



First Presbyterian Church

# The Mustard Seed

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2022, Issue 03 First Presbyterian Church, Helena, Montana March 2022

## “Pack Your Bags”

One of the consequences of the pandemic is that we haven't moved around as much. We stayed in our homes except for necessary trips to places like the grocery store. Many avoided even the emergency room and the doctor's office except for really serious issues. Recreational travel was cancelled and put off. In some instances, we were banned from crossing certain borders. At times we didn't travel because we just didn't feel safe spending hours in a small enclosure with unknown others - particularly with travel over oceans to foreign lands.

I say “Phooey to all that, pack your bags, let's get going!” But not because Covid infections are falling. I'm inviting you on a journey to a foreign land, and even a time foreign to us. I am inviting you on a “forty-day” journey with Christ. Lent is upon us with Ash Wednesday on March 2 (we'll be having a worship service with communion and the imposition of ashes at 7:00 pm). As a travel guide on this journey to help us follow Jesus is a Lenten devotional text, “Lent in Plain Sight.” If you haven't already picked up a copy, grab one at church. If you can't make it to church, call me and I'll mail you a book (406.442.4775).



**Rev.  
Scott Wipperman**

This is a “Devotion through ten objects.” Each day references a couple of scripture texts (Yes! Get out your bible and read them!), a short discussion, several questions for reflection, and a prayer for the day. Each day's reading is only two and a half pages, nothing onerous. So take your time, read and *reflect*. Pay attention to the questions - you never know, there could be pop quizzes in worship!

On this journey do more than simply check off the accomplishments - visited Bethlehem (v), saw Jesus' baptismal site in the Jordan (v), read today's devotional in “Lent in Plain Sight” (v), ... - really listen to the One we are following.

Listening to one another isn't as easy as it sounds and not what we typically do.

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A Journalist, Amanda Ripley, thought she was a good listener. After all, her profession is to listen to people to get their stories. But she sat down with Gary Friedman to learn about an active listening practice he calls “looping.”

In short, “looping” is a technique where the listener reflects back to the speaker, what the speaker seemed to have said, and checks if this is correct. This is different than offering an occasional nod, a periodic “yup!,” a well-timed smile. Amanda states “Looping forced me to not think about my next question, or when I could get another cup of coffee. It meant letting the other person lead, and I had to follow, which was a little scary.”

In practicing this skill with Gary, Amanda found that she had gotten what Gary had said slightly wrong when relaying back. She tried it repeatedly, listening carefully each time until she got it right. Then Amanda and Gary switched place, with Gary listening to her and “looping” back; Amanda experienced what it was like to really be heard.

Terri McDowell speaks of this in relation to Jesus’s disciples listening to him. So often in scripture we see that they didn’t hear what Jesus was communicating. In the transfiguration text we read on February 27, at the mountain top God speaks “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.” Terri asks, do we sense a little exasperation in God’s instruction?

We are disciples following Christ. Do we listen any better than the 12 apostles and the crowd of disciples that were right there with Jesus?

Listening to Christ is a bit more challenging for us. We are not carrying on a face-to-face conversation with him. We can’t “loop” to see if we accurately heard and comprehended what Jesus is teaching us.

Active listening to Christ for us certainly involves reading his words and paying attention to his actions, but it takes more than that. It requires consideration of the context of these words and what is the setting in which this took place. It requires reflection on what we’ve heard, quite possibly looping back to the verse to read it again and experience what light the verse shines upon our reflection. Are we getting to what Jesus meant?

So, grab your bags! This 40-day journey with Christ is challenging. There is no bell hop, you have to carry your own bag. It entails much more than a cursory reading of Christ’s words. It requires being open to new insights, and possibly having to let these understandings replace long held misconceptions. We need to explore the nuances of Christ’s teachings for a more complete understanding than oversimplifications and sanitizations that strive to make his words “more comfortable” to the way we are living. On this journey, let’s listen and explore the ways Jesus is calling us to live.

