be turned on May 1st.

Spring cleanup day is set for Sunday June 2nd, so wear your work clothes and let's get our building and grounds spruced up. Please bring gloves, knee pads, and tools. Lunch and fellowship will be provided!

Thanks to everyone who has been part of the weekly cleaning crew, especially Kathe Simons and Robbie Culver!

~Terry Tatchell



In memory of our beloved and dear friend,
Margy Kohl.
You are deeply missed! Our hearts go out to Ken and the family.



We are going to miss Margy's monthly posters.

THE HELENA CHAMBER SINGERS present

“From the Earth to the Sky”



The Helena Chamber Singers, under the direction of Dr. Steve Michelson and accompanied by Mark Walker, are presenting their spring concert on Sunday, May 19th, at 4:30 pm and Monday, May 20th, at 7:00 pm. The concerts will be held at Plymouth Congregational Church.

Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$12 for Seniors & Students, and children under 12 are free. Tickets can be purchased from Piccolo’s Music, from HCS members, or at the door.

This concert will feature a 4-movement vocal jazz composition called “Images” by Rob Landes, a song by Brahms, “Die Schone Nacht” (O Lovely Night), a song by Morton Lauridsen, who was influenced by Brahms, called “Sure on This Shining Night,” a song called “The Pasture,” a poem by Robert Frost and composed by Z. Randall Stroepe, and a Native American piece, “I See the Universe,” that references a belief in the power and influence of nature. The concert will also feature the women of HCS and guest musician, Nancy Roe on French Horn, and a small ensemble, Con Amore, singing a beautiful, haunting song about peace called “Earth Song” by Frank Tichelli.

The second half of the concert (about 40 minutes in length) will feature music from the Broadway musical “Les Miserables,” a show about the French Revolution. The music reflects an array of emotions and will involve many of the HCS members as soloists, as well as Mark Walker, synthesizer, Luke Michelson, bass, Jeremy Slead, drums and Dennis Ferriter, guitar.

The concert will be about an hour and 40 minutes, with a 10-minute intermission. A post-concert reception, held across the hall, will immediately follow the concert.

The Helena Chamber Singers is a community choir that was formed in 1999; it’s comprised of a diverse group of singers in terms of age, occupation, musical experience and of course, personality, who meet for 2 ½ hours a week, on Mondays, at Plymouth Congregational Church. Membership is open throughout the season. The HCS mission is to:

- 1) DEVELOP artistry and musicianship in the choir.
- 2) SING in such an artistic and vocally appropriate way that the music presented uplifts and touches the hearts of audiences.
- 3) PRESENT concerts that are a means of enjoyment and contemplation for audiences.

For more information about membership, contact Steve Michelson at (406) 459-8259 or through email at board@helenachambersingers.com. Information about the choir can be found at our website: www.helenachambersingers.com.

WORLD LAUGHTER DAY—MAY 5

GOT JOY?

If you've been caught in a season of disappointment or struggles, maybe you've lost your joy, and as a result, laughter is a rare occurrence.

You've likely heard the old adage that laughter is the best medicine. That happens to come from the Bible!



Proverbs 17:22 is true—a merry heart really does a spirit, soul and body good like medicine.

There are spiritual, emotional and physical benefits of joy and laughter. Science has proven why the Bible tells us to laugh—it's good for our health! Laughter reduces stress, fights against depression and sorrow, fosters a positive outlook on life, and puts you in an all-around good mood. Laughter also lowers blood pressure, and impacts the cells in your body, preventing disease and setting you up to live long and strong.

Job 8:21: “He will once again fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy.”



John 15:11: “I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!”



Psalms 126:2: “We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy. And the other nations said, ‘What amazing things the Lord has done for them.’”



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