

The Mustard Seed

First Presbyterian Church of Helena, MT

November 2026

Congregational Dinner Sunday Night

Synergos Team to Visit Nov. 1-3

First Presbyterian Church of Helena will host the Rev. Jessica Crane Munoz and Dr. Trace Haythorn of Synergos Sunday, Nov. 1 through Tuesday, Nov. 3.

Synergos is a residency and renewal program of the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary Foundation (OPSF). Their visit will blend worship, congregational engagement, and strategic conversation designed to help FPC Helena discern its future.

Sunday, Nov. 1

The weekend opens Sunday morning, when Pastor Jessica joins worship to share a brief update on OPSF and introduce the Synergos program to the congregation. That afternoon, the Leadership Team and Session will gather to explore "Hopes & Dreams." Then Dr. Haythorn will lead a session to map community assets across greater Helena, connecting the congregation's ministry to the city's needs and resources.

Sunday evening brings the congregation together for a reflective dinner gathering at 5:30 p.m. Members will engage in small-group conversation around values and wishes for the church's future, and imagine what FPC Helena's ministry could look like.

Monday, Nov. 2

Monday shifts into deeper planning work. The morning session focuses on financial asset mapping with the Leadership Team and Session, followed by a working lunch and casual conversation. The afternoon session turns to synthesizing input gathered from Sunday's congregational dinner, identifying themes and next steps for the church.

Tuesday, Nov. 3

The visit concludes Tuesday morning with final reflections and closing conversation before Jessica and Trace depart in the afternoon. Together, these three days aim to equip FPC Helena's leadership with fresh perspective, congregational input, and concrete next steps as it navigates change in the broader landscape of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) — a denomination in which nearly 79% of congregations have fewer than 150 members.



Trunk or Treat

More than 100 Helena kiddos visited our Trunk or Treat event in early October.

Community invited!

Free Thanksgiving Dinner Thursday, Nov. 26, 1-3 pm



FPC Helena will host a free Community Thanksgiving Dinner Thursday, Nov. 26, from 1-3 p.m., in Richardson Hall.

Turkey, ham, potatoes, pie and much more – prepared or donated by the FPC congregation – will be served as a Thanksgiving gift to the people of Helena.

We will be seeking volunteers for food, and for set up, clean up, and to work during the dinner. Please check the sign-up sheet in the fellowship area to see where help is needed. For details, contact Carol Gneckow or Patti Borsberry.

From the Pastor's Desk

Rev. Emily Cowser



Dear friends in Christ,

Let's continue to reflect on 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." This month, let's consider what it means to grow in faith.

What does "faith" mean to you? Perhaps you consider faith to be your beliefs about God. Perhaps you consider faith to be your trust in Jesus's promises. Perhaps you consider faith to be a community that you are a part of. Perhaps you consider faith to be the way that you live. We Presbyterians can be tempted to conceptualize faith as centered in the intellect. Presbyterians tend to pride themselves in their complex systematic theologies. However, faith is more than what we believe in our heads. It involves the trust of our hearts and the ways that we live.

The author of Hebrews writes, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." By faith, we have confidence that the promises of God are true, even when what we see around us might suggest otherwise. Faith is assurance that Jesus reigns with peace and justice, even though we are surrounded by war and injustice. Faith is assurance that God loves us, even when we struggle to feel loved and valued. Faith is assurance that God is Lord, even though we see human leaders grappling for power and control. This assurance impacts our actions. When we trust that Jesus reigns with peace and justice, we work for peace and justice in our communities. When we trust that God loves us, we are content to live humbly rather than trying to earn love and approval from others. When we trust that God is Lord, we live in accordance with the ways of God rather than the ways of world around us.

We can grow in faith through our individual and communal practices. Prayer can strengthen our trust in God, and reading scripture can deepen our understanding of God's promises. Worshipping together and being involved in our community can assure us of the hope that we hold. In this season, reflect on your faith journey and consider in what ways you can help to strengthen the faith of others in our congregation.

