

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

November 2024

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any congregation, and Plymouth Congregational Church is no exception. It is only because of our dedicated and hard-working volunteers that the buildings and grounds are maintained, that our committees function, and that mission happens. Volunteers allow us to have refreshments after worship, and to share in special events. Even our weekly Sunday worship only happens because of the volunteers that provide music, and help with the projector and streaming, decorations and coordination with special guests. So many people contribute to the health and wellbeing of this congregation, and the support, education, and joy that we provide for our community, and the wider community of Helena.



During our time of stewardship, a lot of emphasis is placed on the finances of the church, and how much money we need to make it through the next year. These are important concerns, but we always need to remember the other resource that goes hand-in-hand with monetary contributions: our volunteers. Giving of our time, talent, and energy is just as important as the giving of our treasure. As we often discuss, service is a large part of what it means to follow Christ. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve, and asks us to do the same. But, service doesn't have to mean drudgery. I can happily report that these gifts are not burdens, but joys. I always see our volunteers smiling and laughing together, enjoying each other's company as they set-up for events, prepare food, clean, practice, and discuss things during meetings.

Volunteering isn't only what allows the church to function, it's the glue that holds everything together. It warms my heart to be part of a congregation that loves each other so much and so well, and truly enjoys spending time together. To me, this is one of the most important indicators of a healthy congregation.



Continued from previous page

In order to thank all of our wonderful volunteers, the church council is inviting you all to a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon after the service on Sunday, November 17. The council will be providing a delicious meal and dessert, a special gift, and maybe one or two other surprises. We hope to see you all there!

~ Rev. Charles Wei

YOU'RE INVITED!

Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon—Following the service, November 17. There will be food, fellowship, and a special presentation in honor of our wonderful volunteers—
Fellowship Hall

Finance Meeting, Wednesday, November 20 at 10:30 a.m.—Founder's Room. This is an open meeting and all are welcome to attend.

Church Council Meeting, Thursday, November 14 at 3:00 p.m.—in the Fireside Room.

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.

Plymouth Chimers Update – Advent is Coming!



What fun we're having preparing music for our worship services! We rehearse each Tuesday in the sanctuary from 1:30-2:30 and would love to have you join us.

What's that you say? You can't read music? No problem! Our current music will be very familiar to you and easy to play. We can help you to be a successful member of our chime choir and enjoy some wonderful fellowship at the same time!

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE

Last month, I lost two weeks of socializing and productivity due to a cold. Before COVID, when sick, I was less inclined to isolate, and probably spread viruses among my co-workers without realizing it was selfish and dangerous. Lately, a friend has been criticizing **Kamala Harris on Facebook for supporting a woman's right to make decisions about her own body**, as though that choice is comparable to asking employees to wear masks or vaccinate in order to protect their co-workers and customers from a highly contagious and deadly disease. One is highly personal and the other impacts community.



Last Sunday, we heard guest speaker, Jeff Buscher, talk about the history of White Christian Nationalism, carefully avoiding politics. However, afterwards many of us discussed what most label politics (“activities associated with governance, especially the conflict among individuals or parties hoping to achieve power”). Although each of us makes a personal choice when we vote or do not vote, our collective choice impacts community like a virus. I am white, I am Christian; but in this Nation, we respect our neighbors of all colors and all religions. We must vote for respect, considering how each candidate will treat every one of our neighbors.

Dr. Buscher pointed out that Christian Nationalists tend to “other-ize” people, blaming people unlike themselves for all the world's problems. I fear that we have become less and less the “united” states, with the electoral college labeling us as red or blue based on geography. “Otherizing” and dehumanizing political rhetoric fractures the values of compassion, justice, and respect shared by all religions.

