

First Presbyterian Church

# The Mustard Seed

NEWSLETTER



Vol. 2025 Issue 1 First Presbyterian Church, Helena, MT

January 2025

## FPC Helena accepted into Synergos Program

Our church is one of 3 accepted into the Synergos Pastoral Residency Program. We join First Presbyterian from Gillette, WY, and Calvary Presbyterian church in Bayfield, CO.

A significant part of this program involves a leadership team made up of leaders from each congregation. FPC's team includes: Vicky Bryan, Kathy Chambers, John Coefield, Barb Leland, Jane Ogle, Ward Stiles and John Warren.

This program is designed to bring a pastor to the church in Aug. 2025. When the Leadership Team begins working with the program, our Pastor Nominating Committee will stop meeting. Until then, they remain busy discerning, connecting and interviewing with potential pastors. As I told them.... "A bit fuzzy, I know, yet they are staying open to the movement of the Holy Spirit." May we all stay open to the Holy Spirit!

Pastor Janet

## *Reflections on the Season*



**Helena Xpress Children's Christmas Chorus sings during the Dec. 15 worship service.**



**John and Joy help prepare and serve the Thanksgiving Day community dinner.**



**Readers' Theater at Dec. 8 worship service.**

# PNC Year-End Update

About a year ago Helena First Presbyterian Church's Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) began regular hour-long meetings every Monday at 3:00pm. We have missed a few weeks, and our meetings often extended beyond sixty minutes, especially when we are visiting with more than one potential pastor.

Our first task was to develop a Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) based upon a template provided by the Presbyterian Church (USA) Church Leadership Connection (CLC). When completed, our MDP was submitted to the Session and Glacier Presbytery. With their approval it was then provided to the CLC for entry into its computer-based system. On February 8, 2024, our MDP became active and the CLC's algorithm-based system began to match our MDP with Personal Discernment Profiles (PDPs) submitted by pastors open to a call.

To date the CLC computer has provided us with 38 PDP skeleton matches (we expect more in January). We in turn invited thirty-one of those matched PDPs to apply. If our invitation was accepted, the CLC provided that pastor's complete PDP including contact information and personal data (name, address, references, etc.). We also engaged with several non-CLC candidates

If the completed PDP maintained our interest, we contacted the pastor to initiate an hour long ZOOM conversation. The number of follow-up conversations were dependent on the pastor's and our mutual interest. In some cases, the conversations continued to the point of background and reference checks. In one instance we brought a pastor to Helena for an in person visit. Alas, she accepted a call from another church.

At the moment, we are in conversation with four pastors. We have two ZOOM conversations scheduled for the first full week of January. It will be our first with one and our third with the other.

It has been an interesting and challenging experience. We are blessed to have engaged with pastors with wide and various backgrounds and ethnicities, many from the southeast for whom Montana is a far and distant land. Montana's cost of living, especially housing in Helena, is a high hurdle.

It is a privilege to represent HFPC. We have received favorable comments from pastors about our on-line presence. It was not long ago a pastor told us her husband was traveling cross-country when he joined us for worship one Sunday. He was impressed. He encouraged her to give us a fair shot.

**Butch Plowman,**  
**Moderator of Pastor Nominating Committee**

**H**appy New Year! This is great time to look back at 2024. And what a year it was! GOD has done all these great things through *you*! Here are some highlights:



**January:** Pastor Nominating Committee began receiving resumes from pastors. The Ad-Hoc committee (to discern better use of the new building) continued to meet. For the first time, we participated in the United Way "Point in Time" survey of unhoused people by serving dinner at God's Love.

**February:** Annual Congregational meeting was held and the Annual Report was received. For the first time, we took a collection for "Energy Share."

**March:** A Lent study using the book "Walking Towards Glory," was held during Lent. We celebrated Easter Sunday with joy! The Fellowship Committee sponsored a movie night.

**April:** Folks took the Habitat Trolley Tour to learn about Helena. The Session/Deacon retreat was held. Our first meeting with the group "Girls Thrive" was held to discuss the possibility of them moving into the building.

**May:** Work began on the all-church photo directory and the PW Spring Luncheon was held. Ad-Hoc and Pastor Nominating Committee, other committees continued to meet.

**June:** New Elders and Deacons were ordained and installed. The prayer chain continued to send out prayer requests.

**July:** Fellowship Committee sponsored the Gates of the Mountain boat ride with dinner at Barb's cabin. We dedicated vests donated by PW (to be used whenever the congregation is working outside the church walls.)

