

First Presbyterian Church

# The Mustard Seed

NEWSLETTER



Vol. 2024, Issue 12    First Presbyterian Church, Helena, MT    December 2024

## Special Worship Services

### Readers' Theater

*"A Christmas Truce"*

Sunday, Dec. 8

10 a.m.

### Celebrating Christmas with Music

Sunday, Dec. 15

10 a.m.

### Blue Christmas Service

Wednesday, Dec. 18

12:00/Noon

### Christmas Eve

Tuesday, Dec. 24

7 p.m.



### *Season preparations*

New garland is among the decorations gracing the sanctuary in preparation for Advent & Christmas.

### Angel Tree gifts due December 15



On Nov. 17, the congregation began choosing names and purchasing gifts for children who have family in prison.

The incarcerated person has requested a gift be sent in their name to the child. If more than one gift is bought for the child, place all gifts in one box and return by Dec. 15, either wrapped or in a box ready for wrapping. Any unwrapped gifts will be wrapped at a "Wrapping Party" after the service on Dec. 15.

The gifts will be delivered to families Dec. 19 and 20.

Special Olympics  
Dinner

“The Miles City Bandits” Special Olympian basketball players and their coaches were our guests for dinner Nov. 8.

Greeters John & Carol Gneckow and Bonnie Anderson welcomed the 45 guests, and our kitchen crew, Leo Potter, Kathy & Allen Chambers, BJ Burns, and Karen Witte prepared and served the meal.

Thank you all for helping us welcome the strangers among us.



BJ bumps elbows with an athlete during the Special Olympics dinner Nov. 8.

December services will feature various musical groups!

For some additional Christmas Joy during Advent this year, First Presbyterian Church will welcome various musical groups featuring young people on December 1, 8, 15 and 22. You won't want to miss it!



FPC Elders

**Sheryl Eriksen**  
(Fellowship chair)

**Jim Meyer**  
(Administration chair)

**Butch Plowman**  
(Building & Grounds chair)

**Karen Witte**  
(Mission chair)

**Patti Borsberry**  
(Worship co-chair)

**Jeff Chaffee**  
(Personnel chair)

**Barb Leland**  
(Worship co-chair)

**Linda Bench**  
(Nominating chair)

**John Bryan**

**John Gneckow**, Clerk of Session

FPC Deacons

Vicky Bryan  
Merle Korizek  
Carole Massman  
Darlene McNay

BJ Burns (Moderator)  
Kathy Chambers  
Jill Cook

Bonnie Anderson  
Ward Stiles (Vice-mod.)

Each of the monthly Session meetings begins with a brief time of worship. There is a prayer of invocation which includes confession, scripture is read using a process called "dwelling in the word" and communion is celebrated. November meeting was the same. We considered what the Holy Spirit was saying to us through Psalm 126. Psalm 126:3 is "The Lord has done great things for us and we rejoiced." Each person responded by sharing some great thing(s) they are thankful for today. Their answers were for health, days of enjoying the beautiful weather and place we live in, for successful hunting trips, music, family, funds, freedom, friends and planes allowing us to travel to see family.



If you were asked that question...what would your answer be? What great thing has the Lord done for you?

At this time of year, we think of the blessings of food, family, friends and celebrations. With the thanksgiving holiday, we gather together and recognize all that we have received. We look forward to Hallmark movies, worship services with advent candles, and celebrating the blessing of Jesus Christ. The commercial world calls this Christmas time, but in the church, we are in Advent, meaning "coming."

Our Christian year begins with Advent as a time of preparation for the Lord's return. Scripture this month comes from the book of Isaiah. Isaiah may seem to be an odd choice since it is in the Old Testament.

But Isaiah is often referred to as the "Fifth Gospel" because of the many prophecies of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection. Isaiah points us to Jesus. Other Advent scriptures point to the second coming of Christ. Jesus says "stay alert," John the Baptist reminds us to get ready, Mary rejoices in what God has done and will do while Joseph encourages us to stay faithful. All the while, Isaiah's ancient words bring the blessings of hope, peace, joy and love.

