

ANNOUNCE & ENGAGE — *Rev. Charles Wei*

This is the second article in the series I'm writing about the Order of Service for Worship. Please refer to the previous edition of the Waymarks if you would like to see the first article about the beginning of the service, "Gathering & Preparing."

I realized in my previous **Waymarks** article that I neglected to mention the announcements. Believe it or not, this part of the service is a major point of contention in some congregations. Some people believe announcements should be at the beginning of the service, while others believe they should be at the end. I don't think I have ever seen them in the middle. There are arguments about how long the announcement portion should go, what constitutes an announcement, who gets to decide what gets announced, and whether announcements should even be part of the service at all! Personally, I believe they should. Part of coming to church is maintaining our church community, and we can't do that if we don't know what's going on in our community. The announcements are one of the first points of organization when it comes to the mission of the church, and while not scripture, teaching, or prayer in and of themselves, though they sometimes are, the announcements often point us towards those things.

Moving on to the next part of the service: *We Engage*. This is usually where the scripture and teaching portions of the service can be found. We usually have two readings a week, three if we're using scripture for the Invitation to Worship, which we usually do. It may seem like a lot, but when you consider how small of a percentage of the Bible we get through in a year, it's really not. Did you know that in some faith traditions, they read through their entire sacred text over the course of a year? We don't even manage that over the course of four years!

We have a musical interlude between the two readings to allow ourselves time to absorb what we've heard, and to even think about it a little, before we move to the second reading. The second reading is typically the one that I will read, as it is the scripture that the sermon is usually based on, though you may have noticed that the second reading is often a continuation of the first reading. I break the readings up in this way when it's a longer reading, as many people have a difficult time paying attention to a long reading of scripture.

Next, we have the teaching component of the service, what I call the "reflection" because of the connotations that the word "sermon" has for many people. For some, a sermon leaves no room for argument or alternative interpretation. For others, sermons are
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Rev. Charles Wei

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used to control or manipulate. My sermons truly are my personal thoughts about the scriptures of the day, and while I put a lot of thought and research into them, I certainly don't think of them as the final word. And, although I call this part of the service a reflection, what I bring to you each Sunday is, by definition, a sermon.

I was taught that a sermon must have four parts in order to truly be a sermon. 1. It must be based on scripture. 2. It must describe the trouble in the text and how that relates to trouble in our world. 3. It must describe the grace in the text and how that relates to how God is at work in the world today. 4. There must be a charge or call to action. Not every sermon is going to have all four requirements in equal measure, but each element must be present in order for it to actually be a sermon. Otherwise, what you would have is a speech, a homily, a tirade, or something that might simply be a reflection.

After the reflection we have the musical reflection, to give us some space to think about the teaching before we move on to the Prayers of the People.

Join us next month as we "Respond & Close."

STEWARDSHIP

It's Fall and thus it's Stewardship time in the life of Plymouth.

Stewardship letter and Pledge Cards were recently mailed to Plymouth members and friends of Plymouth. Please complete the Pledge Card and return to the church office or place in the Pledge Box in the Narthex.

If you did not receive a Pledge Card, please stop by the Church office and get one.

We would like the 2026 Pledge Cards turned in to the office by Sunday October 26, so the Church Council will know how much is available to budget for 2026.

Respectfully and in the Spirit of Thanksgiving,

Chuck Butler, Stewardship Chair

You're Invited!

Bible Study:

Every Tuesday

9:00 a.m.

Fireside Room.

Sandwich Ministry:

Second & Fourth
Wednesday of the
month. 9:30 a.m.
Kitchen

Chime Choir:

Tuesdays, 1:30 p.m.
Sanctuary

Women's Fellowship

Second Tuesdays at
Plymouth

Fourth Tuesdays for
Lunch Out

Cleaning Crew

Saturday mornings

Contact Kathe to
volunteer:

603-860-4539 or
kathe@simonshome.
org

OUTREACH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE — *Gus Byrom*

Our Plymouth Outreach and Social Justice Committee is continuing with activities and projects to support members of our Plymouth Church community and other area residents with special needs, as well as serve as a catalyst to support Helena's affordable housing needs.

We are currently supporting conversations 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 and the Helena Afghan Refugees Resettlement Team (HARTT). At a recent housing provider meeting held in our downstairs Fellowship Hall on September 15, Michele Zentz, Homeless Liaison for Helena Public Schools, reported that over 200 Helena area students are living without permanent housing (couch surfing, living in cars, etc.).

Another current major concern is that God's Love has indicated that they do not plan to provide emergency overflow, sleeping space on the floor of their dining room when their existing shelter capacity is exceeded during spells of extreme cold this winter. They will continue to provide three meals per day and overnight shelter subject to their capacity for about 36 persons.

