

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

March 2025

POLITICS IN THE PULPIT

You may have noticed a bit of a political bent to some of my sermons lately, and I wanted to address that. I try as much as possible to keep politics out of the pulpit, and I hope you've noticed that I very rarely identify anyone by name whenever I feel the need to breach this topic. If anyone makes the connections in their own minds, then it's up to them to ask themselves why they made that connection. But, so many things have been happening lately that I have felt God calling me to respond to, and I learned long ago not to fight God.



I've always said that those of us in the mainline denominations have allowed certain parts of the wider church to run away with the narrative of who we are and what we stand for. A lot of us have kept quiet due to fear that we would be lumped in with the people spreading that rhetoric. But, we have been quiet for far too long, and what is being understood as "Christianity" keeps getting further away from what Jesus Christ said and did. And, because we have not spoken up, this is what people think Christianity is.

Our tradition is based on the life and teachings of Jesus, and we have to ask ourselves, if Jesus was alive today, which causes would he support? Who would he stand with? What would he be doing? I think we all know the answers to these questions. Jesus would be defending the weak. Jesus would be feeding the hungry. Jesus would be building homes for the unsheltered and healing the sick. Jesus would welcome the strangers and the foreigners. Jesus would be doing everything that he could to make sure that everyone knew that they were loved.

It seems so simple; we all know these things in our hearts. So, how have we become a society that spreads fear and insecurity? How have we become a society that refuses to feed hungry children, that denies healthcare to the sick? How have we become a society that values wealth over the wellbeing of the people around us?

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

Perhaps the worst part of all of this is that this perverted form of “Christianity” is being used to justify it, pulling people further and further away from the church. We know that real church helps people. We find community and support, here. We find help and spiritual sustenance, here. This is where we come to learn how to love each other and to gain resilience against the hardships of life. This is where we come to find Jesus.

God demands that we speak up against the things that are happening, now. When people do evil in the name of God, that is what it truly means to use God’s name in vain. Jesus would weep if he could see what is happening now. Jesus is weeping.

Being a Christian has never been easy, and it’s not easy now, at least if you actually are trying to follow the teachings of Christ. But, if we want the world to be a better place, if we want our children to grow up in a better world, we have to do the work. Always remember that God is working alongside us, that Jesus is alive in us, and that the world is filled with the Holy Spirit. God have given us the tools and the wisdom to change the world. We just have to try.

~ Rev. Charles Wei

ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday is a Christian holy day that marks the beginning of Lent, a 40-day period of fasting and prayer. The ashes symbolize repentance, humility, and death, and the cross shape reminds Christians of Jesus’s sacrifice. The tradition of marking foreheads with ashes in the shape of a cross dates back to ancient times. The ashes were made from burning the palms from the previous year’s Palm Sunday.



Pastor Charles will be in the Sanctuary from 11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. Ashes will be available for anyone who would like to receive them. The Sanctuary will be prepared as a contemplative space if anyone would like to reflect.

WHAT’S HAPPENING AT PLYMOUTH—YOU’RE INVITED!

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

Chime Choir Rehearsal: Tuesday, March 4 at 1:30 p.m.—Sanctuary. Interested in learning how to play chimes? Please join us. All are welcome!



The theme for the 2025 One Great Hour of Sharing® is Be the Light. The United Church of Christ invites you to join this meaningful Lenten offering, which supports disaster relief, refugee assistance, and development ministries through Love of Neighbor. Your contributions are welcome at any time. To assist in promoting this important initiative, a wide range of OGHS Resources are available through UCC Resources.

Celebrate One Great Hour of Sharing Day with us at Plymouth on March 30, 2025. Your generosity continues to spread light to places in need. There will be envelopes and an informational flyer in your bulletins Sunday morning. Please consider giving to this effort.

***You're here to be light**, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—SHINE!*
~Matthew 5:14-15

1. One Great Hour of Sharing, part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. The UCC works with international partners to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation. One Great Hour of Sharing also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.

