



The Mustard Seed

First Presbyterian Church of Helena, MT

October 2026



Trunk or Treat Saturday, Oct. 10

FPC is hosting a Trunk or Treat event Saturday, Oct. 10, in our parking lot!

We will be handing out candy to neighborhood children and serving free hot dogs from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

If you would like to participate by decorating your car's trunk and greeting trick or treaters, contact Dianna Goodman or Carol Gneckow for details.

And be sure to invite your neighbors and friends!



We had a great retreat at Glacier Camp in September!

Special Congregational Meeting Notice

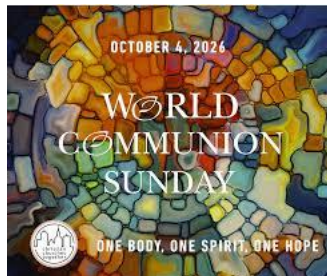
Session has called a special congregational meeting on October 11, 2026, in the sanctuary following the 10 a.m. worship service. The purpose of the meeting is to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee. If you would like to join the meeting via Zoom, please use this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85185156598?pwd=3b3IBlyYgWd0XSbWap-NGnLSdQPZ6xA.1>

Strategic Planning Team submits the following nominees:

Art Bumgardner
Kathy Chambers
Wanda Jewell
Matt Richards
Ward Stiles

Please join us after worship for this important meeting.



World Communion Sunday October 4

The World Communion Offering (PC(USA)), received during A Season of Preparation leading up to World Communion Sunday on October 4, is a new way for Presbyterians to

"love kindness" expressed in action, often involving mercy, faithfulness and steadfast commitment.

Racial justice, gender justice, global witness, and ecumenical and inter-faith engagement are the important causes supported by this Offering.

The prophet Micah is clear: Our love of God moves us to faithful action through justice, kindness and humble living. Participating in the Church-wide Special Offerings is one way Presbyterians show their love for God and help all God's children live into the fullness of Micah's prophecy.

Thank you for your generous gifts. When we give to the World Communion Offering, we become the hands and feet of Christ's work of dismantling racism, practicing peacemaking and assisting communities in finding their voice. And when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

Thank you! Mission and Outreach, Carol Gneckow, (406) 422-9914



Milk Campaign Carnival!

Carnivals held after worship helped raise money to buy milk for the Helena Food Share Kid Packs. Above, Wanda Jewell won the bowling game and a guessing game!

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 August net giving is here:

	August 2026	YTD
Income	22,512	225,663
Expenses	16,976	159,292
	5,536	66,371

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!*

Discerning our future

Synergos Team to Visit Congregation November 1-3

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

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 direction.

The weekend opens Sunday morning, when Pastor Jessica joins worship to share a brief update on OPSF's name change and introduce the Synergos program to the congregation. That afternoon, the Leadership Team and Session will gather to set the stage for the weekend, exploring "Hopes & Dreams" through creative exercises tracing the congregation's past, present, and future — including mosaic creation and personal diary writing. Then Dr. Haythorn will lead a session mapping community assets across greater Helena, connecting the congregation's ministry to the city's needs and resources.

Sunday evening brings the whole congregation together for a reflective dinner gathering. Members will engage in small-group conversation around values and wishes for the church's future, using guided questions to creatively imagine what FPC Helena's ministry could look like.

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.

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.

From the Pastor's Desk

Rev. Emily Cowser

Dear friends in Christ,

Last month, I began a series of reflections on our updated mission and vision statements with an exploration of what it means to be “shaped by the grace of our sovereign God.” Let’s look again at 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 follow Jesus Christ.



A good place to begin to understand what it means to follow Jesus is to look at the disciples. Since the beginning of August, we have been exploring the Gospel of Mark in worship with particular attention to the disciples’ journey of trying to follow Jesus. Perhaps we can notice a few themes.

First, following Jesus involves learning from Jesus. Jesus taught the disciples through both his actions (for example, healing people, feeding crowds, and performing miracles) and through his words. Like the disciples, we can continue to learn from Jesus’s actions and words. We can learn about God’s character and about how to live in accordance with the ways of God. We learn both by considering what we know of Jesus from Scripture and by reflecting on our experiences of encountering Jesus.