These are words and blessings that we all need. This year, invite your friends to worship and prepare for Christmas. Invite them to hear those words from Isaiah, to see the candles lighting the way in the darkness and feel the warmth of God's love through this congregation.

Invite them to come and hear different groups of children sing or come on Dec. 8 for a special reading of "The Christmas Truce," to the Christmas Music celebration on Dec. 15, or to the Blue Christmas service of hope and light on Dec. 18 at noon. Christmas Eve worship will again be at 7:00pm on Tuesday, Dec. 24. Our final Sunday in December will be a joyful celebration of music and scripture.

During this season of Advent, may each of us recognize the blessings we have in Christ as we prepare for his coming.

In Christ,

Pastor Janet

## Property Oversight Committee update

by Linda Bench

The Property Oversight Committee was given the task of exploring and identifying our expectations and requirements to achieve a “GREAT FIT”, a tenant to share the mission of the church, to occupy the unused space on the east end of the first floor and at the same time help the finances of the church.

The committee shared its expectations and requirements with the commercial real estate broker, Tyler Warne, and almost immediately a potential tenant viewed the area. The potential tenant, a childcare center, is very interested. There is still work to be done before this, or another potential tenant will be sharing our space with sunshine.

For more information, contact Linda Bench and plan to attend a Town Hall Sunday, Dec. 15, after the worship service.

### Christmas Joy Special Offering



The Christmas Joy Offering period begins Dec. 1.

Fifty percent of the offering provides assistance to current and retired church workers and their families in their time of need, and the remaining fifty percent develops our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

The Christmas Joy Offering is one of four annual special offerings. Please give generously... for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

### Session approves pastor's time off in January

Session has approved Pastor Janet taking the month of January off as time away. She will not be in the office, nor receive any salary or vacation benefits.

Worship will be led by Dianna Goodman and one Sunday by Jim Meyer. The January Session meeting will be moderated by Rev. Chuck Carlson.

Any issues that come up during that time will be handled by either President of the Corporation John Coefield or by your Clerk of Session, John Gneckow.



### ***Non-financial Giving Opportunities***

**Dec. 15**—Last day to return Angel Tree gifts for children of incarcerated family. “Wrapping Party” after the service for unwrapped gifts.

### ***Financial Giving Opportunities***

**Dec. 1-21**—Christmas Joy Special Offering

# MINUTES OF THE SESSION

## First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

November 19, 2024

The worship service and regular meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena were called to order on Tuesday, November 19, 2024, at 6:35 PM by Reverend Janet Potter.

Pastor Janet opened the meeting with prayer followed by a worship service that included a Scripture reading from Psalm 126. After reading of the Scripture followed by a time of reflection, Pastor Janet asked: 1) What are you thankful for today? 2) What caught your imagination? and 3) How might the Spirit be encouraging us? Pastor Janet concluded the worship service with communion.

Following conclusion of worship, she opened and moderated the business meeting.

There was a quorum with the following Elders present: Sheryl Eriksen, Barb Leland, Patti Borsberry, John Bryan, and Linda Bench. Elders on Zoom: Karen Witte, Jeff Chaffee, and Jim Meyer. Clerk of Session John Gneckow, Treasurer Leo Potter, and Deacon Ward Stiles were also in attendance. Elder Arlyn “Butch” Plowman was excused. Guest: Building & Grounds co-chair John Coefield

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to give John Coefield voice so he could present the B&G committee report.

**APPROVAL OF DOCKET:** A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the docket as presented.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of October 15, 2024, regular Session meeting.

### CLERK’S REPORT:

	Active Membership as of September 30, 2024	90	
	Active Membership as of October 31, 2024	90	

The Clerk stated that Glacier Camp raised \$25,000 for camper scholarships at the annual Fall fundraiser November 17, 2024. The average cost per camper per week is \$600.00.