**Aug:** A class on comforting those experiencing loss was held. Girls Thrive moved into the "youth room" and storage area. FPC was accepted into the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation's Synergos Program.

**Sept:** We celebrated Les Cramer's 40th anniversary with the church! Ad-Hoc, Pastor Nominating Committee Deacons, and all the committees continued to do their work and ministry.

**Oct.:** Pumpkin Patch!! John Coefield and many volunteers helped make this a huge success. For the first time (in a long time) the church held a free community Party from 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Nov:** For the first time (in a long time) Mission sponsored the Special Olympics team dinner. The free community Thanksgiving Dinner was held and the church was decorated for Advent and Christmas. The Property Oversight Committee (Ad-Hoc) met with a potential tenant.

Dec: For the first time, we helped the Montana Jewish Project assemble and box their anti-bullying curriculum material. For the first time (in a long time), gifts were collected for children with the Prison Fellowship Angel Tree Christmas. Of course, we celebrated Advent and Christmas!

Did you notice? There were several successful events and ministries in 2024 "for the first time" or "for the first time (in a long time)." Each success in 2024 came about by prayer plus your commitment and dedication to the work of Jesus through this congregation. In 2025, may we all commit to "spreading the good news of Jesus Christ through our love, words and actions" wherever God leads us!

## **Interim Pastor Janet on break during January**

Pastor Janet will take an unpaid break from serving as Interim Pastor during the month of January. She will return to lead worship on February 2, 2025.

The following arrangements are in place for January:

Preaching: Dianna Goodman: Jan. 5 (*with Communion*), Jan. 12, Jan. 26; Jim Meyer: Jan. 19.

Moderator for Session Jan. 21, 2025: Chuck Carlson (either in person or by zoom.)

Pastoral care: Deacon's hospital visitation, Butch Plowman and congregation.

Executive decisions: John Coefield (president of corporation) or John Gneckow (clerk.)

Prayer chain (as usual): Pearle

As always, Julie will be in the office from 9-1, Monday through Friday. She will forward calls, concerns or requests to the appropriate committee or responsible person.

## **Prison Fellowship Angel Tree Gifting Program**

Our congregation purchased and delivered gifts for 20 children in 8 families in December.

In addition to the gifts for the children, used age-appropriate books from the church (including a children's

Bible), were given to each family. The caregivers of the children were given a gift card for Safeway.

Thank you to all who participated; the caregivers expressed gratitude for our generosity.

**MINUTES OF THE SESSION**  
**First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)**  
**December 17, 2024**

The worship service and regular meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena were called to order on Tuesday, December 17, 2024, at 6:30 PM by Reverend Janet Potter.

Pastor Janet opened the meeting with prayer followed by a worship service that included a Scripture reading from Isaiah 12:2-6. After reading of the Scripture, followed by a time of reflection, Pastor Janet asked: 1) What caught your imagination? and 2) How might the Spirit be encouraging us? Pastor Janet concluded the worship service with communion.

After worship, she opened and moderated the business meeting.

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

**APPROVAL OF DOCKET:** Additions to the docket under new business: Elect an elder to serve as moderator for the Nominating Committee. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept the docket as presented.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of November 19, 2024, regular Session meeting as presented.

**CLERK'S REPORT:**

Pastor Janet requested a motion to accept Patti Borsberry as Clerk in John Gneckow's absence from tonight's meeting. Motion made, seconded and passed.

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

Linda Bench has resigned from Session, effective Dec. 31, due to health reasons. She will remain moderator of the Property Oversight Committee. Pastor Janet asked for a motion and second; regrettably received and approved by all.

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

Continue to plan and lead weekly Sunday worship.

Weekly worship at Cooney - Will be taking January away from Cooney and am discerning future work there.

Attended: Building and Grounds, Mission & Outreach, Deacons, Property Oversight Committee

Attended Thanksgiving dinner

Participated in packing curriculum boxes with Montana Jewish Program.

Planning for various December services including "Blue Christmas Service."

Town Hall meeting on Dec. 15 after worship, give an update on potential lease.

Building the Synergos Leadership Team.  
 Plans for Pastor Janet's unpaid break in January 2025:  
 Preaching: Dianna Goodman-Jan. 5 (with Communion), Jan. 12, Jan. 26; Jim Meyer-Jan. 19.  
 Moderator for Session Jan. 21, 2025: Chuck Carlson (either in person or by Zoom)  
 Pastoral care: Deacon's hospital visitation, Butch and congregation  
 Executive decisions: John Coefield (president of corporation) or John Gneckow (clerk)  
 Prayer chain (as usual): Pearle Plowman  
 Julie will be in the office to manage and field calls or requests. If something comes into the office, she will send it to the appropriate committee.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

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

Chair Jim Meyer moderated and opened the meeting with prayer.

