



First Presbyterian Church

# The Mustard Seed

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2021, Issue 12

First Presbyterian Church, Helena, Montana

December 2021

### ***“... Coming ‘round the Mountain ...”***

You have likely heard that “Advent” means *coming*. Its Latin roots are *ad* (“to”) - *venire* (“come”). Even in its everyday use, such as: *“the advent of space travel ...”*, the word speaks of an arrival, especially of something momentous, that has been anticipated or awaited.

So, *Advent* (with a capital “A”) enunciates the anticipated, prophesied, foretold arrival of something more than momentous. The Israelites had long anticipated the arrival of the *Messiah*. And while there may have been nearly as many understandings of what the Messiah would be and accomplish as there were people, it appears none of them anticipated God incarnate! God, come to earth.



**Rev.  
Scott Wipperman**

God took on a clever disguise, looking like one of us, a rather common one of us. An infant. Born in a stable. Not from a wealthy family. No political lineage. Joan Osborne sang *“What if God was one of us ...,”* however there’s no “what if.” God came as one of us, fully human. But, also fully God, fully divine. God came to walk among us to reveal God’s nature to humanity, to reveal God’s intention for humanity, and to reveal God’s kingdom in-breaking upon us.

During Advent 2021 what is it that we are anticipating the arrival of? Are we anticipating the probability of being awakened

one night to be told “For unto you is born this day a Savior”? Are we anticipating God incarnate to be walking along beside us, revealing God’s self to us? Are we anticipating someone who will turn our 21<sup>st</sup> century world upside down?

I suspect that what we anticipate may heavily influence what we wind up finding, or possibly preclude us from discovering what lies outside our anticipation. The challenge is to anticipate, but in the process to be open to what is coming. The challenge is not to believe we have a good handle on what to anticipate for it has come some 2020 times already.

As we anticipate what gifts we may be unwrapping come Christmas, may we also anticipate the one that has no wrapping, ribbon or bows. A gift that will exceed our ability to predict, and challenge our ability to comprehend. A gift that is light, that is life! A gift that will cause us to discard our old lives for the new life that is held out before us, by the very one who saves us. Let us be open this Advent and Christmas to the arrival of the beyond momentous gift of Christ - for the 2021<sup>st</sup> time!

Peace,  
*Pastor Scott*

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## **NOTES FROM SESSION NOVEMBER 16, 2021**

The regular meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Helena was called to order on Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at 6:35 PM via Zoom. Reverend Scott Wipperman opened with prayer and moderated the meeting.

Pastor Scott Wipperman presented the devotional using Galatians, Chapter 6, Verse 2.

There was a quorum with the following Elders present: Linda Bench, John Coefield, Sheryl Eriksen, Rose Leavitt, Barb Leland, Carol Stebbins, Karen Witte, and Mary Stiles. Also in attendance: Pastor Scott Wipperman, Clerk of Session John Gneckow, Deacon Candace Coefield, CP Butch Plowman, and Worship Chairman Dianna Goodman. Kathy Chambers and Mary Wright were excused.

**APPROVAL OF DOCKET:** A report by the Covid Task Force was added to Committee Reports. Reopening Worship was added to New Business. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the docket as amended.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the minutes of October 19, 2021, as presented.

**PASTOR'S REPORT:** Pastor Scott reported that October was another "in the black" month with income of \$21,399 and expenses of \$19,450. Our YTD shortfall is \$28,257 compared to \$16,470 last year at this time. We are 80% of the way through the year and have spent 67.82% of our budget.

Advent begins Sunday, November 28. We will continue to exercise caution and take precautions with Covid during the Advent season.

Reverend Tim Lanham will be leading a Sunday online study during Advent beginning November 28 at 5:00 PM. Contact him at [timothy@glaciercamp.org](mailto:timothy@glaciercamp.org) for more information and to enroll.