2. How is the United Church of Christ's offering used? Over 55% of the UCC's offering supports international development initiatives. The offering also funds refugee resettlement, disaster preparedness and response, and disaster-related volunteer initiatives in the U.S. and internationally.

3. Where and how are One Great Hour of Sharing funds shared? The United Church of Christ responds to humanitarian and development needs in the world. Specifically, the UCC supports sustainable development and refugee needs internationally and provides disaster relief and immigration assistance in the United States. The United Church of Christ responds as a member of organizations such as Church World Service and the ACT Alliance. We also support the direct mission efforts of churches and church-based organizations that the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have direct partnerships with through Global Ministries. Nearly one-fifth of the UCC's OGHS offering is shared through Church World Service to support refugee, and disaster programs worldwide.

4. How many dollars are given to the UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing offering? Due to the pandemic, in 2020, the OGHS offering was only \$1.2 million (44% less than the previous year). Nearly sixty percent of UCC congregations participate annually.

5. What percentage of One Great Hour of Sharing donations are used directly for the mission? On average, of every dollar given to One Great Hour of Sharing, 95 cents is used directly for mission programming; and 5 cents for interpretation materials.

For more information: <https://surl.li/wgnnpX>



Our dear friend, wonderful musician, and music director, Nancy Michelson passed away on January 10, 2025. Our hearts and prayers go out to Steve, her family and friends. We dearly miss her! A memorial service will be Saturday, June 28 at 1:00 p.m. here at Plymouth. The reception (Memorial Potluck Dinner) will be held at the Michelson's farm at 4:00 p.m. The family asks that you RSVP if you wish to attend.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY KATHLEEN CULVER

Our very own and dearly beloved Kathleen turned 90 in February.
What a happy day it was celebrating with family and friends!



Plymouth Chimers Welcomes New Member

Our handchime choir continues to meet on Tuesdays from 1:30-2:30 in the sanctuary. We recently welcomed new member Jeannie Wolf and welcomed back Lynn Bolin. Yay! We are working on new music and look forward to helping to lead worship in late March and at Easter time. We have a lot of fun and you don't need to be able to read music to participate. A trio (Mary, Alane, and Kathe) recently shared our love for handchimes with the Women's Fellowship and everyone had an opportunity to chime. Please consider joining us or stopping by to learn more.



Musically yours,

~ Kathe Simons

Moderator's Message

Over this past month, Pastor Charles has helped us see the political landscape in our country through the lens of Jesus's teachings. If you missed or would like to revisit these messages, you can read them on the Plymouth Congregational Church website; click BLOG on the top ribbon. "A God Carved of Wood" concludes with A Prayer before Reading the News by Rabbi Irwin Keller (2016):



My God, the soul that you have placed in me is pure and vulnerable. I am afraid that looking at today's news will be painful. Encircle me in a robe of light so that I can witness the wounds of the world without being wounded myself. Let me learn what I need to know in order to be of my greatest use, without being overwhelmed by despair. I feel your protective light now as I open myself to the world's suffering and the world's joys. Amen.

I sent this sermon's link to my grown children in Seattle and Los Angeles, both of whom are struggling to make sense of the cruel turn our country has taken—toward exacerbating climate change, widening the chasm between rich and poor, crippling medical research, scorning our allies, and mistreating public servants. My son, a geologist, has led many federally-funded projects exploring an often overlooked renewable, geothermal energy. My daughter-in-law is an attorney for Earth Justice. My daughter is an architect, now working with Altadena residents hoping to rebuild homes from the ashes. They found the prayer comforting.

I wanted them to watch the service online, but on February 9, the computer used to stream services on YouTube died and could not be revived. The Council quickly authorized the Richard and Mary Drysdale to find an appropriate new computer and we expect to return to streaming the service this week. Thank you to Mary and Richard, the Unitarian's tech support person, and Lucas Michelson for helping resolve this issue. This outreach is an important mission of our church, as we are reaching over twenty additional households every Sunday.