During my lost weeks, I had hoped to complete the solar project with a monitor to display our power generation, news release, and plan for our celebration. Patience, please. In the meantime, so much is happening at the church it's hard to keep track! We have many volunteers doing much good work—for the church itself, for the community, and for the environment. We will honor this work with a luncheon on November 17. Although paid employees, Reverend Wei voluntarily bakes for meetings and cooks for events and Alane Dallas helps with cleaning and recycling. Donating and volunteering are contagious and unite us as a loving congregation.

~ Jan Clinard



PCC SOLAR STATS as of November 1, 2024	
Lifetime Revenue	\$563.63
Lifetime Energy	3.8 MWh
CO2 Emissions Saved	5,882 lbs
Equivalent Trees Planted	45

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Hello Plymouth, we are fully into the fall season and I would like to thank everyone who participated in the upkeep of our building and grounds this summer. As you all know, we decided not to contract out the building cleaning and lawn care. Kathe Simons organized and is part of a crack team of volunteers who keep our church building sparkling. There are many members working behind the scenes that we are not aware of. Marcia and Skeeter stripped and waxed the Fellowship Hall, Marcia Lauer and Jean Goetz have been tirelessly cleaning up the landscaping and shrub beds. Ed Field and Scott Thompson have been on lawn duty. Since many were not named, thank you all for your efforts.



Moving on, your church board gave approval to accept a proposal from Frontline Glass, to replace six windows in the education wing. The original windows are in really rough shape with broken operators, rotten wood, and leaky seals. The new windows will be energy efficient and egress compliant. I would also like to thank my building and grounds committee, Don Harriott, for his help and support. Bye for now!
~ Terry Tatchell

Stewardship Drive 2025

Please return your 2025 Stewardship Pledge Card to Plymouth by Sunday November 18. You can mail it to Plymouth or leave it in the 'Green' Box on the table in the Narthex. If, by chance, you did not receive a Pledge Card, you can get one in the church office. Please fill it out and put it in the Green Box.



Thanks to Robie Culver for sharing a few personal thoughts on October 20, about the importance of pledging and helping others in our community, **“Because of You, Our Church Changes Lives!”**

Another very long-time member of Plymouth, Boyce Fowler, is scheduled to speak on November 27 about pledging and what Plymouth means to him.

Thanks to each of you who have already made your pledge for 2025!

To those who are still thinking about your pledge for next year, please do so by November 18, so the Church Council will know how much will be available for church operations, including staff, and Plymouth's Mission: "to nurture our Congregation and the wider community with acts of love and a vision of God's image in all things."

In the Spirit of Caring and Giving,

~ Chuck Butler, 2025 Pledge Drive

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Healing Wounds and The Women—Summer Book Read Wrap Up

Diane Carlson Evans was not able to attend the Women's Fellowship meeting in October due to illness. She did receive your notes of concern and good will and asked me to thank you for your thoughts and prayers. All those kinds gestures gave her a much-needed lift; she looks forward to a time when we can all meet.

Looking ahead a bit and giving you lots of time to make plans, our December meeting will be on Tuesday the 10th at 11:30 (note the time change). We will enjoy a special holiday brunch and program in the downstairs Fellowship Hall. Bring a guest or guests if you like. The cost is \$10 each and reservations are necessary; a sign-up sheet will appear on the table in the narthex. ~ Jennifer Jeffries Thompson

November Meeting Schedule

Tuesday, November 12, at 10:00 a.m.—Fireside Room.

The November luncheon is Tuesday, November 26 and will be held at the Overland Express Restaurant at 11:30 a.m. All are welcome to enjoy a meal and to visit.

December Special Brunch Get Together

Tuesday, December 10, at 11:30 a.m. Meeting in the Fellowship Hall.



In Our Prayers Today

Medical Treatment/Healing: Greg Bolin, Lynn Bolin, Gus Byrom, Richard Burns, Mary Jacobson, Nancy Michelson, Karen Mills, Kelly Murphy, Brenda Senne, and Diane Vares.

Bereavement: The families of Ed Canty and Jen Butler, and the families of the victims of gun violence and natural disasters..