### **CLERK'S REPORT:**

**Clerk's Report:** The Clerk reported that FPC received a thank you from Helena Food Share for a recent donation from our Mission Committee.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**Administration Committee:** Elder Linda Bench reported, and a written report was submitted. Our accountant needs help transporting information between the church and his office beginning in January. The committee is also looking for people to serve on the committee.

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Committee members are concerned that a Faith Budget of \$41,095 is unattainable and needs to be reduced to \$15,000 and the Personnel Budget is the most likely place to make a reduction of this amount. **ACTION ITEM:** The Administration Committee requests the Personnel Committee to review its currently proposed budget for 2022 and develop options for Session to consider to reduce the Faith Budget for 2022 to approximately \$15,000; the expectation is that this will require reductions in portions of the Personnel Committee budget by approximately \$26,000; it appears this can best be done via the following actions: 1) Reductions in hours for staff member(s); 2) Temporary elimination of Staff position(s); 3) Changes to Pastor's Terms-of- Call or some combinations of these actions. Approved.

**Building and Grounds:** Elder John Coefield reported, and a written report was submitted. The security system has been installed but is not yet activated. After the system is activated, anyone entering the building outside of certain hours will have to enter a code to turn the alarm off. What hours the system will be turned off for church access is yet to be decided.

The elevator service company and church cleaning company have both indicated that they are increasing their rates for 2022.

**Christian Education Committee:** Elder Mary Stiles reported and a written report was submitted. Pumpkin Patch made money this year. The Friday night teen fellowship and the Kid's Fall Fellowship continues using Tik Tok and Instagram. **ACTION ITEM:** To approve Merle Korizek as a member of the Education Committee. Approved.

**Congregational Fellowship:** Elder Linda Bench reported, and a written report was submitted. Fellowship Time following worship has been discontinued on recommendation of the COVID task force. To-Go treats will be available after worship. No coffee will be available.

**Mission Committee:** Elder Karen Witte reported, and a written report was submitted. The United Way backpack promotion for the Homeless program is continuing. FPC is also soliciting food or monetary donations for the Food Pantry. As part of the Matthew 25

journey, tea, cider, or hot chocolate packets will be provided to the congregation to quench both their thirst and thirsty souls while reading their Advent Devotionals.

**Memorial Committee:** No activity to report this month.

**Nominating Committee:** Elder John Coefield reported and a written report was submitted. The committee members have met twice during November. Potential candidates are being contacted about serving as either an Elder or Deacon and some have already indicated their willingness to serve.

**Personnel Committee:** Carol Stebbins reported and a written report was submitted. Staff evaluations are done. The committee has been updating the church's Personnel Policy.

**Worship Committee:** Chairperson Dianna Goodman reported and a written report was submitted. Advent begins November 28. Because of Covid concerns, Hanging of the Greens will be done by the Goodmans and primarily limited to the Sanctuary. Les and some choir members are practicing music using the chimes. Advent Devotionals are available. There are different varieties to choose from.

**Covid Task Force:** Pastor Scott reported and a written report was submitted. The Task Force is monitoring the situation in the Helena area.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved that FPC return to singing hymns albeit while wearing masks. FPC will purchase K95 or M95 masks for worshippers to wear during the service and while singing.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved to allow the card game Hand and Foot to return to church on Fridays beginning December 3. The card players will be required to wear masks and no eating will be allowed. Masks will be provided.

**Deacon Report:** Deacon Candace Coefield provided a report of Board activities for October. Butch and Pearle Plowman are continuing to serve communion at Touchmark despite the increase in

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COVID cases in the Helena community. They are not sure if that will change soon.

**Old Business:** Discussion and finalization of the 2022 budget was delayed until the December Session meeting to allow the Personnel Committee to address the motion passed during this evening's Session meeting.

**New Business:** Dianna Goodman opened a discussion on her perspective of the future return to church normalcy. No proposals were presented beyond the above noted motion to allow singing of hymns during worship.