The Clerk also reported that two old televisions, three old computer towers and one laptop along with various computer parts, and an old unused printer were recycled last week through 406 Recycling.

**INTERIM PASTOR’S REPORT:** Pastor Janet reported her activities:

Plans and leads Sunday worship.

Moderated the October 15 Session meeting.

Attended Deacon meeting on November 10.

Attended Mission and Outreach, Worship, Fellowship, Building and Grounds, Admin, and Personnel committee meetings.

Performed hospital and home visits as needed.  
 Completed the Stewardship sermon series.  
 Conducted worship at the Cooney Rehabilitation November 5, 12, and 26.  
 Attended discussions and meetings with Property Oversight Committee.  
 Attended Julie’s personnel review meeting with Elder Mary Stiles.

Thanks to Sheryl Eriksen, Carol and John Gneckow for the time and energy they have given to cleaning out the closets in preparation for leasing four classrooms and unused office space on the first floor. Also, thanks to Les Cramer for moving AV equipment into new storage locations.

To date, we have sent 100 red hymnals to a church in Ohio and 10 red hymnals to a church in Illinois.

Thanks to Dianna for preaching on November 17.

- Upcoming events:
- Thanksgiving dinner November 28
  - Decorating for Advent/Christmas November 24
  - Advent begins December 1
  - Blue Christmas Service December 18 at noon
  - Christmas Eve Service December 24 at 7:00 PM

Communion	Total	Breakout
October	90	49 in person, 31 online, 10 at home

### COMMITTEE REPORTS:

**Administration Committee:** Chair Jim Meyer reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

Treasurer Leo Potter provided a written report. October giving was \$19,953 including a one-time gift of \$6000. Net operating revenue for October was \$4735 bringing YTD revenue to \$-1064.

Vanguard accounts decreased \$257.49 during October.

Building use donations are up and utility expenses are down.

The next Administration meeting: December 11 at 4:00 PM.

**Building and Grounds:** Co-Chair John Coefield reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

New light bulbs have been ordered for the Sanctuary. Once in place, visibility in the Sanctuary and choir loft should be much improved.

A sensor on the alley door has been replaced.

Next meeting: December 11 at 10:00 AM.

**Congregational Fellowship:** Chair Sheryl Eriksen reported, and a written report was submitted to Session.

The committee helped with the Pumpkin Patch Party on October 19. The event

was a success.

The committee also helped with the Special Olympics dinner held November 8.

We are finalizing plans for the community Thanksgiving dinner November 28.

The committee is looking at having a movie night or dinner-out night in the first part of the new year.

**ACTION ITEM: Change the Committee name from Fellowship to Friendship. Motion passed.**

There will be no 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday potluck in December.

No meeting in December. Next meeting: January 8 at 1:00 PM.

**Memorial Committee:** Met October 23 and a written report was submitted.

Mark Goodman and Ward Stiles were welcomed as new members of the committee.

Current fund balance is \$10,353.28.

The committee voted to assist the Worship committee with the purchase of Christmas decorations, should help be needed.

It was noted that the stage in Richardson Hall needs a replacement curtain. Chair Kathy Chambers will look into this.

Committee members are to look at the memorial sign on the Ewing Street side of the church to see if the sign needs to be refurbished, replaced, or left alone.

**Mission Committee:** Chair Karen Witte reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

Discussed the Pumpkin Patch Party. We do not yet have a final figure on the profit from the party and the Kid Pack offering on which to base the Kid Pack donation to Food Share.

The committee is sponsoring a Prison Fellowship Angel Tree for Christmas. We will have 20 names/9 families of local area children. All families have been contacted. Gifts are to be brought to the church by December 15, and distributed December 19 and 20.

Larry Mirch reported that the next overnight hosting of Family Promise will be November 24 and 25. Help with meals and someone for the overnight stays is needed.

We are looking at selecting a giving project from the PCUSA Gift Giving Catalog for January.

