

# Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

October 2024

## WHERE HAS THE TIME GONE?!?

Fall is once again upon us, which means winter is not far behind. I am fast approaching my 3-year anniversary of arriving in Montana, and I can't believe how quickly it's gone by! We've done so many exciting things since I've moved here: a ping-pong fundraiser which raised thousands of dollars for Afghan refugees, Plymouth's 60th anniversary, a city-wide book read of *Rough Sleepers* with hundreds of participants, the installation of new boilers, a fire alarm system, and solar panels, along with so much more!



I could have never imagined where I would be now, having arrived on your doorstep, broken in both body and spirit. As you all helped to nurture me back to health, and I did my best to lead and teach, I have experienced some of the most profound moments of my life. I often have to take a step back in wonder at where God has put me, and I will be eternally grateful for the opportunity to serve such an amazing congregation in such a beautiful setting.

Plymouth has done an incredible job of living into Christ's teachings of "love God" and "love your neighbor." Our focus over the last three years has been on our unsheltered neighbors and refugees who have become our neighbors. As we look ahead, I hope to widen our scope. The things that we do here in Montana affect not only the people living next door, but people all over the world, and the people who are going to inherit this world after us. How can we be good neighbors to people living in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa? How can we be good neighbors to the teenagers at Helena and Capital High Schools, children in Costa Rica, Mongolia, and Zambia, and the babies who have yet to be born, right in our backyard and all over the world?

Creation care has always been important to me, going as far back as when I started a nature club with neighborhood friends when I was in the 4th grade. I have been fascinated by plants, animals, and mushrooms my whole life, and have always been an avid collector of rocks and

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seashells. I am continually amazed at God's creativity and God's providence, and have taken to heart the idea that we are supposed to be the stewards of the earth.

God has given us this incredibly precious gift, and I hope that we can pass it on to the next generation in such a way that it can protect and provide for them as it did for us during our lives. Moreso, I hope that it can provide for them the wonder and awe that it has always given to me. I hope that you will join me on this next leg of our journey, finding ways to be good stewards of the Earth, and to be a good example for our neighbors and our community of what it means to "love God" and to "love your neighbor." The world needs people of faith who are willing to step into this role, and I believe that God is calling us to be that people. So, I ask you to pray and think about what we can do as a congregation to do this work, and to bring all of your creativity, hope, and joy into it. We are God's people, and all things are possible through Christ, who strengthens us.

~ Rev. Charles Wei



The United Church of Christ – Global HOPE team of Cleveland, Ohio, recently awarded the Outreach and Social Justice Committee of Plymouth Congregational Church of Helena a grant to support music and art instruction for Helena's refugee children. The award of \$7,380 comes from the Refugee Community Program Seed Grant. Plymouth requested funds on behalf of HARRT, Helena's refugee

resettlement team, and in collaboration with the Helena public school system, volunteers, as well as talented instructors from our community. After-school instruction is expected to begin this fall and to continue for ten weeks. If you have questions or interest in assisting with this effort, please notify either Plymouth Church (442-9883) or Valerie Hellermann at HARRT.



Dove of Peace: painted by  
Valerie Hellermann

## MODERATOR'S MESSAGE: DETAILS

These warm, sunny days of September are particularly enjoyable for me when I look at the data from our Solar Edge website. Installed on July 26, our solar panels have generated 2.41 megawatt hours of electricity as of September 24, saving approximately 4,000 pounds of Co2 emissions. Already, revenue from the panels is \$410. Of course, as summer wanes, the hours of sunlight will decrease, but we'll continue to collect a trickle of electricity from the sun. What's particularly satisfying is that our utility savings will translate directly into our operating budget.



The total cost of our project was \$109,947: \$51,816 for complete roof replacement and \$58,131 for the solar system. Our congregation donated \$34,623. For timely “summer” completion of the project, we applied for and received an \$18,000 grant from the Treacy Foundation. We are especially grateful for this unexpected source of funding.