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded at 8:22 p.m. to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried. Elder Rose Leavitt closed the meeting with prayer.

**Next Regular Session Meeting: December 21, 2021, at 6:30 pm.**

John Gneckow  
Clerk of Session

ADDENDUM: A Boy Scout from the FPC sponsored troop is working on Food Pantry boxes similar to the Yard Library concept as part of an Eagle Scout Project. On November 1, 2021, the Scouts approached FPC with a request to allow placement of a Food Pantry on church property near the east entry to our parking lot. An electronic vote of Session members resulted in approval for placement of one of the boxes on our property.

### **Willing Workers will meet each Wednesday at 9am.**

The group continues to plan for and organize future Craft Fairs and events. We invite everyone interested to attend the weekly gatherings. We need not only your ideas, but your crafts and your help to ensure the success of this event. We hope to put together many gift baskets containing hand crafted items, so we'd like your assistance with this new addition to the Craft Fair. Come one and all; we welcome your participation.



## **Found by the Love of Christ**

Love is the foundation of every relationship, and it is meant to be a full and free gift of oneself. Father Boniface Hicks summarizes the love of God by saying: “We are to bear with one another through love, and it is always a crucifixion, but we are in good company, Jesus is with us. And he has loved us this way and leads us to love others.”

To be in the love of Christ is to conform our hearts to humility, gentleness, and patience in every relationship.

As we seek humility, it is beneficial to place ourselves back to see the greatness of others. Every one of us has something to teach and offer to the world. But, as brothers and sisters in Christ, let us elevate one another through the offer to learn.

As we seek gentleness, in our speech and our actions, we offer tenderness to our brothers and sisters in Christ, because we will never fully know the experiences of another person.

As we seek patience, we choose to walk with another person enduring the joys and trials of life, offering the compassion and mercy of Christ.

May God bless you this week, and always remember to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received as a son or a daughter of God.

Ashley Burke  
Director of Christian Education



## FOCUS ON MATTHEW 25 - December

The Matthew 25 focus for December will be on "thirsty".

*I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. v35*

The Mission Committee invites you to pick up an Advent devotional from the church or to use one you may have saved from a previous year. Please also pick up some packets of coffee, tea, cider or hot chocolate from the Fellowship area each week to enjoy while you read. As you study the message and quench your thirsty soul, quench your thirsty body as well. The Committee encourages you to find ways to help those in our community who are also thirsty.



## CHRISTMAS GIVING PROJECT



The Mission Committee has chosen the United Way *"BackPacks for the Homeless"* as our Christmas Giving Project. We encourage you to purchase any of the following items and keep them at home until December after the Christmas Tree has been erected.



With the frigid winter months coming up, the United Way is looking for your help to ensure those without permanent residences are safe and warm. Items are distributed to those needing them in Lewis & Clark, Jefferson and Broadwater counties thanks to the assistance of partners and friends of the United Way, such as Good Samaritan Ministries and God's Love Inc.

### WHAT WE PUT IN THE BACKPACKS

- Band-Aids
- Blankets
- Boots
- Chapstick
- Coats or Sweatshirts
- Combs or Small Brushes
- Food that does not need to be cooked
- Gift Certificates for Fast Food or Grocery Store
- Gloves and Hats
- Mints, Cough Drops or Gum
- Nail Clippers
- Packs of Tissues
- Pillowcases
- Sanitary items
- Shampoo
- Sleeping Bags
- Soap
- Socks
- Tents
- Toothbrushes and Toothpaste
- Water Bottles
- Wet Wipes

**We also need backpacks!**



## **Come and enjoy a low-impact exercise that's easy, free and available to EVERYONE!**

New Walkers Wanted! Our Church "weekly walking group" is looking for additional people -- men, women, children -- get some exercise, visit with friends, and enjoy our beautiful Montana summer. **We meet each Tuesday at 10:00 am in Centennial Park by the flagpole next to the YMCA.** A group from our church family ventures out into the fresh open air to enjoy a time of exercise and fellowship as we walk along the park walking path. Come and join us if you're looking for walking partners...or even if you're not because **EVERYONE** is welcome to join, and it's **FREE!!**

MORE FUN COMING -- Watch for Lost Soles hikes to begin soon.