Family Promise is currently constructing 16 housing units on their parcel of land behind Arby's restaurant near N. Montana Avenue-- 8 units for families and 8 units for women.

Our committee continues to support our Crock Pot Ministry with a hot soup delivery the third Thursday of each month to the current Our Place location on National Avenue at the former Habitat Re-Store.

Thank you so much for your ongoing contributions to Plymouth's Missions funds (the little yellow envelopes in the pews). They are critical to our committee efforts!

**Any concerns or suggestions for ongoing needs, please call Gus at
(406) 202-8768**

In Our Prayers

Special Prayers: Maxine Ferguson, Art Gilreath, Loraine Hopgood, Doris Powell, Marlyce Taylor, and Giles Walker. All those who are experiencing the horrors of war and natural disasters.

Medical Treatment: Michael Blanchard, Greg Bolin, Gus Byrom, Brian Coplin, Kathy Field, Karen Senne Hayes, Carol McKerrow, Karen Mills, Kelly Murphy, Donna Randolph, Kathe Simons, Rebecca Stanfell, Phyllis Weaver.



MODERATOR'S MESSAGE — Jan Clinard

Bringing in the Sheaves

This past month, Pastor Charles has guided us from Revelation—which ends with a new heaven and a new earth—to Genesis, which begins with a formless void to which God adds light, water, earth, sun, moon and stars, and the creatures of the earth—and all are declared good. Abraham is tested, brothers Jacob and Esau split, and the Israelites wander into the desert.

Pastor Charles has helped us relate all these stories to our own lives. In my own family, a wedge was driven between my sister and me, which just this spring was removed, and after thirteen years of little interaction, we have re-embraced, like Jacob and Esau.

After reading **Saving Us**, we opened the conversation about climate change by becoming “weather wise,” learned some Indigenous perspectives, explored the impact of climate on the migratory habits of Snow Geese, and culminated with perspectives on how God’s word resonates through the universe, how the love of God and neighbor IS love of his creation, the Earth. Despite weather fluctuations and the fact that dinosaurs enjoyed a warmer climate than ours, the ocean’s coral reefs, mountain glaciers, and coastlines tell us that we need to work on reducing our carbon emissions. The Helena Interfaith Climate Advocates will help continue “talking about” it.

Late summer in Montana means harvesting God’s bounty. Although my apples were disappointing, I’ve actually harvested tomatoes this year! Worship in the farm community church of my childhood meant singing “Bringing in the Sheaves” nearly every Sunday of late summer and fall. Now, I’m raking pine cones (which are unusually bountiful) and needles from my front yard—a harvest I don’t need! Autumn at Plymouth means we begin our Stewardship drive, hoping to gather in the pledges that allow us to budget for another productive year, with compensation for our pastor, music director, and office administrator; utilities, maintenance, supplies, and outreach. With last year’s budget built upon pledges totaling \$145,960, your generosity is critical to our operations.

Enjoy a glorious Autumn, bringing in the sheaves.



PROJECT WARMTH — *Susan Butler*

October is notable for many things - football games, warmer clothes, harvest and hearty foods, Halloween, and the true beginning of fall weather. With the onset of colder nights, we think about our homeless neighbors, and how we might make a difference in the lives of those who have no shelter.

With great excitement, Plymouth Church is delighted to announce that this year's Sleeping Bag project will be joined by three other Helena congregations, those of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, and St. John's and Our Redeemer's Lutheran Churches. We hope this collective effort, now called Project Warmth, will enable us to purchase tents, sleeping pads, and tarps in addition to sleeping bags for our homeless brothers and sisters.

Ours is a small but important effort to keep people, including many children, warm and safe during the winter. Our tax-deductible contributions will be used to purchase new merchandise. The gifts will be given to Our Place's outreach coordinator, Ryan Galliher, to distribute. Ryan works daily with people on the street and understands their needs.

In the last ten months, Our Place, a part of Good Samaritan ministries, has supported more than 150 homeless people, offering or directing people to services of health, training, therapy, housing, and employment. As we know, many of these services are on the federal chopping block, so the need for help is greater than ever. Our Place's outreach program, currently located in the old Habitat for Humanity building on National Avenue, does so much to provide stability and support for Helena's homeless population.

As we enter the season of cold weather, sleeping bags, tents, tarps, and sleeping pads are a welcome gift to our neighbors in desperate need. Project Warmth's campaign for funds to purchase new goods will be held throughout the month of October. In each of the last two years, your donations have provided funds to purchase over 100 sleeping bags.

Together in this joint effort by the four churches, we should be able to do even more.

Thank you for your support.

We'll keep you apprised of our progress.



BUILDING & GROUNDS —*Terry Tatchell*

As we enter the fall season, it is time to consider the preparation for winter. The sprinkler system was blown out on September 30th, and that will mark the end of the growing season.

