

Waymarks



Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

December 2024

ADVENT—THE PROMISE OF HOPE

It is once again Advent, and even though we haven't gotten nearly as much snow as we should have by now, the days have become shorter and temperatures are dropping. The darkness and the cold serve as a perfect metaphor for what is happening in our lives right now, as we all look forward to an uncertain future. But, as Advent is the time when we wait with anticipation for the birth of Christ, so too do we know that the warmth of spring will soon melt the snows and encourage the plants to become green again. There is always light after the darkness, warmth after the cold, and hope for a better world.



Our Advent theme this year is “The Promise of Hope.” Hope is a part of our faith, and hope emanates from faith. We must trust that God is at work in the world, that the Holy Spirit moves among us, that Jesus is alive inside of us, working to make the Realm of God a reality here on Earth. Remember that Christmas is not just a single day of the year, nor is it just a single season. Christmas has come, is here now, and will always be. This is the hope that we must carry with us, no matter how grim and hopeless things become. So, I offer this poem that I wrote for my first Christmas here at Plymouth, in the hope that it will help you to remember that it is always Christmas.



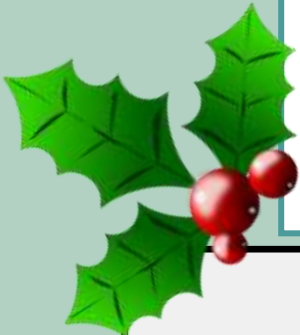
Still, It Is Christmas

After all the wrappings have been unwrapped,
And all the gifts are given,
When all the pies and pudding's done,
And the music stops, and the friends go home,
Still, it is Christmas.
The whole year long,

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And all of the hours,
The Christ child has come to be,
The birth that changed the hearts of all,
Is not forgot when tinsel falls,
Or when the snow melts, and the flowers
bloom,
When grasses grow, and salmon runs,
And when the leaves fall, and the snow falls again,
Still, it is Christmas,
Forever and now,
Where the wind blows, where it does not,
For you, and for me, and the space in between,
It is Christmas. ~Rev. Charles Wei



YOU'RE INVITED!

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: Are playing special music every Sunday for Advent this month, including the Christmas Eve service. Please come!

Memorial Service—Jim Powell

There will be a memorial service here at the church Wednesday, December 11 at 1:30 p.m. There will be a reception in the Fellowship Hall following the service.

Our deepest condolences to Doris and their family. Jim was a long-time member of Plymouth Congregational Church.

He will be deeply missed.



MODERATOR'S MESSAGE

I'm plagued by squirrels. Over the years, they've intruded into my rafters, my heat ducts, my basement and crawl space, soffits, and most recently, toilet drain—having dropped three stories from the roof vent. I regularly trap them and deport them; but right now, they're climbing up and down the tree outside my kitchen window, looking rather cute as they nibble on tiny crab apples. Mitigation efforts have cost hundreds, even thousands of dollars. Because my yard shouts "Welcome critters!" I can guess the solution—but I love trees more than I dislike squirrels.



I grew up on a farm three miles from the nearest neighbor. We never locked doors. Houses and churches in town, especially in today's culture, are an entirely different matter. Last year, due to vandalism inside the church, we rekeyed and issued new keys to members and building users. However, we're finding doors left unlocked, or even left propped wide open.

Yes, no matter where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here! You are welcome to our church, which is more than a building; it's worship, outreach events, and fellowship. To maintain Plymouth as a safe space, we need to keep intruders out. Please be vigilant about locking up the building.

This Thanksgiving, I'm thankful for your generous contributions of money, time, and energy to Plymouth. The Council is beginning to develop a 2025 budget, to be adopted by the membership at our annual meeting, tentatively scheduled for January 26. Thank you for helping us develop the budget with your pledges.

As we enter Advent and celebrate our Savior's birth, we welcome members and guests to worship with us.

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas Season,

~ Jan Clinard



PCC SOLAR STATS as of December 1, 2024	
Lifetime Revenue	\$630
Lifetime Energy	4.23 MWh
CO2 Emissions Saved	6,555 lbs
Equivalent Trees Planted	50

OUTREACH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

United Way Housing First Capital Campaign

The Outreach and Social Justice Committee hosted a community luncheon Wednesday, November 13 downstairs in the fellowship hall to continue to support Helena's awareness of our unsheltered persons and households. Over 20 persons were in attendance. Jeff Buscher of United Way reported on efforts to raise at least \$2 million before the end of this year to purchase the Helena Inn building located east of the old Kmart structure on Cedar Avenue. The proposed United Way project would house at least 48 persons in studio apartments with supportive services.