Critical to the effort, this renewable generation project is receiving \$40,000 in funding through the NorthWestern Energy Efficiency Renewable Energy Program. The program is established with Universal System Benefits Program funds collected from all NorthWestern electric customers in the State of Montana.

Finally, I will be applying for \$17,439 (30% of the solar panel cost) as “direct pay for nonprofits” for renewable energy credits established by the Inflation Reduction Act. Those funds become available to us in 2025, as our panels were installed in the 2024 tax year.

We plan to install a kiosk or electronic display with the graphs and data about our solar energy that Alane and I examine weekly.

With this significant project nearly complete, we must turn to other priority needs: 1) the kitchen sanitizer cannot be repaired again, as parts are unavailable; 2) windows throughout the building, and especially in the daycare, need to be replaced; 3) vents in the soffits have become bird nests and squirrel entrances and must be replaced; 4) temporary risers in the front of the sanctuary must be finished, carpeted, and faced; and 5) signage on Winne Avenue should be replaced or repaired.

While all this is going on, we also need to think about some possible vacancies on the Council. Have you considered serving Plymouth in this way? The Council does important work for the church and it's never boring! Please contact me or Charles if you would consider serving.

~ Jan Clinard

### PCC SOLAR STATS as of October 1, 2024

<b>CO2 Emissions Saved</b>	<b>4,297 lbs</b>
<b>Equivalent Trees Planted</b>	<b>32</b>



## TREASURER'S MESSAGE: 3RD QUARTER UPDATE

Last winter our Waymarks included a line about “leaving space in your budget for a miracle.” Nearly three quarters of our fiscal year has passed and we have had miracles. Looking at our Income/Expense and Balance Sheet we see:



- The percentage of pledge payments has remained strong through the summer months. Yea!! Letters were mailed in mid-September as a reminder of balances due.
- We have been able to renew two CDs at an interest rate of 4.1%. While the term is rather short at seven months, this will allow us to renew frequently and continue to obtain a special with the best rate. Yea!!
- We have been able to correct an over-billing of \$921.40 for the 2023/2024 insurance period of our worker's comp insurance. Yea!!
- Thanks to the cleaning crews, PCC has saved nearly \$4,000 for janitorial services. Yea!!
- Although approved in February to move \$14,586 from savings to pay for the fire alarm system and possible other maintenance expenses, we have not yet had to dip into savings. Yea!!

It takes the support of the entire church to accomplish these things; to let a miracle happen. Thank you to each and every one of you for your part in these miracles and for the many varied ways you love and support Plymouth.

Our next Finance Committee meeting is Wednesday, October 9, 9:30 a.m. We will be reviewing our financial reports through September 30, 2024 and making plans for the upcoming 2025 budgeting process. The meeting is open to anyone interested in attending.

Your finance committee: Lynn Bolin, Don Harriott, Al Simons, Terry Tatchell, Jan Clinard, Alane Dallas and myself. Thanks!

~ Gail Tronstad



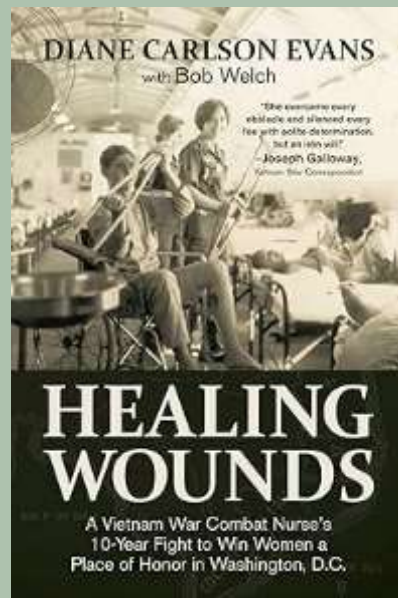


## WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUP

### Off to a Fantastic Start for 2024-2025!

Tuesday, October 8, at 10:00 a.m. (Fireside Room), the Plymouth Women's Fellowship Group is honored to welcome Diane Carlson Evans. Diane will speak to us about her book, *Healing Wounds* (one of our recommended summer reads). Bring guests if you like for this extraordinary opportunity to visit with Diane.