Grace and peace,

Emily Cowser

The Rev. Emily Cowser

ELDERS & DEACONS

FPC Elders

Dianna Goodman
Nominating Chair

Jim Meyer
Admin Co-Chair

Butch Plowman
Buildings & Grounds Chair

Carol Gneckow
Mission & Outreach Chair

Patti Borsberry
Congregational Life Chair

Matthew Richards
Admin 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

POET Society Dinner Nov. 4

The November POET (Presbyterians Out Eating Together) Society will meet for dinner at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 4, downstairs at the Brewhouse. All Church members and friends are welcome. Please RSVP to Barb Leland if you are planning to attend.



Coffee for Vets

We'll be collecting Coffee for Vets, November 1, 8, and 15, along with shelf-stable condiments. The collected items will be delivered to the VA. Thanks to everyone who will participate in this wonderful event!

John Gneckow Elected 2027 Synod Moderator



The Synod of the Rocky Mountains held its annual meeting September 27 and 28, 2026, in Denver, Colorado. Synod is a regional mid-council governing body of the Presbyterian church serving as a corporate expression of the region.

Glacier Presbytery Commissioners to the meeting were John Gneckow, Ruling Elder and Reverend Karin Cravens, Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Former FPC-Helena Pastor, Reverend Chuck Carlson, Interim Executive Presbyter of Glacier Presbytery was also in attendance. During the meeting, John Gneckow was elected as Synod Moderator for 2027.

In addition to the business meeting, worship service, and communion, we heard presentations from Doctor Lee Butler, president of Iliff School of Theology (Methodist) in Denver, about the importance of ecumenical relationships between denominations.

Jeromy Howard, General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Wyoming, presented a look at the overtures which were approved at General Assembly and will be voted on by the presbyteries this year.



Vic guides Tour participants through the sanctuary.

Hidden Helena Tour

Everyone was amazing on Saturday, October 17, for the Preserve Montana Hidden Helena tour!

Thanks to our wonderful church tour volunteers. It could not have happened without you.

We opened the doors to our historic property and shared it with about 150 historic building enthusiasts, about 90 of whom walked into our building.



Intermountain Notes 117-Year Anniversary

Intermountain recently celebrated 117 years of ministry to children, teens and families. At left, Carol Gneckow stands with a photo of Van Orsdel, who founded the Montana Deaconess School in 1909 in the Helena valley.

Local Churches Exceed Milk Campaign Fundraising Goal

By: Evan Charney, MTN News



HELENA — Six Helena-area churches have exceeded their fundraising goal to help ensure local children facing food insecurity have access to nutritious food on weekends.

Our Redeemer's Lutheran, New Life Lutheran, St. John's Lutheran, First Presbyterian, Plymouth Congregation, and St. Peter's Episcopal presented Helena Food Share with a donation on Tuesday after raising $31,000 for the nonprofit's Kid Pack program. Organizers had initially set a goal of $25,000, enough to cover all of the milk included in Kid Packs for the 2026-27 school year.

According to Linda Nelson of Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church's Hunger Team, this year's campaign outperformed last year's effort and nearly doubled the number of participating faith communities. Three churches participated in the fundraiser a year ago, while six churches joined the effort this year.

The partnership between local churches and Helena Food Share has grown significantly over time. Nelson said Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church began supporting the initiative approximately 13 to 14 years ago, contributing about $5,000 during its first year. Since then, both participation and fundraising totals have steadily increased.

The Kid Pack program provides kid-friendly food packs to children at risk of hunger throughout Helena, East Helena, Boulder, Basin, Canyon Creek, Clancy and Lincoln. The packs are distributed through local schools and help provide weekend nutrition when students are away from school meal programs.

What began in five Helena schools in 2014 has expanded to 25 schools and preschools across the region. Depending on the week and school schedules, between 1,000 and 1,100 students receive Kid Packs. In 2025, Helena Food Share delivered 41,090 packs to children and families in need.



Family Promise Opens New Shelter

Family Promise of Helena celebrated the opening of its new shelter with a ribbon cutting ceremony on Sept. 22.

Pictured at left is Family Promise office administrator/case manager Ellie Hampton visiting with Lucille Letcher, a member of FPC who was one of Family Promise's founders.



At right, FPC member Bonnie Anderson stands by the "Ways You Can Help" table.

