

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

August 2024

BIBLE STUDY

Our weekly Bible study has been going for a few months now, and it has been a truly wonderful experience. Every week, a group of 6 to 15 of us gather together to look at one of the lectionary readings for the week. It's usually the text that I've decided to preach about that Sunday, but before I've figured out what I'm actually going to say. We've been alternating between two different ways of looking at the scripture. The first way is called exegesis. The Oxford English Dictionary defines exegesis as "critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture." My Old Testament professor in seminary called it "a very close reading of the text."



When you're doing exegesis, you're trying to understand as much of the text as possible, so I lead the group through a standard set of questions:

- Who is in the text? We look for any names mentioned, any groups of people, anyone who might be speaking. I always remind the group at this point that we need to think about who the author was, who the intended audience was, and that we need to include ourselves on the list as well, because everything we read goes through our personal filters of education, experience, culture, and personality.
- Where? Are any place names mentioned in the text? Where is the action of the text taking place? Where was this text written?
- When? What is the time frame of the action in the text? When was this text written?
- What? Give a brief one or two sentence summary of what is happening in the text.
- Why? Why is what is happening in the text happening? Why did the author write this?
- How? What genre is the text?
- What is the trouble in the text?

Continued from previous page

- How does that relate to trouble in our world?
- What is the grace in the text? How is God moving to resolve or mitigate the trouble?
- How does that relate to how God is moving in our world to make things better?
- What is the invitation here? What is God asking us to do?

After going through this process, you have a much richer and deeper understanding of the text, and more often than not, the slow methodical way that exegesis forces you to look at the text often reveals things that you never noticed before.

The second way that we do Bible study is through translation comparison. Depending on the length of the text, we compare how it was translated in either two or three different translations of the Bible. Typically, we use the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) as one of the translations. **If we're only using two translations, I like to use King James as the other one, because it's so well known, and pretty much as different a translation as you can get from the NRSV. If we're using a third version, I like to use The Message, because it's written using modern vernacular.** Also, it is the work of Eugene Peterson, who grew up in Montana.

Translators do an incredible amount of work as they translate texts written in ancient languages into English. **It's not only the words that have to be translated; a translator needs to understand the grammar structure of the original language, which can be very different from English.** They need to understand how the verbs change for past, present, future, and other tenses, and they need to figure out what to do with words that simply have no English equivalent. It is an extremely difficult job, and involves an incalculable number of choices on the part of the translators. So, when you lay those choices side by side, it can sometimes reveal some very interesting things. You get to look at the different words that the different translators chose to use, and the different ways they decided to structure their sentences. Sometimes, you can even detect how biblical scholarship has changed over time, as some translations are much older than others, and the way that we see the original texts might be different from one time period to another. Examining the different ways that scholars see and translate these texts can help us with our own understanding.

Throughout each of these processes, we talk about our impressions of the text, **different ideas that we have, and what we think the text is trying to tell us.** There's usually lots of laughing, sometimes a bit of confusion, but always a good time. I am constantly amazed at how looking at scripture with a group of people always reveals things that I never would have seen on my own, and it is such a wonderful and valuable gift.

~ Rev. Charles Wei

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE

Have you enjoyed the Paris Olympics?

The Olympics allow us to witness the peak of human athletic achievement and to savor the spirit of international competition. I've watched the swimmers, after a race, cross their lanes to hug their competitor—gold hugging silver; bronze hugging gold. Three stand at the podium, one national anthem playing, all honored and respecting one another. Skin color, language, culture, nationality, religion—these superficial differences fade as they pit their strength, agility, training, concentration and skills against one another.



These beautiful young athletes are proud to represent their countries without displaying the kind of nationalism that fosters arrogance, conceit, superiority, and vanity. I think of one of my favorite hymns: “This is my song, O God of all the nations, a song of peace for lands afar and mine. This is my home, the country where my heart is; here are my hopes, my dreams, my holy shrine; but other hearts in other lands are beating with hopes and dreams as true and high as mine. My country's skies are bluer than the ocean, and sunlight beams on cloverleaf and pine. But other lands have sunlight too and clover, and skies are everywhere as blue as mine. Oh, hear my song, O God of all the nations, a song of peace for their land and for mine.”

As we watch the Olympic Games, we can almost hear those other hearts “beating with hopes and dreams as true and high” as our American athletes. And, in these competitions, we see the gymnasts joyfully stick the landing; or stumble, with no one to blame but themselves. We watch Team USA, representing the diversity of our population—including recent immigrants—as they display their love for one another.

The Olympics are a “song of peace” among nations, where comradery, diversity, veracity, and beauty are on full display.

~ Jan Clinard

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.

The Climate Circle: Thursday, August 1 at 6:00 p.m.—Fireside Room. A support group for those concerned about our environment.

TREASURER'S REPORT—2ND QUARTER 2024

I hope that all of you are somehow comfortably managing the days of extreme heat and smoke that we have had and will continue to have for a while, it seems. While the smoke is troublesome and the fires are unfortunate, we have been awed by some spectacular sunsets.

In July the Finance Committee met and reviewed the Income and Expense Reports and the Balance Sheet through the end of June. A brief summary follows.



Income:

- Total new income for the first half of the year was \$110,346.27. This is 48.00% of our budget. We did transfer \$33,000 from the Earmarked account into the Operating account which was financial gifts given specifically for the solar panels.