The October luncheon is Tuesday, October 22 and will be held at the Overland Express Restaurant at 11:30 a.m. All are welcome to enjoy a meal and to visit.



### **In Our Prayers Today**

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

Bereavement: Margy Kohl's family.

Special Prayers: Ed Canty, Maxine Ferguson, Art Gilreath, Loraine Hopgood, Jim and Doris Powell, Marlyce Taylor, Giles Walker, and the people of Israel, Palestine, Russia, and Ukraine and all who are experiencing the horrors of war.

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



### Jeanette M. Fregulia, PhD. Discussion



On Sunday, September 8, Plymouth jointly hosted with the Big Sky Unitarian Universalist Church, Professor Jeanette Fregulia (Carroll College History Department Chair), who presented the history of Israel and Palestine prior to the current conflict in the Middle East. Attendee estimates varied from 60 to 80 persons. All hands pitched in to provide a baked potato meal beforehand. Deep, deep thanks to all those who volunteered their help.

~ Gus Byrom, OSJ Chair—(406) 202-8768/byromiii@gmail.com

## Fireside Room Exhibit: Art in Three Faith Traditions



**Christian**

exhibit in the Fireside Room provides a glimpse of the art, customs and worship practices of three faiths now contributing to Helena's religious communities: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the religion practiced by Muslims.

There are many differences between our respective theological practices. But there are compelling similarities, too. Take time to think about the act of prayer, the importance of humility and contrition before God, the common beauty among the artifacts used to celebrate special occasions, and the recognition of the source of all life, God the Creator.



**Muslim**



**Jewish**

Iris Lazarus, Cathy Campbell, Pat Buell, Jennifer Thompson and the Feaver Family estate.

The art and artifacts are on loan to Plymouth until November when a new exhibit will be installed. We are grateful to the lenders, including Rebecca Stanfell of the Montana Jewish Project, Elinor Miller and Valerie Hellermann of HARRT,

# Creation Care Tips

## WILDLIFE HABITAT

Gus and I installed the Wildlife Habitat signs last week. While they may not seem like much in the grand scheme of things, they signal to the community that Plymouth Congregational Church does care about environmental justice. This can be the first step on the journey of helping people to understand the connection between Our Creator God, God's Creation, and our place and responsibility in it. We hope you will join us in celebrating this beautiful project in front of our church! ~ Pastor Charles





## Helena Area Refugee Resettlement Team—Hands On Global



A three-generation Congolese family makes a new home in Helena after 18 years in a Tanzanian refugee camp.

Their arrival comes through Helena Area Refugee Resettlement Team (HARRT), which was founded in 2022 after Kabul, Afghanistan was captured by the Taliban just a year prior. The family of 10 marks 71 people rehomed by the volunteer team. HARRT is a project of the Helena-based non-profit Hands on Global: Hands on Global serves the disadvantaged and displaced, hand-to-hand and heart-to-heart by providing holistic and healthcare support through partnerships and collaboration.

“Since inception, HARRT has successfully welcomed 10 families and two individuals – they are all now largely independent and living ‘on the economy,’ ” treasurer Martin Finnegan said Wednesday in a press release. “Considering their starting point, and the level of resources we had, this is a remarkable achievement.”

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The Lwamba family includes a grandmother, mother, father, and seven children. They escaped the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2006 and were staying at the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in Tanzania (housing 150,000 people), but it wasn't a permanent solution.

Family members had to walk for water every day, and education for the children was limited. As refugees, the family wasn't allowed to leave the camp. The family was granted asylum and vetted by the State Department, Homeland Security and the International Office of Migration, according to HARRT.

They had extended family living in Missoula; however, Missoula's refugee landing didn't have the room. "If Helena had not accepted them, they would have gone to the bottom of the list—meaning many more years in a refugee camp," the HARRT news release said.