Peace,  
*Pastor Scott*

# NOTES FROM SESSION

## FEBRUARY 15, 2021

The regular meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena was called to order as a hybrid meeting on Tuesday, February 15, 2022, at 6:30 PM by Reverend Scott Wipperman. Reverend Scott Wipperman opened with prayer and moderated the meeting.

Pastor Scott Wipperman talked about the differences between the people's Kingdom and God's Kingdom.

There was a quorum with the following Elders present in the church facility: Elders Sheryl Eriksen, Kathy Chambers, Rose Leavitt, Linda Bench, and John Coefield. Attending on Zoom were Carol Stebbins, Barb Leland, Mary Stiles, Karen Witte, Jeff Chaffee, and Deacon Candace Coefield, and Clerk of Session John Gneckow. Also in attendance: Pastor Scott Wipperman, CP Butch Plowman, and guest Leo Potter. Elders Mary Wright and Vic Reiman were excused.

**APPROVAL OF DOCKET:** Pastor Scott added selecting a new church and corporation treasurer and plans for Lona Albright's memorial service to New Business. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept the docket with additions.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of January 18, 2021, as presented.

**PASTOR'S REPORT:** Pastor Scott reported that we have completed the upgrade to the church website (<https://fpchelena.org>). He also reported that his church's email account ([swipperman@fpchelena.org](mailto:swipperman@fpchelena.org)) is working correctly again. Butch Plowman will fill in for Pastor Scott during the pastor's sabbatical June 1 through August 31, 2022.

**CLERK'S REPORT:** The Clerk reported that FPC received thank you notes for recent donations from Food Share, and Good Samaritan, and Giving Statements from God's Love and First Christian Church. We also received a request for Transfer of Membership information for Kapri Byrne from Our Redeemers Lutheran Church and sent them the requested information.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS:

**Administration Committee:** Elder Linda Bench reported, and a written report was submitted. Pastor Scott opened the meeting with prayer. The Chair noted that there are things for which we can use Anderson Trust Funds. Examples:

Bible Study materials (Teacher Guides, student guides, videos) and worship materials (banners, Advent and Lenten devotionals). **ACTION ITEM:** Invest the \$19,908.68 in the Education Murfitt savings account in a new Vanguard account. Need a person to nominate to Session for Corporation Vice President.

**Building and Grounds:** Elder John Coefield reported, and a written report was submitted. John opened the meeting with prayer. The church received a plaque from Scout Troop 1228 to commemorate 50 years of our association. Plans are to remove two (2) front pews to aid traffic flow in the front of the church. The security system alarm times will be 11 pm to 7 am weekdays, all day Saturday, and Sunday midnight to 7am and 5 pm to midnight.

**Christian Education Committee:** Elder Mary Stiles reported, and a written report was submitted. Mary Stiles opened the meeting with prayer. Pastor Scott will lead a study on the Sermon on the Mount when the Covid crisis improves. The committee is looking at presenting programs on topics related to Estate Planning, Home Care, Wills, Hospice Care, and Funeral Planning, and Trusts.

**Congregational Fellowship:** Elder Linda Bench reported, and a written report was submitted. Pastor Scott opened the meeting with prayer. After church fellowship and treats will continue as they have been recently pending changes to the Covid status.

**Mission Committee:** Elder Kathy Chambers reported, and a written report was submitted. Kathy opened the meeting with prayer. FPC continues soliciting donations during February for feminine hygiene products to be shared with Good Samaritan, Florence Crittendon, and other groups involved with women as part of our Matthew 25 involvement. **ACTION ITEM:** The committee requests Session approval to seek donations of books and money to purchase a variety of balls for residents of Pine Hills during the month of March. The motion carried.

**Memorial Committee:** No activity to report this month.

**Nominating Committee:** No activity to report this month.

**Personnel Committee:** Carol Stebbins reported and a written report was submitted. The meeting was opened with prayer. The committee put together a list of information about Pastor Scott's sabbatical to be read at the Annual Congregational meeting February 13.

