Growing in Faith, Supporting One Another, and Sharing Christ's Love



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

535 North Ewing Street

Helena, MT 59601

Sunday, November 29, 2026 ~ 10 a.m.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Pastor: Rev. Emily Cowser
Liturgist: Max Oliver
Organist: Ann Swisher

"In our tears and agony, we hold our children close and confront the truth: The future is dark. But my faith dares me to ask: What if this darkness is not the darkness of the tomb, but the darkness of the womb?"
-Valarie Kaur, Sikh American civil rights leader and educator

**Please stand if you are able*

PRELUDE "Light Dawns on a Weary World"
David M. Cherwien (b. 1957)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our mission statement: ***Shaped by the grace of our sovereign God, we follow Jesus Christ by growing in faith, supporting one another, and sharing Christ's love in our community and the wider world.***

*LIGHTING the ADVENT WREATH and CALL TO WORSHIP
One: We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ.
In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord!
ALL: Make a highway in the desert for our God.
One: From ages of old, no ear has heard, no eye has seen
one so glorious as the Lord our God, for whom we wait.
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
ALL: those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined.
One: Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

*HYMN "My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout" GtG #100

My soul cries out with
a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the

wondrous things that you bring to
the ones who wait.

You fixed your sight on your
servant's plight, and my weakness
you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name
be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?

My heart shall sing of the day
you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the
depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.

Your very name puts the proud to
shame, and to those who would
for you yearn,
you will show your might, put the
strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn.

My heart shall sing of the day
you bring.

Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

From the halls of power to the
fortress tower,
not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for
your justice tears
every tyrant from his throne.

The hungry poor shall weep
no more,
for the food they can never earn;
there are tables spread;
every mouth be fed,
for the world is about to turn.

My heart shall sing of the day
you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

Though the nations rage from
age to age,
we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
from the conqueror's
crushing grasp.

This saving word that our
forebears heard is the promise
which holds us bound,
till the spear and rod can be
crushed by God,
who is turning the world around.

My heart shall sing of the day
you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears,
for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

*CALL TO CONFESSION

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

ALL: God-with-us, even in Advent, we confess that you can seem far away. You are hidden when we need you near. In our hurt, doubt, and fear, we do not try to draw closer to you; instead we lash out – against you, our neighbor, even those we love. Forgive us, we pray, and come to save us! Let your face shine until our tears are dried, our sins are faded, and our hope is restored. After all, we belong to you, and in your hands, we can be made new. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. (*a moment of silent confession)*

*DECLARATION OF FORGIVENESS

One: The grace of God, given to us in Christ Jesus, strengthens us to the end so that we may be blameless when Christ comes again.

ALL: Thanks be to God, who is faithful and has called us into the fellowship of the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord!

*THE PEACE

*“Gloria Patri” GtG #581

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen, amen.

PSALM READING Psalm 80 *(The Message)* Page 919

Listen, Shepherd, Israel’s Shepherd—
get all your Joseph sheep together.
Throw beams of light
from your dazzling throne
So Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh
can see where they’re going.
Get out of bed—you’ve slept long enough!
Come on the run before it’s too late.
God, come back!
Smile your blessing smile:
***That* will be our salvation.**
God, God-of-the-Angel-Armies,
how long will you smolder like a sleeping volcano
while your people call for fire and brimstone?
You put us on a diet of tears,
bucket after bucket of salty tears to drink.
You make us look ridiculous to our friends;
our enemies poke fun day after day.
God-of-the-Angel-Armies, come back!
Smile your blessing smile:
***That* will be our salvation.**

Remember how you brought a young vine from Egypt,
cleared out the brambles and briers
and planted your very own vineyard?
You prepared the good earth,
you planted her roots deep;
the vineyard filled the land.
Your vine soared high and shaded the mountains,
even dwarfing the giant cedars.
Your vine ranged west to the Sea,
east to the River.
So why do you no longer protect your vine?
Trespassers pick its grapes at will;
Wild pigs crash through and crush it,
and the mice nibble away at what's left.
God-of-the-Angel-Armies, turn our way!
Take a good look at what's happened
and attend to this vine.
Care for what you once tenderly planted—
the vine you raised from a shoot.
And those who dared to set it on fire—
give them a look that will kill!
Then take the hand of your once-favorite child,
the child you raised to adulthood.
We will never turn our back on you;
breathe life into our lungs so we can shout your name!
God, God-of-the-Angel-Armies, come back!
Smile your blessing smile:
***That* will be our salvation.**

One: The Word of the Lord.
ALL: Thanks be to God.

NEW TESTAMENT READING 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 Page 1771

One: The Word of the Lord.
ALL: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING Mark 13:24-37 Page 1578
One: The Gospel of the Lord.
ALL: Praise to you, O Christ.

SPECIAL MUSIC "Will We Know Him?"
by Besig-Price

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

OLD TESTAMENT READING Isaiah 64:1-12 Page 1161
One: The Word of the Lord.
ALL: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

A TIME OF QUIET REFLECTION

*HYMN "Savior of the Nations, Come" GtG #102

Savior of the nations, come;
virgin's son, make here your home.
Marvel now, O heaven and earth,
that the Lord chose such a birth.

From God's heart the
Savior speeds;
back to God his pathway leads;
out to vanquish death's command,
back to reign at God's right hand.

Now your manger, shining bright,
hallows night with newborn light.
Night cannot this light subdue;
let our faith shine ever new.

Praise we sing to Christ the Lord,
virgin's son, incarnate Word!
To the holy Trinity
praise we sing eternally.

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH *From* The Heidelberg Catechism

One: What do you believe when you say, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth"?