The **Deacons' Benevolence Fund** has been used several times during the pandemic. Thanks to the congregation's generous gifts, we have been able to fulfill every request. We want to remind everyone that this fund is for you. If you need help to pay household or medical bills, buy groceries, medicine or gas, we are here, ready to help. Just contact Pastor Scott at the church office, and he will get the ball rolling. This is completely confidential; not even the deacons know who our recipients are. We are so happy to help! God bless!

## **Family Promise Fundraiser**

JOHN FLORIDIS CONCERT to benefit Family Promise of Greater Helena  
Missoula guitarist and singer-songwriter John Floridis returns to Helena on Tuesday, Dec. 14, for a contemplative concert of seasonal music to benefit Family Promise of Greater Helena. The concert at St. Paul's United Methodist Church will be limited to 200 in-person attendees and also will be streamed online at <https://www.youtube.com/c/StPaulsUnitedMethodistChurchHelena>.

Tickets for the in-person concert are \$15 and will be available beginning Dec. 1 at the Myrna Loy Center and at Birds and Beasleys on the Walking Mall. Donations are gratefully accepted from viewers who tune in on YouTube at: [familypromisehelena.org](https://www.youtube.com/c/familypromisehelena.org)

Thanks much.  
Marsha



## Submission Deadlines for the Bulletin and Newsletter



To allow for the production and review of **worship bulletins** and the **monthly newsletters** we want to reiterate some submission

deadlines for items to be included in those. It is always appreciated if material can be received earlier than these deadlines, but these deadlines need to be met for inclusion in a particular issue.

The deadline for worship bulletins is the most straight forward deadline: items for inclusion need to be into Bruce by Tuesday at 10:00 am for inclusion in Sunday's bulletin, preferably in an electronic form. Given that the last day of the month moves, submissions for a newsletter needs to be made by 10:00 am on the sixth business day before the end of the month.

For instance, if the 30th or 31st is the last day of the month and it falls on a Tuesday, then six business days before the 30th/31st would be Monday the 22nd of the month. For the **January Mustard Seed, submissions need to be in by 10:00 am on Monday, December 20th.** Church holidays may require that submissions be made even earlier for both bulletins and newsletters.

## Thanks - giving

As you consider your Giving Tuesday and Year-End giving, please keep FPC in mind. Any and all donations help support FPC's missions and ministries.

**DECEMBER 2021**



### **ANNIVERSARIES**

- 10 - Chris & Candace Goodman
- 22 - Jeff & Julie Chaffee
- 23 - Dave & Ellen Westenbarger
- 26 - Michael & Marsha Davis
- 31 - Marshall & Elaine Gingery

### **BIRTHDAYS**

- 1 - John Coefield
- 6 - Jennifer Massman
- 18 - Bonnie Anderson
- 22 - Joy Edgar, David McNay
- 24 - Corky Lord, Carol Stebbins
- 27 - Mary Stiles

### **DEACONS ON CALL**

**Pending**

### **December**

### **Lay Liturgists**

**Pending**

### **DECEMBER COMMUNION SETUP**

**Pending**



### **DEADLINE**

**The deadline  
for January's  
newsletter is  
Monday,  
December 20th.**

### **UPCOMING FINANCIAL DEADLINES**

**Completed Credit Card Re-  
quest forms, Completed Check  
Request forms, Personnel  
Forms / Time Sheets are due in  
the Financial Office mailbox on:**

**Tuesday, December 7, 2021  
Wednesday, December 22, 2021  
Monday, January 10, 2022**

**First Presbyterian Church  
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Monday - Thursday  
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