**Worship Committee:** No Committee representative at Session although a

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written report was submitted. Dianna opened the meeting with prayer. Pastor Scott reported that he will be on vacation the week of April 24.

We are already preparing for Lent. Ash Wednesday is March 2 and FPC will have a service beginning at 7:00 PM. Communion will be served along with the imposition of ashes.

We will no longer be showing on the screen the words to the music but will be using the Glory to God song books in the pews.

Also, to encourage use of the pew Bibles, we will no longer show the words to the scripture lessons on the screen.

**Covid Task Force:** Pastor Scott reported that the Task Force is continuing to monitor the situation in the Helena area and noted Covid infection numbers are starting to come down. The committee is monitoring the CDC for new mask guidelines. If the CDC recommendations change, the Task Force will review the church's guidelines for changes as well.

**Deacon Report:** Deacon Candace Coefield provided a report of Board activities for January. Communion was served at Touchmark and Edgewood.

**Old Business:** We are not ready to discuss the Basin church as an FPC "Chapel" as we do not yet have various questions answered such as added responsibilities and liabilities.

**New Business:** The Boy Scout Food Share box is being moved into the entrance to encourage church member for contributions of food items. Butch Plowman volunteered to be the Vice President of the corporation. A motion was made accepting Butch's offer, seconded, and passed. Leo Potter volunteered to be the church and corporation treasurer. A motion was made to accept his offer, seconded, and voted on favorably.

Lona's ashes have been returned to the church from Bozeman. The plan is to have a memorial service in the Spring and scatter her ashes and put a plaque in the memorial garden on the west side of the church. Planning for the event was referred to the Worship committee.

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded at 7:30 PM to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. Pastor Scott closed the meeting with prayer.

**Next Regular Session Meeting: March 15, 2022, at 6:30 pm.**

John Gneckow  
Clerk of Session

First Presbyterian Church  
535 N. Ewing  
Helena, MT 59601  
442-4775

## Larry Linton Scholarship

Larry Linton provided a scholarship gift of \$10,000 to the church several years ago. This gift was invested and is earning interest. As sufficient interest becomes available, funds are to be awarded to students for attending or planning to attend post-secondary school.

### **Criteria:**

Student must be a member or related to a member of First Presbyterian Church

Minimum grade point average of 2.0

Demonstrated financial need

Demonstrated good character

### **Application Process:**

Submit a letter of interest to FPC with your name, address, email, and phone number. Indicate the current school you attend and the school that you plan to attend (must be accredited).

Attach a current transcript and estimated expenses for your year of college (tuition, room and board, books and supplies).

Attach a letter of recommendation from an individual who can address knowledge of your academic ability and character.

Address the following essay questions.

1. What are your current academic goals?
2. What are your career goals once you have completed your degree?
3. What is your involvement with the First Presbyterian Church?
4. This scholarship is for students with financial need. Please describe your financial situation and how the scholarship can help you meet your academic goals.

Mail the application to the attention of the Education Committee at First Presbyterian Church, 535 N. Ewing St., Helena, MT 59601.

Scholarships are to be utilized for tuition and when awarded will be addressed to the school that the student will attend.

Availability of funds will be advertised through the church's website and newsletter. A committee representing education, mission and administration will review and recommend successful applicants.

# Seeley Family Memorial Scholarship

Eve and Nelson Seeley, members of the Helena First Presbyterian Church, created an endowment at the Montana Community Foundation in 2015 called the Seeley Family Memorial Scholarship. This endowment will provide annual scholarship awards in perpetuity to benefit members of the church who are attending or planning to attend post-secondary school.

## Scholarship Criteria:

- Student must be a member or relative of a member of the Helena First Presbyterian Church
- Graduate from a Helena high school
- Minimum grade point average of 2.0
- Demonstrated financial need.
- Demonstrated good character

Students may apply online for the scholarship through the Montana Community Foundation website at [www.mtcf.org](http://www.mtcf.org). Students create an account to start the process. For further information or assistance with the application process, please call or email Jenny Lou Stark, Scholarship Manager, at the Montana Community Foundation ([jstark@mtcf.org](mailto:jstark@mtcf.org) or 441-4946).