ALL: That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ the Son. I trust God so much that I do not doubt he will provide whatever I need for body and soul, and will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends upon me in this sad world. God is able to do this because he is almighty God and desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE OFFERING

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

OFFERTORY "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"
Gordon Young (1919-1998)

Offering plates are located in the back of the sanctuary. You may also give online at fpchelena.org/giving or by mailing a check to First Presbyterian Church, 535 N. Ewing St., Helena, MT 59601.

*DOXOLOGY "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow" GtG #606

Praise God, from whom all
blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here
below;

Praise him above,
ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son,
and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*OFFERING PRAYER

*HYMN "Now the Heavens Start to Whisper" GtG #94

Now the heavens start to whisper,
as the veil is growing thin.
Earth from slumber wakes to listen
to the stirring, faint within:

Seed of promise, deeply planted,
child to spring from Jesse's stem!
Like the soil beneath the frostline,
hearts grow soft to welcome him.

Heavy clouds that block
the moonlight
now begin to drift away.
Diamond brilliance
through the darkness
shines the hope of coming day.

Christ, the morning star
of splendor,
gleams within a world grown dim.
Heaven's ember fans to fullness;
hearts grow warm
to welcome him.

Christ, eternal Sun of justice,
Christ, the rose of wisdom's seed,
come to bless with fire
and fragrance
hours of yearning, hurt, and need.

In the lonely, in the stranger,
in the outcast, hid from view:
child who comes to grace
the manger,
teach our hearts to welcome you.

*CHARGE

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE "Wake, Awake!"
Martha Sobaje (b. 1948)

Announcements

Welcome!

A special welcome to visitors joining us for worship today! Hymns are found in the "Glory to God" (GtG) hymnal in the pews, as well as on the screen. Please sign the red fellowship pad in your pew and pass it to your neighbor. It is our tradition to remain seated during the Postlude at the conclusion of the service. After the service, please join us for refreshments and conversation.

Advent Devotionals Available

Advent devotionals are available for pick up on the table by the sanctuary entrance. Please feel free to take one for a friend as well! The theme of the devotional is "Until the Dawn." Each week offers art, reflections, poetry, and hymns to help us resist despair and put our

prayers in motion. As we move through the season, we will cry out, start somewhere, speak up, take courage, build up, and choose joy. Until the day when God's love reigns and all the earth echoes shalom, let us keep moving, singing, resisting, and rejoicing—trusting that God joins us in the work of Advent.

Invitation From Your PNC and Strategic Planning Team

You are invited to share in choosing FPC's next pastor! Share your thoughts, hopes, and must haves with the Pastor Nominating Committee and Strategic Planning Team at one of our Focus Group sessions. Signup sheets are available on the fellowship table; simply choose the day and time that is convenient for you to attend and make your input known for us to use in the call. The Focus Group session options are Nov. 29, December 2, 6, 9, and 13, so please sign up.

POET Dinner Wednesday, Dec. 2

The December "POET Society" dinner is Wed., Dec. 2, at Jade Garden Restaurant at 5:30pm. There is always a lot of lively conversation, good food, and a game or two. All Church members and friends are invited. Barb needs to know how many are coming, so please email her if you're planning to attend at barb640@hotmail.com. And — by the way — there is no poetry reading. POET just stands for "Presbyterians Out Eating Together!"

Christmas Giving Opportunity

The Mission and Outreach Team invites you to participate in a Christmas project. We have arranged with the two preschools that share our building to be our Christmas giving recipients. The students and teachers will generate ideas of items that their classrooms need and want. Each idea will be put on an angel, placed on a tree in the Narthex, and you are invited to take an angel or two and fulfill the wish. The requests will be for the classroom, not for a specific child. The children are 4 and 5 years old. Our gifts will be collected and delivered to the classroom in one big box, to be used and shared by everyone at school. Please do not wrap them. All gifts will be collected through **December 13** and given to the students on December 17. Cash gifts are also welcome. Questions: Please ask any Mission team member. Thank you for your participation.

Doors to Remain Locked During Social Time

Session has decided to keep the main entrance doors locked during the worship service and social time. The doors will be unlocked Sundays between 9 and 10:15 a.m. only.

You're Invited!

Wednesday, Dec. 2	Choir 2 p.m. Bell Choir 3:30 p.m. POET Dinner at Jade Garden 5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 3	Women's Bible Study 1 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 4	Friday Bible Study 12/noon Hand & Foot Cards
Sunday, Dec. 6	Worship Service w/Communion 10 a.m. Social Time 11 a.m.

Staff

Ministers—Every Member
Pastor—Rev. Emily Cowser
Director of Music & Media—Les Cramer
Organist—Ann Swisher
Treasurer—Leo Potter
Office Coordinator—Julie Young

FPC Elders

Dianna Goodman
(Nominating Chair)

Jim Meyer
(Administration Co-Chair)

Butch Plowman
(Buildings & Grounds Chair)

Carol Gneckow
(Mission & Outreach Chair)

Patti Borsberry
(Congregational Life Chair)

Matthew Richards
(Administration Co-Chair)

Max Oliver, Clerk of Session

FPC Deacons

Bonnie Anderson
Ward Stiles, Vice-Moderator
Art Bumgardner, Moderator
Rena Bumgardner
Ria Caussyn
Carole Massman
Wanda Jewell
Alysia Ryan

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Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Phone: 406-442-4775 **Email:** admin@fpchelena.org **Website:** www.fpchelena.org

Pastor Emily Cowser

Phone: 406-442-4775 **Email:** pastor@fpchelena.org

Weekly Sermon on HCTV Cable Channel 189, Wednesdays 6 p.m. & Saturdays 9 a.m.

Cover Icon: *Mary: Love Forever Being Born* by Kelly Latimore