A second theme that we see in the disciples’ journey of trying to follow Jesus is that as we learn from Jesus, the way that we live changes. Following Jesus means loving God and loving our neighbors like Jesus did. Following Jesus means addressing others’ physical needs, caring for the marginalized, and working for justice.

A third theme that emerges from the disciples’ journey – perhaps one of the most apparent themes in Mark’s account of the disciples’ experiences – is that despite how hard we try to follow Jesus, we will fail again and again. But Jesus continues to journey with us, to love us, and to be compassionate towards us.

In this season, let us seek to follow Jesus – learning from him, living in accordance with what he teaches us, and continuing the journey despite our failures.

Grace and peace,

Emily Cowser

The Rev. Emily Cowser

ELDERS & DEACONS

FPC Elders

John Bryan

Congregational Life
Co-Chair

Dianna Goodman

Nominating Chair

Jim Meyer

Admin Co-Chair

Butch Plowman

Buildings & Grounds Chair

Carol Gneckow

Mission & Outreach Chair

Patti Borsberry

Congregational Life
Co-Chair

Matthew Richards

Admin Co-Chair

Max Oliver

Clerk of Session

FPC Deacons

Bonnie Anderson

Ward Stiles

Vice-Moderator

Vicky Bryan

Art Bumgardner

Moderator

Rena Bumgardner

Ria Caussyn

Carole Massman

Wanda Jewell

Alysia Ryan

Hidden Helena Tour to Feature FPC Helena Oct. 17

FPC Helena has been invited to participate in the “Hidden Helena Tour” Saturday, Oct. 17, from noon until 5 p.m. Sponsored by Preserve Montana, the tour is designed to show visitors the “hidden stories and curious spaces” inside some of the most beloved historic buildings in Helena. Mission and Outreach will coordinate hosts to greet visitors and lead tours of our church building that day. For details, visit with Carol Gneckow or visit the Preserve Montana website at: www.preservemontana.org.

MINUTES OF THE SESSION

September 15, 2026

The regular meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena was called to order on Tuesday, Sept. 15, at 1:30 PM by Pastor in Residence, Reverend Emily Cowser.

There was a quorum with the following Elders present at the meeting: Elders Butch Plowman, Jim Meyer, Matt Richards, Patti Borsberry, John Bryan, and Carol Gneckow. Deacon Ward Stiles, and substitute Clerk of Session John Gneckow were also in attendance. Elder Dianna Goodman was absent due to illness. Regular Clerk of Session Max Oliver and Treasurer Leo Potter were excused.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to accept John Gneckow as the substitute Clerk for the meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of August 18, 2026 as presented.
- Remove discussion of the Thanksgiving meal until the Congregational Committee report. Approve all other committee and the deacon reports.
- Refer the Church Policy Concerning Harassment to our attorney for review.

CLERK'S REPORT:

Clerk read a letter from Lori McNay thanking the volunteers who made the church picnic a success.

Active Membership as of August 31, 2026	76
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PASTOR'S REPORT:

- Pastor Emily was looking forward to the church retreat at Glacier Camp. Sixteen members attended and participated in the group discussions.
- Pastor Emily enjoyed preaching on Mark.
- She is grateful to have spent time with her parents who visited her in Helena.
- Pastor Emily asked that the October Session meeting be moved to October 27 as she will be officiating at her sister's wedding October 16, 2026, and attending the Board of Pensions CREDO conference. Motion was made, seconded, and passed.
- Pastor Emily asked about following recent tradition of giving the paid staff time off from Christmas through New Years. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to have the Administration/Personnel committee to discuss this and report back to Session and Pastor.

Pastor Emily is concerned about our membership. Are members getting the care and attention they need and want? She handed out a membership list and asked Elders to review the list for people that should be contacted. She also handed out a copy of G-1.0304, The "Ministry of Members" from the Book of Order to look at with those individuals that Elders visit.

Following up on a discussion about the future of the church, Max contacted Helena Point. They will discuss and get back to him.