The application deadline this year is March 15, 2022. The recipient(s) of the scholarship(s) will be chosen, among eligible applicants, by a scholarship committee established at the Helena First Presbyterian Church.

**Christianity 101**  
**Or**  
**Instructions for Being a Decent Human Being**  
**Or**  
**Practicing Parenesis in a Post-Christian World**

(Note: “Parenesis” = an amicable reminder of moral practices entailed by agreed-upon convictions the consequences of theological beliefs)

1. God created everyone. Every. Single. Person. We have that in common no matter our other myriad differences.
2. Integrity is more valuable than material wealth in the eyes of God. Therefore, always choose a good name over great riches. (Um, that might be a timely word, friends.)
3. The Lord pleads the case of the poor. Ergo, so should we.
4. Generosity is a blessing all around, for the giver and the receiver.
5. Do not exploit the poor. (There are too many examples to list how the poor are exploited: title loans, cash bail, prison labor, subprime loans, higher prices on groceries in food deserts. The list is exceedingly long. Do a little digging into the policies and systems in our community, pick a few and hold them up in contrast to Christianity 101 this week.)
6. A person’s value does not equate to their monetary net worth. A person is valuable because, well, see number one on this list. God does not care how much or how little is in your bank account. See number two on this list.
7. Love your neighbor as yourself. Really. Not in theory, but in daily, tangible practice. See number 5 for more information.
8. Faith is visible to all. How we live reflects our deepest beliefs, revealing what and who we truly value. (Please do not go to lunch after worship, clearly having been to church, and treat the server badly and leave a meagerly tip. Please, just do not.)
9. When someone comes to you in pain and suffering, at the very least treat him with dignity, respect, and kindness, even if you cannot do for him what he hopes you can do.
10. When someone comes to you in pain and suffering, do what you can do to alleviate her pain and suffering, no matter who she is where she comes from or how that pain and suffering came to be.



## A Lenten Journey

Soon we will be entering into our Lenten Season. Each year, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent and is always 46 days before Easter Sunday. Lent is a 40 day season (not counting Sundays) marked by repentance, fasting, reflection, and ultimately celebration. The 40 day period represents Christ's time of temptation in the wilderness, where he fasted and where Satan tempted him. Lent asks believers to set aside a time for making Lent an intentional season of focus on Christ's life, ministry, sacrifice, and resurrection.

Ash Wednesday this year is March 2. We will have an Ash Wednesday service at 7:00pm. Pastor Scott will share a message to be followed by communion and the imposition of Ashes. Typically, the palms from the year before have been burned and are used for the Ashes. The symbol of the cross is drawn across the forehead with the words, "From dust you came and from dust you shall return." At the end of the service, we will leave the sanctuary in silence.

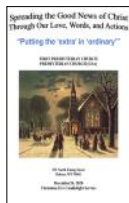
This year we are offering a book written by Jill J. Duffield called Lent in Plain Sight. These books will be available in the narthex free of charge to help guide you through Lent. We encourage our Deacons to distribute them to our shut-ins.

May we find this time of personal repentance and reflection a Blessing as we grow into a deeper relationship with Christ our Savior. Amen

In Him,

Dianna Goodman/worship chair, Les Cramer, Ann Swisher, Pearl Plowman.

The **Deacons' Benevolence Fund** has been used several times during the pandemic. Thanks to the congregation's generous gifts, we have been able to fulfill every request. We want to remind everyone that this fund is for you. If you need help to pay household or medical bills, buy groceries, medicine or gas, we are here, ready to help. Just contact Pastor Scott at the church office, and he will get the ball rolling. This is completely confidential; not even the deacons know who our recipients are. We are so happy to help! God bless!



## Submission Deadlines for the Bulletin and Newsletter



To allow for the production and review of **worship bulletins** and the **monthly newsletters** we want to reiterate some submission deadlines for items to be included in those. It is always appreciated if material can be received earlier than these deadlines, but these deadlines need to be met for inclusion in a particular issue.