The next meeting: December 9, at 1:00PM.

**Nominating Committee:** No updates this month.

**Personnel Committee:** Chair Jeff Chaffee reported and a written report was submitted to Session.

Pastor Janet and Committee member Mary Stiles completed Julie Young's annual evaluation.



The committee budget for 2025 was discussed. The committee approved a 2.5% COLA adjustment for the staff. After discussions with our Treasurer, the Board of Pensions factor was adjusted upward to 39% which is in line with the 2024 budget.

**ACTION ITEM: Ask Session approval to close the FPC Helena office between Christmas and New Years. An amendment was added to pay staff for that week. The motion with the amendment passed unanimously.**

The next meeting: February 3, 2025, at 10:00 AM.

**Property Oversight Committee:** No written report was submitted to Session. Committee Chair Linda Bench verbally reported.

The committee goal is to lease to organizations who have a mission consistent with the FPC Helena's mission.

Linda also reported that we have a possible tenant beginning in January. This is a daycare that will utilize the downstairs classrooms. The operator of the daycare has met with Stacy who okayed the arrangement as the two groups have different goals and clientele. The new tenant's lease will be for 2-3 years. They will operate 10 hours a day four days a week.

**Worship Committee:** Co-chair Patti Borsberry reported. A written report was submitted to Session.

The date for decorating the church for Advent is November 24 following the worship service.

Christmas Music Sunday will be December 15. Les is gathering people as bell ringers for the December 15 service. Co-chair Barb Leland noted that we have some children who will sing at FPC during the Advent Season Services. Stacy and the Spanglish children are planning to sing at one of the services.

Joy Edgar will be scheduling volunteers to light the Advent candles each week.

New fall Advent banners are on display in the sanctuary.

Pastor Janet reported that the Devotional book for Advent is based on Isaiah. The booklet includes some recipes and articles. The booklet will be disbursed via email.

The Blue Christmas Service will be December 18 at noon. Cookies and coffee will be available.

The next Worship committee meeting: December 10 at 10:00 AM.

**Deacon Report:** The minutes from November 10, 2024, meeting will be submitted in December to Session.

The Board will decorate Christmas trees for the shut-ins during their December meeting.

During October, communion was served to seven people at Touchmark, one at Son Heaven, and two people at home. Two people were visited in the hospital. Three meals were supplied to homebound individuals.

**A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the committee reports.**



**Old Business:** Pastor Janet is still open to ideas for next year’s Pumpkin Patch Fun Day.

Pastor Janet reported that Synergos has accepted FPC Helena as a cohort along with a church in Wyoming and one in Colorado. We now have to form a group of 5-6 individuals to work on the program with the other two churches.

**New Business:** After some discussion, Session selected February 16, 2025, for the annual Congregational Meeting.

The Presbytery Committee on Ministry approved Dianna Goodman conducting communion January 5 in the absence of Pastor Janet.

There being no more business to conduct, a motion was made, seconded, and approved to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was closed with prayer at 8:25 PM. The next Regular Session Meeting: December 17 at 6:30 PM.

John Gneckow  
Clerk of Session



***Thank You for  
Your Generosity***  
Thank you for your  
faithful giving to the  
ministry of FPC Helena.

Your financial support makes the proclamation of the gospel possible throughout the world! Our Oct. net giving is below.

	Oct. 2024	YTD
Income	\$26,720	\$206,914
Expenses	<u>\$21,985</u>	<u>\$208,277</u>
	\$4,735	(\$1,364)

The online giving program can be found on the [fpchelena.org](http://fpchelena.org) website. If you have any questions, please contact Treasurer Leo Potter at 815-980-5236.

*This is the day that the Lord has made:  
let us rejoice and be glad in it!*

### Coffee for Vets

Well over 3,000 cups of coffee, as well as cream and sugar, were collected for distribution to Veterans in health clinics throughout Montana! That’s a lot of coffee!