Inside our church building, the air handlers will be serviced to prepare for cooler temperatures. Hopefully the work to rebuild the altar steps will get started soon with carpeting to follow.

Thanks to everyone who commits their time and energy to the upkeep and cleaning of our Plymouth Church building .

FINANCES —*Gail Tronstad*

Time flies! As of the end of September, 75% of 2025 is behind us. Quarterly, we like to update the congregation about our finances. A snapshot is provided below.

Income:

Pledges received is at 69% and our overall income from all sources is at 71%. Reminders of 2025 pledges will be sent in October. Individuals have different patterns of giving (weekly, monthly, annual, etc.) so while this is slightly below average, it is not yet a concern. Some individuals have already given above and beyond their pledge. Thanks to all of you.

Expenses:

Several areas of expenses are below average and likely will remain so through the end of the year. These include administrative expenses (accounting fees, licenses, postage, printing) at 57% and office and cleaning supplies at 47%. Other areas (personnel, pastor, withholdings) and in the average range.

Currently our income for the year is above our expenses but we have some large payments to make yet this year. These include property assessments to the county of approximately \$5000, snow removal for the coming winter which also will likely be about \$5000, and slightly more than \$5000 for our property and liability insurance.

Our water usage fees are considerably lower this year, likely due to adjustments to the sprinkler system. Our gas and electricity charges are also considerably less, likely due to the solar panels.

It is a pleasure and an honor to provide this update and that is due to the generosity of all of you.

Thank you!!

*Thank
you*

- Kathe and the cleaning crew for keeping our church building clean and tidy.
- Ed Field for keeping our grounds looking neat and trimmed this summer.
- Office volunteers for answering phone, ordering supplies, scheduling, formatting and printing, etc., and a special thanks to Gail Tronstad for bookkeeping.



Climate Change: Let's Talk About It

—Jennifer Thompson

The September series featuring a variety of perspectives on climate change began September 3 and concluded September 24. Approximately 60 to 90 people attended each event, held not only at Plymouth but also at the Lewis & Clark Library, Montana Wild, and the Helena Indian Alliance.

The series referred to Katharine Hayhoe's book [Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World.](#)

Thanks to a grant from the Helena Area Community Foundation, Plymouth was able to purchase 40 copies and to distribute them broadly through the church.

Now What?

You may have wondered what our church and climate change have in common. We are reminded that regardless of how one may feel personally about climate change or global warming – is it a hoax, a threat, a nuisance, a reality – faith calls us to embrace three tenets: to love one another; to “fear not”; and to hope. How we apply those lessons, how we use them in our everyday interactions with friends or neighbors or community at large, may be more powerful than the message we plan to make known.

One of the four presentations during the climate change series offered a documented view implying that the threat of climate change may be simply an extension of what has been occurring since records have been kept, nothing really exceptionally new or shocking with regard to climate or weather is occurring. For many, this was a disappointing conclusion.

Since Plymouth frequently addresses topics of contemporary concern about which there is often disagreement, it is important to be prepared to respond with love, with hope, with mutual respect, and without fear. While we may not always agree with the

message, we should support the right of a person to express his/her opinion. After all, talking about it is what we value in community forums.

Katharine Hayhoe addresses faith and advocacy in her book “Saving Us...” On page 78 she speaks to the challenge of saying it right. When we can't control those we really want to, we manipulate our fear and use shame to control the outcome. We might temporarily feel better, but it just makes things worse in the long-term.

Let's make room in our hearts and minds for open dialog, for respect, for many points of view, keeping in mind that love is what guides us.



Curtis Grevenitz, A Little More Weather Wise, September 3



Mike Jetty and Mandy Smoker, Earth Care and the Indigenous Voice, September 11



Mark Mariano, Adapting Bird Migrations, September 17



Jeanetter Freguilia, Eric Meyer, and Sue Kronenberger, Faith Perspectives on Nature, September 24



Office Hours

Pastor Charles Wei: 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m. (Tues. & Thurs.), and by appointment.

Office Manager Bryan Knaff: 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. (Tues.-Thurs.)

Contact Us

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Web: www.plymouthmontanaucc.org

Email: pccofficemgr@gmail.com

Also: www.facebook.com/plymouthcongregational

Sundays

10:00 a.m. Worship Service

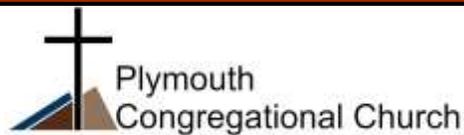
In Person and Online



Afghan Food and Auction

On Sunday September 7 many individuals from Plymouth attended the Helena Area Refugee Resettlement Team’s fund raising dinner. Providing delicious Afghan food, the event raised over \$30,000 which will benefit “Pathway Forward Program”, providing vital support for refugee resettlement in Helena, ESL, job coaching, emergency assistance and community integration.

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.



United Church of Christ
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