The deadline for worship bulletins is the most straight forward deadline: items for inclusion need to be into Bruce by Tuesday at 10:00 am for inclusion in Sunday's bulletin, preferably in an electronic form. Given that the last day of the month moves, submissions for a newsletter needs to be made by 10:00 am on the sixth business day before the end of the month.

For instance, if the 30th or 31st is the last day of the month and it falls on a Tuesday, then six business days before the 30th/31st would be Monday the 22nd of the month.

For the **March Mustard Seed**, submissions need to be in by **10:00 am on Wednesday, March 23rd**. Church holidays may require that submissions be made even earlier for both bulletins and newsletters.

### Willing Workers will meet each Wednesday at 9am.

The group continues to plan for and organize future Craft Fairs and events. We invite everyone interested to attend the weekly gatherings. We need not only your ideas, but your crafts and your help to ensure the success of this event. We hope to put together many gift baskets containing hand crafted items, so we'd like your assistance with this new addition to the Craft Fair. Come one and all; we welcome your participation.

**FOOD SHARE:** The Mission Committee is pleased to announce that we will resume collecting food for Helena Food Share. Our Boy Scout troop will collect and deliver donations as an ongoing service project. Thanks for your help.



**DEADLINE**  
**The deadline for**  
**March's**  
**newsletter is**  
**Wednesday,**  
**March 23rd.**

### **UPCOMING FINANCIAL** **DEADLINES**

Completed Credit Card Request forms,  
Completed Check Request forms, Personnel Forms / Time Sheets are due in the Financial Office mailbox on:

**Tuesday, March 8, 2022**  
**Wednesday, March 23, 2022**  
**Friday, April 8, 2022**

# MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

1st - Marvin & Carol Carpenter  
15th - Elroy & Lucille Letcher

17th - Ron & Karen Witte

# MARCH BIRTHDAYS

6th- Elroy Letcher  
7th- Sandy Phillips  
11th- Merle Korizek  
12th- Mary Brainard

13th- Tonna Strasko  
19th- Lexsey Carpenter  
21st- Candace Coefield  
22nd- Ward Stiles

## DEACONS ON CALL

Merle Korizek 431-0677

## March - Lay Liturgists

**March 6** Deb Whitcomb  
**March 13** Dianna Goodman  
**March 20** Art Bumgardner  
**March 27** Rose Leavitt

## DECEMBER COMMUNION SETUP

**Pending**

## MATTHEW 25 Activity for March



*I was in prison and you visited me. V 36*



Visiting those in prison is difficult with Covid in our midst. Instead the Mission Committee has adopted Pine Hills Correctional Facility in Miles City as the recipient of our Matthew 25 love and caring this month. Pine Hills is the only state-operated long-term facility for male offenders ages 10-17 and currently houses 30 youth. Please see the Mustard Seed for additional information.

FPC's outreach to the school is twofold:

1. We will collect the following items for the youth during leisure time: puzzle books (crossword, Sudoku, word search, etc.), color-by-numbers books with pencils/crayons.
2. We would also like to make a monetary donation to the facility to allow them to purchase recreational equipment, especially basketballs, footballs, softballs, etc. Your donations can be made through the Church's website or by sending a check to the church with 'Pine Hill' on the memo line. A collection can also be available in the Fellowship area.

**Thank you in advance for your generosity. Please add these boys to your daily prayer list in March.**

*"In everything I have shown you that by working hard, we must help the weak. In this way we remember the Lord Jesus' words: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35*

**First Presbyterian Church**  
535 North Ewing Street  
Helena, MT 59601

**[www.fpchelena.org](http://www.fpchelena.org)**

**Weekly Sermon on HCTV Cable Channel 189**  
**Wednesdays at 6 pm & Saturdays at 9 AM**

**OFFICE HOURS**

**Monday - Thursday**

**9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

**Fridays - 9:00 am - 12 Noon**

**406-442-4775**

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