October Session Updates

At the October 27th session meeting, the following actions were taken:

- Approved the minutes of the September 15th session meeting.
- Accepted the reports of the committees and the deacons.
- Approved Christmas caroling on December 13th.
- Approved participation in the Warm Hearts drive in January.
- Approved collection for Coffee for Vets November 1st, 8th, and 15th.
- Accepted, with regrets, the request of John and Vicky Bryan to be removed from membership.
- Adjourned with prayer.



Daylight Saving Time Ends Nov. 1

Be sure to set your clocks back one hour before going to bed Saturday, October 31!

The public is invited to a



Helena-wide Thanksgiving Dinner

First Presbyterian Church -- 535 Ewing Street
Upstairs in the dining room

Thursday, November 26th between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m.

(or when the food runs out!)

Turkey, ham, potatoes, pie and much more — prepared or donated by members of Helena's Presbyterian Church, as a Thanksgiving gift to the people of Helena.



If you're alone for the holiday or have no family around to celebrate with, stop in for the delicious food and fellowship. Bring a friend or two.

And, best of all, there is NO CHARGE!

We hope to see you here!

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 September net giving is here:

	September 2026	YTD
Income	$19,628	$245,291
Expenses	$23,746	$183,039
	-$4,118	$62,252

The online giving program can be found on the fpchelena.org/giving 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!



Trunk or Treat Snapshots!

Clockwise from top: Art & Rena, Wanda, Jim, and Max







November 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 **10 am** Worship w/Communion **11 am** Social Time **5:30 pm** Congregational Dinner	2 **5 pm** Xpress Singers **6:30 pm** Bridge	3 **Noon** Bridge **5:30 pm** Scouts **7 pm** Al Anon	4 **2 pm** Choir **3:30 pm** Bell Choir **5:30 pm** POET Dinner @ Brewhouse	5 **Noon** Bridge **1 pm** Women's Bible Study **7 pm** AA	6 **Noon** Bible Study **1:30 pm** Hand & Foot Cards	7
8 **10 am** Worship **11 am** Social Time **11:15 am** Deacons	9 **1 pm** Mission & Outreach **5 pm** Xpress Singers **6:30 pm** Bridge	10 **Noon** Bridge **1 pm** Admin **5:30 pm** Scouts **7 pm** Al Anon	11 **10 am** Building & Grounds **Noon** Winter Worship Planning **1 pm** Congregational Life **2 pm** Choir **3:30 pm** Bell Choir	12 **Noon** Bridge **7 pm** AA	13 **Noon** Bible Study **1:30 pm** Hand & Foot Cards	14
15 **10 am** Worship **11 am** Social Time	16 **5 pm** Xpress Singers	17 **Noon** Bridge **1:30 pm** Session **5:30 pm** Scouts **7 pm** Al Anon	18 **2 pm** Choir **3:30 pm** Bell Choir	19 **Noon** Bridge **7 pm** AA	20 **Noon** Bible Study **1:30 pm** Hand & Foot Cards	21
22 **10 am** Worship **11 am** Social Time	23 **5 pm** Xpress Singers **6:30 pm** Bridge	24 **Noon** Bridge **5:30 pm** Scouts **7 pm** Al Anon	25 **2 pm** Choir **3:30 pm** Bell Choir	26 Thanksgiving Day **1-3 pm** Community Dinner	27 **Noon** Bible Study **1:30 pm** Hand & Foot Cards *Church office closed*	28
29 **10 am** Worship **11 am** Social Time	30 **5 pm** Xpress Singers					

November Birthdays

14th	Larry Mirch
21st	Deanna Albert
25th	Susan Steffens
25th	Mary Wright
27th	Louise Cramer
28th	Lucille Letcher
28th	Rena Bumgardner
29th	Bill Uthman

November Anniversaries

November 24
Butch & Pearle Plowman

November 25
Joe & Susan Steffens

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PC(USA)

535 North Ewing Street ~ Helena, MT 59601

Office Hours: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. **Phone:** 406-442-4775 **Email:** admin@fpchelena.org **Pastor Emily Cowser Email:** pastor@fpchelena.org

Website: www.fpchelena.org

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

BIBLE STUDIES

Women's Bible Study
1st Thursday of each month
Meets at 1 p.m.

Friday Bible Study
Meets at noon

First Presbyterian Church
535 N Ewing St.
Helena, MT 59601



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