HARRT plans to help the family find housing and adults to work with offering English courses to the family, which speaks Swahili, and place the students in school. "We have helped launch them," said Valerie Hellermann, executive director of HARRT.

Other refugees helped by HARRT have become working, independent adults, sometimes moving to other cities, HARRT reported.

Those interested in supporting HARRT can provide linens, welcome baskets, toys and financial donations. Volunteers are also welcome.



Meet Suma and Jeanette; children from the Congo, now living with their family in Helena. Thanks to the U.C.C. Refugee Community Program Seed Grant awarded to Plymouth who requested funds on behalf of HARRT and the tireless efforts of Valerie Hellerman.

# PING PONG PARTY BENEFIT FUNDRAISER

Saturday, October 19, 2024, Fellowship Hall



You're invited to a free Helena-Congolese Ping Pong Party on Saturday, October 19, in the Fellowship Hall. Paddles Blazing with Love welcomes our new refugee friends from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Plymouth Congregational Church's Outreach and Social Justice Committee -- in partnership with Hands On Global's Helena-Area

Refugee Resettlement Team (HARRT) and more than 20 other community partners/co-sponsors -- invites everyone to help us give a big welcome to Helena's new refugee family from the Democratic Republic of Congo on Saturday, October 19, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the downstairs Fellowship Hall at our free Helena-Congo Ping Pong Party. Come any time to join in the fun.

This free October 19th ping pong party will be like Plymouth's Aug 6, 2022 Helena-Afghanistan Refugee Ping Pong Festival Benefit (with 19 co-sponsors) that brought 300 people together for ping pong fun and raised \$6,000 for Helena's Afghan refugee families.

Join Helena's Ping Pong Paddles Blazing with Love for Our Congolese Refugee Friends Facebook Event Page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1771287767035804/>



## YOU'RE INVITED!

Thursday, October 3 at 7 p.m.—educator, psychotherapist, and Dharma Teacher Joann Rosen will be giving a public talk in the Fireside Room; possibly moving to the Sanctuary if more people come than expected.

Finance Meeting, Wednesday, October 9 at 9:30 a.m.—Fireside Room. This is an open meeting and all are welcome to attend.

Church Council Meeting, Thursday, October 10 at 3:00 p.m.—in the Fireside Room.

Ping Pong for Refugees, Saturday, October 19, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.. All proceeds will go towards the HARRT efforts to help the Congolese family and other refugees in Helena.

Falls Prevention 101: Thursday, October 24 at 2:00 p.m.—meet here at the church.

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

Plymouth Chimers meet Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. Meet in the Sanctuary. All are welcome to “ring” with us.

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.

## “Faces of our Unsheltered Neighbors” Photo Exhibit

“Faces of our Unsheltered Neighbors,” is now entering its 14th month of travel to local churches, public buildings, conferences and office buildings; each time informing many viewers of those who live on the streets. The exhibit was featured at the UCC Conference Annual Meeting in Billings this last weekend and is currently at Our Redeemer’s Lutheran Church in Helena. We are grateful for the artistry of Ed and Kathy Field, for the financial support of Town Pump, and the support and interest of many partners in this important effort. Thank you!



### FALLS PREVENTION 101

Thursday, October 24 at 2:00 p.m.  
here at Plymouth Congregational Church.

This class is being taught by the  
DPHHS Montana Falls Prevention Program  
Public Health in the 406



Learn about: Risk of falling / Steps to prevent falls / Understand changes in your body / Receive tips and tools to help prevent falls/ and more

### BECAUSE OF YOU, OUR CHURCH CHANGES LIVES!

Stewardship Drive 2025—Kickoff October 8, 2024

It's that time of the year: Pledge Season is here again!

The stewardship theme last fall was: “What we do with what we have.” This year, let’s think and pray about how our gifts and contributions actually change lives in the people of our congregation, people in our community and beyond.

“Because of You, Our Church Changes Lives!”

More information will be coming.  
In the Spirit of Caring and Giving,

~ Chuck Butler, 2025 Pledge Drive Chair





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## Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC

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.—1:00 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