SYNERGOS STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM: Reverend Jessica Crane-Munoz and Dr. Trace Hawthorne, staff members of Synergos will be visiting our church Nov. 1-3. (See "Synergos Team to Visit," on page 2.)

The Planning Team will submit the following nominees, all of whom have graciously consented to performing this critical task: Art Bumgardner, Kathy Chambers, Wanda Jewell, Matt Richards, Ward Stiles.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Administration/Personnel Committee

ACTION ITEM: Session approve the Harassment Policy for review by our attorney.

The financial report was given by Treasurer Leo Potter. At the end of August, YTD total General Fund income was \$66,371 compared to last year's \$22,733 end of August amount. General Fund checking was \$149,004 compared

to last year \$58,364. Vanguard and endowment fund increased value by \$6609 bringing the YTD total increase to \$41,830.

Administration Old Business

We need to replace the computer in the sound booth. Leo will pursue this.

New Internet Provider. Still waiting for TDS.

Sexual Harassment and Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult policies have been reviewed by our attorney who made suggestions for the policies.

Administration New Business

Discussed this year's stewardship campaign. Wanda Jewell will compose a letter to send to the membership. We will also have people to share their reasons for and methods of giving.

Give thanks to the congregation for their response over the past years especially for arising on the occasion when special needs arise.

We need to share with the congregation specific information about anticipated expenses for a new called pastor.

Jim is working on an article on ways to give with less tax impact.

Wanda Jewell is working on revising our database unifying several different lists.

We have received information from Rose Leavitt's attorney that when the court proceedings are finalized, we will receive a considerable sum of money.

Administration will be reviewing church credit cards and why and how many we need.

Julie Young has approached the committee and Pastor Emily with a request that she be allowed to be take long weekends a couple times a month to provide respite care for her parents. If she is gone for several days, she also asked to be able to use unpaid sick leave. Session approved Julie's request. We will try to have a contact person in the office during regular business hours when she is gone.

The committee noted that there was an error in our response regarding contributions from lessees of the church, and especially Richardson Hall. We concur that any money received for the event (weddings, funerals, etc.) first be applied to replacement of church supplies used during the event and any excess funds be deposited in the general fund unless otherwise designated.

NEXT MEETING: October 13 at 1:00 pm

Building and Grounds Committee

It is time to shut down the lawn sprinkler system. The city will be asked to remove the meter; Clark's plumbing will be contacted to install a shut off in the manhole; and Dusk to Dawn will be scheduled to blow-out and winterize the system.

Butch will contact Perchon Roofing regarding the torn roofing material and missing masonry near the bell tower.

Dawn-til-Dusk will be asked to remedy the depression in the southeast quadrant of the playground.

Girl's Thrive will be asked to find a non-invasive method to mount their doorbell.

A contract has been drawn up with Helena Fence Company to repair the playground fence.

Material has been ordered to seal the rodent access points identified by the pest control exterminator.

Darla from the preschool observed some boys abusing the playground equipment. They were less than accommodating when instructed to move on. We need to figure out a way to limit access to the area.

Who bought the Girl's Thrive refrigerator remains a mystery. Motion was made, seconded and passed to ask the congregation to help with the \$218 expense.

NEXT MEETING: October 14 at 10:00 am

Congregational Life Committee

The summer picnic went well. The chicken and steak sandwiches were a hit along with lots of great food. Max Oliver and Barb Leland told "their stories".

The POET Society met at the Delta Hotel restaurant. Next month's meeting will be at the Brewhouse Pub and Grill or Miller's Crossing.

Future Activities:

Pow Wow at the fairgrounds. Caroling in December. Winter Game Night. Carroll College Basketball Game

Community Thanksgiving dinner: Session held a discussion about the event. Noted was that it takes a lot of work and volunteers to offer this to community but has become a tradition for The recommendation from the committee concurred with by Session is to provide the dinner again this year.

Tonna Strasko will be absent in October. She prepares the Sunday service PowerPoint slides. We need someone to do this job while Tonna is gone. Janet Potter has helped in the past and has written instructions on doing the slides. Slides need to be prepared on the sound booth computer to avoid having to make adjustments presented by mixing versions of the software.

