

Waymarks

Plymouth Church | Helena Montana

April 2025

Moderator's Message

After three weeks of Council members taking on the tasks of bookkeeping and office work, we decided we could perhaps handle the production of *Waymarks*.

The Council is moving forward with a couple of necessary improvements:

- Before this year ends, we hope to have attractive and secure stairs in front of the sanctuary. The experiment with risers that Steve Michelson built taught us that musicians, liturgists, and other speakers prefer the wider stairs. They should be built and carpeted professionally in late May.
- Thank you for input and contributions into rebuilding the sign on Winne. Although the sign will not look appreciably different, the crumbling base will be repaired, signage will have a fresh clean look, and the structure will accommodate banners with important messages.



During part of my last day of skiing, it was hard to see through the snow and fog. I knew I was going downhill, but not so sure about the terrain. On that same day, the stock market was plunging, and I wasn't sure about our investment and my retirement accounts. With tariffs designed to bring back factories and DOGE cutting university research, I wondered if my granddaughter may be assembling sneakers rather than conducting biomedical research in a few years. Is that "too political"? We now live in a time when even one's view of biology, the arts and humanities, public lands, media, medicine, higher education, and research are political.

Brianna O'Reilly, in her article *Like it or not, Everything is Political*, writes that *"Politics is all around us. It's a tool we use to understand and address problems, it's how we measure right and wrong, what we deem to be moral and immoral, how we think about issues and challenges facing us individually and collectively. You cannot argue that politics is separate to humanity and human experience, when it is a system made by humanity, for humanity. And here's the greatest irony - the people who don't realize how political everything is, those are the most political amongst us. Because to be blessed with the privilege to move through the world without having to think about politics means that it's working perfectly for you."*

Challenging the social structures of his time, urging followers to love their neighbors and seek truth, Jesus was political. Where he was born and how he died were due to the politics of his time. But unlike low-visibility skiing and the uncertainty surrounding today's economy, we know how the story of Jesus ends.

Have a Blessed Easter,

Jan Clinard

What is a Tenebrae Service?

Holy Week, the last week of Lent in Christianity, commemorates the final days of Jesus Christ's life, beginning with Palm Sunday and culminating in Easter Sunday. It's very easy to celebrate Palm Sunday, Jesus' triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Waving palm branches and singing favorite songs on Palm Sunday is something that many of us look forward to. And a week later on Easter Sunday, we joyously celebrate Jesus's resurrection with beautiful music, beautiful lilies, colorful eggs, and plenty of Easter decorations.

But what about Jesus' passion story? His betrayal? His suffering and crucifixion?

Tenebrae (TEN-uh-bray) is an ancient Good Friday service that we will hold on **Friday, April 18th at 7 PM here at Plymouth**. The Service of Tenebrae, or "Shadows," is based on a twelfth-century late night/early morning service and is an extended meditation on the passion of Christ. The story of the suffering and death of Jesus is divided into a number of Scripture readings. After each segment of the story is read, a candle is extinguished and the sanctuary becomes increasingly dark. Music is shared between the readings. After the final candle is extinguished, a loud sound (called *strepitus* in Latin) is made to convey the sense of total loss of God's presence and the effect of the death of Jesus on the universe. Worshipers leave in silence to ponder the impact of Christ's death and await the celebration of the coming Resurrection. We hope you will join us for this important and meaningful service.

--Kathe Simons - on behalf of PCC Worship Committee

SPECIAL HOLY WEEK EVENTS AT PLYMOUTH



Palm Sunday Salad Luncheon: After the service April 13,—Fellowship Hall

Tenebrae Service: Good Friday, April 18, 7 pm.
— Sanctuary

Flower donations should be brought to Sanctuary on Saturday, April 19, 11 to noon.