Whenever a Veteran visits a clinic, you can be confident that you helped to provide a cup of coffee for them while they wait for treatment.

Thank you for honoring our Veterans in this way.

### Trivia Question:


What were John the Baptist’s clothes made from?

*(Answer on page 11)*



# DECEMBER 2024



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sa
<b>1</b> <b>9 am</b> Worship w/ Communion <b>11 am</b> Social Time	<b>2</b> <b>2 pm</b> Sarah Circle <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	<b>3</b> <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Scouts	<b>4</b> <b>2 pm</b> Choir <b>3:30 pm</b> Bells	<b>5</b> <b>10 am</b> Rebekah Circle <b>5:30 pm</b> District AA <b>6:30 pm</b> Chat Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA	<b>6</b> <b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> <i>Readers' Theater</i> <b>9 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time <b>11:15</b> Deacons	<b>9</b> <b>1 pm</b> Mission	<b>10</b> <b>10 am</b> Worship <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Scouts	<b>11</b> <b>10 am</b> Building & Grounds <b>2 pm</b> Choir <b>3:30 pm</b> Bells <b>4 pm</b> Admin	<b>12</b> <b>6:30 pm</b> Beginner Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA	<b>13</b> <b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> <i>Christmas Music Sunday</i> <b>9 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time & Town Hall	<b>16</b> <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	<b>17</b> <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>6:30 pm</b> Session <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Scouts	<b>18</b> <i>Noon Blue Christmas Service</i> <b>2 pm</b> Choir	<b>19</b> <b>6:30 pm</b> Chat Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA	<b>20</b> <b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> <b>9 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time	<b>23</b> <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	<b>24</b> <b>7 p.m.</b> <i>Christmas Eve Service</i> <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon	<b>25</b> <i>Christmas Day</i> 	<b>26</b> <b>7 pm</b> AA	<b>27</b> <b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	<b>28</b>
Church office closed through New Year's Day						
<b>29</b> <b>9 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time	<b>30</b> <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	<b>31</b> <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Scouts				

## Curriculum Boxes

### A Montana Jewish Project

Nov. 25, FPCH helped our Jewish neighbors assemble boxes containing lesson plans and games for 4<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms in Montana.

Each of the 50 curriculum boxes contains everything a teacher needs to address bullying because of religion, race or ethnicity, family income, Tribal affiliation, or around LGBTQ issues. The purpose of the project is to provide resources for teachers and a lens into bullying of all kinds.

It was an honor to participate in such a worthwhile project.



**John Gneckow unpacks sanctuary decorations**

## *December Birthdays*

1st John Coefield  
2nd John Bryan  
17th Connor Goodman  
18th Bonnie Anderson  
22nd Joy Edgar

22nd David McNay  
24th Carol Stebbins  
24th Corky Lord  
27th Mary Stiles



## *December Anniversaries*

10th Candace & Chris Goodman  
22nd Jeff & Julie Chaffee

26th Marsha & Michael Davis

*January "Mustard Seed"*  
*articles due Wednesday, Dec. 18.*

**The Fifth Sunday Potlucks**  
**are being put**  
**on hold until**  
**next spring.**



**Trivia Answer:** Camel hair



**SARAH CIRCLE**  
**Monday, Dec. 2, 2 p.m.**  
**(Contact: Sheryl Eriksen)**

**REBEKAH CIRCLE**  
**Thursday, Dec. 5, 10 a.m.**  
**(Contact: Merle Korizek)**

First Presbyterian Church  
535 North Ewing Street  
Helena, MT 59601

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

Sunday Service 10 a.m.  
Weekly Sermon on HCTV Cable Channel 189  
Wednesdays at 6 pm & Saturdays at 9 AM

**OFFICE HOURS**  
Monday - Friday  
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
  
406-442-4775  
[admin@fpchelena.org](mailto:admin@fpchelena.org)

Stamp  
here



*Spreading the Good News  
of Christ through Our Love,  
Words, and Actions*

Label here