Friday Bible Study on the Book of Romans will start up 09/25/26.

NEXT MEETING: October 14 at 1:00 pm

Mission & Outreach Committee

Carol presented information on the Preserve Montana, Hidden Helena Tour, October 17 from noon until 5:00. FPC Helena would be one of the facilities open to the public. We will need volunteers to act as tour guides and share information about early days of the church.

**ACTION ITEM: PARTICIPATE IN THE HIDDEN HELENA TOUR OCT. 17
FROM NOON UNTIL 5:00. MOTION PASSED.**

What's Happening

Habitat for Humanity annual fundraiser, Helena Civic Center, Wednesday September 30 at 6:00 p.m.

Preserve Montana Hidden Helena Tour Saturday October 17 Noon until 5:00 pm.

Friendship Center Coffee & Pastries, Tuesday, Oct. 6, 7:30-10 am, at Montago Coffee 317 Cruse Ave.

Indian Heritage Indian Celebration Thursday, September 24, 7:30 pm at the Myrna Loy.

Helena Native American Pow Wow at the Fairgrounds, September 25 6:00 pm.

Synergos Team FPC Helena Sunday November 1 through Tuesday November 3.

NEXT MEETING: October 12 at 1:00 pm.

Deacon Report: The Board of Deacons met August 2026. A report on Board activities was submitted for August: Two meals were provided. Ninety Shepherd Contacts were made.

NEXT MEETING: October 11.

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. Elder Jim Meyer closed the meeting with prayer.

Next Regular Session Meeting: October 27 at 1:30 pm.

John Gneckow

Clerk of Session, pro tem

POET Society Dinner Oct. 7

Join us Wednesday, Oct. 7, for another POET (Presbyterians Out Eating Together) dinner.

We will gather at 5:30 p.m. at Miller's Crossing, 52 S. Park Ave. Hope you can join us!

For details, visit with Barb Leland

October 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Noon Bridge 1 pm Women's Bible Study 7 pm AA	2 Noon Bible Study	3
4 <i>World Communion Sunday</i> 10 am Worship w/Communion 11 am Social Time	5 5 pm XPress Singers 6:30 pm Bridge	6 Noon Bridge 5:30 pm Scouts 7 pm Al Anon	7 2 pm Choir 5:30 pm POET Dinner @ Miller's Crossing	8 Noon Bridge 7 pm AA	9 Noon Bible Study	10 11 am-1 pm Trunk and Treat Party
11 10 am Worship 11 am Special Congregational Meeting 11:15 am Deacons	12 1 pm Mission & Outreach 5 pm XPress Singers 6:30 pm Bridge	13 Noon Bridge 1 pm Admin 5:30 pm Scouts 7 pm Al Anon	14 10 am Building & Grounds 1 pm Congregational Life 2 pm Choir	15 Noon Bridge 7 pm AA	16 Noon Bible Study	17 Noon-5 pm Hidden Helena Tour
18 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time	19 5 pm XPress Singers	20 Noon Bridge 5:30 pm Scouts 7 pm Al Anon	21 2 pm Choir	22 Noon Bridge 7 pm AA	23 Noon Bible Study	24
25 10 am Worship 11 am Social Time	26 5 pm XPress Singers 6:30 pm Bridge	27 Noon Bridge 1:30 pm Session 5:30 pm Scouts 7 pm Al Anon	28 2 pm Choir	29 Noon Bridge 7 pm AA 10 am- 2:30 pm Preschool Trunk a Treat	30 Noon Bible Study 10-11:30 am Preschool Trunk a Treat	31

October Birthdays



4th Sandi Smith
9th Carole Massman
10th Michael Davis
10th Linda Bench
17th James Moses
17th Joe Strasko

22nd Eddy Crowley
22nd John Warren
27th Jeff Chaffee
28th Jacob Borsberry
29th Vicky Bryan

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 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.

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



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

You're Invited!



Trunk or Treat!

and Free Hot Dogs!



Saturday, Oct. 10 ~ 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church ~ 535 N. Ewing St.