Special Prayers: Maxine Ferguson, Art Gilreath, Loraine Hopgood, Jim and Doris Powell, Marlyce Taylor and Giles Walker. The people of Israel, Palestine, Russia, Ukraine, Venezuela, Lebanon and all who are experiencing the horrors of war. The victims of Hurricanes Helene and Milton.

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



Succulent Pumpkin Class—Great Times—Awesome Pumpkins!



PING PONG for REFUGEES

On Saturday, October 19, The Plymouth Congregational Church Outreach and Social Justice committee in partnership with the Helena Area Refugee Resettlement Team (HARRT) and 19 other co-sponsors held a Welcome to Helena Ping Pong for Refugees Fundraiser.



More than 150 people attended, interacted, and warmly welcomed our new refugee friends. It was a fun and joyful event that further **demonstrates our belief that "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!"**

A total of \$6,334 (money and gifts) was raised and more continues to come in to the HAART organization.

The Faiz family (from Afghanistan) just arrived in Helena in September. The Lwamba family (from the Congo) arrived in Helena in early August after escaping from Congo and living in a refugee camp in Tanzania since 2006. Both families are living temporarily in apartments in Helena and need basic supplies, including food, clothes, shoes, car seats, healthcare services, school supplies, sofas, twin beds and mattresses, linens for 7 twin beds, pressure cooker, household cleaning supplies, vacuum, silverware and kitchen utensils, glassware, toys, and games. If you are interested in helping out with these needs and requests, please contact Valerie Hellermann at 406-439-3580 or email at Valerie.handsonglobal@gmail.com.

The overwhelming success of this event would not have been possible without the contributions from the following sponsors:

1. Plymouth Congregational Church and its Outreach and Social Justice Committee,
2. Hands on Global and HARRT,
3. The Justice League of St. Paul's United Methodist Church,
4. Sleeping Giant Citizens Council,
5. Good Samaritan Ministries,
6. Helena DSA Solidarity Network,
7. Helena Service for Peace and Justice,
8. Helena Table Tennis Club,
9. YWCA Helena,
10. Montana Jewish Project,
11. Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church,
12. Shop University for English as a Second Language Instruction in Helena,
13. Sunflower Bakery,
14. Van's Thriftway Food Store,
15. Helena Food Share,
16. First Christian Church/Disciples of Christ Helena,
17. Costco,
18. H-Town Eagles Boxing Club,
19. Safeway Grocery Store,
20. The Episcopal Diocese of Montana, and
21. First Presbyterian Church of Helena.

We also want to thank:

- The Lwamba and Faizi families for their warm welcome to all who attended and for preparing the meal.
- The 150+ attendees who joined the party and graciously donated monies and gifts including: toys, games, books, art supplies, paints, crayons and coloring books for the kids, more than a dozen stuffed animals for the children, soccer balls and other large balls, household supplies, dozens of school notebooks, and other beautiful gifts.
- Jennifer Jeffries Thompson who purchased gifts for the families on behalf of Plymouth, designed and supervised a “Play and Paint Art and Games” party for the younger children.
- A Plymouth Church member who gave a piano to a nice young refugee youth who is taking piano lessons at school
- Members of the Helena Table Tennis Club for showing the refugees kids how to play table tennis.
- Plymouth Congregational Church for donating a ping pong table and equipment to the HARRT Refugee Community Center.
- And to everyone who during the entire event warmly greeted and opened their hearts to our new refugee friends and families.



Gus Byrom (OS&J Chair), said this event is rooted in a compassionate vision expressed by Pastor Charles Wei in the following prayer:

Loving God, in your house there is room for everyone. Help us as we strive for a world where everyone has a home that truly meets their needs. Give us the grace to welcome strangers and refugees. Give us the insight to see where inequality hurts, and fill us with the courage to do our part. God of Promise and Revelation, be with us in our hour of need. Help us to build community, to fight isolation and despair. Help us to build relationships, to fight apathy and injustice. Help us to build a community where everyone is cared for, fed, and sheltered. Let us be a community of love, friendship, and sharing.



Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:16)

HAND CHIMES AND SANCTUARY CONVERSATION

I'd like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Kathe and Al Simons. Al and Kathe recently purchased a three-octave set of Malmark hand chimes, the finest hand chimes manufactured in the world, as an addition to our church music program. Additionally, Kathe purchased tables, music stands, lights, and music for the hand chime choir. Kathe also volunteered to form and direct a hand chime choir, leading them in rehearsals and performances.



Kathe has done amazing work, teaching the players how to play the instruments including our Pastor Charles, who is rapidly learning to read music for the first time and making great progress!

We need at least two more players to fill in or play regularly so we can utilize all three octaves of chimes. Anyone can learn to play, even with little or no musical experience (to which Pastor Charles can attest). If you can physically raise and lower your arms and can fit in an hour on Tuesday afternoons from 1:30-2:30 you CAN play the chimes!

When you get a chance, thank Al and Kathe for their generous contribution to our music ministry. Our church ministry is greatly enhanced because of this added musical element! The Plymouth Hand Chime Choir played for the first time in a service on Sunday, October 13, 2024, and were enthusiastically received by the congregation. Our church is indeed blessed to have this added musical element for our worship services.

Pre-Worship Times and Sanctuary Reverence

I'd like to share with you some thoughts that the Worship Committee discussed in a recent meeting and that I have regarding worship services on Sunday morning. Charles has commented more than once to our committee how blessed we are to have a church congregation who loves and cares about each other, who looks forward to greeting one another each Sunday and enjoys catching up on people's lives.

However, along with this weekly reconnection before worship comes a problem for some people, which is at what point is the socializing in the sanctuary distracting to those who would prefer to enter quietly and perhaps meditate, pray, or just engage in personal reflection. I've often wondered if visitors to our church feel somewhat left out when it seems as if everyone knows each other and are socializing in the sanctuary. I've observed several of our members who enter and just sit quietly, perhaps even with their heads bowed, and I'm wondering if they feel the space is reverent enough to pray and reflect.

Continued from previous page

One of the Worship Committee's long-range goals is to create a pre-service atmosphere in the sanctuary that is reverent and sets a tone for the worship service itself. To that end, we've asked Charles to play his "singing bowl" at approximately 10:00 am each week to indicate that the service is about to start and will begin with the Prelude. Simultaneously with the playing of the bowl, the door greeters will be asked to close the back doors, with the hope that people who socialize in the Fireside Room will come into the sanctuary before the doors close. It might even be useful for one of the sanctuary doors to remain closed so there's not so much distraction from conversation in the Fireside Room and the Narthex.

Most members who greet each other probably aren't too aware of visitors or members who just enter the sanctuary quietly. If they wish to pray, meditate, or reflect, there ought to be a place for them to do this, and logically, that place is the sanctuary. Realizing that customs established around a morning worship service are sometimes difficult to change, here are some of my personal suggestions to consider for pre-service atmosphere:

- 1) Greet friends and engage in conversation in the Fireside Room or the Narthex.
- 2) Be aware of the time so when the singing bowl is played, or perhaps just before it's played, you have found a seat in the sanctuary.
- 3) There could be just a moment of silence following the playing of the bowl for people to get settled before the Prelude begins.
- 4) Following the service, during the postlude, conversation in the sanctuary seems more natural and appropriate and both sanctuary doors would be opened.

Finally, keep in mind that the worship committee is always striving for the "perfect" worship service, and is flexible and willing to receive ideas that are in everyone's interest. We welcome your feedback regarding any changes that are made in worship or any ideas you might have. We simply want the presence of God to be experienced each Sunday so we might feel renewed spiritually as well as inspired to live out our daily lives as Christians.

~ Dr. Steve Michelson—Music Director



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.—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

Email: pccofficemgr@gmail.com

Also: www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational

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