Easter Service: April 20, 10 am — Sanctuary

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

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

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

Treasurer's Report

Last year we often mentioned miracles in our financial outlook and reports. Blessings abound and we have miracles again in 2025. Following are just a few:



- Lucinda Sheldon donated funds for a new computer so that we can again have PowerPoint slides during the service. The slides are much appreciated by the inhouse congregation and provide a more meaningful experience for those who join us online. Many thanks to you, Lucinda! And thanks to Charles for creating the slides on a weekly basis.
- The streaming computer went kaput and the services were not streamed for several consecutive weeks. Richard and Mary Drysdale graciously donated funds for a new computer for streaming and the services are now back online. Thank you, Richard and Mary.
- To date we have received \$645.00 for One Great Hour of Sharing. The theme this year was "Be the Light." Your financial gifts will be used to spread God's Light and change lives around the world. Thank you for your generous giving.
- The Outreach and Social Justice Committee received a \$200.00 donation for the use of the "Faces of our Unsheltered Neighbors" display. Awesome gift.
- Thus far donations of \$800.00 have been designated for our new sign on Winne Avenue. When combined with the \$600.00 on hand there is a total of \$1400 for the new signage.
- We had two CDs that renewed since the beginning of the year. One was the Youth Programs in the amount of \$5328.68 was renewed for 5 months at 4.0 percent. The other was the Sabbatical / Search CD which matured with a balance of \$9433.42. To this we added the \$4670.00 approved in the 2025 budget for a balance in the CD of \$14,103.42. This new amount renewed for one year at a rate of 4.25%.
- Last year at the end of March we had paid \$1054.92 for electricity. This year for the same period we have paid \$591.26.

It is truly a joy to be able to work up close with a very loving group of people who thoughtfully and generously give of their resources. Thank you, thank you for these miracles as the effects ripple out and support the mission of Plymouth Church

Gail Tronstad

Best Wishes to Alane Dallas

On March 14, we said goodbye to our Office Coordinator, Alane Dallas, as she ventures on a new career path. We will be forever grateful for our time with Alane and the wonderful job she did keeping the books, answering the phone, interacting with building users, preparing the bulletins, and putting her special touches on the monthly *Waymarks*. We already miss her!

During the interim, you may notice several of our Council members covering the duties in the office. The office hours may vary slightly from those posted. Please call ahead to make sure the office is open if you need something.

If you know someone interested in a part-time, position with flexible hours, please notify a member of the personnel committee (Lynn Bolin, Gail Tronstad, or Liz Gundersen).

Job qualification include:

- Ability to use Microsoft Office (Excel, Word, Power Point, and Publisher) Google Suite, QuickBooks, and WordPress
- Familiarity with customer service, office management, and filing systems.
- Pass a required background check.



**A memorial service for Nancy Michelson will be Saturday, June 28
at 1:00 p.m. at Plymouth Church.**

**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:
Meg Crane: megjcrane@gmail.com (406) 594-4430**

Linens for Refugees

In the last month, Helena welcomed three new families, originally from Afghanistan. Valerie Hellermann and HARRT are asking for resources to help resettle our new neighbors. If you have extra (used or new) LINENS that you would like to donate, it would be appreciated.



Linens include sheets (also crib sheets), towels, dish cloths, blankets, etc. Sheets should fit queen or twin mattresses. There is a large basket on the long table in the Fireside Room for you to place your donations. Let's see what we can do by Easter.

On your behalf, Plymouth recently donated \$300 to HARRT, funds that were remaining from the UCC Seed Grant for Refugees. The majority of that grant was used to pay for an after-school art and music class.

Jennifer Thompson

In Our Prayers Today

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

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. All who are experiencing the horrors of war and natural disasters.

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



TRAUMA OF GENERATIONS

Rev, Dr, Tony Clark, Conference Minister

Dear Folks:

In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. faced a crowd of 250,000 on the Washington, D.C., mall, and declared, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character....I have a dream... that little Black boys and little Black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and little white girls as sisters and brothers." It appears as if some in our nation feel we have arrived at that moment and we do not need to focus anymore on racial diversity, gender equality, or inclusion of underrepresented voices.

I have been surprised at how quickly institutions are renouncing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs. All of a sudden those three words became bad words, to be erased from our history and culture. By removing them from our lexicon and common speech we are implicitly agreeing that racism, injustice, and rejection are no longer part of our common everyday experience.

I do not agree.

Racism continues to be strong and alive in our culture. Injustice is rampant. Rejection occurs regularly. While DEI may raise hackles for some, the reality is that we have needed to have these laws in place to assure that voting rights, job promotions, and success in life are just and egalitarian for people of color, women, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ folk. By stripping away these laws and policies, we imply that we don't see the color, gender, or loves of people who have always been disadvantaged in the public sphere. By pulling away from the values of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, we sweep aside the progress we've made since the 1960s.