Financial report given per Leo Potter and discussed. November showed less giving to the general fund (approximately \$12,000), resulting in an operating loss of \$6,179 for the month; \$6951 YTD. It is anticipated that we will have significantly less loss for the year than the \$40,217 that had been budgeted.

It was noted and appreciated that all of the committees and personnel have controlled expenses.

Vanguard accounts increased by \$19,955 in November.  
 Building use donations are up and utility expenses are down.

Stewardship: Leo Potter reported that only 26 pledges have been received so far compared to 43 at this time last year. However, these are increase in giving, by 9.2%, over the previous year.

Budget was presented and discussed. Presentation was made for the budget with the following assumptions: Giving estimate was for the same as last year’s budget.

- Budget is estimated as though we will have a “permanent” pastor for the whole year (without the financial assistance of the Synergos program, which would result in much less direct cost to FPC, should we end up with a pastor via that program).
- Current building use fees are included. This does not count the impact of any additional renter(s).
- It is noted that this year the Richardson Trust is providing about \$5,000 more than last year.
- The expenses reflect a 2.5% increase for our personnel.

John Warren closed the Administration Committee meeting with prayer.

The next Administration meeting: Jan 8, 2025 at 4:00pm.

**Action item:** The admin committee recommends to the session that the budget as presented be accepted for 2025. Motion passed.

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

Co-chair Butch Plowman opened the meeting with prayer.

All Season Heating and Air Conditioning has performed semi-annual inspection and maintenance on all nine furnaces. No unresolved issues requiring attention.

Report received regarding “stove malfunction” during Thanksgiving Community Dinner preparation resulted in a discussion of whether it was the consequence of the Fire Department’s directive relative to the fire suppression system. The committee recommends a conversation about replenishing the “kitchen fund” and upgrades to bring the kitchen to current standards and fire codes.

Lester Burgess will be retained to clean the carpets in the office, Richardson Hall and the Paul, David, Thomas, and Sarah rooms pursuant to proffered pricing.

Sarah Elkins (Custom Maid) will be reminded again concerning required tax forms and embargoed payments.

Advice will be requested from Ascension Electric regarding improving the efficiency and performance of the outdoor light fixtures above the walkway approaching the main entrance.

There was a brief discussion concerning inadvertent obstacles to chancel approach handrails.

Frontline Glass is scheduled to replace the cracked window near first floor men’s room at 9:00 am, Friday, December 20.

No date has been set regarding sanctuary lights upgrade (dependent upon supply chain).

Janet closed the meeting with prayer.

Next meeting: January 8, 2025 at 10:00am

**Friendship Committee:** The Friendship Committee had no meeting today. We went out to lunch instead. Next meeting is January 8, 2025, at 1 p.m.

**Memorial Committee:** Did not meet. Jim Meyer verbally reported. Memorial Committee purchased new garland to hang in the sanctuary (\$149.98.)

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

Chair Karen Witte opened the meeting with prayer.

Family Promise Report: Larry was unavailable for an update. We discussed the continued difficulty of getting a second person to participate in overnight hosting duties. One participant expressed reluctance to continue in that role. Decision was made to pause the hosting at this time, but to continue to offer support with meals.

New Business:

- **Point-in-Time Dinner** – We have been asked to participate again this year. We can host at God’s Love again for approximately the same number of people (75) and there are other local organizations who are willing to share expenses. The event is January 30th.

- Karen asked for thoughts on sending a letter to some of the local organizations we support asking about their educational/support programs and ways we might help them non-financially. We agreed to compose a letter.

- A discussion was held about the possibility of changing the date and/or time of our meeting. We will explore further, but will leave the date and time as is for now.

Minute for Mission: Christmas Joy – December 15th

Chairperson Karen closed the meeting with prayer.

The next meeting: January 13, at 1:00PM.

**Action items:** Note: pause in overnight hosting for Family Promise. Motion passed.

**Nominating Committee:** (see report). Class of 2028 for Elders and Deacons has been filled. Everyone’s quick reception to serving made the job very easy this time.

**Personnel Committee:** Did not meet 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:

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, Spanglish daycare, 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. Discussion was held during the Town Hall meeting after Sunday’s service. Many attended.

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

Co-chair Patti Borsberry opened the meeting with prayer.