Last Friday afternoon, fields and valleys appeared to be covered with meringue, edged by marshmallow hills. Our Montana landscape shone in all its glory, especially breathtaking between Three Forks and Townsend. My backyard looked like a huge white pillow Saturday morning. It was as though God had encircled us in a robe of light.

Blessings and light to you,

~Jan Clinard

PCC SOLAR STATS as of March 1, 2025	
Lifetime Revenue	\$784
Lifetime Energy	5.26 MWh
CO2 Emissions Saved	8,153 lbs
Equivalent Trees Planted	62



OUTREACH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

The Plymouth Outreach and Social Justice Committee has been attempting to assist Plymouth members, as well as supporting efforts of United Way, Our Place (Good Samaritan), Family Promise, and the Helena Area Refugee Resettlement Team (HARRT) as these organizations seek to assist Helena's most needy persons and households.

As you know, these are very challenging times. The joy is that the Lord will help us if we seek to do those things that please Him. To paraphrase author of the devotional *My Utmost for his Highest*, by Oswald Chambers, God will tax the energy of the furthest most star to help us fulfill His will. You are welcome and we want to encourage you to join us in this worthy effort!

~ Gus Byrom, Chair



Thank you,
Donna Disher-Hathy for
doing such an excellent job
decorating the Fireside
Room bulletin board.
Margy would be very proud!

2025 Cleaning Crew Update

We are off to a terrific start in our second year of the Plymouth Cleaning Crew! It was heartening to learn how many thousands of dollars this fearless crew has saved the church over the past year. Cleaning teams are doing a terrific job and we continue to get comments about how the church has never been cleaner. It takes on average 1-1/2 to 2 hours to complete each week's cleaning and the schedule is such that everyone only needs to volunteer once a month. Bravo! Keep up the terrific works, friends!

If you'd like to join this effort, please contact me at 603-860-4539 or at kathe@simonshome.org. ~ Kathe Simons





In Our Prayers Today

Medical Treatment/Healing: Greg Bolin, Lynn Bolin, Gus Byrom, Brian Coplin, Gregory Curtis, Jude Curtis, Karen Mills, Kelly Murphy, Brenda Senne, Alex Weaver, and Phyllis Weaver.

Bereavement: The families of Nancy Michelson, Mary Dana White, Richard Penfield III, and the victims of gun violence and natural disasters. Prayers for us and the families around the world as we mourn the loss of our loved ones.

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 and all who are experience the horrors of war. The victims of Hurrricanes Helene and Milton, and the California wildfires.

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



WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUP—February & March

February 11, Heart Attack and Stroke Awareness

Our very own nurse (retired) and Vice-Moderator, Lynn Bolin gave a talk about stroke and heart attack warnings and what you can do if you or someone nearby is having these symptoms:

Stroke Warnings

F.—Face drooping

A.—Arm weakness

S.—Speech Difficulty

T.—Time to call 911

Heart Attack Warnings

Chest Discomfort

Discomfort/pain in other areas (arms, back, neck, jaw, stomach)

Shortness of breath

Other sign (cold sweat, nausea, vomiting or light headedness)



For more comprehensive information please call 1-800-242-8721

(heart.org) or 1-888-478-7653 (stroke.org). There are also flyers, pocket pamphlets, and pins on the narthex table.

March Women's Fellowship Meeting—Tuesday, March 11 at 10:00 a.m.

Ann Lauer (guest speaker and presenter) will be discussing an organization called Ride 4 a Woman. This organization helps to support over 300 women and children in dire circumstances in Bwindi, Africa and twelve surrounding villages. Who knew there would be QUILTERS in this remote part of the world!!! These women use treadle sewing machines and charcoal irons to make and sell quilts for survival.



Please join us!

March meeting schedule:

Tuesday, March 11 at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room

Tuesday, March 25 at 11:30 a.m. brunch at the Overland Express Restaurant

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