As a Christian, I cannot ignore the fate of vulnerable people. I cannot ignore the diversity of God's creation. I cannot brush away the visible and physical differences of humanity. I cannot sweep away that these differences are used to suppress speech. I cannot forget that rape, separation from family, beatings and whippings, were common forms of control during American Slavery, the forming of Indian reservations and boarding schools, and the internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII.

We now know that trauma can be passed down to future generations; at least 4-7 generations can receive that trauma through changes to genes, social pressure, family teachings. There are people alive today whose grandparents or great grandparents were enslaved. That's 2-3 generations. And the trauma did not stop at the end of American chattel slavery.

There are people alive today who knew Jim Crow era repression including "Whites Only" signs, lynching, degradation at the voting booth, and brutal beatings by police. A family of parishioners at one of my churches was red-lined out of a desirable neighborhood. Two of my parishioners had been sent to Indian boarding schools, and one of them reported serious abuse and trauma at the school they attended. I knew a parishioner's daughter-in-law whose grandparents were sent to Japanese American internment camps and whose property was saved for them by the Catholic church; and while they loved the UCC, they would not leave the Catholic church because of this loyalty. I worked with an artist whose parents survived the Holocaust; her mother kept a suitcase packed at the foot of her bed until she died. (next)

Plymouth Chimers Have Fun....and You Can, Too!

What fun we're having ringing handchimes together! There are six chimers in the choir and if one is absent, I'll step in to ring for them whether at rehearsal or on a Sunday morning.

We rehearse in the sanctuary on Tuesday afternoons from 1:30-2:30.

Please consider stopping by to learn more or maybe to try chiming -- what a wonderful group!

Call Kathe 603-860-4539 or by email (kathe@simonshome.org) with questions. --- Kathe Simons



(continued)

And I heard of one Holocaust survivor who always slept with her shoes on because when she was arrested, she had no shoes. The trauma is still present and it is still going on. We haven't even gotten out of the first generation.

We cannot claim to be "color blind" without erasing a legacy of pain, shame, trauma. We cannot say that slavery was in the past when the generational trauma is still with us. I cannot move past the Holocaust while watching Palestinians being systematically oppressed and killed. I cannot forget about ethnic cleansing while several million South Sudanese are living in refugee camps across central Africa. I cannot blot out the Armenian genocide knowing that a colleague of mine grew up in Syria as a child of Armenian refugees.

In short, we are nowhere near the end of the trauma; we've got several generations to go even if we stop creating more trauma right now. And we seem to be addicted to causing trauma to others.

Removing DEI sugarcoats our history and makes it seem like we have arrived at an egalitarian nirvana. Rewriting history to be more pleasant ignores that the trauma of generations ago is still with us, and the trauma continues to be compounded at each turn by more trauma, more rape, more being disappeared, more injustice and ongoing disrespect. Living with memories sweetened by whitewashing over individual stories is like a solid diet of cotton candy; sure does taste good, but is vacuous as nourishment.

Peace,

Pastor Tony

OUTREACH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Our Outreach and Social Justice Committee continues to seek ways to support members of the Plymouth Church community with special needs. Our goal is also to support United Way, Family Promise, and Good Samaritan Ministries in their efforts to serve Helena's homeless population and underhoused families, as well as recent refugees. Please put contributions in the "Love Offering" envelopes in the pews.

Val Hellerman and the Helena Afghan Refugees Resettlement Team (HARTT) will host a fundraiser in the Fellowship Hall to support newly arrived Afghan refugees on Sunday, May 18, at 12:30. Expect a delicious meal! ~ Gus Byrom, Chair

Please Consider Joining the Cleaning Crew

Our church continues to shine thanks to the efforts of so many volunteers in our congregation. Thank you!

We have a couple of volunteers who have had to step away and summer vacations are coming up. **We could use a couple new volunteers to join our crew.** We tailor your tasks to your needs and will find the

perfect job for you. Do you have 1-1/2-2 hours you could volunteer each month or even every other month to help? Please email me

(kathe@simonshome.org) or phone me on 603-860-4539 if you can help with wiping surfaces, or vacuuming, or dusting. All cleaning products are provided (of course!) and your help is ALWAYS greatly appreciated.



Kathe Simons

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: 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