Our Place

Ryan Galliher of Our Place reported on efforts to relocate Our Place, including a new women's shelter, as an adjunct to the new Family Promise center expected to be under construction before this Christmas—to be located behind Taco Bell on North Montana Avenue. They may have a new home some time in the early part of 2025.

Unhoused School-aged Youth

The Outreach and Social Justice Committee is also interested in raising the community focus on unhoused school age youth and their parents within the Helena school system.

Crock Pot Ministry

Plymouth's Annual Empty Stocking campaign will begin on Sunday December 8. The Outreach and Social Justice Committee encourages you to sign up to provide a crock pot "snack" for those using Our Place during the day time.

You should find a small Christmas tree in the Fireside Room with red stockings denoting 12 different months of the year. Pick the month that will work best for you, add your name to the stocking, and that's all there is to it. (Well, yes, you do have to cook and deliver the snack.) The meals are expected on the third Thursday of the month around 11:00 AM.

Plan to retrieve the crock pot by the next day. In our experience it has always been cleaned and ready to return to Plymouth. This is the same program that was offered last year, to rave reviews and heartfelt thanks. So we thought it would be good to try it again.

Thanks so much for the ongoing support of our Plymouth congregation!

~ Gus Byrom, Chair

THANK YOU-2025 PLEDGE DRIVE

It is with deep appreciation that I extend my thanks to those of you in our Plymouth Congregation who submitted a pledge for 2025! Thank you very much! If you are still thinking about Pledging, it's not too late and your pledge will be most welcome)

As our 2025 Pledge theme expressed “Because of You, Our Church Changes Lives”



Because of your generous pledges and donations, we are able to support a special ministry both at Plymouth and within our community. Plymouth's Social Justice and Outreach efforts are deeply appreciated by many folks in our community and widely recognized.

For example, the 2nd annual Ping Pong Refugee Fundraiser brought in a total of \$6,334 (See the November Waymarks for more details).

The Plymouth Women's Fellowship Group is again raising money to purchase sleeping bags. I took this Street Sleeper photo before church on November 17, in downtown Helena.

Good Samaritan Ministries- Our Place outreach coordinator, Ryan thanked the congregation during the worship service on November 17, and with his spouse Hannah attended the volunteer brunch.



These two fundraising projects, of course, plus the fundraising for solar panels were all in addition to your pledges. Thank You Plymouth and Friends of Plymouth.



In the Spirit of Thanks & Giving,
My deepest appreciation
~ Chuck Butler, 2023, 24 & 25 Pledge Chair

Wishing you all a very blessed Christmas season!

REFUGEE ART AND MUSIC CLASS

The conclusion of the 10-week art and music class for Afghan and Congolese refugee kids came about November 21. It was an amazing opportunity to meet children, to play and sing, and to witness their ability to learn a new language through song and art. Led by Katie Knight and Judy Fjell, the classes were held after school at Smith each Thursday from 3:30 to 5:00. On the last day that the group met, Judy asked



the children to tell her what they were thankful for this year. Here's how they responded: I'm thankful for safety, for family, for love, for teachers, for new friends and old friends, for opportunity, for learning, for happiness, for my name... And the most common response? "I'm thankful for Montana."



Through a grant awarded to Plymouth Congregational Church, the teachers' stipends, supplies and transportation costs were met. Here's one

of things I'm grateful for: the United Church of Christ - Global HOPE Team - who helped these children acclimate to their new home. One Great Hour of Sharing is the major source of program funding.



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUP



December Special Brunch Get Together

Women's Fellowship Christmas Brunch is Tuesday December 10 at 11:30 a.m.. (Note time difference.) We will meet downstairs in the Fellowship Hall for the meal and program. Reservations are necessary as the brunch will be catered; the cost is \$10. If you are paying by check be sure to note in the memo section "Women's Fellowship." Either Lynn Bolin or Jennifer Thompson will be happy to receive payment. A sign-up sheet is posted on the table in the narthex. Please respond by Wednesday December 4.



In Our Prayers Today

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

Bereavement: The family of Jim Powell, and the families of the victims of gun violence and natural disasters.

Special Prayers: Ann Chivlicek, Maxine Ferguson, Art Gilreath, Loraine Hopgood, 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.



Plymouth Congregational Church Wishes you all a
joyous and blessed Christmas season!

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