Expenses:

- Most expense areas are on target at 50% or in some cases slightly lower. Al Simons and Alane will be researching our domain name registration costs as they are higher than expected. Alane and I continue to clarify our high costs for Worker's Compensation coverage in the previous year. Consideration was given to finding other insurers but there are not other options for an entity that has such a small payroll.
- The one area of our budget that is significantly higher than budgeted is Facility Maintenance. That has been expected with the completion of the fire alarm system and the installation of the new roof and solar panels. A grant and an application have been completed to hopefully provide added income to cover a portion of these expenses.

Other Meeting Topics and Information:

A three-month, 2% CD matured in July. We reinvested in a seven-month CD at 4.1%.

We have another CD which will mature in August that is designated for expenses related to pastor's sabbatical, interim pastor or new pastor moving expense. That also will be reinvested in the best rate and term possible. Committee members expressed interest in adding to this account on a regular basis.

Continued from previous page

Don Harriott and Jan Clinard are gathering information about accounts which would allow individuals to donate stock / equities directly to the church and receive a tax deduction. We'll keep you informed.

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

Many, many thanks to each of you for your continuous dedicated giving to Plymouth – both financially and in time, talent and your presence.

I am grateful to work with a wonderful committee who present great ideas and hash them over. They are very fun to work with and work to make our financial picture more solid.

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

Finance Committee Members: Lynn Bolin, Jan Clinard, Alane Dallas, Don Harriott, Al Simons, Terry Tatchell, Gail Tronstad.

In Our Prayers Today

In treatment/Healing: Greg Bolin, Gus Byrom, Jen, Nancy Michelson, Karen Mills, Kelly Murphy, Brenda Senne, Mary Jacobson, and Grace Solis.

Bereavement: Margy Kohl's family. The families of the victims of gun violence and natural disasters.

Special Prayers: Ed Canty, Brian Coplin, Chelsey Curtis, Jude Curtis, Maxine Ferguson, Art Gilreath, Loraine Hopgood, Jim and Doris Powell, Ralph Szymanski, Marlyce Taylor, Tina Tigert, and Giles Walker.



To add someone to the prayer list, please call the church office at 442-9883 or email pccofficemgr@gmail.com.

Plymouth Has Gone SOLAR!

As of today's publication, our new solar system has generated and saved energy to equal 382.85 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions saved AND the equivalent of 2.89 trees planted. Halleluia!



Our system was turned on July 26 and has already produced 247.25 kilowatt hours of energy with a lifetime revenue savings of \$30.92 in just 6 days. This changes hourly. It is our intention to install a kiosk monitor in the church accessible for everyone to see our solar system in action. Very exciting!

Thank you to everyone who contributed towards the new roof and new solar panels.

We are planning a celebration party in the near future. Stay tuned!

LET'S MAKE MUSIC

Have you ever wanted to make music but think you couldn't because you can't read music? NOW IS YOUR CHANCE! Back in June, we debuted our Choirchimes; Mary Drysdale, Alane Dallas, and I had great fun sharing a couple of familiar tunes with the congregation. Now it's time for YOU to give it a try! It's helpful to be able to read music but it is NOT REQUIRED!

The most wonderful part of this beautiful instrument is the unique sound --- our sanctuary's acoustics are magnificent and the sound of the chimes ringing to the rafters speaks to our souls. We'll have several "exploration" sessions later this summer and early fall so that you can try it out – no commitment! Please look for a sign-up on the foyer table. Please call me (603-860-4539) or email me at kathe@simonshome.org if you have any questions.

~ Kathe Simons



CLEANING CREW UPDATE

Thanks to everyone who continues to help to keep our church spic and span! The efficiency of our cleaning teams is AMAZING! We're often done in less than 90 minutes.

The August schedule has been created and now is the time to check your assignment. I will have the schedule on the foyer table at church. Please stop by to initial your name to indicate your willingness to help on your assigned date(s).

If your assigned shift(s) does~ Kathe Simons n't work for you, please call me at 603-860-4539 to see about swapping dates.



OUTREACH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Congolese Family Arriving in Helena

Valerie Hellermann recently announced that a refugee family from Congo will be arriving in Helena soon. The family consists of 2 parents, a grandmother, and 7 children between the ages of two and 17. They will be living in apartments at Carroll College and are in need of some basic supplies. If you can provide any of the following items, contact Valerie (406-439-3580) or Jennifer (406-442-2642):

- 1 sofa
- 3 twin beds and mattresses
- Linens for 7 twin beds
- Pressure cooker
- Household cleaning supplies
- Vacuum
- Silverware and kitchen utensils
- Glassware
- Toys, games



This family has been living in a refugee camp in Tanzania since 2006. Let's see what we can do to help them adjust to life in Helena.

Mission Money

The Mission Money effort is progressing well. Plymouth has contributed approximately \$800 so far - to be used for special mission efforts, including members of Plymouth who need some assistance at this time.

Our monthly crock pot ministry is continuing at Our Place. We are also hoping to sponsor Carroll professor Jeanette Fregulia along with our Unitarian Universalist partners one evening in early September to present the history of Israel and Palestine prior to the current conflict, as part of a Helena community conversation.

Just Coffee sales are doing well.

As always, Plymouth's support has been terrific! Thank you so much!

~ Gus Byrom, Chair



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

Church Office: 406.442.9883

Web: www.plymouthmontanaucc.org

Email: pccofficemgr@gmail.com

Also: www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational

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