Musical guests in December: Spanglish Preschool children and siblings (12/1) Xpress Singers Children’s Christmas Choir (12/15) and Trio from Townsend (12/22) The Townsend group will receive a gift of \$50.00 for their performance.

Les will have shoulder surgery in mid-January.

Janet will be taking time off in January. Dianna will fill the pulpit on 1/5,1/12, 1/26. Jim Meyer is 1/19. Butch will provide back up.

The next Worship committee meeting: January 14, 2025 at 10:00 AM.

**Deacon Report:** The minutes from the November 10, 2024 meeting were received and in the December packet.

The Board decorated and delivered small



Christmas trees for the shut-ins during their December meeting.

During November, communion was served to 5 people at Touchmark, Son Heaven resident received a visit, and no at home. No one was hospitalized in Nov. Two meals were supplied to homebound individuals.

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

**Old Business:** Janet announced a partial list of those willing to serve on the Synergos Leadership Team. Six people agreed so far. Janet will be asking one more person.

Need new moderator for the Nominating Committee. John Bryan agreed to serve until June 2025. It is likely John would be asked to report to the Congregation during the Annual Meeting.

**New Business:** Annual reports are due on Feb. 4, 2025 for the Annual Congrega-

tional meeting on February 16, 2025. Copies of last year’s report can be gotten from the office.

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 7:45 PM.

The next Regular Session Meeting: January 21, 2025 at 6:30 PM. Moderator will be Rev. Chuck Carlson, Presbytery Leader/EP.

Patti Borsberry  
Clerk of Session,  
pro temp

### Trivia Question:

The wise men presented gifts of Gold, Frankincense and . . . ? (Answer on page 11)



### 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 Nov. net giving is below.

	Nov. 2024	YTD
Income	\$18,171	\$225,084
Expenses	<u>\$24,350</u>	<u>\$232,035</u>
	(\$-6,179)	(\$-6,951)

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!*

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sa
<div>January</div> <div>2025</div>			1 <i>New Year's Day</i>	2 <b>5:30 pm</b> District AA <b>6:30 pm</b> Chat Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA	3 <b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	4
5 <b>9 am</b> Worship w/Communion <b>11 am</b> Social Time	6 <b>2 pm</b> Sarah Circle <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	7 <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Scouts	8 <b>10 am</b> Building & Grounds <b>1 pm</b> Friendship <b>2 pm</b> Choir <b>4 pm</b> Admin	9 <b>10 am</b> Rebekah Circle <b>7 pm</b> AA	10 <b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	11
12 <b>9 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time <b>11:15</b> Deacons	13 <b>1 pm</b> Mission  <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	14 <b>10 am</b> Worship <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Scouts	15 <b>2 pm</b> Choir	16 <b>6:30 pm</b> Chat Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA 	17 <b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	18
19 <b>9 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time 	20 <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	21 <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>6:30 pm</b> Session <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Scouts	22 <b>10 am</b> PW Coordinating Team <b>2 pm</b> Choir	23 <b>6:30 pm</b> Beginner Bridge <b>7 pm</b> AA	24 <b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	25
26 <b>9 am</b> Worship <b>11 am</b> Social Time	27 <b>5 pm</b> Xpress Singers	28 <b>11:30 am</b> Bridge <b>7 pm</b> Al Anon <b>7 pm</b> Scouts	29 <b>2 pm</b> Choir	30 <b>7 pm</b> AA	31 <b>Noon</b> Bible Study <b>1:30 pm</b> Hand & Foot Cards	

# January Birthdays

2nd Carol Carpenter  
 5th Ann Swisher  
 6th Kristen Clausen  
 8th John Gneckow  
 11th Carol Gneckow

14th Glenn Phillips  
 14th Molly Bealer  
 18th BJ Burns  
 23rd Deb Whitcomb  
 30th Robin LeNeve

**Thank you**



to Linda Bench for her service  
 as a church elder. Session accepted  
 her resignation, effective Dec. 31,  
 with regrets.

## *Non-financial Giving Opportunities*

**January 30**

We will again serve dinner at  
 God's Love for the Point-in-Time  
 Dinner.

The Mission & Outreach Com-  
 mittee will request congregational  
 assistance with the food.

## **Committee Reports for the 2024 Annual Report**

are due February 4.  
 The Annual Meeting will be  
 held Feb. 16, 2025,  
 after the worship service.

*Articles for the February  
 "Mustard Seed" are due  
 Thursday, January 23rd.*

**Trivia Answer:** Myrrh

### **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)

**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.)

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)

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